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THE RELATIONS OF GILBERT TENNENT TO THE RELIGIOUS
DEVELOPMENT OF THE MIDDLE COLONIES.

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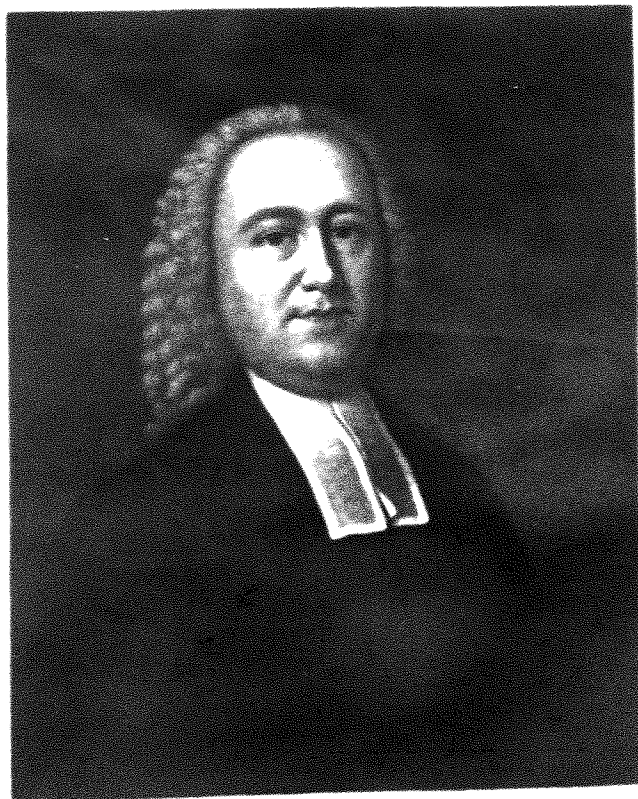
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GILBERT TENNENT.

The Revivalist of a Puritan Ideal.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THESIS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THESIS.

Foreword - Tribute of President Harrison to Log College Ministers.

"I am glad to stand at the source of a great movement.

I have seen the Mississippi River pouring out its great torrent into the Gulf and opening a way inland for an enormous commerce, and I was glad to stand a few years ago where the Gallatin, Jefferson and Madison combine to form the Missouri and send it on its great course to the Sea. On this spot, about which there are gathered so many historical associations, we celebrate one of those impulses born of God and that will do God's work until the world shall cease to move".(1)

These words were spoken by the Honorable Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States, on September 5, 1889. He was standing on the early site of one of the most unique educational institutions that our country has ever known, and his reference was to the rise of that institution together with its subsequent influence upon the development of the religious and secular life of the Middle Colonies and the United States of America. This institution was the "Log College" founded in Neshaminy, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, about twenty-eight miles north of Philadelphia, in 1726, by William Tennent, Sr..

His words are so applicable and significant in their re-

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1. Address of President Benjamin Harrison at the "Old Log College" celebration, Sept. 5, 1889. Recorded in "The Presbytery of Log College" by Murphy. pp 513. Appendix.

lations to the scope of this thesis, that I shall quote verbatim the succeeding paragraph.

"I stand in awe before the thought of what the great day will reveal as the fruit of this modest but pious and courageous effort, the Institution of Log College,-the wholesome fruit of faith. Only the eye of God can follow those tender and imperceptible filaments of mental and moral influence that touch our lives. If it could be revealed to us today, how many in this great audience, gathered from remote sections of our Country, would see the silver thread by which they have been drawn into the Church of God reaching back to efforts that were started here! It is pleasant to believe that that which is now hidden in our eyes will some day be known, and that we will be able better to realize what these men wrought for God and for mankind".(1)

Gradually as the years go by, the wisdom thus anticipated is revealed through research, through the finding of unknown or unused documents, and above all through the opportunities of generations to behold great men or movements together with their influences in the clarifying light of the perspective of time. It is thus that we may study the lives, the works and the contributions of the men who were affiliated with the Log College whom historians recognize as the most potent factors in the religious life of the Middle Colonies during the formative years of the religious denominations then represented in these parts of America. The publications of these

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1. Address - President Harrison. Murphy, "Presbytery of Log College", pp 513.

men have not been widely distributed; few of them even reprinted. Hence it becomes necessary to search in scattered places for sources of information. Tributes have been paid and recognitions have been made as to their religious zeal, undaunted faith, courage, scholastic ingenuity and pulpit power. But there yet remains that detailed investigation of individuals on a broader scale than has previously been done with respect to personal motives, doctrines preached and external factors that influenced, if not, determined their pursuits and activities.

I. HISTORICAL EVALUATIONS OF GILBERT TENNENT.

A. Contemporary with Edwards, Whitefield and Great Awakening.

From amongst this group, Gilbert Tennent has been selected as the subject of this Thesis for particular investigation. Historians have granted to him the supreme place of leadership. This position is of special significance when we consider the period in which he lived. He was a contemporary and associate with two of the greatest religious leaders of both England and America, namely George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. In his religious activities, he was associated directly with one of the most universal religious awakenings that has swept over the Continents of Europe and America since the Protestant Reformation. He was the product of, and stood in direct denominational relations with the Presbyterian Church in America during the years of its infancy, when its future course was determined, its traditions and practices established and when it was going through the process of being purged of heresies and unbelief that the future structure might be founded on a sound spiritual and doctrinal basis.

However, mere affiliations with great men, movements or critical periods are no assurance of special merit. It is when we look to the personal relations of Gilbert Tennent to the spiritual awakenings that were manifest in the Middle Colonies from 1730 through 1740; and to his relations to the Presbyterian Church that we may appreciate and evaluate his work during the middle part of the eighteenth century. He lived in a time of conflict when two religious groups struggled for supremacy. Both in New England and in the Middle Colonies a traditional and conservative group of theologians had gradually evolved through a century of religious development. This conservative element was known as the "Old Side" group. In opposition to this, there arose a "New Side" group who valued less the traditions and creedal basis for the Church, placing instead the major emphasis on religious experience.

B. Testimonies by historians.

(1) Recognition of his superior talents.

In the middle Colonies the "Log College" group or the men associated with the New Brunswick Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church were the chief proponents of the New Side theology. Amongst these, Gilbert Tennent has been recognized by historians as the most illustrious leader. Archibald Alexander says of him in his book on "The Log College" that "He was the leader amongst a galaxy of preachers, who were without doubt amongst the most famous in our history".(1) Charles H. Maxson credits him with the same honorable position,

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1. Archibald Alexander, "The Founder and Alumni of Log College", pp 78, Ed. 1845.

emphasizing the fact that the secret for his enviable place was his pulpit power that superceded that of any other member of the synod.(1) That Gilbert Tennent rose early in life to this position of leadership is held by C. L. Thompson, who wrote, "Gilbert especially (amongst the Tennents) when yet a young man sprang to leadership. As a preacher he was bold, intense and spiritual; as a leader in the Church, he had no superiors; not always wise in methods--sometimes arrogant in manner--stern as an old Prophet, he had the zeal and the consecration of an Apostle".(2) This seems to be also the sentiment of Mr. Thomas Murphy, who wrote in his scholarly but exasperating history because of the absence of source references, that "Gilbert Tennent was the greatest preacher of this land in any age. He was like the Apostle John both in the sweetness of his private life, and in his fervid eloquence. He was probably the greatest preacher who ever adorned the American Pulpit".(3) Mr. Murphy states further that, "No name stood so high as his in the exciting ecclesiastical events of that day when our Church was crystallizing into permanent form".(4)

(2) Associated with Great Awakening.

The chief importance of these recognitions of Gilbert Tennent's leadership in the "New Side" group lies primarily in the relations of this group to the Great Awakening. As an individual, Gilbert Tennent could hurl his invectives at his opponants in the

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1. Charles H. Maxson, "The Great Awakening", pp 33 & 34.
2. Charles L. Thompson, "The Presbyterians", pp 69.
3. Thomas Murphy, "History of Presbytery of Log College", pp 80.
4. Thomas Murphy, "History of Presbytery of Log College", pp 81.

meetings of the Synods and thus bring pressure to bear upon its decisions. But in stimulating the revival of religion the true essentials of leadership had necessarily to manifest themselves. Thus it is in connection with the revival of experimental religion that historians recognize his superior abilities.

(a) Significance of movement.

However, before we note the evaluations of the part that Gilbert Tennent played in the Great Awakening by historians, we must recognize that the movement itself was perhaps the most significant movement in the history of the American Colonies. Prof. Sweet of the University of Chicago writes, "The series of religious awakenings which swept over the American Colonies in the middle of the eighteenth Century were in many respects the most farreaching social movements of the whole Colonial period. They influenced all the churches either directly or indirectly".(1) Thus on the basis of the proposition that the importance of a movement determines the significance of its leaders, we may more fully appreciate the historical evaluations of Gilbert Tennent.

(b) Leadership of Tennent amongst Presbyterians.

Referring to Prof. Sweet again, we note that "Gilbert Tennent---was destined to be the heart and center of a revival movement among the Presbyterians".(2) Professor Archibald Alexander of Princeton Seminary, one of the most quoted authorities on this subject states that "indeed all must acknowledge, that among the friends

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1. Sweet, Story of Religion in America, pp 201.
2. " " " " " " " " pp 203.

and promoters of the Revival, he--Gilbert Tennent--stood pre-emin-ent, and in the harshness of his censures and the severity of his denunciations, he went far before all his brethren".(1) In comparison with George Whitefield, this same writer states that, "as Mr. Whitefield was doubtless honored 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".(2) Mr. Frederick L. Chapell in his book on "The Great Awakening of 1740" also places Gilbert Tennent in the foremost position amongst the leaders of the movement, and offers as a probable explanation why Gilbert Tennent does not occupy the same position amongst the Presbyterians, as Wesley amongst the Methodists, and Edwards amongst the Congregationalists, that "The genius of Presbyterianism would not admit of any great hero".(3)

However, if the Presbyterian Church has not immortalized Gilbert Tennent, it has through its most authoritative spokesmen, credited him with being the most outstanding leader of the party with which he was affiliated. Charles Hodge, perhaps one of the most conservative and critical writers on this period, states that "Gilbert Tennent was so completely the soul of the party to which he belonged that without him it would never have existed. He is often therefore addressed as the party itself, and his writings and declarations are referred to as speaking the language of his associates".(4)

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1. Archibald Alexander, Log College, pp 51.
2. " " " " pp 47-48.
3. Frederick L. Chapell, "Great Awakening of 1740", pp 70.
4. Charles Hodge, "Constitutional History", V.2, pp 161.

But this does not imply that the influences of Gilbert Tennent were limited to his own group. On the other hand, as a leader of the party that championed the cause of the Revival, his influences affected the entire Church. Referring to Hodge again, we read, "To the Presbyterian Church particularly, it--the Revival--was the commencement of a new life, the vigour of which is still felt in all her veins".(1) Archibald Alexander substantiates this same recognition of the lasting influence of the party to which Tennent belonged. He writes, "We of the Presbyterian Church are more indebted to the men of the Log College for our evangelical views and for our revivals of religion than we are aware of. By their exertions and the blessings of God on their preaching, a new spirit was infused into the Presbyterian body; and their views and sentiments respecting experimental religion have prevailed more and more; until at last, opposition to genuine revivals of religion is almost unknown in our Church".(2)

Such are the estimations of Gilbert Tennent by historians who are classed amongst the greatest authorities on this particular field of Church History. However, it would be far from true to suppose that all references to him exalt and glorify his preachings and activities. His actions at times are the objects of many derogatory remarks. However, such are recognized as but rash incidents manifest in the heat of conflict and uncontrolled passion for certain principles he deemed inevitable for vital Christianity. Released from

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1. Charles Hodge, Constitutional History, pp 122.
2. Archibald Alexander, Log College, pp 56.

the tension of conflict and overburdened responsibilities, he repented for the errors of his ways and sought the reconciliation of those whose resentment he had aroused. (1) But inspite of these shortcomings we see from the testimonies above that Gilbert Tennent stands out on the pages of history as a recognized leader who through his own activities and the work of his associates produced a spiritual revival that left an indelible impression, not only upon the Presbyterian Church, but on the life of the Middle Colonies in general.

C. Compared with Whitefield.

(1) Influence of Whitefield overestimated.

The names of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield are usually linked to the Great Awakening of 1740 as its leaders. Jonathan Edwards was undoubtedly the most outstanding leader of this great movement in the New England Colonies. George Whitefield must also be recognized as a leader in the New England revival, though his work there was of a very limited duration. His work of evangelism was primarily done in the Middle Colonies. However, in the light of the facts of history one is lead to question the popular contention that he was the dominating spirit in that revival and responsible for its lasting influences. The facts that lead to the raising of this question are the following. In the first place, George Whitefield had not direct denominational affiliations with the people to whom he preached. He was a member of the Church of England, although

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1. The Irenicum, Gilbert Tennent.

in practice and spirit he was a Calvinistic Methodist. Because of this latter fact he was rejected by the Episcopalians of America with rare exceptions. Consequently because of his broad spirit of evangelism, he preached in the churches of any denomination that opened their doors to him. Even though the denominational barriers thus were broken down so that George Whitefield was welcomed with open hands by the friends of the revival, the fact still remains that he was but a visitor in America and unable to participate in the aftermath of the movement in which we find the benefits of the awakening particularly evident. The question thus rises in connection with the Middle Colonies if George Whitefield had no direct Denominational affiliations with the people to whom he preached, and since his visits to the colonies were of very limited time must we not look to the native leaders of the revival who were within the American denominations for the sources of the effects of the awakening that were manifest in nearly every phase of religious life. In the second place, George Whitefield was constantly itinerating, passing hurriedly from one place to the other with no opportunity to follow up the religious zeal that was aroused through his preaching. In the third place, the records of the period show that during the ten years previous to the coming of Whitefield to the Middle Colonies there were revivals of religion in scattered congregations, largely served by the members of the Log College group. The proportions and the intensity of these increased as the New Brunswick Presbytery became organized under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent. The results of the Great Awakening are measured in terms of its permanent in-

fluences. On the basis of these facts, it is reasonable to conclude that Whitefield could not have been responsible for its lasting effects.

(2) Native ministers the chief revival leaders.

On the other hand as we direct our attentions to the colonial leaders of the Great Awakening we are led to a new evaluation and recognition of the contributions that they made to the development of religion and our religious institutions during the early pioneer days of our country. In the Middle Colonies, it was this group under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent that defended in the synod meetings of the Presbyterian Church, experimental religion which was the basis for the Great Awakening against the professional standard implied in the Adopting Act of 1729. It was this group who practiced itinerating contrary to the practices of the day, that the revival gospel might be spread far and wide. It was this group that defied the ordinances of the synod and ordained men in sympathy with the revival, in order that the demands for such preachers might be met. It was this group, who through their spokesman, Gilbert Tennent denounced most severely the preachers who opposed the revival. It was this group that founded schools that their principles might be perpetuated. It was this group that welcomed George Whitefield to the Middle Colonies and opened their congregations to him that he might preach to them and it was they who followed him on his long and tiresome journeys.

On the basis of these facts, it is reasonable to presume that we may find in the activities of the native leaders, the primary

causes and effects of the religious development that took place in the colonies in a period that has been termed most significant in our colonial Church History. This fact becomes revealed in the scope of this thesis as it sets forth the life of Gilbert Tennent in the light of his relations and contributions to the religious development of the age in which he lived.

II. PERSON IN WHOM THE ISSUES OF GREAT AWAKENING WERE CENTRALIZED.

A. Key to interpretation of movement.

From this study there emerges a second factor of great historical importance, namely, a clarification of the issues that were involved in the movement. The Great Awakening cannot properly be interpreted apart from the issues that characterized it, because the movement involved certain specific contentions between the Old and the New Side parties. Only as we see the two sides of these issues can we understand the fiery zeal of the revivalists, with their apparent disregard for ecclesiastical order as recognized in the Directory of the Presbyterian Church. Only as we analyze the issues, can we find the basic explanation for the stern opposition of the conservatives to a quickening of religion which even they deemed imperative and vital for the times. In no person living, either in New England or in the Middle Colonies, were these issues focused as in Gilbert Tennent. As we have previously noted, Jonathan Edwards was the chief source and inspiration of the revival in New England. This work cost him his congregation, in that he was expelled by his people because of his revival principles. But New England Congregationalism did not adapt itself to the bringing of

the issues into central ecclesiastical assemblies backed by judicial powers. Hence, in New England, friends and foes of the revival held their respective consociations, drawing up their acclamations or condemnations according to their particular attitudes toward the movement. Consequently the issues there did not become centralized in one individual. In the Middle Colonies, the situation was different. The most efficiently organized denomination in the "Babel of Faiths" of those colonies during the first half of the eighteenth century was the Presbyterian Synod. This body was also the one in which the Great Awakening was most manifest. Its form of government, as defined in the synods of 1729 and 1735 stood for a more centralized form of government than the loose consociations of New England and was backed by judicial power. Hence its affairs became centralized in the meetings of the synod. It was in these meetings of the synod, where the friends and the foes of the revival gathered jointly, that the issues of the revival were debated. Naturally since Gilbert Tennent was the leader of the evangelical party, he became the apologist for the revival and the central object for attack by the protestors, who in turn constituted the conservative leaders of the church.(1) This is the basis for the proposition that the issues of the Great Awakening were centralized in Gilbert Tennent as far as the Middle Colonies were concerned. The importance of this is Gilbert Tennent becomes the key to the interpretation of the revival movement of 1740.

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1. Apology of Gilbert Tennent
 "Protest" Synod 1740.
 John Thompson, "The Church of Christ".

B. Whitefield not center of conflict.

One may raise the question as to whether or not the issues were focused in George Whitefield. As far as the Middle Colonies are concerned, the answer must be an emphatic no. In England where the Established Church opposed his evangelical endeavors, the issues were largely centered in him, in that he was the chief defender of experimental religion and the chief object of attack by the church. But in America where he had no denominational affiliations, there were not the opportunities for the positive and the negative elements of the movement to come to a point of issue in him in any organized form.

III. A VITAL INFLUENCE ON RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE MIDDLE COLONIES.

A. Nature of development.

The third factor of historical importance in the scope of this thesis pertains more directly to the relations of Gilbert Tennent to the religious development within the Presbyterian Church of this period. The term, development, here refers not to doctrinal development in the sense that Tennent contributed new theological concepts that modified the religious doctrines of the church. Gilbert Tennent was not primarily a theologian, as was Jonathan Edwards who not only influenced the theological thinking of his time, but largely laid the basis for the Calvinistic branch of American Protestantism. The term "religious development" is used in the sense of the progress of religion as it gained a foothold amongst the people of the colonies and grew through the various denominations. This involved the adoption of creedal standards; the establishment of educational institutions for the training of pastors for the newly formed congregations; the stimulating of the spiritual life of the people who had largely become calloused by the trials of the frontier and affected by heretical

influences; and the ministering to the people in the remote frontier areas not served by any local pastor. We are prone to value "religious contributions" only as they take the form of new doctrinal interpretations or statements. But in the onward progress of the Christian Church, these other factors mentioned above must also be taken into consideration. And it was in this respect that Gilbert Tennent made his chief contributions.

B. Evident by his works and relations to Synod of Philadelphia.

The particular factors which lead to this study are the writings of Gilbert Tennent and his relations to the Presbyterian Church. In proportion to the facilities for printing in those times, his works were extensively sought by the press and circulated. (See Bibliography) Certain of his writings and discourses were directly responsible for the courses taken by the Presbyterian Church in this period. This is substantiated by the records of the Synod of Philadelphia. As we go back into its records we note that it was Gilbert Tennent who took issue with the Adopting Act of 1729 and demanded the more specific emphasis on experimental religion by the synod in 1735. Tennent was the dominating voice in the defense of itinerating. He was the apologist for the New Side theologians. He was the preacher of the "Nottingham Sermon" which was primarily responsible for the divisions of the Presbyterian Church in 1741. It was he who wrote the "Apology" against the conservative opposition to the revival and who answered the "Protestations" written and read against the New Side group in the synod meeting of 1741. Tennent was the dominating force in the New York Synod after the schism and was the conciliator

of the two divided groups so that union was effected in 1758. And when the two synods were thus united, their esteem for Tennent was manifest in his election as moderator of the reunited synod.(1)

C. A promoter of education and national interests.

Historians have largely overlooked the activities of Gilbert Tennent in other fields than the revival and the functions of the church. In the field of education, he tenaciously defended the existence of the "Log College" as a means for training native ministers who understood the problems of the church in the Middle Colonies and who were not contaminated by the suspected liberalism of the New England and the Irish schools of theology. Following the cessation of "Log College", we find him touring England with Samuel Davis in behalf of the new institution called the "College of New Jersey", which later was called "Princeton". He also served as a director of this institution. In the secular affairs of the colonies, we note his interests in his sermons on "the just right of wars for defense" against the encroachments of foreign powers.(2)

It will be the aim of this study to permit the facts pertaining to the life of Gilbert Tennent to speak for themselves with regard to the place that he deserves in the history of the American Protestant Church during the colonial period. But in the presentation of these facts, various problems arise. Gilbert Tennent may be characterized as "The Ingenius Paradox". In his relations to the church he never ceased to recognize nor did he renounce its confessions and

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1. Minutes of Synod of New York and Philadelphia, pp 285.
2. Tennent, Defensive war defended.

Directory of ecclesiastical order. Yet he ignored the precepts of the Directory in ordaining of men and in encouraging itinerating of pastors. Hence the question arises as to the cause for such inconsistencies and the basis on which he justified his actions. In the second place, a distinct change took place in his life after he transferred from his ministry at New Brunswick to the Second Presbyterian church in Philadelphia. In the first location he was an extemporaneous, fiery pulpit preacher filled with the zeal of an apostle Paul. This zeal bordered on rashness in his relations to the "Old Side" group with little or no regard for the consequences, just so that his principles of experimental religion and the work of the spiritual revival might be sustained. But in Philadelphia he became subdued and moderate in his ways, writing out his sermons in detail and reading them from the pulpit. He became distinctly a man of peace instead of a man of war. The question arises as to the cause for this change in attitude. This question will be dealt with in the development of this thesis.

Hence, we turn to the study of Gilbert Tennent on the basis of the three factors dealt with in this introductory chapter, which may be summarized as follows. First, historians who have specialized in the study of the period of American church history with which Tennent was affiliated, have unanimously assigned to him the place of leadership amongst a group of revival leaders, who affected the whole tone of the spiritual life of the people in the Middle Colonies. Secondly, we find in Gilbert Tennent, the person in whom the issues of the Great Awakening were centralized. Since

this movement was primarily a movement of issues involving the conflict between the "Old Side" group and the "New Side" group, he becomes a key to the understanding of the basic factors that were involved in a movement which historians have termed the most important in the colonial period of America. In the third place, Gilbert Tennent stands out on the pages of history as a churchman in a critical period of colonial history, whose dynamic personality and religious zeal influenced the spiritual life of the Presbyterian Church at a moment when vital religion of experience was threatened to give way to creedal formalism and spiritual stagnation.

IV. SOURCES

A. Brief Memoirs.

Church historians unanimously refer to Gilbert Tennent in their treatises on the period and locality in which he lived. But it is strange to note that no extensive investigation has been made into his life and works with the special purpose of setting forth his relations and contributions to the religious development of the Middle Colonies. The most exhaustive and scholarly work in this connection is the brief memoir of the life of Tennent by Archibald Alexander, published in "The Biographical sketches of the founder and principal Alumni of Log College". This was published at Princeton in 1845. However, the brevity of this memoir permits but a characterization rather than a comprehensive study of his relations to the Great Awakening and the Presbyterian Church of this period. Charles Hodge in "The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church", published in 1851, has given a most scholarly interpretation

of the principles that Gilbert Tennent and his co-workers stood for in their relations to the Presbyterian Church. But this is largely from the point of view of the Great Awakening in general and the transactions of the Presbyterian Church, with no particular attention to Gilbert Tennent. The Reverend Mr. Richard Webster also published in 1857, in his "History of the Presbyterian Church" a very brief memoir of Tennent. But this is hardly more than a sketchy outline of his life including for the most part quotations from Prince's "Church History", and the historical collections of Gillies. The first two mentioned works have been used as the basic authorities by most subsequent writers on the subject. Mr. George H. Ingram started a collection of short memoirs on the Alumni of Log College, in the journal for the Presbyterian Historical Society, but after completing the works on the less known alumni of this school, he passed away, 1930, without doing his proposed work on Gilbert Tennent.

All historical works that deal with the Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies refer to Gilbert Tennent. Histories on the Presbytery of the Log College and the Neshaminy church also naturally touch upon his life. But these works are extremely brief and general.

B. Scattered

Hence it can be said that there has not been published a single work dealing exclusively with Gilbert Tennent. One of the chief difficulties encountered in the study of his life and work is the finding of source materials. These are largely scattered

in the older libraries of the East. Some, seemingly, cannot be found. The major documents are available. Hence the missing sources, which are mostly sermons, could do no more than perhaps contribute on a small scale to certain minor events. (See Bibliography for documents available and those missing). The sources that are available are sufficient to give a comprehensive view of his purposes and major activities even though the minor and more intimate details of his life may never be known. It is regrettable that he never kept a daily journal.

CONCLUSION - a two-fold value of study.

A two-fold value emerges from the study of his life. In the first place as a historical character, we may view his life in the light of the whole, making it possible to note influences and reactions that would otherwise be hidden and misunderstood if we glean his activities from scattered references apart from their relations to each other. In this connection facts appear which have hitherto been unnoticed due, perhaps, to the unavailability of the original sources. Since Gilbert Tennent took a very vital part in the religious affairs of the Presbyterian Church in particular and the Middle Colonies in general, his activities become invaluable in interpreting and understanding the significant development that took place during his active ministry. In the second place, the life, works and preachings of Gilbert Tennent carry with them the inspiration and message of spiritual reform and zeal in times of spiritual decline. In the view of the tremendous obstacles that vital Christianity has to contend with at all times, his published messages

and recorded activities transmit to the present age, with those of other valient saints imbued with the same ideals, new power and hope in their emphasis on the experience of Christ in the life of the believer.

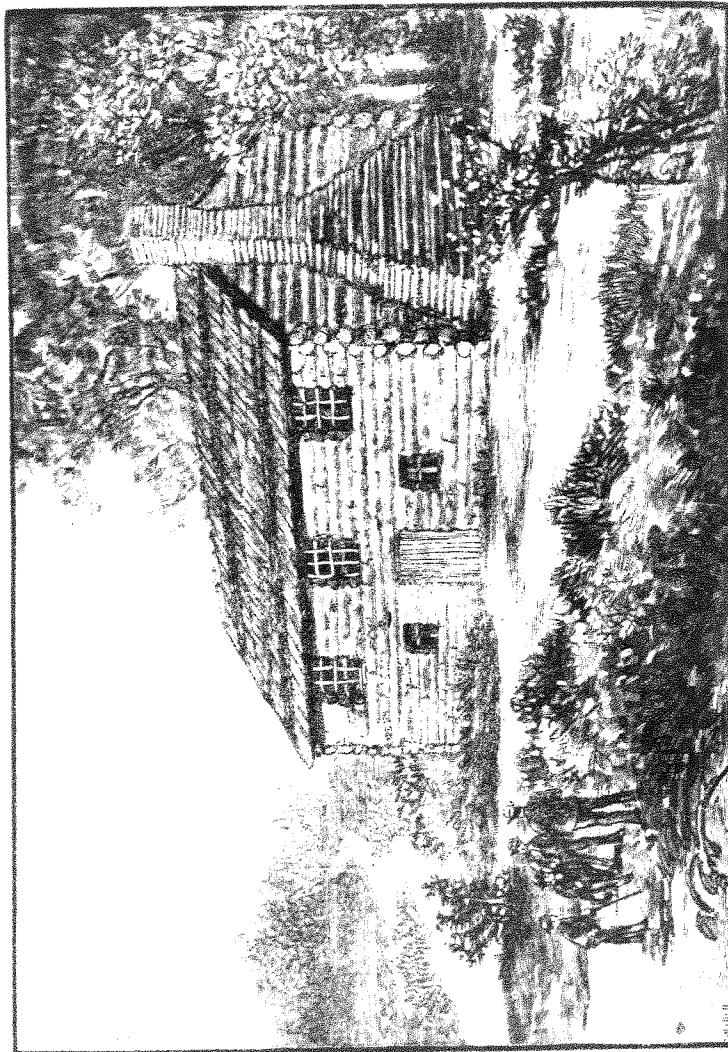


FIG. 27.

THE ORIGINAL LOG COLLEGE BUILDING.

*THIS IS THE ONLY KNOWN ARTISTIC CONCEPTION
OF THE CRUDE BUT VERY HISTORIC LOG COLLEGE.*

Photostat work by Columbia University.

CHAPTER II

HIS EARLY LIFE AND THE FACTORS
THAT CONTRIBUTED TO HIS RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

GILBERT TENNENT

HIS EARLY LIFE AND THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO HIS RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT.

The least conspicuous but very significant period in the life of most people is youth and early manhood. It constitutes the plastic age when external forces exert their greatest influences, when habits are formed, and when persons entertain idealistic conceptions of their manhood ambitions. It is the time of intellectual development, and very frequently of spiritual conflicts that lead to great concern over religion. The type of impressions made and the nature of the ideals formulated are usually in accord with the home and social environment in which one lives. Hence, it is not only possible to determine what may be expected of youth as it develops into manhood, but also to note in retrospect from the achievements and activities of man's maturity the sources for the principles and ideals expressed. Gilbert Tennent is a typical illustration of the facts here set forth. From a careful analysis of his early training, experiences, and environment, one can well understand the position that he took towards certain problems that rose in connection with the religious development of the Middle Colonies. And visa versa, as one studies his activities during the years of his greatest influence on the spiritual life of the early settlers in America, he can find their source in his youth. Hence, it is essential for a clear understanding of his work and activities, to note his early experiences and the factors that contributed to his religious development.

1. PARENTAL BACKGROUND

A. Birth and dissenting parentage.

Gilbert Tennent was born in Ireland, in the County of Armagh, on the fifth day of October, 1703. He was the son of the Reverend William Tennent, an Episcopalian clergyman, and Mrs. Catharine Kennedy, the daughter of an Irish dissenter. He had three brothers, William, Charles, and John, and one sister Eleanor. (1) There is hardly any source material available on the first years of his life. Consequently, we must rely on mere casual statements and references for the knowledge that we possess of his early years and family background. However, the significance of these years is in no wise proportionate to the limited material at hand. We may find in them certain influences that shed considerable light on his later career.

Undoubtedly the most outstanding forces that affected his early life were his parents. They seem to have impressed upon him certain traits and principles that he adhered to throughout his entire ministry. Concerning them we have the following facts.

1. Memorandum Book kept by William Tennent Sr. Quoted from Alexander, Log College pp 248 & 49. This record gives the dates for the Tennent family as follows. "William Tennent Sr. was married on the 15th day of May, 1702, in the County of Down, in the north of Ireland. He was ordained a Deacon in the Episcopal Church of Ireland on the first day of July, 1704; and ordained Priest or Presbyter in the same, on the 22nd day of September, 1706. The dates of the birth of his children are, Gilbert Tennent born in the County of Armagh on the 5th of October, 1703, and baptized the following day. William was born in the County of Antrim on the 5th day of January 1705. John was born in the County of Antrim on the 12th of September, 1706, and was baptized the following day. Charles was born in the County of Down, on the 3rd day of May 1711. Eleanor was born in the County of Down, on the 27th of December 1708. Mr. W. Tennent arrived with his family in Philadelphia Sept. 1718. On the 22nd of November 1718 he was settled in the parish of East Chester, New York. And on the 3rd of May 1720, removed to the town of Bedford, New York."

William Tennent, Sr. was educated at the University of Edinburgh, graduating from there July 11, 1693.(1) His early training was thorough in the classic languages and divinity. This is evident by the satisfactory manner in which he passed the tests submitted to him by the Synod of Philadelphia, and the reputation that he later established as a teacher of the Log College. On May 15, 1702 he married Cathrine Kennedy, a daughter of Gilbert Kennedy who was affiliated with the Church of Scotland, and a pastor of the church at Dundonald, Ireland.(2)

Following his marriage he settled in the County of Armagh, residing there when Gilbert Tennent was born in 1703. On the first of July, 1704 he was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Down in the Established Church of Ireland. On the 22nd of September, 1706, he was ordained as a regular Priest.(3) He moved from the County of Armagh to Antrim in 1705, and later settled in the County of Down in 1711.(4) There seems to be some evidence for the fact that he served for a time as chaplain to an Irish nobleman. But being conscientiously scrupulous of conforming to the terms imposed on the clergy of the Kingdom, he was deprived of his living.(5) Hence he forsook the Church of Ireland and joined with the dissenters. It

1. Personal letter from the Secretary of Edinburgh University to G. H. Ingram. Journal, Presbyterian Historical Society. Vol. XIV, March 1930.
2. Book on the Kennedy family which is lost, but quoted by G. H. Ingram in same reference as 1.
3. Book on Kennedys, Ingram, Presb. Hist. Journal March 1930.
4. Mss. record by William Tennent, Sr. Alexander, Log College 248.
5. Assembly Magazine, March 1806, pp 99

was not long before he emigrated to America, where, according to the Assembly Magazine, "he was encouraged to hope for a greater liberty of conscience as well as the prospect of being employed in extending the Redeemer's kingdom in the New World."⁽¹⁾ His relations to Gilbert Kennedy undoubtedly had great influence on him in taking this course. The parallel career of the two men seems to substantiate this fact. Gilbert Kennedy, like Mr. Tennent had been a dissenter from the Church of Ireland; and he like Mr. Tennent had manifested his dissent by leaving his homeland for foreign shores. But instead of going to America, he had taken the course of the earliest English Puritans who emigrated because of their religious convictions, and went to Holland.⁽²⁾ An incidental but rather interesting fact to be noted in the relation of Gilbert Tennent to his grandfather, is that the former was named after the latter. The perpetuation of the name Gilbert became symbolic of the perpetuation of the principles of Mr. Kennedy

1. Ibid pp 99.

2. The following background for the Kennedy family is given in the book on its history. "John Kennedy, the sixth Earl of Casillis, was one of the three Scotch nobles appointed to act as lay assessors to the Westminster Assembly in 1643. He never however attended. His brother Colonel Gilbert Kennedy, who was with Cromwell at the battle of Marston Moor had two sons, who were Presbyterian ministers, Thomas and Gilbert. The youngest son of Colonel Gilbert Kennedy was ordained by the Presbyterian Church as a minister of Girvan, in Ayreshire, Scotland in 1651. He was ejected from the Church in 1662 for misconformity. He continued to preach in the glens by starlight where the children of the neighborhood were brought to him to be baptized. Finally he was compelled to flee from Scotland to Holland. From there he returned to Ireland in 1668, and settled in Dundonald near Belfast, where he died Feb. 6, 1668, and was buried in the aisle of the church. He had a son named Gilbert who was ordained minister in Tullylish in 1704, and a daughter Cathrine, who was married May 15, 1702 to a student of theology, named William Tennent." From the Book on the Kennedys pp 76.

down into the second generation.

B. Emigration to America.

William Tennent, Sr. arrived in America at the Port of Philadelphia during the first part of September 1718. On the 22nd of November of the same year he settled in East Chattam, New York, in the East Chester Parish.(1) On the 3rd of May 1720 he moved to the neighboring town of Bedford, where he received in salary forty pounds a year and a farm.(2) During his stay there, he preached also at Stamford in Connecticut. In the Spring of 1721, he paid a visit to Bensalem in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with a probability of settling there. But he stayed there for but a brief period of time, returning again to Bedford and Stamford.(3) There he continued his ministry until his removal to Neshaminy in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where he established the Log College. Immediately after his arrival in America he made application to the Synod of Philadelphia for membership in the Presbyterian Church. This was granted to him. The minutes of the Synod for September 17, 1718, state that after due consideration the committee was well satisfied with his credentials and with the material reasons which he offered concerning his dissenting from the Established Church of Ireland.(4)

The reasons given for dissent by Mr. William Tennent, Sr. in his application for admission to the Presbyterian Church are significant because of the explanation that they give of the principles

1. William Tennent, quoted by Alexander in Log College. pp 249.
2. G. H. Ingram. Journal Presb. Hist. Soc. Vol. XIV March 1930.
3. Charles W. Baird, History of the New Bedford Church. pp 46.
4. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia. pp 49.

of religion that he stood for. They are given as follows.

1. "Their government by Bishops, Arch-Bishops, Deacons, Arch-Deacons, Canons, Chapters, Chancellors, Vicars, are wholly anti-scriptural.
 2. Their discipline by surrogates, and Chancellors in courts ecclesiastic, are without foundation in the word of God.
 3. Their abuse of that supposed discipline by commutation.
 4. A Diocesan Bishop cannot be founded "juro divino" upon those Epistles to Timothy or Titus, nor anywhere else in the word of God, and so is of mere human invention.
 5. The usurped power of the Bishops at their yearly visitations acting all of themselves, without consent of the brethren.
 6. Pluralities of benefices.
- Lastly, the Churches conniving at the practice of Armenian doctrines inconsistent with the eternal purpose of God, and an encouragement of vice. Besides I could not be satisfied with their ceremonial way of worship. These and etc. have so affected my conscience, that I could no longer abide in a Church where the same are practiced." Signed by William Tennent. (1)

C. American Presbyterian sympathy with dissent.

From these reasons it is apparent that the basic causes for his dissent was dissatisfaction over the ecclesiastical machinery of the Church and the absence of vital spiritual life from within the Church. Consequently on the basis of conscience he withdrew from the Established Church of Ireland to join the Presbyterian Church in America. The fact that he was received by this latter body shows that it was in sympathy with the general spirit of dissent. In this same meeting of the Synod, there was a second indication of such agreement. A letter was sent by the Synod to the Ministers of London appealing for financial aid to the fund of the church that was set aside "for the evangelizing of these Colonies." (2)

This letter was addressed to "the much honored and very reverend dissenting ministers at London." These facts show the close

1. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia. pp 49-50.
2. Letter. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia. pp 52.

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relationship between the American Presbyterian Church and the dissenting element in England and Ireland. One may well raise the question, what would be its attitude if some of its own members would try to exercise this same principle in case such members would be dissatisfied with its polity and spirituality. This is identically what took place in the Schism of 1741. It was then that the influences of the spirit of dissent, that was practiced by William Tennent, Sr. and recognized by the Presbyterian Church, made itself manifest in the life of Gilbert Tennent. He was confronted with a situation where it became a matter of conscience with him to withdraw from what he interpreted to be a dead creedal formalism of the Church in order that he and his associates might propagate their personal principles of experimental Christianity. Hence we may see in the parental background of Gilbert Tennent the roots for dissent.

11. CONVERSION AND EARLY INFLUENCES.

A. English Persecutions of Dissenters.

This period in the life of Gilbert Tennent, which involves his departure from Ireland and his father's withdrawal from the Established Church to join the Presbyterians, had a vital bearing on his spiritual experiences. He was but thirteen or fourteen years of age when he left Ireland for America. But nevertheless it was at this period that he experienced within himself a spiritual awakening that determined his future life. To understand this it becomes necessary to note the historical environment in which he was brought up.

(1) Tennents, Victims of Acts of Suppression.

He was born and raised in a locality and time of intense religious conflict. The Church of England under Queen Anne was boldly and desperately seeking to destroy both the dissenting Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics. During the school days of William Tennent, Sr. the Established Church had tried with considerable success to invalidate all marriages performed by Presbyterian clergymen, claiming that this was contrary to the "Act of Conformity". But in 1704, at the time when the elder Tennent was embarking on his ministerial career, the Sacramental Test Act was passed, which had even more dire effects upon the Presbyterians. It was originally intended to "prevent further growth of Popery". (1) But in its final submission to the English Ministry, a new clause was added, so that when it was presented to the Irish Legislature in February 1704, it effected not only the Romanists but the Presbyterians as well. This clause stated that "all persons holding any office, civil or military, or receiving any pay or salary from the Crown, or having command or place of trust from the Sovereign, to take the sacrament of the Established Church within three months after every such appointment". (2) Reid estimates this Act to be a "flagrant injustice towards the Presbyterians of Ireland, who were not only deeply insulted and injured, but were cajoled and deceived throughout the whole affair". (3) The seriousness of the situation is understood as we note that the Act meant the exclusion of all Presbyterians

1. Reid History of Ireland. Vol. III pp 19.
2. " " " " " " pp 20.
3. " " " " " " pp 28.

from any public or political office. Even the bounties of the Presbyterian clergymen were threatened to be withdrawn. In addition to this despicable Act, the High Church party tried in every conceivable way to oppress the Presbyterians. In 1705 a resolution was adopted to close their seminaries. In the same year two other successive resolutions were passed to stamp the preaching and the teachings by persons "who have not taken the oath of abjuration" as opposed to the State; and that "offenders in such wicked practices should be punished and looked upon as enemies to her Majesty's government and the Prosperity of the Kingdom."⁽¹⁾ In 1711 the Queen removed Lord Wharton, the patron and protector of the Presbyterian Church, from the head of the Irish Government; and placed there instead the Duke of Ormond, a high Tory, who renewed the persecution of the dissenters. Under his regime "inferior departments fell entirely into the hands of Constantine Phipps, a violent church man, who made no one a magistrate or high sheriff who was not a thorough partisan of his intolerant policy."⁽²⁾

These continued persecutions naturally led the Presbyterians to despair. Consequently when the Duke of Shrewsbury replaced the Duke of Ormond as lord lieutenant over Ireland, October 27, 1713, the people presented him with a petition for relief. In this they expressed their discouragements, disappointments and their griefs, and "assured his Grace that melancholy apprehensions of these things have put several of us upon the thoughts of trans-

1. Journals of Irish Commons Vol. 3 pp 319 Reid-ibid pp 36.
Adopted June 1, 1705.
2. Reid, Hist. of Ireland 111 pp 79.

planting ourselves to America, that we may there in a wilderness enjoy by the blessing of God that ease and quiet to our consciences, persons, and families which is denied us in our native country."(1)

(2) Emigration and Conversion.

It was this very course that the Tennents pursued in their emigration to America in 1716. No relief whatsoever came in Ireland before the passage of the Toleration Act in 1719, and even this required the subscription to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England.(2) The Tennents constituted a vanguard of emigrations from Ireland to America that gradually increased to twelve thousand annually by the middle of the century. Many and varied must have been the emotions of young Gilbert Tennent as he beheld the injustice perpetrated against his father, compelling him to emigrate from Ireland. It is likely that the influences of these early years can hardly be estimated. At the time of his departure from Ireland he was old enough to see that his family were victims of religious intolerance. He understood that his father was persecuted because of his conscientious adherence to certain Christian principles that he deemed basic for vitality and truth in the Christian religion. In contrast to this pious and courageous attitude of his father, he had the occasion to see the religious formalism of the Established Church together with its selfish ambition for ecclesiastical and political dominance. No personal testimony is given by Gilbert Tennent as to the impression that this religious

1. Ibid pp 95 from Tisalls "Nature and Tendency of Popular Phrases" pp 10.

2. Webster, History of Presbyterian Church pp 97.

situation made upon his life. The extent of such influences in the life of an individual is always difficult to estimate. However, history has ample evidence to show that as youth, imbued with a sensitive religious and righteous instinct, is confronted with injustice and evil, it is led to certain determinations and decisions which determine its future course. The case of Abraham Lincoln in his early contact with the slave traffic of New Orleans is an illustration of this fact. Such was also the case with Gilbert Tennent. In the consciousness of the injustice imposed upon his family because of its religious convictions, and in the monotonous meditations of the long and the perilous sea voyage from the land of his homeland to an unknown land in the wilderness, he took the first step in the consecration of his life to God and the cause of vital Christianity. (1) Samuel Finley, one of his life associates, gives a more detailed account of this spiritual awakening during his early years.

He states, "He began to be seriously concerned for the salvation of his soul when he was about the age of fourteen, and continued for several years, being often in great agony of spirit, until it pleased God to give him the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." (2) Finley further shows how this spiritual ex-

perience gradually led to the dedication of his life to the Christian Ministry. "Having begun the study of Divinity in those days, while under the conviction that his spiritual state was bad, he durst not persist in it with any view to the Ministry; but betook himself to the study of Physic for the space of a year, before he was satisfied as to his interest in the divine favour." (3)

Hence we find in the early life of Gilbert Tennent the

1. Webster, History of Presbyterian Church. pp387.
2. Funeral Sermon for Gilbert Tennent by Samuel Finley.
3. Assembly Magazine May 1805. pp239.

first factors which contributed to his religious development. He received from his parents by example and training, a type of Christianity that consisted in "experience" rather than conformity to high church formalism. He lived in a national environment where such a vital religion was oppressed by an aggressive ecclesiasticism possessing very little spiritual life. He experienced through the course taken by his parents dissent from the Established Church, at the sacrifice of State, Church and home, that such experimental religion might be retained. Out of this early life came his conversion and his convictions pertaining to experimental Christianity. And here undoubtedly we may find the roots for his dissent in later life from a Church which he deemed antagonistic to his principles of religion.

B. The Log College.

A second factor in the early life of Gilbert Tennent was the Log College. If this institution had not existed it is doubtful if his public career would have extended beyond that of a zealous preacher. It was not so much the training and the direct inspiration of the school which made it such a factor in his life, but it was primarily the men that it trained who gave their whole hearted support to the great awakening and the cause of experimental religion. Without these men, it seems certain that the endeavors of the Tennents would have been in vain.

(1) Founded and Conducted by William Tennent, Sr.

The history of Log College is largely a continuation of the history of William Tennent, Sr. He was its founder, its only teacher, and it ceased with his death. The value of his work through this

institution to the Presbyterian Church can best be estimated from a statement by Archibald Alexander, who writes, "The benefit he conferred on the Church by his school can never be forgotten. The Presbyterian Church is probably not more indebted for her prosperity and for the evangelical spirit which has generally pervaded her body, to any individual, than to the elder Tennent."⁽¹⁾ The time of the origin of this school is uncertain, but evidences favor 1726, the time when William Tennent, Sr. became established as a pastor in Neshaminy, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.⁽²⁾ However, the training of the four sons of Tennent, Gilbert, William, John and Charles, had been taking place for several years under parental tutelage, since there were no available schools to send them to. The location of this first educational institution of the Presbyterians in America, is given by George Whitefield as being twenty miles from Trenton, ⁽³⁾ and twenty miles from Philadelphia.⁽⁴⁾ This intermediate location between Philadelphia and New Brunswick may be looked upon in a figurative way as indicative of the influence that it would exert upon both the New Brunswick and Philadelphia Presbyteries.⁽⁵⁾

1. Alexander, Log College. pp 31.
2. Ibid. pp 22; Turner, Hist. of Neshaminy Church. pp 12.
3. Whitefields Journal Nov. 22, 1739.
4. Ibid Nov. 10, 1739.
5. Turner. Hist. of Neshaminy Church. pp 18.

Mr. Turner gives a more detailed location of the school stating that "it is about a mile south of the present village of Hartsville on the main road to Philadelphia, eighteen miles north of the City. This is called the York road; because at that time, and for half a century and more afterwards, it was the principal route of travel between Philadelphia and New York. In 1751 Benjamin Franklin used to travel up and down this road in a chase superintending the mails.

(2) Aim to train men for the ministry.

The aim of the Log College and the need of the times, explain its great importance. "Many of the Clergy and members of the Presbyterian Church of this period were thought to be deficient in zeal and devotion to the progress of religion and the salvation of souls. They were correct in their creed and maintained most of the doctrines of the evangelical system of faith. But their piety had become somewhat cold and their efforts for the spiritual welfare of men were too formal and heartless. However, some of the ministry and laity greatly lamented the decay of vital godliness and sympathized with any proper means for promoting it. Among these was William Tennent, Sr.."(1) He sought to establish an institution which would train ministers who could proclaim the gospel of vital Christianity. "He well knew that a learned ministry was necessary to the sure foundation of the Church of Christ, especially in the new country, so peculiarly exposed to every invader, and where the enemy might so successfully sow tares among the wheat. In pursuance of this design he established an academy, and built a house, since known by the name of Log College".(2) This is in brief the situation and the incentive that prompted the establishment of this school.

For a description of this most unique educational institution, and for a characterization of its founder and sole faculty, historians have been able to do no more than to turn to the Journals of George Whitefield for their source material. In his Journal for

1. Turner, Hist. of Neshaminy Presb. Church. pp 13-14.

Alexander, Log College. pp 22.

2. Memoirs of William Tennent. Assembly Magazine. March 1806.

November 22, 1739, he gives the following description of the school.

"It happens very providentially that Mr. Tennent and his brethren are appointed to be a Presbytery by the Synod, so that they intend breeding up gracious youths, and sending them out into the Lord's Vineyard. The place wherein the young men study is now in contempt called the 'Log College'. It is a log house, about twenty feet long, and nearly as many broad; and to me it seemed to resemble the school of the Old Prophets. That their habitations were mean, and that they sought not great things for themselves is plain from the passage in Scripture, wherein we are told that each man took them a beam to build a house; and that at the feast of the sons of the Prophets, one of them put on the pot, whilst the others went to fetch some herbs out of the field. All that we can say of our Universities is that they are glorious without. From this despised place, seven or eight worthy ministers have lately been sent forth; more are almost ready to be sent; and a foundation is now being laid for the instruction of many others. The Devil will certainly rage against them; but the work, I am persuaded, is of God, and will not come to nought. Carnal ministers oppose them strongly; and, because people when awakened by Mr. Tennent or his brethren, see through them, and therefore leave their ministry, the poor gentlemen are loaded with contempt, and looked upon as persons who turn the world upside-down".(1)

This brief description of the Log College is of value because of the light that it throws on the nature of the school, and also because it informs us concerning its purpose, its type, and the reaction of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church towards it.

(3) Spiritual and Intellectual Ideals.

One more essential consideration must be noted if we are to fully appreciate the bearings that this institution had upon Gilbert Tennent. This is the character and the ability of William Tennent, Sr., its founder and sole faculty, as an educator. He was a man of great sincerity and firm convictions. George Whitefield gives his first impressions of him as he visited him upon his first arrival in Philadelphia.

"At my return home, I was much comforted by the coming of Mr. Tennent,

1. Whitefield's Journals Nov. 22, 1739. pp 350-51.

an old gray headed disciple and soldier of Jesus Christ. He keeps an Academy twenty miles from Philadelphia. He is a great friend of Mr. Erskine of Scotland, and, as far as I can find, both he and his sons are secretly despised by the generality of the Synod, as Mr. Erskine and his brethren are hated by the judicatories of Edinburgh, and as the Methodist preachers are by their brethren in England".(1)

Upon becoming more intimately acquainted with Mr. Tennent, Sr. he gives a further impression. "We went to old Mr. Tennent who entertained us like one of the ancient Patriarchs. His wife seemed to be like Elizebeth, and he like Zacharias; both, as far as I can find, walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord".(2)

However, William Tennent, Sr. had more to offer to his pupils than the inspiration of a vital and deep rooted spirituality. Mr. Elias Boudinot, who was a relative of the Tennent family,(3) and an intimate friend of William Tennent, states,

"He was well skilled in the latin language, and could speak and converse in it with as much facility, as his vernacular tongue. He was also a good proficient in the other learned languages, and well read in Divinity. He determined to set up a school for the instruction of youth, particularly of those designed for the gospel ministry as the best service he could render to God and his new adopted country, education being at a very low ebb".(4)

Following his admission to the Presbyterian Church "he addressed that venerable body in an elegant latin oration which added greatly to his celebrity, and increased the hopes of his friends as to the success of the institution that he founded".(5) The author of the Memoirs of Gilbert Tennent also contributes a statement concerning

1. Whitefield's Journal Nov. 10, 1739.
2. Whitefield's Journal Nov. 22, 1739. pp 351.
3. Family papers of Boudinot. Vol. 11. pp 1
4. Assembly Magazine March 1806, pp 99-100.
5. Memoirs of William Tennent, Jr. pp 14-15.

the intellectual attainments as well as his personal character. This writer states that he was eminent as a classic scholar. "His attainments in science are not so well known, but there is reason to believe they were not so great as his skill in language. His general character appears to have been that of a man of great integrity, simplicity, industry and piety".(1)

From these testimonies concerning William Tennent and his Log College, we may draw our conclusions as to his influences upon Gilbert Tennent and the alumni of his school. In the first place the training by the elder Tennent involved the cultivation of a deep rooted piety, and the conviction that true religion is based on experience rather than mere confession of faith or adherence to certain creeds. Together with this there was coupled a religious zeal that stirred the colonies to new spiritual life. Mr. Alexander states in this respect that "one advantage which they possess who were educated in the Log College was that the spirit of piety seems to have been nourished in that institution with assiduous care. All those, as far as we can learn, who proceeded from this school, were men of sound orthodoxy, evangelical spirit, glowing zeal, and in labors abundant".(2) "They had the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and without the advantages which many others enjoyed, they became burning and shining lights".(3) Gilbert Tennent was the first to be the recipient of this spiritual inspiration.

1. Memoir of Gilbert Tennent. Assembly Magazine May 1805.

2. Alexander Log College.

Gilbert Tennent was not trained in the building of Neshaminy. But since there was no other school in the Middle Colonies that he could attend, there seems to be no question but that he was trained by his father in classes conducted at Bensalem.

3. Webster Hist. pp 387; Alexander, Log College. pp 60.

Coupled with religious zeal and piety, Gilbert Tennent received a thorough training in the classic languages and theology. This was evident in his examination before the Presbytery when he sought to be ordained. Even though he never had the privilege of entering within the walls of any college or University, he showed intellectual proficiency equal to those who had attended such schools. This is shown by the fact that he received the honorary degree of Master of Arts from Yale in the fall of 1725.(1) This intellectual ability was recognized by his father in that he chose him to assist as a teacher in the Log College during the first year of its existence at Neshaminy.(2)

(4) Trained Co-Workers of Gilbert Tennent.

But the most direct and perhaps the greatest value of Log College to Gilbert Tennent is found in his relations to its graduates. He undoubtedly would have been helpless in achieving his goal with the Synod, and in the work of the Great Awakening, had he not had the support of a group of preachers that were of the same type and in direct accord with his views. Mr. William Tennent was directly responsible for the training of such men. Mr. Webster states in this connection that "he had the rare gift of attracting to him youth of worth and genius, imbuing them with the healthful spirit, and sending them forth sound in the faith, blameless in life, burning with zeal, and unsurpassed as instructive, impressive and successful preachers".(3) The high estimation in which these men are held, may be seen from the words of Mr. Murphy in his history of the Presbytery of the

1. Webster, History of Presbyterian Church. pp 387.
2. Alexander, Log College. pp 36.
3. Webster, History of Presbyterian Church. pp 367.

Log College. He states,

"It is absolutely startling to glance at the list of eminent ministers--who obtained their training for the ministry in this humble institution. There rises before us a galaxy of those who were without doubt, among the most famous in our history,---No one can help being surprised at this honored list of men of far more than ordinary eminence, who in the formative ages of our church filled the first place of usefulness, led in precious revival seasons, became theologians of the highest rank, thrilled the multitudes wherever they went with their eloquence, swept like flaming torches bearing the gospel over the land, as missionaries planted the gospel in every quarter, and left names which were them selves a power and which shall live while the Church herself is alive".(1)

These men constituted the party over which Gilbert Tennent was recognized as a leader, according to the words of Samuel Finley, one of its most illustrious members.(2) This group of Log College men constituted the New Brunswick Presbytery, which in reality was the New Side Party within the Presbyterian Church. This group included the most outstanding revival preachers. And it was this group that supported Gilbert Tennent in most all his overtures to the synod, and as we shall later see, followed him and Samuel Blair from the meeting of the synod of 1741 to form the new Synod of New York.

Thus we may find in William Tennent and his Log College, the soil in which were embedded the roots for the preaching and the activities of Gilbert Tennent. In our attempts to fathom the causes and reactions in the lives of men, our conclusions are prone to be but opinions based on the comparison of similarities in these two phases of human conduct. But in the case of Gilbert Tennent, his religious zeal, intellectual ability, faith in experimental Christianity and inseparable relations with his associates, definitely

1. Murphy, Presbytery of Log College. pp 78-79.
2. Samuel Finley, "A Successful Minister".

establishes the fact, that without the influences of William Tennent and the Log College, his course, together with the course of the entire Presbyterian Church would have been vastly different from what it is recorded on the pages of history today.

C. Theodore Frelinghuysen.

(1) First revivalist in Middle Colonies.

A third factor which greatly influenced the career of Gilbert Tennent was his relationship with Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen. The significance of this influence lies primarily in the fact that Frelinghuysen was the man who started the revival of religion in the Middle Colonies. George Whitefield, writing from New Brunswick, Nov. 20, 1739, states concerning him,

"Among others who came to hear the word were several ministers.--- One was a Dutch minister named Frelinghuysen, pastor of a congregation about four miles off New Brunswick; he is a worthy soldier of Jesus Christ, and was the beginner of the great work which I trust the Lord is carrying on in these parts. He has been strongly opposed by some persons,--but God had made him more than conqueror through his love".(1)

Frelinghuysen came to America through a request, extended by the Reverend Mr. Freeman of Long Island, 1719, of certain Dutch families residing in the middle portion of New Jersey. The spiritual life of these people was at a very low ebb. The morals of the communities were lax, and the people were more interested in the civil benefits derived from their church membership than in the spiritual blessings which it had to offer. "Horse racing, gambling, dissipation and rudeness of various kinds were common. The sanctuary was attended at the convenience of the people and religion consisted for the most part in the mere formal part of routine duty".(2)

1. Whitefield's Journals Nov. 20, 1739.

2. Demarest, Brief Biography of Frelinghuysen, with Sermons. pp 7.

(2) His two fold influence on Gilbert Tennent.

No sympathy or conciliation was shown by the Reverend Mr. Frelinghuysen upon his arrival in the midst of such depraved religious conditions. With the defiant attitude of "I would sooner die a thousand deaths than not preach the truth", (1) he preached like a John in the wilderness, calling the people to repentance and faith. With regard to his theology and preaching there are two important elements to be noted that had a vital bearing on the work and preaching of Gilbert Tennent. The first is his zeal for experimental religion as opposed to creedal formalism. And the second is his strong style of preaching and his fearless defense of the principles of the revival of religion against his opponants who accused him of disturbing the spiritual tranquility of the people.(2)

(a) Inspired concept of experimental religion and examination.

Frelinghuysen's belief in experimental religion is most clearly expressed in relation to participation in the Lord's supper and the sacrament of Baptism. Such an association of an experience of religion with the Sacraments is but a recapitulation of the basic question at issue in the entire previous history of the religious development in both the New England and Middle Colonies. This association was natural because it involved the problem of church membership. It raised the question as to whether a confession of faith according to a recognized creedal statement, or an experience of religion upon its confession should be the requisite for participation in the rights and privileges of the church. Baptism was looked upon by the colonial

1. Frelinghuysen's Sermons. pp 66.
2. "Complaints" against Frelinghuysen.

Puritans to be the key to church membership. And the Lord's Supper was considered to be the "Holy of Holiest" that the church had to offer. Since then, Baptism and the Lord's Supper constituted the essential elements of the church, they naturally became the points of focus around which the question of church membership became centered. This point became the dividing line between the two groups, called the "Old Side" and the "New Side" parties. The conservative or the old side theologians, who were largely the product of a hundred years of religious development in the New England Colonies, held that confession of faith and a moral life were all the requirements to be demanded of a church member. Frelinghuysen, together with the new side ministers of the Colonies demanded that it was not sufficient merely to confess ones faith and live a decent life, but that a Christian must also have a definite religious experience and that such an experience must be confessed publicly before the congregation.

In taking this stand, Frelinghuysen was not a radical who ignored the confessions of the Church. He states specifically that a Confession of Faith was required, quoting from the sixty first article of the Constitution of the Dutch Reformed Church which reads, "No one shall be admitted to the Supper of the Lord except he have made confession of the Reformed religion according to the custom of the churches with which he connects himself".(1) "But", he states further, "this is not sufficient for the Communicant himself, who must be a true believer, sorrowful on account of his sins, seek

1. Frelinghuysen, Sermons. pp 68.

salvation and forgiveness in Christ and aim to lead a holy life in order properly and profitably to observe the ordinance".(1) "Where things are conducted in the best manner, the members who present themselves for admittance are indeed examined some what respecting their knowledge of fundamental truths and their external deportment".(2) This conception of experimental religion was more than a mere ideal to him. It was a dogma that he expounded with great positiveness. "Remember also," he states, "that each member is bound to subject himself to the examination of the minister of Christ and thus give a reason for the faith and hope which are within him".(3) This examination was not limited to applicants for Communion alone, but it was applied also to parents who sought to have their children baptized. In his dedication of a series of Dutch sermons, he underscores the example of the Reverend Joh. Verschnir of Zeeryp, Holland, to whom he dedicates the volume, that "parents who present their children for Baptism should be examined". Then he adds concerning his own practices that "these and like duties, have here been faithfully performed by us in our ministry, and with much fruit and blessing, for which the Lord be praised".(4)

The reactions of the people to such an insistence on experimental religion was practically identical with the experience of Gilbert Tennent when he tried to enforce the same principles in the Presbyterian Church. The people of the Raritan Valley issued a

1. Ibid pp 69.
2. Ibid pp 65.
3. Ibid pp 68.
4. Frelinghuysen, Dedication of Sermons. pp 339.

"Complaint" against Frelinghuysen and denounced him severely. Certain ministers of the Presbyterian body, issued a "Protest" against Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Blair in the synod meeting at Philadelphia, June 1st, 1741.(1)

The people of the Raritan Valley opposed Frelinghuysen on the following grounds. They claimed that he overstepped the bounds of the Confessions of the Church. They insisted that it was not becoming to set a so-called holiness or propriety in opposition to the rules and the customs of the Church and its unity. They stated that it set all things in commotion under the pretense of reformation, and that it set the house of God on fire through the profession of zeal. "Rather than such a disruption", the opposition argued, "it was better to bear any inconveniences in meekness than for the sake of it to disturb the peace of the believers".(2) Regarding this opposition, Frelinghuysen, himself states,

"This, the examination of the people for their religious experience, was done amid much opposition and contradiction even from such as pretended to be great Rabbis, who branded these pastoral acts, having reference to a knowledge of the state of the flock as dangerous innovations, nay; even as new and false doctrine. Similarly have some Elymas; like ministers here done with respect to us, as well in their pulpits-proper, places for pouring forth their vials of fury as in their libellous writings, denominated, "Complaints".(3)

The time for this proclamation and defense of experimental religion was at the period when Gilbert Tennent was commencing his ministerial career, and continued parallel with his ministry both as to time and location. Frelinghuysen and Gilbert Tennent were not only contemporary pastors, but had their parishes in the same section of New Jersey. Hence a close relationship was possible between the

1. Records of Synod of Presbyterian Church. pp 155.
2. Complaint.
3. Frelinghuysen, Sermons. pp 340.

two men.

(b) Exemplified a forceful and positive style of preaching.

The second element that had a bearing on Gilbert Tennent was Frelinghuysen's style of preaching. He spoke with the courage, the force and the directness of an Old Testament Prophet. His preaching can be characterized in no better way than by quoting a few passages from his sermons and permitting these to speak for themselves.

His greatest pronouncement of judgment and appeal to repentance are expressed in his "Sermons to Repentance", occasioned by an earthquake that was felt throughout the colonies on the night of December seventh, 1737.(1) On the basis of Revelation 16:18 he appealed to the people, after a full exposition of the text in the following words,

"Come hither ye careless, at ease in sin, ye carnal and earthly minded.—Tremble ye cursers and swarers, reflect that you will not have a drop of cold water to cool your accursed tongues when you shall be in flames, and gnaw upon your tongues for pain. Be filled with terror, ye impure swine, adulterers, and whoremongers, and consider that without true repentance ye shall soon be with the impure devils; for I announce a fire hotter than that of Sodom and Gomorrah to all that burn in their vile lusts; not a place to set a foot upon for the dogs in the new Jerusalem into which there shall not enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they only who are written in the Lamb's book of life".(2) "Awake ye civil ones, who engage in your religious performances to be seen of men, formal and almost Christians, apers of the pious in their discourse, who wish to be considered as of the number of the pious; ye who creep among them; ye who have a form, but are strangers to the power of godliness. And be not deceived, God is not mocked, 'for whatsoever man soweth, that shall he also reap'".(3) Awake then ye sinners, men and women; he moved, cast down yourselves before the Lord, tremble before his dread majesty, tremble at his word. Upon such will the Lord look".(4)

1. Frelinghuysen, Int. to Sermons. pp 297.

2. Frelinghuysen, Sermons. pp 311 and 314.

3. Ibid. pp 314.

4. Ibid. pp 316.

Frelinghuysen preached the sermons, from which the above quotations are taken, under the great concern for the spiritual salvation of the people. Consequently it cannot be said that all his preachings were as strong as those. Besides trying to humiliate his hearers, he also knew how to direct the people to the mercy of God, and his righteousness and salvation as only found in Jesus Christ.⁽¹⁾ But it is evident from the above selections that Frelinghuysen was more interested in bringing the people prostrate before the judgment throne of God in repentance, than to ease their conscience and win their applause and approval by flowery terms and formal dialectics.

On the basis of these considerations of Frelinghuysen's zeal for experimental religion and his bold style of preaching, we may note his influence upon Gilbert Tennent. The intimacies which existed between these two leaders of revival in religion in their respective church bodies were due largely to the close proximity of their fields of labor. Frelinghuysen preached primarily to the Dutch settlers of the Raritan Valley, being located only six miles outside of New Brunswick. But his itinerations also brought him into Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and frequently into New Brunswick.

This constituted the identical field with the Tennents. Gilbert Tennent himself writes that the labours of Mr. Frelinghuysen in this territory had been much blessed, especially in New Brunswick. And when he came there about seven years after the coming of Frelinghuysen he states, "I had the pleasure of seeing much of the

1. Ibid-"The Way of God with his People."

fruits of his ministry; divers of his hearers with whom I had opportunity of conversing appeared to be converted persons, by their soundness in principle, Christian experience, and pious practice; and these persons declare that his ministrations were the means thereof."(1) The work of Frelinghuysen thus became an example for Gilbert Tennent as he commenced his ministry at New Brunswick. However the greatest influence came through the personal relationship between the two men. Through a personal correspondence, Frelinghuysen assisted the young novice in finding himself, and directed him upon the proper course in the ministry. That Gilbert Tennent recognized this two fold influence of Frelinghuysen is evident from his own words. He writes, "This-- the work of Frelinghuysen--together with a kind letter which he sent to me respecting the necessity of dividing the word aright and giving to every one his portion in due season, through the divine blessing excited me to greater earnestness in ministerial labours."(2)

(3) Encouraged Tennent during time of despair

This guidance and encouragement by Frelinghuysen was of great importance during this early stage of Tennent's ministry. When he took up his work at New Brunswick he did not meet with very great success at first, and it seems that he was affected with a mental and spiritual despair that culminated in a serious illness.(3)

This period constitutes the second great crisis in his life. (The

1. G.Tennent's letter to Mr. Prince. Aug. 24, 1744. Gillies, Historical Collections.
2. Ibid pp 424.
3. G.Tennent's letter, Gillies Historical Collection pp 424.

first being that of his conversion at the age of fourteen years.) But he emerged from this great trial with unshaken confidence, and ~~took~~ up the ministry again with great success. The experience was one of great mental anguish and spiritual struggle. He tried to preach to the people in such a way that he would appeal to their confidence. But his preachings seemed in vain. In despair he prayed that God might give to him one-half more year to live that he might redeem himself and his humble efforts before his God and Saviour. His own personal account of this experience illustrates vividly the emotions and the spiritual trial that he went through. It is recorded in a letter to Mr. Prince of Boston as follows,

"It pleased God to afflict me about that time with sickness, by which I had affecting views of eternity. 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 flags 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 among others pressed me sore, viz, that I had spent much time in conversing about trifles, which might have been spent in examining peoples' states toward 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 endeavour to promote his kingdom with all my might with all adventures. The petition God was pleased to grant manifold, and to enable me to keep my resolution in some measure.

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 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 many were awakened out of their security; and of those divers were to all appearance effectually converted; and some that I spoke plainly to were prejudiced. And here I would have it observed, that, as soon as an effectual door was opened, I found many adversaries, and my character was covered with unjust reproaches, which through divine goodness did not discourage me in my work. I did then preach much upon original sin, repentance, and the nature and the necessity of conversion, in a close examinatory and distinguishing way; labouring in the mean time to sound the trumpet of God's judgment and alarm the secure by the terrors of the Lord, as well as to affect them

with their 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".(1)

Thus it is evident that Frelinghuysen was a vital influence in the life of Gilbert Tennent in a very direct manner, and at a very critical period in his life. In the first place, he prepared the way in the Middle Colonies for the spiritual awakening that followed the preachings of Gilbert Tennent and his associates. In the second place, his proclamation of experimental Christianity with its consequent fruit of deep concern over religion by the people, substantiated in practice the earlier convictions of Gilbert Tennent, that experience, rather than confession, constituted the true sign of the Christian life. In the third place, Frelinghuysen showed Gilbert Tennent that the people could not be led to such an experience through a formal and popular style of preaching, but rather through an impassioned appeal to repentance. In the fourth place, Frelinghuysen was a personal factor and influence in the life of Tennent at the time of ^{his} second great spiritual experience. With the prayer on his lips, "Give me one half year more to live," he made the vow that he fulfilled in all his consequent ministry, namely, "to promote the Kingdom of God, with all might at all adventures."

D. Summary of Influences

Considerable space has thus been given to the early life and the factors contributing to the religious development of Gilbert
1. Tennent's letter, Gillies Historical Collection pp 424.

Tennent. This has been done in view of the fact that the background for his ministry, together with the religious status of the colonies, which will be dealt with in the following chapter, are essential if we are to understand his major work and activities. It is utterly impossible to explain his spiritual zeal and sincerity, his apparent disregard for the ecclesiastic order which he professed, and his denunciations of fellow ministers, without knowing his early training and religious experience and the various influences that effected his religious development. These factors may be summarized as follows:

1. His early home environment in Ireland, which introduced him in childhood to the principle of experimental religion, and gave to him a vision of people's dissent from formal and dead orthodoxy in defense of their vital convictions.
2. The Log College, or rather the school of his father, that gave to him his academic training, and a cohort of preachers of like mind and religious zeal, to support him in the work of religious revival, and in his relations to the Church.
3. Theodore Frelinghuysen, who guided him as he set out on an unchartered course in the ministry, to a greater appreciation and to the method of application of the religious principles that he had previously acquired.

The influences of these three factors may again be condensed in a two fold way, which in turn practically constitute the basic principles of his life; First, the experience of religion rather than the mere conformity to a confessional standard; Second, the

right of dissent, when such vital and experimental religion is renounced and opposed by the ecclesiastical body to which a person belongs. The effects of these influences became more and more clearly defined in his life as he continued in his ministry; and especially as he developed in his position as leader of the New Side party, and championed its cause in the Presbyterian Church.

CHAPTER III

THE TIMES AND TRENDS OF RELIGION IN HIS DAY.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION

GILBERT TENNENT

THE TIMES AND THE TREND OF RELIGION IN HIS DAY.

No great public leader can be understood apart from the time and the country in which he lived. The conditions of an age, together with the trends of the various phases of society constitute the background or the basis for the understanding of its leaders. Gilbert Tennent is no exception to this rule. It is a certain fact that his aims and activities rose out of the religious conditions round about him, and the theological tendencies that were prevalent in the American Colonies in his day. In our modern times, with our millions of church members, and an overabundance of churches and pastors, we are prone to look askance at the moral and religious laxity which characterized the life of the Middle Colonies during the first half of the eighteenth century. But as we look further into the living conditions of these early settlers, we check our hasty judgments, and discover that the religious decline was inevitable. This was primarily in consequence of the rapid immigrations to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and the general trend of religious thinking throughout all the Colonies. Out from this decline and trend of religion, Gilbert Tennent emerged as a champion of vital Christianity, who sought to revive again the fundamental doctrines of the Reformation.

1. THE IMMIGRATION PROBLEM OF THE MIDDLE COLONIES.

A. Relations to religious decline.

The first factor that must be considered in connection with the religious decline of this period is the rapid immigration from Europe. The transplanting of a people from one country to another without adequate means for ecclesiastical absorption in the new land, or sufficient pastoral care, naturally proves disastrous to the spiritual life of the people. Mr. R. E. Thompson writes in relation to the settlement of the Middle Colonies as follows,

"One of the effects of immigration upon great bodies of men is almost invariably their spiritual declension.---Human transplantation involves the sacrifice of those fibers of sacred local and personal associations upon which the life of the spirit depends so much. The old home, the traditional place of worship, the opinions of hereditary neighbors, the wholesome routine of religious usage, all are forgone; and no one knows how much he is dependent on these until he is parted with them".(1)

The last part of the seventeenth and the first part of the eighteenth centuries, was an era of beginnings in the Middle Colonies. It was a period of rapid immigration, scattered settlers and communities, and the absence of preachers and churches with the consequent decline of vital religion. To understand this fact we have only to observe the various religious groups that had their origin at that time.

B. The Dutch Reformed in New Jersey.

The first of these groups, by priority of settlement, was the Dutch Reformed. Those who had settled in East Jersey had largely come from the province of New York after the English occupation of that territory in 1664. When Frelinghuysen entered upon his labors

1. R. E. Thompson, Presbyterians, pp 28.

amongst these people in 1719, a biographer states that there was almost everything to dishearten, and few things to encourage.

"The population was sparse, the settlements miles apart, the country covered with wood, the roads but little more than bridle paths, and the rivers and streams unbridged".(1) This writer states further,

"The physical condition of the country was an apt emblem of the character of the people who inhabited it,--that great laxity of manners prevailed throughout his charge, naturally associated with neglect on the part of the rulers, and great tenacity with respect to their abstract church rights on the part of the members,--that while horse racing, gambling, dissipation, and rudeness of various kinds were common, the sanctuary was attended at convenience, and religion extensively consisted of the more formal pursuit of the routine duty".(2)

Frelinghuysen instilled considerable spiritual life into this spiritual decay, but one man was not capable of coping successfully with the tremendous problem of a church in the wilderness void of spiritual leaders. Mr. Bacon writes concerning the Dutch Church in 1730,-

"It continued to suffer in common with some other imported church systems, from depending on a transatlantic hierarchy for the succession of its ministers. The supply of imported ministers continued to be miserably inadequate to the need. In the first four decades of the century the number of its congregations more than doubled, rising to a total of sixty five in New York and New Jersey; and for these sixty five congregations there were nineteen ministers, almost all of them from Europe. This body of church, so inadequately manned, was still further limited in its activities by the continually contracting barrier of the Dutch language".(3)

C. The German and Irish in Pennsylvania.

Shifting the scene of our attentions from New Jersey to Pennsylvania, we behold one of the most rapid settlements in the history of American colonization. This territory was opened for settlement by William Penn shortly before his arrival in America

1. W. Demarest, Biographical sketch of Frelinghuysen, in his Sermons, pp 7.
2. Demarest, Frelinghuysen's Sermons, pp 7.
3. Bacon, Am. Christianity, pp 134.

in October 1682. Bancroft gives a vivid description of Philadelphia as it appeared a year later, and its rapid growth from the very beginning. "In August 1683, Philadelphia consisted of three or four little cottages. The conies were yet undisturbed in their hereditary burrows; the deer fearlessly bounded past blazed trees, that foreboded streets; the stranger who wandered from the bank was lost in the forest; and two years afterwards the place contained about six hundred houses and the school master and the printing press had begun".(1) In 1708 the major German immigration commenced.(2) This came from the Rhenish Palatinate, where Louis XIV had driven the Germans to despair and starvation. Helpless and homeless these noble vagabonds sought the refuge of Queen Anne, who had previously invited them to come to England. But in the first year of their migration, they came in such great numbers that the English people complained over their coming, and caused the House of Commons to petition the Queen to take notice of "the squandering away of great sums upon the Palatines, who were useless people, a mixture of all religions, and dangerous to the Constitution".(3) With no other place to go, they sought America. In June 1710, twenty-seven thousand of them arrived in New York and Pennsylvania.(4) But the liberality of the latter Province attracted the majority of them, so that they settled primarily in that place.(5)

1. Bancroft. Hist. of U.S. Vol. 1 pp 569.

In 1685 William Bradford established his printing press in Philadelphia, the first in the Middle Colonies. Am.Ch.H.S. Vol.XII, pp 229.

2. Jacobs, Lutherans. pp 113.

3. Holmes, American Annals, Vol. 11, pp 77.

4. Ibid. pp 77. Jacobs in "Lutherans" states 3000.

5. Dubb, History of German Reformed Church. pp 239.

This influx of Germans continued to increase, so that in the year of 1749, it was estimated "that twelve thousand German immigrants, arrived and continue to come in this number for several years".(1) It has been further estimated that by 1750, there were from seventy to eighty thousand Germans in Pennsylvania alone.(2)

But this German element constituted but a fraction of the total population of this rapidly growing Province. The original settlers were largely Quakers of New England, English, or Welsh extraction.(3) A few were from Germany. These continued to increase in number so that by 1700, it is estimated that in Pennsylvania and New Jersey there were fifty thousand or more. (4) From 1702 to 1726 there was a still greater increase. Besides the Quakers, there were extensive Irish immigrations during this same period. In 1729, there arrived in Pennsylvania six thousand two hundred and eighty persons. Of these, five thousand, six hundred and fifty three were from Ireland.(5) Four thousand five hundred of these settled at New Castle. Hodge estimates that by the middle of the century fifty thousand or more Irish emigrated to America.(6)

Thus the Germans, the English Quakers, and the Irish constituted the major racial groups that settled Pennsylvania. The number of their immigrations have been given, in order that we may understand the rapid growth of the Colony, and the resultant spiritual confusion that followed the first settlement. In less than

1. Proud, History of Pa. Vol. 2, pp 273. Jacobs, Lutherans, pp 234.
2. Dubb, German Reformed, pp 235-6.
3. Thomas, The Friends, pp 230.
4. Ibid. pp 236.
5. Holmes. American Annals, Vol.11, pp 123.
6. Hodge, Hist. of Presb. Church, pp 60.

fifty years this Colony had outstripped all the other Colonies, so that in the year of 1730 Governor Gordon estimated its population to be forty nine thousand people(1) .

D. Religious decline amongst Lutherans and Quakers.

Returning to our original proposition, that the transplanting of a people from one country to another without adequate means for ecclesiastical absorption in the new land or sufficient pastoral care, proves disastrous to the spiritual life of the people, we may clearly see its application to the province of Pennsylvania. The Germans came to America with practically no ministers, and without any official connection with the churches of the Fatherland. They were literally a flock in the wilderness without a shepherd, during the first part of the eighteenth century. The German Reformed Church did not come into existence before 1747, and then its thousands of the German Reformed faith were attended by only thirty-one ministers and elders.(2) The Lutheran Church laid a temporary foundation in 1748 through the work of H. M. Muhlenburg. But it was not permanently established before 1760.(3) The Moravian Church, which constituted the minority group among the Germans, made a humble beginning in 1734 and 1736, with the arrival of George Bönish and Spangenberg.(4) These late beginnings are evidences of the shortage of pastors and the very limited number of churches.

1. Bacon, American Church History, pp 142. Holmes, in American Annals estimates the population of Pa. in 1732 to be 30,000, as compared with New York, 65,000, Virginia, 60,000. Figures based on records of British Empire. Vol.11, pp 397.
2. Dubb, German Reformed, pp 281-82.
3. Jacobs, Lutherans, pp 260.
4. Hamilton, Moravians, pp 444.

"Few preachers or school teachers were found among them. Thousands lived without worship of any kind. There were heads of families who had never been baptized, and who brought up their children with no regard for the Christian faith.---Neither the Lutherans nor the Reformed in the few parishes which were organized, maintained a steady supply of pastors; and even if there had been no vacancies the number would have been wholly inadequate to the needs of the German population".(1) In 1731, it was estimated that Philadelphia, perhaps the best churched settlement in the Colony, contained twenty-four hundred houses, and twelve thousand souls. There were in the city, one church of England, two Quaker meeting houses, one Presbyterian, one independent and one Anabaptist Church.(2) Thus we note that there were six churches ministering to twelve thousand people. Jacobs gives a vivid picture of the religious conditions of the time. He states,

"In 1739, the representatives of the Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania, wrote to Dr. Ziegenhagen (of London) that--'There is not one German Lutheran preacher in the whole land, except Caspar Stoever, now sixty miles distant from Philadelphia.' The spiritual life was what might be expected on the frontier. Baron Von Reck writes of Philadelphia, ' It is an abode of all religions and sects, Lutherans, Reformed, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Catholics, Quakers, Dunkards, Menonites, Sabbatarians, Seventh Day Baptists, Separatists, Bökemists, Schwenkfeldians, Tachfelder, Wohlwütscher, Jews, heathen, etc.' (June 6, 1734) A new heathenism was threatened with the destitution of pastors and schools. The Governor of Pennsylvania wrote a few years^{later} in 1748--'The Germans imported with them all the religious whimsies of their country, and I believe have subdivided since their arrival here'."(3)

The religion of the Quakers fared little better than

1. Hamilton, Moravians, pp 444.
2. Holmes, American Annals, pp 129.
3. Jacobs, Lutherans, pp 191.

that of the Germans under the gruelling tests of the frontier life. Bacon states concerning them, that "the exceptional growth and prosperity of the Colony was attended with a vast unearned increment of wealth to the first settlers, and the maxim "Religion gave birth to wealth and was devoured by her own offspring" received one of the most striking illustrations in history. So speedily had the Society entered on its middle age; that the most violent of protests against formalism had begun to congeal into a precise and sometimes frivolous system of formalities".(1) One would naturally expect that since the Quakers were not dependent upon pastors and a central organization for its unity and strength, that it would prosper under the liberties granted to it by William Penn. But such was not the case. With the cessation of persecutions and the increase of the number of adherents had come a laxity in regard to the good order of the society and the declension in spiritual life".(2) Together with this laxity there was present the tendency that characterized the trend of religion in every religious denomination during this period of decline, namely to formalism instead of vital Christian experience. "The tendency was to run to form, rather than to abide in the power and life. There was a great increase in the amount of secular business transacted in the meetings for discipline, attracting more attention than the spiritual condition in the Church".(3) Formalism in ecclesiastical affairs constitutes the strange paradox in religion. It is instituted and defended on the basis of order and consistency in church polity and faith. But invariably it bears the fruit of

1. Bacon, American Christianity, pp 143.
2. Thomas, The Friends, pp 136.
3. Ibid, pp 237.

religious decline.

E. Relation of other faiths to Presbyterians.

It may seem like a considerable deviation from the subject of Gilbert Tennent to deal so extensively with the denominations of the Middle Colonies other than the Presbyterian. But it is justified on the basis that it is impossible to understand and explain the decline of religion in the Middle Colonies during the first part of the eighteenth century without due consideration for the general conditions that prevailed. One may say that the decline was due to the absence of vital religion. But that does not explain the cause for the absence. We must visualize the frontier life with its strange inter-mixture of foreign races, and its babel of varied faiths, segregated from the authoritative guidance of an established church; and practically void of the inspiration and personal contacts of religious leaders, if we are to fully understand the decline, and the problem that it presented to conscientious ministers who were deeply concerned over vital religion. Frontier life knows few barriers in human relations. Even though the Presbyterians had no direct ecclesiastical affiliations with the Germans and Quakers, and few with the Dutch Reformed, yet these other bodies illustrate the same factors and principles that deteriorated the religious life of the Presbyterian Church. Thus noting the common factors manifest in most all of the denominations, we arrive at the basic causes for decline. I have thus far avoided any reference to the Scotch Irish and the Presbyterian Church, for a two-fold reason. First to illustrate the fact that the religious

decline in the Middle Colonies was general, and that it was the inevitable result of what happens to the religious faith of a people, when such people are either severed from all ecclesiastical bonds as were the Germans, or succumb to the spirit of the frontier, as did the Quakers. Secondly and primarily, because the Scotch Irish immigrations to New Jersey and Pennsylvania are most pertinent to the work of religious revival as it was carried on by Gilbert Tennent and his associates.

F. The Presbyterians and Scotch Irish Immigrations.

Directing our attentions to this last mentioned groups of immigrants and the Presbyterian Church, we find that the situation was practically the same as amongst the other Faiths present in the Middle Colonies. The chief distinction being that the Presbyterians became organized in 1706 into a Presbytery through which they could deal with their problems. However, this was no panacea for all their religious ills. They had the same difficulties and problems to contend with as prevailed amongst the other denominations.

The earliest settlers of New Jersey came from New England. But in 1685 a new stream of immigration commenced. Because of the ruthless crimes of the Stuarts against the Scotch, the Scottish people began to emigrate to the new world. These were strict Presbyterians and were zealous for their religion. But at the opening of the eighteenth century, the incoming tide of colonizers again shifted; this time from the Scotch to the Irish. However, because of the previous influx of Scots into the Ulster Province of Ireland, this flow of immigration constituted a mixture of Scotch and Irish.

The cause for this exodus from Ireland has been dealt with in the previous chapter.

From the humble beginning this Scotch-Irish immigration rapidly increased, so that by 1728, three thousand and one hundred people are reported to have arrived in America from Ireland. In 1729 six thousand came across.(1) In September 1736, one thousand families sailed from Belfast. On the ninth of that same month "one hundred Presbyterians from Ireland arrived at Philadelphia and as many more soon after at New Castle. In fact the emigrations from Ireland were so great at this period, that the government of Ireland feared 'lest the whole of the country would be abandoned to the Baptists'."(2) Before the middle of the century it was estimated that twelve thousand arrived annually for several years.(3) In 1738, the population of New Jersey had increased to a total of 47,369, and by 1745 this number had risen to 61,403.(4) The general opinion of people seems to be that New Jersey was populated largely by Quakers, but these numbered but 6079.(5) The majority of the people were the Scotch Irish Presbyterians.

To care for the spiritual interests of these hordes of immigrants, the Presbytery of Philadelphia was organized in 1706 with seven ministers.(6) By 1718 this number of clergymen had increased to twenty-three ordained men and three probationers, "who agreed to unite their endeavours for propagating the gospel of

1. Webster, Presbyterian Church, pp 60.
2. Ibid, pp 120.
3. Proud, History of Pennsylvania, Vol.11, pp 273-4.
4. Holmes, American Annals, Vol.2, pp 148, 167.
5. Ibid, pp 167.
6. Letter to London. Minutes of Synod.

Christ in these dark parts of the world, viz, in the provinces of New York, the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, and the Territories of Maryland and Virginia".(1) By 1741 the number had swelled to forty-seven.(2) But this small group of ministers was wholly inadequate for the thousands of immigrants scattered over such an extensive territory. The perilous fate of these people is expressed in a letter drawn up by the Synod in 1718, and sent to the Presbytery of Dublin, Ireland. This states in part;

"Many poor souls are scattered to and fro in this wilderness, under awful danger of perishing for the lack of vision.--The paucity and poverty of these people render them utterly incapable to support the ministry among them, could they obtain it; and there lies, therefore, upon them a deplorable necessity of still continuing in the same circumstances of darkness that they are now in which may render both themselves and posterity miserable pagans, unless some methods can be found out for their speedy assistance in the maintaining of such ministers as we would direct them to, which is what we are altogether unable to compass. And yet in faithfulness to our Lord, and the souls of these poor people, we dare not but use our utmost essays to strength^{en} their hands in this day of small things, lest the spark, which is but newly kindled, may be utterly extinguished, which gives occasion for this address unto you for your charitable assistance in so momentous an affair".(3)

However, the shortage of ministers and the lack of necessary funds for their support were not the only difficulties that the Presbyterian Church had to contend with during this period. The infant organization was completely dependent upon the schools of New England, Ireland and Scotland for their ministers. Many of these, as we shall note in Gilbert Tennent's defense of Log College, were spiritually and morally out of accord with the church. Mr. Thompson writes in this connection as follows: "Even where it was

1. Letter of Synod to ministers of London. Minutes of Synod 1718.
2. Bacon, American Christianity, pp 147.
3. Letter of Synod to Rev. John Boupe, Dublin, to be communicated to the Presbytery there. Phila. Sept. 17, 1718. Minutes of Synod of Phila., pp 51.

possible to obtain preachers, these in many cases were not of a character to weigh heavily on the side of a stricter life. The number of cases in which ministers were arraigned before the Presbytery and the Synod for grave moral offences was very large in proportion; and in some cases the penalties imposed were very inadequate to the offense proven or confessed".(1)

A decline in the religion of the people was inevitable under such circumstances. However, noble and undaunted the faith of the immigrants may have been as they left their homeland, it could not endure without any ministration against the perils of the frontier life. The characterization of this decline will not be dealt with before the third section of this chapter; but may it be noted here that it is no wonder that a man like William Tennent, Sr., felt the challenge to establish a school for the training of pious men for the ministry. And when such men as Gilbert Tennent were trained specifically to meet the tremendous challenge of the day, it was most natural that they take up their tasks with the zeal of the Reformers and the boldness of the Prophets, that the souls of the people might be humbled in repentance and brought to the experience of an inner conviction.

G. Summary of nature and effects of immigration on religion.

On the basis of this general review of the conditions of the Middle Colonies during the last part of the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth, there are certain conclusions pertaining to religion that are clearly evident.

1. R. E. Thompson, *The Presbyterians*, pp 29.

1. They were populated by immigrants, who had been persecuted for religious and political reasons.
2. Their settlement was rapid, so that in a period of fifty years, they had been transformed from a wilderness to a region populated with forty-nine thousand people in Pennsylvania by 1730, and over forty-seven thousand in New Jersey by 1738.
3. The resulting religious condition was one of confusion, with no means for the caring of the spiritual life of the people.
4. The ultimate consequences were the weakening of the convictions that had endured persecutions in the old country, and a general decline in the religious life of all the people.

Such in brief constitutes the times in which Gilbert Tennent lived. Another aspect of the background for his activities is the trend of religion as had been manifest in the colonies previous to his coming to America, and as was evident in his day. This has a two-fold importance, because it explains the nature of the opposition with which Gilbert Tennent had to contend; and it contributes further to an explanation of the religious decline, which will be dealt with in the last section of this chapter.

II. THE RELIGIOUS TRENDS IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES.

A. Their relation to Gilbert Tennent.

Gilbert Tennent began his ministry a little over a century after the establishment of Puritanism in America. During this period great changes took place in its spirit, doctrines and polity. The Congregationalism of New England was primarily responsible for these changes, and was most affected by them. But Presbyterianism

in Connecticut and the Middle Colonies was also greatly modified. In brief this trend of Puritanism or of religion in general in the American colonies was from a religion of personal experience to one of confession or conformity to certain creeds of the Church. In daily life it was manifest in a change from a vital Christianity to one of indifference and lax morality.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to present a detailed account of the doctrines of Puritanism and a complete history of its modification down to the time of Gilbert Tennent. But the purpose here is to note the changes in Presbyterian Puritanism that effected the controversies at the time of the Great Awakening.

B. Puritanism's original stress of experience.

This change did not involve so much doctrines, as it did forms and ordinances of the Church. Foster states that, "To all appearances the ancient Calvinism had fully maintained itself down to the close of the (seventeenth) century,--and yet beneath the surface there was a wide spread departure and alienation from that system".(1) In the Salem Covenant of 1629, there was not a single doctrinal statement. It was simply a promise to walk in the way of the Lord. The Calvinistic doctrines were taken for granted. This is also true in connection with the Mayflower Compact. "But", states Walker, "if the doctrinal beliefs of the Church as a whole needed no general statement the case was far different with the individual applicants for church membership. They had to submit to a searching private examination by the Elders of the Church,

1. Foster, New England Theology, pp 23.

both as to their knowledge in the principles of religion, and their experience in the ways of Grace, and of their godly conversation amongst men. Once accepted by the Elders, the candidate had to render an account to the church, dwelling largely on experience, but not wholly omitting doctrine".(1) Upon this membership rested the right of franchise in Massachusetts and New Haven; and the right of baptism to those in the Church covenant in other parts.(2)

C. Objections to limitations.

But not many years passed in the Colonies before objections were raised to such requirements. Roger Williams left Salem in January, 1636. Mr. John Wheelwright and Mrs. Anne Hutchinson were banished from Massachusetts November 2, 1637. In 1645, the people outside of the covenantal relationship of the Church began to threaten that they would send a petition to England to overthrow the existing order if some change was not made in the requirements for church membership. The reason for this may be seen in the fact that in 1643, only 1708 persons out of a total population of 15,000 enjoyed the

1. Walker, Congregationalism, pp 106-7; Cotton, Way of the Churches, pp54.
2. Walker, Congregationalism, pp 160.

See Cotton's "Twelve fundamental articles of the Christian religion; the denial whereof--makes man a heretick". Tract published 1713. These tests were so severe that many could not meet them as noted in Lechford, "Plain dealing" pp 73.-"Again here is required such confessions and professions both in public and private, both of men and women, before they be admitted, that three parts of the people of the country remain out of the church".

The Covenant of Salem constituted but the brief agreement--"We covenant with the Lord and one with another; and do bynd ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveale Himself unto us in his blessed word of truth". Text from Walker pp 116.

The enlarged Covenant of 1636 was but an elaboration explaining the detailed conduct involved in such "walking with one another".

rights to citizenship in the colonies, because such rights involved membership in the church. In Plymouth, it was so difficult to obtain citizenship, even though the ecclesiastical test was not applied, that out of some three thousand inhabitants, only about two hundred and thirty had been enfranchised by 1643.(1) The situation thus became serious. To avoid the interference of England in the political and the ecclesiastical affairs of the colonies, the whole of New England united in an attempt to clear up the difficulty. Synods were called in 1646, and in June 1647, but no solution was produced to the existing problem. However on August 15, 1648, a synod met at Cambridge, and drew up the "Cambridge Platform", which satisfied the general court of the colonies and the majority of the people.

D. Cambridge Platform placed Creeds equal with experience

The basic issues of this controversy were the rights to Baptism, and the test for church membership. But in the final platform these were practically ignored, or when referred to in the preface to the Platform, they were defended. Hence the opponents to the rigid requirements for church membership were very little benefited. The significance of the Platform itself, was essentially that it involved the adoption of the Westminster Confession, which had recently been formulated by the English parliament "as their public confession of faith, for unity and harmony

1. Walker, Congregationalism. pp 165.

Walker states that in 1646, there was prepared a petition-"to the parliament, pretending that they being free born subjects of England, were denied the liberty of Subjects both in Church and commonwealth, themselves and their children debarred from the seals of the covenant except that they would submit to such a way of entrance and church covenant, and take such civil oath as would not stand with the oath of allegiance".

amongst the churches", (1) This involved no radical change in the doctrines of Puritanism, since it included but the theological principles previously held. In fact the Cambridge Platform has been evaluated as a monumental work because of its crystallization of the Puritan faith. But that which sets it forth as a distinct step in the trend of religion in the American Colonies is that it marks the first milestone in the transition from experimental religion to a religion based on a mere confessional standard. This was done through the adoption and the recognition of the Westminster Creed on the same basis with the rigid experimental tests for church membership.

The development of this change from the emphasis on Christian experience to an emphasis on the confession of faith was inevitable with the rise of the second generation of the Puritans. The modification became centered about the rights of children of the parents holding the covenant, to baptism and the privileges of the church. The original Puritan conception was that children born of church members were within the church and had the natural right to baptism, but that such children could not partake of the sacred rite of the Lord's Supper when they grew to maturity without the profession of a personal regeneration. (2) Hence in the second generation the complicated situation arose, whereby certain individuals were members of the church but could not partake of its privileges be-

1. Preface to Cambridge Platform. Walker Text.
2. Mather's, Church Government, pp 21.

"But notwithstanding their birthright, we conceive there is a necessity of their Personal profession of faith, and taking hold of the church-covenant when they come to yeares---for without this, it cannot so well be discerned, what fitness is in them for the Lord's Table".

cause of their failure to submit themselves to the test of religious experience. The preface to the Half Way Covenant states the problem as follows,

"The children of church members with us, though baptized in their infancy, yet when they come to age they are not received to the Lord's Supper, nor admitted to the fellowship of voting in admissions, elections, censures, til they come to profess their faith and repentance and to lay hold of the covenant of their parents before the church; and yet their being not cast out of the church, nor from the covenant there of their children as well as themselves being within the covenant, they may be partakers of the first seal of the covenant".(1)

The alteration of this situation involved the fear that if the succeeding generations of the church were not required to profess their faith and spiritual regeneration, that the church would soon decline.(2) Still some action was necessitated defining the position of these people who were church members, and still not permitted to participate in the major benefits and rights of the church.

E. Emphasis of Creeds in Half-Way Covenant.

The answer to this problem in Massachusetts was the Half-Way Covenant, which was a compromise between permitting children of church members who did not profess themselves to be regenerate, to full participation of the privileges of the church and the denial of such rights. This was an agreement drawn up by representatives of the Massachusetts' churches in Boston, in March 1662. It was a half-way agreement which recognized that the children born of parents who were within the covenant of the church, were members of the church, and were entitled to transmit their church membership and right to Baptism to their offspring. But because of their

1. Preface to Half-Way Covenant.
2. Hooker, Survey of the Sum of Church Discipline. Preface to H.W.Covenant.

unregenerate nature they could not become partakers of the Lord's Supper, that is, to enter into full communion of the church unless they made confession of their faith and religious experience. This gave standing in the church for the class of moral but not regenerate people who were kept under the influence of the obligations and the discipline of the church, and yet were not required to have an intelligent comprehension of religious truth and the experience of such convictions.(1)

This Half-Way Covenant, in accord with its name constituted a distinct step in the trend of Calvinistic Puritanism from its emphasis on religious experience to less rigid qualifications for church members. It was a product of gradual development, and was no part of the plan of the founders of New England at their coming.(2) It was intended as a solution for the blighting influences that had reduced the number of conversions greatly and was beginning to deplete the church members; but as a remedy it had no curative effects.(3) The momentum of change that had been inaugurated by its inception continued on to greater deviations from the original concepts of

1. Results of Synod. of 1662. Walker text, pp 249.

The following propositions are mentioned to illustrate this fact.

Prop. 3. The infant-seed of confederate visible believers, (are subject to baptism) and are members of the same church with the parents, and when grown up are personally under the watch, discipline and government of that church.

Prop. 4. These adult persons are not therefore to be admitted to full communion merely because they are, and continue members without such further qualifications as the word of God requireth there-unto.

Prop. 5. Church members who are admitted in minority--and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, their children shall be baptized.

2. Walker, Congregationalism, pp 250.

3. Foster, New England Theology, pp 31 & 35.

colonial Puritanism. In Connecticut, where no solution had been worked out, a petition was presented to the General Court at its session in October, 1664. This encouraged the court to recommend that all children be admitted to the rights of Baptism and entrance into the church. It did so in the following words,

"This Court do comment it to the ministers and the churches in the Colony to consider whether it be not their duty to entertain all persons, who are of honest and godly conversation, having a competency of knowledge in the principles of religion, and shall desire to join with them in church fellowship, by an explicit covenant, and that they have their children baptized, and that all the children of the church be accepted and accounted real members of the church, and that the church exercise a due Christian care and watch over them". (1)

However, very little heed was given to the appeal. After two attempts in 1667 and 1669 to convene the churches for the purpose of devising a solution to the problem, the General Court could do no more than appeal for harmony amongst the churches until some settlement could be made. The two opinions, for and against, the limitation of church membership to those "owning the covenant", continued parallel to the end of the century, with the liberals becoming predominant. The emphasis upon the experience of religion as a requisite for church membership gradually gave way to the act of Baptism. "The rite, which at first was but a symbol of membership, became the important thing". (2) Furthermore, laxity became prevalent in determining those who had a right to such Baptism, so that Cotton Mather wrote that "tis well known there is not one person in all the country free from a scandalous and notorious disqualifying ignorance and impiety, but what may repair to

1. Connecticut Records, Oct. 13, 1664. Walker, pp 272.
2. Walker, Congregationalism, pp 278.

some hundred ministers in these colonies and be baptized".(1)

F. Stoddard's liberal views.

The next step was natural and inevitable. After the barriers had been broken down as to baptism and church membership, admission to the Lord's Supper was granted to regenerate and unregenerate alike. The chief exponent of this view was Solomon Stoddard, (1643-1729) the grand-father of Jonathan Edwards, and pastor of North Hampton from 1669 until his death in 1729. He opposed the principle of the "Covenant" as a requisite for church membership, and went so far as to say that individuals in a "natural condition" could and ought to come to the Lord's Supper. He defended his position by stating that all "ordinances are for the saving good that they are to be administered unto. The Lord's Supper is according to institution to be applied to visible saints, though unconverted, therefore it is for their saving good, and consequently for their conversion".

(2) Foster comments on this view by stating that "he probably intended to deny that the sacraments had any personal application as seals of forgiveness to the believing recipient, and to limit their sealing efficacy to the covenant in general, that is to make them mere monuments—a view far from the Scriptures, the confessions, and the consensus of teaching in New England at the time. Thus the main thing about them was the affecting representation they made; their efficiency was that of a sermon, or a prayer, and hence they should be attended by the unregenerate, as these should be".(3)

1. Cotton Mather, Ratio Discipline. Walker, pp 279.

2. Stoddard, The Doctrine of Instituted Churches, pp 21 & 25.

3. Foster, New England Theology, pp 39.

In connection with the sacraments, Stoddard held a view pertaining to Christian ministers that became one of the points of contention in the Great Awakening. He stated,

"If a man do not know himself to be unregenerate, yet it is lawful for him to minister baptism and the Lord's Supper. The blessing of this ordinance doth not depend upon the piety of him that doth administer the ordinances of God". (1)

Such views are indicative of the radical departures from the religious principles of the first New England Puritans. Three steps are evident in the change that took place in a period of fifty years. The original position emphasized the religious experience of the individual as the real element in the Christian life, and the requisite to church membership and "owning the covenant". The first position of deviation, implied in the Cambridge Platform introduced a confessional standard together with that of experience. The next position expressed through the Half-Way Covenant, shifted the emphasis from both the confession of faith and experience to the Sacrament of Baptism as the key to the covenant. The third position in this development, as expressed by Solomon Stoddard, minimized both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and opened the way for a universal church membership, with no particular requisites or demands for admission. This even recognized the validity of the ministrations of unregenerate ministers.

G. Religious decline and Reforming Synod of 1679.

Whatever attitude one takes towards this trend in religion, whether critical or favorable, one thing is evident, and that is that it was followed by a great religious decline that led to the calling

I. Stoddard, Sermon of the year 1707, pp 14.

of the Reforming Council of 1679. So serious had the religious conditions of the New England Colonies become, that names of leaders of divergent groups, as Increase Mather and Solomon Stoddard, are found amongst the signatures to the petition sent to the General Court of Massachusetts on May 28, 1679. This request asked that a Synod be called for the purpose of devising some means of reform. (1)

Such a Reforming Synod met in Boston, September 10, 1679, and drew up statements both as to the religious decay and proposed remedies. The report of the synod described the prevailing conditions "as great and visible decay of Godliness amongst many professors in the churches". In thirteen propositions it goes into details as to what constituted this decline. In the category of evils are listed, pride, profanity, Sabbath breaking, inordinate passions, intemperance, untruthfulness, inordinate affections for the world, and public opposition to reformation. In the proposed remedies, it recommended that the living generations return to the faith and the order of the Gospel expressed in the platform of discipline. The council must have been out of sympathy with the liberalizing tendencies that had crept into the churches. Because in the third article it makes the following recommendation, "It is requisite that persons be not admitted unto communion in the Lord's Supper without making a personal and public profession of their faith and repentance, either orally or some other way, so as shall be to the just satisfaction of the church". The eighth article states that

1. Reforming Council 1679. Walker Text.

"solemn and explicit renewal of the covenant is a scriptural expedient for reformation".(1)

Under the guidance of Increase Mather an attempt was made to return to the first principles of Puritanism in New England. However, to illustrate the impossibility of a complete reversion, one has but to turn to the sixty-five page booklet drawn up at the second session of the synod, which met May 12, 1680. This confession was a duplicate of the Savoy Confession, the creed of the Congregational Church of England.(2) This had been adopted October 12, 1658 in London. The entire preface constitutes an apology for the validity and the necessity of a confession of faith. It clearly indicates that the leaders of the church had come to the realization that if the efficacy and the integrity of the church was to be maintained together with the growth of the colonies and the peculiar position of the young people, they could not solely rely on the religious experience of its members, but also had to have a confessional standard of faith. On this creedal statement, together with suggestions for reform, the religious leaders of the second generation sought to reinstate the Puritanic ideals of the original colonists. But their failure to do so is clearly visible in the history of the succeeding years.

The Reforming Synod of 1679-80 seemed to make very little impression on the religious life of the people. At the opening of the eighteenth century signs of continued spiritual decline were evident. Walker states that "if the second generation of New Eng-

1. Text. Reforming Synod.
2. Preface to Confession of 1680.

land soil had shown a decided declension from the fervent zeal of the founders, the third generation was even less moved by the early Ideals".(1) A group of outstanding preachers consisting of John Leveritt, William Brattle, Benjamin Coleman, and strange enough Solomon Stoddard, championed a still greater deviation from the first Puritan principles. It must not be thought that religious experience had been completely dropped as a requisite for baptism and church membership."It was still almost universally prevalent". But it was looked upon as a burden and the experienced had lost their original emotional fire.(2) The liberals of Boston thus sought on the basis of this condition to propose new principles which were completely out of accord with the older beliefs. These principles are summarized by Mather as follows:

1. Churches are not to enquire into the regeneration of those whom they admit into their communion.
2. Admission to sacraments is to be left wholly to the prudence and conscience of the minister.
3. The explicit covenanting with God and with the Church is needless.
4. Persons not qualified for communion in special ordinances shall elect pastors of churches.
5. All professed Christians have a right to Baptism.
6. Brethren are to have no voice in ecclesiastical Councils.
7. The essence of a "Minister's Call" is not in the election of the people, but in the ceremony of imposing hands.
8. Persons may be established in the pastoral office without the approbation of neighboring churches or elders.(3)

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1. Walker, Congregationalism, pp 465.
2. Ibid, pp 473.
3. Mather, Order of Gospel, pp 8, See also Stoddard "Doctrine of Instituted Church".

H. Saybrook Platform of 1708.

In Massachusetts an attempt was made to check the rapidly increasing dominance of these principles through the "Proposals of 1705". (1) But these were defeated because of the antagonism of the Massachusetts' legislature. In Connecticut the "Saybrook Platform" which included the Savoy Confession, (2) and the Presbyterian form of government was drawn up September 9, 1708, and later adopted as a means for checking the liberalizing tendencies of the time.

I. Creedalism and religious decline.

But the rapid departure of religion from its original state in the colonies seemed beyond control. "The spiritual dearth increased, revivals were uncommon, immorality grew apace and the state of religion went lower and lower. Theological modifications naturally entered with lax practice and the Arminian writings of Tillotson, Whitby, Taylor and Clarke, and subsequently the Socinian treatises of Emlyn and others were read and had a large influence.--- The impression was abroad that many, both in the ministry and the Churches were in greater or less sympathy with this style of thought". (3) The strange part of this trend and tendency in religion was that it pursued its onward course despite the periodic adoptions of orthodox statements of faith. But such paradoxes are frequent in the religious history of man. When Christianity shifts its emphasis from experience to creeds without carrying over its vitality, it loses its power, and spiritual decline is inevitable.

1. Proposals of 1705. Walker Text, pp 486.
2. Saybrook meeting and Articles, pp 502.
3. Foster, New England Theology, pp 42.

Trumbull gives a clear summary of this principle in its application to the colonies.

"The first settlers of Connecticut and New England,---formed churches, strict in doctrine, in discipline and in practice. Great pains were taken by them to govern and educate their children religiously that they might indeed be a generation of the Lord. They were sound in faith, eminent for experimental religion and of lives of strict and universal morality,---But as the good people who planted the country died, and the new generation came on, there was a sensible decline as to the life and the power of godliness. The generations which succeeded were not in general so eminent and distinguished in their zeal and strictness of morals, as their fathers. The third and fourth generations became still more generally inattentive to the spiritual concerns and manifested a greater declension from the purity and zeal of their ancestors. Though the preaching of the Gospel was not altogether without success and though there was a tolerable peace and order in the churches, yet there was to generally a decay as to the life and power of godliness. There was a general ease and security in sin".(1)

That Trumbull recognizes a correlation between this changed spiritual status of the people and the change in their religious principles and practices is clearly seen from his further statement,

"It does not appear that the ministers in general at that time made any particular inquiry of those whom they admitted to communion, with respect to their internal feelings and exercise. The Stoddardean opinion generally prevailed at that period, that unregenerated men could consistently covenant with God, and when moral in their lives, had a right to sealing Ordinances".(2)

J. Relation of trend in New England to Middle Colonies.

The connection between these religious tendencies in New England and the Middle Colonies is found in the immigration of the New England Puritans to East Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

Hodge states that though New England was the home of the Puritans, they did not confine themselves to that region of the country. "With the adventurous spirit that has always been one of their leading

1. Trumbulls, History of Connecticut, Vol.11, pp 135.
2. Ibid, Vol.11, pp 143.

characteristics, they extended at an early period their settlements in various directions".(1) The significant feature of these settlements was that they took place at the time when the New Englanders were active in the religious alterations noted above. "In East Jersey, these settlements were numerous and important". In 1667 or 68, about thirty Presbyterian families from Bradford, Connecticut, settled in Newark, New Jersey. In 1715, the church established there joined with the Presbytery at Philadelphia. The township of Woodbridge, near Philadelphia was settled principally by emigrants from New England. Fairfield on the Jersey side of the Delaware was settled in 1690 by people from Connecticut. Cape May was a Puritan settlement.

(2) In addition to this, New England background for the Presbyterian Church of the first half of the eighteenth century; many of its ministers were trained in New England schools. Hence, it is natural to presume that the Presbyterianism of the Middle Colonies would be affected by the same tendencies as was Puritanism of New England. The evidences for this fact lies in the comparison of the arguments of the Old Side parties of both the New England and the Middle Colonies against the revivalists who tried to reinstate the tenets of the original Puritan ideals.(3)

When Gilbert Tennent commenced his ministry at New Brunswick, the Presbyterianism of the Middle Colonies was practically identical with the Puritanism of New England with respect to the

1. Hodge, History of Presbyterian Church, Vol.1, pp 35.
2. Ibid, pp 35-38.
3. The report of the Consociation of Churches in New England that opposed the Revival and the Protest to the Synod of Philadelphia, 1741 shows this.

modification of the basic principle of experimental religion. The proof for this fact will be seen in the relations of Gilbert Tennent and his associates to the Presbyterian Church. This involved the fundamental distinctions between the original and the modified forms of Presbyterian Puritanism. The discussion of this point will not be introduced in this place, but will be considered in the chapter dealing with the relationship of Tennent to the Church. However, may it be noted here that the challenge conceived by Gilbert Tennent to restore again this first Puritan principle of experimental religion, came out of the universal decline of religion and the decay of morals in the existing society, with the Church utterly inadequate to stem the downward trend.

III. THE UNIVERSAL RELIGIOUS DECLINE.

The universality and the nature of the religious decline in the American colonies are clearly testified to by the ministers of both the New England and the Middle Colonies. Jonathan Dickenson, one of the most respected leaders in the Presbyterian Church wrote concerning the conditions in Newark and Elizabethtown, New Jersey, previous to 1739, that "In these towns religion was in a very low state; professors were generally lifeless and the body of the people careless, carnal and secure".(1) In Freehold, New Jersey, a center for the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, the conditions were equally deplorable. William Tennent, Jr., states that the means of grace dispensed there "were too much like a miscarry womb and dry breasts, so that the major part of the congregation could not be said to have so

1. Gillies, Historical Collections, pp 339.

much as a name to live".(1) He complains further that family prayers were generally unpracticed. The people were so ignorant concerning the doctrines of the new birth that even when it was explained and pressed upon them as necessary to salvation they made game of it, and looked upon it as a new and false doctrine. And then he adds that their practice was as bad as their principle, namely loose and profane.(2)

D. New England

To understand the universality of this religious decay, both as to doctrine and life, one has but to compare the situations of the Middle and the New England Colonies. Such a comparison reveals not only the similarity in the manifestation of the religious decline in the life of the people; but primarily that it was attributed to the common cause, namely the deviation from the principle of experimental religion. This change was evident even though the Ministry remained true to the orthodox confessions of the churches. The Reverend Mr. Thomas Prince of Boston expresses this fact in his account of the religious situation there from 1721 to 1740. He states that the "lamentable defect of piety" in Boston seemed to be especially prevalent amongst the young people. This he attributed, especially to the "deplorable decay of family religion" as the general source of all other decays. To check these prevalent tendencies the ministers of Boston agreed to give special sermons and lectures in their churches. But even though these preachings were accompanied

1. Prince, Church History Vol. 11 pp 299

2. Ibid.

by the seemingly divine interventions in the form of the scourge of small pox in 1721 and 1729, and an earthquake in 1727, their effects "were like the morning cloud and early dew which quickly passed away". A spiritual slumber continued to seize the generality of the people, and the city remained "unawaked, ungrateful and unreformed". Even though days of prayers and fastings were set aside, the religious declension became so prevalent in principle and practice, that "the ministers were wont to express themselves greatly discouraged".(1)

The direct relation of this decay to the absence of experimental religion is clearly stated by the Reverend Mr. Crocker of Taunton, Connecticut. He served a congregation that had been awakened through the preachings of Gilbert Tennent. He writes,

"The state of religion among them before the happy revival, appeared to be very dark and awful. The church was but small considering the number of inhabitants; and deadness, dullness, formality, security, etc., too awfully abounded among them.--In a word, it is to be feared that there was but little of the life and power of godliness among them, and irreligion and imorality of one kind and another appeared awfully to increase. Indeed vital and experimental godliness seemed to be almost banished from both old and young.--As to doctrines, perhaps it did not so openly appear what were the religious principles of many of them in the time of their security.--For persons may profess to believe and esteem the self denying doctrines taught us in the Gospel of Christ; and when they find their natural unbelief of and against them; they will find their carnal hearts rising up against and cavilling at them if the grace of God prevent not. Many may be able to bear with those doctrines of the Gospel in the theory, who cannot endure the power of them, who cannot endure to see them exemplified in practice, as is too evident in this day. But indeed other doctrines prevailed; especially exceedingly agreeable to the natural blindness, pride and haughtiness of human nature in this its lapsed and depraved estate; doctrines in their nature and tendency contrary to the tenor and the spirit of the Gospel, and destructive to the souls of men.

1. Prince, Church History Vol. 11 pp 375

Thus had this people degenerated from the primitive piety of their ancestors. Thus had they almost sunk to the very dregs of formality, irreligion etc., and seemed, according to human views, to be almost ripe for the signal execution of divine vengeance upon them."(1)

B. The Middle Colonies

The significance of the above quotation is that it gives a clear illustration of how the religious decline was looked upon as a natural consequence of adherence to an orthodox confessional standard without the experience of the divine relationship which it represents. That this situation was identical with that of the Middle Colonies is evident from the account of Samuel Blair, in Londonderry, Pennsylvania. His statement of the religious decline in that place is a representative description of the general religious status throughout the Middle Colonies during this period when Gilbert Tennent championed the cause of Experimental religion. Mr. Blair's account is given as follows;

"I doubt not then, but there were sincerely religious people up and down; and there were, I believe, a considerable number in the several congregations pretty exact, according to their education in the observance of the external forms of religion, not only as to attendance upon the public Ordinances on the Sabbaths, but also as to the practice of family worship, and perhaps sacred prayer too; but with these things the most part seemed to all appearance to rest contented; and to satisfy their consciences just with a dead formality of religion.--A very lamentable ignorance of the main essentials of true practical religion, and the doctrines nextly relating thereunto very generally prevailed. The nature and the necessity of the New Birth was but little known or thought of. The necessity of a conviction of sin and misery, by the Holy Spirit opening and applying the law to conscience, in order to a saving closure with Christ, was hardly known at all to the most.--Heart distressing sight of the souls danger, and fear of the divine wrath was generally looked upon to be a great temptation that had befallen those persons. The common names for such soul-concern were, melancholy, trouble of mind, or despair.--There was scarcely any suspicion at all, in general, of any danger of depending upon

1. Gillies Historical Collection pp 373.
Prince, Christian Church pp 323, 325.

the self-righteousness, and not upon the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation.--The necessity of being first in Christ by a vital union, and in a justified state before our religious services can be well pleasing and acceptable to God was very little understood or thought of; but the common notion seemed to be, that if people were aiming to be in a way of duty as well as they could, as they imagined, there was no reason to be much afraid.

According to these principles, and the ignorance of some of the most soul concerning truths of the Gospel, the people were very generally through the land careless at heart, and stupidly indifferent about the great concerns of Eternity. There was very little appearance of any hearty engagedness in religion; and indeed the wise for the most part were in a great degree asleep with the foolish. 'Twas sad to see with what careless behaviour the public Ordinances were attended, and how people were given to unsuitable wordly discourse on the Lord's Holy Day. In public companies, especially at weddings, a vain and frothy lightness was apparent in the deportment of many professors; and in some places very extravagant follies, as horse-racing, fiddling and dancing, pretty much obtained on those occasions.

Thus religion lay as it were dying, and ready to expire its last breath of life in this part of the visible Church".(1)

C. Its relation to Gilbert Tennent.

The times and the trend of religion with their consequent decline, thus constitute the background for an interpretation and understanding of the relations of Gilbert Tennent to the Presbyterian Church in particular, and the American colonies in general. They also aid in explaining his indefatigable and passionate zeal for evangelism against the majority of the ministers in his denomination. The immigration of the second quarter of the eighteenth century, tells the story of confusion and diffusion of the conglomerate racial and religious mixtures that inhabited the Middle Colonies. Separated from the bonds of social conventions and ecclesiastical ministrations, these settlers turned their attentions

1. Samuel Blair, Prince's Christian History Vol. 11 pp 243-44.

to the soil in the spirit of the pioneers. Handicapped by either the absence or the limitations of preachers to provide the spiritual manna necessary for spiritual life in the adopted wilderness, they soon lost their Christian vitality and sank to a coma of religious indifference and moral decay. Schools were practically unknown. Mass revivals of religion were practically unheard of. The religious situation became critical and precarious. Consecrated believers scanned the horizon for divine intervention and aid. The only two sources to which they could look were the mother Churches and the Churches of New England. As to the former, they were either indifferent or helpless to offer any great assistance. As to the latter, they were struggling with the same difficult religious conditions.

In fact the religious decline that manifested itself in practically the first generation of the Middle Colonies, was but a recapitulation of the downward trend of religion in the New England Colonies that had extended over a period of a hundred years. This trend, as has been shown, led from a major emphasis on the experience of religion, as the prime requisite for true Christianity and admission to the benefits and sacrament of the Church, to the prevalent opinion that an apparent recognition of the confessions adopted by the Church as its creedal standard, fulfilled all requirements for Church membership and the Christian religion. The fruits of these circumstances and the shift in religious emphasis, were the corrupt spiritual conditions that have been characterized in the words of the ministers who witnessed their existence.

In the midst of these conditions, Gilbert Tennent became the undisputable leader of a group of pious ministers who were keenly interested in the revival of vital Christianity. They became known as the "New Light" or the "New Side" party, as contrasted with the "Old Light" or the "Old Side" party, because of their apparent new views in promoting new spiritual life amongst the people. (1) It would have been contrary to the laws of human experience, if Gilbert Tennent would not have taken his aggressive attitude for religious reform. The prevalent decay and the apparent futility of the church to cope with the situation constituted a distinct challenge to his sensitive spiritual consciousness. The answer as to how the challenge was to be met naturally came out of his early background and training, where he had been imbued with the unalterable conviction that true religion must be that of experience. In defence of this view his family had surrendered its civil rights in Ireland, and had been practically driven, due to reasons of conscience, to the wilderness in America. His parental and educational training had strengthened this conception; and his contacts with Frelinghuysen had demonstrated to him that it was the only panacea for religious decay. Hence when a consciousness of the lamentable religious situation of his people dawned upon him, and when he awakened to his great personal responsibilities as a

1. Mr. White, a minister of Gloucester, Mass. explains that the term "New Light" was a term of reproach, as was the term Puritan when it was first used. This reproach was cast upon the Revivalist by the opposers to the Great Awakening.

minister of God, he conceived of but one solution, namely that the people must not only confess Christianity, but they must also come to an experience of all its doctrines and all that it stands for. This view became the dominating motive for his energetic promotion and defence of his "New Side" principles; and the basic factor that led to his disregard for any ecclesiastical bonds or barriers that might interfere with the awakening of the slumbering multitudes to new spiritual life.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRYSTALLIZATION OF HIS RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES
and
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS ISSUES THAT LED
TO THE GREAT AWAKENING OF 1740
and
THE SCHISM IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF 1741

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GILBERT TENNENT

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THE SCHISM IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF 1741.

INTRODUCTION

The manifestation of the religious convictions of Gilbert Tennent evolved gradually during the first ten years of his ministry. This period witnessed the origin and rise of distinct factions within the Middle Colonies. These differed greatly with respect to their views on religious reform. Ultimately the friction between these groups set them apart as friends and foes of the religious revival of 1740. Gilbert Tennent was inconspicuous in the first great issue of the controversy which centered primarily around the Adopting Act of 1728. But immediately after its passage he commenced to champion his principles of vital religion before the Synod and became a reactionary to the major acts passed under its jurisdiction. It is of great interest and historical significance to note his activities during these years. They involve questions of vital importance to the religious development of the Middle Colonies and they reveal the various steps in his rise to the undisputed leadership of the New Side party.

I. EARLY MINISTRY AND RISE OF DIVERGENT PARTIES

A. Tennent's first ministry and zeal for vital religion.

The very first experience of Gilbert Tennent in the Ministry anticipated his future relations to the Presbyterian Church. Immediately after he was licensed to preach in May 1725, he ministered for a short time to the people at New Castle, Delaware, and was extended a call to settle there permanently.(1) But for some unknown reason he left the field so abruptly that the congregation and the Presbytery of New Castle reported his case to the synod meeting at Philadelphia on Sept. 22, 1725. He undoubtedly must have been at fault, because the synod concluded that "the said Mr. Tennent's steps were too hasty and unadvised in several particulars;" and accordingly ordered the moderator to reprove him, "and withall, exhort him unto more caution and deliberation in his future proceedings."(2) It is said that he received the rebuke with meekness.(3) Little did both he and the synod realize that during the next fifteen years a gradual friction was to develop between the two that was eventually to induce certain members of the synod to attempt a second rebuke, but with disastrous results.

Divine providence seemed to guide his course during the first years of his ministry into the "destitute regions of New Jersey". Following his ordination by the Philadelphia Presbytery

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1. Sprague, Annals of American Pulpit Vol 111, pp 35.
2. Minutes of Synod, pp 81.
3. Mss. Records of New Castle Presbytery.

in the fall of 1726, there was offered to him a congregation at Norwalk, Connecticut.(1) There were great needs for ministers in Connecticut, as is evident from a letter written by Joseph Morgan, a pastor at Freehold, New Jersey, stating that he had traveled through Connecticut in 1722, for the purpose of securing ministers for New Jersey. But he had failed because there ten vacant congregations in that colony.(2) However, Tennent chose according to the recommendation of the Fairfield Association, to labor in the uncultivated, yet fertile fields of New Jersey.

The ordination of Gilbert Tennent is of special significance, because he is considered to be the first minister ordained in the Presbyterian Church, who received his training within the bounds of the synod. For the first thirty years of its existence, the Synod received almost without exception, its candidates and its ministers from the mother country or New England. But Gilbert Tennent was the first to have pursued his whole course of study within the Synod.(3) The importance of this native training may be seen in the different views regarding religion held by Gilbert Tennent and his Log College associates on the one hand, and the ministers trained in the colleges of New England and Europe on the other. Both groups were orthodox Presbyterian Calvinists as to doctrine. But the former, not having been subject to the rigors of the Scottish Church, were to take issue with the latter as to

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1. Sprague, Annals of American Pulpit Vol. 111 pp 35.
2. Letter quoted by Webster. History of Presbyterian Church pp 336.
3. Webster, pp 126

the method of stimulating and promoting vital Christianity. It may truly be said of Gilbert Tennent that he was the "rugged pioneer of American Christianity," bearing the stamp of the frontier in his words and deeds as he championed the cause of vital religion. The intensity and aim of his message may be noted from his own words as he proclaimed, "Multitudes of precious souls are in the utmost hazard of being deceived into eternal damnation; for they are induced to content themselves with a dead form of piety, resulting from a religious education and a historical faith, instead of seeking after the power and life of Christianity".(1) With this spirit, and in the consciousness of the challenge of this religious decay, he entered upon his work in one of the most important periods of the Presbyterian Church. Professor Hodge makes the following estimation.

"There is scarcely any period in the history of our Church more prolific in acts and overtures than the one now under consideration. These acts proceed in nearly equal proportions from each of the two parties into which the synod now began to be divided. Neither party questioned the right of the synod to make such acts, as both freely availed themselves of the power."(2)

B. Adopting Act, the origin of conflicting views

The Adopting Act of 1729, constitutes the first important event to be noted in the consideration of the relations of Gilbert Tennent to the Presbyterian Church. It is a significant coincidence that the beginning of his ministry should be contemporary with the adoption of an Act that has ^{remained} ~~constituted~~ the heart of American Pres-

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1. Gilbert Tennent, Preface to "The Legal Bow Bent". pp 175.
2. Hodge, History of Presbyterian Church Vol. 1. pp 200.

byterianism down to the present day. (1) However the historical importance of the Adopting Act, is not the purpose for its introduction at this time. Its consideration is due primarily to the fact that it involved the origin of the conflicting principles of reform, and the subsequent history in which Gilbert Tennent became a prominent figure.

The foremost problem of the Christian churches in the second decade of the eighteenth century pertained to the ways and means for the protecting of religion from the ravishes of ungodly doctrines, and to the revival of vital Christianity. All the ministers of the Presbyterian Church were agreed as to the end in view for the solution of this problem. But disagreement was evident as to the method for arriving at such an end. Gilbert Tennent ultimately became the proponent of principles that were at odds with the conservative and majority party of the Church.

(1) Objective to establish creedal basis.

The Adopting Act of 1729 was the measure agreed upon by the synod of Philadelphia as a solution to the above mentioned problem. This measure had been anticipated, both as to party differences and method of correcting existing difficulties in 1722, when the Presbytery of New Castle introduced a measure into the meeting of the synod, which included the following proposals.

1. The grant of full executive powers to the Church government in Presbyteries and Synods.
2. The grant that circumstantial of church discipline belong to ecclesiastical judicatories providing that any acts decreed "be

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1. Hodge, History of Presbyterian Church Vol. 1, pp 200.

not imposed upon such as conscientiously dissent from them."

3. The grant that Synods may compose directories, respecting all parts of discipline, "providing that all subordinate judicatories may decline from such directories when they conscientiously think that they have reason to do so."

4. The grant that appeals may be made from inferior to superior judicatories.(1)

The records of the synod state that the Synod was pleased with these measures, so that the conflicting factions joined in their adoption. But they were not sufficiently comprehensive to meet the emergencies of a rapidly expanding Church. Previous to this time, the minutes show no accepted confessional standard or directory for discipline, government or worship of the Presbyterian body. However the unwritten creedal basis had unquestionably been the Westminster Confession. One would naturally expect that under such conditions there would be little opposition to the adoption of a definite standard both for faith and practice.

However such was not the case. A long and intense debate ensued before an agreement was reached on the official adoption of a definite confession of faith.(2) The chief advocate of such a measure was Mr. John Thomson, a pastor of long standing in the

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1. Minutes of the Synod pp 72.

2. Ibid. pp 92.

Mr. Andrews in a letter to Dr. Colman dated April 7, 1729 concerning the debate that this Act involved. He states, "An Overture drawn up by Mr. Thomson of Lewistown, was offered to our Synod the year before last, but not then read in the Synod. Measures were taken to stave it off, and I was in the hopes that we should have heard no more of it. But last Synod it was brought up again, recommended by all the Scotch and Irish members present and being read among us, a proposal was made prosecuted, and agreed to that it should be deferred till our next meeting for further consideration."

Presbyterian Church.(1) He later became the most aggressive and outspoken opponent of Gilbert Tennent and the practices of the revival preachers.(2) Our primary source as to the needs and the purposes of the Adopting Act must be the overture presented by Mr. Thomson as explanatory of the act itself, in its presentation to the synod in 1729.

There exists no document or source material that expresses more vividly the precarious situation of the Presbyterian Church at this period than this statement by Mr. Thomson. It conveys the deep concern over an infant Church threatened with corruption and heretical teachings, with no means or weapons of defense. He likens the Church in its careless, helpless condition, to a city without walls in that it possessed no basic articles of confession of faith. In this situation there existed no means to keep ministers out of the Church, who were corrupt in doctrines; and no check on the ministers within the Church who propagated gross errors and ^{side-wind} corrupted

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1. Hodge History of Presbyterian Church Vol. 1. pp 128
Mr. Hodge states concerning Mr. Thomson.--"He was a native of Ireland. He came to this country as a probationer for the ministry in 1715, and was ordained over the congregation of Lewis in 1717. He had therefore been at this time eleven years a member of the Synod. He appears to have been a man of self command, learning and piety. He took indeed an active, and in some respects a very mistaken part in opposition to Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Tennent; yet no one can read his writings without being impressed with respect of his character and talents, and it is gratifying fact that Mr. Tennent himself after the excitement of controversy had subsided came to speak of him in terms of affectionate regard."
2. John Thomson later wrote, "The Government of the Church of Christ," which constituted an attack on the Apology of Tennent and the revival party, and especially the tactics of the former.

"many thereby without being discovered to preach anything against the received truth, because the truth was never publicly received among us."(1) Another cause for concern was the threatening corruption by false doctrines. Arminianism, Socinianism, deism, free-thinkers, etc. overflowed like a deluge the Reformed churches, and had taken a firm root even amongst the direct descendents of the Reformers. Even where such heresies were not confessed, and the people retained their orthodox faith, "the edge of their zeal against the prevalent errors were blunted so that because of fear, indifference, and mistaken charity they sought not to defend their opinions about points of religion that were mysterious and sublime."(2)

The method for ameliorating this condition, as recommended by Mr. Thomson, constituted the expression of the majority opinion of the church. In brief it involved the following:

1. Granting to the Synod, as an ecclesiastical judicator of Christ, ministerial authority to combat error.
2. The public and authoritative adoption of the Westminster Confessions and Directory.
3. The demand of Presbyteries to compell its ministers to subscribe to the confessions of the Church.
4. The making of such subscription to faith obligatory for all new ministers.
5. The right of Presbyteries to censure ministers of false teachings.
6. That the Synod recommend to all ministers and members of congregations earnestness in Christian life.(3)

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1. Overture to the Adopting Act.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

(2) Its efficacy questioned.

In the light of history, the measures seem reasonable and essential. But they met with severe opposition. Mr. Andrews of Philadelphia feared that subscription to the Westminster Confession would cause the people to fall into a great religious indifference. The groups that he represented objected not so much to making it a confession of the church; but primarily to making it a test for orthodoxy and the term of ministerial communion.(1) Here we find the century old issue revived, namely whether a confession of faith or religious experience should be the basis for vital Christianity and church membership.(2) The objections to the confessions were especially upheld by Jonathan Dickenson. He argued that Christ, scripture, agreement as to the necessary articles of Christianity, and the same methods of worship and discipline were sufficient bonds of union. And that unscriptural terms of union or communion would lead to church divisions, as exemplified in the history of churches that have adopted such confessions. He states further that, "a subscription to any composition as the test of orthodoxy is to make it

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1. Letter of Mr. Andrews to Dr. Colman. Quoted by Hodge. pp 142.
2. The connection between the trend of religion in New England and the Middle Colonies is here clearly seen. The Adopting Act was in accord with the general trend towards the introduction and emphasis of confessions in the churches. And it came from a Presbytery whose ministers were predominately from New England. Hodge writes in this connection that "The Presbytery of New Castle from the bosom of which the Adopting act proceeded, was not a homogeneous body of Scotch and Irish members. It had scarcely a majority of such members; five were either originally or immediately from New England, two from Wales, and one from England. Hodge, History Presb. Church, Vol. 11, pp 132

the standard of our faith, and thereby to give it honour due only to the word of God." The imposition of a confession on church members and ministers would mean that individual church members would be deprived of the "Liberty with which Christ has made us free, and placed under the authority of the synod; and that candidates for the ministry would be kept "out of Christ's Vineyard whom he has sent to labour there, and qualified for glorious service in his church."

These objections together with the arguments in favor of the Adopting Act, clearly reveal the presence of two groups of thought in the Presbyterian Church at this early age. The one placed its hope of reform in the adoption of the Westminster Confession; and the second in the direct quickening power of the word of God. Both groups were in perfect accord as to their Calvinistic doctrines of faith; and were also agreed in their desires for remedying the spiritual confusion of the Colonists. But they disagreed as to method. The final result of the debate was the unanimous adoption of the Overture, making the Westminster Confession, not only a standard of conformity but a standard to which every minister of the Presbyterian Church was bound.(1) In Addition to this the Directory was also adopted in the following terms:

"The Synod do unanimously acknowledge and declare, that they judge the Directory for worship, discipline and government of the Church, commonly annexed to the Westminster Confession, to be agreeable in substance to the Word of God, and founded thereupon, and therefore do earnestly recommend the same to all their members, to be observed as near as circumstances will and Christian prudence direct."(2)

1. Hodge, History of Presbyterian Church Vol. 1 pp 155-6.
2. Minutes of the Synod pp 93.

(3) Tennent's attitude towards Act.

Gilbert Tennent was present at the synod meeting of 1729, but there is nothing in the minutes to indicate whether or not he took an active part in the debate pertaining to the Adopting Act. He was just commencing his ministry at that time, having received a call to New Brunswick two years previously. So naturally he would not be a conspicuous figure in the affairs of the synod. But if one were to anticipate the group with which he sympathized, his future relations to the synod clearly indicate that he was of the same opinion with Jonathan Dickenson.

These two men became the two most outstanding exponents for the principle defended by Mr. Andrews and Mr. Dickenson in the debate on the Act, namely, that the final test of orthodoxy cannot be adherence to a prescribed confession of faith. It must be the experience of religion. This is evident by the ministry of Gilbert Tennent during this period. His work consisted primarily in the personal examination of his parishioners, and "the urging of them to seek converting grace." His preaching was largely centered around the doctrines of original sin, repentance, the nature and the necessity of conversion, and the judgment of God. His one aim was to lead his people to the experience of religion, and as such, he was one with the group who were of different opinion than the advocates of the Adopting Act.(1) However this does not mean

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1. G. Tennent's Letter to Prince. Prince Christian History pp 294
G. Tennent's zeal for experimental religion manifested itself most clearly even during these first years of his ministry. This is evident from his definitions of the essential doctrines

that he minimized the importance of the Westminster Confession and the Directory. In the organization meeting of the synod of New York in 1745, these were again adopted by Tennent's party, as they had been at Philadelphia in 1729.⁽¹⁾ But, as previously stated, the significant thing to note with regard to the Adopting Act in its bearing upon the relations of Gilbert Tennent to the synod is that it constituted the beginning of the party differences within the Church, that increased in magnitude during the next ten years. In this gradual separation and conflict Gilbert Tennent played a most important part.

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of Christianity. He explains them as follows;

- A. Conviction is not only judgment or assent to the doctrinal truths of religion. But it is a clear consciousness of the corruption of the heart, of actual sins, occasioning great perplexity and distress.
- B. Conversion is not trouble of conscience and an outward reformation, both of which may be without a saving and converting grace. It is a Universal efficacious and internal change which spreads through all the powers and passions of the soul, illuminating the understanding and making the will pliable to the will of God.
- C. Repentance is not legal sorrow with some care after reformation, neither mourning, but it is backed by love and must be followed by a thorough reformation.
- D. Faith is not historical assent to the truths of Christianity, or the believing that they shall be saved by the mercy of God, but must work by love and must overcome the world.
- E. Sanctification is not a mere inward combat with sin, a struggle between conscience and lusts; but a spiritual combat arising from a new nature against all sins, internal, external, small, great, fashionable and scandalous. pp 19-25.
The remedy for existing presumptuousness he prescribed to be examination of the states of persons' souls.
Gilbert Tennent, "Solemn Warning to secure world", pp 171, written June 1734.

1. Records of Synod of New York 1745, pp 232.

C. Tennent's overture involving religious experience.

(1) His dissatisfaction with creedal emphasis.

The adoption of the Westminster Confession and the Directory in 1729 had little effect in bettering the spiritual status of the church. The conditions caused such general concern that an overture was introduced in the synod meeting of 1733 for the purpose of "reviving the declining power of godliness. This overture reads as follows,

"The Synod do earnestly recommend it to all our ministers and members, to take particular care about ministerial visiting of families and press family and secret worship, according to the Westminster Directory, and that they also recommend it to every Presbytery, at proper seasons to inquire concerning the diligence of each of their members in such particulars".(1)

That this might be given the proper emphasis, it was ordered that a copy of the overture should be inserted to each of the Presbyteries' books.(2)

(2) His overture on examining ministerial and sacramental candidates.

Gilbert Tennent interpreted this measure to be but a recapitulation of the general emphasis of the Adopting Act. Consequently he sought to introduce to the synod, the following year, certain corrective measures. His overtures were rejected three times before they were finally considered by the synod. In these he emphasized that which he considered essential for vital Christianity. He recognized the importance of the trials of candidates, both for the ministry and the Lord's Supper, "with respect to the

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1. Minutes of Synod, pp 103.
2. Ibid.

necessary qualifications of compliance with the Westminster Confession; "but he stressed especially the recommendation that "due care be taken in examining into the evidences of the grace of God in the people".(1)

The result of this overture was a recommendation by the synod, that the ministers be more serious and solemn in the trials of both sorts of candidates mentioned above. The following is of special importance, because it reveals the influence of Gilbert Tennent in impressing upon the synod the principle of experimental Christianity. It reads as follows,

"And this Synod does therefore in the name and the fear of God, exhort and obtest all our Presbyteries to take special care not to admit into the sacred office, loose, careless, and irreligious persons, but that they particularly inquire into the conversations, conduct and behaviour of such as offer themselves to the ministry, and that they diligently examine all the candidates for the ministry

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1. Minutes of Synod, pp 108.

Gilbert Tennent condemned most severely unconverted ministers from the very first of his ministry. He gave four ways by which he thought they led people astray. First, by false preaching. Secondly, by their lives. Third, by groundless and cruel charity, in failing to lead people to experimental religion. Fourth, by their lax and promiscuous admission of unworthy guests to the Holy Sacrament, pp 101. He further rebuked the people for blessing such ministers with the cry, "Hosana, hosana", because they "thundered not about hell and damnation, and displayed a sense of learning". "O, the blindness," he states, "and the madness of an infatuated world, such soul murderers and dry nurses are the only men fit to be esteemed and caressed. You would fly the company of a faithful minister-as you would do a lion, because his pious discourses gail you are afraid, poor souls, of being converted". Tennent, "Solemn Warning", pp 74.

for their experiences of a work of sanctifying grace in their hearts, and that they admit none to the sacred trust that are not in the eye of charity serious Christians. And the Synod does also seriously and solemnly admonish all the ministers within our bounds to make it their awful, constant, and diligent care, to approve themselves to God, to their own consciences, and to their hearers, serious, faithful stewards of the mysterious of God, and of holy and of exemplary conversations. And the Synod does also exhort all the ministers within our bounds to use due care in examining those they admit to the Lord's Supper".(1)

This action of the synod involved a three fold emphasis on examination and the experience of Christianity. First it stressed the examination of all candidates to the ministry as to their experiences. Secondly, it admonished a self examination on the part of all ministers. And Third, it exhorted the examination of all candidates to the Lord's Supper. These admonitions were approved by the whole synod, and as if the emphasis on "examination" and "experience" was not enough to meet the crying needs for reform, it further recommended that all the Presbyteries should examine at least once a year all its ministers as to their preaching, doctrinal teachings, the administration of the means of grace, and personal visitation and instruction to all that were under their care.(2) The strictness of these measures is evident by the prescribed penalty for non-observance. In case any minister within our bounds shall be found defective in any of the above mentioned cases, he shall be subject to the censure of the Presbytery, and if he refuse subjection to such censure, the Presbytery are hereby directed to represent his case to the next synod.(3)

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1. Minutes of Synod, pp 108-9.
2. Ibid, pp 109.
3. Ibid, pp 109.

Gilbert Tennent's influence upon the synod in this connection is of great importance, since it involved the official recognition of the principles for which he and his party stood. The conservative element in the Presbyterian Church won a unanimous recognition of their basic principle through the adoption of the Westminster Confession and Directory as requisites for ministerial candidates and orthodoxy. The evangelical party, or the group that favored experimental Christianity, won the official recognition of their main emphasis when the synod passed the above measure, making obligatory the examination of candidates for both the ministry and the Lord's Supper as to their actual experience of religion.(1)

(3) Opposition to overture over-ruled by Synod.

Complaints were made the following year as to the stringency of this measure by the Presbytery of East Jersey. These were based on the Presbytery's inability to control the irregularities of Mr. John Cross. But the synod refused to yield any part of the Act. The minutes contain the following decision:

"The Synod esteeming the act of last year with respect to the trial of candidates for the Ministry, and examining into the methods of our ministers' discharge of their awful trust, to be of greatest moment and importance, do in the strongest manner exhort each Presbytery to an exact compliance with the said act in all the parts of it. And do also exhort all the ministers within our

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1. Sprague states concerning the difficulty involved in the adoption of these two overtures in the preface to "Annals of the American Pulpit" Vol. III pp 13. "These two Acts embraced the favorite objects of both parties,--the main difficulty lay in carrying them into execution.--The practice by the several Presbyteries was decided by the accidental circumstance of one party or the other being the majority, and this occasioned much debate and collision at the Synodical meetings."

bounds, to take care in the examination of all candidates for baptism, or that offer to dedicate their children to God in that sacred ordinance, that they are persons of a regular life, and have suitable acquaintance with the principles of the Christian religion; that seal be not set to a blank, and that such be not admitted to visible church relation that are manifestly unfit for it."(1)

Apparently it seemed that Gilbert Tennent and his associates had won a decisive victory. But such was not the real significance of this action by the synod in 1734. Its real importance consisted in that through its adoption both parties in the Presbyterian Church, the conservative group under the leadership of John Thomson, and the evangelicals under Gilbert Tennent, had gained equal official recognition in anticipation of a bitter conflict, as the basic issues became intensified in the succeeding debates.

II THE EARLY WORK OF REVIVAL BY THE NEW SIDE PARTY.

A slight digression must here be made to note the growth and the activities of the New Side Party, as Gilbert Tennent and his group were called. These factors are essential to an understanding of the overtures that Tennent made to the synod between the years 1734 and 1739. Previous reference has been made to the fact that is here established, namely that the Great Awakening in the American colonies was not a spontaneous outburst of new spiritual life, but rather, it was a movement that gradually developed during the fourth decade of the eighteenth century. During this

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1. Minutes of Synod pp 113.

period the majority of the New Side ministers commenced their work in the Church. Wherever they became established there were evidences of religious revival. Out from their zeal and enthusiasm there developed irregularities, contrary to the order of the Presbyterian Discipline and Directory. Consequently strife was inevitable, as the Old Side party sought to correct the resultant evils, but, according to the views of the revivalists, at the expense of vital religion.

A. Revival under Gilbert Tennent

Gilbert Tennent heads the list of the ministers in the Presbyterian Church, who experienced the blessings of a spiritual awakening.(1) During the very first year of his ministry, 1728-1729, he was active in stirring his people, through personal examinations and the preaching of repentance, to new spiritual life.(2) Strange as it may seem, his own people at New Brunswick were not greatly affected, but the people of Staten Island, to whom he also ministered, were brought under great spiritual concern. He makes the following statement concerning this early revival.

"When I lived-at New Brunswick-I do not remember that there was any great in-gathering of souls at any one time; but through mercy there were pretty frequent gleanings of a few here and there, which in a whole were a considerable number.--But at Staten Island, one of the places where I stately laboured, there was 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

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1. Jonathan Dickenson preceded G. Tennent in the Ministry, but he experienced no real revival of religion before 1739. Prince Church History Vol. 11 pp 252.
2. Letter to Mr. Prince of Boston Aug. 24, 1744. Gillies History Col. pp 424.

were generally affected about the state of their souls; and some to the 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 the general inquiry was, 'What shall I do to be saved.'"(1)

Later in 1754 he modified this description and said that it "was rather too low, for the people generally fell upon their knees, and that it was one of the most affecting sights he ever saw."(2)

B. Revivals under Log College Alumni.

From 1730 this humble beginning of religious revival was greatly stimulated by the ordinations of many of the Log College Alumni. John Tennent ordained Nov. 19, 1730, located at Freehold, New Jersey.(3) William Tennent, Jr. October 25, 1733

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1. Quoted from Prince Ch. History. Vol 11 pp 285.
This work by Gilbert Tennent even preceded the great work of Jonathan Edwards in the New England Colonies. The preliminary revivals to the Great Awakening of 1740, by these two men are indicative of their leadership in their respective churches. In the period from 1733 to 1735, Jonathan Edwards experienced a great and universal awakening in and around Northampton. He describes it in the following terms. "A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all ages.--Religion was with all sorts the great concern, and the world was a thing only by and by.--There was scarcely a single person in the town, either young or old, that was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those that were wont to be the vainest, and loosest, and those that had been the most disposed to think and speak lightly of vital and experimental religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings." (From "Surprising Narratives" by Edwards pp 8ff.) This account further states that this revival extended from one end of the county to the other, including the towns of South Hadley, Suffield, Deerfield, Green River, Hatfield, Enfield, Hadly, Northfield, etc. It also spread to many towns and communities in Connecticut.
2. Personal statement by Tennent to Mr. Gillies June 1, 1754, Hist. Col. pp 425.
3. Prince Christian History Vol.11 pp 300.

succeeded his brother John.(1) Samuel Blair entered the ministry at Shrewsbury May 24, 1734, and ordained shortly after.(2) John Rowland was licensed in 1738, and Samuel Finley in August 1740.(3) Other associates were Jonathan Dickenson, Richard Treat, Eleazer Wales, John Cross, Alexander Craighead, Aaron Burr, William Robinson, Charles Beatty, John Blair, James Davenport, and others of less prominence. When the Synod of New York was organized in 1745, which in reality constituted the ministers active and in sympathy with the revival of religion, there were twenty-two ministers present. Nine of these were of the Presbytery of New York; nine from the Presbytery of New Brunswick; and four from the New Castle Presbytery.

Of these ministers, John Tennent, and his successor, William Tennent, were to witness the second spiritual awakening to that produced by Gilbert Tennent on Staten Island. This took place in Freehold, New Jersey, during the years from 1730 to 1733. The people of that place had so degenerated in their attitude towards the church and God, that it seemed "they were a people whom God had given up for their abuse of the Gospel."(4) But

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1. Prince Christian History Vol.11 pp 301.
2. Samuel Blair's letter. Prince Ch. History.
3. Alexander, Log College, pp 341.
4. Letter, William Tennent, Prince Ch.Hist.Vol.11 pp 300.
Gilbert Tennent appealed to his brother William to join in the revival of religion, as is evident by a letter which he wrote to him in 1733. The contents state, "My dear brother: Let us join heart and hand in seeking the interest in Christ's Kingdom. The time is short, the work great, the crown of life near.-- The prudence of hypocrites and many of the pious of this gener-

through the preaching of John Tennent a great revival took place. The public worship became crowded by people of all ranks and orders. Tears were shed as souls were melted under the preaching. "It was no uncommon thing to see persons in the time of hearing, sobbing as if their hearts would break." Religion became the general subject of discourse. The Bible was searched by believers and unbelievers alike. "The terror of God fell so generally upon the inhabitants of the place, that wickedness was ashamed, in a great measure hid itself."(1) This concern over religion continued on into the ministry of William Tennent, Jr. He states that many came to him and inquired what they should do to be saved, "and some to tell what the Lord had done for their souls."(2)

The revival of religion continued to spread quite extensively during the early thirties. It was prevalent through New York, Staten Island and the Jerseys. Jonathan Edwards gives the following testimony to this effect. He states;

"This shower of divine blessing has been yet more extensive. (than Northampton and surrounding territory) There was no small degree of it in some parts of the Jerseys; as I was informed when I was at New York, (in a long journey I took at that time of the year for my health) by some people of the Jerseys whom I saw. Especially

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ation, though it be highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God; a meer mystery of selfish sneaking and cowardly iniquity.--Away with the abomination of carnal cunning. Let us come out for God as flames of fire and say with the gallant Luther, madness is better than mildness in the cause of God.--Our good name among the ungodly and fleshly Christians of this adulterous generation, gotten by carnal compliances, is to our reproach, For it we did what we should, and as we should, they would fall upon us and beat us for God's sake." G.Tennent's letter to William, 1733. In appendix to Finley's Sermon "The Successful Minister."

1. Prince Ch. Hist. Vol 11 pp 304

2. Ibid. pp301

the Rev. Mr. William Tennent, a minister, who seemed to have such things much at heart, told me of a very great awakening of many in a place called the Mountains, under the ministry of one Mr. Cross."(1)

The territory here referred to was the vicinity back of Newark.(2) Edwards testifies further concerning the revivals under Gilbert Tennent and Theodore Frelinghuysen during this period. He calls it a very extraordinary dispensation of providence.- "God having in many respects gone out of, and much beyond his usual and ordinary way."(3)

The several ministers mentioned above, all seemed to have caught the spirit of this new spiritual life; and as they became ordained to the ministry, they became preachers of religious revival in their respective communities. John Davenport entered upon this work at Southold, Long Island, Oct. 26, 1738, in a most enthusiastic, but erratic way.(4) Samuel Blair commenced his work at Shrewsbury, East Jersey in 1734, but was most effective in the revival at New Londonderry, Pennsylvania, 1739.(5) John Rowland reaped great spiritual harvests at Maidenhead and Hopewell, New Jersey, from 1738 and on. Samuel Finley spent the years from 1740 to 1744 in itinerating, i.e. traveling from one place to another preaching the Gospel of the revival.

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1. Edwards, Faithful Narrative pp 15.
2. Webster, History of Presbyterian Church pp 413.
3. Edwards, Faithful Narrative pp 15.
4. Webster, History of Presbyterian Church pp 537.
5. Alexander, Log College pp 266.
S.Blair, Prince Ch. Hist. Vol. 11 pp 245

Their inspiration of these early revivals and the combined strength of the added revival preachers contributed greatly to the growing complexities within the Presbyterian Church. They added to the growth of the New Side party in that new encouragement was given to experimental religion; and new strength was acquired for both the promotion and the defense of their party principles. The power and enthusiasm of Gilbert Tennent became more and more manifest as this development took place. The entire New Side party became bolder in its relations to the synod, and began to show signs of dissent from actions which it interpreted to be contrary or out of sympathy with the revival of religion. This is clearly evident from the attitude of the New Side leaders towards the actions of the synod pertaining to Itinerating and the ordination of candidates to the ministry, that were passed during this period.

C. Gilbert Tennent's views of vital religion.

However, before these overtures are introduced, it is essential to note the views of Gilbert Tennent during these years as to what constituted true and vital Christianity. And also to note the way he proposed it should be preached and promoted.(1)

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1. The most direct and comprehensive statement that the author has discovered, which reveals the mind of Gilbert Tennent during this period from 1730-39, is the introduction to the preface of a sermon on "The Legal Bow Bent" wherein the natural enmity of secure sinners against Christ, and the manner of their reduction to his obedience by a work of conviction is described". In this preface he states, "Being thoroughly convinced by Scripture, reason, experience, and the universal consent of the most godly eminent and useful Divines of the Protestant churches, as well as by the suffrage of the ancient fathers; of the great necessity of a work of humiliation, or conviction, in order to a sound conversion, from sin and Satan to God and holiness, and perceiving to my sorrow, the gross ignorance of this important truth greatly prevailing among many professors of the present generation; and thereby a presumptuous

(1) Conscious of great spiritual decline

In the first place, Gilbert Tennent labored under a deep sensibility of the low spiritual status of the people, and his own inability to remedy it. This is evident from his preachings. "Multitudes", he stated, "are so mad in the immoderate chase of this world, that they will not allow themselves time to think seriously upon another, and a better; or with reverence to attend to, and solemnly ponder upon that word which gives a description of it, and proposes the way to it; their hurry is so great, poor infatuated creatures, that they can't afford themselves leisure from their weighty affairs to look after such a trifle as their eternal salvation. However till God himself speaks from Heaven with almighty power to their hearts, we may as well pretend to still by our breath, a fierce tempest, calm the disturbed deep, or turn the course of a violent torrent, as by our arguments to stop the dismal career of such demented creatures".(1) He attributed this condition primarily to the dead formal orthodoxy that had swept over the people, "Multitudes" he writes, "of precious souls are in the utmost hazard of being deceived into eternal damnation; for hereby they are induced to contend themselves with a dead form of piety, resulting from a religious education and historic faith, instead of seeking after the power and the life of Chris-

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security fatally introduced;---I cannot but wish with all my heart, that the aforesaid subject was more frequently and generally insisted on, both from the press and pulpit than it is. I am persuaded that it would conduce much to promote and spread vital religion through the nations."

1. Sermon, "Divinity of Sacred Scripture" 1738. pp 148. Sermons , Sac. Occasions.

tianity."(1) "Whatever notional dead dry knowledge you may have attained of some divine things by the force of education, yet you have no clear experimental knowledge of them. Otherwise you could no more live contentedly in the state you are in, than could lie contentedly in a burning fire. You only speak by rote and hearsay of divine things, like parrots."(2) In this relation he was fully aware of the great opposition by the majority of the people to anything like vital Christianity. He compared the people to the Pharisees of old, who through ignorance and enmity opposed it as though it were an enthusiastical delusion.(3) These opponents, he stated, make a jest and a banter of the very name of saint, and use it as a term of contempt and badge of disgrace; to depreciate those they dislike. "As soon as ever anybody begins to be sorrowful for his sins, zealous for God's glory and affectionately laborious in seeking his happiness, in the way of unfeigned holiness; they presently lose their former esteem of him, and despise him as a fool, and oppose him as an enemy to himself and others."(4)

(2) Stressed experimental religion and examination.

In the second place, Gilbert Tennent grounded all his hopes for reform, on the basic principle of experimental religion. That is, a person must not only know the essential principles of religion, but he must also come to an experience of the fundamental

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1. Preface to "Legal Bow Bent." 1738 pp 175.
2. Sermon "Divinity of Sacred Scripture" 1738 pp 175.
3. Ibid.
4. Sermon "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ" 1737 pp 15.

doctrines of sin, grace and sanctification. He states,

"My dear Brethren, that which I would especially and passionately recommend to you as a principle and absolute necessary preparation for the judgment of 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."(1)

He explains this experimental knowledge as the spirit of God opening the mind of the individual to receive the truth in a supernatural light, and which sets such trust upon the heart with an almighty power. The effects of this experience of divine knowledge is that the heart is warmed with a correspondent affection to the elements of the sacraments; and the conduct or the life of the individual is reformed.(2) Those who possess not this experimental knowledge of God's truths, and stand not in a covenantal relationship with God, he recognized to be "covered with shame and banished from Jehovah."(3) He had the greatest abhorrence for any one who professed God in word but denied him in conduct. He looked upon such as "abominable, disobedient, reprobates to every good works, and contradictory in the course of their conversations."(4) The essential means, that he considered to be the way whereby individuals arrived at such an experience of religion, was through examination and conviction. He looked upon these as absolutely necessary for remedying the prevalent spiritual ills of the people, in the same way as diagnosis is needed by a medical doctor for correcting physical diseases. He stated, "that if you never saw yourselves enemies to

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1. Sermon, "The Solemn scene of the last judgment." 1737 pp 218.
2. Sermon, "The Duty of Self Examination" 1737 pp 237.
3. Ibid. pp 237.
4. Ibid. pp 237.

Christ, and never were humbled on that account, you are enemies to him, and rebels against him. This disease must be known, and felt before it can be remedied."(1) Such an examination was to be twofold. In the first place it was to be conducted by the ministers; and secondly, by the individuals themselves. "Although," he writes, "it be undoubtedly the duty of ministers to labour by examination to know the state of their flock, and to distinguish the precious from the vile, yet it is a great and dangerous sin in their hearers, if they depend by an implicit faith in their judgment, neglecting self examination."(2)

(3) Emphasized duties of Clergy.

In the third place, Gilbert Tennent recognized that the sole responsibility for the propagation of experimental religion rested upon the Christian ministry. He denounced most severely the common practice of many ministers to preach the Gospel with indifference, and fail to bring the people to the conviction of faith and an experience of Christianity. He stated,

"Smoot stories about moral virtues, and the sweet anodynes of the precious promises promiscuously proposed, will not do to alarm this lethargic generation out of their perilous slumbers. No. No. The ax must be laid to the root of the tree before it will bring good fruit; the deceits of the heart and the dangers of a secure state must be declared and denounced with plainness and pungency. Pretending to build before the foundation is laid is very ridiculous. It's a pity then it should be so frequently attempted as it is."(3)

His great emphasis of this fact, and his extreme denun-

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1. Sermon, "Legal Bow Bent"
2. Sermon, "The Duty of Self Examination."
3. Preface, "Legal Bow Bent"

ciation of the clergy of his day, are stated in the famous Nottingham sermon preached in 1739. But because of the vital connection between this sermon and the schism of 1741, its discussion will be postponed to a later chapter.

D. Tennent's contributions to religious reform.

The views of Gilbert Tennent thus expressed in his sermons during the years of 1737 and 38, are of great value in understanding his relations to the synod during these same years. They reveal his deep concern over the critical religious situation that prevailed amongst the Colonists. They show his earnest and sincere convictions that vital Christianity meant its experience; and that the return to such an experimental religion constituted the only basis for reform. They manifest further his emphasis on the "personal examinations" of individuals, both by the ministers and by the individuals themselves. And last but not least in importance, they reveal that he considered the ministry responsible for the sad plight of the people; and that if they were indifferent to leading their parishioners to the experience of the essential Christian truths, they were disloyal to their Christian calling. In the light of the trend of religion in the American colonies during the preceding century, no one can deny that these principles indicate a return to, and a reemphasis of the fundamental doctrine of American Puritanism. The great contribution of Gilbert Tennent at this period was the insistence on the maintenance of the essential principles of vital Christianity

that had been the strength of Puritanism in all its perils and in all its history. When we consider the primitive and the transitory stage of the Presbyterian Church and religion in general in the Middle Colonies at this period, and the great danger that it confronted in losing its spark of vitality, we can understand why Gilbert Tennent, together with his associates ignored synodical actions and jurisdictions. This is the underlying tendency evident as we direct our attentions again to the relations of Gilbert Tennent to the synod during the years from 1737 to 1739.

III. ITINERATING AND THE NEW SIDE EVANGELISM 1737 - 1739.

A. A vital issue

The first major point of issue between the revival party and the Old Side group of the Presbyterian Church pertained to the itinerating of preachers. This involved the traveling of pastors from one call to another, proclaiming the Gospel where opportunities presented themselves. As the evangelical zeal of the revival preachers grew in intensity, the activities of these men became more and more manifest outside of the bounds of their own congregations. Apparently since such itinerating constituted irregularities, inconsistent with the order of church government, an overture was introduced in the synod meeting of 1737, which sought to place the practice under very rigid control. Naturally Gilbert Tennent interpreted the measure to be an attempt on the part of the opponents to the revival of religion, to stop the travelings of the revival ministers. This is evident by his defense of itinerating, and the ultimate defeat of the overture in 1740. However upon a closer analysis of the minutes of the synod, there are grounds to believe that the great

conflict that arose over this practice was primarily due to misunderstandings on the part of both parties.

B. Act of 1737 to control foreign ministers.

The Overture of 1737, that was passed by the synod, closes with the reminder of the synod's action of 1735. In that year the synod was especially concerned with the dangers of ministers from Europe coming into the church "as so many wolves in sheep's clothing, invading the flock of Christ".(1) To check these ministers from coming into the church, the synod passed an overture with the following restrictions.

1. No such foreign preachers could preach in a vacant congregation before he had given full satisfaction to the Presbytery of the congregation, concerning his confession of faith.
2. No congregation could issue a call to such a minister before he had preached a half year in the Synod.
3. No call could be issued by a congregation without the concurrence of some one appointed by the Presbytery. Finally it was stated that no minister from Ireland would be accepted before he had submitted to the trials of the Presbytery.(2)

The synod here unquestionably sought to check the incoming foreign preachers who were not in sympathy with the Presbyterian faith.

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1. Minutes of Synod pp 116.
2. Ibid. pp. 116.

Mr. John Thompson in his "Church of Christ" sheds some very interesting light on the purposes of the overtures of 1735 and 1737, (pp 13) as to the types of ministers that they wanted to avoid. He states, "The adoption of the Westminster Confession and the Catechism, etc. was a matter of very great satisfaction to most of us, and to myself in particular, who had been for some time before, under no small fear and perplexities of mind, lest we should be corrupted with the new schemes of doctrine, which for some time had prevailed in the north of Ireland. That being the part from whence we expected to be in great measure supplied with new hands to fill our vacancies in the ministry within the bounds of our synod."

The first three sections of the Overture of 1737 deals with probationers, making it impossible for such to even preach in any congregation without the consent and the supervision of the Presbytery of the congregation involved. As the measure of 1735 had prohibited the sending of a call to a foreign minister, so the Overture of 1737 gave the Presbytery power over the location of preachers even after they had been accepted as probationers. The fourth and the fifth articles dealt with the preaching of either ministers or probationers within or without a Presbytery, only as the respective Presbyteries gave their consent. Hence both the actions of 1735 and 1737 involved the control of foreign ministers entering the church.

C. Interpreted to check itinerating by revivalists.

But whatever the underlying motive of the Overture of 1737 may have been, it had a direct bearing upon the activities of the New Side party. Consequently at the next Synod meeting in 1738, the debate was resumed on the question as to whether a minister had the right to preach in the vacant congregations of another Presbytery without the consent of said Presbytery. The following action of the Synod seems to have been aimed directly at the methods of the Tennent party, to travel to any congregation or community without seeking the permission of any one. The Overture reads as follows;

"No minister belonging to this Synod shall have the liberty to preach in any congregation belonging to another Presbytery whereof he is not a member, after he is advised by any minister of such Presbytery, that he thinks his preaching in that congregation will

have a tendency to produce divisions and disorders, until he first obtain liberty from the Presbytery or Synod so to do."(1)

However in consideration of those members of the synod who were guilty in transgressing the above rule, the synod took cognizance of their activities, and granted the liberty to every minister to preach in any vacant congregation in any presbytery to which he is called, unless some ministers of such presbytery advised him that such preaching would procure divisions and disorders in the congregation. Even then the minister could preach, but he would have to have either the consent of the Presbytery or the synod.(2)

However, since this also involved a limitation on the liberty of ministers to preach the gospel, it was far from acceptable to Gilbert Tennent and his associates. But they were in no position to express their opposition in an organized way.

D. Organization of New Brunswick Presbytery and opposition to Act.

In 1738 a very important action of the synod took place which greatly effected the power of the New Side party in their relations to the actions stated above.(3) The East Jersey Presbytery

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1. Minutes of synod pp 136.

2. Ibid. pp 136.

3. "Up to the erection of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, the total ordained membership of the General Presbytery, and the General Synod, comprising the years 1706-1738, was eighty-five. Of the ministers, 31 were born and educated in Ireland; 12 came from Scotland; 23 came from New England, receiving at least a part of their education there; England and Wales furnished 10; the birth places of 6 are uncertain; and there were 6 who came from the Log College. Thus the Scotch Irish element constituted one half of the membership; the New England element stood second; and while the Log College contingent was inconsiderable in point of numbers, yet its influence was beyond all proportion to its numerical strength." G. Ingram, Journal Presb. Hist. Soc. Vol VI pp 212, June 1912.

was divided into the two Presbyteries of New York and New Brunswick. The organization of the latter constituted the bringing together of Gilbert Tennent and his immediate sympathizers into a single unit of organization. The result was that the New Brunswick Presbytery under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent entered a formal protest in 1739 against the actions of the synod pertaining to itinerating.(1) But the synod refused to yield the measure that the majority considered a safeguard for order, and answered the protest with a renewal of its purpose to enforce the act. However after renewing the protest in the synod meeting of 1740, the act was repealed for the following reason. "Finding that some of our brethren are now dissatisfied with the agreement (Act Pertaining to Itinerating) and that it is wrong interpreted and misunderstood by many of our people as though it was calculated to prevent itinerating preaching; the synod do now declare that they never thought of opposing, but do heartily rejoice in the labours of the ministry in other places besides their own particular charge, and that they may not give umbrage to the contrary, they do now repeal that agreement, and do agree that our ministers shall, in that respect, conduct themselves, as though it had never been."(2) Thus after upholding the act for three consecutive years, it was finally repealed.

E. Justification of Tennent's dissent.

The problem of justifying Gilbert Tennent's opposition to the act, and his defence of the practice of itinerating is difficult to determine. The answer is largely in accord with ones justification of irregularities in times of crisis for the sake of vital

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1. Minutes of Synod pp 143-44.
2. Ibid. pp 152.

religion. The great concern of Gilbert Tennent was over the numerous communities and congregations, that were without a pastor.(1) The situation was so dire in 1739, that the New Brunswick Presbytery directed its clerk to write to Mr. Edwards of Northampton, presenting the "Necessitous circumstances of divers places in this country in respect of the Gospel ministry in order to excite him to speak to some pious candidates there to come this way and help us in the Lord's work."(2) But the answer came that there was no prospect for such help. The great need for pastors, especially of the evangelistic type, is further seen from the fact that on the second day after the schism in 1741, there were eighteen places that applied to the New Brunswick Presbytery for ministerial supplies. Almost all of these came from without the bounds of the Presbytery.(3) In the light of such needs we may understand the practice and the

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1. Chapter III Confusion as a result of rapid immigration. Archibald Alexander makes the following significant comment on the justice of itinerating. "Luther and the other Reformers did not feel themselves bound by the authority of the popish magistracy and priesthood. Every minister holds a commission to preach the Gospel to every creature to whom he can gain access; and if certain number of people, who are anxious to hear the Gospel, happen. by human arrangements to be circumscribed within the limits of the parish, over which another has charge; and if this nominal pastor is believed not so to preach the Gospel as to lead a people in the way of salvation, why may not the faithful preacher disregard these human arrangements intended to promote order, and carry the Gospel to those who are thirsty for the Word of Life." Alexander, Log College pp 290-91.
2. Minutes of Presbytery of New Brunswick pp 11-12.
3. A.H.Brown History of Presb. Church in West and South Jersey pp 19.

defense of Gilbert Tennent to overstep ecclesiastical boundaries that he might preach the work of God to congregations that were vacant and destitute.(1) Prof. Hodge, a strict conservative against any irregularity in church order makes the following statement with regard to Gilbert Tennent's policy of itinerating.

"The opposition to this rule (against itinerating) seems to have proceeded principally from Mr. Tennent. No man was under ordinary circumstances more disposed than that gentleman to enforce the obligation of such rules and even to push them to extremes. But when he thought they stood in the way of the interest of religion, he trampled them under his feet. To create a division in the congregation of a converted pastor, or to preach against his consent within his bounds, was in his eye, a high ecclesiastical offense. But to preach the Gospel to the people of a graceless minister in despite of his remonstrances, was a matter of duty; and he would have done it in despite of all Synods in the world. In this he was clearly right, as the principle is concerned. There are obligations superior to those of mere ecclesiastical order; and there are times when it is a duty to disregard rules, which we admit to be legitimate both in their own nature and in respect to the authority whence they proceed. It was on this principle that the Apostles and the Reformers acted. It is analogous to the right of revolution in civil communities; and consequently the cases are very rare in which it can be resorted to, with a good conscience."(2)

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1. A.H. Brown. History of Presb. Church in West and South Jersey. The great demand for the revival preachers in the scattered congregations is evident from the words of Samuel Blair, a most intimate associate of G. Tennent. He writes, "The people were aroused over quickening messages of some of the preachers. There were several vacant congregations without any settled pastors which earnestly begged for their visits; and several ministers who did not appear heartily to put their shoulders to help in carrying on the same work, yet they yielded to the pressing importunities of their people in inviting those brethren to preach in their pulpits; so that they were very much called abroad, and employed in incessant labours, and the Lord wrought with them mightily. Very great assemblies would ordinarily meet to hear them on any day of the week; and often times a surprising power accompanied their preaching was visible among the multitudes of their hearers." Prince Ch. History. Vol. II pp 260-61.
2. Hodge, Const. History of the Presbyterian Church Vol. I pp 208.

IV ACT OF ORDINATION AND NEW SIDE DISSENT.

The second great problem that arose during the years from 1737 to 1739, which involved a very critical relationship between Gilbert Tennent and the synod, pertained to the ordination of candidates for the ministry. The significance of the conflict which developed out of this issue lies primarily in the fact that it was the direct contributing factor that led to the schism in the Presbyterian Church in 1741. The question as to the nature of the ministry had been vital to Gilbert Tennent for several years. In 1734 he spoke most frankly against the ministers, who, in his estimation, were responsible for the corruption of the Church. (1) His attack was centered primarily upon the unregenerate nature of the ministry. But in the synod meeting of 1738, the representatives of the Presbytery of Lewis submitted a proposal, approaching the problem from a different angle. This involved a closer supervision of the ministry by a close check on the educational qualifications of the ministerial candidates. (2)

The introduction to this overture clearly reveals the

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1. Tennent, Sermon, Solemn Warning to a Secure World, pp 37.
2. The right of the Synod in passing this measure is debateable, since the power of ordaining and examining ministerial candidates is a Presbyterian duty. Geo. H. Ingram contends that the Synod overstepped its authority in passing the ordination act of 1738, in that it took upon itself the power of the Presbyteries. (See Jr. Presb. Hist. Soc., Vol. VI, pp 212.) Prof. Hodge holds that the New Brunswick Presbytery was to blame for irregularities in defying the act, but admits that "the right of examining, licensing, ordaining, suspending, and deposing ministers,--are ordinary and acknowledged Presbyterian functions". Hodge, Hist. of Presb. Church, Vol. II, pp 98.

universal recognition of certain perils confronting the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. Since this proposal became the official statement of the Old Side party regarding the requisites for the ordination of ministerial candidates, it naturally expresses their view of the need of some measure, regulating the supervision of ministerial candidates. This first statement admits in brief the grievous disadvantages confronting the young men of the colonies in securing a religious education in preparation for the ministry. Because of limited financial means they could not attend the European or New England colleges; and because of the absence of educational institutions in the Middle Colonies, there was a danger that men not properly trained would enter the ministry; "thereby paving the way for a formidable train of sad consequences" to the church.(1)

A. Involved Synodical power to examine ministerial candidates.

To prevent this evil it was proposed that "every student who has not studied with approbation, passing the usual courses in some of the New England or European colleges, approved by public authority, shall before he be encouraged by any presbytery for the sacred work of the ministry, apply himself to the synod, and that they appoint a committee of their members yearly, whom they know to be well skilled in the several branches of philosophy and divinity, and the languages, to examine such students in this place, and finding them accomplished in those several parts of learning, shall allow them

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1. Minutes of Synod, pp 139.

a public testimonial from the synod, which til better provisions be made, will in some measure answer the design of taking a degree in a college".(1)

The purpose of this overture was to stimulate youth "with a laudable emulation, prevent errors young men may imbibe by reading without direction, or things of little value, will banish ignorance, fill our infant church with men eminent for parts and learning, and advance the glory of God, and the honour of our synod both at home and among our neighbors, who conceive a low opinion of us for want of such favourable opportunities".(2)

B. Violation by New Brunswick Presbytery.

Both the purpose and the method are here clearly stated as to what constituted the majority view with regard to ordaining candidates for the ministry.(3) However, it was far from being in agreement with the views of Gilbert Tennent and his associates, who had been organized into the New Brunswick Presbytery that same year.

(4) In direct violation of this act, they accepted the application of Mr. John Rowland for license to preach, at their organization meeting, ^{according} to the following conclusion, "They were not, in point of conscience, restrained by said act from using the liberty and the power which Presbyteries have all along hitherto enjoyed; but that it was their duty to take the said Mr. Rowland on trial", (5). Consequently after giving the usual examination and hearing him profess the

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1. Minutes of Synod, pp 139.
2. Ibid, pp 139.
3. This measure was approved by a great majority.
4. Minutes of Synod, pp 136-37.
5. Minutes of Presbytery of New Brunswick, pp 1-2.

Westminster Confession to be his confession of faith, he was granted free license and liberty to preach.(1) To complicate matters still more, the New Brunswick Presbytery took the liberty to give heed to some of the people at Maidenhead and Hopewell, New Jersey, who were under the regularly appointed ministry of Mr. Guild, and who in turn again was under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and assigned Mr. Rowland to that place. However, this action of the New Brunswick Presbytery was not as defiant of the Synod's jurisdiction as it may seem. In March 1738 the people of Maidenhead and Hopewell had applied to the Presbytery of Philadelphia for the liberty to call in some other ministerial candidates. And this right was granted to them.(2) Consequently when the New Brunswick Presbytery sent Mr. Rowland to them, it was in accord with Presbyterian order. But since Mr. Rowland had been irregularly ordained, they reconsidered their grant to the congregations of Maidenhead and Hopewell and refused Mr. Rowland the right to preach in their midst. But the New Brunswick group insisted on their prerogatives to both ordain and send their ministers to whatever territories they deemed necessary for the work of God, and refused to withdraw their candidate from the bounds of the Philadelphia Presbytery.

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1. Letter of Rowland to Prince. Gillies Hist. Col., pp 337.
2. Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, pp 52.
Rowland states that upon his first coming to these places, he was compelled to preach in barns. Yet the attendance at the meetings was so numerous that the largest barns among us were chosen to worship God in. This shows the demand and the popularity of the revival preachers even though they took largely the law into their own hands. Gillies Hist. Coll., pp 337.

C. Reprimand by Synod.

Hence the Tennent group became guilty in the eyes of the majority of the Synod of not only violating the act of 1738, but also the act pertaining to Presbyterial jurisdiction over new preachers coming into its territory.(1) Against such flagrant violations, both the Presbytery of Philadelphia and the Synod raised their objections. The former based their rebuke on the grounds that John Rowland had not complied with the order of the last Synod, relating to the examination of ministerial candidates. And that he had been hastily passed over in his trials by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, in direct opposition to the order of the Synod. Concerning this irregularity of his licensing, he had been informed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia. In view of these circumstances, the said Presbytery refused to accept Mr. Rowland as an orderly licensed preacher among the people of Maidenhead and Hopewell. Nor would they accept him in any other vacancies within their bounds, until his way be cleared by complying with the act of the Synod of 1738.(2).

The case was laid before the synod of 1739, causing that body to approve an overture reprimanding the people of Maidenhead and Hopewell for their "unmanerly reflections and unjust aspersions, both upon the Synod and the Presbytery through their disorderly action improving Mr. Rowland as a preacher among them, when they were advised by the Presbytery that he was not to be esteemed and improved as an orderly candidate of the ministry."(3)

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1. Minutes of Synod pp 133.
2. Minutes of Presbytery of Philadelphia pp 57.
3. Minutes of Synod pp 146.

The New Brunswick Presbytery was also to receive its share of criticism at this Synod meeting. Through its Presbytery book, the case of Rowland was brought before the synod, and there seemed to be no question but that it had violated the synod's action of the preceding year.

"The Synod so judge the proceedings of the said Presbytery of New Brunswick to be very disorderly, and do admonish the said Presbytery to avoid such divisive courses for the future; and do determine not to admit the said Mr. Rowland to be a preacher of the Gospel within our bounds, nor encourage any of our people to accept him until he submit to such examinations as were appointed by this Synod for those that have had a private education."(1)

D. Tennent's basis for opposition.

Gilbert Tennent was without doubt the power behind the reactionary conduct of the New Brunswick Presbytery that led to the above overture by the Synod. In this controversy over the right of Presbyteries to ordain ministers he becomes the undisputed leader of the New Side party in its relations to the Synod, and consequently the chief figure in the great upheaval within the Presbyterian Church that rose primarily out of the conflict. There are three major principles that are distinctly manifest in his protest against the above actions of the Synod. The first of these is the right of dissent from decisions of the Synod that arouse within the individual conscientious objections to such actions. The second involves the absolute necessity of the experience of religion, especially by the ministers of the Gospel. The third is the right of Presbyteries as over against the dominating powers of the synod in

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1. Minutes of Synod pp 146

questions affecting the promotion of vital religion. The background for all three of these principles have been noted in his early training and education. It is at this time that he most aggressively champions their defense, and leaves his greatest impression upon the religious history of the Middle Colonies.

The principle of tolerating unregenerate ministers had been most detestable to Gilbert Tennent from the very first of his ministry. As early as 1734 he spoke most violently against those who preached true doctrines, but who had no experience of what they taught. He stated that there have been and yet are too many lifeless ministers who preach like the old pharisees, their predecessors, without authority and without effect, their cold sermons that freeze and languish on their lips. He likened their sermons to a "parrots prattle".(1) In the controversy over the ordination of ministerial candidates, he could conceive of the actions of the synod as being nothing more than a toleration and justification of such pharisaical preachers in the pulpits of the Church.(2) This is evident by his interpretation of the Ordination Act. He considered it to be but a measure for the exclusion of the Log College men from the ministry, who constituted the chief advocates of vital and experimental religion.(3)

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1. Sermon, "Solemn Warning" 1734 pp 37.
2. Nottingham Sermon.
3. Minutes of Synod pp 187. This is evident by a letter approved by the Synod and sent to President Clapp of Yale in 1746. It states "Mr. Gilbert Tennent cried out that this (the ordination act) was intended to prevent his father's school from training gracious men for the ministry; and he and some of his adherents protested against it."

V. THE APOLOGY OF THE NEW BRUNSWICK PRESBYTERY.

A. Defense of Presbyterial Powers and Dissent.

Consequently he, together with his associates, took issue with the action of the Synod of 1738, and its censure of 1739. Anticipating this last course of the Synod, the New Brunswick Presbytery submitted an Apology at the same meeting on May 23, defending its actions in the case of John Rowland and explaining its stand with regard to the Act of Ordination. Gilbert Tennent heads the list of the signers of this Apology and is undoubtedly its author.

(1) In this work his position is clearly defined with regard to his opposition to the Synod. It contains in the first place three propositions. The first of these is that there is a parity or equality of power among gospel ministers. Secondly, that a Presbytery of the smallest association of ministers have a power from Christ to ordain. Hence thirdly, Presbyteries have authority from Christ to examine all candidates, who regularly offer themselves respecting all qualifications that are necessary for the ministry.

(2) This implies that the authorities of the Presbyteries are distinctive within themselves as regards the examination and the ordination of candidates for the ministry. Pressing the case still further we may note that underlying this implication there exists the basic distinction between the Old Side and the New Side parties as to church government. The former emphasized the rights of the Presbyteries and individual church members; and the latter the superior authority of

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1. Hodge, Const. History, Vol. II, pp 108.
2. Apology, pp 48.

the synod in the matter of legislation pertaining to church polity and practice. The following quotation from the Apology brings out this fact.

"They, (the Presbyteries) have like wise liberty to agree and conclude among themselves upon such things as appear to them to have a good tendency to the advancement of religion, and are agreeable to the word of God, and so engage themselves voluntarily to the observation of these things; provided that they do not encroach upon the just liberties of the people under their charge, nor pretend to bind their dissenting members to observe their agreements, who may have a different view and apprehension of them. Likewise it is reasonable and useful that Synods, consisting of several Presbyteries, may together, whether matters may be brought by way of appeal or reference from particular Presbyteries, in order to obtain judgment and sentiments of a greater number upon them, for in the multitude of counsellors there is safety; and accordingly it is no doubt their duty to take such cases under their consideration and give them their best advice in them. But we think that they should not proceed with any further authority except in such cases where in God hath given particular obvious directions in his word, which is to be exactly followed, and even then they do no more than show what is the mind and will of God in such cases, and declare their own resolutions to act accordingly".(1)

The right of dissent, both on the part of individuals and Presbyteries from the acts or decisions of higher judicatories is here clearly set forth. The fourth proposition states that dissenting members are not obliged to observe such agreements as are by the majority thought agreeable to the word of God.(2) The justification for these liberties or rather the basis for opposing the power of legislation in matters of religion, precedence and conscience, is that such legislation opposes and tends to destroy the ancient church discipline that Christ has appointed by fixing new terms of communion.(3)

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1. Apology, pp 28-29.
2. Ibid, as quoted by John Thompson, pp 10.
3. Ibid, pp 12.

B. The right of itinerating.

On the basis of these propositions he argues in detail against the two acts pertaining to itinerating and ordination. He recognized that the peace of the church was at stake, but for the sake of that peace, he refused to sacrifice the interest that he apprehended to be truth and justice, as determined by the dictates of his own conscience.(1) His first objection to the Itinerating Act was that it was not Scriptural. He looked upon it as but a suitable expedient to preserve peace and order in the congregations, without any particular order from God. But rather than fulfill such a purpose, he deemed it but an instrument that would stimulate that which it sought to eliminate. It would encourage ministers to judge one another, thereby justifying personal animosities. The only disorders that it would prevent, would be those that come from the opposition of Satan to the power of the Gospel. This would come as a result of forbidding the preaching of the truth, hereby tolerating evil to exist in its peace and security.(2) Secondly, he reasoned that the limitation of itinerating was contrary to a ministers sacred calling of preaching the word in season and out of season, and that such a handicap would be injurious to the ruling Elders and the Christian people, who because of the prejudices of ministers not in accord with the true Gospel, would be prevented from hearing the Word of God rightly proclaimed.(3)

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1. Apology, pp 39-40.
2. Ibid, pp 45.ff
3. Ibid, pp 41 & 46.

C. Authorities of Presbyteries to ordain.

Concerning the Ordination Act, the Apology claims that it was unscriptural, uncharitable, antisciptural, unjust and anti-presbyterian. The latter argument is given the greater stress, and underlies the preceding. He interprets the Presbyterian Constitution as granting an absolute equality among all ministers; and that Presbyteries have the full and complete power for ordering all the affairs of the Church within its bounds.(1) "In a word, they have the power to execute all parts of the government, which Christ has appointed in his church, (which by way is not inconsistent with their liableness to be brought to account by Synods or large assemblies consisting of several Presbyteries, either for errors in doctrine or wrong conduct in practice) and consequently they have the whole management of the admission of persons to the preaching of the Gospel, who may and ought to apply to them for that end. Now certainly this Act, we oppose, is an abridgement of the aforesaid right and privilege; for according to it, no presbytery must try to license any candidate, until they obtain the liberty and approbation of those who are constituted their superior in the business."(2) He feared that such encroachment on the rights of the Presbyteries would ultimately lead to a heirarchical power of the church, and the final destruction of Presbyterianism. Hence the basic argument of Gilbert Tennent and his associates against the Ordination Act became one of general principle, that may be

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1. Apology pp 39-40
2. Ibid. pp 51.

summarized in his own words.(1)

"We humbly conceive that the aforesaid acts, (Itinerating and Ordination Acts) in their present form are founded upon a false hypothesis or supposition, namely, that a majority of the Synods or other church judicatories have a power committed to them from Christ to make new rules, acts or canons about religious matters on this ground, viz. that they judge them either to be not against or agreeable to the general directions of the word of God, and serviceable to religion; which shall be binding upon those that conscientiously dissent there from under certain penalties which are to be inflicted even upon those who judge the acts they enforce to be contrary to the mind of Christ and prejudicial to the interests of his Kingdom. This is in brief, a legislative or law making power in religious matters, and this we do utterly disclaim and renounce."(2)

The result of this Apology was that the Synod reconsidered the Ordination Act and revised it so that candidates to the ministry, instead of being examined by an appointed committee of the Synod, they were to be examined either by the whole Synod or its commission.(3)

However Gilbert Tennent was not to be appeased by any such alteration. He immediately renewed his protest to the Synod, and was joined at this time by his father, two brothers, William and Charles, Samuel Blair and Eleazer Wales. But their action was of no avail. A great majority of the Synod favored the retention of the Act, and it continued to remain in force. Undaunted in their contentions, the New Side party disregarded the actions of the Synod, and licensed Mr. McCrea later in the year of 1739,(4) and the Messers William Robinson (5) and Samuel Finley in 1740.(6) In no

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1. Apology pp 53.
2. Besides Gilbert Tennent signing the Apology, the names of Eleazer Wales, William Tennent, Jr. and Samuel Blair also appear.
3. Minutes of the Synod pp 144.
4. Minutes of Presbytery of New Brunswick pp 13.
5. Ibid. pp 16.
6. Ibid. pp 20.

one of these cases did they comply with the requisites of the Synod.(1)

D. Factor's determining Tennent's apologetic views.

One may well question, as was done by John Thompson in his refutation of the Apology, 1741, whether Gilbert Tennent and his associates did not so minimize the confessions of the Church, and the ecclesiastical authority of Church judicatories in contrast to the word of God and the authority of Christ, that the ultimate result of carrying out their principles would be religious anarchy.(2) The Old Side party interpreted his principles to this effect. But upon further analysis it does not appear that Gilbert Tennent purposely sought to undermine the Presbyterian form of government or deviate from the Westminster Confession and Directory. There are two factors which cannot be ignored in interpreting his opposition to the Synod's Acts pertaining to itinerating and the ordination of ministerial candidates; and also his prime emphasis on the authority of scripture and Christ as compared with his secondary recognition of the power of the Synod and Presbytery.

(1) Man's Glorification of God.

The first of these considerations is a debate which he carried on during the years of 1738 to 40, with David Cowell on

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1. During the first years, 1738-1744, the New Brunswick Presbytery added three members to the roll by ordination;-John Rowland, James McCrea, and William Robinson, all students of Log College. In addition one candidate was licensed,-Samuel Finley. James Campbell, licentiate, was received from the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and three candidates were taken under care of the Presbytery. NO ORDAINED MINISTERS WERE RECEIVED UPON CERTIFICATE. Mr.G.Ingram, Journal Presb.Hist. Soc. Vol. VII Dec. 1913 pp 167.
2. Hodge Const.Hist.Vol.II pp 109.

the question whether the ultimate aim of man should be the glory of God or ones own happiness. The second factor is his attitude towards the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. These two factors were intimately associated in his mind, in that the former constituted the ideal towards which man should strive, and the latter the reality of the life of the Christian ministers as it was actually manifest in the Presbyterian Church. He recognized that between the ideal and the actual state of the clergy, there was an unexplainable and great inconsistency. The ministers were orthodox in their doctrines; but so far were they from the experience of their preachings, that instead of glorifying God, they cursed his very name through their pharisaical hypocrisy. Consequently he justified his denunciations of man made institutions and decrees on the basis that when they stood in the way of man's ultimate end of glorifying God, he could justly exercise his conscientious privilege of dissent in order that he could expose and correct the existing evils. This procedure, to Gilbert Tennent, was not a mere justification of a means to gain an acquired reform and a regenerate clergy, but it constituted a deeper spiritual interpretation of the underlying principle of all Church government, that it exists not as an end in itself, but as a means to the ultimate spiritual aim of man, namely the glorification of god. If it does not fulfill this objective, it falls short of its intended purpose, and must be dealt with accordingly.

The debate between Gilbert Tennent and David Cowell first

appears on the minutes of the Synod in 1738. However it must have been carried on for a considerable period before it was presented to the synod.(1) It was given no consideration at this meeting, but deferred to the following year. A committee was however appointed to investigate the affair, which gave its report at the Synod meeting of 1739.

The doctrine involved in this debate together with its abuse by ministers, had undoubtedly been a source of irritation for Gilbert Tennent since his early ministry. In 1734, he indicted most severely both laity and clergy for ignoring the "Glory of God" and seeking only their own welfare. He accused them of taking comfort unto themselves,(2) with the result that their religious services were "abominable and loathsome to God." He contended that they pretended to worship God, but in reality they worshipped themselves. Hence they had only their own interests in mind, and their aim in divine worship was but mercenary and selfish. "Self", he stated, "bears the ascendent in the breasts above the glory of God."(3) In 1740 he expressed this conviction in still more forcible terms. He stated that "the principle part of the ordinary call of God to ministerial work is to aim at the glory of God, and in subordination thereto the good of souls."(4) No natural minister could do this. He could fish faithfully for a good name, and for wordly self, but

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1. Minutes of Synod pp 138.
2. Sermon "Solemn Warning." pp 42.
3. Ibid. pp 45.
4. Nottingham Sermon pp 7.

not for the conversion of sinners to God.(1) Gilbert Tennent associates this doctrine with the platonic idea of the ultimate good. "The last end of a worshipper is the chiefest good for the last end and the chief good ~~are~~ convertible terms."(2) Even natural reason informs one that good is desirable for its own sake.- "Good added to good makes a greater good, and so more desirable, and therefore evil as evil, or a lesser good, which is comparatively evil, cannot be the object of desire."(3) Thus on the basis of the idea that the glory of God constitutes the greatest good and the object of an individual's chief desire, he could conceive of no greater inconsistency than a minister preaching and striving for his own happiness and comfort. He was firm in his convictions that such a state existed in the ministry of the Church. The unsoundness of many preachers in the principal doctrines of Christianity that related to experience and practice, he interpreted to be primarily due to the fact that they made no distinction between the glory of God and their own happiness, and believed that self love is the foundation of all obedience. "These doctrines," he states, "do in my opinion entirely overset, if true, all supernatural religion; render regeneration a vain and needless thing; involve a crimson blasphemy against the blessed God, by putting ourselves on a level with him".(4)

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1. Nottingham Sermon. pp 7.
2. Sermon, "Solemn Warning" pp 45.
3. Paper by G. Tennent read before Synod 1740.
4. J. Thompson, Ch. of Christ. pp 5.

The extent to which these charges were true, is difficult to estimate. The only prominent leader of the Church who took occasion to answer them was Mr. John Thompson. He considered it a "very strange stretch of censoriousness, and harsh judging" to conclude that persons were unconverted who disagreed with the doctrines of Gilbert Tennent.(1) Undoubtedly the numerous testimonies to the decline of religion during this period, establishes the fact that there were grounds for great concern over the lax practice and faith of a great part of the clergy.(2)

The synod gave no special consideration to the contentions that David Cowell, together with other ministers, were guilty of deviating from this essential doctrine of Calvinism. In fact the committee reported to the synod at its meeting in 1739, that the principal controversy rose largely from the two parties not having a clear idea of their subject, and that upon closer examination they found no differences between them, in that they both agreed "that the glory of God is the ultimate end of all things."(3) Gilbert Tennent was dissatisfied with this decision and appealed the case again to the synod meeting of 1740, for a review of the debate. But he was sadly disappointed in that a great majority opposed its reconsideration.(4)

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1. J. Thompson, Ch. of Christ pp 5.
2. See Chapter III, Quoted J. Thompson, "Ch. of Christ" pp 5.
3. Minutes of Synod pp 146.
4. Ibid pp 150.

The report of the committee in the Synod meeting of 1739 is of importance in that it shows that officially the Synod defended the identical views that Gilbert Tennent proposed. This report is in part as follows.-"We apprehend that the glory of God was the only motive that influenced him to all his external operations. For since nothing else had an existence, nothing certainly

The importance of the decision of the synod regarding this controversy lies not its settlement of the question at issue, but primarily in its effect upon Gilbert Tennent. It constituted to him a final justification by the synod of the evil that he considered to be the root of all the religious degeneracy at that time, namely unconverted ministers. This conclusion led to the preaching of the Nottingham sermon which was one of the major factors in the disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1741. It is also of great significance in that it reveals Gilbert Tennent's attitude towards an evil which he considered paramount amongst the oppositions to the Great Awakening, in which he was most actively engaged.

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could influence him from without himself. By this glory declarative, we mean the manifestation of his essential and adorable perfections for the great and excellent ends he designed in this manifestation. It is the indispensable duty of every creature, according to its utmost capacity, to aim at the same end which the blessed God has in view, and to endeavour to direct all his actions to it. The method, in which the great God has required us to prosecute this end is by a conformity to his image, and example, and a sincere and universal obedience to his laws.---This obedience which we are to pay to the divine law, and by which alone we can glorify him, must be performed by us, not only because it is the way of happiness, but because it is infinitely just, and reasonable in itself, agreeable to the blessed God, whom we are under indissoluble obligation to obey, and carry on the same designs which he has been pleased to propose in all his actions. And these designs of the glory of God, and our own happiness, are so inseparably connected that they must never be placed in opposition to each other. For in all cases he that actively glorifies God, promotes his own happiness, and by a conformity to the divine statutes and laws which is the only way to happiness, we, in the best manner are capable of glorifying God."

Minutes of Synod pp 146-7.

(2) Prevalence of unconverted ministers.

The second factor underlying Gilbert Tennent's opposition to the actions of the synod was that he conceived many of the clergy to be unconverted ministers. On the basis of this supposition he denied the synod's right, to prevent pious ministers from preaching in congregations where the people did not have the privilege of hearing the true gospel, and to hinder the New Brunswick Presbytery from ordaining ministers that it knew stood for vital and experimental Christianity. Tennent's chief exposure of such pharisaical preachers is his sermon on "The Unconverted Ministry" that was preached at Nottingham, Pennsylvania, March 8, 1740. However since this sermon constitutes the key to the crisis of the conflict between the old and the new side parties in 1741, its analysis will be deferred to the discussion on the schism.

Summary of Tennent's to the Synod. 1729--1739

The years from 1729 to 1739 constitute a significant period in the life of Gilbert Tennent as well as in the history of the Presbyterian Church. They were largely formative and involved the development of two distinct groups of thought, culminating in the revival of religion and great ecclesiastical turmoil. The passing of the Adopting Act introduced the period with the intent and the hope of the members of the Presbyterian Church, that the perils of heresies and religious decline would be eliminated. As a counter remedy for the existing dangers, Gilbert Tennent proposed the measure of 1734, which required the personal and ministerial examination of people for their experience of religion. Hence these two

actions of the synod, agreeable to each other, but representative of two divergent groups, mark the beginnings of two distinct conceptions of religious reform. The advocates of the Westminster Confession, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory, consistently continued their program of protection and right guidance of the infant church, by ecclesiastical legislation governing the activities of the clergy, and centralizing the power of selecting ministerial candidates in the synod rather than in the Presbyteries. Gilbert Tennent stringently opposed such measures in the fear that the former would seriously hinder the necessary freedom of the revival preachers in proclaiming the gospel to an unchurched and destitute people; and that the latter would threaten the liberties involved in presbyterial government and prevent pious men from entering the ministry in a time when many of the clergy had declined to a state of formal orthodoxy and dead security. In all cases of debate, Gilbert Tennent had only the support of the minority. But he stood boldly and firmly for his conviction that he championed the cause of vital Christianity, and defied the majority even in cases of official synodical actions, as was the case with the ordination of John Rowland. Such a circumstance, whereby the minority resolutely resists the majority, leads inevitably to grave and serious consequences. The great schism of 1741 was the direct result of the cumulative differences that gradually developed during this period under consideration. But great good also must come from an individual's absolute surrender to the service of Christ. Gilbert

Tennent's defense of the revival preachers before the synod as well as his encouragement and active participation in awakening vast multitudes from spiritual security and indifference, contributed new vitality to the Christian Religion, that generations in the past have been unable to fully estimate. However the real contribution of Gilbert Tennent in this respect, had but just begun during this period. His endeavours were to have their ultimate expression in a greater way and on a much larger scale in the Great Awakening of 1740, that was to sweep over the Middle Colonies like a Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, leaving its indelible impression, never to be erased from the history of American Christianity.

CHAPTER V

GILBERT TENNENT AND THE GREAT AWAKENING

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Mine eyes and ears have seen and heard so much of the appearances and fruits of the late revival of religion, that I must reject religion altogether and turn infidel, if I should dispute and oppose the same.

INTRODUCTION

A. His great activity.

Gilbert Tennent wrote the above words as he beheld in retrospect the profusion of new spiritual life amongst the Colonists that came out of the revival that is known as the Great Awakening. From the middle of the year of 1739 to the Spring of 1741, he manifested an indefatigable zeal in behalf of this great movement. In fact these years constitute a climax in his spiritual development and religious thinking. It is the period when he gives full expression to the religious convictions that had matured and crystallized during the ten preceding years of his ministry and relations to the synod. At times in this great crisis he acts heedlessly but always in the consciousness that he is championing the cause of vital religion. He fervently preaches repentance to his parishioners, that they may be saved from the terrors of eternal judgment. He journeys far and wide to bring the message of the gospel to the unregenerate masses in the isolated sections of the Colonies. He welcomes George Whitefield as a "Great Awakener" to assist him and his associates in their activities. He appears before the meetings of the Synod

defending the work of revival, and denounces most severely its opponents. He leaves the grave of his wife, who had recently passed away, and sets out in the midst of a most severe winter to tour the New England Colonies. There is something courageous, adventurous and romantic in his intense enthusiasm to bring the people of the Colonies to the glorious riches of Christ by way of a religious experience.

In this great work he stood not alone. Within the Presbyterian Body, he was associated with a group of preachers of like mind and purpose, who have been classified with the greatest of ministers in that Church. In general, he was a vital part of the universal awakening that swept over America and Europe during the same period. The following section will point out the contributions that he made to this great revival of vital Christianity, in an age when people were spiritually indifferent, and when the vital doctrines of Christianity were challenged by the rationalistic and deistic influences of the Old World.

B. Divisions of period.

The participation of Gilbert Tennent in the Great Awakening from 1739 to 1741, may be divided according to time into two parts. The first constitutes the period from the fall of 1739 to December 1740, when he was actively engaged in the work of the revival in the Middle Colonies. During this time he worked in close association with his own co-laborers in the Presbyterian Church and with George Whitefield. The second part includes his

journey through the New England Colonies, commencing ~~with~~ December 1740 and extending to the middle of 1741. It is a great loss to our historical knowledge that he kept no journal or record of his work and travels during this period. For our information concerning his activities in the Middle Colonies we are primarily dependent upon the "Journals of Whitefield," and the writings of his contemporaries. As to the trip to New England, we must depend on the writings of the ministers of those colonies for our sources. These scant and diverse records make it impossible to trace his journeys either chronologically or in detail. But they are sufficient to give us an estimate of his extensive travels and the great influence that he had upon the people who heard him preach.

C. A Co-worker with other revivalists.

No claims can here be made that Gilbert Tennent was responsible for the great revival of 1740. This spiritual awakening was not a movement inaugurated and developed by any one or two outstanding religious leaders. It was a manifestation of new vitality in religion, stimulated by many pastors in their respective communities, who caught the spark of new spiritual life and kindled it amongst their parishioners. The torches were carried to outlying fields with the same general effects, causing a general conflagration of deep spiritual concern through out the colonies. This is evident by the many distinct accounts by the several ministers who were engaged in the work. (1) Hence, in 1739, Gilbert Tennent was surrounded

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1. Prince's "Christian History" contains these various reports

by a host of supporters and revival preachers. The sermons of John Rowland at Maidenhead and Hopewell caused many to be "convinced of their perishing nature," so that they became converted.(1) Johathan Dickenson was instrumental in stirring the people of Newark and Elizabethtown to new spiritual life.(2) William Tennent continued the work commenced by his brother John at Freehold, New Jersey.(3) Mr. John Davenport carried on a great work in Staten Island; Samuel Blair, in New Londonderry, Pennsylvania.(4) George Whitefield aroused the people of Philadelphia.(5) Hence by the Fall of 1739, the revival of religion had taken root in various scattered congregations through out the Middle Colonies from Philadelphia to New York. Gilbert Tennent became an active participant in encouraging and promoting these separate revivals wherever opportunities presented themselves.

I. HIS ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDDLE COLONIES

A. Influence on George Whitefield.

The most information that can be secured on his activities during the first year of this revival, is gleaned from his associations with George Whitefield. On the latter's first preaching tour through the Middle Colonies, he was most graciously welcomed by Gilbert Tennent at New Brunswick.(6) (Nov. 13, 1739) Out of this

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1. Gillies, Historical Collections pp 337.
2. Ibid. pp 339
3. Prince, Christian History Vol. II pp 299.
4. Ibid. pp 245.
5. Ibid. pp 295.
6. Whitefield's Journals Nov. 13, 1739 pp 343. Whitefield here characterizes Gilbert Tennent as an eminent dissenting minister, whose labours God has greatly blessed. He states further that he and his associates are now the burning and shining lights in this part of America.

meeting there developed a most intimate relationship and friendship that continued through out the course of the Great Awakening. When Whitefield left New Brunswick the following day, (Nov.14,1739) for Elizabethtown, Gilbert Tennent followed him. On the way they exchanged accounts of their experiences, and when they arrived at their destination, Gilbert Tennent preached a sermon that made a profound impression upon Whitefield. He recorded in his journals that "he had never before heard such a searching sermon. He 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." Then he makes a statement concerning the power of his preaching. He writes, "Being deeply convicted of sin, he has learned experimentally to dissect the heart of the natural man. Hypocrites must either soon be converted or enraged by his preaching. He is a son of thunder, and does not fear the faces of men."(1) This is indeed a great compliment by so powerful a preacher as Whitefield. The effects of this sermon are still further noted by his own words, when he states, "My soul was humbled and melted with the sense of God's mercies, and I found more and more what a babe and novice I was in the things of God."(2) This spiritual and homiletical power of Tennent explains in part the influence that he had over the people.

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1. Whitefield's Journals pp 344.
2. Ibid. pp 344.

B. Itinerations. November 1739--November 1740

From November 1739 to November 1740, he traveled quite constantly from one section of the Middle Colonies to another. On the twenty-first of November 1739, he traveled with Whitefield to Maidenhead, N.J., and on the twenty-second, to Neshaminy.(1) On Friday, April 25, 1740 he was in Amwell, N. J.(2), returning to New Brunswick on the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh. On the twenty-eighth he left against for Elizabethtown.(3) On May fifth he was at Perth Amboy and Freehold.(4) On may fourteenth and fifteenth, at Nottingham, Faggs Manor, and New Castle.(5) From November fourth to sixth, he was in Staten Island, Baskinridge and New Brunswick.(6) These places were visited primarily in connection with George Whitefield, and it is doubtful if it ever will be known as to the other journeys that he made. It is a certain fact that he made a very extensive trip preaching the gospel, through out the various Middle Colonies during the summer of 1740. No detail records are found of this journey, but it is known that it took him through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.(7). He seemed well satisfied with the results of this evangelistic tour, in that he told Whitefield that "God worked in a remarkable manner through his ministry in many places."(8) In the Fall of 1740, he

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1. Whitefield's Journals pp 350.
2. Ibid. pp 410
3. Ibid. pp 411-12.
4. Ibid. pp 416.
5. Ibid. pp 423-24.
6. Ibid. pp 488-91.
7. Ibid. pp 488.
8. Ibid. pp 488.

spent a week in Greenwich, N.J., preaching once and twice every day that he was there. The records of this church states that his efforts "were accompanied with surprising effects, in the comforting and establishing old pious professors and awakening the thoughtless of almost every age and character. After this the church on the Sabbath days was filled with people who came and joined in the worship with the few who had constantly kept up the society of worship there."(1)

C. His great spiritual concern.

One of the interesting phases of his experiences on these itinerations, was his deep concern over his own spiritual status. In a letter to George Whitefield dated Dec. 1, 1739, he pours out the anguish of his soul, and the consciousness of his great personal limitations. This letter is given in full because it shows most touchingly his humility before God, as contrasted with the boldness that he manifested in his actions before the synod.

"The reason why I spoke so little for the most part of the time while I was with you, was a shameful sense I had of my ignorance and barrenness, after such a multitude of waterings and sealings as God had given me. Though I am a brute beat before God, one of the meanest and vilest worms that ever crawled on the creation of God, yet I must say to his praise, and my own shame, that I have had in time past such discoveries of my great Father's dear affection as have overcome me. For months together my soul has been so ravished with divine objects, that my animal spirits have been wasted, and my sleep much broken. I have been made to loath my food because of the superior sweetness I have found in Christ. I could not refrain my soul from a secret longing for reproach, poverty, imprisonment, and death for a glorious Christ, that thereby I might testify a grateful regard to his unspeakable dear and very venerable majesty.

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1. Records of Presb. Church, Greenwich, N.J. in Jr. Presb.Hist. Soc. Vol. II pp 87.

I could not refrain wishing that every hair of my head was a life, and that I might lay it down freely for my sweet Lord Jesus. The fears of bringing any reproach on his religion has many times brought bitter tears from my eyes and my heart. Sometimes when traveling on the road, while I beheld the canopy of Heaven, my heart has been suddenly ravished with love to God as my father, so that I could not forbear crying out in the pleasing transport of a child like affection, Father, Father, with a full and sweet assurance that he was my father and my God.--In the night season when I awoke, my soul was still with God; the passion of my soul for Christ was so vehement, that my dreams were full of him. It made my rest very broken, and caused me often to speak through my sleep. And thus it was for a long tract of time. But alas, when the great God wisely withdrew his quickening presence and let loose Satan upon me, O what a terrible havoc did he make in my soul, and that alas, too much with my will. I thought myself a monster in iniquity, and that there was some peculiar brutishness in my heart, that none had but myself,---This made me often wish for death to get clear of it. This hath often enraged my soul so against sin and myself for it, that I have thought, if it were lawful, I could freely try to pluck my heart out, and tear it to pieces."(1)

This constituted what Gilbert Tennent termed, "the experience of religion." It sounds somewhat exaggerated or fantastic in this modern age, when the term "Christian experience" is hardly heard of. But to him it was a reality. It gripped his life, and manifested itself in his labours to bring others to the same experience. Consequently he writes concerning his activities during this revival period. "I have been among my people dealing with them plainly about their souls state in their houses; examining them one by one as to their experiences, and telling natural people the danger of their state; and exhorting them that were totally secure, to seek convictions; and those that were convinced, to seek Jesus; and reproved pious people for their faults; and blessed be God, I have seen hopeful appearances of concern amongst a pretty

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1. G. Tennent's letter. Gillies Collection pp 334.

many in the places I belong to."(1)

D. Results.

Great results followed the evangelistic endeavours of Gilbert Tennent. He failed to glory in the thousands of people that came to hear him, as did Whitefield. But he bears positive evidence concerning the fruit of his labours. Consequently he writes, as previously quoted, that if he refused to believe all that his eyes and ears had seen and heard of the fruits of late revival of religion, he must reject religion altogether and turn infidel.(2) As to the number that were converted, he states that poor souls flocked to the dear Immanuel, the blessed Lord Jesus, as doves to their windows. "Multitudes tremble in their religious assemblies under the apprehensions of God's dreadful vengeance. Many melted into the softest contrition, while they beheld the amiable glories of redeeming grace and love."(3) He refers in particular to the places of Nottingham, Faggs Manor, White Creek, Neshaminy, and "elsewhere" as places of such general lamentation that the speaker's voice was almost drowned with the cries of distress, under the spell of the sermon. "Diverse persons fell to the ground as though they were stabbed with a sword". "Some", he states, "relapsed into the sordid impieties, but many were brought to a sound conversion."(4) A few years later he admitted that many of these were deceived respecting their state towards God. But he explained that such was but

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1. G. Tennent's letter. Gillies Collection, pp 334.
2. G. Tennent's account of Revival. Prince, Christian Hist., Vol. II., pp 297ff.
3. G. Tennent's preface to Dickenson's "Display of special grace".
4. G. Tennent's account of Revival. Prince, Ch. Hist., Vol. 11, pp 297.

usual under the circumstances and in no way disparages the work of God.(1) "Rather", he states, "we have the fullest evidence that many have been during the late gracious revival brought from a state of nature to a state of grace".(2) The sudden conversions that were followed with raptures were but the "expressions of joy over finding the great prize".(3)

E. Opposition.

Great opposition was aroused in the Middle Colonies against these abnormal manifestations of spiritual experiences. Gilbert Tennent states that the opposers were as numerous as they were invidious and impertinent.(4) However, this antagonism was not limited to the exceptional cases of conversions alone. There was also a natural prejudice that manifested itself in the "spreading of false reports both by word and writing in an attempt to blacken the character of several ministers whom God has been pleased to honour with success.(5) The source of this opposition is not difficult to determine. It was officially expressed at the synod meetings of 1740 and '41 at Philadelphia and will be dealt with in the next section on the conflict that arose largely out of the ~~a~~wakening. However, this does not in the least cast any doubtful reflections upon the work of the revival preachers. During the time when the ~~a~~wakening was at its greatest height "the work of conviction and conversion spread with such power

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1. The Examiner Examined, pp 109.
2. Ibid, pp 112.
3. Ibid, pp 113.
4. Tennent's account, pp 297.
5. Preface to "Display of Grace". Prince, Vol.II, pp 286.

and progress that even the most malignant opposers were silenced". "They were then either afraid or ashamed openly to contradict the astonishing displays of the divine almightiness, in alarming multitudes of secure sinners out of their fatal stupor, and exciting in them the utmost solicitude about the everlasting concerns of their souls".(1)

II. GILBERT TENNENT'S JOURNEY THROUGH NEW ENGLAND.

A. Its motivation and importance.

The second period of Gilbert Tennent's participation in the Great Awakening constitutes an evangelistic tour through the New England Colonies during the winter of 1740 and 1741. This trip was suggested by George Whitefield immediately after he returned therefrom October 31, 1740.(2) In comparing the places visited by both Whitefield and Tennent, it appears certain that the purpose of this journey was to follow up the work of the former. The plans for it were made at New Brunswick on November 7, 1740. Gilbert Tennent was unwilling to undertake the adventure at first, because of diffidence, and the consciousness that he was not able to do so great a work.(3) However, after being convinced that it was the Will of God, he consented to go. It was arranged by Whitefield that a young minister who had been a

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1. Preface to "Display of Grace" by Tennent.
2. Whitefield's Journals, pp 452 to 486.
Trumbull states that this journey was prompted by his success in the labours among his own people, and among others in neighboring towns of New Jersey; and that he was sent by the Presbytery or a number of ministers in his vicinity to preach in New England, and assist in promoting the good work which had so remarkably been begun. Trumbull "Hist. of Connecticut", Vol. II, pp 154.
3. Whitefield's Journal Nov. 7, 1740, pp 491.

tutor at Harvard, and whom Whitefield had brought back with him to the Middle Colonies, should accompany him. Undoubtedly the hesitancy on the part of Gilbert Tennent to consent to this journey, was due to his awe and respect for the supremacy of both the New England churches and ministers over those of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. However the divine influence in his life again manifested itself, in that he never failed to say or do a thing that he was certain to be the will of the Lord. It is impossible to explain his courage in promoting the cause of experimental religion, or his boldness before the synod of Philadelphia, without having this fact in mind. The reason for this absolute surrender to the Will of God was the inviolate satisfaction that he derived from such an obedience. Upon his return from this journey he expressed this idea most clearly. He stated that,

"I never undertook anything with a deeper sense of my own weakness and a sincere intention of God's glory and his Kingdom's good, than my journey to New England; and never underwent such hardships by reason of the intense cold, frequent travel and continued labours as there. So that I am like to feel the effects thereof til my death, having thereby contracted a hardness of hearing, with other bodily disorders. But that which comforts me under those infirmities is this, that the eternal God was visibly with me in that journey, in sealing my labours with surprising and manifold success in the conviction and conversion of many sinners to God; which some of the most eminent for piety and learning in New England have already born express testimony to, and many thousands more can."⁽¹⁾

The New England journey is of special significance in relation to Gilbert Tennent's part in promoting vital religion for a threefold reason. First, there are numerous and extensive testimonies of this trip which shed considerable light on the nature of his evangelistic methods. This is something that is missing from the

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1. Tennent's, The Examiner Examined. pp 3.

references pertaining to his work in the Middle Colonies. Secondly, this trip makes possible a comparison of the respective abilities of Tennent and Whitefield as revival preachers. On the basis of this, the ability of Gilbert Tennent may be determined according to the standard of one of the world's greatest evangelists. Third, this journey furnishes direct evidences as to the effects and the results of his preachings.

B. Its Progress.

(1) To Boston.

Gilbert Tennent arrived in Boston on the thirteenth of December, 1740, after having stopped on his way to New York.(1) He undoubtedly experienced strange and conflicting emotions as he made the long and perilous journey from his home in New Brunswick. It was the midst of winter, with a heavy snow fall that lasted into March of the following year. These are no indications from the available sources, that a young man whom Whitefield had promised to accompany him was with him. A short time before his departure, he had buried his wife who had been very dear to him and whose funeral sermon he had preached while the corpse was lying before him. (2) Thus in sorrow, loneliness, and the dangers of winter he traveled to Boston, fearful of the great task that confronted him; but urged on by the simple yet powerful concept, "the will of the Lord be done".(3)

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1. Prince, Ch. Hist., Vol.II, pp 384.

2. Whitefield's Journals, pp 488.

Whitefield here writes, "This put me in mind of Melanchton, who, as the news of his wife's death said, 'By Kate, I'll come after thee ere long'."

3. Whitefield's Journal, pp 491.

He had been preceded in Boston by George Whitefield who had aroused multitudes to great concern over their souls.(1) But he was not effected by an inferiority complex, just because of a notable predecessor.

(2) Style of preaching and spiritual power.

He commenced to preach in the new North Church on the day following his arrival. If he had ever entertained any personal ambitions to come to Boston to win a reputation as a master of homiletics or oratory, there were no signs of any such motives in his first discourse. His appearance, gestures and delivery were crude and displeasing to both the eyes and the ears of his hearers. But as to his message, it was aimed directly at the heart and the consciences of the people, intent to expose "the ruinous delusions", and the "hypocritical shifts in religion", that so characterized the faith of the people in that day. The result was that many came out of their deceitful refuge of security in a "form of godliness without power", and became conscious of "their self deceived hypocritical situation".(2)

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1. Prince, Ch. Hist., Vol.II, pp 347-381.
Yet Mr. Prince seems to disparage the soundness of the conversions caused by his preachings. (Whitefield) He states in a note, that "Tho the people were then generally frighted many awakened to such a sense of their duty as to offer themselves to our communion; yet very few came to me then under deep convictions of their unconverted and lost condition, in comparison of what came now. (After Tennent) Nor did those who came to me then, come so much with the enquiry, what shall we do to be saved, as to signify they had such a sense of their duty to come to the Lord's table that they dare not stay away any longer.
2. Prince, Christian History, Vol.II, pp 384.
Prince writes, "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 thoroughly discovery; they went to hear him, that the secret corruptions and delusions of their hearts might be more discovered; and more searching the sermon, the more acceptable it was to their anxious minds".

The Reverend Mr. Prince gives a most vivid description of the great personality that lay back of his preaching, "From the terrible and deep convictions he had passed through in his soul, he seemed to have such a lively view of the divine majesty, the spirituality, purity, extensiveness, and strictness of his law; with his glorious holiness, and displeasure at sin, his justice, truth and power in punishing the damned; that the very terrors of God seemed to rise in the mind afresh, when he displayed and brandished them in the eyes of unreconciled sinners. And though some could not bear the representation, and avoided his preaching; yet the arrows of conviction by his ministry, seemed so deeply to pierce the hearts of others, and even some of the most stubborn sinners, as to make them fall down at the feet of Christ and yield a lowly submission to him".(1) This author has given the best description and apparently the best interpretation of Gilbert Tennent's ability as a revival preacher, amongst all the contemporary writers of his day. He also draws a very interesting comparison between the preaching of Whitefield and Tennent. He recognized in the former a power and a purpose comparable to those of the martyrs of Christianity. But he also saw in Whitefield's preachings a certain mechanical persuasion which

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1. Prince, Christian History, Vol.II, pp 384.

This testimony is of great value because it is given by a man of a conservative mind, and great experience in preaching. He was not of the type who could be led astray by great displays of emotion. He states concerning himself, "As in Old England and the New, I have been a constant preacher and observer of the religious state of those who heard me, for about thirty years; they have passed under many scores of most dreadful tempests of thunder and lightening,--and yet in all this display of the Majesty of God, and terrifying apprehensions of sudden danger of destruction, neither in this surprising night, not in all the course of thirty years have I scarce known any by these kinds of terrors brought under genuine convictions.

aroused primarily the animal passions of the hearers. However, he also admits that as Whitefield passed from these mechanical influences to an earnest presentation of "vital truths" of Christianity, he was then instrumental in producing "a vital inward and active piety" that in many cases became permanent. But as to Gilbert Tennent, he characterized his preaching in the following terms.

"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 being damned for ever; with the amazing miseries of that place of torment. But his exhibitions both for matter and manner fell inconceivably below the reality; and tho this terrible preaching may strongly work on the animal passions and frighten the hearers, rouse the soul and prepare the way for terrible convictions; yet those meer animal terrors and these convictions are quite different things".(1)

(3) Effects of his ministry in Boston.

In the light of the charges made against the revival by its opponents, one can hardly consider this statement very complimentary to Tennent. One of the chief criticisms of the revival preachers was that they sought but to arouse the emotions and the passions of the hearers to such an extent that the people were overcome with great abnormal bodily effects.(2) That this was true in many cases is evident from the many accounts of the revival. The Rev. Mr. Prince also recognized the possibility that people may be greatly terrified with the apprehensions of God, eternity and Hell, and still have no conviction.(3) Yet he defines conviction as "the work of the spirit of God, a sovereign, free and almighty agent;

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1. Prince, Vol.II, pp 387-88.
2. Thompson, "Conviction of sinners".
3. Prince, Vol.II, pp 388.

wherein he gives the sinful soul such a clear and lively view of the glory of the divine sovereignty, omni-presence, spirituality and strictness of the law, the binding nature, efficacy, and dreadful-ness of his curses; the multitudes and heinousness of its sins both of ~~commission~~ and omission; the horrible vileness, wickedness, perversness, and hypocrisy of the heart, with its utter impotence 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 the holy and righteous God, and the least degree of strength to help itself out of this condition".

(1) The discoveries, he holds, are made by means of some revealed truths, pertaining to Christian experience. "Such", he states, were the convictions wrought in many hundreds in this town by Tennent's searching ministry".

No stronger statement could hardly be made in appreciation of Gilbert Tennent's work in Boston. His influence and power lay not in the striking of terror in the hearts of the people, but rather in the searching nature of his preaching. This constituted his principal means for the bringing of people to a true religious conviction, his aim was not as the critics complained to preach the terror of the Law, the wrath of God, damnation and Hell. His objective was in the words of the Reverend Mr. Prince, to lay open for the people, "their many vain and secret shifts, refuges, counterfeit resemblances of

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1. Prince, Vol. II, pp 389.

grace, delusive and damning hopes, their utter impotence, and impending danger of destruction; whereby they found all their hopes and refuges of lies to fail them, and themselves exposed to eternal ruin, unable to help themselves in a lost condition."(1) One can easily see how evident it is that this purpose and method of Tennent for arousing the slumbering people to a new vivid experience of conviction and faith, came out his own religious experiences and background.

(4) Itinerations.

He stayed in and around Boston for a period of nearly three months. He did not spend all this time directly in the City but used that place as a center from which he traveled to other towns.(2) On Monday March 2, 1741 he preached his farewell sermon to the people there, and made his departure midst a "general sadness at his going away on the part of many who had been awakened to new spiritual life by his ministry.(3)

The course that Gilbert Tennent took after leaving Boston is uncertain.(4) In a letter to Mr. Whitefield, dated April 25, 1741, he gives a list of the towns that he visited. These are as follows,-
Boston, Charlestown, Cambridge, Ipswich, Portsmouth, Greenland, Ham-
let, Marble-Head, Chelsea, Malden, Hampton, New-Town, Rosebury,

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1. Prince, Ch. Hist., Vol.II, pp 390.

2. Ibid, pp 127.

This is based on a statement by Dr. Coleman of Boston who wrote to the Rev. Mr. Parsons of Lyme, concerning the wonderful progress of the Gospel at Boston, and the towns round about by the blessing of God upon the fervent ministry of Mr. Tennent.

3. Ibid, pp 391.

4. Trumbull states that he preached in Boston principally for more than two months. Trumbull, Hist. of Connecticut, Vol.II, pp 155.

Plymouth, Bristol, Providence, Stoning-Town, Great-Town, New London, Lime, Guilford, New Haven, Milford, Stratford, and New Port.(1) However, these places are but the ones that he considered to be effected by his preachings. It is certain that he visited many more.(2) His travelings took him through the Provinces of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, extending as far north as Maine. He visited several of the congregations twice, stopping both on his northward and southward journies. We cannot follow him chronologically in these travels, neither can we account in detail for his visits to the various congregations, because of the limited sources. However, there are sufficient testimonies available to give us a clear and comprehensive estimate of his contributions to the Great Awakening that took place in the New England Colonies.

(a) Taunton Mass.

The congregation of Taunton, about forty miles southward of Boston, is a typical illustration of the type of religious life with which Gilbert Tennent had to deal. The pastor at this place, The Rev. Mr. Crocker, states that the people had so degenerated from the primitive piety of their ancestors and had sunk into such dregs of formality and irreligion that they were almost ripe for the execution of divine vengeance upon them.(3) Gilbert Tennent visited

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1. Tennent's letter to Whitefield. Gillies Historical Coll., pp 534.
2. Some of the testimonies given concerning his preachings given in Prince's Christian History, come from ministers in towns other than the ones he mentions himself, as Rev. Mr. Crocker from Taunton, Rev. Mr. J. Porter from Bridgewater, Mass., and Rev. Mr. Parks of Westerly, R.I..
3. Letter of Rev. Mr. Crocker, Christian History, Vol.II, pp 325.

this place immediately after leaving Boston on his way to New Port. He preached from Matt.11:28 to an audience that was not so very large on account of the very bad winter. The effects of his preaching were in proportion to the size of the crowd. Some were filled with wonder, and a few were brought to a concern over their souls, but only one or two persons were deeply and abidingly effected. However, this visit was the beginning of a greater interest in the affairs of the church and religion, and developed later into a general spiritual awakening.(1)

(3) Bridgewater and Plymouth Mass.

At the same time that new spiritual life was beginning to manifest itself at Taunton, news came to that people of an awakening at Bridgewater, Mass.. George Whitefield had visited that place in the fall of 1740, but he had reached only a few of the people.(2) Gilbert Tennent arrived there in March 1741, upon the urgent entreaties of the Rev. Mr. Porter and other ministers. The people there greeted him as being a "man of God, who had the skill and the will to win souls". And even though there had been very little time to spread abroad the news of his coming, and though the season was difficult by virtue of snow, a large and crowded assembly attended his meetings. The people of all four congregations of that city came out to hear him. Some of the people mocked his sermons, but a great many of them were awakened from their security in sin and spiritual hypocrisy and became interested in the doctrines of religion

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1. Letter of Mr. Crocker, Prince, Ch. Hist., Vol.II, pp 326.
2. Letter of Mr. Porter, Ibid, Vol.I, pp 398.

for their own information and edification.(1) This concern over religion increased during the spring so that the churches were encouraged to hold more services, in order that the new spiritual interests of the people might be satisfied. The new religious life was characterized as "the whole town becoming a mountain of holiness".(2) In Plymouth Mass., the original settlement in America, Tennent had been preceded by the Rev. Mr. Croswell, who had been instrumental in arousing great interest in religion amongst the people. Previously the religious decline had been so manifest, and so many ways had been resorted to in an attempt to better the conditions that it seemed that the people were in danger of losing the very form of godliness.(3) They had tried to get Whitefield to visit them in October 1740, but were not successful. Consequently they look to Gilbert Tennent with great expectations for further stimulating the religious concern amongst them. In this they were not disappointed. He preached eight sermons in Plymouth which greatly awakened the people, causing many to date their first religious impressions from that time. These impressions led to real and lasting conversion.(4)

(c) Rhode Island.

In Rhode Island the influences of Gilbert Tennent are less heralded than in Massachusetts and Connecticut. This may be accounted for by the fact that the people of this colony were farther from the centers of the general awakenings. However, in the fall of 1741, the

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1. Letter of Mr. Porter, Vol.I, pp 398-99.
2. Letter of Mr. Porter, Prince, Vol.I, pp 398-99.
3. Letter of Rev. Mr. Leonard of Plymouth, Prince, Vol.II, pp 313.
4. Ibid, pp 314.

fruits of Tennent's ^{Preaching} began to manifest themselves. One of the places visited in Rhode Island was Westerly. He preached at this place both going and coming in his travels through New England. His first sermon was on Matt. 11:28, and was preached with very little noticeable effect on a limited number of people. But his second sermon on his return voyage had a greater effect, and was heard by a larger assembly. The usual reactions attended these sermons. Some were filled with great wrath, so that prejudices were stirred up against the local pastor, the Reverend Mr. Parks, for tolerating and encouraging Tennent's style of persuasion. On the other hand some of the consciences of the people became more awake. However he left no lasting impression at that place. Immediately after his departure the people were as indifferent as ever towards the church and religion.(1) The real revival in that place began a year later, in January 1742. In Charlestown, a neighboring city to Westerly, and part of the same parish, the people responded much more readily to the revival message. Mr. Tennent himself estimates that the concern there was more general than it was at Boston. "Multitudes," he states, "were awakened and several received great consolation, especially among the young people, children and negresses."(2) Although as in Westerly, no lasting awakening took place before the spring of 1742.(3)

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1. Letter of Mr. Parks of Westerly. Prince Christian History Vol. I, pp 204.
2. Tennent's letter to Whitefield. Gillies Hist. Col. pp 334.
3. Same as 1.

(d) New Hampshire

In Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a town about sixty-four miles north east of Boston, his ministry was blessed and followed by visible effects upon the people. There also, many spoke of his itinerating with reproach. But his preaching together with that of Whitefield was instrumental in "putting a great many upon shaking off their heavy slumbers." In most all cases where ministers had the occasion of seeing the results produced by the preachings of the itinerants, they became supporters of the practice. The Reverend Mr. Shurtleff of Portsmouth testifies that despite the many charges against Tennent and Whitefield, "I must look upon their traveling this way as a favourable providence, and that for which we owe abundant thanksgiving to the God of grace."(1)

(e) Connecticut

(1) Middleborough

The greatest results experienced by Gilbert Tennent on his New England journey, outside of Boston, were in Connecticut. The reason for this may have been that he was preceded in several places of this State by Whitefield and other revival preachers; and also by small awakenings under local pastors. In one of the Connecticut congregations his chief influence was not so much in quickening the spiritual life of the people, as converting the pastor from his discouragement to a more optimistic view of his field. This took place in Middleborough, the East Precinct or congregation. The

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1. Letter of Mr. Shurtleff of Portsmouth. Prince.Ch.Hist.Vol I pp 384

spiritual depravity of this place had been so great for a long period of time that the public worships or the private ministrations of the pastor had no influence whatsoever upon the people. There was no prayer life in the congregation, and they indulged openly in their drunkenness and envyings. The situation had come to the point where the pastor, the Rev. Mr. Tacher, had almost "to speak no more of the Lord", and had decided to leave the congregation after a ministry of thirty-four years. In this despondency he had a natural and sensible prejudice against Gilbert Tennent, "both his person and his ministry." This had been formed on the basis of reports that he had heard about him. However, when Tennent was traveling from Plymouth, he rode six miles to a neighboring parish to hear him preach.(1) The sermon was from Luke 15, on the prodigal son, and made a very deep impression of Mr. Tacher. He states that "I never saw more of the presence of God with any in

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1. In a letter dated March 30, 1741, he states that this place was Lakenham. Here he again expresses his appreciation over Tennent's coming. He writes, - "We are thankful to God who sent him unto this sleepy, secure and dead part of the vineyard. I had the privilege to hear him preach five sermons; at Lakenham, from the Prodigal Son; in my own pulpit from that lesson- 'I was alive with the law once ' etc. That evening he had twelve of his company lodged with us. I had the pleasure of his company to the Rev. Mr. Perkins; where I heard three sermons that day and in the evening; the first the Jailor, the second Luke 13:24; the third, "all things are ready, come to the marriage." I was compelled by pain to leave him. Peter awaited on him to Taunton, from whence he went to Berkly; since which I have heard nothing. There were some young ones in my family and neighbourhood under awakenings; especially through God's goodness among my children. His discourse in public, and personal in private was melting to to them. Gillies Hist. Col. 403.

prayer and preaching, and never felt more of the power accompanying the word on my heart. Every word made its own way. I felt the weight of it. This revived me in the ministry I sa^d under in my youth." The impression caused him to invite Tennent to come to Middleborough and preach that very evening. But evidently the cold indifference of the audience effected him because he complained after the sermon that "he never was so shut up but once before." This, however, put still greater fear into Mr. Tacher, in that he perceived that God had withdrawn his mercies from both the congregation and the pastor. So he laid his case openly before Mr. Tennent. The latter gave considerable attention to his difficulties, and encouraged with these words, "Oft' times 'tis darkest a little before day, the rising sun will bring light." New hope and faith were kindled in the disconsolate pastor, with the result that he took up his work with renewed interest, causing a general awakening amongst his people in the fall of that year.(1741) (1) In the spring of the following year he could report that one hundred and seventy souls had been added to the church.(2)

(2) East Parish, Lyme

In the East Parish of Lyme, Connecticut, Tennent's preaching was followed by visible results. The usual carelessness and stupidity in religion, with little of the life and power of godliness, characterized this place, as it did the rest of the Colonies. Whitefield visited the place in the fall of 1740, but he was not instrumental in causing any great spiritual concern. However during the

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1. Letter of Mr. Tacher to Mr. Prince. Ch.History Vol. II pp 87.
2. Ibid pp 92.

winter of 1740 and '41, the people began to be serious and thoughtful about the state of their souls. So a revival of religion had begun in this place before Gilbert Tennent visited it. He arrived in April, 1741, and preached two sermons to a large assembly that had gathered from the neighboring communities. Evident results followed these discourses. The Reverend Mr. George Griswold, pastor of the church makes the following statement as to the reactions of the people.

"The sermons were blessed to a great (if not to a general) awakening among the people; and two or three were deeply wounded;--so that they plainly discovered it in their looks and behaviour; and the concern spread and increased, and was visible in the face of the congregation on the Lord's days and other times of public worship; and some were distressed that they were so stupid as not to be concerned."

The concern spread and increased, and persons became solicitous as to what they should do to be saved.(1)

(3) West Parish, Lyme.

In the West Parish of Lyme, Connecticut, his preachings also were very successful. His reputation as a revival preacher had preceded his coming to that place. Dr. Colman of Boston had written to the pastor, the Reverend Mr. Parsons of the "wonderful progress of the gospel at Boston and the towns round about by the blessing of God upon the fervent ministry of Mr. Tennent."(2) However the attitude of many of the people towards his preaching and methods was very resentful. They looked upon the result of the revivals as

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1. Letter of Mr. G. Griswold, Pastor of East Parish, Lyme. Prince, Ch. Hist. Vol. II pp 106.
2. Letter of Mr. Parsons, Pastor of West Parish, Lyme. Prince, Ch. Hist. Vol. II pp 127.

"effects of an heated imagination or mere enthusiasm and disorder." They spread the propaganda that "the country would be undone if such a spirit should have a general spread; and religion would be banished from all the churches."(1) Gilbert Tennent visited the place in the face of such opposition, and arrived there during the first part of April. In his first sermon he seems to have been afflicted with the same dullness that came over him at Middleborough. The Reverend Mr. Parsons writes that he seemed to be so dull that he thought several times that he would have nothing to say. He seemed to lack freedom, and his audience had very little sense as to what he was talking about. However the next morning his vitality and power returned. He preached to a large and effected crowd from Luke 13:24, with the result that many were led to lament their sins, and manifested through their speech that the "arrows of conviction had shot deep into their hearts." The sermon left a lasting impression upon the people. So sensible and extensive were its effects that many were led to make a personal confession to their pastor, and dated their first awakening from it.(2)

(4) Saybrook.

From Lyme, Tennent went to Saybrook. Many of the people who heard him in various places had become impressed by his sermons, that they followed him to that place. He must have preached an unusual sermon, because of the stir that it excited among the people.

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1. Letter of Mr. Parsons. Prince, Ch.Hist.Vol II pp 126.
2. Ibid. pp 134.

Mr. Parsons characterized it as "rational and searching, suited to unconverted sinners and drowsy saints." No great reaction was manifested during its delivery, but immediately after the service some became enraged at Tennent, and did not hesitate to express their feelings. It was the censoriousness of the discourse that had taken root. As the people journeyed to their respective towns they continued their cavillings and finding fault with what had been said. "One especially", on the way to Lyme, "seemed exceedingly disaffected, and endeavoured to disaffect others. But still he could not forget the sermon, especially that part of it which was to backward Christians; and though he thought or endeavoured to think, that it was a censorious discourse, yet, it never left him until he was made to see that he was the very man to whose case it was suited above any sermon that he had ever heard."⁽¹⁾

Agreement and applause are not always signs of a great sermon. In some cases where souls have been caloused with sin, and hardened with resistance to divine influence, the only effective recourse seems to be to preach such indictments as will arouse persons to a pitch of fighting anger, that they may be awakened to the saving grace of God. In analyzing the major causes for opposition to the Great Awakening in general, the chief reason expressed were irregularities from church order, and censoriousness on the part of revival preachers. But going deeper into the hearts of the opposers,

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1. Letter of Mr. Parson. Prince Vol. II pp 127

one finds in many instances, that the underlying cause for antagonism was rebellion against the saving grace that was proclaimed.

Despite the opposition on the part of some at West Parish, Lyme, the preaching of Gilbert Tennent there produced great positive results. Following his visit, the attendance at the public service increased greatly in numbers, and the people became more attentive to the exhortations of the local pastor. The interest in religion became so great that mid-week services had to be introduced, and meetings in the homes of the parishioners had to be conducted to meet the spiritual cravings after the Gospel of Christ.(1)

(f) General

The general influences of Gilbert Tennent on his New England journey in other places than those mentioned, seems to have been accord with the testimonies referred to above. In New Port the concern over religion became very great. At that place, even the Quakers and children came to him in distress over their souls.(2) At New Haven and Yale College, there was an equal concern, in both the college and the town. About thirty students came on foot ten miles to hear him preach.(3) At Milford, Connecticut, great interest over religion followed his discourses.(4) At Cambridge, both at Harvard and in the town there was a general revival amongst both the students and people. At Ipswich, general concern manifested itself

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1. Letter of Mr. Parson. Prince Ch. Hist.
2. Tennent's letter to Whitefield. Apr. 25, 1741. Gillies Hist. Coll. pp 335
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

amongst the inhabitants.(1) There seems to be no question but that this New England ministry was greatly blessed.

C. Testimonies concerning his success.

(1) The Reverend Mr. Thomas Prince of Boston.

Three sources are available as to evidences to this effect. These are, first, the Reverend Mr. Prince of Boston. Secondly, the testimonies of six other ministers of that place. And third, his own personal statement. The Reverend Mr. Prince of Boston, states that the ministry of Mr. Tennent had twofold effect. In the first place, it caused many to seek advice in their soul concerns, both from Mr. Tennent himself, and from the local ministers. In the second place, he influenced the ministry of Boston in that he led them to a different emphasis in their preachings. "He excited them to treat more largely of the workings of the spirit of grace, as a spirit of conviction and conversion, consolation and edification in the souls of men, agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and the common experiences of true believers."(2) The combined effects of these influences was that in some congregations there came more people in deep concern over their souls to their pastors in one week, than there had previously done in twenty-four years.(3) To one pastor there came about six hundred such cases in three months' time. To another, Mr. Webb, there came about a thousand in the same space of

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1. Tennent's letter to Whitefield. April 25, 1741. Gillies Hist. Coll. pp 335.
2. Prince, Ch. Hist. Vol. II pp 391.
3. These are the estimates of the Rev. Mr. Cooper and Prince of Boston.

time. (1) Gilbert Tennent was given the major credit through his ministry, for these manifestations of new spiritual life.

(2) Six ministers of Boston.

The second general testimony to Tennent's work in New England is given by six ministers of Boston. This bears out the impression given by the Reverend Mr. Prince. The signed statement of these ministers reads as follows, "When this our dear brother, (Gilbert Tennent) whose praise is in our churches through the Provinces, visited us at Boston two years ago, and in the spirit of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield, entered into his labours here, it pleased God in a wonderful manner to crown his abundant services with success, in the conviction and (we trust) the conversion of many souls. As therefore the name of Mr. Tennent is greatly endeared to us, so we beseech the ascended Saviour, the head of the church, long to continue him for a burning light and extensive blessing to our Provinces; and in particular to use this faithful, judicious and seasonable endeavour of his

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1. Prince, pp 391. The nature of the cases that repaired to their ministers are most interesting. The Reverend Mr. Prince gives the following account. 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 a course of religion for many years. And their cases represented were, a blind man, 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 that they had been all along building on a righteousness of their own, and were visited in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Some under flighty, others under strong convictions of their sins and sinfulness, guilt and condemnation, the wrath and curse of God upon them, their impotence and misery; some for a long time, even for several months under these convictions; some fearing lest the Holy Spirit should withdraw; others having quenched his operations, were in great distress lest he should leave them forever; persons far advanced in years afraid of being left behind, while others were hastening to the great Redeemer.

servant, for a guard and defence about his own sacred truths and his glorious work in the midst of us, which too many are ready to speak evil of and oppose".(1)

(3) Tennent's own statement.

The statement of Gilbert Tennent himself is most interesting because of his hesitancy to accept the responsibility of such an undertaking. No dissatisfaction, fear or sense of inferiority are any where present in his report to Mr. Whitefield upon the return of his journey to New Jersey. He writes concerning his journey, that in the town of Boston there were many hundreds if not 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 opposers were convinced. Divers of the young and the middle aged were converted and several negroes were hopefully converted.---I believe by a moderate computation that divers thousands have been awakened".(2) Then in a spirit of exhaltant gratitude he states, "I thank you sir, that you did excite me to this journey". These words convey the feeling that they came from a soul overflowing with joy. He rejoiced not over the personal honor that came to him in consequence of his reputation as a revival preacher. But his joy was manifest in his own words, "Glory to God on High".(3) He was glad because the work of God was spreading more and more.(4) His

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1. This statement was drawn up in Boston Dec. 22, 1742, and signed by Benjamin Colman, Thomas Prince, John Webb, William Cooper, Thomas Foxcraft, and Joshua Gee. Recorded in Preface to G. Tennent's "Moravian Sermons".
2. Tennent's letter. Historical Coll., pp 335.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

great delight was to know that the divine blessings rested upon his prime purpose in life, namely to lead souls to a personal experience of their own unrighteousness, and the saving power of God in Jesus Christ.

III. HIS EVANGELICAL ZEAL.

A. Continued during post revival season.

His labours as an evangelist did not cease upon his return to New Brunswick.(1) He continued his strenuous program of preaching daily, ordinarily three times a day and sometimes oftener. He continued to rejoice in the fact that through pure grace, he met with success much exceeding his expectations. When the synod met in Philadelphia, May 31, 1741, he preached five times and baptized eight adults.(2) In May of 1743 he received a call from Philadelphia, and immediately transferred his activities to that place.(3) However, by that time the zeal of the Great Awakening was past. His work in this new field was not so much reviving new spiritual life amongst the people, as caring for those who had been awakened under the ministry of George Whitefield. "There were so many under soul sickness, according to his own words, that his feet were pained with walking from place to place to see them. And when people saw him going into a house they would flock to it, that they might hear him speak. The public assemblies were attended with the same interest.(4) In May

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1. He returned to New Jersey during the middle part of April. At the first of the month he was in Connecticut, and on the 25th he writes to Whitefield that he had been home for some time.
2. Webster, Hist. of Presb. Church, pp 392.
3. Sprague, Annals of American Pulpit, Vol.III, pp 37.
4. Tennent's letter to Whitefield, Gillies Coll, pp 334. He states, August 24, 1744, that since I came here, my labours seem to be chiefly serviceable to instruct and establish in the great truths of religion, and to comfort pious people. There have been put few instances of conviction and conversions in this town that I know of. Prince, Vol.II, pp 296.

of 1744 he administered the Lord's Supper for the first time to the new congregation that had been formed through the Revival, and there were one hundred and forty communicants who took part. Most of these had been converted through the Great Awakening.(1) Tennent's dealing with these people is typical of his religious convictions. He states that he examined them about their gracious state and their doctrinal knowledge, and with satisfaction, he adds, that "upon trial almost all of them gave a Scriptural and satisfactory account of the grounds of their hope".(2) This speaks well for the thoroughness of the revival in dealing with the religious life of the people.

B. Limited by reason.

The chief distinction between the contributions of Gilbert Tennent to the Great Awakening and those made by George Whitefield, is that the former was a permanent resident of the Colonies, having the opportunity of dealing with people of his own household of faith. In this position he was able to prosecute the work of religious revival in such a way that it effected more directly the organized religious life of the people. The following section will reveal that many, if not the majority of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church, interpreted his activities and principles to the contrary, holding that he aimed to disrupt all organized religion. But such an accusation is hardly valid. It is true that his preachings were forceful and at times terrible. One of his co-revival preachers, Samuel Finley, testifies concerning his strong style of preaching. He states, "that

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1. Tennent's letter to Prince, Prince Ch. Hist., Vol. II, pp 295.
2. Tennent's letter to Whitefield, Prince, Vol. II, pp 295.

Hell from beneath was laid open before the sinners that he addressed, while the Heavens above gathered blackness and a tempest of wrath seemed ready to be hurled on the guilty head. Many a sinner trembled under him and the visage of his countenance has changed, and his knees have smitten one against another, while this man of God reasoned of righteousness, temperance and the judgment to come".(1)

It was this phase of Tennent's preachings that his enemies interpreted to be but terrors that drove the people to flights of imagination, and Satanic delusions, that "divided the people of God, and set them a jangling amongst each other.(2)

But Finley reveals a deeper phase of Tennent's preachings which undoubtedly was that which he sought to stress before the people. He states that he comforted the mourners in Zion. "The atoning blood of the Redeemer was applied to their recent or festering wounds. Heaven smiled, the clouds were dispelled, the sky became serene, the Almighty God was shown to be their refuge, and underneath were his everlasting arms. Then his exhilarating words dropped upon them like the dew."(3) One can hardly say that such preaching is religious fanaticism. The sanity of his revival methods, and his deep concern for organized religion, as well as the salvation of the souls of mankind, is evident from a personal letter to Mr. Benjamin Lord of Norwich, who enquired concerning lay converts going out to preach. He replies,

"Supposing they be real converts, I cannot but think that if it be encouraged and continued, it will be of awful consequences to the churches' peace and soundness in principle; for ignorant young converts to take upon themselves to instruct and exhort publicly by word, would be to introduce the grossest errors and the grossest

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1. Finley, A successful Minister, pp 23.
2. The Examiner, pp 21 & 25.
3. Finley, A successful Minister, pp 24.

anarchy and confusion. I know that rash young zealots are apt through ignorance, inconsideration, and pride of heart to undertake what they have no proper qualifications for, and through their impudentness and enthusiasm, the church of God suffers. Dear brother, I think it is necessary to crush all enthusiastical cochrises in the egg. The times are dangerous we live in. The churches in America are in present hazard of enthusiasm."

But he argues, it is necessary to crush it.(1) This attitude is corroborated by his own statement concerning the place of religious zeal in religion. He states,

"It is true that zeal is excellent and advantageous, when directed by knowledge and discretion, tempered with humility, meekness, and mercy, and proportioned in degree to the importance of things. But when it springs from ignorance, is alienated with uncharitableness and bitterness and disproportioned to the importance of things, run out in a high degree, and with great flame, upon small and doubtful matters, it is exceeding pernicious to the peace and weal of Christ's Kingdom in general, and souls of men in particular. Hot and violent zeal in an ignorant man, especially about circumstantials, is like a drawn sword in a blind or a madman's hand, exceeding dangerous to himself and others. Knowledge without love is cold and ineffectual like the light of the moon; and zeal without love is like a fierce flame, which scorches and devours all before it. But knowledge and zeal, with love, are like the light of the sun which yields a gentle warming, refreshing and fruitful influence"(2)

C. Opposed by the enemies of the revival.

Hence it can hardly be said that Tennent was a zealot, who sought but to arouse the animal passions of man at the expense of sound religious conviction and church order. It was only when ministers conspired to blacken and oppose habitually the memorable revival of God's work with terms of utmost contempt and ignominy, that he was led to question the right of true Christians to sit under their ministrations without becoming accessory to their crimson

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1. Manuscript letter of Tennent in Presbyterian Historical Library, Philadelphia.
2. *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum* pp 31.

guilt.(1) In the light of the circumstances he seems to be perfectly justified to take such a stand. Undoubtedly much of the opposition that he had to struggle against was based on a natural prejudice to vital Christianity. Alexander writes in this connection, "Many of those of the Old Side manifested a malignity of spirit against the revival, which was wicked in the extreme. I have heard so much from aged persons, who were living in the midst of the revival; and even the subjects of it have given me such accounts of the malign spirit with which the whole work was ridiculed and opposed by many, that I cannot doubt, that in a good degree the contest between the parties was, between friends and enemies of true religion".(2)

D. Backed by unselfish motives.

It is certain that this constituted the conviction of Gilbert Tennent, as he withstood both critics and foes for the cause of vital religion. Without financial support, and solely dependent upon his own resources and the good will of the people to whom he came, he undertook his extensive travels. Whenever he was invited by a minister or some one else to stay in their houses for the night, he generally complied and partook of whatever was set before Him.(3)

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1. Tennent's letter to Benjamin Franklin. Sept. 2, 1742. In *Examiner Examined*. Further in this letter Tennent shows that he can hardly be accused of fanatical preaching. He states, "Although I freely own the absolute necessity of--divine energy in order to saving instruction of men's minds and renovation of their hearts; yet I cannot but disclaim all pretense to immediate inspiration or objective revelation, all following of immediate impulses without consulting the word of God, and dictates of reason, as an enthusiastical and perilous ignis fatunis, which may lead its votaries into the strangest absurdities in opinion and most enormous evils in preaching."
2. Alexander, *Log College* pp 291.
3. *The Examiner Examined* pp 38.

To confute the "ungenous cavils" of his opponents, who spread the charges that he was out seeking material gains, he never permitted any public collections at his meetings. He states that, "I never needed nor expected, nor desired anything for my labours in New England. There were no collections made for me in any one place for near six months that I traveled in it; nor was there anything given me excepting in seven or eight places in all New England, and that by some gentlemen of their own accord."(1) It cannot be said that he was guilty of intrusions in congregations without the consent of the local pastors. Whenever he came to a place where there was a settled pastor, he always applied to him first for permission to preach before he ever attempted to hold a service. He states that there was but one man in New England that refused his request. And this individual feared, that since Tenment arrived so late in the evening, the ringing of the bell at night might surprise the people with an alarm of fire, and because of insufficient warning only a small crowd would turn out. But on the next day even this man invited him to preach in his pulpit, and treated him with kindness and courtesy.(2) Thus with the good will of the pastors whom he visited he was instrumental in turning many to righteousness, so that numerous people in different places whose previous piety was questioned, looked to him as their spiritual father. In retrospect, as he meditated on his extensive labours, he could say with satisfaction, that his endeavours had been to promote a religion

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1. The Examiner Examined pp 41.
2. Ibid. pp 40.

that was balanced with judgment, passion and practice, and that God had given success to all his attempts. (1)

SUMMARY

Gilbert Tennent and the Great Awakening were so inseparably related that the one can hardly be understood apart from the other. To Gilbert Tennent the movement was an expression and manifestation of the vital principles of religion that he promulgated in a society that had sunk deep in its spiritual decline. Consequently he was active in its promotion, and defended it even at the cost of unity in the Presbyterian Church. The revival itself was greatly augmented by his efforts. It is doubtful that it would have been general through out the Middle Colonies without his leadership, encouragement and inspiration. These influences were evident a long period before the final outbreak of new spiritual life in 1740. They involved a long and bitter struggle during which experimental religion became recognized as an essential solution to the problem of religious decay. When the way had finally been prepared for the culmination of religious reform in the Great Awakening, he took the initiative through the instrumentality of the New Brunswick Presbytery in furthering the cause of vital religion in nearly every part of the northern American Colonies. Every available means and opportunity were used. George Whitefield was welcomed as a co-worker. Itinerations and ordinations of ministers were resorted to in violation of apparently unjust synodical jurisdiction. New Churches were

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1. The Examiner Examined pp 131.

established. And people were called upon to give special heed to the great profusion of God's Spirit in their midst. Thus in the consciousness of the great responsibility resting upon the servant of the Lord, Gilbert Tennent became one of the most outstanding contributors to one of the most significant movements in the history of American Protestantism.

CHAPTER VI

GILBERT TENNENT'S CONFLICT WITH THE SYNOD IN 1741

OR

THE CLIMAX OF THE "OLD SIDE" OPPOSITION TO TENNENT'S
PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS REFORM

CHAPTER VI

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or

THE CLIMAX OF THE "OLD SIDE" OPPOSITION TO TENNENT'S PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS REFORM.

INTRODUCTION

A schism was inevitable between the extremely divergent views of Gilbert Tennent and the conservative majority of the Presbyterian Church with regard to religious reform. The Great Awakening constituted a movement through which the revival leaders had exercised undisputed sway in promulgating their principles and practices, contrary to the views and actions of the Synod of Philadelphia. The New Brunswick Presbytery under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent ignored completely the action of 1737, prohibiting the unrestricted practice of itinerating, as well as the action of 1739, pertaining to the synod's examination of candidates to the ministry before such candidates could be ordained by the Presbytery. Tennent officially justified such disregard of ecclesiastical jurisdiction on the basis of inherent liberties of subordinate organizations under the Presbyterian form of government. Practically, however, the basic issue between the two parties became a general suspicion of the personal integrity and sincerity of their respective motives. Tennent considered the animosities of the Old Side brethren as premeditated opposition to vital religion. Whereas the latter interpreted the zeal of the former as unbridled enthusiasm, which would ultimately lead to corruption and

ecclesiastical anarchy. All secondary and related issues became included in the significant conflict that involved the breach between the two groups in 1741.

I. THE MAJOR EVENTS AND ISSUES IN CONFLICT.

A. The Nottingham Sermon.

The most direct and immediate contributing factor to this schism was the scathing denunciation of the clergy of the Presbyterian Church by Gilbert Tennent, in what has come to be called "The Nottingham Sermon." Since this discourse constitutes a general summary of the issues that had emerged out of the period of 1729 to 1739, as well as the major cause for the disastrous disruption of the Presbyterian Church, which paralleled the glorious blessings of the Great Awakening, its contents must be noted in detail.

(1) Chief proposition and points of discussion.

The Nottingham Sermon, or rather the sermon on "The Danger of an unconverted Ministry," based on Mark 6:34, was preached at Nottingham, Pennsylvania, March 8, 1740.⁽¹⁾ The central thought of this sermon is stated in the introductory sentence. "As a faithful minister is a great ornament, blessing, and comfort to the church of God;---so on the contrary an ungodly minister is a great curse and judgment." He then proceeds to state the proposition of the text. "That the case of such is much to be pitied who have no

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1. Tennent states that, "the Nottingham sermon was occasioned by the view I had of the danger of unconverted ministers in general, and the mischief that I was credibly informed some of them had done to the souls of men in particular." Examiner Examined pp 90. As to its principles he states, "The Nottingham Sermon,--I had wrote as my opinion and preached, a matter of ten years before I ever was at Nottingham." Examiner Examined pp 87.

other but pharisee-shepherds or unconverted teachers." The first point of discussion deals with an inquiry into the character of the old Pharisee teachers. The most notorious branches of their character were pride, policy, malice, ignorance, covetousness, and bigotry to human inventions in religious matters.(1) With these principles they sought to root vital religion out of the world.(2) Their purposes were mercenary in that "they had their eyes with Judas fixed on the bag." To them the ministry was but a trade, and they endeavoured to make the best market of it that they could.(3)

The second point refers to the people of the congregations. It states that those who have no better than the old Pharisee teachers for ministers are to be pitied. He gives four arguments in support of this fact. The first is that natural men have no call of God to ministerial work. He points out that the principal part of the ordinary call of God is to aim at the glory of God, and in subordination thereto the good of souls. No natural man, he contends, can do this. The second argument is that the ministry is uncomfortable to natural men, in that it involves a close relationship with the spirit of God. Since they do not have this fellowship their discourses are "cold and sapless, and, as it were, freeze upon their lips. They have no experience of the Holy Ghost; hence, they cannot discourse upon it before the people."(4) Their

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1. Nottingham Sermon pp 4.
2. Ibid. pp 5.
3. Ibid. pp 6.
4. Ibid. pp 6-8

only work is to strengthen souls in their own carnal security, and "fix a deluded world upon the false foundation of their own righteousness." Their prayers are cold, and their conversations have no savour of Christ. Hence, they make as little distinction in their practice as in their preaching. As to the people tolerating such preachers, "it is only when the wise virgins sleep, that they can bear with those dead dogs."(1) The third argument is that the ministry of natural men, is for the most part unprofitable. This is confirmed by a three fold evidence, namely, scripture, reason and experience. The fourth argument is that the ministry of natural men is dangerous, in respect of doctrine, practice and piety. This, he states is the cause for the general spread of Arminianism, Socinianism, Arianism, and Deism. "It is such that make light the souls distress, and oppose the work of God in men."(2)

The third general head states that pity should be expressed upon the mournful occasion where such circumstances exist. On the basis of this, he justifies his deep concern over the congregations that are destitute of faithful ministers. He also defends the training of pious ministers in this same connection, stating that, "we should pray for laborers and join endeavours to our prayers."(3) "The most likely method to stock the church with a faithful ministry in the present situation of things, the public Academies being so

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1. Nottingham Sermon pp 13
2. Ibid. pp 13-14.
3. Ibid. pp 16.

corrupt and abused generally, is to encourage private schools or seminaries of learning which are under the care of skillful and experienced Christians; in which those only should be admitted, who upon strict examination have in the judgment of reasonable charity, the plain evidences of experimental religion. This method has, in my opinion, a noble tendency to build up the church of God.

{2) Application.

(a) The prevalence of pharasaical preachers.

He then proceeds to apply his main propositions to prevailing conditions, "If this be so," he states, "that the case of those who have no other, or no better than 'Pharisee-Teachers,' is to be pitied, then what a scroll and scene of mourning and lamentation, and woe is opened; because of the swarm of locusts, the crowds of pharisees, that have as covetously as cruelly crept into the ministry in his adulterous generation; who as nearly resemble the character given of the old Pharisees, in the doctrinal part of their discourses, as one crow's egg does another."(1) "It is true some of the modern pharisees have learned to prate a little more orthodoxly about the new birth, than their predecessor Nicodemus, who are in the meantime as great strangers to the feeling of experience of it, as he. They are blind who see not this to be the case of the body of the clergy of this generation."(2)

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1. Tennent states, "I may add that the diverse epithets and censures charges upon unconverted ministers in the Nottingham sermon are borrowed from the writings of Calvinistic divines, famous for their learning and piety, such as Messers, Hildersham, Pool, Baurgess, Baxter, Brackle, Fenner and others." Examiner Examined pp 79.
2. Sermon pp 17.

The people who sit under such dead ministers are then chastised. "It is an awful sign that they are as blind as moles-- without any spiritual taste or relish." Just so a minister is free from gross crimes and does not disturb their consciences, they consider him a charitable man. They admire him because he is not always harping upon terror, and sounding damnation in their ears, like some rash headed preachers do."⁽¹⁾ It is clearly seen here that Tennent had reference to the opposition that was so frequently expressed to the style of preaching used by the revival ministers.

(b) Encouragement to leave their ministry.

The justification of one of the most criticised practices of the Great Awakening then follows. Namely, the encouragement of people to leave their ministers if they are unconverted as he represented them. He states,

"It is both lawful, and expedient to go from them to hear godly persons. Yea, it is so far from being sinful to do this that one who lives under pious ministers of lesser gifts, after having honestly endeavoured to get benefit by his ministry, and yet gets little or none, but doth find real benefit and more benefit elsewhere; I say he may lawfully go, and that frequently, where he gets most good to his precious soul AFTER REGULAR APPLICATION TO THE PASTOR WHERE HE LIVES, for his consent, and proposing the reason thereof; when this is done in the spirit of love and meekness, without contempt of any, as also without rash anger or vain curiosity.--To bind men to a particular minister against their judgment and inclinations, when they are more edified elsewhere, is carnal with a witness, a cruel oppression of tender consciences, a compelling of men to sin. Besides, it is an unscriptural infringement on Christian liberty. It's a yoke worse than that of Rome itself."⁽²⁾

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1. Sermon pp 18.
2. Ibid. pp 21.

That which ought to be the main motive of hearing any, viz, our souls good or greater good, will excite us, if we regard our own eternal interests to hear there, where we attain it. And he that hears with less views acts like a fool, and a hypocrite. Hence if it is lawful to withdraw from the ministry of pious men, to gain the chief purpose of life, it is so much more lawful and expedient to withdraw from the ministry of natural men. To entrust souls to such as are unskill-ful and unfaithful is to "set light by them," and not show the proper concern for their welfare.

(c) Answers to objections to practice.

Gilbert Tennent realized the opposition that such advocations would arouse. Consequently he answers possible criticism by stating that if love, meekness, and humility accompany such withdrawals, no trouble would arise. Or in case an individual takes issue with an individual seeking the greatest good for his soul, such cannot be heeded for the mere sake of peace. "Otherwise," he states, "we must quit powerful religion altogether, and particularly carefully avoid faithful preaching, for that is wont to occasion disturbances and divisions, when accompanied with divine power."⁽¹⁾ "The power of the gospel is not the proper cause for division,-- but rather the enmity against God, and holiness, stirred by the Devil, pride, and selfish lusts."⁽²⁾ He admits that it is a duty to avoid giving just cause for offense, and to maintain union and

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1. Sermon pp 24.
2. Ibid. pp 25.

harmony; but not if such union is wicked or in harmony with the good of souls.(1)

Concerning the danger of grieving the parish ministers and breaking up congregations, he states, "if a parish minister be grieved at our greater good, or prefers his credit to it, then he has good cause to grieve over his own rottenness and hypocrisy. "As to breaking congregations to pieces on account of people going from one place to another to hear the word with a view to a greater good, such will be put out of danger by the elimination of the spiritual blindness and death that so generally prevails. On the other hand, he denounces the practice of seeking another preacher when people enjoy the blessings and the rare privilege of a faithful ministry. Such a sin he reckons a great contempt" of God's authority,--which courts destruction,--and embraces ruin with open arms.

(3) The two-fold appeal.

The sermon closes with a two fold appeal. First, "let those who live under the ministry of dead men, whether they have got the form of religion or not, repair to the living where they may be edified." He encourages this in meekness, despite all reproach and censures, "since suffering is the lot of Christ's followers." Secondly he appeals to vacant congregations, to take due care in the choice of ministers. He points out that the subtle hypocrites may be distinguished by their manner of praying, preaching,

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1. Sermon pp 26.

and living. "Their opposition to Christ's Kingdom is varnished with their art, rhetoric, and appearance of piety."(1)

(4) Summary of essential points.

The essential facts of this sermon may be summarized under three points. First, there exists amongst the clergy, unconverted ministers who are hazards to both the spiritual life of the people and the church. Secondly, institutions of learning are justified in training candidates for the ministry, which stress the experience of religion, even though they be handicapped in teaching the more scientific studies. Thirdly, individuals have a full right to withdraw from the preachings of natural ministers, that they may hear the word expounded by men who have experienced it in their hearts, providing they do it in the spirit of charity.

He understood clearly that the censoriousness of the sermon would arouse great excitement. "He supposed it would be like rousing a wasp's nest," and he continues, "I have found it according to my expectations."(2) However, he did not intend that it should promote confusion and separation.(3) Rather he considered

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1. In dedicating this sermon to the people of Nottingham, Tennent makes the following comment on its forceful style. "If any should object against the style and say that it is too pointed; I answer that it is not keener than the reflections of Christ against the old pharisees. So far as I know my heart, it is grief for the injuries that have been done to the church of God by natural ministers, that has extorted such acrimony from my pen. If there be any rule of any church that seems to contradict what is offered in the discourse, it ought to be considered that there is a great difference between the flourishing and declining state of the church, and that every general rule admits of exceptions." Preface to Sermon.
2. Examiner Examined pp. 31.
3. Ibid. pp 28.

the preaching of it a sign of love to God and man; to God in that he risked his reputation in "detecting and opposing his enemies who are dishonouring his name and destroying his kingdom; and to man, in that it reveals to ungodly ministers their own dreadful picture, and aids them to awaken and humble themselves before God."(1)

B. Tennent's paper read before Synod. 1740.

(1) Official declaration of grievances.

It is apparent that Gilbert Tennent was fearless of either consequences or public prejudice during the year that the revival was at its greatest height. As he unofficially denounced the unconverted ministers at Nottingham, and exhorted the people to seek the proclamation of the pure gospel even at the expense of forsaking their own ministers, so he officially declared his grievances before the Synod meeting on June second of the same year. Undoubtedly, the transactions that transpired at this assembly prompted this second tirade on the unconverted ministers. The synod refused to reconsider his appeal of the controversy on the chief end of man, between himself and Mr. David Cowell.(2) This he interpreted to be an inconsideration of the more weighty matters of religion. (3) Furthermore, a heated debate had taken place on the issues pertaining to the acts of 1737 and 1739, with the result that the former was repealed, whereas the latter continued

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1. Examiner Examined pp 75.
2. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia pp 150.
3. Letter to Synod. Hodge, Hist. of Presb. Church, Vol. II pp 123 ff.

in force.(1) This aggravated Gilbert Tennent and Mr. Samuel Blair to read two papers before the entire audience of the synod. Mr. Blair states that he was ignorant of Tennent's plan to present a paper, and after reading his own, moved to have the latter read privately at a closed session of the synod. But the majority wanted it read publicly, so Tennent complied with their request.(2)

(2) Purpose for exposing degenerate clergy.

The major purpose of these two papers was to expose before all the ministers of the church, the prevalent degeneracy of many of their number. "Hence," they reasoned, "both known and unknown guilty ministers might be profited; and the trial of any particular one of them might be averted."(3) Mr. Blair volunteered to

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1. Mr. J. Thompson gives the following account of the attempt to heal the differences between the two parties at this meeting. "Tis well known that dissatisfaction subsisted for some years--the removal of which was tried at the Synod meeting of 1740, but without deserved success. The Reverend Jonathan Dickenson proposed that the case should be submitted to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; or to the general Synod of the North of Ireland; or their commission, and to the ministers of our profession in London or Boston, to obtain their judgment and advice. But all these were rejected. The Synod tried to accommodate the differences between the two parties--them and the other views, nor designs in our late act or agreement; but to secure a learned ministry in this infant church. And that we were heartily willing to lay aside these acts or agreements made for their purpose as soon as the Synod could fall upon any other expedient which would secure what we aimed at.--Mr. George Gillespy brought in an overture which seemed likely to take til Mr. Gilbert Tennent declared that the protesting brethren would be only accountable to this Synod for their conduct in licensing and ordaining candidates to the Sacred Ministry, and insisted that we should be obliged to receive all whom they licensed or ordained as members of our body without calling them to any further account." John Thompson, "Introduction to Protest."
2. S. Blair, "Vindication of the Brethren" pp 225.
3. Ibid. pp 226.

process the specific persons against whom he complained, but the synod refused to hear any such charges. Consequently the general complaints were read in accord with the permission of the synod. Since the paper of Mr. Tennent especially constitutes another cause for the schism of 1741, its contents must be noted together with the Nottingham sermon.

(3) Reasons for suspecting unconverted ministers.

He stated that his purpose was to give reasons for suspecting members of the synod to be in a carnal state. The first was their unsoundness in some of the principal doctrines of Christianity that related to experience and practice. Under this head he pointed out the following false doctrines. First, that there is no difference between the glory of God and our own happiness, and that self love is the foundation of all obedience. Secondly, that there is a certainty of salvation connected to the labours of natural men. This supposed the falsehood that there is a free will inclined to good; and caused man to depend on his personal righteousness for salvation. "These opinions," he states, "are contrary to the express testimony of scripture, our confession of faith, and Christian experience, and give reason to suspect at least those who hold them are rotten hearted hypocrites, utter strangers to the saving knowledge of God and their own hearts." The second reason for suspicion was the preaching of the clergy. Under this he gives the following evidences.

1. Their preaching is powerless and unsavoury, and not with the authority of Christ.
2. Their preaching is too general, and does not search the hearts of sinners.
3. Their preaching is soft and flattering.

4. Their preaching is legal.
5. Their preaching is unsuccessful with the appearances of contentedness under it.

Under the questionable practices of the clergy he lists the following; great stiffness in opinion; opposition to God's servants and works; the ordaining of ministers without examining them for their Christian experience in accord with the canon of the Synod; their manifestation of more zeal for outward order than for the main points of practical religion.

"These things," he states, "I mention in the fear and love of God, without personal prejudice against any.--I am obliged in faithfulness to God and the souls of men, to make mention of these things, as some of the reasons why I protest against all restraints in preaching the everlasting gospel in this degenerate state of the church. Rules which are serviceable in ordinary cases, when the church is stocked with a faithful ministry, are notoriously prejudicial when the church is oppressed with a carnal ministry."(1)

(4) Acknowledgment of charges by Synod.

The synod officially accepted the charges in good faith. Following the reading of the papers, it passed the following resolution.

"The Synod do hereby solemnly admonish all the ministers within their bounds seriously to consider the weight of their charges, and as they will answer it at the great day of Christ, to take care to approve themselves to God, in the instances complained of. And the Synod do recommend it to the several Presbyteries to take care of their several ministers in these particulars."(2)

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1. Letter of Gilbert Tennent read before the Synod as given in Thompson's "Church of Christ" pp 9 ff, and Hodge, Hist. of Presb. Church, Vol. II pp 120 ff.
2. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia pp 152.

C. Refutation of Tennent's accusations by Mr. John Thompson.

Unofficially, however, the charges were received with less approbation. Mr. John Thompson acting as spokesman for the clergy against whom the accusations were directed, and who felt especially the sting of the denunciations, gave a reply to the charges. (1) His attack was based primarily on the rash judgments that were proclaimed. "They despise," he stated concerning Tennent and his associates, "their own pastors as sapless, lifeless preachers, because they decline the use of such hideous unscriptural language and dialect as can serve only to fill weak minds and fancies with confused fears and terrors, rather than the rational way to convince them from Scripture of their sin and misery and need of a saviour." (2) He then proceeds to deal with Tennent's arguments in detail.

Concerning the false doctrine, that "the glory of God and our own happiness is one and the same," he holds it a very strange stretch of censoriousness and harsh judging to conclude the person unconverted who held to it. (3) As to "self love being the foundation of all obedience," he replies, "Who can prove the

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1. Mr. John Thompson was a minister who had been a victim of the irregular--practices of the revival preachers. Consequently he took this occasion to make his reply against their general practices. He states, "My conscience would not allow me to be altogether silent, but hath obliged me every now and then to bear testimony against what I saw amiss. Though God knows, with a heavy heart; knowing and finding that the more forward and faithful I was in warning the people of my own congregation, the more I was maligned, despised, hated and forsaken by my own people." Church of Christ pp 3.
2. Thompson, Church of Christ pp 5.
3. Ibid. pp 11.

user of it entirely unsound in fundamentals." With regard to the second false doctrine referred to in Tennent's paper, that there is a certainty of salvation annexed to the labours of natural men, he answers, "If there be any of the members of our Synod of this judgment, it is more than I know; and I am persuaded that there are very few. For my own part I know not one whom I so much as suspect in this particular".(1) Concerning the unsuccessfulness of ministers, as a mark of their unconverted state, he replies that this would with equal force of reason condemn some of the most eminent prophets of old. However, he argues, that the determination of success depends upon the basis of judgment one employs. "If crying out in public assemblies to the disturbance of the worship of God; and if falling down and working like persons in convulsions, he used as a basis, I must own I do not understand it".(2)

The charges of Tennent against the clergy are dealt with by Thompson to still greater length. If they are stiff in their opinions on smaller matters, he reasons, "is it not right to be so, 'providing that they are correct? And if they are false, why does not Tennent prove it'." As to ministers opposing God's work and servants, he states that that was done when Tennent was guilty of preaching the false doctrine of the converts sensibleness of his own good estate, and when he brought into the pulpit "the dialect of the black guard". As to the clergy's practice of not pretending to know the states of people, he replies,

"I know none who denies a judgment of charity concerning our fellow

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- 1: Thompson, Church of Christ, pp 13.
2. Ibid, pp 19.

christian's spiritual estate.--It's a pretense to the spirit of discerning which some, and particularly Mr. Tennent, pretends to, by their rash judging and condemning others, a notable instance whereof is this very manuscript which I am now examining as also his sermon concerning unconverted ministers."(1)

Tennent's charge concerning sending men out into the ministry without examining them about their Christian experience, brought out an answer which practically defined the Old Side view of the powers of the synod in ordaining men to the ministry. Thompson replied,

"I am yet to be convinced and instructed that either it is a Presbytery's duty to require this discovery or a candidates duty to submit to it, farther than a profession of faith in the doctrines and subjection to the laws of the Gospel goes. I think these personal and secret things are rather the proper matter of free intimate private voluntary conversation between or among intimate bosom friends. I'm fully persuaded that no judicatory upon earth hath first right or authority to require of me a particular declaration of the spiritual secrets of my heart or what passeth between God and my soul".(2)

However, he admits that a presbytery is duty bound to inquire of a person concerning an acquaintance with some sort of religious experience.

The last charge concerning the zeal of ministers for outward order, instead of zeal for the more weighty matters of religion, he acknowledges to be a fault where ever it prevails. But he denies the justice of holding it against the ministers, since it is but a false interpretation by Tennent of the Synod's decision on his debate with Mr. Cowell.(3)

In conclusion Mr. Thompson refers to Mr. Tennent's statement that the "Church is oppressed with a carnal ministry". This he contends, implies that church order and a congregation's obligations to

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1. Thompson, Church of Christ, pp 23.
2. Ibid, pp 25,
3. Ibid,

its pastor are but "slavish schemes of bigots; and the observation of them a confinement in the preaching of the Gospel." By this one bold stroke", he declares, "all order and government is thus knocked to pieces, and our Directory exploded as a slavish confining scheme. What can we expect next, but in like manner he (Tennent) will strike at our confession and catechisms,--and so the conclusion is in short, he will preach when he pleases, where he pleases, and what he pleases, without being accountable to any earthly judge or judicature. May the Lord preserve his church from such a scheme of confusion as this."(1)

D. The critical aspects of the conflicting views.

This refutation of Tennent's paper, together with the paper itself and the Nottingham sermon clearly reveal great differences between the two parties which they respectively represent. The issues were beyond mere personal prejudices. To Gilbert Tennent the conflict involved the defense of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and vital religion. Hence he felt it to be his personal obligation to expose the existing errors of the clergy; and to encourage such practices amongst the people as would lead them to hear the Gospel proclaimed in its truth and fullness. On the other hand his opponents considered him under a delusion with respect to the ministry, fanatical and enthusiastical in his practices, and exceedingly dangerous to the general order and welfare of the church. It can hardly be said that in this stage of the controversy, the differences between the two factions were merely concerning circumstantials.(2)

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1. Thompson, Church of Christ, pp 27.

2. Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum, pp 99.

In 1749 Gilbert Tennent raised the questions as to what was the

Certain basic principles are clearly evident in the arguments which took place. The one pertained to the respective rights of Presbyteries and Synods. The other to the Puritan ideal of conviction and assurance as determined by personal examination. The divergent views on these principles practically involve all secondary issues. Their importance in the estimation of the leaders of both groups explains the extreme measures to which they resorted in defense of their respective views. The disregard for the synod's actions pertaining to itinerating and the ordination of candidates to the ministry, together with the public denunciations of the clergy, and the encouragement of church members to forsake unconverted pastors constituted the methods adopted by Gilbert Tennent and his associates in upholding their particular principles. The Old Side party would naturally be expected to defend their ideas with equal severity. This was done in the synod meeting of 1741. After their patience and tolerance with the activities of the Tennent party, they issued a protest against what they deemed to be their dangerous practices and unjust accusations; and without further recourse to judicial procedure, they expelled their brethren from the synod. Since this protest or

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basic issues of the controversy. He gave the following answer. "Why, some circumstantials in government, in other words some rules or acts of discipline formed by the majority, and reckoned prudential and expedient by them, but on the contrary prejudicial and sinful by the minor party". However in the heat of the conflict the differences were looked upon as being deeper significance. In 1741 the opponents of Tennent wrote --- "We protest--that these brethren (Tennent and his associates) have no right to be acknowledged as members of this judicatory of Christ, whose principles and practices are so diametrically opposed to our doctrine, and principles of government and order, which the great King of the Church hath laid down in his Word". Protest to the Synod 1741.

protestation, as it is called in the official minutes of the synod, constitutes the immediate cause for the schism between the two parties, as well as the joint statement of the Old Side views concerning its opposition to Tennent and his party, it is essential to note its contents.

E. The protestation by the Old Side Party to Synod, 1741.

(1) Its occasion.

The first paragraph of this most audacious protestation, includes the motives that prompted its presentation to the synod.

It reads as follows,

"We, the ministers of Jesus Christ, and members of the Synod of Philadelphia, being wounded and grieved at our very hearts at the dreadful divisions, distractions, and convulsions, which all of a sudden have seized this infant church to such a degree,--that she is in no small danger of expiring outright, and that quickly, as to the form, order, and constitution of an organized church,--do protest".

Recognition is then given to the decay of practical godliness both in the life and the power of it, as the meritorious cause of the existing doleful distractions, but the major cause is assigned to the New Side party as we may see from the continuation.

"We evidently see that our protesting brethren, and their adherents were the direct and proper cause thereof, by their unwearied, unscriptural, antipresbyterial, uncharitable, divisive practices which they have been pursuing, with all the industry they were capable of, with any probability of success, for above these twelve months past especially, besides too much of the like practices for some years before, though not with such barefaced arrogance and boldness".

The various protests or rather demands are then set forth.

(2) Its five demands.

First, we protest that it is an indispensable duty of this synod to maintain and stand by the principles of doctrine, worship and government of the church of Christ, as summed up in the confession of faith, Catechisms, and Directory.

Secondly, we protest that no person, minister or elder should be allowed to sit and vote in the Synod who has not received, adopted or subscribed to the above, or who acts contrary to the directory, or orders made or agreed to by this Synod, unless he renounce his practice, and confess his sorrow for such sinful disorder--before the Synod, or appointed inferior judicatory.

Thirdly, we protest that all our protesting brethren have at present no right to sit and vote as members of this Synod, having forfeited their right of being accounted members.

Fourth, we protest, that if, notwithstanding of this our protestation, these brethren be allowed to sit and vote in the Synod, without giving suitable satisfaction to the Synod and to us,--that whatsoever shall be done, voted or transacted by them, contrary to our judgment, shall be of no force or obligation to us, being done or acted by a judicatory consisting in part of members who have no authority to act with us in ecclesiastical matters.

Fifth, we protest that if these protesting brethren -- shall continue to act as they have done this last year, in that case we, and -- as many as maintain the rights of this judicatory, shall be accounted in no wise disorderly, but the true Presbyterian Church in this Province; and they shall be looked upon as guilty of schism, and the breach of the rules of Presbyterial government, which Christ has established in his church, which we are ready at all times to demonstrate to the world.

3. Its reasons for protests and answers by Tennent.

The reasons for these protests against the protesting brethren then follow. These are very significant since they give in brief the essential grievances of the Old Side party, which, in turn, summarizes the chief issues of the conflict. Gilbert Tennent took the occasion to answer these issues in his "Remarks on the Protest". Hence as the reasons for the protests are set parallel with their refutations, we have a clear and concise statement as to what constituted the points of difference between the conservative majority of the synod and Gilbert Tennent and his more liberal associates.

(a) Dissent from Synodical Jurisdiction.

The first reason given for the Protest is their (the protesting brethren, Gilbert Tennent and his associates) "heterodox and

anarchical principles expressed in their Apology, where they expressly deny that Presbyteries have authority to oblige their dissenting members, and that Synods should go any farther in judging of appeals or references, than to give their best advice, which is plainly to divest the officers and judicatories of Christ's Kingdom of all authority". This implied also the right of dissent from any Synodical act or order.(1)

Tennent replied to this that the synod had no authority to infringe upon the rights of conscience and private judgment, which ought to be prescribed as sacred and inviolable. He contends that the only binding authority on earth is the word of God, interpreted according to an individuals own judgment, and not that of another.(2) Hence when a decree by the synod is inconsistent with the word of God, there is just right for dissent from its action. Consequently since the Itinerating Act of 1737 and the Ordination Act of 1738 were not in accord with the Divine Word, the New Brunswick Presbytery was fully justified in ignoring them. He states,

"Since Synods or Councils are not to be made the rule of faith and practice; and since the Confession urges no better subjection than in the Lord, and asserts -- His lone sovereignty over conscience; and that he hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men,--then--to believe or obey otherwise is to betray true liberty of conscience. We acknowledge all that authority which consists with the right of conscience and private judgment; but in the mean time, we cannot but abhor an implicate faith and blind obedience; whatsoever plausible epithets of order and government they be garnished with".(3)

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1. Protest
2. G. Tennent, Remarks on Protest, pp 17.
3. Ibid, pp 18.

(b) Irregular Ordinations.

The second reason for the Protest was "their protesting against the Synod's act in relation to the examination of candidates, together with their proceeding to license and ordain men to the ministry of the Gospel, in opposition to, and in contempt of the said act of the Synod".(1)

To this charge, Tennent answers that the New Brunswick Presbytery did not hold the act of the Synod in contempt in the sense that "we contemned the Scriptural authority of the Synod, or the judgment of the majority of our brethren. We gave all deference to our brethren's authority and judgment which was consistant with out irrefragable right of thinking for ourselves. But after examining with all impartiality the reasons for the act, and after supplicating Jehovah for light and direction and finding the arguments upon which they went in our opinion relevant and sufficient; we were constrained by our conscience to act as we have done".(2)

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1. Protest to the Synod.
2. Remarks on the Protest pp 19.

The records of the New Brunswick Presbytery substantiate this statement. They read as follows,
 "Signified to the Presbytery that Mr. John Rowland desired to be received upon tryal in order to his being licensed to preach the Gospel. The Presbytery thereon entered upon serious consideration of the Act of the last Synod appointint that young men be first examined by a commission,--and obtain a testimony of approbation before they can be taken upon tryal,--after much reasoning upon the case they concluded viz, that they were not in point of conscience restrained by said act from using the liberty and power which Presbyterians have hitherto all along enjoyed, but that it was their duty to take the said Mr. Rowland upon tryal for which conclusion they conceive they have several weighty and sufficient reasons".

Minutes of Presbytery of New Brunswick, Organization meeting, 1738.

(c) Disruptions of congregations.

The third reason for protest was "their irregular irruptions upon the congregations to which they have no immediate relations without order, concurrence, or allowance of the Presbyteries or ministers to which congregations belong, thereby sowing seeds of divisions among the people, and doing what they can to alienate and fill their minds with unjust prejudices against their lawfully called pastors."(1)

Tennent answers this charge by saying,

"What is proper in ordinary cases may be prejudicial in extraordinary. When the church is planted with a sound faithful and lively ministry, no doubt those rules respecting ministers keeping within the bounds of the particular charge until they are invited in an orderly manner to go elsewhere, may be of service. But upon the supposition that a number of the ministers are either unsound in doctrine or unfaithful and contentedly unsuccessful in their work. Then is it not lawful to suspend the aforesaid rule for a reason? Especially, ---when people seek a close and affectionate preaching of the word; and ministers also being importuned by some of the people of the places whether they traveled, find themselves spirited to uncommon labours and perceive those attended with uncommon success,"(2)

Further more, he argues, that the very fact that the synod repealed the itinerating act the previous year (1740), is an indication that the synod itself considered it unjust.

Concerning the stirring up of the people against their ministers and the sowing seeds of divisions, he states that the only seed sown by himself and his brethren has been the Word of God. And the intention back of itinerant preaching was not to alienate, but to glorify God. "But", he continues, "the truth is that some of

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1. Protest.
2. Tennent. Remarks, pp 20.

those who were awakened without any speech of ours in their prejudice, have entertained of their own accord, meaner thoughts of the ministry of some of our protesting brethren than formerly. THIS, THIS, seems to alarm their jealousies and resentments about and against the work of God, and such instruments as he has been pleased graciously to rise in promoting it."(1)

(d) Rash condemnations and judgments.

The fourth reason for the protest was the principles and practice of rash condemnation and judgment upon both ministers and people as carnal and graceless and enemies to the work of God. The basis for this accusation was Tennent's Nottingham sermon and the papers read before the synod meeting in 1740. The results of these practices, according to the Protest, were that "most of our congregations, through weakness and credulity, are so shattered and divided, and shaken in their principles, that few or none of us can say we enjoy the comfort or have the success among our people, which otherwise we might, and which we enjoyed heretofore."(2)

Tennent denied that either his Nottingham sermon or his paper read before the synod, contained anything that could justify such a charge. He boasted that, "we are far from such narrowness and bigotry as to imagine that all God's ministers are of our own sentiments and willing to comply with our measures in lesser things."

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1. Tennent. Remarks pp 21. As to the charges against Tennent of promoting confusion, separation, and disrupting congregations he states, "It is a notorious falsehood. Thousands in New England can witness I spake seldom of the ministry at all; not one word came out of my lips in favour of separating from them." Examiner Examined. pp 28.
2. Protest.

At the same time he justifies censure of the inconsistent conduct of some ministers towards the work of God, pointing out that Mr. John Thompson termed the late revival a "new fangled stir about religion and a spiritual frenzy."(1)

(e) Depreciation of outward call and ordination to ministry.

The fifth reason of protest was the New Side conception of the call of God to the ministry, claiming that they ignored the external institutional ordination according to scripture; and recognized but an invisible call by the Holy Ghost that none could distinguish but the person himself, and at times deceived him so that he played but the part of a hypocrite. The preaching of such unconverted ministers was looked upon as ineffectual in the saving of souls.

To this Tennent replied that there was a necessity of previous trials and ordinations to the ministry, and that such who are regularly set apart, "being sound in doctrine and blameless in life, however their inward state may be, are true ministers in the sight of the church, and that their ministrations are valid." But at the same time he states that only those should undertake the ministry who are gracious and seriously intend to glorify God and the good of human souls. As to the efficacy of unconverted ministers, God may use what means he pleases to glorify his works, but it is highly improbable that their preaching will be successful.(2)

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1. Remarks, pp 22.
2. Ibid. pp 24.

(f) Over emphasis of legal terror in preaching and passions.

The sixth reason for protest was the preaching of the terror of the Law, as without the word of God; and the working on the passions and the affections of weak minds so that crying out, convulsions, and other bodily disturbances prevent the hearing of the word when it is preached.(1)

This Tenment stamps as a worse representation of the work of God than could be expected from a professed enemy of religion. He calls it but a "rise of an uncommon circumstance" to blacken the whole work of the revival. At the same time he admits irregularities, but denies that they have ever been justified. As to preaching the terrors of the law he states, "We are bid to cry aloud, and not to spare; to show Judah her transgressions,--knowing the terrors of the Lord, we must persuade men. If we speak smooth things or please men, we are not the ministers of Jesus Christ." He held that if any boasted of convulsions like fits, as the work of God, it was but a bodily weakness. "It is doubtless," he states, "the duty of persons to labour to keep their passions within due bounds, especially in public assemblies, lest they interrupt their own and others edification. We only judge such appearance to be probable indications of concern of mind, which when it issues in a closure with Christ, by faith, as communion with him by love, and conformity to him in humble holiness."(2)

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1. Protest.
2. Remarks. pp 25-6

(g) Absolute assurance of salvation.

The seventh reason for the protest was the preaching and the maintaining that all true converts are as certain of their gracious states as one can be what he knows by his outward senses. This involves the knowledge of the definite time and manner of ones conversion. Without such an experience persons are looked upon as graceless. Furthermore, the protesting brethren are charged with holding "that people are under so sacred a tie or relation to their own pastor lawfully called, but may leave them when they please, and ought to go where they think they can get the most good."(1)

Tennent admits the possibility of reaching a full assurance of ones good state, but denies that all experience it. But he did recognize that all converted persons have a greater or lesser persuasion of their gracious state. As to the encouragement of people to forsake their pastors, he sets up the standard, that if a person desires the liberty to attend the preaching of some other minister he should do so only after he had made regular application to his pastor. But in case the minister conspired to oppose the work and faithful servants of God in an open and flagrant manner, then there was no harm in using an extraordinary method."(2)

F. The divergent views of two parties.

Such, in brief, constituted the chief points of contention between Gilbert Tennent and the Old Side Party of the Synod. It is

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1. Protest
2. Remarks, pp 29.

difficult to estimate which of the two sides was the most earnest in their convictions. To say that the former defended true religion and the latter opposed it, would be far from the truth. Both were sincere as to their motives; but they differed greatly in a twofold way; first as to what constituted true religion, and secondly as to the way of promoting it amongst the people. The concluding paragraph of the protest summarizes the conservative point of view. "As it is our duty in our station, without delay, to set about a reformation of the evils whereby we provoke God against ourselves, so we judge that strict observance of his laws of government and order, and not the breaking of them, to be one necessary mean and method of this necessary and much to be desired reformation."(1) The motives here expressed seem to be apparently valid. But one may well question the course that these brethren devised for the realization of their objective. The demand for either the unconditional exclusion of the New Side brethren from the Synod, or the renunciation of their principles, and confession of their sinful disorders, seemed but to substantiate the new side view that they were out of sympathy with, and enemies to the true revival of religion. Hence when the protest was read before the Synod meeting, June 1st 1741, dire consequences were naturally inevitable.

II. THE SCHISM OF 1741.

A. Account by the Synod.

It is very difficult to determine just what did take place,

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1. Protest.

because of the conflicting accounts by the respective parties. The minutes of the Synod simply state, "A protestation was brought in by Mr. Cross, read and signed by several members. Upon this it was canvassed by the former protesting brethren whether they or we were to be looked upon as the Synod. We maintained that they had no right to sit whether they were the major or the minor part. Then they motioned that we should examine this point, and that the major number was the Synod. They were found to be the minor party, and upon this they withdrew."(1)

B. Account by Mr. John Thompson.

Mr. John Thompson, the chief spokesman for the Old Side party gives a more detailed account of what followed.

"After this protest was entered and subscribed, the New Brunswick party or the protesting brethren insisted that a great number of us who are now in the Synod, should be cast out of membership; for there were several brethren who did not sign this protest, who were not of the number which we protested against, and they concluded that all these members would join with them; and they were exact in counting the roll, and found that when they had counted all such with themselves they could not make the majority. But some of the members who did not sign the protest soon convinced them that they would not be of their party; and upon this they thought it expedient to withdraw. The withdrawing put the house into a little confusion. But as soon as they had withdrawn, our moderator took his place, and the Synod proceeded to do their business as usual; where the world may observe by and by the injustice of their complaint, who now paint us as cruel persecutors, for denying them the right of membership when they rendered it impracticable for us to live in communion with them, when they had done all that lay in their power the year past to cast us out of communion, and exerted themselves on this occasion to turn us off."(2)

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1. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia, pp 157.
2. Appendix to Protest.

6. Account by Gilbert Tennent.

Gilbert Tennent gives a different version of what took place. He calls Thompson's account a strange misrepresentation of the affair, and denies that the New Brunswick party insisted that the others should be cast out of the Synod. Neither does he admit that the protesters were in the majority, or that his party withdrew when they discovered that the non-protesting members who were neutral would not give them their support. The fact of the matter was that the protest was read; after which followed a hasty signing of it, which in turn put the assembly into disorder. The protesters then counted the roll to see if they could put the new side group out of the Synod.

"We were surprised with the extraordinary method of proceeding and knew not what to do. We were loath to be cast out so hastily without speaking anything in our own defense. But our attempts to speak were repulsed. The house being confused, one spoke one thing and another another; and sometimes two and more at once, so it's hard to tell what was said. Mr. Blair, I remember, offered more than once to read a paper, but the motion was rejected, silence enjoined by the moderator; and thus the Assembly, after prayer, broke up."(1)

D. Conclusions as to facts of Schism.

Though these accounts vary in details, they agree in several particulars. The first of these is that the reading of the protest caused such confusion, that the meeting ended in turmoil, with the result that no serious consideration could be given to the demands and charges which it contained. The second is that the two parties were of approximate equal strength. The third, that no

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1. Tennent, Remarks on the Appendix to the Protest. 34-35.

official vote was taken which excluded the new side brethren from the Synod. The fourth, the New Brunswick group considered itself excluded from the Synod even though its members had not been properly put to trial. These facts reveal the injustice and the illegality of the whole procedure. Little did Tennent and his followers perceive that as they walked out from that meeting, that they were to be separated from the Synod of Philadelphia for a period of seventeen years.

E. The futility of reconciliation.

(1) The independent organization of the New Brunswick Presbytery.

This rupture in the synod meeting of 1741 constituted a climax in the conflict which had gradually developed between the Old Side and the New Side parties during the ten preceding years. (1) But it eliminated by no means the debates and the differences between the two groups. In fact it served greatly to intensify the existing antagonism; and especially to clarify the line of demarca-

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1. Mr. John Thompson writes in the introduction to the protest, "In reality the separation has been made by these members (New Brunswick Party) in very deed for a considerable time past, tho we were united in name. In the light of this we did not think that they would listen to any proposals this year,-- therefore we chose to lay open some of our crying grievances, and to complain of their infringing and violating the known rights of Presbyteries; and their breach of our most public and solemn agreement; and we persuaded ourselves that if they had any intention to have our differences accommodated, or were they resolved to adhere to the Presbyterian constitution this would open a door for them to make proposals for peace; and to testify their dislike to disorders, and confusion in Christ's Church." He states further that this had been tried again and again, but had failed; hence "we were obliged to enter the following protest against their lawless anti-presbyterial proceedings."

tion between the respective clergy of the two sides. On the following day after the schism, June 2, 1741, the excluded ministers of the New Brunswick Presbytery met in Philadelphia, and established themselves as a distinct organization with Gilbert Tennent as their moderator. After considering at this meeting the unjust and sinful action on the part of the members of the Synod, of casting them out of their communion, they agreed that it was their duty to form themselves into distinct presbyteries to carry on the government of the Church of Christ. In consequence they divided themselves into what they called the New Brunswick Presbytery and the New Londonderry Presbytery.(1) To counteract any false presumptions that they were actually desirous of breaking away from the confessions and tenets of the Presbyterian church, they passed the following resolution.

"In as much as the ministers have protested against our being of their communion, do at least insinuate false reflections against us, endeavouring to make people suspect that we are receding from Presbyterian principles for the satisfaction of such Christian people as may stumble at such aspersions, we think it fit, unanimously to declare, that we do adhere as closely and fully to the Westminster confession of faith, catechism, and directory, as ever the Synod of Philadelphia did, in any of the public acts or agreements about them."

(2) Minority plea for union in Synod of 1742.

The communications and the exchange of controversial writings between the separated factions after the schism show distinctly the futility of any immediate hopes for reconciliation. Practically the entire session of the synod meeting of 1742 was

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1. Minutes of Presbytery of New Brunswick pp 21. Later called New Castle.

occupied with the question of accommodating the differences between the synod and the excluded brethren. But being unable to agree on any basis for re-union the session closed with a second protest by certain members of the synod who were out of sympathy with the proceedings of the previous year.(1) The chief argument of this presentation was that the exclusion of the New Brunswick Presbytery without trial, was "an illegal unprecedented procedure, contrary to the rules of the gospel and subversive of our constitution."(2)

(3) Appeal for union by Presbytery of New York. 1743.

In 1743 the Presbytery of New York made an appeal to the synod for reunion on the same basis. But this involved also a threat that if the illegality of the exclusion be not recognized and the New Brunswick Presbytery be again received by the synod then they would seek to set up a new synod under the name of "The Synod of New York."(3) Both these overtures to the Synod of Philadelphia were rejected, but they led to the sending of a proposal to the New Brunswick Presbytery, seeking peace and union. But the terms of this letter were but a re-emphasis of the demands of the original protest, with a special stress on the renunciation of Gilbert Tennent's doctrines as set forth in the Nottingham sermon. Naturally, the

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1. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia pp 161.

2. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia pp 161.

This protest was signed by Jonathan Dickenson, John Pierson, Ebenezer Pemberton, Simon Horton, Daniel Elmer, Azariah Horton, Nathaniel Hazzard, David Whitehead, Silas Leonard, Timothy Whitehead. It further demanded the cessation of the publication of pamphlets casting reflection on the late revival; and a declaration approving its reality.

3. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia pp 165-66.

pangs of injustice perpetrated by the synod caused the recipients of the overture to turn a deaf ear to its appeal. The conjoint presbyteries of New Brunswick and New Castle (New Side) sent the following reply.

"There can be no regular methods of proceedings towards the compassing a stated union between them and us, until their illegal protest be withdrawn; yet so they and we may both stand upon an equal foot in the regular trial of the differences between us."(1)

(4) The establishment of the Synod of New York, 1745.

This the synod refused to do. The New York Presbytery persisted in entreating the protestors to reconsider their action by offering plans of reconciliation but of no avail. In 1745 they also withdrew from the Synod of Philadelphia, and joined with the Presbytery of New Brunswick in establishing the Synod of New York. This was done at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, September 19, 1745.(2) Hence the break between the Old Side party and the friends of the

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1. Minutes of Synod pp 168. The spirit of antagonism by the synod towards the excluded party was shown in 1744 when the latter appealed for a part of the fund of the church. The following reply was sent in return. "We look on that party made up partly of those who have by their conduct forfeited their rights to membership among us, and of consequence of all privileges belonging thereto, and partly of those who never belonged to our Synod, and of consequence have no more right to any privilege whatsoever who will pretend there unto without any colour of reason or equity. And therefore, on the whole, we judge their demand here in to be highly unreasonable and unjust and not to be complied with." A copy of this was ordered sent to Mr. Gilbert Tennent, the Moderator of the New Brunswick Party.
2. Minutes of the Synod of New York pp 232. It is of interest to note that the first action of this newly organized body was the adoption of the confessions and directory according to the Adopting Act of 1729, and the approval of a testimony to the revival of religion "which had been carried on in these parts of the Land."

revival became official and complete.

III. THE ISSUES OF CONFLICT DEFINED IN SUBSEQUENT DEBATES.

A. By Mr. John Thompson

(1) Two chief points of difference.

It is a difficult but very significant problem to define specifically the basic issues that occasioned the separation within the Presbyterian Church. From the schism in 1741 to the organization of the Synod of New York in 1745, Gilbert Tennent engaged in controversies that aid greatly in their clarification. His chief opponent continued to be his old time rival, Mr. John Thompson. In "The Government of the Church of Christ", Mr. Thompson points out two differences between the synod and the protesting brethren, as he termed Tennent and his associates. "First", he states, "the brethren have conceived so exceedingly low and bad opinion of the generality of their brethren, judging them to be void of grace, and enemies to the life of religion; and consider their activities a work of highest and most exalted charity to rescue the multitudes of perishing souls that are under their care from the jaws of everlasting destruction, by persuading them to believe that ministers are as bad as they represent them to be". As a basis for this charge he points to Tennent's Nottingham sermon, and his paper read before the synod in 1740. The second point of difference that he points out is the opposite judgment and sentiment regarding church government. He refers to the Apology as evidence for the fact that the revivalists assigned no authority to Presbyteries and Synods which was in his estimation but "to sap and over-

throw the very fundamental laws of all societies in the world".(1)
 The divergent views on these two issues, namely the question of un-converted ministers on the one hand and the powers of the synod and presbyteries on the other, undoubtedly summarize and constitute the basic differences between the two contending factions. All other grievances as itinerating, dissent, rash judging, divisions etc. were but manifestations or by-products of these two general principles.

(2) Questions of theological doctrines.

One of the strange phenomena of the conflict was the very little attention given to doctrines of theology. Were it not for Mr. Thompson's attempt to discredit the practices and principles of Tennent and his co-workers on the grounds of false beliefs, their consideration would hardly have entered into the conflict. He pointed out that the New Side ministers were guilty of the following heresies;

1. Believing that the awakening of convictions of sin and misery took place in the soul before any work of grace or of the spirit. Hence a person could be under conviction but fall short of regeneration.
2. Believing that all true converts experienced the assurance of grace and the love of God as vividly as though perceived by the outward physical senses.
3. Believing that all those who are not thus assured of their conversion are yet in a damnable state.
4. Believing that one true convert may be a free conversation with another person, know whether he be converted or not.
5. Believing that the principle or the great mark or criterion by which to judge our own spiritual state or others, is not an orthodox profession accompanied with a godly righteous walk or conversation, but only the experience of certain inward exercises at the time of conversion.

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1. Thompson, Government of the Church of Christ, pp 5.
 He could well have added a third point of difference, namely their conceptions of religious reform, or what constituted true religion.

6. Believing that tho a person be regularly, after due trials, called and ordained to the ministry, yet if he be not converted, or have not an inward call of the Spirit to that work, that such a person has not the call of God, but only the call of man to the ministry.

7. Believing that an unconverted minister who has only the call of men, cannot in an ordinary way be the means of conversion to others in preaching the Gospel. (1)

Since these doctrines were not the primary points of issue but only the apparent underlying motives for the principles of the New Side brethren that grieved Mr. Thompson and his conservative party, Tennent did not take the liberty to answer them directly on a doctrinal basis. But he did explain his views concerning them as they related to some of the more direct points at question.

B. By Tennent's relations to Moravians.

(1) His criticisms of their irregularities.

These explanations were occasioned by his relations to the Moravians. He stood in practically the same position with regard to his charges against them, as the Old Side ministers stood with regard to their charges against himself. He interpreted their activities to be grounded on false doctrines, and considered them guilty of intrusions and disorders amongst the various religious denominations of the colonies. As he attacked these practices of the Moravians he was naturally called upon by his enemies to explain his own activities, and especially to show the consistency between his views expressed in the Nottingham sermon. The reconciliation of these two

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1. Thompson, Doctrine of Conviction, pp 15. These he states to be a just and fair representation of the doctrines which are taught and propagated with great industry and received by many with great greediness.

works give what may be considered the real justification and explanation of his principles in relation to the synod and the Great Awakening.

In the Moravian Sermons, he deals first with the doctrine of conviction. He criticized them because they held that conviction was not necessary to conversion, rather hurtful; and that the preaching of the Law was false.(1) Concerning this he stated that if the doctrine of conviction was dropped, there would be no hope that a secure world would even be alarmed. And if people would be converted without the preceding work of the Law, they would either be under the delusions of fancy and affections or of Satan.

Another objection that he made to them was that they sent out missionaries without "human learning, and preached ordinarily without study, depending on their impulses and the guidance of the Holy Spirit".(2) In contradiction to this he states that it is needful "to use all suitable means to obtain a godly, learned and regular ministry". In ordinary cases where any of these qualifications are wanting, the church's safety is endangered.--When ignorant novices are admitted to the ministerial order, they are apt to be puffed up to the churches great prejudice, as well as their own, and to spread error. To say that these qualifications may be ordinarily attained without human learning is notoriously enthusiastical and foolish.-- It is a manner self evident, that all those who deny the necessity

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1. Tennent, Account of Principles of Moravians, pp 12.

2. Ibid, pp 43.

of human learning,--to prepare persons for the ministry, are enthusiasts".(1) A still further criticism that he made was regarding their appeal to the passions of the people and their childish fickleness of the people who follow them.(2) He contends that such endeavour primarily to propagate a sect by their zeal, rather than to promote the interests of true religion. To refute this he points out the necessity of an understanding of ones faith, and close adherence to its practice. "Certainly", he states, "we should adhere inviolably to the principles we have been instructed in.--I think it is exceedingly black in the Moravians to slight speculative knowledge".(3) Another weakness pointed out is their superficiality in conversion and religious experience, He looked upon the former as slight, without any preparatory work of the Law, "done in a moment, without fears, without complaint of sin, making the converted strangers to spiritual conflicts and the knowledge of their own hearts".(4)

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1. Moravian Sermons, pp 53-54.

As to the ordination of such ministers, Tennent here states, "Whatsoever --- good appearance, thrusting out ignorant persons (However pious) into the ministry may have, yet it is a dangerous practice tending directly to divide and corrupt the church of God, and bring the ministry there of into contempt. Besides when persons intrude into the ministerial work without any previous work, without any previous trial and license from those who by virtue of their office are constituted judges in such cases, it is doubtless our duty to discountenance them.--Therefore all proper care should be taken to prevent intrusions which are pregnant with mischievous consequences".

2. Ibid, pp 45.

3. Tennent, Account of Moravians, pp 47.

Here he states further, "Indeed to impose our opinion upon others by force and violence is doubtless a detestable bigotry; for every one has an equal right to think for himself, and reason and argument can only convince the mind".

4. Ibid, pp 42.

He criticised them most severely for their uncharitable speech, and expressed most forcibly his resentment against their practice of judging the state of people's souls. He pointed out that if people desired to hold fast the precious truths of Christ, that it was necessary to waive any positive conclusions respecting the good state of strangers, when there was not sufficient evidences for it in "respect of their principles, experiences, and practices. "Rash judging", he stated, "either way is certainly unreasonable and prejudicial when persons do so speedily without sufficient grounds, conclude strangers who come among them to be pious and perhaps eminently so because of their appearance in behaviour without examining",--into their true spiritual state.(1)

(2) His charges applied to himself by "Philaethes".

One can hardly read these attacks on the Moravians by Gilbert Tennent without questioning whether many of his arguments are not sadly inconsistent with his previous utterances. On the basis of this, one calling himself "Philaethes" sought to expose his contradictions by placing in parallel columns his principles stated in the Nottingham sermon, and the discourses on the Moravians. These comparisons have a twofold significance. First, they expose the suspicions of his enemies as to his stability in holding fast to the principles that he personally proclaimed. Secondly, they led to an explanation by Tennent of his views in the light of interpretations that he had not previously conceived. This contributes greatly

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1. Moravian Sermons.

towards the solution of the problem as to his apparent changed attitude after the excitement of the awakening was past. The comparisons may be condensed in the following propositions.

1. Tennent stated with regard to the Moravians that to separate from a true church because many of her members are unconverted or spiritually dead is a sign of a proud spirit; Whereas in the Nottingham sermon he chides the unconverted ministers and encourages the people to leave them.
2. In the Moravian discourses Tennent considered the neglect to attend the preachings of unconverted ministers as unscriptural and a dangerous tendency, while in the Nottingham sermon he denies any profit derived from the ministry of unconverted preachers, except by chance.
3. In the Moravian sermons Tennent commended most strongly a learned and regular ministry; in the Nottingham sermon he stressed but the requisite of experimental religion.
4. Tennent accused the Moravians of haughty pride in their criticisms of the Reformed Churches; and at the same time manifested the same spirit in his severe denunciations of the clergy.
5. Tennent charged the Moravians with inconsistencies; but was personally guilty of the same offense.
6. Tennent considered the conversions of the Moravians as flights of imaginations and Satanic delusions; but his own converts were of the same type.
7. Tennent charged the Moravians with uncharitable and devisive speech and practice; while his own censoriousness manifested the same spirit.
8. Tennent accused the Moravians of separations and divisions; while he and his followers divided the people and set them a jangling amongst each other.
9. Tennent held that the Moravians were guilty of encouraging an irregular and uneducated clergy; whereas the New Brunswick party irregularly ordained John Rowland and dissented from the acts of the synod pertaining to the education of the clergy.
10. Tennent accused the Moravians of courting the affections of the people, and working on their passions; but he himself did the same.
11. Tennent considered the Moravians fickle and tossed about by divisive doctrines, but by comparison the converts of the revival were without one reason for their faith.

12. Tennent warned the people of not being led astray by the preachings of the Moravians, encouraging them to hold fast their faith, thereby drawing a picture of his own practices.

Hence the Examiner concludes, "The Moravians treated Mr. Tennent in the same uncharitable, censorious, imperious, divisive manner in which he himself treated the body of the clergy of this generation, and then the spirit appears to him in a most frightful shape and must be avoided.(1)

(3) His final clarification of views pertaining to conflict.

The above arguments appear to have considerable force to the casual observer. On the basis of inconsistencies historians together with the Old Side brethren have disparaged the work of Gilbert Tennent and held him largely responsible for the schism in the Presbyterian Church in 1741. The only true answer to such an accusation is to permit Tennent to speak for himself. This he does in what he termed the "Examiner Examined or Gilbert Tennent Harmonious".

(a) The call to ministry and unconverted pastors.

His first point of defense is his explanation of the "Call to the Ministry". He distinguished between an outward and an inward call. The first, he states, constitutes the external separation to the ministerial work; the second, the pious dispositions and aims of the person involved.(2) His reference to the inability of unconverted ministers to glorify God was based on the inner call, whereas his opponents applied his principle to the outward. He explains his view that unconverted men are not sent of God into the ministry under the

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1. General Summary of the "Examiner".
2. Tennent, Examiner Examined, pp 10.

Gospel dispensation by three positions. First, they are destitute of an aim at God's glory, and other pious dispositions, without which they are not well qualified for the ministerial work and consequently unlikely to do much good in it. Second, unconverted men are not moved by the spirit of God. Thirdly, God does not require his work of unconverted people.(1) He does not admit of any extraordinary call as visions, voices, etc.

(b) People forsaking their ministers.

His second point of explanation pertains to people leaving their congregations to hear some other minister. He recognized the right of persons to leave one minister that they might hear another for the best interest of their spiritual welfare, but only on the following basis.

1. Persons should not go from their churches to others merely to tickle and exorbitant fancy or for the sake of vain curiosity.
2. Neither should persons go without regular requests according to order.
3. Nor in any secession through envy, malice, or contempt from hearing the parish minister.
4. Nor hasty secession without attempting to get good under the ministry one stands in special relation to.
5. Nor merely to avoid first censures of the church, for this tends to disannul its government, and introduce confusion and anarchy.(2)

(c) Itinerations.

The third point deals with the right of ministers to preach in other parishes. This he explains on the basis of a minister, not only having certain relations to his own parish, but to the whole church.

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1. Examiner Examined, pp 13.
2. Ibid, pp 30.

If he is to further the cause of the greater good, he must have the liberty to do so on a broader scale. However, he states,

"We should with equal care avoid both extremes, viz, tyranny upon the one hand, and the abuse of christian liberty upon the other. Truth and duty lie between both. As we should abhor with a perfect hatred the enslaving schemes of high church bigots, so on the contrary, we should equally abhor and avoid extraordinaries, except the case be evidently so".

(d) Denunciation of clergy.

The fourth point defends his strong denunciation of unconverted ministers. He looked upon the opponents of the work of God's Spirit as guilty of an unpardonable sin.(1) Hence he justified his strong terms on the basis of justice and considered them as not only mere signs, but acts of love to God and man. To God, love was shown in that he was willing to risk his reputation in detecting and opposing the enemies to God's work and his Kingdom. To man it was revealed in that such terms would awaken the unconverted, and humble them before God.(2) He denied that his attacks on the ministers applied to the clergy in general. Although he stated that he thought that the greater part of the clergy were unconverted.(3) To these he laid the greatest blame for the prevalent disturbances that followed the Great Awakening. He states,

"It was their bitter opposition to the power of religion, that gave rise to separate meetings, together with the irregular and unjust attempt to cast us out of the Synod communion.---It is the necessity of their wretched cause that urge those unhappy men to take such sinful and scandalous methods in order to cloak their horrible wickedness in opposing God's work which has been the real cause of the divisions subsisting among us, which they without foundation ascribe to me".(4)

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1. Examiner Examined, pp 47.
2. Ibid, pp 47.
3. Ibid, pp 76.
4. Ibid, pp 89.

(2) The work of religious revival.

The work of revival and his principal tenent of experimantal religion, he defends on the grounds of their efficacy. He denied that he had ever minimized human learning in the training of ministerial candidates that experience might be given the prime emphasis. The sole objective of the Log College, he points out, was to co-ordinate the two.(1) As to examining individuals for their religion, he stated that the very opposition to it "gave his reason to suspect the want of it, as well as unfaithfulness in the ministry!" (2) He defends the converts of the late revival as being real. Some he recognized as being under the presumptuous sophistry of Satan; but these did not disprove the testimonies of the Presbyteries of New York, New Brunswick, and New Castle, as to the validity of the revival in general.(3) The fullest evidence he held, showed that many were brought from a state of nature to a state of grace. In this work he rejected the charge that he was uncharitable and guilty of intrusions, since he preached in no place without invitation, nor condemned any one without cause.(4)

(f) Ordination of ministerial candidates.

Concerning the accusation that he and his followers were guilty of irregularities in ordaining ministers, he gives the following explanation,

"All that we have licensed and ordained for the Holy ministry were furnished with a complete measure of human learning agreeable to our Directory. Indeed we have not ordained anyone to a fixed charge for

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- 1.. Examiner Examined, pp 96.
2. Ibid, pp 100.
3. Ibid, pp 111.
4. Ibid, pp 123.

this reason because the congregations that depend upon us for supplies are so numerous and our number of candidates so small, that we cannot supply them all at present with a settled ministry as we desire and intend. The people in the mean time urge us with almost incessant importunities for some supplies in respect of preaching and like wise want to have Baptism administered to their children. And it should likewise be observed that those congregations are many of them far distant from each other. Now we know of no better method to remedy the present stressing exigence than that of ordaining some to preach about in diverse places for a while and baptize, until we could get the places supplied with a regular ministry".(1) "But", he adds, "the accusation of sending any into places where there is a sound ministry is a calumny".(2)

(g) Passions in religion.

In the closing pages of this extensive defense he denies the charge of being "but a mover of the passions". He attributes all charges wrought in the people to the Holy Spirit. He states that his own conscience and multitudes of others could testify to the fact that he always endeavoured to inform men's minds before he addressed their consciences and passions. He credited passions as being of no further use in religion than when appealed to under the guidance of a well informed judgment.(3) An analysis of Tennent's sermons substantiates this claim.

IV. SUMMARY OF TENNENT'S VIEWS ON RELIGION AND THE CHURCH.

This interpretation of Gilbert Tennent of his previous works, principles and activities in the light of the charges and accusations by his opponents, must constitute the true basis for our understanding of his attitude towards the synod and his views of vital religion. Without taking into consideration certain basic principles, one can readily point to specific utterances, works or acts of Gilbert Tennent

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1. Examiner Examined, pp 125.
2. Ibid, pp 126.
3. Ibid, pp 131-2.

and set them forth as objects of just criticism. But as the underlying motives for his activities are comprehended, and the true intentions back of his purposes understood, there emerges a consistency which in the light of reason, adds glory instead of discredit to his name. His major objective was the inculcation of experimental religion into the spiritual life of the people, who had degenerated to a state of false security and moral corruption. Unconsciously the approach to his purpose involved three essential factors. First, the conversion of souls; secondly, the existing ministry; and third, the government of the church.

A. Conversion of souls.

The principles governing his activities in the conversion of souls, may be summarized in the following statements;

First. Souls at ease and dead in a false security must be convicted of sin and judgment as the first step to a vital relation with God's saving grace.

Second. The Law and the preaching of the terror of judgment constitute the means for producing such conviction.

Third. The passions are aroused by preaching, and are but a subordinate part of conversion to knowledge, scripture and judgment.

Fourth. Personal and public examinations are essential to clarify the states of persons souls, for both the individual and others.

Fifth. The saving factor in conversion is the gospel of grace.

Sixth. Persons may come to an assurance of the state of grace to a greater or lesser degree. This state is positive as opposed to indifference and uncertainty of salvation.

B. The ministry of the church.

In relation to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church his views may be thus condensed.

First. Distinctions must be made between the converted and the unconverted clergy, since the latter becomes the cause for religious decline.

Second. The basis for distinction is the inner call to the ministry, and not the external issued by the Church as an institution.

Third. An unconverted clergy is non effective in the saving of souls, and constitutes a hypocritical state in man's relation to God and salvation. Although God does use it at times as a means of conversion in some cases. Hence such deserves the most severe denunciations.

Fourth. The laity has a right to separate themselves from unconverted ministers providing they do it according to due order, and for the ultimate purpose of the best interests of the good of their souls.

Fifth. In the absence of schools for the training of ministerial candidates, private institutions of learning should be established and recognized that emphasize mutually the experience of religion and intellectual training, in order that the evils of an unconverted clergy might be avoided.

C. The government of the church.

Tennent's views of church government may be stated thus.

First. Exceptions to rigid ecclesiastical order can be made in times of abnormal religious decay for the spread of vital religion.

Second. Presbyteries have certain distinct rights and powers, including the examination and ordination of ministerial candidates, with which the Synod has no authority to interfere.

Third. Hence the legislative power exercised in governing the itinerating of preachers and the examination of ministerial candidates, was contrary to its judicial powers, and the broad scope of the ministry.

Fourth. Dissent from actions of superior judicatories by either lower bodies or individuals is justified if based on conscientious reasons and the ultimate of human souls.

Fifth. Divisions and disorders as manifest in the course of the Great Awakening were not due to liberal and anarchical principles held by the revivalists, but to the old side opposition to the revival of religion.

On the basis of misconstruing these tenets which pertained primarily to religious reform, his opponents considered him a zealous enthusiast with respect to his preaching and evangelical activities; guilty of rash judging with respect to his ministerial

brethren; and the cause of disorders and divisions in the church. On the other hand, when they excluded him and his associates from the Synod of Philadelphia, he interpreted their action as a justification of his views that they were enemies to vital religion. Hence the conflict that has been considered in the course of this chapter took place, resulting in the separation of the two groups, and the establishment of the Synod of New York, in which the New Side principles of experimental christianity might be perpetuated and maintained.

CONCLUSION

The conflict between the two parties of the Presbyterian Church was a culmination of the issues that had developed during the ten years previous to the schism of 1741. It had its roots in the original question as to whether a creedal basis or the emphasis of experimental religion should be the way to religious reform. When the synod sought to correct certain existing evils in the church by restricting itinerations, and supervising the ordination of ministerial candidates by the presbyteries, the new side party dissented from its actions, and set out independently to promote the revival of religion. The Great Awakening was the climax to this attempt. The old side party persisted in its demands that the revivalists conform to the jurisdiction of the synod, that the integrity of presbyterial government might be maintained. Under the pain of severe rebukes and the accusation that they were enemies of vital religion, they expelled their brethren from their midst. Only the divine omniscience can know exactly the justice and the injustice perpetrated by the respective sides. However, it is significant to note in connection with the scope of this thesis

on the relation of Gilbert Tennent to the conflict, the great dangers involved in times of great religious excitement, to permit prejudices to over rule the better sense of reason. As Tennent experienced the great manifestation of new religious life amongst the people he did not always show the best judgment in dealing with the ministers who were not in sympathy with his convictions. His opponents became even more blinded in opposing the Great Awakening that was so clearly evident throughout the colonies. These suspicions and prejudices counteracted to a great extent the benefits of the revival. However, as such human limitations are discounted, and the true purposes and intents noted, the true glamour of these pioneers in American Christianity reveals itself. Gilbert Tennent stood for an ideal. It consisted in the leading of the people to an experience of Christ, and the establishment of the infant pioneer church on the firm basis of vital religion. This ideal superceded the visions of many in his day. Hence the conflict took place which ended in the apparent disastrous consequence of Schism. But the years of separation healed the wounds of enmity, and after years of deliberation and adjustment, the two natural groups of religion, namely the evangelicals and the orthodox, became reconciled in still greater unity and harmony. Despite all shortcomings, Tennent deserves the credit of defending his principles of experimental religion even in the face of the most bitter conflict.

CHAPTER VII

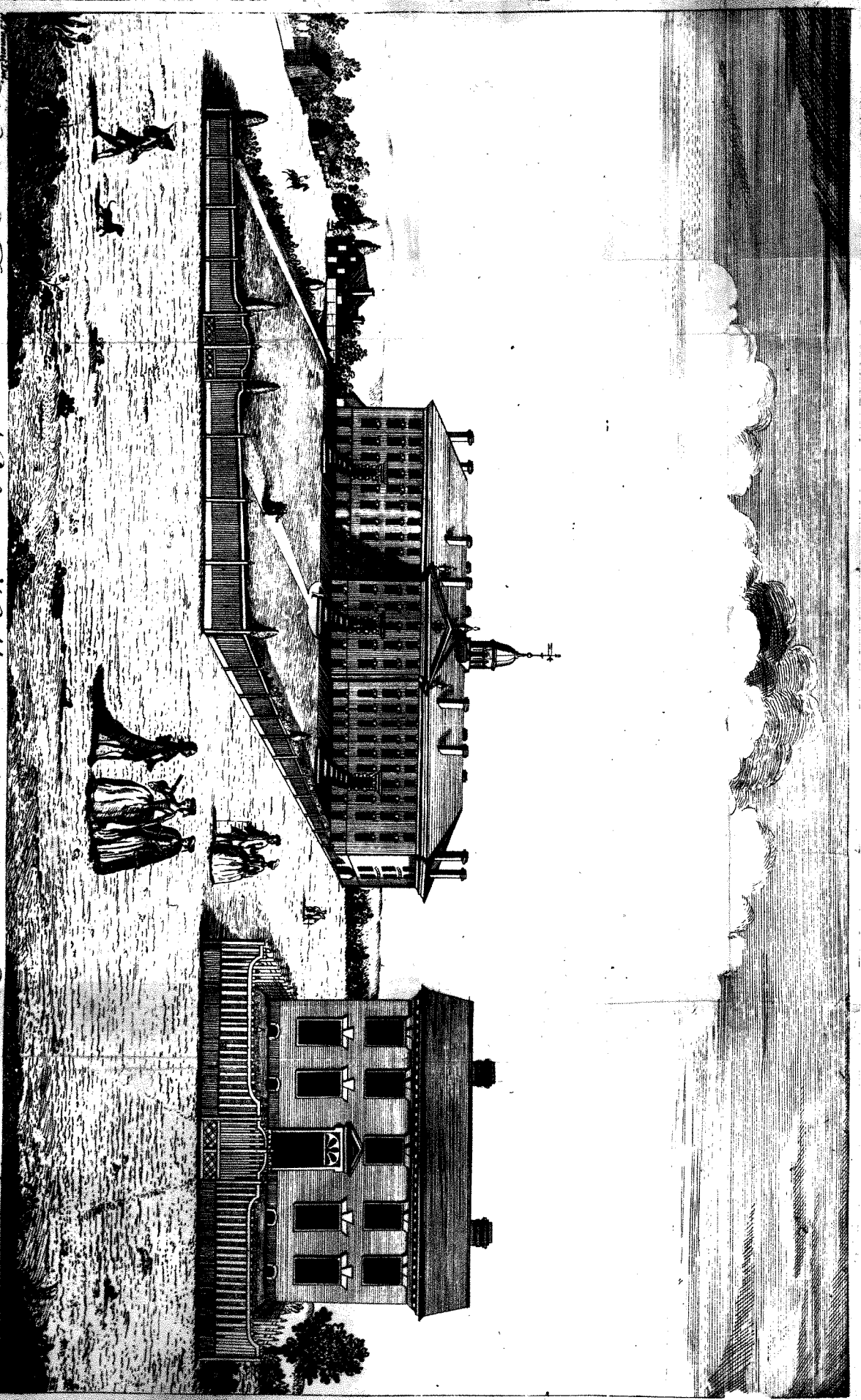
GILBERT TENNENT IN THE TIME OF PEACE

showing

HIS NATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS AND

HIS PLEAS FOR UNION

A North-West Prospect of Nassau-Hall, with a Front View of the Presidents House in New-Jersey.



CHAPTER VII

GILBERT TENNENT, THE CHAMPION OF PEACE.

INTRODUCTION

Gilbert Tennent's activities after the establishment of the Synod of New York reveal a more deliberate aspect of his life. This period may be considered the third and final division of his ministerial labours. Historians have been prone to minimize his work after the Great Awakening and his removal from New Brunswick to Philadelphia, on the basis that his zeal for vital religion had abated. And since his general personality and abilities were primarily suited for the animated spirit of religious revival, his subsequent labours are looked upon as being very ordinary during the normal trends of religion. It must be admitted that as the excitement of the revival movement and the schism in the Presbyterian Church were over, his attitude became more considerate for consequences, rather than concerned in a special way for the immediate regeneration of spiritual life amongst the colonists. However, it would be physically impossible for his aggressive mentality to become entirely passive towards the public questions that concerned the spiritual and social life of the people. Hence we find his public activities continued during this period also, but in a different way, and with a different spirit. Weighty problems were pressing heavily upon the colonies and the church. Of these there were three in which Gilbert Tennent took a most active interest. The first was the great danger of French and Indian raids and massacres upon the defenseless colonists. The second was the

establishment of an educational institution in the Middle Colonies for the training of youth, and especially ministers for the many vacant congregations. The third was the re-establishment of peace and union between the two separated synods of the Presbyterian Church. His activities in these respects are not characterized by the brilliant aspects of his controversial endeavours, but are of fully as great significance. His religious defense of just wars and the colonial militia for the sake of defense, constituted one of the many contributing facts that averted the encroachment of the French and Indians upon English territory. It also gave a great incentive to the rise of a colonial military unit that was later to resist the invasion of England upon the rights and liberties of the American colonies. Had the Quaker conception of war prevailed throughout the Middle Colonies in accord with the Quaker background of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the decisive campaigns of the Revolutionary War would have been practically impossible. With regard to his educational interests in the Middle Colonies, he was one of the leading men in the establishment of the first major educational institution that has continued down to the present time to be a great force in the educational development of America. This school was the College of New Jersey, or as it is now called, Princeton University. But undoubtedly the most direct and lasting influence exerted these years was the bringing together again the two separated bodies of the Presbyterian Church into a single and united body. All three of these factors were of the utmost importance with regard to the future development of the infant colonies.

I. HIS RELATIONS TO COLONIAL MILITARY DEFENSE

A. Motives

Gilbert Tennent's interest and participation in the military defense of the Colonies were motivated chiefly by two factors that constituted causes for great concern. First, the prevalent disasters of the French and Indian massacres of the frontier settlements. Second, the remote fear that if the Colonists would not be equipped and trained for war, the French Papal power would seize the English Colonies in the New World.

B. The perilous circumstances of the colonies.

The history of the Colonies and the English wars with France and Spain during the first sixty years of the eighteenth century fully justified this attitude. The Colonial conflicts were manifestations on the frontiers of the entangling alliances and the continued warfare that raged amongst these European nations on the Continent. The war of the Spanish Succession occupied the years from 1702 to 1713. During those years France made treaties with the American Indians, and encouraged their onslaughts and massacres amongst the settlers of Maine and the New England Colonies.(1) One of the terms of the treaty of 1713 was that both England and France should have equal colonial trading rights and free trade. However, in 1731 France continued her policy of encroachment on the English Colonies by erecting Fort Crown Point within the limits of the province of New York.(2) On Cape Breton she had fortified Louisbourg

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1. Longmans', Summary of English History, pp 107.
2. Abiel Holmes, American Annals, pp 129.

to the extent that it had become the best protected and the greatest stronghold on the American continent. Hence the colonists were justified in fearing both the massacres of the Indians and the conquests by the French. It was this fear that motivated Governor Shirley of Massachusetts to inaugurate the successful expedition against the French stronghold of Louisbourg in 1745. But the French retaliated with the sending of its fleet under duke D'Anville in 1746 with such military provisions as seemed certain to guarantee a victory in America. It was at this time that Tennent began to participate in the cause of colonial defense. Following the conclusion to King George's War in 1748 the French continued their aggressions by building forts along the Ohio and near the Alleghany mountains. This threat prompted the sending of Colonel Washington to take Fort Duquesne in 1754. But his defeat only added greater fear to the hearts of the English settlers. This defeat was followed by other disasters. In 1755 General Braddock and his English officers were mowed down in great numbers while attempting the same mission. Further reverses were experienced by the English at Fort Crown Point, and Fort Niagara. Fort William Henry on the south end of Lake George was seized in 1757, and most of the colonial troops were massacred.(1) During all this time no settlement or colony was safe from massacre and plunder. The political situation in England was corrupt and divided. "The colonies themselves were split into factions, and the war was carried on with a half heartedness and stupidity.(2)

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1. Eggleston. Hist. of U. S., pp 132
2. Ibid, pp 132.

C. Answers to Quaker opposition to military defense.

In the light of these hazardous situations, the Quakers who constituted an integral part of the population of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, opposed any preparation for war or participation in colonial defense on the grounds of their religion.(1) Gilbert Tennent had no premeditated intention to join in any public debate on the issue. But he did so in view of the particular perilous circumstances that confronted the colonies.(2) He approached the question on the basis of Scripture and limited his justifications of military exploits to only wars of defense. One peculiar trait of Tennent is here clearly evident, and that is that he presented his arguments on the basis of God's providence and justice to man. He associated the perils that seemed inevitable with the carnal security of the people and pleaded not only for military defense but for moral and spiritual reform as well. And strange as it may seem, as he pointed out in 1756 the symptoms for an expected manifestation of the wrath of God upon the people, he exposed the basic causes for the tragic blunders of the English and colonial leaders previous to the ministry

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1. This view was defended in a publication called, "A vindication of the doctrine of Christianity as held by the people called the Quakers". This work was highly recommended by many and went through several editions of print. It constituted also an attack on a sermon that Tennent had preached before the Association of National Defense, in which he had upheld the justice of defensive wars.
Tennent, Defensive Wars Defended, pp 1.
2. Tennent, Dedicatory Epistle to Defensive Wars Defended.
Tennent here states, "I may truly say that being engaged in a controversy of this kind, is one of the most unexpected events to me that ever I met with. 'Tis not long since that I had almost come to a full resolution, never more to offer any production of mine to public view, being somewhat sensible of my unfitness for things of that nature, and likewise desirous of peace".

of William Pitt. He gave the following.

1. A general and notable defection from foundation principles.
2. A general and great corruption of manners in notorious instances in the bulk of a nation, or in the generality of its leaders in the church and state.
3. A failure to heed lesser calamities, as warnings for greater, if people do not reform their ways.
4. An infatuation for councils of defence, without money and military laws for their support and execution.
5. Sloth and negligence in not making suitable fortifications in important places.
6. Scandalous divisions and unreasonable debates on lesser things, when the great question of colonial protection is pending.
7. Cowardice and treachery in fleets and armies, selling the country basely for private gain, and lacking manly courage.
8. The withdrawing of the spirit of prayer.(1)

Thus on the basis of the threatening dangers from without, and the existing corruptions from within, he pictured the perils that confronted the people.

"We cannot resist an enemy, but must submit to their tyranny and lawless rage. Though we have men enough, they are not provided with arms and ammunition, they are not prepared for an attack by martial discipline. We have no officers, no fortresses, no ships of war to protect us.--Through neglect of defense--this great and growing city (Philadelphia) could be laid in ashes, or its inhabitants reduced to beggary, by an intolerable ransome, or both".(2)

Hence he justifies wars in three instances. First, when undertaken for necessary defense against unjust invasion, designed to bodily assault, robbery or ruin of ones estate. Second, when commenced for the recovery of something of great importance, unjustly taken, which is essential to ones existence. Third, when undertaken

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1. Tennent, Funeral discourse over Captain William Grant, 1756.
2. Tennent, Late Association for defense encouraged, pp 35. December 24, 1747.

by the magistrate for the punishment of some great injury or wrong, which most effects the credit and interest of a nation or people. (1) According to these definitions of just wars, he then proceeds to defend them on the basis of the scriptural authority of both the Old and the New Testament. He argues that God approved and appointed his people to make war under the laws of Moses, and the moral code. (2) He refers to the Angels of God assisting Israel in slaying thousands, and God acting as a "Captain of the Hosts" in many battles, as proofs for this fact. (3) The necessity for such situations was the depraved nature of man. Hence the moral law, the Jewish Economy and the gospel dispensation all are referred to as supporting the lawfulness of war. When Jesus came, he states, He did not alter the case in the least. He came neither to destroy the laws of Moses, nor the law of nature. "The injustice and encroachments of neighboring nations and states to and upon each other's rights and properties are in diverse instances as flagrant as under the Jewish Economy.-- Human nature remains the same. Multitudes do now grasp after wealth and dominion as much as formerly, and do concert and pursue as unjust measures to attain them". (4) Consequently he pointed out that it was but vain confidence to expect protection in any other way than the regular military defense. There was no instance in Scripture of the preservation of any in a time of danger and calamity, but that the proper means for defense had been used. (5)

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1. Tennent, Late Association for Defense encouraged, pp 7-8.
2. Tennent, Sermon, Dec. 24, 1747, pp 14.
3. Tennent, Sermon, January 24, 1748, pp 19-21.
4. Tennent, Sermon, Dec. 24, 1747, pp 14-15.
5. Tennent, Late Association for Defense, pp 24.

D. Application of arguments to colonial government.

With such arguments supporting his proposition that wars for defense are justified, he applied it to the colonial government.

"Defenseless war is essential to society; without government, society cannot subsist; and without defensive war, government cannot long be maintained. Without this we are naked and shelterless; without this, through a sordid negligence of proper means we tempt the righteous God to abandon us, as well as to invite unreasonable men to injure and molest us by methods of force and violence.--In a word without preparation for defense, we are perpetually exposed as an easy prey to enemies of our King and country."(1)

The organization through which he conceived such defense could be supported was the Association for Colonial and National Defense. This he considered to be the best expedient that could be concerted, and the last necessity to promote the security and advantages of the provinces.(2) Hence, he plead for its support.

"Let the consideration for these things excite you to go on unwearidly, undauntedly in this necessary and noble attempt for defense. Lay aside all your private piety, animosities, and unite as one man in your country's cause. Union is the glory of society, its safety and strength. O let a generous love to your country ever fire your bosoms; this when exerted is prudent counsel, unfainting industry, and heroic bravery, and contains almost everything in it that is great and noble. This sublimates the human soul, inspires us with most tender sentiments to our country, and conforms us to God."(3)

Such constitutes his arguments and pleas for the people to rally to the cause of their country when it was exposed to grave

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1. Tennent, Sermon January 24, 1748.

2. Tennent, Sermon January 24, 1747. pp 35.

The complete purpose of this Association was set forth in a document called "Plain Truth." He considered it the only temporal method in the existing unhappy and difficult circumstances, which could be decided upon for mutual defense and safety. At this time, 1748, he conceived the danger of France conquering Holland, the chief ally of England by situation, religion, and national interests, thereby preparing the way for a victory over England the following spring by the augmented naval power thus derived. Sermon, Fasting and Prayer. Jan. 7, 1748.

3. Tennent, Sermon Dec. 24, 1747.

disasters and distress.

E. Association of National dangers with religious security.

The treaty of 1748 between England and France alleviated the intensity of the circumstances for a few years, but only, as has previously been noted, to be renewed again as France established forts from Canada to Louisiana along the Ohio River. The defeats of Colonel Washington and General Braddock were the immediate cause for Tennent to renew his encouragement and justification of defensive wars in 1756.(1) He pled in a most passionate manner for the government to establish forts and suitable means for protection; and for the people to awaken from their security and carnal pleasure to a concern over the critical situations that confronted them.(2) He pointed out in a most forceful manner the fact that had forts been built in the back parts of the country in due season, and the inhabitants trained up in the use of arms, and formed into a regular militia by an equitable and impartial act of the legislature, the existing distress would either have been wholly prevented or much lessened.(3) He attacked most vehemently the indulgences of the people, as drunkenness, profanity, contempt of the Gospel and family religion, scandalous contentions, sordid security and presumptuous

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1. Tennent, "The Happiness of Rewarding the Enemies of our Religion. pp 18. Sermon preached Feb. 17, 1756.
2. Ibid pp 30. "My heart bleeds, " he stated, "for this ravaged country especially for our poor brethren in the back parts of it, many of whom have been mercilessly sacrificed by the pagan savages, and the remainder reduced to such circumstances of distress and woe as are enough to pierce the heart of iron."
3. Ibid pp 19.

expectations of impunity in the midst of great and growing dangers. Instead, he points out, the people should be either, "girding on the harness of faith against the ravages of their country, or praying between the porch and the Altar that God should spare them and not give them up to reproach."(1) The chief objects of fear were the French and the Indians, who if successful would impose their papal tyranny upon the colonists. Such a life under the sordid shackles of idolatry, superstition and tyranny he considered to be infinitely worse than death. "there are," he stated, "no such bloody tyrannical task masters under the whole Heaven as the papists. We have therefore reason to dread their government more than death itself." He glorified death in the following terms;

"Death, dear brethren, in the fields of battle, the bed of honor, while nobly contending for our religion and liberty is infinitely preferable to the sordid life of a slave, or a hypocrite under the worst of tyrants. Yea, in such death there is something so sublime, grand, and noble, in preferring the safety of the church and state to our own, that it cannot but be agreeable to good and heroic minds. Such must therefore have disordered misunderstandings, or cowardly, little selfish souls, who want to sleep in a whole skin or sordidly to spare their cash when their country is bleeding to death."(2)

F. His influence.

Thus in a national crisis it is evident that Gilbert Tennent displayed the same burning zeal that he had manifested when the spiritual life of the people was threatened with extinction. There are no ways of determining the results of his exhortations in behalf of national defense. But we can determine the different groups with whom he came in contact. First, he preached

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1. Tennent, "The Happiness of Rewarding the Enemies of our Religion. Sermon preached Feb. 17, 1756 pp 23.
2. Ibid. pp 31.

his encouragement of military defense publicly before the people in general from his own pulpit in Philadelphia. Secondly, he proclaimed his views before the company of Independent Volunteers under Captain Vanderspiegel, (1) and the Association for National Defense. Third, he published an elaborate treatment of his views to counteract the opposition to war by the Quakers. Hence, he appealed to the militia, the public, and even his opponents to rise in the defense of their country and colonial interests when French invasion seemed inevitable. It is a significant parallel that England's proclamation of war with Spain and the continued conflict were contemporary with the Great Awakening. So it is also of interest to note that during the wars with France, Tennent pleaded for National defense and social reform in the name of God and religion. From this it may be seen that National calamities and threatening exploitations by foreign powers, together with the many other perils that confronted the colonists, led the people to a more serious consideration of their spiritual life. These parallels were no mere coincidences. They are written on the pages of history as evidences for the fact that religious leaders and a great many of the people had a clear consciousness of divine providence determining their course and destiny. In viewing the historical events that took place there are certain remarkable evidences for the fact that their divine philosophy of history was not in vain. In answer to the official days for prayer and fastings,

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1. Sermon "The Happiness of Rewarding". Feb. 27, 1756.

and the appeals made by Gilbert Tennent and many other religious leaders in the name of God to use the proper means for defense, certain apparent disasters were averted. The case of Duke D'Anville is an illustration. He came to America with the French fleet consisting of forty ships of war besides the transports, three or four thousand troops with veteran officers, and great military supplies.(1) Mr. Holmes in the American Annals states concerning this expedition that had the project succeeded "It is impossible to determine to what extent the American Colonies would have been distressed or desolated."(2) However in the light of English indifference towards the protection of the American Colonies, and the very limited strength of the Colonies themselves, the expedition came to naught without striking a single blow. Mr. Trumbull makes the following comment on the case.

"Indeed there was no exertion of military skill or prowess, no employment of policy nor the adoption of a single measure to have had the least influence in the preservation of the country. The whole glory of that remarkable salvation, which it experienced, appeared to be to God only, whose Kingdom ruleth over all."(3)

Hence the value of Tennent's participation in encouraging and defending the organization of militias for Colonial defense consisted not only in the incentive that he gave to that very essential cause, but also in the fact that in the time of a national crisis he linked the human with the divine. This he did in the consciousness that the wrath of God was inevitable if the people would not

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1. Holmes, American Annals. pp 170.
2. Ibid. pp 171. The purpose of this expedition was to recover Fort Louisbourg, take Annapolis, and distress if not conquer the Colonies.
3. Trumbull, General History of the U.S. pp 333.

reform of their carnal security, and come to the protection of their country according to the regularly appointed means of military defense.

II. TERNENT AND EDUCATION

HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RISE OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

A. An original trustee.

A second field of public interest in which Tennent was especially engaged after the organization of the Synod of New York was education. This was by no means new to him, since it had been one of the major enterprises that he had defended and supported from the time he entered the ministry. However previous to this time, his endeavours to gain a recognition by the Synod of Philadelphia of local schools had been limited to the Log College and other private academies. It was such institutions that the church refused officially to accept as accredited places of learning. But in 1747, a group of twenty-three men of like mind with Tennent were granted a petition from Governor Belcher of the Province of New Jersey, to incorporate under the name of "The College of New Jersey." This was done with Governor Belcher acting as president of the Board pro temp. The school was supported entirely by private contributions. During the first five years of its existence it had collected twelve hundred pounds sterling; the interest of which was to be used in the support of the president and the teachers.(1) However the fund was very inadequate to meet the expenses

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1. Account of the rise and state of the College of New Jersey. pp 4. The inhabitants of Princeton had also given in land a consideration of 400 sterling for its support and supply of firewood. In 1750 the Society for the propagation of Christian Knowledge had also set aside 30 pounds sterling for the work, and recommended it to others on the basis of supplying ministers to the Colonies.

of a new building and the other essentials necessary for the establishment of any institution of learning. Hence the Trustees petitioned the Synod of New York, September 26, 1751, that Mr. Pemberton should be sent to England to solicit benefactions for the college. (1) In the meantime public collections from all the congregations of the synod were also made to alleviate the distressing need. (2) But both these enterprises came to naught. (3) This caused the Trustees to renew their application to the synod to send some representatives to England to collect funds. But this time they recommended Mr. Gilbert Tennent and Mr. Samuel Davies to make the trip. This the synod unanimously consented to do.

B. Purpose of School.

It is a strange fact that the Synod of New York should take the initiative in thus establishing a recognized educational institution. (4) During the conflict over the accreditation of the Log College and other private places of education by the synod, the Old Side party refused to acknowledge anything less than a

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1. Minutes of the Synod of New York. pp 243.
2. Ibid. pp 247.
3. In the petition made to the churches of England and Scotland it was stated that there were no prospects of a sufficient augmentation of the fund by any further benefactions in the Colonies "to bring the seminary to such maturity as would answer the pressing exigences of the numerous societies that expected their ministers from it.
4. The Synod of Philadelphia established a school without a charter in 1744, and sought affiliation with Yale College to complete the education of their men. This was under Mr. Francis Alison. The University of Glasgow bestowed on him the Doctor of Divinity degree in 1758. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia, pp 185-87, and pp 229.

public school. However when the time came for the founding of such a school, it was the new side party that took the initiative and carried the brunt of the burden. This contributes greatly to the sincerity and the earnest concern of Gilbert Tennent and his associates to meet the urgent demands for both secular and religious education in the Middle Colonies. The petition sent by the Synod of New York to the people of England and Scotland clearly reveal the justification of Gilbert Tennent in upholding the school of his father to meet the critical needs of the earlier years. One of the sources from which the Middle Colonies had drawn their ministerial candidates was the New England Colleges. But at a meeting of the associated pastors of Boston in 1752, it was admitted that they could hardly supply their own churches with pastors.(1)

Furthermore many congregations and communities continued to be without any ministerial services, and had no hope or prospects of getting any under the existing circumstances. The urgency of the situation was evident from the words of the appeal.

"It (the school) is the last necessity to furnish persons with the proper qualifications in the southern provinces of North America, of which there are at present no less than fifty or sixty entirely destitute of the stated ministry of the gospel."(2)

Besides these there were forty other vacant congregations that were cared for by the ministers of the Synod of New York, by serving two or three congregations besides their

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1. Petition pp 13.
2. Ibid. pp 11.

own.(1) On the basis of these conditions, and the inability of the synod to supply pastors, an appeal was made to the English people, and especially to the Church of Scotland which had been the model and the guide for the colonial church.(2) The prime argument set forth in behalf of this appeal was that the school would meet the religious needs of the colonies. But its purpose was of a still broader scope than just to supply ministers for the church. It was not calculated to be limited to any party, but rather its motive was to further the cause of Protestant interests in general, and Great Britain in particular, with respect to both religious and civil development.(3) These purposes are further explained in the petition.

"To preserve a sense of religion, promote the knowledge of the English language among the German Protestant emigrants by educating some of their youth for the ministry in an English College that so, national prejudices may be removed.---To propagate the Christian religion amongst the Indians,--so to attain them inviolably to his majesty's crown and the interests of Great Britain.(4)

This broad purpose of the college is further evidenced

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1. Address of Synod to the General Assembly of Church of Scotland. Minutes of Synod of New York. pp 254.

The causes for these vacancies is explained as follows: "The great number of vacancies in the bounds of this Synod is owing partly to the death of sundry ministers belonging to this Synod, but principally to the small number of youth educated for the ministry,-- so vastly disproportionate to the numerous vacancies; and unless some effectual measures can be taken for the education of proper persons for the sacred character, the Church of Christ in these parts must continue in the most destitute circumstances, wandering for shepherdless and forlorn through this wilderness, thousands perishing for lack of knowledge, the children of God hungry and unfed, and the rising age growing up in a state little better than that of heathenism, with regard to the public ministrations of the gospel."

2. Address to Assembly of Scotland. Minutes of Synod of N.Y. pp 255.
3. Account of rise of College. pp 8-9
4. Petition pp 11.

by its charter. All Protestants of every denomination, who were loyal subjects, were to be admitted to the enjoyments of its privileges, and allowed the unlimited exercise of their religion. There were two principal objects in view of its Trustees, namely science and religion. "The first of these concerns was to cultivate the minds with the subjects which were generally taught in the Universities abroad. The second was to rectify the heart by inculcating the great precepts of Christianity in order to make them good."(1)

C. Relations of purpose to Tennent's educational principles.

The importance of these characterizations of the scope and purposes of the College of New Jersey is their bearing on Gilbert Tennent and the New Side party, which primarily constituted the Synod of New York. The former in acting as a Trustee for said college and giving it his hearty support, showed the falacious basis for the accusations made against him by the Old Side party, that his views were so limited by the precepts of experimental religion, that he had little or no regard for true academic learning. Directly to the contrary, he was vitally interested in high academic standards. But in the two previous decades he realized the futility

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1. Petition pp 4-5.

This granted full religious liberty to the students. In a note it is stated that "The Trustees of said college have not made such regulations as may burden the consciences of any or confine the advantages of the institution to a party.--The said petitioners have expressed their earnest desire that those of every religious denomination may have free and equal liberty and advantages of education in the said college, any different sentiment in religion not withstanding."

of a synodical institution of learning, and urged his brethren to yield to the same acknowledgment by recognizing the Log College as an emergency measure that would supply the church with pious ministers. Furthermore, the prevalent situations that led to the founding of the College of New Jersey were just as acute and extensive at the time of the Great Awakening as they were during the early fifties. Twelve or fifteen years had not altered greatly the situation of the colonies with regard to ministerial supplies, the only difference being that the Presbyterian Church had not been either organically or economically capable of starting a school any earlier. Hence the conditions centering around the founding of the College of New Jersey substantiate and justify Tennent's estimation of the perilous situation, whereby numerous communities and myriads of colonists were without any ministers or religious care. It was on this basis that he defended the itinerating of preachers without the limitation of the synod. And it was for this reason that he justified his dissent from the actions of the Synod, when the latter acted in a hierarchical way to check or control the activities of the New Brunswick Presbytery from ordaining men to the ministry to meet the critical emergency.

D. Journey to England to solicit funds.

Gilbert Tennent set sail with Samuel Davies on his mission to England November 16, 1753, and reached London on the twenty-fifth of December.(1) There are no records indicating his travels or activities while abroad. However, the reports of the journey indicate

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1. Journal of Samuel Davies. In Memoir of Samuel Davies pub. 1832.

that they met with unexpected success. At the synod meeting October 3, 1755, they reported to the synod that they had received contributions amounting to two hundred and ninety-six pounds and seventeen shillings. The interest of this sum was to be for the education of such youth to the ministry of the Gospel in the College of New Jersey, who were unable to defray their expenses, and who appeared upon proper examination to be promising genius of Calvinistic principles, and in the judgment of charity, experimentally acquainted with the work of saving grace, and to have a distinguished zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men.(1) Miscellaneous gifts were added to this fund, bringing it to a total of three hundred and fifty-seven pounds, four shillings and six pence.(2) The entire amount raised both for scholarships and building purposes may be deduced from a statement by Samuel Blair in his Journal for April 7, 1754.

"From the best information of our friends and our own observation upon our arrival here, we could not raise our hopes above three hundred pounds, but we have already got twelve hundred pounds. Our friends in America cannot hear the news with the same surprise, as they do not know the difficulties we have had to encounter; but to me it appears the most signal interposition of Providence I ever saw."(3)

Gilbert Tennent received also a special bill for two hundred pounds sterling to be used for the propagation of the gospel amongst the Indians under the direction of the synod.

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1. Minutes of Synod of New York pp 264.
2. Ibid. pp 265. This fund was nearly all lost in the Revolutionary War. Alexander, Log College, pp 78.
3. Samuel Davies Journal, April 7, 1754.

Thus through the efforts of Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Blair the College of New Jersey became established on a sound economic basis. A portion of the fund that they collected was used in the building of the famous Nassau Hall which stands practically unchanged to this day, as a monument to the work of these two men. It is a question if the college would have been financially possible but for their journey to England in behalf of the school.

E. Religious revival amongst students.

Gilbert Tennent's interests in this infant seminary extended beyond its mere financial support. When the spiritual status of the students appeared low, and characterized by indifference towards religion and security, he sent religious literature for special reading. In the spring of 1757 he visited the students, and preached a series of sermons on important subjects adapted to the perilous state of the British nation.(1) These produced a spiritual awakening amongst the students that lasted for several months. Previous to this revival, corruption had become so prevalent amongst them and had manifested itself in so many forms that the president of the College hardly knew how to deal with the situation. But following the sermons of Tennent, new spiritual life manifested itself among all the members of the school.(2) In a personal letter to Dr. Guise of London, Tennent described the situation in the following terms.(3)

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1. Tennent. Preface to Sermons on Important Subject.
2. William Tennent, as quoted by Gilbert Tennent in Preface to Sermons.
3. Gilbert Tennent's personal letter to Dr. Guise of London, Nov. 15, 1757. In treasure room of Princeton University. In this same letter Tennent appeals to Dr. Guise to prevent a Justice Morris from succeeding Governor Belcher, deceased. "By the best informa-

"Last Spring there was an uncommon effusion of sacred influence upon that society, the far greater part of which were under deep conviction respecting the last state by nature.---It had then and since all the evidence that can be desired in such cases that it was a gracious work of the most high God; the use of which in many of the students appears in a judgment of charity to be of a saving kind. This is a crowning instance of the favour of Heaven towards that Institution."

III. HIS PLEAS FOR UNION AND PEACE.

A. First futility of reconciliation.

Gilbert Tennent's third major interest after the schism was the reconciliation of the two parties of the Presbyterian Church. The accounts of the transactions carried on between the two synods during this period for union, show that the Philadelphia group took a very firm, if not antagonistic attitude towards the approaches of the New York brethren.(1) As long as the New York Presbytery remained a part of the Philadelphia Synod after the schism, all proposals for arbitration came from that group. But as has been previously noted, the New Brunswick Presbytery refused any basis for peace which did not include the unconditional withdrawal of the protestation issued against them in 1741. This the Synod of Philadelphia declined to do. Hence when the New York Presbytery joined

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tion I can get his assession to the seat of government there will be very disagreeable to the dissentin body in that province in general,---and have unfriendly aspect upon the College in particular, against which he has been prejudiced, and so far as I know, he still is.

1. In a letter by the Synod of Philadelphia to President Clapp of Yale, in the interest of the school that the Synod had established, the Synod denounced most bitterly the New Side brethren, and especially Gilbert Tennent for his attitude towards order in the church and education. They refused to admit any affiliation or participation with them in their principles and activities. Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia pp 185-188.

with the New Brunswick ministers in establishing the Synod of New York in 1745, the healing of the breach had apparently become futile. It was in the light of these circumstances that Gilbert Tennent became as illustrious in the cause of peace as he had been active in provoking the issues that led to the break between the two parties.

B. Proposals of 1749.

During the four year period after the organization of the New York Synod, both groups seem to have been so occupied with the problems of reorganization and the unlimited demands for pastoral care by vacant congregations and frontier communities, that no steps towards union were considered. However at the synod meeting of May 17, 1749, Gilbert Tennent took the initiative in introducing negotiations between the two synods that finally led to their reunion. This was in the form of a motion calling for the submission of certain proposals to the Synod of Philadelphia, and setting forth the grounds on which the Synod of New York would be willing to unite. This proposal is of utmost importance since it expresses the sentiments of the New Side party with regard to their demands and views of union. The essential proposals are:

1. The abolition of all means of distinction between the two Synods.
2. The adoption of the Westminster Confessions of Faith and Directory.
3. The concurrence or passive submission to a majority vote in ecclesiastical matters, with the reservation that if one conscientiously objected, to any actions of the Synod he could peaceably withdraw from the Synodical communion, without making any attempt at schism or division. This was to apply only in essential matters of doctrine and discipline.

4. All congregations and vacancies were to be acknowledged as belonging to the Synod, but continuing under the same Presbyteries for the present.

5. That all were to agree and treat it as a censurable evil to accuse any of the members of the church of error in doctrine and immorality in conversation any otherwise than by private reproof, till the accusation had been brought before the regular judicature and issued according to the known rules of the church discipline.

The proposals further recommended that negotiations be further considered through a commission appointed by the respective synods. (1)

There is a very strange and essential omission here evident, namely the demand for the withdrawal of the protestation of 1741. Together with this the above proposals reveal the concurrence of the New Side brethren in correcting the abuses charged against them, of ignoring the authority of the majority actions; and censuring people contrary to the established order of the Church Directory.

The Synod of Philadelphia considered the measures at their meeting on the twenty-five of May of the same year. They agreed to refer the matter to the suggested commission, which in turn was to make its report to the synods the following year. Gilbert Tennent made use of this period intervening between the pending negotiations by publishing a document which is of equal importance with his Nottingham sermon. This was called the Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum.

C. Arguments for Union. Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum.

(1) Motives.

The purpose that motivated this publication was to clarify

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1. Minutes of the Synod of New York pp 238.

both sides of the controversy by exposing the apparent differences as based on mere circumstantials. It further sought to show the agreement of the two groups on the essential matters of religion and church government when such circumstantials were removed.(1) He denies that he made this declaration because of any regret of his past activities or change of sentiment about the late revival of religion. He expressly confirmed his previous convictions that he could not enter into any union with any body of men who refused to recognize it as a special manifestation of God's grace.(2) However, he did yield on one point, and that was that his conception of it was fallible. He refused to make his opinions a term of communion to others, or to impose them on persons of different views and judgment. Tennent's attitude in this respect shows a decided change from his previous resoluteness. He regarded no longer instances of conversion a mark of distinction between people; especially when it led to divisions amongst the professors of Christianity. Neither would he admit that his steps towards union were in any way an attempt to vindicate himself for any supposed misconduct in times Past.(3) He further explains his purpose as being purely his desire for peace in the Church of God. This he considered to be essential for the true glorification of God's name, and would

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1. The proposals that he made in the Synod meeting of 1749 for peace and union occasioned uneasiness in several societies. Hence he sought through this work to "remove the grounds thereof and promote the glorious and truly evangelical design of peace". Prefatory address, *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum*, pp 1.
2. *Ibid*, pp 4.
3. Tennent, Prefatory address, *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum*, pp 4.

contribute manifold benefits and comforts to the existing religious societies. His visions were to the future, "when generations yet unborn" would reap the valuable advantages of it. His views regarding the basic causes for the schism that he was seeking to remedy can best be understood from his own words.

(2) Real causes of schism.

"It seems to me that through the heart of the debate the principal matters controverted were either not so clearly and distinctly apprehended or not so sufficiently and happily attended by the parties in controversy as could be wished. As the nature and necessity of conversion, as represented in Scripture and Confessions, were acknowledged; and only the opinion of some concerning the reality or number of some late instances of conversion disputed and contradicted. So the nature and necessity of order and government in the Church of Christ, as in Scripture and Confessions were acknowledged; and only some prudential acts and rules not expressed in Scripture or our Directory for worship and government, disputed and opposed. The substance of the points disputed were freely acknowledged on both sides, viz, nature and necessity of conversion to God, as held forth in Scripture and Confessions of faith; and the nature and the necessity of church discipline as in Holy Scripture and our Directory; so that the controversy in my apprehension, turns entirely upon circumstantials. And any action that was mutually complained of was grounded upon, and issued from a difference of opinion about the circumstantials aforesaid.

So I cannot but believe that the reverend brethren upon both sides of the question had sincere and good designs in the different parts they bore in the late controversy. While some were earnestly contending for the late extraordinary religious appearances with the design that they might spread far and wide; others were strenuously contending for the order and government of Christ's Kingdom, lest they should suffer, and be quite unhinged in that uncommon situation of and ferment that obtained among the churches. But though the things controverted considered calmly and in a true distinct light were small, yet the heat of the debate about them, run very high; this together with evil surmisings, severe censurings, and rash judgments of each other, encouraged and enflamed by misrepresentations, carried to and fro by the unwearied industry of tale-bearers and tattlers, who were generally busy on such occasions, increased mutual prejudices and suspicions to a melancholy crises, and so occasioned the unhappy rupture of the church union".(1)

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1. Tennent, Prefatory Address, *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum*, pp 6.

This statement constitutes in brief a statement of Tennent's attitude toward the conflict as well as the conciliatory spirit for peace. However, to note further his views and explanations on the controversial issues that had torn the Presbyterian Church asunder, as he championed the cause of union, it is necessary to turn to the *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum* itself.

There are two significant facts revealed in this publication which summarize in a general way Tennent's mind during this period. The first is that he had greatly modified his previous principles pertaining to certain practices of the Great Awakening. The second is that as he had conceived of certain extreme methods for the glorification of God and His church in the revival of religion, so now he looked upon peace as an absolute essential for the good of the church and the praise of God in times of normal religious procedure.(1)

(3) Points of argument.

It is rather difficult to segregate his views on the distinct issues of the preceding religious conflict; but only as this is done is it possible to note his compromising spirit for the sake of peace. His first major point of discussion deals with the Scriptural teachings on the peace and union of the visible church. He recognized certain diversities within the church, but argues on the basis of the parables of the tares, the chaff and the wheat, and the net, that such are to exist in a state of mutual toleration for the strength and harmony of the earthly organization. The chief

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1. Tennent, *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum*, pp 10-11.

thing to be noted in this connection is his denial of the right of any individual or body to pass a judgment on the inward experiences of the believer. He refers to the Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Confessions as proof for the good judgment of the church in declining to assume the bench and make her uncertain opinion of men's spiritual experience, the terms of their admission either to the initiatory or confirming seals of the covenant. This admission seems strange in view of the fact that one of the major criticisms by the Old Side group of Tennent and the other revival leaders was that they judged the spiritual status of ministers and people on this very basis.(1)

The second major point deals primarily with the right of communion, and the wrong practice of withholding same because of rash judgments formed on the basis of mere circumstantials. He pleads with the people to show a condescending spirit and especially a firm adherence to Scripture, the Confessions and the Directory for worship and government. "They are", he states, "A noble medium between the two dangerous extremes of unjustifiable severity upon the one hand, and criminal laxness on the other. The former of which encroaches upon our liberty, and the latter is prejudicial to truth".(2) In this connection, Tennent recognized that deviation from essentials set forth in the above standards, may be dealt with either by verbal acknowledgment or reformation. But in this case he yields to the sake of order in the church to the extent that he even denies the

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1. Irr. Ecc., pp 27.

2. Ibid, pp 35-36.

advisability of an open confession of a gross immorality if it tends towards the disruption of peace and union.(1) Another point which may sound contradictory to his previous utterances (as Nottingham sermon) is his strong denunciation of rash judgments. He distinguished between three ways of forming such judgments. First, when we judge and condemn men's secret designs in acting not made evident. Second, when we judge our brothers different opinion from ours in circumstantial and conduct. Third, when we make our judgment of men's state towards God founded upon the spiritual experience separate from principles and practice, the ground of public conduct towards them.(2) On the basis of this explanation of rash judgment, he concludes it to be an evil pregnant with pride, malice, mischief, which opposed the clearest dictates of reason, humanity and revealed religion. "An evil which under the pretext of kindness and piety, cruelly rends our neighbors characters, saps the foundations of the church's peace, and turns its union, order and harmony into the wildest confusion of ungoverned anarchy, schism, prejudice and hate".(3) He denied that the regenerate state of the individual could in any mode or manner be comprehended by reason. The importance of these statements is evident when we consider that one of the chief arguments of Mr. Thompson against Mr. Tennent and his associates was rash judging. The Synod of Philadelphia refused fellowship with the New Side group primarily because of this practice.

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1. Irr. Ecc., pp 36.
2. Ibid, pp 53.
3. Ibid, pp 56.

The third and fourth major heads of the discourse deals with the prospect of union in relation to the views of the two synods regarding the Great Awakening. One of the main difficulties in this connection was the question as to whether the champions of vital religion could join with its opponents, who apparently were graceless. At the time of the awakening, the basis for judgment was the inner experience of religion. Here, however, Tennent concludes that persons sound in the fundamental truths of religion and regular in life, should be received into the communion of Christian fellowship. Any suspicions as to people's sincerity should be kept secret. He placed the confessions as the sole requisite for determining conversion, since the fallibility of man made it impossible for him to determine the state of an individual's spiritual status on any other basis.(1) To make any other terms of communion was to "cast out of the church fellowship those that are sound in the main doctrines of religion and regular in life, whom Christ commands us to receive, and thereby oppose his authority".(2) "If we are agreed", he writes, "in the main points of doctrine, worship, and discipline, and are holy in heart and life, peaceable in disposition, and behaviour, and have spiritual complacence in God through a mediator, God will justify our persons".(3) He denied that the past conflict had been over conversion; rather concerning the secondary questions of the reality of the experiences of converts "and the number of such being as great as some claimed".

He then explains his views concerning the attitude one

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1. Irr. Ecc., pp 79.
2. Ibid, pp 80.
3. Ibid, pp 85.

should take towards ministerial candidates. He states,

"Respect should be shown to the ministerial character in all those that have been regularly introduced into the ministry. Such who are sound in the main principles of religion, and regular in life, should be honored for their work's sake, their office's sake, nor should any be condemned positively as to the state of their souls, who have the aforesaid fruits or evidences of religion, which are the only certain scriptural standards of our fixed sentiments concerning men and public proceedings towards them."

This is decidedly a more charitable attitude than the one he expressed in the Nottingham sermon. To abolish any prejudice that he may have expressed or entertained against the Old Side rivals, he absolves them of the guilt of any official opposition to the great revival. With a special reference to Mr. John Thompson as spokesman for the party, he commends them that they "expressly acknowledged the late revival, rejoiced in it, and prayed for its increase."⁽¹⁾ In an apologetic manner he adds.

"For my own part, I must declare my utter abhorrence of inflexible stiffness in our own justification in every thing in so perplexing a controversy of so long continuance, as well as of unrelenting rigours and severities against our brethren."

The final issue and perhaps the most significant that he seeks to clarify, pertains to the power of the majority over the minority and the rights of the individual. In reality this involves the principle of dissent. Concerning this point he states.

"No doubt a smaller number ought freely to submit to the conclusions of the majority in matters relating to government which they (the majority) judge essential to the well being of the church. For without this there can be no government at all; without this the minor party would have power to impose upon the majority in things which they reckon of the least consequence to the good of society; which is absurd. Even in matters that are reckoned circumstantial

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1. Irr. Eccl. pp 88.

by the majority, the minor party ought for peace sake, to comply if they be not conscience bound in the matter; but if so they cannot; and whether forbearance should not be exercised towards them in this, as well as in other cases, I leave to others to determine."(1)

Basically, it may be said, that this constituted his views through the whole controversy. But his liberal interpretation of conscience caused him at times to act in such a way that his respect for the majority was questioned. Consequently he admits the possibility of interpreting the New Side action of licensing and ordaining ministerial candidates as contrary to the just act of the synod.(2)

(4) Plea for charity.

The closing pages of this plea for peace reveal especially his charitable view towards both parties for the sake of union. He again denies that the Synod of Philadelphia universally or as a body ascribed the late revival of religion to the work of the devil. "Therefore", he concludes, "to spread such charges, is no act of friendship to truth, justice, charity, and the peace of Christ's Kingdom." On the other hand, even though the conduct of the New Side party was interpreted to be irregular, he justifies it on the basis that it was done from the purest motives and best intentions. He states,

"For whether we did right or wrong in licensing, etc. we did it in integrity of our hearts, as believing it to be our duty. And if we would not exercise the same charity towards our brethren, we desire towards ourselves, would not we believe that they protested against us with the like integrity from the apprehension that the church was

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1. Irr. Eccl. pp 99.
2. Ibid. pp 122.

in no small danger of expiring outright, and that quickly as to the form, order, constitution of the organized church."(1)

D. Union of 1758.

Such in brief summarizes Tennent's views on the schismatical conflict, as he beheld it in the light of reason and its derogatory effects upon the Presbyterian Church. The joint commissions of the Synods of Philadelphia and New York, met at Trenton October 4, 1749, in accord with his motion of May 18, of the same year. No agreement of union was reached, but recommendations were made that the respective synods give due consideration to continued negotiations under three heads. First, the protest. Second, the paragraph about essentials. Third, presbyteries.(2) Mr. Tennent became the medium of communications during the following year with the result that in 1750, the Synod of New York submitted a second plan of union to the Synod of Philadelphia.(3) In this the following principles were defended; the right of dissent on the basis of conscience; adherence to the Confessions and the Directory; an admission of the validity of the Great Awakening; the declaration of the Protest of 1741 as void and of none effect; that the existing Presbyteries were to remain status quo. The following points that had previously been held by the revivalists were yielded; irregular censuring of ministers, and irregular itinerations without the consent of local ministers. One point was arbitrary, namely that presbyteries should not ordain without degrees or certificates from some college.

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1. Irr. Eccl. pp 122.
2. Minutes of Synod of New York pp 240.
3. Minutes of Synod of Phila. pp 195; and of Synod of N.Y. 242.

However the Synod of Philadelphia disagreed to any plan of union, that did not involve an assurance of regular compliance with the majority actions in its meetings; the cessation of itin-
erating; the eradication of all presbyteries and names established since the schism; and a recognition of the protest.⁽¹⁾ Hence negotiations pended until 1758, when peace and union were finally established.

E. Terms of agreement.

The terms of union express the final points of agreement between the two parties that had been separated for a period of seventeen years. Their introductory paragraph convey the deep concern for the general welfare of the church which was ultimately to be the final and determining factor in conquering prejudices, and healing the wounds of hurt and pride. The basic terms are as follows.

1. The acceptance of the Confessions and the Directory for worship and government.
2. An active concurrence or passive submission to a majority vote; unless in case of conscientious objection, when a person shall in accord with reason withdraw from communion without attempting schism.
3. The right of protest against any judicial act of the Synod.-- But such protestations are only to be entered against the public acts, judgments, or determinations of the judicature with which the protestors conscience is offended.
4. As the protestation entered in the Synod of Philadelphia 1741 had been apprehended to have been approved and received by an act of said Synod, and on that account was judged a sufficient obstacle to union, it was declared that said Synod never judicially adopted the the protestation, nor did it account it a synodical act. But it

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1. Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia pp 202-3, 205-7.

was to be considered as the act of those only who subscribed it; and therefore it could not in its nature be a valid objection to the union of the two Synods; especially considering that a very great majority of both Synods had become members since the protestation was entered.

5. It was to be esteemed and treated as a censurable evil to accuse any member of heterodoxy, insufficiency, or immorality in a calumniating manner, or otherwise than by private brotherly admonition, or by a regular process according to the known rules of judicial trials in case of scandal. And the act of any Presbytery should be considered in the same light, if it appointed supplies within the bounds of another Presbytery without the concurrence of the latter; or if any member officiated in another congregation without asking and obtaining consent from the minister, or the session in case of the ministers absence. On the other hand it was esteemed unbrotherly for any one in ordinary circumstances to refuse consent to a regular member of the church when it was requested.

6. No Presbytery should license or ordain to the work of the ministry any candidate, until he give them competent satisfaction as to his learning, and experimental acquaintance with religion, and skill in divinity, and cases of conscience; and declare his acceptance of the Westminster Confession and Catechism as the expression of his faith, and promise subjection to the Presbyterian plan of government in the Westminster Directory.

7. Presbyteries were to be re-divided in accord with the greatest expedience.

8. The Great Awakening was to be recognized as a work of God, with exception to the extraordinary manifestations as visions, faintings, convulsions, etc.

Finally it was agreed to cultivate peace and harmony, and strengthen each others hands in promoting the knowledge of divine truths and diffusing the savour of piety among the people. To prevent any renewal of the conflict, it was decided that no future inquiry or vote was ever to be proposed in the synod concerning it; and if any members should ever seek such synodical inquiry or declaration about the matters of the past differences, it would be deemed a censurable breach of the agreement, and be refused and

rebuked accordingly. (1) These points of agreement constituted the basis on which peace and union were finally established in the Presbyterian Church.

F. Conclusions based on arguments for union

Gilbert Tennent's views and arguments in the negotiations of this reunion are characterized by a far different attitude than that displayed during the time of conflict. He had undoubtedly altered his principles greatly during the years of peace as is evident by his concessions in interpreting certain matters as circumstantial which he had previously considered to be of vital importance. However, his *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum* cannot be interpreted as a series of retractions. Fundamentally his opinions were not changed. He continued to hold in low esteem the ministers who were unconverted, and judged their preachings as of little value. His concern for the vacant congregations and the many people without ministerial care was not abated. He did not deviate in the least from his principle of experimental religion. He continued to recognize the right of dissent on the basis of conscience. But the change that is apparent in his pleas for union was primarily his recognition of the violability in attempting to enforce his principles at the expense of peace and union. His change of mind involved the toleration of unconverted ministers, the check on itinerations, the twofold recognition of the creeds and experimental religion as the standards of the church, and the practice of dissent only in a most precautionary way. This explains the apparent

paradox between his writings during the time when the Great Awakening and the religious conflict in the Presbyterian Church were at their height, and his principles stated in the *Irrenicum Ecclesiasticum* which were published for the cause of peace. This change in attitude can hardly be used as the grounds for the charge of inconsistency against Gilbert Tennent. It rather proves his great sincerity and interest in the glorification of God; first through the intense program of religious revival; second, when such a way brought turmoil and distress, through the established means and the order of the church.

SUMMARY.

The activities of Gilbert Tennent from the time of the establishment of the Synod of New York to the union in 1758, constitute an admirable example of a servant of God interested in promoting his kingdom in the various channels that are available. When the country was threatened with foreign conquest and distressed with the calamities of Indian massacres, he exerted his influence in rallying the Colonists to join in the preparation for national defense. In the absence of educational institutions whereby youth might be educated, and especially candidates for the ministry trained for the many vacant congregations, he aided in the establishment of the College of New Jersey. While the religious interests of the people were suffering because of the lack of harmony in the Presbyterian Church and duplication of work by two opposing synods, he pled for their reconciliation and union. All this he did in the name and

interest of God and the Church of Christ. When the final chapter of the history pertaining to this period of the Middle Colonies is recorded, he must be given the credit for understanding the prevailing problems and difficulties of the people; and above all for the broadness of vision and spirit to adjust himself to circumstances that would meet the existing needs. It may truly be said that in all his activities he was loyal to the dominating principle of his life, and his life's ambition, namely the glorification of God and the saving of human souls.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

CONCLUSION.

A. Summarizing statement of thesis.

The history of Gilbert Tennent's relations to the religious development of the Middle Colonies reveals that he was the most conspicuous leader in the Presbyterian Church during the major years of his ministry. The effects of this leadership were more or less generally felt amongst all the early settlers, since the denomination to which he belonged was the most progressive religious body amongst the many sects. The importance of his influences in this capacity lies primarily in the fact that it was exerted during a period when religion was being resuscitated from a state of chaos and confusion. The people had lost their spiritual zeal as a natural consequence of the rapid immigrations and the strenuous life of the frontier. Gilbert Tennent sought to revive amongst them again a personal experience of their faith, and above all to have his own church body officially recognize experimental religion as an essential requisite for vital Christianity.

In the fulfillment of this purpose, his life and activities may be summarized in the following terms. His religious convictions had their origin in his parental background and were greatly stimulated by Theodore Frelinghuysen and

his associate Log College ministers. When the Presbyterian Church adopted the Westminster Confession and Directory as its standards of faith and practice, he submitted to the Synod an overture placing experimental religion on an equality with the creedal basis. This he did with the conviction that the only remedy for the prevalent spiritual decline was the experience as well as knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. He traveled extensively to promote vital religion, and encouraged his co-workers to do the same. But the Synod fearing that such a practice would cause disturbances in the church, passed legislation restricting preaching outside of established parishes without special permission. Interpreting such an Act to be opposed to the welfare of Christ's Kingdom, Tennent and his followers dissented from the jurisdiction of the Synod. This was done on the basis of an individual's right of conscientious objection to anything which he deemed derogatory to the development of the Christian Church. Taking issue with such liberties, his opponents excluded him from their midst. But undaunted by either opposition or humiliation, he continued his activities and the defense of his principles through the newly organized Synod of New York. But as the great needs for a united church, and the insignificance of the circumstantials that caused the separation of the respective parties, dawned on him, he pled for union with the same resoluteness and

and zeal that he manifested in proclaiming his views during the time of the great revival.

B. Facts evident from the activities of Tennent.

Certain facts are evident in the course of these activities which are pertinent to the religious development of the Middle Colonies. These are briefly summarized as follows.

1. The manifestation of dissent.

First, it is obvious that the practice and tenets of dissent which were prevalent in the religious history of Great Britain from which the majority of the American settlers came, were also manifest in the American Colonies. This non-conformity took place when higher church judicatures rose to power, and when confessional standards were substituted for experimental religion as requisites for church membership and religious reform. The direct evidence for this fact is that Gilbert Tennent came from a family that had dissented from the Established Church of Ireland. It had done so on the basis of conscientious objection to the hierarchical exercise of authority, and the prevailing dead religious formalism. When he perceived that the church to which he belonged had similar tendencies, and restricted the promotion of vital religion in a period of great spiritual decline, he did not hesitate to employ the same principle of dissent. With the aid of his Log College associates and the instrumentality of the New Brunswick Presbytery he defended

and upheld such actions against the threats and rebukes of the conservative majority. Such a procedure involved the minimizing of, and resistance to, established ecclesiastical authority. But it was backed by the same motive that impelled all previous Puritan dissent namely, the cause of vital religion. Superior to the power of earthly organizations over the sacred duty of promoting the Kingdom of God, he placed the supreme authority of Christ as revealed in the sacred pages of Scripture.

2. The principle of experimental religion.

A second observation is that Gilbert Tennent revived in the Middle Colonies the original Puritan principle of experimental religion. This tenet which motivated the activities of his party was a reaction to the trend that characterized the previous doctrinal development that had taken place amongst the protestant churches. The first Puritan settlers held but one requisite necessary for church membership and a true religious life. That was the experience of their faith. Gradually this requisite became overshadowed by the adoption of confessional standards. The New Side ministers held this change primarily responsible for the religious decline that had become so prevalent, and sought the re-instatement of the experience of religion in the life of the people and the church. This gave rise to two divergent groups, the one emphasizing personal experience, and the

other, compliance with the adopted creeds or standards. The opposite views of these two factions, constituted the basis for the conflict between Gilbert Tennent and the Old Side party of the Synod of Philadelphia.

3. The Great Awakening in Middle Colonies motivated by New Side ministers.

The third fact to be noted is that the above principles of dissent and experimental religion became predominant in the Great Awakening. This movement in the Middle Colonies was a joint attempt of the New Side ministers to lead the people to a religious experience, and because of the previous restrictions placed upon their activities by the Synod of Philadelphia, they dissented from its jurisdiction. Tendencies heretofore have been to account for this great revival in the central Provinces through the illustrious and popular preaching of George Whitefield. His valuable contributions must be recognized, but he cannot be considered primarily responsible for its origin and general spread. To understand its true historical significance one must turn from his travels and preaching to the purpose and activities of the native clergy. The correct approach to this very remarkable manifestation of new spiritual life, must be through the New Side leaders who sought to revive the experience of religion amongst the people through the agency of their New Brunswick Presbytery. Basically the Great Awakening

was a climax to the activities of these men, and constituted their united efforts to remedy the existing spiritual decline and religious confusion by the promulgation of the essential principle of experimental religion.

4. Reaction to New Side policies.

A fourth fact emerges from the aggressive activities of Gilbert Tennent and his associate revival preachers as they came in contact with their opponents through their official relations to the Presbyterian Church. This was that the Old Side party expelled unofficially and illegally the revivalists from the Synod of Philadelphia as an act of resentment against their tactless attitude towards the church and clergy. The significant fact to be noted here is that this act was a culmination of the conflict between the two parties, and was aggravated by the uncharitable spirit manifested by the respective groups towards each other. The Old Side party, in its emphasis on church authority and the strict compliance with the Westminster Confession and Directory caused the New Side ministers to doubt their sincerity on the following grounds. First, their unsympathetic attitude towards emergency measures to meet the existing religious needs. Second, their unpresbyterial stress of Synodical power and authority as opposed to the rights of Presbyteries. Third, their misinterpretation of the revival, attacking it on the basis of certain questionable consequences as uncontrolled emotions, and refusing to recognize its true

benefits. Fourth, their illegal and unjust expulsion of the New Side ministers from the Synod of Philadelphia. On the other hand, the New Side party also had its faults. It dissented from synodical jurisdiction on the basis of suspicion and unjust accusations of the Old Side orthodoxy. This became their reason for conscientious objections. Its leaders criticized and rebuked the clergy in general in a most severe way, having cause for complaint against only a few ministers. And, finally, the members of the New Side party were blind to certain disastrous consequences that followed in the wake of their irregularities. Both these groups were more or less desirous of peace and religious reform. But in their enthusiastic and prejudicial defense of their respective views they sacrificed reason and judgment, causing the above circumstantials to end in their official separation.

5. Peace and re-union.

The fifth and final fact is that Gilbert Tennent was the chief agent in re-uniting the Synods of Philadelphia and the Synod of New York in 1758. This union was brought about by both parties ignoring the above incidentals, and reverting back to the fundamental principles and regular practices of the Westminster Confession and Directory.

B. Tennent's vital relation to the religious development of the Middle Colonies.

From the above facts and the general analysis of this thesis it is evident that Gilbert Tennent stood in a vital

relationship with the religious life and development of the Middle Colonies. As the undisputed leader of the New Side party he was the chief figure in whom its different activities became centralized. In the revival of religion from its degeneracy and inefficacy he re-introduced the principle of experimental religion and took the initiative in promoting the cause of vital religion from the beginning of his ministry to the end of the Great Awakening. He was the chief apologist for his party and the most illustrious exponent of dissent from the actions of the Synod, when such acts interfered with or restricted the activities of the revival preachers. Naturally he also became the main object of attack by his Old Side opponents. This placed him in the midst of the controversies and conflicts of this period. After the Schism of 1741 he was the most outstanding advocate of peace and union between the Synods of New York and Philadelphia. Hence in the revival of religion, in conflict, and in peace he stood in a most vital relationship to this very significant period of American Christianity.

But his relationship was only a means to an end. The objective that motivated his activities was to lead people to a more vital experience of religion. He introduced no new forms, nor did he originate any new views on religious doctrines. Such were not the needs of the time. The urgent necessity was the revival of the people from a state of spiritual indifference to the experience of the efficacy and con-

sciousness of Christ in their souls. The introduction of this principle, namely experimental religion, into the official life of the Presbyterian Church, and especially into the spiritual life of the people, constitutes the contribution of Gilbert Tennent to the cause of vital religion. The full significance of this must be determined in the light of the prevailing circumstances. Religious confusion and spiritual decline characterized the unsettled conditions of the Middle Provinces. The trend of religion was towards the emphasis of creedal standards as the basis for reform. A few of the largest protestant denominations in America were either just taking form, or in their infancy. It was highly essential for both the spiritual welfare of the Colonies, and the future of American Christianity that experimental religion be resurrected and maintained. This was identically what Gilbert Tennent and his associates sought to do.

D. Questionable aspects of his career.

In closing it is necessary for the sake of justice to note two questionable aspects of his career. The first pertains to his enthusiasm as a revival preacher. He cannot be classed as an erratic and fanatic revivalist. His preachings and activities at times appeared rash and unguarded, but they were founded on sound principles and the exposition of Scripture. He never deviated from the Westminster Confession and Directory as his standards of faith. His dis-

regard for ecclesiastical authority was due to his liberal interpretation of the clause pertaining to conscientious objection, and the vital needs of the times. His undue rebukes of the clergy, and his undiplomatic dissent were in part justified, and in part the product of the intensity of his zeal and the prevailing controversy. The second point at question is the cause for his changed attitude after the Schism of 1741. This was not due to any alteration of principle, but to a more tolerant view. After the controversy between the two parties ceased, he became conscious of the changed circumstances, and the necessity of a united church and order, and of the disastrous consequences of his previous resoluteness.

E. Death and eulogy.

Gilbert Tennent died in 1764, at the age of sixty-two years. He was first buried under the aisle of the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, but when that structure was sold and torn down, his remains were removed in 1853 to Abington, Pennsylvania, and are now buried there in the same grave with Samuel Finley. (1) Two centuries have passed since he first entered upon his ministry, but his influences still are felt in the Church with which he stood in a special relation. Christianity in its entirety is indebted to him because of his bold proclamation of its central principle, namely, the experience of religion. His life and activities

1. H. P. Ford, *Graves of Tennent and Finley*. *Presb. Hist. Soc. Jr.* Vol. XI, March 1922.

have a special message for the world today. With the trend of Christianity towards institutionalism and the emphasis on its objective aspects, there is need again for the revival of a personal experience of Christ and the principles which he proclaimed.

Words can hardly convey the spirit of a great man. But the eulogies that were written and spoken after his death, express in part the greatness of his soul. An appraisal of his life and abilities by a young man from Philadelphia, given immediately after his burial, is a fitting conclusion to this analysis of his religious activities.

"Gilbert Tennent was distinguished in a very remarkable manner by his eminent endowment of mind. He had a love of learning that nothing could abate, and an intense application that no recreations could divert.--In him the good old Puritan spirit, that had for a series of years been asleep, seemed to revive, and blaze forth with a genuine lustre. He was indeed like the harbinger of his Master, a burning and shining light in the Church. His undissembled piety, his fervent zeal, his pungency of address, and his indefatigable assiduity in the performance of every ministerial duty were remarkably eminent. It pleased God in a very gracious manner to crown his labours with success. The energy of the

divine spirit accompanied his ministrations. Where ever he went the kingdom of Satan trembled,--the desolate and solitary places bloomed like a rose before him; and he became the happy instrument of turning many from the error of their ways to the living God.

Undamped by doubt, undarkened by despair in that solemn hour of death which sheds horror on human nature, like some mighty rock amidst a dreadful inundation, he stood unmoved. 'Come blessed Jesus; and why tarry thy chariot wheels,' seemed to be the silent breathings of his soul. With full confidence in the merits and atonement of his redeemer, he gently fell asleep.

Softly his fainting head he lay
 Upon his Makers breast.
 His Maker kissed his soul away
 And laid his flesh to rest.

In God's own arms he gave the breath,
 Which God's own spirit gave,
 His was the noblest road to death,
 And his, the sweetest grave." (1)

1. Funeral eulogy to Gilbert Tennent.
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Appendix

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- C. *The Divinity of Sacred Scripture Considered, and the Dangers of Covetousness Detected.*
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- D. *The Legal Bow Bent, or Arrows on the string Against the King's Enemies.*
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B. Franklin, Philadelphia 1740.
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 - D. *The Wisdom of God in Redemption.*
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C. *Vindicae Operum, or the Necessity of Good Works Vindicated. Two Sermons.*
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W. Bradford, Philadelphia 1745.
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16. *Brotherly Love Recommended by the Argument of the Love of Christ.*
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B. Franklin, Philadelphia 1748.

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18. *The Gospel Mystery.*
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W. Bradford, Philadelphia. No date.

19. *The Divine Government Over All Considered and the Necessity of Gratitude for Benefits Conferred.*
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W. Bradford, Philadelphia, No Date.

20. Twenty Sermons on important subjects, adapted to the perilous state of the British Nation.

- A. *Original Righteousness.*
- B. *Man's Disease and Original Sin.*
- C. *The Remedy, or Christ the Wisdom of God.*
- D. *Early Religion Recommended.*
- E. *The Wretched State of the Unconverted.*
- F. *The Attainment of the Unconverted.*
- G. *The Nature of Conviction.*
- H. *The Nature of Conversion.*
- I. *Delays in Religion Inconsistent.*
- J. *God's Lamentation Over Sinners.*
- K. *Unconverted Sinners, Lost Creatures.*

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- L. *The Call of God, and The Word of God.*
- M. *Turning to God.*
- N. *Turning to God. Continued.*
- O. *Directions to Unconverted.*
- P. *The Riches of the Grace of Christ.*
- Q. *God's Gracious invitation to Backsliders.*
- R. *The Backsliders Return.*
- S. *Pious and Magnanimous Singularity.*

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James Chatten, Philadelphia 1758.

- 21. *The Terrors of the Lord Upon the General Judgment.*
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- 22. *Two Sermons on the Day appointed for a Provincial fast.*
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W. Bradford, Philadelphia 1749.
- 23. *The Blessedness of the Peacemakers represented, and the Danger of Persecution Considered. Sermon for Church Union.*
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W. Bradford, Philadelphia, 1765.
- 24. *A Persuasion to the Right Use of the Passions in Religion., or The Nature of Religious Zeal Explained.*
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W. Dunlap, Philadelphia 1760.
- 25. *Twenty three sermons on the chief end of man.*
 - A. *God's Glory, the Chief End of Man.*
 - B. *The Illustration of Fact by Testimony of Diverse Divines.*
 - C. *The Divine Authority of Scripture.*
 - D. *The Divine Existence Proved, and Improved.*
 - E. *The Nature and Attributes of God.*
 - F. *The Eternity of God and Immutability.*
 - G. *The Spirituality of God.*
 - H. *The Divine Immensity and Omnipresence Applied.*

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- J. God's Sufficiency, Its Properties and Extent.*
- K. God's Power, Nature and Kind.*
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- M. The Holiness of God.*
- N. The Justice of God.*
- O. The Goodness of God.*
- P. The Mercy of God Unfolded.*
- Q. The Sovereignty of God and Free Grace.*
- R. The Divine Patience.*
- S. The Truth of God.*
- T. The Unity of God.*
- U. The Divine Life.*
- V. The Persons of the Trinity.*
- W. The Holy Ghost Proved to be God.*

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