

Life of the  
Rev. William Tennent. No. 61

Among the duties which every generation owes to the succeeding one, we may reckon the careful delineation of the character of those whose example deserves, and may invite imitation. Example speaks louder than precept. Hence the lives of pious men become very important sources of instruction & warning to posterity. But when men have been remarkably favoured of God with unusual degrees of light, & knowledge, & honoured by extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit. It is a duty devolving upon us to hand down to posterity the principal events of their lives, to see how wonderfully God deals with men.

One amongst the rest worthy our attention is the late Rev. William Tennent born on the 3<sup>d</sup> of June 1705 in the county of Antrim in Ireland & at 13 arrived in America.

He applied himself with much zeal to his studies & made great proficiency in the languages. Being early impressed with a deep sense of divine things, he determined to follow the example of his father & elder brothers by devoting himself to the service of God in the ministry.

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He determined as he had finished his course in the  
languages to study for the ministry under his  
brother. Accordingly he went to New Brunswick.  
After a regular course of study in Theology, he was  
preparing for his examination. His intense applica-  
tion affected his health, & brot on a pain on his breast.  
He soon became emaciated & at length like a liv-  
ing skeleton. He was attended by a young physician,  
a warm friend of his. He still grew worse, his spirit  
its failed him, & <sup>at length he</sup> began to entertain doubts of final  
happiness. As he was conversing with his brother one  
morning on the state of his soul, he fainted & died  
away. He was laid out & the neighbourhood invited  
to attend the funeral next day. His physician re-  
turned in the evening, much afflicted at the news, &  
could not be persuaded, that it was certain. Being told  
~~that~~ the one who requested to lay him out, felt a tremor of  
the flesh under the arm. He applied his own hand &  
said he felt some warmth. He had the body restored to  
a warm bed & <sup>insisted</sup> requested that the people be requested not  
to attend the funeral. To this the brother objected. But  
the doctor prevailed, the 3<sup>d</sup> day arrived no hopes of life.  
The people were again invited. The doctor objected & re-  
quested 1 hour, then  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour finally to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an hour

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His tongue being swollen, the doctor trying to soften it by some  
ointment, the brother came in & said, it is shameful to  
feed a lifeless corpse; & insisted that the funeral should  
immediately proceed. At this critical <sup>moment</sup> ~~the~~ body to the  
astonishment of all, <sup>around</sup> opened its eyes, gave a groan &  
sunk again into apparent death. Every effort was  
now employed to bring about a speedy resuscitation.  
In about an hour it opened its eyes <sup>again</sup> & gave a groan.  
In another hour life returned & a complete revival —  
took place. Mr Tennent continued very low for 6 weeks  
& about 12 months, <sup>elapsed</sup> before completely restored. After be-  
ing able to walk about in the room, his sister was  
reading the Bible one Sabbath day, he asked her what  
she had, she told him. He replied what is the Bible?  
I know not what you mean. Upon examination he  
was found to be totally ignorant of every transac-  
tion of his life. He could not read one word or had  
he any idea of its meaning. As soon as he became  
capable of attention, he was taught to read & write  
as children & afterwards to learn the Latin. As he  
was reciting one day, he clapped his hands, to his head  
as if <sup>he were</sup> hurt, his brother asked him what was the matter,  
he said he felt a shock in his head & it seemed to  
him as if he had read this book before. By degrees  
his memory revived & <sup>he</sup> gained a perfect knowledge of  
past events, & the Latin language.

On being asked for an account of his visions & apprehensions during this extraordinary state of suspended animation. Says he, while I <sup>was</sup> conversing with my brother on the state of my soul, & the fears I entertained of my future welfare. In an instant I found myself in another state of existence, directed by a superior Being, who ordered me to follow him. I was wafted along I know not how, till I beheld an ineffable glory. The impression it made on my mind I cannot communicate to mortal man. I thought, blessed be God I am safe at last. I saw an innumerable host of happy beings, surrounding the incomprehensible glory, in acts of adoration. But saw no bodily shape. I heard things unutterable. I heard their songs & hallelujahs of thanksgivings & praise, with rapture. I requested from my conductor leave to join the happy throng. On which he tapped me on the shoulder, & said you must return to the earth; this seemed like a sword thro' up my heart. In an instant I ~~found myself~~ <sup>recollect to have seen</sup> my brother standing before me disputing with the doctor. So great was the effect of what I saw & heard that I thought if it were possible for a human being to live above the world I was that person. The ravishing sounds of the songs & hallelujahs were not out of my ears when awake for atleast 3 years.

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As soon as circumstances would permit Mr. Tennent was licensed, & began to preach the Gospel with great zeal & success. The death of his brother opened a place for him at Freehold New Jersey, where he was received on trial. In Oct. 1733 he was regularly ordained their pastor, & continued so through the course of a pretty long life. His judgment of mankind gave him a marked superiority in this respect over his contemporaries. His manner was very impressive & his sermons though seldom polished were generally delivered with such power, that he was truly an able & successful preacher. The great numbers of communicants in his church was a good evidence of his pastoral care & power of preaching. But his labors were not confined to the pulpit. <sup>only</sup> He was indefatigable in his endeavours to communicate in private families a savor of the knowledge of spiritual & divine things. In his parochial visits he would visit his congregation regularly in order to carry the unsearchable riches of Christ to every house. He earnestly pressed the parents to instruct their children at home by pious questions, so as gradually to expand their minds, & prepare them for the reception of the more practical doctrines of the gospel. He was accustomed to have morning & evening service with only  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour's intermission. He had preached

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On the morning, & in the intermission walked to the woods  
for meditation, the weather being warm. He was reflec-  
ting on the infinite wisdom of God, as manifested  
in the works of Creation & particularly in the redem-  
ption, by the death of his son. This <sup>subject</sup> suddenly opened on  
his mind with such a flood of light, that his views of  
the glory of God overwhelmed him & he fell to the ground.  
When he had revived a little, all he could do, was to  
raise a fervent prayer that God would withdraw  
himself from him, or he must perish under a  
view of his ineffable glory. When able to reflect he could  
not but abhor himself as a weak & despicable worm,  
& astonished, <sup>him</sup> that a creature so unworthy, ever dared to  
instruct his fellow men in the nature & attributes  
of God. Overstaying the time, his elders went in search  
of him, & found him prostrate on the ground; they raised  
him up & brot him to the church, he ascended the pul-  
pit on his hands & knees, he was silent for some  
time praying that God would hide himself from him,  
that he might address the people. His prayers were  
heard, he began the most pathetic address that  
they ever heard from him. The time of which we are  
now speaking is remarkable for a great revival of re-  
ligion in which Mr. Touret was ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> ~~instrument~~ <sup>instrument</sup>  
my ears were <sup>considerably</sup>

David Rowland got up with Mr. Tennent at the Log College; was also very remarkable for his successful preaching. Possessing a commanding eloquence as well as other qualities, he became very popular. There was at this time, prowling through the country a noted man by the name of Tom Bell. It happened that Bell arrived one evening at a tavern in Princeton dropped in a dark passant's grey frock. On his entering Mr. Stockton went to him & addressed <sup>him</sup> as Rowland & it was with some difficulty that he acknowledged the error though Bell <sup>had</sup> told him. Next day Bell went to the <sup>county</sup> of Hunterdon & stopped at <sup>the</sup> congregation where Mr. Rowland formerly preached several times, but <sup>was</sup> not well known. <sup>He</sup> met with a member of the congregation & introduced himself as the Rev. Rowland, the gentleman invited him to his house & asked him to preach the next Sabbath, to which Bell agreed, notice was given <sup>for preaching</sup> the day arrived & he was invited to ride to church, with the ladies in the family wagon, the master of the house rode. When they arrived near the church, Bell observed that he had left his notes at the house; the horse was given him to go for them, he returned & robbed the desk of <sup>his</sup> host & ~~made off with~~ <sup>rode away with</sup> the horse. At the time this event took place

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Messrs. Tement & Rowland had gone to Pennsylvania or  
Maryland. Rowland was charged with the robbery, he  
gave bonds for his appearance at court. The jury  
had much difficulty to find a bill. At last they  
agreed & brot in a bill. On the trial Messrs. Tement  
& Anderson & Stevens appeared as witnesses in favour of  
Rowland, by swearing that, on that day they heard  
Rowland preach in Pennsylvania or Maryland,  
accordingly he was acquitted. The opposers of the opinion  
of the hospital not satisfied, collected a mass of wit-  
ness. Rowland being out of their power, their ven-  
geance therefore was directed towards the witnesses.  
On examination the grand jury found bills of in-  
dictment against the witnesses, Mr. Anderson had  
his trial at the first court of oyer & found guilty.  
Messrs Tement & Stevens were summoned to appear  
at the next court; they employed several very  
eminent lawyers, <sup>who, before the trial was entered on</sup> they asked for the witnesses to exam-  
ine them before they go to court, says Tement I  
know of none but God & my conscience. He assured  
his counsel that his confidence in God was so great  
that he was sure he would bring about his deliv-  
erance in some way.



Mr. Coxe urged putting of the trial, charging Mr. Tennent<sup>9</sup> with acting the part of a wild enthusiast, rather than of a meek & prudent christian, but he insisted on them to proceed & left them in astonishment, the bell summoned them to court. Mr. Tennent had not walked far before a man & his wife met him in the street & asked him if his name was not Tennent. He answered in the affirmative & begged to know if they had any business with him. He told him that ~~he was a certain place which he mentioned~~ <sup>from a certain place which he mentioned</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>that they</sup> Pennsylvania or Maryland, lodged either at his <sup>house</sup> or in a house wherein he & his wife had been servants & next day heard Tennent & Rowland preach. That some nights before they left home they dreamed that Mr. Tennent was at Trenton in the greatest possible distress, & that it was in their power to relieve him. Mr. Tennent took them to the court house, <sup>when they</sup> & were examined. They went to trial, great exertions <sup>were</sup> made on both sides, Mr. Tennent's advocates so traced every movement of the defendant, for the time, & satisfied the jury <sup>so</sup> perfectly on the subject, that they gave a unanimous verdict not guilty. Tennent says during the whole of this his spirits never failed him. He prepared & was determined to deliver a sermon to the people

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On in the pylon, if placed in that situation. Although he  
was unshaken at this time, afterwards as he was riding  
by, he cast his eyes on the pylon, which gave him  
such a shock, that he was obliged to dismount,  
& it was for some time, before he could so get the  
better of his fears, as to proceed on his journey. Such  
is the constitution of the human mind! It will often  
resist with unshaken firmness, & at others again  
yields without reason. Mr. Tennent had been tried  
heretofore in the course of Gods providence, in various ways,  
but as yet domestick afflictions had not been laid  
on him. The <sup>terse</sup> however was now come. His youngest  
son who just come into public life. Commenced the  
practice of physic, was married, & had one child. Wholly  
negligent of religion, indulged, without restraint, in  
the gazety & follies of the world. While he was engaged  
in inoculating a number of persons, he was seized  
with a raging fever. <sup>With this disorder</sup> ~~His heat~~ <sup>he</sup> was brought to  
a very alarming view, of his last condition. The  
affectionate & pious father was constantly in pray-  
er, that God would have mercy on him, so great  
were the convulsions of mind, that the bed <sup>on which he lay</sup> was  
shaken. The parents were touched to the quick, but  
in due time they were relieved, God in his in-

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his infinite & condescending grace was pleased in some  
measure to answer the many prayers. In a short  
time the Lord was pleased to remove the sufferer  
from time to eternity. There being no minister in the  
neighbourhood the father undertook to preach the  
funeral sermon himself, which had a very sala-  
utary effect. Scarcely had he got ~~over~~ <sup>over</sup> this  
heavy affliction, when God again called him to  
another severe & arduous struggle, of a similar  
nature. But amidst all his trials & afflictions,  
he was always resigned to the will of God, he was al-  
most always in action never wearied in well do-  
ing. A great lover of truth, he could never bear  
the least observation from it in a joke. His  
publick spirit was always conspicuous & his attach-  
ment to the interests of his country. At one time  
while Washington lay with his army in the City of  
New York, says he (Tulnet) to a friend; while  
our fellow citizens are fighting let us retire  
to prayer. They retired to his room where he  
poured out his soul, in fervent prayers to God  
in behalf his suffering country.

about the latter end of February or beginning of  
March 1777, he was suddenly seized with a  
fever. He sent for his physicians, who when  
arrived told him that the attack was very violent  
& the symptoms unfavourable. He received this  
+ calmly & during his whole sickness was perfectly  
+ resigned to the will of God, until death  
was swallowed up in victory on the 9th day  
of March 1777

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