

L I F E

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM TENNENT,

LATE PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
AT FREEHOLD, N. J.

BY ELIAS BOUDINOT, LL. D.

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ther, come, join with me, and let us pray." This had an effect so uncommon and extraordinary on the congregation, that the utmost seriousness was universally manifested. The prayer and the sermon added greatly to the impressions already made, and tended to rouse the attention, influence the mind, command the affections, and increase the temper which had been so happily produced. Many had reason to bless God for this unexpected visit, and to reckon this day one of the happiest of their lives.*

* The writer having requested of the present Rev. Dr. William M. Tennent, a written account of an anecdote relative to his uncle, which he had once heard him repeat verbally, received, in reply, the following letter :

Abington, January 11, 1806.

SIR—The anecdote of my venerable relative, the Rev. William Tennent, of Freehold, which you wished me to send you, is as follows :

During the great revival of religion, which took place under the ministry of Mr. Whitefield, and others distinguished for their piety and zeal at that period, Mr. Tennent was laboriously active, and much engaged to help forward the work ; in the performance of which he met with strong and powerful temptations. The following is related as received, in substance, from his own lips, and may be considered as extraordinary and singularly striking :

While on this subject, we may introduce another anecdote of this wonderful man, to show the dealings of God with him, and the deep con-

On the evening preceding public worship, which was to be attended the next day, he selected a subject for the discourse which was to be delivered, and made some progress in his preparations. In the morning, he resumed the same subject, with an intention to extend his thoughts further on it, but was presently assaulted with a temptation that the Bible, which he then held in his hand, was not of divine authority, but the invention of man. He instantly endeavored to repel the temptation, by prayer, but his endeavors proved unavailing. The temptation continued, and fastened upon him with greater strength, as the time advanced for public service. He lost all the thoughts which he had on his subject the preceding evening. He tried other subjects, but could get nothing for the people. The whole book of God, under that distressing state of mind, was a sealed book to him; and, to add to his affliction, he was, to use his own words, "*shut up in prayer.*" A cloud, dark as that of Egypt, oppressed his mind.

Thus agonized in spirit, he proceeded to the church, where he found a large congregation assembled, and waiting to hear the word; and then it was, he observed, that he was more deeply distressed than ever, and especially for the dishonor which he feared would fall upon religion, through him, that day. He resolved, however, to attempt the service. He introduced it by singing a psalm, during which time his agitations were increased to

templations of his mind. He was attending the duties of the Lord's day in his own congregation, as usual, where the custom was to have morning and evening service, with only half an hour's intermission to relieve the attention. He had preached in the morning, and in the inter-

the highest degree. When the moment for prayer commenced, he arose, as one in the most perilous and painful situation, and with arms extended to heaven, began with this outcry, "*Lord have mercy upon me!*" Upon the utterance of this petition, he was heard; the thick cloud instantly broke away, and an unspeakably joyful light shone in upon his soul, so that his spirit seemed to be caught up to the heavens, and he felt as though he saw God, as Moses did on the mount, face to face, and was carried forth to him, with an enlargement greater than he had ever before experienced, and on every page of the scriptures saw his divinity inscribed in brightest colors. The result was, a deep solemnity on the face of the whole congregation, and the house, at the end of the prayer, was a *Bochim*. He gave them the subject of his evening meditations, which was brought to his full remembrance, with an overflowing abundance of other weighty and solemn matter. The Lord blessed the discourse, so that it proved the happy means of the conversion of about thirty persons. This day he spoke of, ever afterwards, as his harvest day.

I am yours, with esteem,

WILLIAM M. TENNENT.