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A Survey of Representative Sermonic Approaches in Preaching the Doctrines of Divine Love and Divine Wrath

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APPROVAL SHEET

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A SURVEY OF REPRESENTATIVE SERMONIC APPROACHES
IN PREACHING THE DOCTRINES OF
DIVINE LOVE AND DIVINE WRATH

A Thesis
Presented to
the faculty of
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Roger Brandon Swaren

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM, IMPORTANCE, ASSUMPTIONS, AND PROCEDURE

One of the numerous accusations made against the Bible is that it contains contradictions. The one Book that is unique in every way is in no single phase more unique than in the matter of its unity: yet it is in regard to that particular facet of truth that many of its enemies delight to aim their weapons, believing it to be a target worthy of a large share of their ammunition and energy. Two of the doctrines that appear to be contradictory are the doctrines of divine love and divine wrath. Are they compatible or are they opposed to each other? If one believes in divine wrath can he also believe in divine love? Is it reasonable? Is it possible? Is it truth or error? Can God be a God of love, and, at one and the same time, be a God of wrath? Can a God of love send a person to hell?

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was to survey sermons of specific Christian ministers who are both representative and successful. Their sermons were analyzed to discover how they dealt with the problem of preaching retribution and love, and an attempt was made to discover a satisfactory and workable method of presenting the truths

under consideration. The survey was made to find out if these ministers had been able to preach the doctrines without contradictions, disunity, or unreasonable absurdities. An important question was whether this problem had obligated them to an "either-or" position, or if they had been able to make them a "both-and." Specifically then, the problem was how have these ministers preached the doctrines of divine love and divine wrath? Have they harmonized them or have they placed them in opposition one to the other?

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Importance of the study. What the minister believes about these two subjects will radically influence his sermonizing. There is no proper ground for neutrality. His views will result in one of three emphasis: (1) he will place a greater emphasis upon love than upon wrath, (2) wrath will receive the greater emphasis, or (3) the two views will be harmonized. Either unity or disunity will result.

No two doctrines are treated more fully in the Bible than are these two. Therefore it is impossible for the Christian minister to escape their implications or take a neutral position regarding them if he is to be a preacher of the Word. It is assumed that the Christian minister is a preacher of the Word. Any other position is absurd, for the Christian message comes from the Christian Scriptures. In his great work on

Homiletics and Pastoral Theology, Doctor William G.T. Shedd, speaking about the content of the minister's sermon, well said:

In respect to matter . . . we affirm that he ought to confine himself to evangelical doctrine. If he is to err in regard to the range of subjects, let him err on the safe side. It is undesirable, and unwise, for the pulpit to comprehend more in its instructions, than that range of inspired truth which has for its object the salvation of the human soul.¹

If, as Doctor Shedd said, the Scriptures are the source of the message, and the doctrines of divine love and wrath make up a very vital portion of the Scriptures, then they must be dealt with by its messengers. The preacher's views on divine love and wrath will color his belief on every other doctrine of God. Especially will this be true of his views on the attribute of unity and the moral attributes of holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, and love.

III. ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions. It is assumed that the Bible is the inerrant, authoritative Word of God and as such contains the messenger's message. It is assumed that both doctrines are Scriptural, reasonable, and harmonious. It is further assumed in this thesis that they can be preached in an harmonious manner, with the result that one strengthens the other rather than weakening it. The attempt, then, in this treatise, is

¹ William G.T. Shedd, Homiletics and Pastoral Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1876), p. 246.

not to prove the truth or error of the doctrines under consideration, but, believing them, to analyze the sermons of successful and representative preachers, and to discover their failure or success in this matter and to arrive at a workable method of presentation of these two extremely important and fundamental truths.

IV. THE PROCEDURE FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

Procedure. The procedure will be as follows. In chapter two the sermons of Jonathan Edwards will be studied. He is recognized as an extremely strong preacher on the sovereignty of God, with wrath being much more prominent than love. Chapter three will be a survey of sermons by Bishop Gerald Kennedy, a liberal preacher who emphasizes the love of God to the exclusion of a strong emphasis on the wrath of God. In chapter four the sermons of T. De Witt Talmage will be studied. He was a Calvinist preaching during the last half of the nineteenth century and who was a strong preacher on both doctrines. In chapter five sermons of Doctor Paul S. Rees will be considered. He is also a strong preacher on both doctrines, but he is contemporary and of the Arminian Wesleyan persuasion. Chapter six will consist of a summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER II

SERMONS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

There are many different types of sermons, types of preachers, and methods of delivery. The sermons to be considered in this chapter fully represent a type which is nearly forgotten in this day, but once was very common.

I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jonathan Edwards was born in East Windsor, Connecticut on October 5, 1703; the same year John Wesley was born in Epworth, England. He is popularly and correctly known as the founder of New England theology. His theology can best be described as hyper-Calvinism, and he was one of the most able defenders of it that has ever lived. He did give a little more place to the freedom of the will than did John Calvin. Many theologians consider him the greatest theologian America has ever produced, and other scholars say he possessed the greatest intellect of any American thinker.

The Great Awakening came about primarily through the preaching of Edwards and George Whitefield. The following description of moral conditions given by Albert Henry Newman shows the necessity of such a revival:

By 1733 a Socinianized Arminianism, blended with deistic modes of thought, having wrought havoc with the established church and the dissenting bodies of England, invaded

the colonies. Skepticism and indifferentism were somewhat widely diffused. Conversions were rare, and deep religious experiences were not only not unlooked for, but were regarded by many as savoring of fanaticism. Preaching here, as in England, had lost much of its fervor. The great mass of church-members were living in a hopeless state of carnal security.¹

So great was the revival that in some towns there were very few people who had not either been converted or were deeply moved because of the revival.

As to his person many people have pictured Edwards as severe, unemotional, and entirely lacking in compassion and love. They say he seldom mingled with people, but spent at least thirteen hours daily in his study. But a study of his sermons and personal life has impressed this writer that he loved God and man with a burning passion. Even in his most severe sermons there can be sensed a warm heart and compassion for souls. Doctor Charles Warner says of him:

Probably for most persons the influence of Edwards will longest survive through his wonderful personality. 'From the days of Plato,' says a writer in the Westminster Review, 'there has been no life of more imposing and simple grandeur.'²

Two of his many resolutions reflect his motive and ambition.

As to his motive: "Resolved, never to do any manner of thing,

¹ Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1948), II, p. 673.

² Egbert C. Smith, "Jonathan Edwards, Library of World's Best Literature (New York: R. S. Beal and J. A. Hill publishers, 1897), p. 1758.

whether in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God; nor be nor suffer it, if I can possibly avoid it."³ The other resolution is a hint concerning his ambition: "Resolved, to live with all my might while I do live."⁴

He was a Congregational minister, his most famous pastorate being at Northhampton, Massachusetts. It was while he was there that the Great Awakening came, and it is generally considered to have begun in that very church. During a part of his later years he was a missionary to the Indians in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He was inaugurated President of Princeton College, Princeton, New Jersey in 1758, but died that same year.

Besides writing out all of his sermons in full, he also found time to write books and essays. Titles of some of his best known works are: Inquiry Into the Freedom of the Will, History of Redemption, Life of David Brainerd, and Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God.

Though he had little oratorical ability, he nevertheless became famous as a preacher. An Editor of the Masterpieces of Eloquence says of him, regarding his manner and effectiveness in preaching that:

³ Ibid., p. 5181.

⁴ Loc. cit.

His sermons were read from a small manuscript book held in his left hand, his right being used only to turn the pages, and his body remaining almost motionless. But his solemnity, his logic, his sincerity, were so impressive, and his description of the fate of the impenitent so terrible in their realism, that his hearers were often moved to agonies of tears and supplications.⁵

This solemnity on his part and conviction on the part of his hearers was especially marked in his most famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

Jonathan Edwards is known as a "Hell-fire" preacher. It will be noted from the list of sermon titles below that he preached upon the wrath of God a great deal, and from many different approaches. The sermon titles are from Volume IV of The Works of President Edwards.⁶ This book contains forty of his better known sermons, and it is both interesting and illuminating to see how many proportionately are either directly upon the subject of damnation or contain much of the wrath of God in them. The first list is of those that are directly on the damnation of Sinners:

The Final Judgement; or the World Judged Righteously by Jesus Christ.

The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners.

The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable.

The Eternity of Hell Torments.

⁵ Mayo W. Hazeltine, Editor, Masterpieces of Eloquence (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, n.d.), Vol. V, p. 1797.

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, Works of President Edwards (New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1855), Vol. IV.

When the Wicked shall have Filled up the Measure of their Sin, Wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

The End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous; or, the Torments of the Wicked in Hell, no Occasions of Grief to the Saints in Heaven.

Wicked Men Useful in their Destruction Only.

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

The Sin and Folly of Depending on Future Time.

The Folly of Looking Back When Fleeing out of Sodom.⁷

This next list is not directly upon the subject of wrath, but contains much on the subject:

Men Naturally God's Enemies.

God Glorified in Man's Dependence.

The Vain Self-flatteries of the Sinner.

The Warnings of Scripture are in the best Manner Adapted to the Awakening and Conversion of Sinners.

A Warning to Professors; or, The Great Guilt of those Who Attend on the Ordinances of Divine Worship, and Yet Allow Themselves in any Known Wickedness.

God's Sovereignty.⁸

These are sixteen of forty representative sermons which indicate that a great deal of his sermonizing was on the subject of retribution. The sermons to be considered in this paper will be selected from these lists.

⁷ Ibid., p. 111.

⁸ Loc. cit.

II. SERMONS TO BE ANALYZED

It has already been mentioned that Jonathan Edwards was one of the most capable and willing promoters of the Calvinism of John Calvin. From the time of Calvin to Edwards, Arminianism had had a very fast growth and was a decided opponent to strict Calvinism. With this in mind, it would seem appropriate to take as the first of Edwards sermons for study one entitled, "God's Sovereignty."⁹ The text was, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth."¹⁰ The opening statement in the doctrinal treatment of this subject clearly indicates that he believed God acts sovereignly in regard to man's salvation. He said:

God exercises His sovereignty in the eternal salvation of men. He not only is a sovereign, and has a sovereign right to dispose and order in that affair; and he not only might proceed in a sovereign way, if he would, and nobody could charge him with exceeding his right; but he actually does so; he exercises the right which he has.¹¹

In this statement he declares that God does "actually" exercise an absolute sovereignty.

Two of his favorite terms, judging from the numerous times they are used and the emphasis given them, are "The glory of God" and "The glory of His attributes." These and similar

⁹ Ibid., p. 548.

¹⁰ Romans 9:18.

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards, op. cit., p. 549.

terms are used repeatedly in the sermon under discussion with a strong appeal for the hearer to understand that absolute sovereignty does not in any way cast the least reflection on the glory of any divine attribute. This assertion : That absolute sovereignty does not lessen the glory of any attribute, was the main burden of the sermon.

He seemed to sense that his congregation might think that this sovereignty would reflect on God's love and man's freedom; so he came back again and again to the proposition that none of God's attributes are changed in the least because of His absolute sovereignty. It almost seems that he was not sure of the correctness of the proposition and was trying to convince himself as well as his hearers.

The extreme predestination arising from this doctrine is summed up in the following strong argument:

There is no person whatever in a natural condition, upon whom God may not refuse to bestow salvation without prejudice to any part of his glory. Let a natural person be wise or unwise, of a good or ill natural temperament, of mean or honorable parentage, whether born of good or wicked parents; let him be a moral or immoral person, whatever good he may have done, however religious he may have been, how many prayers soever he may have made, and whatever pains he has taken that he may be saved; whatever concern and distress he may have for fear he shall be damned; or whatever circumstances he may be in; God can deny him salvation without the least disparagement to any of his perfections. His glory will not in any instance be the least obscured by it.¹²

¹² Ibid., p. 552.

This shows that he believed that there is absolutely no possibility for anyone to be saved who is not sovereignly selected and predestined to salvation no matter how seriously or desperately they seek and plead and act.

He then attempted to prove this statement by arguing that God could deny salvation to anyone without injuring the honor of His righteousness, the honor of His goodness, or the honor of His faithfulness. As to God's goodness he said, "That which is not contrary to God's righteousness is not contrary to His goodness."¹³ And in referring to the honor of His faithfulness he argued that not all men have been promised the privilege of salvation, and, therefore, God is not obligated to them. His own words are:

Men in a natural condition are not the children of promise; but lie open to the curse of the law, which would not be the case if they had any promise to lay hold of.¹⁴

This again shows that if they are not predestined to salvation they have absolutely no hope or possibility of obtaining it.

His next approach was that of illustration. He taught that the heathen nations on the whole did not have any opportunity for salvation; and that such nations as America, with all of her privileges did have an opportunity to be saved solely on the basis of God's sovereignty. Another illustration

¹³ Ibid., p. 553.

¹⁴ Loc. cit.

of this sovereignty, he said, was God's choice of the Covenant people in the Old Testament days and His rejection of the Gentile nations. He dealt at length with the matter of the difference between privileges of heathen nations in his day and the Gentile nations of another day contrasted with America and the Covenant people.

Two reasons are given to show why God exercises His sovereignty. The first is that it was God's intention in the creation of the universe to manifest the glory of each of His attributes and if one were glorified more than another His glory would be defective. Since one of His attributes is absolute sovereignty, then He must exercise that sovereignty. The second reason for God's exercise of His sovereignty is a natural progression from the first. In this it is argued that the higher the creature, the greater the glory will come from the sovereignty exercised over it. Men are higher than animals, therefore, God exercises His sovereignty over men; and since no endeavor of man is higher than that which issues in eternal salvation, God exercises His sovereignty in that realm, thus bringing all the greater glory to Himself.

In the application of this sermon, the appeal was made only to the elect. That is only natural. However, in other sermons his appeal was to everyone, which seems to point up a contradiction in his theology. But if one followed his reasoning closely he would soon discover that Edwards appealed to

everyone to come for salvation, because no one could know for certain, while in this life, if he were of the elect or not. In other words, "Come, everyone. If you are of the elect you will be saved. If you are not of the elect you will, by your coming and your supplications, add to God's glory by showing your absolute and utter dependence upon Him." So in the application he reminded them of their absolute dependence upon God in the matter of eternal salvation, because it was all of sovereignty. He exhorted the elect to adore the awful and absolute sovereignty because by it they were made different than others; to praise God that because of His sovereignty He has become bound to them by His word of promise; to gladly submit to the eternal and unchanging decrees; and lastly, to seek salvation early even though they will be saved if they are sovereignly chosen. The reason he wanted them to seek early was because the sooner they come the more they will add to God's glory.

More space has been given to this sermon than will be given to any of the others because the idea of God's absolute sovereignty was so basic in all of Edward's theology and came out in nearly all of his preaching. This sermon showed up his hyper-Calvinistic theology in that it presented, besides absolute sovereignty, an unconditional predestination and a complete denial of the freedom of the will.

Another sermon entitled, "When the Wicked shall have

filled up the measure of their Sin, wrath will come upon them to the uttermost, "15 built upon the text, "fill up their sin alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, "16 has much of predestination in it, but has an appeal much more universal. There are three basic propositions in this address; namely, God has set a "certain measure" to the sins of every man; while men continue in sin they are "filling the measure" set them; and when once the measure is full, wrath will come upon them to the "uttermost."

The following statement seems to indicate that God waits patiently for people to fill up their prescribed measure of sin so they can die and He can punish them. He asked and answered the following pointed question:

To what effect was the heinous wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews; viz., to fill up their sins. God hath set bounds to every man's wickedness; he suffers men to live, and go on in sin, till they have filled up their measure, and then cuts them off. To this effect was the wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews: they were exceedingly wicked, and thereby filled up their measure of sins a great pace. And the reason they were permitted to be so obstinate under the preaching and miracles of Christ, and of the apostles, and under all the means used with them was that they might fill up the measure of their sins.¹⁷

In this sermon the absolute sovereignty of God of the type that would issue in unconditional predestination is not

¹⁵ Edwards, op. cit., p. 280.

¹⁶ I Thessalonians 2:16.

¹⁷ Edwards, op. cit., p. 280.

nearly as pronounced as in the previous one. In fact, there are several rays of hope and mercy evident for everyone. Mercy is suggested in the degree of punishment; for he declared that the judgment will be in direct proportion to the sins committed. He said:

There is a connection between the measure of men's sin and the measure of punishment. When they have filled up the measure of their sin then is filled up the measure of God's wrath.¹⁸

and again:

Some reprobates commit but a little sin in comparison with others, and so are to endure proportionately a smaller punishment. There are many vessels of wrath; but some are smaller and others greater vessels . . .¹⁹

Though the predestination in this sermon is not as strong as in some others, it is by no means entirely lacking. In this statement: "While men continue in sin they are filling up the measure set them," it is strongly suggested, though not positively stated, that men are predestined to commit a certain or prescribed amount of sin before they die. Another more lengthy passage makes unconditional predestination stand out more prominently, and God's responsibility for man's sin more pronounced in these words:

But sometimes the reason why God lets them alone is,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 280

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 281

because they have not filled up the measure of their sins. When they live in dreadful wickedness, they are but filling up the measure which God hath limited for them. This is sometimes the reason why God suffers very wicked men to live so long; because their iniquity is not full: Genesis 15:16, 'The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.' For this reason also God sometimes suffers them to live in prosperity. Their prosperity is a snare to them, and an occasion of their sinning a great deal more. Wherefore God suffers them to have such a snare, because he suffers them to fill up a larger measure. So, for this cause, he sometimes suffers them to live under great light, and great means and advantages, at the same time to neglect and misimprove all. Everyone shall live till he hath filled up his measure.²⁰

In his appeal he made the invitation universal by calling upon everyone to turn from his sin and to flee to Christ for safety. He then warned them that when the measure of their sin was filled up there would be no moderation or restraint in the degree of punishment. He reminded them that now there is mercy, but then there would be no moderation in the least degree. He declared that wrath would utterly undo the victims of it, that it would be eternal and hopeless, and the final warning was that it would be to the uttermost of what is threatened.

From the text in Ezekiel which reads:

Son of man, what is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch that is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burnt. Is it meet for any work?"²¹

²¹ Ezekiel, 15:2-4.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 281.

he had a sermon which he called, "Wicked men Useful in their destruction only."²² The theme of this sermon is that the primary and only purpose for man being placed on this earth is to bring glory to God. The part that wicked men play in adding to this glory is that in their punishment for sin God is getting glory to himself, and the contribution of the elect is in their absolute dependence on God for redemption. This punishment of sin glorifies two attributes; namely, those of omnipotence and holiness. Therefore, sinners are useful to God in showing the awfulness of sin, God's hatred of sin, His final overthrow of it, and His absolute sovereignty. There was very little of appeal to any sinner in this sermon.

From Romans 3:19, "That every mouth may be stopped" he preached on "The justice of God in the damnation of Sinners."²³ One of his first statements was:

When men are fallen, and become sinful, God by His sovereignty has a right to determine about their redemption as he pleases. He has a right to determine whether He will redeem any or no. He might, if He had pleased, had left all to perish, or might have redeemed all, as He pleases. Or, He may redeem some, and leave others; and if He doth so, he may take whom He pleases, and leave whom He pleases.²⁴

Simply stated, this quotation says that God has every right to

²² Edwards, op. cit., p. 300.

²³ Ibid., p. 226.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 231, 232.

predestine salvation or condemnation on the basis of sovereignty alone.

He then proceeded to show the justice of God in damning sinners by the following arguments, the gist of which will be here presented. It will be noted that all the arguments are based on the proposition that God's treatment of sinners will be in almost exact proportion to their treatment of Him. (1) Because they had shown no love to God, He would not be obliged to show any love to them. (2) Because they had slighted Him He had every right to slight them. (3) Because they had been ungrateful for past mercies, they should not expect any future mercy. (4) Because they had chosen to side with Satan in his opposition to God, they should expect to be punished with Satan. (5) Because they have so often refused His calls He should refuse to hear their call for mercy. (6) Because they had sinned, presuming that God would forgive them when they called He could justly refuse the mercy they had presumed upon. And (7) because they have opposed God's sovereign dispensations He might justly oppose them. In the arguments just mentioned he was saying in effect that God's actions are in direct proportion to man's actions. He was telling his listeners that if they do thus-and-so, God will do thus-and-so.

In the latter part of the sermon he supposed some objections and answered them. The first objection was, "If it be so, that if I am not willing to have Christ for my

Saviour, yet I cannot make myself willing."²⁵ He reminded them that he had already told them that they would not receive Christ, and now he told them that the objection that they cannot receive Him is unreasonable, since he had already proven that they would not. In other words, "Your excuse that you cannot receive Christ is unreasonable, unless you would if you could." Another imaginary objection was: "God shows mercy to others that have done these things as well as I, yea, that have done a great deal worse than I."²⁶ To this objection he answered:

That does not prove that God is in any way bound to show mercy to you, or them, either. If God does bestow it on others, He does not bestow it on them because He is bound to bestow it: He might if He had pleased, with glorious justice, have denied it them. If God has bestowed it on some, that does not prove that He is bound to bestow it on any; . . . God is in debt to none; and if He gives to some that He is not in debt to, because it is His pleasure, that does not bring Him in debt to others.²⁷

At least three principles are stated here: (1) God is not bound to show mercy to anyone, (2) if He does show mercy to anyone that does not prove He is bound to them, and (3) whether He chooses to bestow mercy or not, either position is in perfect harmony with His justice.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 244.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 250.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 250.

"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,"²⁸ is Jonathan Edwards's most famous sermon. It is from the text "their foot shall slide in due time."²⁹ This sermon was given at Enfield, Connecticut, on July 8, 1741. S. E. Frost, in The World's Great Sermons, wrote about the effect of this sermon thus:

It had so marked an effect upon the audience that the hearers groaned and shrieked convulsively; and their outcries of distress once drowned the preacher's voice, and compelled him to make a long pause.³⁰

This sermon gave a decided impulse to the Great Awakening that was then in full progress. It would not be hard to imagine the distress such a sermon would have placed upon the congregation as it came from the lips of the preacher with his great solemnity and seriousness; for in written form, these many years later, it makes a powerful impression upon the reader.

In vivid, picturesque language he visualized the people standing on the slippery edge of a great pit, with no power of their own to back away, and nothing within reach to hold onto. He said they were held there by only one thing; the hand of God: but that hand, he warned them, was the hand of an "angry God" who had power to cast them down into hell at any moment.

²⁸ Edwards, op. cit., p. 313.

²⁹ Deuteronomy 32:35.

³⁰ S. E. Frost, The World's Great Sermons (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1943), p. 111.

Not only did God have sufficient power to cast them down immediately; but He could easily do it. Divine justice would not interfere because they deserved it; they were already under condemnation to hell, they were the objects of the same wrath that those already in hell were suffering, and God was not unmindful of their wickedness and exceeding sinfulness.

The idea of sovereignty is very strong in this sermon. He declared that the only thing that stayed God's hand from casting them into hell immediately was that His "mere pleasure" dictated otherwise. Their time was predestined and it had not yet come, but it might come any moment unexpectedly. In vivid language he said:

The wrath of God burns against them; their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared; the fire is made ready; the fire is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet and held over them, and the pit hath opened her mouth under them.³¹

He referred to the Devil and to devils several times in the message, saying that sinners were their prey. In that regard he said:

The Devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him . . . The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy, hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have, but are for the present kept back; if God should withdraw His hand by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their souls.³²

³¹ Edwards, op. cit., p. 314.

³² Ibid., p. 314.

Then he came back to his doctrine of unconditional predestination. To those, for whom he said the devils were waiting, he held out a fearful future, without a single ray of hope. He said:

God has laid himself under no obligations, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of hell one moment: . . . but what are contained in the covenant of grace, . . . But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace that are not the children of the covenant.³³

Not only were they completely hopeless in that they had no promise to lay hold of, but he told them that they should take no comfort in the fact that there was no visible means of death at hand and that they were at that moment enjoying good health. And then he mentioned a number of possibilities of immediate death, reminding them:

Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering, so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen.³⁴

"All that preserves them every moment," he said, "is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an angry God."³⁵ He was saying they were completely dependent upon a God who was in no respect obligated to them. That they were in the hands and at the mercy of a God who was angry with them and totally unobligated to them is forcefully presented

³³ Loc. cit.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 315.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 317.

when he said:

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

And again he spoke in much the same way except that he went even farther and declared that God was not only not obligated to them, and angry with them, but that He actually abhorred them. He said:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over a fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: . . . You are ten thousand times as abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in yours.³⁷

Then after depriving them of all hope, and telling them how loathsome they were in God's sight, he pleaded with them to consider their danger; but still gave them not a single ray of hope. He only plunged them further into despair by closing the sermon with this hopeless statement:

You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of Divine wrath flashing about it, and every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing of your own, nothing that you have ever done, nothing that you can do to induce God to spare you one moment.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., p. 318.

³⁷ Loc. cit.

³⁸ Edwards, op. cit., p. 318.

He also declared that the Mediator had no interest in them. He taught that Christ died for the elect only and since the only hope of salvation is through the death of Christ they were certainly desperately hopeless. It is no wonder that this sermon had such a marked effect upon the people. It is impossible with the few quotations given here to begin to express the power and seriousness of the message, because with the skill of a master he progressed from each proposition to the next, making every word count and every idea build to a climax that must have plunged his hopeless listeners deeper into despair with each blow.

Jonathan Edwards taught that God does not love those who are not of the elect and not only that but when the saints are in heaven and see as God does they will not love them either. In a sermon built on the text, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy Apostles and Prophets; for God hath avenged you on her,"³⁹ he gave a title which is both suggestive and interesting: "The End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous: or the Torments of the Wicked in Hell, no Occasion of grief to the Saints in Heaven."⁴⁰ In this sermon he said that saints and sinners would be in plain view of each other all through eternity; so that the sinners, seeing the blessedness of the saints would weep and gnash their teeth;

³⁹ Revelation 18:20.

⁴⁰ Edwards, op. cit., p. 287.

being in all the more torment because of the comparison of their condition with that of the elect. But the main emphasis of the message was on what would take place as the saints behold the suffering of the wicked. This would be an occasion of rejoicing for the righteous he said. Not only will they rejoice at God's judgment and the suffering of the damned, he said, but "when they see it, it will be no occasion of grief to them."⁴¹

This statement seems very severe, but in another part of the sermon he enlarged on it, making it even stronger by saying:

They will not be sorry for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will incite them to joyful praises.⁴²

This rejoicing he sought to prove by Revelation 21:4, which says there will be no tears or crying or sorrow in heaven. Another argument he used was to cite several passages from the Bible that taught that everything in heaven will contribute to joy.

In a very strong statement he said that in heaven the saints would no longer love sinners, because they would then know that God does not love them and it would be wrong to love those whom God has no love for. He said:

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 289.

⁴² Ibid., p. 290.

Positively; the suffering of the damned will be no occasion of grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have no longer love nor pity for the damned as such. It will be no argument of want of a spirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they should love them, because they will know then that God has no love to them, nor pity for them; but that they are the objects of God's eternal hatred. And they will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections. They will love what God loves, and that only.⁴³

He told them that they would then not only rejoice because they see the torments of the wicked, but: they would rejoice because of the sovereign grace of God that made it possible for them to be blessed. He said:

This will give them a joyful sense of the grace and love of God to them, because hereby they will see how great a benefit they have by it. When they shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved the same misery, and that it was sovereign grace, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned, that, if it had not been for that, they would have been in the same condition; but that God from all eternity was pleased to set his love upon them, that Christ hath laid down his life for them, and hath made them thus gloriously happy forever; O how will they admire that dying love of Christ, which hath redeemed them from so great a misery, and purchased for them so great happiness, and has so distinguished them from others of their fellow creatures.⁴⁴

It has already been suggested that the reprobates are to praise God for the fact that their damnation will add to His glory and here he presented again the other side of the question; namely, that the elect will praise God for their sovereign selection, remembering that it was not due to any merit of their own.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 291.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 292-293.

They are to rejoice that Christ died for them, but not for others.

In this same sermon he told the people that they should love everyone while they lived, because they could not know until after death who is predestined to eternal life. He advised Christians to love the ones that God loves both here in this present life and in heaven, but to love the ones God hates while in this life only. He said:

It is our duty to love all men, though they are wicked; but it will not be a duty to love wicked men hereafter . . . We ought now to love all, and even wicked men; we know not but that God loves them . . . But this is not the case in another world. The saints will know concerning the damned in hell, that God never loved them, but that he hates them, and will forever be hated of God . . . Therefore when God hath thus declared his hatred of the damned, and the saints see it, it will be no way becoming in the saints to love them, nor to mourn over them.⁴⁵

In reading his sermons one is amazed to find so many pleas and invitations for sinners to come to Christ. His broken-hearted pleas to the unconverted seem to be in direct opposition to his doctrine of predestination, and one feels that he did not fully believe all that he preached. Perhaps no one in his day loved God or people more than he did, and there must have been a terrific struggle in his heart and mind as his theology clashed against what he felt and had in his heart.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 293.

In analyzing the sermons of Jonathan Edwards it has been discovered that he preached much on the absolute sovereignty of God. It was found to a greater or lesser degree in nearly every sermon. The sovereignty which he advocated issued in a doctrine of absolute predestination which in turn robbed man of his freedom of the will in as far as eternal salvation is concerned. He taught that some men were predestined to receive eternal life and others to be eternally damned and there was nothing that could alter the fixed decree.

The love and mercy of God suffered from his extreme predestinarian point of view though he said repeatedly that none of the divine attributes were affected by his doctrine. He declared in other messages that God abhors and actually hates all whom He has predestined to damnation. He also taught his people that when Christians get to heaven and learn finally who are the damned they will hate them as God does. Judging from the number of times he argued that none of the divine attributes were affected by his absolute sovereignty one is caused to sense he was not too positive of the position and felt it needed every possible support he could summon.

He taught that there was absolutely no possibility of salvation for anyone who was not predestined irregardless of how desperately they sought. To prove this he declared that there was no salvation apart from the atonement of Christ and

that Christ died only for the elect. He did make the appeal in some sermons universal, however, which was a contradiction to his idea of predestination. The appeal in the sermon on "God's Sovereignty"⁴⁶ and "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"⁴⁷ was exclusively for the elect. Such a conclusion naturally follows the particular idea of predestination and sovereignty he held.

Though he did not say it clearly he at least intimated that sinners were predestined to commit a prescribed amount of sin and that proposition would make God responsible for man's sin and consequently would make judgment unfair. This idea was particularly pronounced in the sermon from I Thessalonians 2:16.

He told his people that the only reason sinners were put on the earth and allowed to live was that they might add to God's glory when they were judged and punished for sin. Particularly did that add to the glory of God's omnipotence and holiness.

He seemed to have made it one of his major tasks to vindicate the wrath of God. But in doing so, he usually went so far as to either completely lose sight of love or at least to strike severe blows at it.

⁴⁶ Supra., p. 10.

⁴⁷ Supra., p. 21.

Jonathan Edwards exhorted his people to adore the awful and absolute sovereignty of God. The elect were to praise God because by His sovereignty they were made different than others. The reprobates were to praise Him for His absolute sovereignty because by it their damnation would glorify divine omnipotence and holiness. He called on the people to gladly submit to the eternal and unchanging decrees.

He advocated a judgment which will be in direct proportion to the sins committed. This shows at least a glimpse of divine mercy. But the mercy is nearly lost sight of again as he continually came back to the proposition of absolute predestination.

He also advocated a grace of God that is in almost direct proportion to man's actions. This idea is very pointed in the sermon "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners."⁴⁸ The sermon seemed to indicate that God's actions are spiteful and on an "eye-for-an-eye" and a "tooth-for-a-tooth" basis. It is hard to see any grace or the idea of a free gift, but rather God's blessings are earned as wages. This idea conflicts with his absolute predestination in which blessing or suffering is meted out arbitrarily.

He taught that God is in no way bound to show mercy to any person apart from His arbitrary will. He declared that

⁴⁸ Supra., p. 18.

Christ died only for the elect, and therefore there is no promise for those to lay hold of who are not of the elect. Since God is not bound to show mercy to anyone He cannot rightfully be charged with acting unfairly toward those who are predestined to suffer in hell.

Jonathan Edwards made the wrath of God extremely severe. He declared that God not only hates those who are to be damned, but that He abhors them and that they are loathsome and more abominable in His eyes than the worst snake is in men's eyes. He used the most severe and startling terms he could command to describe the terrible wrath of God and the awful torment that would be suffered in hell.

It has been found that Jonathan Edwards believed in both the love and wrath of God, but his conception of the wrathful side of God's nature was so prominent that love was almost lost sight of. He was not able to harmonize divine love and wrath. A great many of his arguments, when carefully analyzed, make love an impossibility. This reviewer does not think that the New England preacher fully believed all that he preached. It seems that he had to believe what he did, because of his premise. If he was to believe in an absolute sovereignty based on an arbitrary will, one of the logical conclusions would be an absolute predestination. There is very little room left for love in a system which includes absolute and final predestination without any possibility for

altering the decree.

The Arminian position believes in absolute sovereignty, too, but it is not based on an arbitrary will. God acts sovereignly, the Arminians say, but his sovereign acts are motivated by His love, justice, holiness and all the other divine attributes. There is a perfect harmony between what God is and what He does.

CHAPTER III

SERMONS OF BISHOP GERALD KENNEDY

The sermons to be studied in this chapter are by a contemporary preacher whose theology is liberal Arminianism. This is a decided contrast to the previous chapter in which the sermons of an eighteenth century hyper-calvinist were used.

I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gerald Kennedy is bishop of the Portland, Oregon, Area of the Methodist Church. He is widely known as an administrator, lecturer, author, and preacher. Most of his books are books of sermons or lectures which are sermonically built. He is recognized as one of the greatest preachers in the Methodist Church and is popular inter-denominationally among the liberal wing of Protestantism. He served as pastor of four churches before his election to the bishopric, the last pastorate being at Lincoln, Nebraska. While in the pastorate he became well known as a radio preacher and lecturer, lecturing regularly at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He also delivered the Quillian Lectures at Candler School of Theology in 1951.

Bishop Kennedy, though still a young man, is already one of the strong voices in the Protestant church today. He

speaks in a casual way, but one is made to feel that every word is carefully selected from a vast vocabulary. And though he speaks so simply as to make profound truths easily understood, one is impressed with a keen mind and logical progression. In contrast to Jonathan Edwards' manner of speaking, Kennedy does not have any notes noticeable to the congregation; he uses short, lively sentences; and employs moderate gestures in an easy and casual movement. In contrast to Edwards in matter of preaching, Kennedy is a liberal, swings to an opposite view on love and wrath, glorifies man, and, though it is not easily noticeable, nearly humanizes God.

Kennedy's part in this thesis will be to present sermons from a liberal position which makes too much of love and almost completely takes away the wrath of God. This is not to say that love can be emphasized too much, for it cannot, but it can be emphasized out of proportion. The love of God, in Kennedy's sermons, is not properly related to all the other divine attributes. So this chapter will also present erroneous positions showing errors the modern minister must avoid. There is a pendulum swing from one extreme in chapter two to the opposite extreme in this chapter.

II. SERMONS TO BE ANALYZED

Bishop Kennedy prepared a pamphlet entitled Preaching

With Authority,¹ which was distributed by the Commission on Ministerial Training of the Methodist Church, the opening statement being, "The greatest weakness of the Christian ministry today is its lack of authority."² He suggested three ways of recovering that lost authority. The first suggestion was nearest to a Scriptural position for he said, "First, we must recover a sense of our message as a unique, divine, saving word."³ He did not make the Bible the authority, he only mentioned one phase of divine truth, namely, that the good news of Christ should be preached. The second suggestion for regaining lost authority was to deepen the conception of the preacher's function which is that God finds men through men. And the third method of recapturing authority was that the minister must extend the ministry of the church to include every layman so that each one will work as unto the Lord. It is difficult to discover a preacher's authority in such a manner as is suggested in the procedure just mentioned for he did not make the Bible the absolute authority, and right here is found the weakness and error of much of his preaching. Since the Bible is not his final authority he is free to decide what he will teach and preach. The first sermon to be studied

¹ Gerald Kennedy, Preaching With Authority (Nashville, Tennessee: The Committee on Ministerial Training, 1948).

² Ibid., p. 1.

³ Loc. cit.

will show up this very problem.

In a sermon which he called, "The Book Of Life"⁴ he told about his early home life and his father who loved the Bible, believing that it was truly the Word of God given by divine inspiration. His father, he said, declared that to doubt the Mosaic authorship of the Penteteuch was of the Devil; but he went to a liberal church-related college where it was popular to doubt the fundamental things about the Bible. Especially were dates and authorship of many of the Books of the Bible disputed. He said that next came a smart-aleck period in which they leaned over backward in contrasting the fundamental and modernistic positions. It was a time, he recalled, when they did not know what they knew but they knew what they did not know. But then he said a change came in the thinking of liberal Protestantism and that of his own. He spoke as if he had come back to a conservative and sound orthodoxy when he said that in a new way the Bible had come to be truly "the Book of life." Then he said:

There is no cause to regret the time and energy spent on Biblical criticism. It had cleared away a good deal of underbrush and burned up much trash. It has made the Book more alive and vital. When one compares the narrow spirit of sectarianism so characteristic of the Inerrancy-Worshippers, he thanks God that he has been led beyond

⁴ Gerald Kennedy, "The Book of Life," Pulpit Preaching, 3:2, September, 1950.

that impasse.⁵

This would sound very fundamental to a casual reader or listener, but a careful analysis shows that he did not come back from a liberal position at all. The term "Inerrancy-Worshippers" is a decided slap at the conservative belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Actually what happened, it seems, is that he stopped half way between a position of sarcastic ridicule of the Bible and a conservative, fundamental belief.

In another part of the sermon he seemed to have pitted Christ against the Bible when he said:

We must remember that our faith is built around a person and not around a Book. We find truth through the personality of Jesus. When Protestantism was born it did not intend to substitute for the intolerable authority of an ecclesiastical institution the dogmatic authority of a Book.⁶

This is almost saying that one must chose Christ or the Bible, but not both. Bishop Kennedy made a mistake right here for it was decidedly one of the primary purposes of the reformers to replace the authority of the Roman Church with the Bible. The Bible was to be for them the final and absolute and indisputable authority. Doctor George P. Fisher, in his authoritative and scholarly work on the history of the Reformation, speaking

⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

about the right and the privilege they had of private interpretation of the Scriptures, said:

The Church, then, that denied their interpretation and commanded them to abandon it, was in error; it could not be the authorized, infallible interpreter of Holy Writ. Thus the traditional belief in the authority of the Roman Church gave way, and the principle of the exclusive authority of the Scriptures, as the rule of faith, took its place. By this process the second of the distinctive principles of Protestantism was reached.⁷

Doctor Fisher had been dealing with the matter of justification by faith alone as against that justification advocated by the Roman Church. He said that this was the first of the distinctive principles of the Reformation and in the quotation above he placed the authority of the Scriptures as the second, which distinguishes it as of vital importance to the reformers. Albert Henry Newman's, A Manual of Church History,⁸ is in agreement with the conclusions of George Fisher on this point of the importance of the authority of the Scriptures of the early reformers. Robert Hastings Nichols also advocated the same principle.⁹

He then went on to say that the Bible did not make the church but that the community of Israel earlier and the

⁷ George P. Fisher, A History of the Reformation (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1873), p. 462.

⁸ Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1902), II. II,

⁹ Robert Hastings Nichols, The Growth of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1941).

community of the Christians later produced the Bible. And, he said, "That is to say that the authority of the Bible is the authority of life and experience."¹⁰

In speaking about the Bible as a text-book he said that it is a text-book on religion only, but as it touches science it has been found to contain errors. He said that the Old Testament teaches that the world is flat and that young people should not take their knowledge of the universe from the Bible. And even in religion the Bible is not a completely trustworthy text, he said, and declared: "Let us get over the absurd idea that all of the Bible is on the same level."¹¹ By way of illustration he said that John and Mark had different pictures of Jesus and James and Philipians and Isaiah and Leviticus are not on the same level.

Most of what has been said so far has shown Bishop Kennedy's critical view of the Bible. The majority of the sermon, however, was given to saying good things about it and this part of the message was done so remarkable well that many preachers, who love the Book and believe it to be God's inspired and inerrant Word, could learn much in making it more appealing to their congregations. But he said enough to reveal that he is a thorough-going liberal as far as the

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹ Loc. cit.

Word of God is concerned and what good he said was weakened by his destructive criticism. It is difficult for one to accept the good things he said about the Bible for he knows that they were given with decided reservations. Since he has said that not all of the Bible is on the same level in importance it is only natural to find him emphasizing the passages that deal with love and speaking very little, or none at all, on the portions that reveal the wrath of God.

"Wanted: Christian Gamblers"¹² is a strange and thought-provoking sermon topic from the text: "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take."¹³ With just a passing word he left the gamblers and fixed attention upon Christ as the heroic gambler. He spoke thus:

But in contrast to this cheap, heartless, tawdry scene, the strange man on the cross is making the heroic gamble. He is betting his life that love is stronger than hate, that life will conquer death, that God seeks and forgives. It will be too bad if we ever forget the risk he took at Calvary, for the stakes were never higher and the daring courage never greater. When you think of running risks for higher stakes, think of Jesus.¹⁴

He suggested that the greatness of humanity lay in its irresistible impulse to risk something for "unprovable

¹² Gerald Kennedy, "Wanted: Christian Gamblers," The Pulpit, 22:7, August, 1951.

¹³ Mark 15:24.

¹⁴ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 7.

goals." Then after speaking of lonely men who had dared to risk their lives for the sake of righteousness, he classed Jesus with them, putting him on the same level with other men. This sermon takes away both Jesus' omniscience and omnipotence. Actually he took away His deity and left him a human only. But he did not stop there. He approvingly quoted a poem by Studdert-Kennedy, saying "Studdert-Kennedy understood this as well as any man, and he wrote:"¹⁵

How do I know that God is good? I don't.
 I gamble like a man. I bet my life
 Upon one side in life's great war. I must
 I can't stand out. I must take sides. The man
 Who is neutral in his fight is not
 A man. He's bulk and body without breath,
 Cold leg of lamb without mint sauce. A fool.
 He makes me sick. Good Lord! Weak tea!
 Cold slops! ¹⁶

By his use of the poem and the approval of it that he gave, hints that he could only guess that God is good; and then in the very next sentence he struck at the omniscience and omnipotence of God, making Him fallible, by saying:

If it is shocking for Christians to hear that man is a born gambler, how much more shocking to hear a minister say that God is a gambler too! You can hardly escape this conclusion, however, if you chose the God of the Bible over against the God of philosophy.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁷ Loc. cit.

His next attack was on the conservative view of the atonement, which view, he said, made it a cold, legal deal worked out by an unmerciful Judge. He said, "They seem to believe that God is caught in His own laws and so he must insist on the best man who ever lived dying in agony to satisfy His demands."¹⁸ And in connection with that he pictured modern man as possessing greater goodness than would a God Who punishes men in hell. He exaggerated the view he opposed which made it appear all the more ridiculous and undesirable. His own words are:

Let us make what may seem a foolish suggestion. We ought to begin all our thinking about God by assuming that He is at least as good as we are. Such a simple assumption would help us escape much unchristian theology. I would not keep any man, even Hitler, in eternal torment, no matter what he had done. I think he ought to have a taste of the sufferings he meted out to others, but to roast eternally as Jonathan Edwards intimated would be the fate of sinners, is certainly overdoing it. I would never send unbaptized babies to hell, but there are theologians who insist, even today, that God does it. This is to make God more vindictive than men and utterly unworthy of our worship. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ does not fit such a pattern.¹⁹

This statement comes to the center of the subject of this thesis. Here Bishop Kennedy has said that he does not believe a God of love would have an eternal hell for punishment of sinners. According to this, then, God cannot be a God of love and also a

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

God of very severe wrath.

He said that because God is free and makes high ventures and that when men confess their faith in Him as a Father "we are confessing our faith in our God's willingness to run grave risks."²⁰ And he said that God gambles on his children when he gives them freedom. The next logical conclusion, going on from a God who gambles and a Saviour Who gambled, was that man must gamble too; for man cannot be very certain about anything if God Himself cannot know what the future holds. And that was precisely his next approach. He said, "Now this brings us to the necessity of faith if we are to live with dignity or meaning, and faith implies risk."²¹ He likened the faith of Christians to the faith that American business men must exercise every day and the faith of scientists working with that which cannot be proved. He said the great men of the Bible were the

Men of faith, the gamblers for high stakes--justice, mercy, righteousness. They would hazard the loss of their lives for God's sake, and the greatest of all was the Galilean Who dared to believe that his death would be redemptive.²²

It has been seen that Christ is a gambler, God gambles, and the great men of the past were gamblers, according to this sermon; but as he closed the message he called for his listeners

²⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

²¹ Loc. cit.

²² Loc. Cit.

to become gamblers for Christ and truth. In a strong statement full of suggestion and important implications, he said:

How truthful and honest was Jesus! He never once appealed to the lower part of man's nature and he never presented his case on the basis of an unworthy motive. When he called his disciples, he told them the truth about the hardships and dangers. Yet he believed in men and bet his life on their hunger for goodness which would be decisive soon or late. Tempted to lose faith in men, I turn back to Jesus and find that faith restored. But even more wonderful than that, when I lose faith in myself he looks at me with understanding eyes and, in spite of knowing all about my betrayals, I know He still believes in me. Perhaps this is the greatest miracle. Are we willing to take our place at his side and look at men through his eyes? Perhaps if we would gamble on truth, as he did, we too could be redeemed by his faith in us and in all men.²³

He further appealed to them for Christian gamblers who would risk their lives in the social underbrush; for Christian gamblers to bet their lives on God and his purposes; and finally, he said, "Wanted: Christian gamblers who will gamble that Jesus is right and has a claim to their complete allegiance."²⁴

In a sermon, "What must I Do to inherit"?²⁵ he spoke at great length on the grace of God, but the ultimate conclusion was that man is saved by his own good works. He did not say this in so many words, but the underlying movement of the message carried the idea. The implication from such a conclusion would be that severe wrath and punishment for sin would

²³ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁴ Gerald Kennedy, Go Inquire of the Lord (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), p.13.

²⁵ Ibid., p.13.

not be in keeping with the character of a God of love; for if man is capable of atoning for his own sin he is not so far gone that he must be required to suffer in hell as a consequence.

Another sermon from the text, "This is life eternal . . ." ²⁶ with the title "When Are We Alive?" ²⁷ suggested that most people are dead intellectually, aesthetically, morally, and spiritually. He did not seem to think that it was too great a calamity to be spiritually dead if one were to judge from the amount of space given to its description and the mild statements he made concerning it. He believed it was Paul Tillich who said, "We build churches because we are sinners and we need a symbol to remind us of the grace of God in our common life." ²⁸ He said that no matter who said it originally he could find no better reason for building churches. He then spoke of life as a relationship and that when one withdraws from others or from God, he dies. In regard to that he came the closest to an evangelical position when he said:

We recall Jesus' warning that we must be born again, which is to say, we must be born into eternal life -- the life of relationship with God. We are not yet alive until this is our experience. ²⁹

²⁶ John 17:3.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

But the whole emphasis of the message impresses one with the idea that it does not matter too much if he is spiritually alive or dead. He did say they must be born-again to have eternal life, but he did not say that if they were not born-again they would not see the kingdom of heaven. The verse he was using was John 3:3 and it reads: "Jesus answered and said, verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In several of his sermons he quoted only part of a text in such a way that the original meaning was often lost and sometimes changed. An example of that is found in a sermon entitled: "Where Is Salvation"?³⁰ In one place he said: "Let us have faith to believe that if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and come to our help."³¹ He was quoting I John 1:9, and the part that was left out reads: "and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It seems quite mild to speak of God just coming to one's help when the passage specifically speaks about "cleansing." It shows again a somewhat indifferent attitude toward the awful fact of sin.

"To Seek and To Save"³² was a sermon topic from two texts, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost"³³ and "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it

³⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

³¹ loc. cit.

³² Gerald Kennedy, Have This Mind (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1948), p. 71.

out" taken from Luke 19:10 and Matthew 5:29 respectively. In handling the texts, especially the last one concerning the eye and hell he dealt with the society, the church, and the individual. He said that society must pluck out nationalistic ideas of sovereignty, isolationism, totalitarianism, and mobilization for war. He affirmed:

National survival now demands that we cut off practices as precious to us as our hands. The most distressing thing about the political situation is the number of men in places of power who do not have the foggiest notions of the real issues at stake. They cannot see what we must do to be saved. They spend their time discussing silly little inconsequential things while the world burns.³³

This type of vague handling of eternal and weighty matters seemed to have sidetracked the main issues. The closest he got to the idea of hell which the text speaks of is the reference to the world burning because of unrest socially. There was no mention of the awful consequences of hell because of an individual's sin, but rather, attention was directed to the sins of a nation. In dealing with individual or personal salvation, he did come closer to a literal interpretation. He said the individual must pluck out hatred, pride and arrogance, and self-pity. The burning, though, was the torment one suffers in this life if he does not get rid of his hatred, pride, and pity. There was not a clear word about how

³³ Ibid., pp. 75, 76.

one could be saved.

In a sermon on "Forgiveness and the Scapegoat"³⁴ he intimated that sin is far worse than those think who depend upon the blood of Christ to cleanse it away. What he really taught was that sin is so great that it takes more than the blood of Christ to atone for it and bear it away. He said Christ is regarded by many as a sort of scapegoat who carries away their sin. Then, speaking further of the death of Christ and redemption, he said:

Jesus on the cross is regarded as a sort of divine scapegoat. By repeating a few words in a creed men think they can be freed from their guilt and responsibility. It is no wonder that the very sound of blood in connection with Christianity has an unreal, sentimental connotation for many modern Christians. It has been associated with ideas repugnant to men who have some idea of the enormity of sin and its consequences, and have ideas of God beyond the mechanical, infantile stage. It is not so easy to get rid of sin. It takes more than passing it on to Christ orally.³⁵

He went on to say that politicians try to blame other parties, that democracies try to dodge the responsibility of their sins by placing them on the communists, that social order is always seeking a whipping-boy, and that groups in general hurl accusations at their rivals. This is a universal tendency, he said, but scapegoat policies never solved any problem. The underlying idea is that no one has gotten rid of his sin till

³⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 87,88.

he has taken care of it himself by a sort of self-atonement. He spoke at great length about the forgiveness of God, but there can be sensed all through it salvation by one's own good works. This is not strong, he does not say it in a way that he can be absolutely quoted as definitely advocating it; but the tenor of the entire message is very suggestive that way. He did paint a very dark picture of sin, and he did picture the forgiveness of God in glowing terms and beautiful phraseology, but he showed that he did not like the idea of Christ dying in order to make provision for the cleansing away of man's sin. This sermon suggests the idea that was in another message already analyzed in which he taught that men should have faith in themselves because Christ has faith in them.

In analyzing these sermons of Bishop Kennedy it has been decisively shown that he is a liberal preacher, and that all of his conclusions are from that standpoint. To begin with it was discovered that he did not believe the Bible was the inspired and inerrant Word of God. He would object to the affirmation that he does not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, but he freely admitted that it contains many errors. To be inspired by God, in the sense that orthodox men believe, it would be free from error. He preferred to think of faith being around a Person instead of around a Book. The conservative believes also in faith in Jesus Christ as a Person, but that Person is known only through the Word of God

and the Person and Word are in perfect harmony in every respect. He claimed a high regard for the Bible and he constantly said excellent things about it, but he said so much with reservations that it must also be accepted with reservations. He considered those who believed in the inerrancy of the Scriptures as being "narrow spirited," "sectarian," "inerrancy-worshippers."³⁶ These terms, especially the last, denoted contempt. Instead of being given by inspiration of God in a supernatural way he thought of the Bible as a product of the Jews and early Christians. He further believed the Bible is not all on the same level, therefore, not all of it is very important. His critical views canceled out most of his glowing compliments. Especially as the Bible touches science, he said, it contains numerous errors. One of the errors he mentioned is that the Bible teaches that the world is flat.

Bishop Kennedy thought of both Jesus and God as great gamblers, neither being omnipotent or omniscient. He classed Jesus with other great men who had dared to risk their lives for "unprovable goals." He pitted the God of the Bible against the God of philosophy making the former a loving Father Who is gradually becoming victorious in the great battle between right and wrong. This victory has come by trial and error

³⁶ Supra., p. 37.

with error gradually becoming less prominent. The God of philosophy, he pictured, as the God of the conservative and orthodox Christian. This God is all powerful and all wise never making any mistakes. He glorified the God of the liberal as loving and kind, but made such disparaging remarks about the God whom orthodox men worship that it would be difficult for them to recognize Him from the description given. In other words he so exaggerated the ideas he opposed that they are unacceptable to even the ones whom he said believed them.

Concerning the atonement, he did not believe that Christ died on the cross to atone for the sins of men. He said that sin is too great and ugly and that because it is so terrible it cannot be gotten rid of so easily as is suggested by those who say Christ died in order that it might be cleansed away. According to Bishop Kennedy sin is so great that it cannot be adequately taken care of by the death of Christ. It is so awful that the one who is guilty must get rid of it himself, he inferred, and to try to turn it over to Christ shows an attitude of indifference. In other words the guilty person is not troubled very much by his sins if he can easily roll them off on Christ and forget about them. He suggested that the orthodox view makes the atonement a "cold, legal deal worked out by an unmerciful Judge."³⁶

³⁶ Supra., p. 42.

This is an extremely important point. It strikes directly to the center of the problem of this treatise. He has spoken of the awful fact of sin and made the charge that the liberals think sin is worse than the conservatives do. He charged the orthodox people with an indifference toward unrighteousness, yet he and the liberals almost completely rule out the wrath of God against sin, while the conservatives declare that God's wrath and hell await all who do not have their sins purged and forgiven. Bishop Kennedy said sin is so horrible that man must exert every effort to do away with it; but the conservative says that sin is so great man is not capable of coping with it himself and therefore must turn to Christ as his Saviour and plead for the blood to be applied.

Though Bishop Kennedy attempted to paint a very black picture of sin, the conclusion arrived at by this investigator is that he presented a rather mild idea. The underlying current suggests this. To him sin is not so bad but that man can solve it without a Saviour. It is not bad enough to make hell necessary for those who will not repent and turn from it. It is not so bad that God must be separated from sinners because of it. It is not so bad, according to him, that God must provide a way of salvation by giving His only Son to suffer and die in order to make provision for deliverance from it. An important question is, which attitude pictures sin to be the worst; the attitude of the liberal who does not believe

he needs the blood of Christ, or the conservative who admits that he is lost, helpless, and rightfully hell-bound unless he flees to the foot of the cross humbly confessing his sins and relying on Christ alone to save him? To the liberal Christ is a helper, but to the conservative Christian he is a Saviour and the only way to heaven.

It was on this mild idea of sin that Bishop Kennedy's doctrine of the wrath of God was built. He said that men should assume that God is at least as good as they are, and he said that he would not send a person to an eternal place of punishment. He said for one to believe in an eternal hell would tend to make God more vindictive than men are. Such a God, he said, would be unworthy of worship. He made the love of God and wrath of God antagonistic to each other. He said that God is too good to send a person to hell. His belief in the love of God would not allow him to also believe in divine wrath. He was obligated to accept one or the other, but not both.

Bishop Kennedy said that men should have faith in themselves since Christ has faith in them. Actually he pictured Christ as dying, not because of man's hoplessness and undone and lost condition, but because he believed in them. Jesus gambled on the goodness of man that it would eventually win out in the eternal warfare against darkness and wickedness and selfishness.

He charged that the orthodox view loses sight of love when they declare that God condemns rebellious sinners to hell. One wonders, however, if his system has as magnified an attitude toward divine love as the conservative system has. Another pertinent question is, which view magnifies God's love most---does the liberal view in which there is a God who loves people who are innately good and have at least a spark of divinity in them, or the other side in which there is a God who loves men who are utterly sinful and rebelliously wicked?

Bishop Kennedy clearly demonstrated an opposite position from that held by Jonathan Edwards. He found it necessary to almost completely eliminate the wrath of God if he was to retain the love of God. But he seemed to have greatly weakened the love that he was trying to fortify. He did not seem to relate it properly to all of the other divine attributes, for example to the holiness of God, or the justice of God. If one holds a lofty view of holiness and justice, he will have to question the love that overlooks those who remain unholy or unjust. For love to be genuine and great does it have to unconditionally forgive transgressors who will not repent, or can God love a person while at the same time he condemns him to hell? Bishop Kennedy does not think a God of love could continue to be a loving God and condemn a man to an eternal place of punishment. Carried to its logical

this would mean that God either unconditionally forgives some people or else allows them to go to heaven with their sins still upon them. This writer has not seen any sermon that exactly says this, but everyone knows that there are great multitudes of people who die in outbroken, unforgiven sin; and if God's love will not allow them to go to hell, and be condemned and punished, then the implication is that God will not exercise His wrath toward them. This is love without wrath, or at least without very much wrath.

CHAPTER IV

SERMONS OF T. DeWITT TALMAGE

The sermons surveyed thus far have been those that have presented an extreme position on the love and wrath of God. They have not adequately harmonized the two sides of God's nature and it would be calamitous if there could not be found a better approach and more satisfying truth and presentation. The sermons to be considered in this and the next chapter should convince one of the possibility and advisability of a preacher's presentation of the two doctrines in a strong, harmonious, and appealing manner.

I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

T. DeWitt Talmage was born January 7, 1832, at Middlebrook, New Jersey, where his father kept a tollgate. He was the youngest of eleven children, four of whom became honored ministers of the gospel. His father and mother were converted in one of Charles G. Finney's revival meetings and they prayed for their children till they saw them won to the Lord. At nineteen years of age he studied law at the University of the City of New York and then he entered the seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church at New Brunswick. At the Seminary he began to show the extraordinary, sensational, and original

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style that characterized him in later life. One of his professors said, after he had preached his first sermon in class, "DeWitt, if you don't change your style of thought and expression, you will never get a call from any church in Christendom as long as you live."¹

His first pastorate was at the Dutch Reformed Church in Belville, New Jersey where he was installed and ordained on July 26, 1856. In 1859 he was called to the Dutch Reformed Church at Syracuse, New York, then in 1862 he went to the Second Reformed Church of Philadelphia where his popularity began to grow as great throngs flocked to his services. By 1869 his fame had gone abroad and he was called to churches in Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, and Brooklyn. He accepted the call to the Central Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn where the church was soon outgrown and a new tabernacle was built to accomodate the crowds. This was the first of three tabernacles that was built for him, each of which were destroyed by fire. After the destruction of the third Tabernacle he was installed as associate pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Washington, D. C. After four years of preaching in Washington he resigned his charge, and from 1899 till his death in 1902 he gave himself to lecturing, preaching, and editorial work.

¹ Clarence Edward Macartney, Six Kings of the American Pulpit (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1942), p. 160.

Talmage was a great traveler both in the United States and in many other countries. He found it easy to meet distinguished persons, even the crowned heads of Europe. He was for many years Editor of the Christian Herald and through it loaded a large ship with food supplies for victims of a famine in Russia. His sermons were packed with references to places he had seen or had read about and he was able with vivid, word pictures to so describe them, as well as people and events, that they were made to live for the hearers. His use of word pictures was one of the main attractions that drew the crowds to hear him.

By the time his third tabernacle was destroyed he was preaching to the largest crowds of any preacher in the world. Like Henry Ward Beecher, who was his contemporary, he did not have a pulpit in his tabernacles, but preached from a long platform using all of it as he energetically walked back and forth enthusiastically presenting his message. Every eye was upon him so that he preached nearly as much with his gestures as with his lips. He was assailed for many years by the newspapers and other preachers because of his spectacular method of preaching and his strong statements. He spoke out harshly against the evils of liquor and was often heard to voice his opinions on political matters, especially during election times. But not only did he preach to larger crowds

than any other preacher, but, after attacking him for a number of years, the press became his friend and for over thirty years his sermons appeared each Monday on the front page of most of the leading newspapers in America and many foreign countries. It is estimated that thirty million people saw or read his sermons weekly during those years. From the time his popularity grew, when his first tabernacle was built, till his death forty years later, it never waned in the least.

He believed the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. He believed in and preached on hell and the born again experience as the only way of escaping it and the only entrance to heaven. He preached much more on the love of God than he did on his wrath, but he did not compromise his stand. The millions who read his sermons in their daily papers and the thousands who heard him preach knew that he believed in a hell for all who were not converted. But he tried to win the people by love. Very seldom did he ever try to win the people by frightening them; rather he beautifully portrayed the love of God and then tried to cause his people to see the great sin of their hearts in refusing such love. With that type of preaching first to set the stage, he then let them know that God could do nothing else for sinners but to assign them to hell. He presented hell to them as the very last resort and he showed God sending them to their eternal punishment with

a heart that was broken because of their rebellion and stubbornness.

Most of his sermons were from Old Testament texts, though he preached incessantly on Christ as Central and the Cross as central and cardinal. Most of his sermons were topical and dealt with some Old Testament or New Testament scene of historical event. But always he found the scarlet thread and traced it through to the cross and presented Christ as the only Saviour and his salvation as the only way to heaven.

The sermons to be studied in this chapter are from a twenty volume set of selected sermons which he had published two years before his death.

II. SERMONS TO BE ANALYZED

A sermon which had as its primary purpose to convince the congregation that God was perfectly justified in pouring out his wrath upon impenitent sinners is one that answered the question : "Why He Said It?"² It was from the text: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."³ He began by asking why the tender-hearted Paul

² T. DeWitt Talmage, Selected Sermons (New York: The Christian Herald, 1900), VII, 289.

³ I Corinthians 16:22.

could make such a statement. Was it, he asked, because he had lost his patience, or lost confidence in Christianity, or because he had been treated so badly by the world that he had become its enemy? No, it was not that, he was sure, and it was his intention, he told his audience, to so explain it so that they would all perfectly agree with Paul in his stern pronouncement.

He then painted a beautiful word picture of Christ, showing him to be wonderful to look at and then he pictured him as having such a beautiful disposition that he would be wonderful to be with. And he said:

But Christ having gone away from earth, we are dependent upon four distinct pictures. Matthew took one, Mark another, Luke another, and John another. I care not which picture you take; it is lovely. Lovely! He was altogether lovely.⁴

Next, in a very dramatic manner, he pictured Jesus' tender and loving way of healing, teaching, praying, and finally his great sacrifice. In picturing the death of Christ for sinners, and after talking about the sorrows of earth and woes of hell that were upon him, describing them in such a way that his hearers must have been listening almost breathlessly, he said:

⁴ Talmage, op. cit., p. 292.

No wonder the rock, the sky, and the cemetery were in consternation when he died. No wonder the earth was convulsed. It was the Lord God Almighty bursting into tears! Now suppose that, notwithstanding all this, a man cannot have any affection for him. What ought to be done with such hard behaviour.⁵

There should be some kind of chastisement for such a man, he assured them, who, after all the distance Christ had travelled from the throne of God and all the suffering he had endured should shut the door in his face and trample on his entreaties. And by way of illustration he suggested that if a ruffian took a boy's cap and threw it in a ditch people would rise up in indignation more over that than many men are stirred by the indignation done Christ in his humiliation and suffering for their sins. He further illustrated by saying that if a man purchased a piece of property but was denied the title after the full price had been paid the purchaser would denounce the other as a defrauder and if need be have him sent to jail; but Christ has purchased everyone by blood and tears and humiliation and sorrow, of infinitely greater worth than monetary value, and he ought to have what he has purchased. He said that by this time in the sermon a man with ardent temperament ought to rise with holy vigor and, bringing his fist down on the pew, say, "I can stand this injustice no longer. After all this purchase, 'If any man love not

⁵ Ibid., pp. 293, 294.

the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha'."6

He continued to build up the case against the man who stubbornly holds out and would not love Christ by means of several more illustrations and strong, unanswerable statements, each of which showed the greatness of Christ's love and which in turn revealed an ever darker picture of a man who would continue to hold out and resist such love. One would think that every member of his audience would feel that God had every right to damn such a soul and could do it keeping in perfect harmony with his great love. He closed with a strong appeal showing God's love and wrath in perfect harmony:

My text pronounces Anathema Maranatha upon all those who refuse to love Christ. Anathema -- cut off! Everlastingly cut off! Behold therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou shalt be cut off. Maranatha -- that is the other word. 'When he comes' is the meaning of it. Will he come?... Maranatha! Hear it ye mountains and prepare to fall. Ye cities, and prepare to burn. Ye nations, and receive your doom! Maranatha! Maranatha!7

He had as his purpose, in a sermon which he called, "A Motherly God",8 to present the love of God in a way that would be both appealing and convincing. His text for this

6 Ibid., p. 295.

7 Ibid., p. 298.

8 Ibid., XI, 257.

sermon was the verse from Isaiah which reads, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."⁹ To begin with he said that the Bible had more to say about the love of God than it did about his wrath, but there were many people who could only see the stern side. He did not want the people to lose sight of retribution, and he made several strong statements and gave a number of Scriptural references which bore on the severity of God. Then he came to the subject at hand, the love of God. He started out by saying:

A father and his child are walking out in the fields on a summer's day, and there comes up a thunder storm. A flash of lightening startles the little girl, and the father says, 'My dear, that is God's eye.' There comes a peal of thunder, and the father says, 'My dear, that is God's voice.' But the clouds go off the sky, and the storm is gone, and light floods the heavens and floods the landscape, and the father forgets to say, 'My dear, that is God's smile.'¹⁰

In beautiful word pictures and numerous illustrations he showed God's love by comparing it to a mother's patient and gentle way of teaching, and by a mother's use of favoritism always sympathizing with the one least loved and cared for by others. He compared it to a mother's sympathetic capacity for attending to little hurts, and a mother's patience with erring ones. And a mother's comforting hand, he said, was

⁹ Isaiah 66:13.

¹⁰ Talmage, op. cit., p. 257.

like God's hand of love outstretched all. And finally he compared it to a mother's patiently tender and loving way of putting a child to sleep. And in a similar way, when men come to the end of their earthly pilgrimage, he suggested that with such a God of love:

The cradle of the grave will be soft with the pillow of all the promises. When we are being rocked into that last slumber, I want this to be the cradle song: 'As one whom a mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.'¹¹

Doctor Talmage marvelously pictured the love of God in this moving and heart-touching sermon, but he was careful to tell his people that there was a severe side to his nature and that such love spurned would call for retributive measures. He closed this sermon in a way that was common to nearly all of his messages; by a reference to heaven.

In a sermon from the text, "It behooved Christ to suffer,"¹² he painted many pictures describing the awfulness of sin and the stubbornness of mankind. And in comparison to the sinfulness of man he once again pictured the love of Christ, saying:

Sometimes people suffer because they cannot help themselves; but Christ had in his hand all the weapons to punish his enemies, and yet in quiescence he endured

¹¹ Ibid., p. 268.

¹² Ibid., XII, 41.

all outrage. He might have hurled the rocks of Golgotha upon his pursuers; he might have cleft the earth till it swallowed up his assailants; he might have called in re-inforcement or taken any thunderbolt from the armory of God Omnipotent, and hurled it seething and fiery among his foes; but he answered not again. No sarcasm, no retort, no curling of the lip in scorn, no flashing of the eye in wrath.¹³

There did come out in this sermon a rather strong Calvinism which unduly emphasized a legal satisfaction theory of the atonement. But he would show the love of God so great that it should have strongly touched every hearers heart. There was also a severe denunciation of sin and he made it appear black and ugly in the light of the holiness of God. He portrayed God as doing everything in his power to win men before he has finally to give them up. It was a strong and convincing message on both the love and wrath of God.

In a sermon on "The Judgment"¹⁴ from the New Testament text, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,"¹⁵ he began on a note that would immediately attract attention by appealing to their common sense when he said:

I take it for granted you are not afraid to look facts full in the face. If there come a business

¹³ Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁴ Ibid., XIX, 65.

¹⁵ II Corinthians 5:10.

panic, you examine your books; you see what is your outgo and what is your income, what is the amount of stock you have on hand, and make deliberate calculations as to what are the probabilities of your going through the panic. And if I can show you that there is a day coming which will try and test and weigh us -- a day which to a great multitude will be a wild panic -- you will immediately want to make calculation as to what are your possibilities of successfully going through that crisis unhurt. Many of you are accustomed to serving on juries. . . . In this sermon, in the name of God I impanel you as a jury before whom I wish to place certain evidence, expecting that by the close of this service you will have rendered your verdict for time and eternity.¹⁶

His next approach was to read to them several specially selected predictions of future judgment from both Testaments to show that the idea of judgment appears often in the Scriptures.

He dealt with the subject first by speaking of the Judge, then of the judged, and finally of the sentence meted out. He explained that the Judge would be impartial which was an uncommon and almost impossible thing in this world. He reminded them that earthly judges were elected and it was hard when a case came up to forget that this one voted for him and that one against him. And he also reminded them that in many places on this earthly scene it was almost impossible for one to have a fair trial. In this regard he told his audience

The law, in many cities, with its hands behind its back, walks in front of great villainies, not seeing them; but woe to the woman who steals a

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

paper of pins, or the man who steals a loaf of bread to keep his children from starving. But on the day of which I speak the Judge will be impartial. What to him are all the inequalities of society? Side by side, czar and gate keeper, president and porter, Chinese emporor and coolie, millionaire and pauper. What to him will it be whether in this world we flashed in gay drawing-room or picked cotton or broke cobble-stones or harangued senates or marshalled armies? One platform on which to stand, one law by which to be tried, one impartial Judge to fix our fate.¹⁷

After earthly trials people complain, he said, that they did not have a fair trial, but after that one they will all be compelled to admit that it was perfectly fair.

Next he spoke of the Judge as being, not only impartial, but merciful. He said that the great Judge before who they would be standing would rather acquit them than condemn them and he will give every advantage possible. By way of illustration he said, "That he has a kind heart I prove by the fact that he went a long journey to comfort two sisters who had lost their brother, and turned aside from a flattering reception to help a poor blind man."¹⁸

The next characteristic of the Judge, he said, is that he will be just. He suggested that if an earthly judge should sit on the bench and command that all criminals be released he would be impeached by an aroused public and

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

proceedings would be in order shortly to have him committed to an insane asylum, for the greatest farce in the world would be to have a judge without justice. Then he said:

Now, I have to tell you that the Judge on that day will be a just Judge. He knows all the law, and he will vindicate it. Suppose we come up before that Judge with all our sins unpardoned, all our crimes unforgiven, and not so much as accepting someone to plead our cause, do you think we will escape? Ah, I tell you nay. If mercy radiant and garlanded, sits on one side that throne; justice, with stern brow and firm lip and gleaming sword, sits on the other. An impartial Judge, a merciful Judge, a just Judge.¹⁹

He certainly harmonized the love of God and the wrath of God in that great statement. If more people were reasoned with in such a way as that today by their ministers they would have strong reasons for both heart and mind to accept the doctrine of the unity of God with no reservations. They would see that all the divine attributes are in perfect harmony.

Concerning the Judged he spoke first of those who were Christians. His own words are too eloquent to be left out:

Once they were sinners, once they were culprits, once they deserved to die; but they got the matter settled. Written all over their hearts in the handwriting of that very Judge is their eternal clearance: 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' Not one sin uncanceled. Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates, and let them come in. March on great army of the pardoned and

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 71.

good. March on! Hail! sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Pass on. Pass up. Pass in.²⁰

The next group were the blasphemers, who, when they first started to make their hard speeches had them stick in their teeth and nearly choke them, but as they got older their hearts became harder and there was no longer twinge of conscience. At first they apologized to the ladies, but finally they got reckless in spewing out their oaths. He said many of the oaths will have been forgotten by the blasphemers, but, in a contrasting statement with what was said about the Christians, he said:

In the last day it will be found out that the recording angel has kept an account of all the profanities, the unforgiven, and unpardoned profanities of a man's lifetime, and they will flame out before his astonished vision. They will almost burn the eye in the socket, old words written so long ago. 'All blasphemers shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death!' Swing back, ye gates of darkness. Lift, ye gates of doom. Pass on, you great army of blasphemers. Pass on. Pass out. Pass down. Forever! Forever!²¹

The third group were the oppressed. In a dramatic and forceful paragraph he spoke of those who had toiled under hard taskmasters in the Egyptian brick-kilns, and garment makers who worked for government contractors at ruinous wages,

²⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

²¹ Ibid., p. 73.

and those who put their eyes out with needles binding shoes for lords and ladies, and those whose foreheads had never felt the sun and whose eyes had never seen green fields. He talked of those who had never heard the song of the meadow-lark, and orphans who were kicked into the world and out again without a chance. And then speaking of the long story of aching heads and blistered hands and broken hearts, he said:

Now they stand in the presence of him who in every fibre of his soul knows what it is to suffer. This is not the first time he has seen them. He saw them all the time when in their earthly sorrows they cried for pity and for help, and will he cast them off now? Cast them off? Will he? Ask the mother who holds the child in her arms to throw it to the wild beasts; ask the father who holds the child lovingly by the hand to dash that child against the rocks; but do not expect that in the fresh memory of cross and garden of bloody sweat Christ will cast off these suffering ones who have confided in his mercy. Happy day for you all, ye children of the fire. In proportion as the thorn was sharp and the flame was severe, your reward will be great. You suffered with him on earth; you will be glorified with him in heaven. Hail! sons and daughters of the fire.²²

He seemed to imply that all such oppressed would go to heaven regardless of whether they received personal salvation or not. There seemed to have been a distinction made between them and the first group in regard to having become born-again Christians, but not in respect to reward. He probably should have said something about the matter of amount of

²² Ibid., pp. 73, 74.

light they had and about degrees of punishment and reward.

He spoke in the fourth place of secret sinners. "Once in a while," he said, "a Phoenix bank swindle or a Ketcham forgery comes to the surface; but the vast majority of the dishonesties never come to the surface, or, coming to the surface, are hushed up."²³ He warned them that all who had devoured widow's houses, or ground the poor under their feet, or collected unlawful fees; all the time pretending to be moral and pious, would have all their secret sins made known and they would be judged. The next group to come under his withering attack were the public outragers of law and order. All the great outlaws will be there, he said:

With their mouths still filled with blasphemies and their bodies still polluted with crime, and their eyes still gleaming with revenge, and their hearts still raving with murder. All looking on the throne of judgment, and reading there, before yet it be uttered, their eternal condemnation. Pass on, you public outragers of law and order. Pass on. Pass out. Pass down. Forever! Forever!²⁴

The last class of people judgment bound that he mentioned are those who trust in their own personal morality and not in Jesus Christ. No one doubted their integrity. They paid every debt and slandered no one. The only thing they ever did was to reject Christ and refuse him their love and

²³ Ibid., p. 74.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

confidence. All they ever did was reject Christ as their Saviour; but, he pointed out, that was the greatest sin a man can commit. It is the greatest sin for it is the tap-root and all other sins spring from it.

In a closing appeal to their minds he spoke of all the opportunities to receive Christ that had been rejected. He said that the churches would plead against them in that day, the Bible they had rejected would plead against them, the communion table, the warning providences of God, the cross of Christ, and the Holy Spirit would all plead against them. In a summary statement of all lost opportunities, he said:

Ah! my friends, it will not be the falling of the mountains and the burning seas that will make the consternation; it will be the unimproved privileges of the past gathering around that soul pushing it to the brink and mocking its agony.²⁵

And in a closing appeal to their hearts he called upon them to come for pardon while the door of mercy was still open assuring them of God's love and mercy and pardoning grace. It was a sample of the type of sermonizing that needs to be done today. Though it was a sermon on judgment it was filled with pictures of God's love. The dominant note of the last two sermons studied was the love of God, but there was in them a note of warning; and the purpose of this sermon was to

²⁵ Ibid., p. 77.

reveal the wrath of God, but it revealed many rays of love and mercy. Both were well balanced with sound logic for the mind and strong appeal for heart.

Doctor Talmage had a great sermon on the text "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?"²⁶ the title of which was, "Why are Sin and Satan Permitted?"²⁷ This was Job's profound query, and, incidentally the question in the minds of men of all ages. It was marvelously answered in this sermon. This is the way he showed God's love in an Old Testament scene in which most people only see wrath:

People sometimes talk of God as though he were hasty in his judgments and as though he snapped men up quickly. Ah, no! He waited one-hundred and twenty years for the people to get into the ark, and warned them all the time. . . .²⁸

Thus he proceeded to give six reasons for the long-suffering patience of God which reasons made up the main points of the message. In a summary fashion they are as follows: (1) They live to demonstrate God's longsuffering patience; (2) they live that their overthrow may be the more impressive; (3) they live that they may be able to build up fortresses for the righteous to capture; (4) they live that

²⁶ Job 21:7.

²⁷ Talmage, op. cit., V, 233.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 235.

some of them may be monuments of mercy; (5) they live to make it plain beyond all controversy that there is another place for adjustment; and (6) they are allowed to live for the same reason that we are all allowed to live -- that we might have time for repentance. Showing them that judgment comes only as a last resort after all other methods and means of winning men have failed, he said:

Where would you and I be if sin had been followed by immediate catastrophe? While the foot of Christ is fleet as that of a roebuck when he comes to save, it does seem as if it were hobbled with languors and infinite lethargies when he comes to punish.²⁹

He closed this message too, with a great appeal. He addressed questions to their minds for serious consideration and to their hearts for a heaven ward response when he asked:

How long have you lived unforgiven? Fifteen, twenty, forty, sixty years? Lived through great awakenings, lived through domestic sorrows, lived through commercial calamity, lived through providential crisis that startled nations, and you are living yet, strangers to God and with no hope for a great future into which the next moment you may be precipitated?³⁰

These have been samples of sermons by a great spectacular preacher of the last century. Those who knew him and were his friends said that he preached nearly as much by his kindly and friendly face and spectacular gestures as

²⁹ Ibid., p. 243.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 244.

with his lips. He was an orator of no mean ability. He preached the gospel of Christ with power, logic, and heart-warning appeal. It is little wonder that Doctor Clarence E. McCartney, who himself is one of America's greatest preachers and lecturers, considered Talmage one of the six greatest American preachers to date.³¹

Though he was a pastor during most of his ministerial career, his type of preaching would be especially appropriate for travelling evangelists and for revival campaigns and summer camp-meetings. He harmonized the love and wrath of God beautifully, each causing the other to stand out more powerfully. And he did it in a spectacular manner that would hold the rapt attention of saint and sinner alike. It should be stated that his preaching was not too spectacular so that all attention was drawn to him, but in a spectacular manner he directed attention to God who in Christ could redeem them from sin and despair to righteousness and victory. Preachers would profit by studying his method and style, and especially profitable would it be for evangelists.

³¹ McCartney, op. cit., p.

CHAPTER V

SERMONS OF PAUL STROMBERG REES

The sermons and preachers considered in chapters two and three were in decided contrast. The contrasts were in the extreme and presented positions the modern minister should seek to avoid. The positions they represented were so extreme that they contained numerous errors, especially from the standpoint of the subject of this thesis. There are contrasts in the sermons and preachers of chapters four and five too. They are contrasts well within proper limits, however, and present very valuable helps and suggestions that would be profitable for the true minister of the gospel.

I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Doctor Paul S. Rees is one of the world's greatest living preachers and is considered by many ministers as the "preacher's preacher". In this reviewer's opinion there is no greater and more important Christian minister and Christian leader in America than he. His influence reaches across denominational, institutional, and theological lines. His theology places him in the Arminian Wesleyan tradition not only as a member, but as one of the most influential leaders. He is a strong preacher and lecturer on the doctrinal and practical phases of entire sanctification. He is a contributor to holiness publications such as The Pentecostal Herald, The

Heart and Life Magazine, The American Holiness Journal, The Preacher's Magazine, and others. As an evangelical he is popular and influential in the conservative, Bible believing movement; and is vice-president of the National Association of Evangelicals which is to the evangelicals what the National Council and World Council of Churches is to the liberal movement. He is scheduled to be president of the NAE for the next year beginning with the annual convention to be held in May 1952. He is popular as one of the leading speakers at many of the most important conferences and conventions of such organizations as the National Holiness Association, The National Association of Evangelicals, and the Annual Convention of Youth For Christ International. He is also invited to address many Christian College and Seminary audiences as commencement and baccaloureate speaker.

As a preacher he divides his time between his pastorate and leading Bible conference, youth conference, camp-meeting, and church revival audiences. He has been pastor of the great First Covenant Church in Minneapolis the last fourteen years. It is one of the leading and best loved evangelical centers in the nation. His messages are gems of homiletical structure combining ideally the devotional, inspirational, and hortatory aspects of preaching. In his preaching, according to Henry and Decker, "He preaches a solid yet popular message, avoiding the 'stilts' of the theologian and the 'low heels' of the

street talker."¹ So far four books of his sermons have been published; they are: If God Be For Us,² Things Unshakable,³ The Radiant Cross,⁴ and The Face of our Lord.⁵ His sermons also appear in several Christian publications.

Doctor Rees is not as spectacular as Talmage was nor does he soar to quite the oratorical heights, but his preaching brings results of perhaps a more stable nature. His sermons have a more solid foundation and, though he is regarded as a great evangelist, a study of his sermonic method and style would probably be of greater profit to the pastor than to the evangelist. This chapter will not by as long as the preceding one because much of the same ground will be covered again for both DeWitt Talmage and Paul Rees are used in this thesis as examples of proper sermonizers on the two doctrines under consideration.

¹ Carl Henry and Rutherford Decker, Editors, The Evangelical Pulpit (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), I, 108.

² Paul S. Rees, If God Be For Us (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950).

³ Paul S. Rees, Things Unshakable (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950).

⁴ Paul S. Rees, The Radiant Cross (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951).

⁵ Paul S. Rees, The Face of Our Lord (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951).

II. SERMONS TO BE ANALYZED

Doctor Rees has a sermon entitled "The Dreadful Face"⁶ which beautifully shows his ability to present the love and wrath of God in a way that makes them appear harmonious. The text is the New Testament verse, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil."⁷ He said that many people have come to think about God as a motherly old soul who wouldn't say anything about anyone. In this sermon, which had as its primary purpose to portray the wrathful side of God's nature, he brought in the balancing element. In one statement is found a sample of his method of giving the proper relation between these two aspects on the divine nature: He said, "God's face shows love and mercy, but there is a line of severity in it."⁸ It was his way of saying that in the main God exercises his love, but when all efforts have failed to bring the person into the proper relationship he will have to take retributive steps. He went on to say that all through the Bible there were evidences of mercy for those who throw up their hands in surrender, but there is also evidence of God's wrath where sin insisted on defying his moral order.

⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

⁷ I Peter 3:12.

⁸ Rees, op. cit., p. 19.

In commenting on Romans 3:26 which reads, "That he might be just and the justifier of them that believe," he talked of the moral realm and the dignity of the moral law that must be upheld. He talked also of God's dignity and then asked a pertinent question replying with penetrating answers that got to the center of the matter and showed a masterful handling of an important truth. He spoke thus:

What then? Since Calvary, is the face of the Lord no longer against them that do evil? Such a conclusion would be dangerously false. His hatred of sin is not modified by the cross; it is, if anything, intensified. What the cross does is enable a holy God to keep his self respect while he pardons the guilt and washes away the defilement of any son of Adam who will come in humble confession and receive his grace. The dreadful face is still there, but there's a trickle of blood on it, and it speaks of mercy.⁸

This is a magnificent handling of a great problem. He painted one side of God's face with love and mercy, but with a line of severity in it; and the other side as dreadful, but with a trickle of blood speaking of mercy. He certainly harmonized the love and wrath of God and made them both stand out clearly as two necessary and friendly parts of one whole. Indeed, the sermon titles of all of the sermons in this book are very suggestive and taken as a whole they portray the love and wrath of God as it appeared in Christ during his wonderful earthly life. The greater emphasis is on the side of God's love, however, which is as it should be. The titles

⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

are; "The Dreadful Face," "The Dauntless Face," "The Dazzling Face," "The Dutiful Face," "The Despised Face," and "The Divine Face."⁹ They suggest respectively: wrath, courage, purity, obedience, humility, and deity. All but the first show clearly the love of God as he was seeking to redeem lost men who were sinful and rebellious and at enmity with him.

In a sermon from the text "so then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God,"¹⁰ which he entitled "When Responsibility Closes In",¹¹ he said that the note of warning needed to be sounded because man has come to a day when a God of justice and punishment for sin is lost sight of. He said that education has robbed men of their idea of responsibility by teaching that back of the universe there is only a mindless machine. He struck hard at the psychological idea that man's behavior has nothing to do with principles or concepts. God could not be just if he would punish people for wrong-doing if the psychology is true that "Men are not bad because they have bad hearts; they are bad (or rather unfortunate) because they have bad glands."¹² It is the same principle behind the statement that alcoholism is a disease

⁹ Ibid., p. xi.

¹⁰ Rees, Things Unshakable, p. 123.

¹¹ Romans 14:12.

¹² Rees, op. cit., p. 124.

instead of calling it sin. Another factor, he said, that contributed to the break-down of individual responsibility is the development of state socialism which does away with individuality. This was especially true in Nazi Germany, but it is coming into the thinking of Americans too with the ever-increasing extension of public services or socialized responsibility. He suggested this tendency when he said:

Want a job? Let the government guarantee you one. Want to build a home? Let the government make you a loan. Want medical and hospital services? Let the government provide them. Want sickness and old age security? Let the government furnish it. And on we go.¹³

And another contributing factor which he mentioned is that which blames heredity and circumstances. In closing this part of the message he said:

Responsible living -- That's what these times demand. That's what God has always asked of us. And that, let it be added, is what he is going to ask of us when we stand before him to be judged.¹⁴

This was a timely message well presented. It logically and clearly dealt with a problem that is ever increasing and that is very vitally related to the subject of this work. When men see more clearly their own personal responsibility and have their false hopes and systems brought out into the clear light so that they can see their error, and see that many of their excuses are in reality sin, and that they have more

¹³ Ibid., pp. 125, 126.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

light than they are willing to admit; they will begin to see that truly they are great sinners, that they have sinned terribly against the love of God, and that it would be only proper and right for God to punish them.

This is the way he began a sermon on the text "What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?"¹⁵

'I hate the very thought of hell,' said a cultured lady one day. Well, I wonder if God doesn't feel the same way, though not, I suspect, in the same sense or with the same motives as might have been true with this woman. I, for one, hate criminal law courts. I hate the penitentiary, the gallows, the electric chair; and I hate as well the burglary, the rape, the murder, that send men to these ugly places.¹⁶

The sermon topic was "The Truth We Will Not Face."¹⁷ He wondered what was the matter with contemporary theology that it simply will not face the doctrine of hell. It used to be, he remembered, that people thought about hell and shrank from it, but now they shrink from thinking about it at all. He said that there is a great tendency in modern times to sidestep the unpleasant in reality. He said that the Bible does not seek to try and make the idea of hell an easy thing to accept, but it does seek to establish the fact that it is a morally just and necessary doctrine when the total picture of God and man is brought into view. In other words, if men get a

¹⁵ Jeremiah 15:21.

¹⁶ Paul S. Rees, "The Truth We Will Not Face," The Preacher's Magazine, 23: 17, June-July, 1948.

¹⁷ Loc. cit.

proper view of both God and himself he will know then that hell is the only reasonable and right answer.

To the objection that modern man has progressed beyond the notion of hell he vividly pictured the sin of the modern world showing it to be no better than other generations when the idea of hell was held with no reservations by most people. In fact he made it plain that in view of all the greater light and opportunities modern man is privileged to have, and still he is no better than his less fortunate ancestors, hell is all the more necessary and probable. He then spoke of Jesus' and Paul's pronouncements of eternal punishment in hell and said:

It is an amazing and solemn fact that these sections of Scripture which describe most vividly and powerfully the future punishment of the unsaved are not to be found in the Old Testament, but amid the blazing light of the New. And what is even more impressive and arresting is that, with the exception of certain passages in the Book of Revelation, the doctrine of hell in the New Testament is nowhere taught so frankly, so forcefully, so repeatedly, or so terribly, as in the words of Jesus himself. The gentlest lips that ever spoke to the sin-burdened, sin-bound sons and daughters of Adam were the lips over which passed the most appalling warnings of hell ever heard on this planet.¹⁸

Surely there must be some truth to the affirmation that God is both a loving God and a just God if the loving and gentle and kind and merciful Saviour spoke so strongly about hell and eternal punishment.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

"Time is Running Out"¹⁹ is a sermon topic on the verse "Brethren, the time is short."²⁰ He suggested to begin with that cronic pessimism is not the proper attitude and that optimism is not always the identical twin of common sense. He was certain that there should be some place allowed between being an optimist and a fool. He said:

If the politicians and priests and preachers, along with millions of money-mad, pleasure-intoxicated Americans, are dull to the fact that the time is short, the men who are working on our weapons of war are stingingly awake. . . .²¹

Then he suggested that it was time for the United Nations and the millions of people represented by Lake Success to have a day of prayer, meditation and contrition because the time is short. To further convince his hearers of the alarming fact that time is running short he gave a number of illustrations in American life. First he said that wild life was exploited and the law of action was "Shoot and kill, shoot and kill;" in regard to top-soil there are 400,000,000 tons of it annually being washed into the Gulf of Mexico, and greed for quick profits spurred the farmers to "plow and plant, plow and plant" and then go West when the land had given out. But, he said, that time is past; the Pacific Ocean has seen to that. And in the forests it was

¹⁹ Paul S. Rees, "Time is Running Out," Heart and Life Magazine, 37:5, January, 1951.

²⁰ I Corinthians 7:29.

²¹ Rees, op. cit., p. 5.

"cut and sell, cut and sell." And in the national scene it is "spend and tax, spend and tax."²²

After using numerous illustrations that should have kept the people with him and vividly painting them a picture that should have caused them to realize that it was time to quit their indifference and slothfulness he narrowed the application to the individual's personal life. He said that some of them had an exterior coat of Christianity but had never been changed inside, some of them were much too careless about spiritual and eternal matters, some had made promises which they had never kept and that time was running out for them so that if they did not act soon it would be too late for them. Then he said:

What will it be like with you -- you who are delaying to take your sin-sick soul to Jesus Christ while the opportunity is so richly yours? Christ's word to you is plain and ever so winsome: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool' (Isaiah 1:18). What will you do with him and his call? You must make up your mind. The time is short!²³

In this message he spoke about the love of Christ and of his great invitation and of his great salvation, but he did not fail to give a warning. He used appealing and thought

²² Ibid., p. 6.

²³ Ibid., p. 16.

provoking illustrations that were appropriate and to the point. They were not fanciful or exaggerated. And there was a logical progression from the first sentence building up to a climax that was well done in the last sentence. It was the type of a message that would appeal to believers and unbelievers alike, it was modest enough to that intellectuals would not be able to say that the preacher was raving or making much ado about nothing, yet it was replete with weighty matter.

In a sermon entitled "The Test You Cannot Escape"²⁴ from the words of Jesus, "And this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil,"²⁵ he spoke primarily of the test that each must face in his earthly life. He talked of the light of reason, the light of conscience, the light of collective experience, the light of prophetic insight, and above all the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. There is all of this light and if it is neglected there is no other alternative than to condemn. Because of his great love God has given so many opportunities and privileges that no man can say he had no chance. He spoke at some length about the light Christ is to people, namely; he is embodied light, energizing light, everybody's light. Next he spoke about judgment

²⁴ Paul S. Rees, "The Test You Cannot Escape", Heart and Life Magazine, 37:5, July-September, 1951.

²⁵ John 3:19.

that comes because of Christ's words. Usually they are kind and gentle, but sometimes he must speak sharply to awaken to important issues. Another factor of judgment are the deeds of Christ and sometimes they are more of a factor than are the words because they are more easily seen. For example, he said:

What was it that judged and rebuked Peter's feebleness of faith? A stinging tongue-lashing from the Master? Oh no, just a net that was burstingly full of fish! A deed of power flashed light into Peter's heart and showed him that he is substituting human shrewdness for childlike trust.²⁶

And it was the deeds of Jesus that first troubled Nicodemus.

He was uncomfortably aware that here was no ordinary man. The light of Christ's deeds shot into his mind. Then, when he came to Jesus, the light of our Lord's words illuminated whole new areas of reality. He found out that he needed to be born again, churchman though he was.²⁷

And so it was that when he came into vital contact with God he saw that in the light of his holiness and standard he was far short. He did not question the appropriateness of judgment -- he knew it was necessary and fair.

But the greatest of all deeds is that of Christ's dying on the cross and therefore it is the greatest of all judges. In a grand statement he said:

That cross, therefore, has become the Supreme court of the soul, adjudging every man to be a

²⁶ Rees, op. cit., p. 16.

²⁷ Loc. cit.

sinner and acquitting of his guilt every man who confesses and forsakes his sin.²⁸

It will be a tremendous thing for a sinner to stand before the Lord in that last great day and be reminded of the cross. Though he may have excused himself in this life and covered over his unrighteousness, it will stand out in all its stark reality then and he will be speechless. Great is the sin that is against such love as the cross reveals.

Commenting on the words of the text "Man loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," he said that some men say they reject him for intellectual reasons, but he was sure that that was not true; rather, it is for moral reasons that they reject him. He pointed out that sin was refusing light once it had dawned upon the person. And in that great judgment day men will have their sin instead of the Saviour because in life they wanted sin more than they wanted him. How terribly loathsome that begins to make sin become. With these words he closed the message:

Two wonders mark the course of Christian testimony through the centuries; one is that people of little light enter into such rich experiences of Christ's grace and power; the other is that people of such great light, such manifold and prolonged light, do so little with it and remain, instead, in the shadows, lost and darkened souls.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 16, 18.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

Both Talmage and Rees made much of the matter of light revealed and opportunities and privileges granted to men. All of this shows God's long-suffering love and patience and mercy. This message by Paul Rees cut through all the excuses men might make and strikes to the very center of their heart showing their real selves. He gave his people, in this and other messages, a reasoned and appealing word. There is sufficient logic for the mind and winsomness for the heart so that if people will allow themselves to think honestly and will allow their hearts to respond they would see the evil of their lives and, seeing it, would surrender to the Lord and find themselves so transformed that when that great and notable day comes they will be able to stand in his presence unashamed and will be able to hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of the Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."³⁰ Doctor Rees shows a method and style of sermonizing that the minister of the gospel could well take valuable lessons from.

³⁰ Matthew 25:34.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Three approaches have been presented in this thesis concerning the preaching of the love and wrath of God. Two approaches were in the extreme while the other was intended to present a well balanced and Scriptural view.

I. SUMMARY

A. Jonathan Edward's approach

In Jonathan Edward's approach there was discovered an extreme emphasis on the wrath of God. This approach nearly canceled divine love. In his sermons love was opposed to wrath.

1. Absolute sovereignty. According to Jonathan Edwards, sovereignty was based on God's arbitrary will, and it issued in absolute predestination as opposed to conditional predestination. His extreme position began with this hyper-calvinistic doctrine of sovereignty and predestination.

2. Absolute predestination. His absolute predestination was that God sovereignly determined from eternity who would be heirs of His love and salvation, and who would be victims of His eternal wrath and hatred. This predestination was fixed and eternal.

3. Wrath without love. He believed in wrath without love for those who are not of the elect. He did not believe God could love those whom He had predestined to everlasting

destruction. And because He hates them He will not show mercy. He also taught that Christians are to love everyone while they are still living on the earth; but when they get to heaven and learn who are not of the elect they will hate them, too, as God hates them. Love suffered also from his absolute predestination for he had God condemning men who are predestined to commit a prescribed amount of sin without any possibility of doing otherwise, and who had no possibility of salvation.

B. Bishop Gerald Kennedy's approach

The sermons of Bishop Kennedy presented a love that nearly excluded wrath. It was also an extreme; but from a theologically liberal standpoint, while Jonathan Edwards was conservative.

1. Fallible Bible. Bishop Kennedy does not have a conservative approach to the Bible. He believes that it is man-made, and, therefore, not divinely inspired and inerrant. And because of that it is not absolutely authoritative. Since the Bible is not an absolute authority he is at liberty to preach and teach what appeals to him. A fallible Bible is the starting point for his extreme emphasis on love.

2. Love without wrath. He did not do away with wrath completely just as Jonathan Edwards did not entirely do away with love. But he made wrath weak, opposed to love, and nearly unnecessary. Though he spoke much about the grace of

God and salvation and the cross, when his sermons are analyzed, it is discovered that he believed man is saved partly by grace partly by his own good works. He did not see man so sinful and helpless that he needs the blood of Christ to atone for his sins. His sermons present God as the Father of everyone regardless of personal salvation. He showed God to be too good to send a man to an eternal hell, and man not bad enough to deserve such a fate.

C. The Approach of T. DeWitt Talmage and Paul S. Rees

The sermons of DeWitt Talmage and Paul Rees present a love and wrath that is properly balanced, and, instead of weakening them by making them opposites, one is used to strengthen the other.

1. The sinfulness of man. They both show man to be very sinful and wicked till he is converted. Bishop Kennedy was more concerned about man's sin against man than about his sin against God; and much of what Jonathan Edwards called sin was not sin at all, for he had man predestined to do what he did, which in reality made God responsible for his sin. Talmage and Rees showed sin to be first and foremost against God. They both revealed outstanding ability to picture the sin of man to be fully worthy of all the punishment God would mete out.

2. The love of God. In the face of the terrible sinfulness of man, black and ugly as it is, they showed a love

that is boundless. They showed a love that should have broken the hardest heart and won the stubbornest will. They pictured God as doing all that was in His divine power to win men by love. He does everything, they pointed out, but take the person by force. They showed His love to include everyone no matter what the degree of sin or station in life. But the love of God to them was not weak. He not only loves all men regardless of their sinfulness, but He also loves righteousness, justice, and holiness and He cannot go contrary to them. Herein was the harmonious secret: God loves all men with a boundless love, but He cannot overlook their sin and allow it to go unforgiven and unpunished for He also loves righteousness, holiness, and justice. They declared that God has a moral order in His universe that must be upheld. His great love found a way. The cross was the answer.

3. The wrath of God. They showed that at the cross of Christ there is seen clearly the sinfulness of man, the love of God, the holiness of God, and the wrath of God. They pictured man as so sinful that something had to be done about his wickedness, but because God is a God of infinite love He used the cross as a means of salvation. They constantly emphasized the love of God and the sinfulness of man in the light of Calvary. They made their listeners to understand that God exercises His wrath only after He has done everything else to win them. They showed the wrath of God to their people as the very last resort. But they also showed it to be absolutely

necessary. They certainly harmonized the wrath and love of God. If a man will not repent and turn from his sins after seeing the cross and the Son of God dying to save him, what else can God do but send such a one to the ordained place of punishment? They showed God's love not waning one bit as He sends a rebellious sinner to hell, but they showed God's heart breaking as the sinner goes to the place, he, himself, has chosen; and that in the face of every opportunity and invitation to go to heaven.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The sermons that have been surveyed in this thesis have convinced this investigator that the doctrines of God's love and wrath are not opposed to each other. Furthermore, he is convinced that they can be preached harmoniously. Divine love cannot be fully appreciated if wrath is overlooked or weakened. Nor can divine wrath be understood correctly if one holds an erroneous view of love. One of the great attributes of God is that known as unity, but unity would only be a name without fact or basis if the two attributes considered in this thesis should be found to contradict each other. Other attributes, such as holiness, would be weakened if one is not theologically correct on these two truths.

The Bible is also in danger of being found in error if it can be proved that these two sides of God's nature are opposed to each other, for it represents them as in perfect

harmony. Bishop Kennedy and the liberals are in error in the first place by a wrong view of the Bible. Not giving it its proper value by making it man-made, or at least less than absolutely inerrant, they must fall back upon their own unaided reasoning ability. And it is not possible for man, unaided by a divine revelation, to correctly understand such profound truths. Jonathan Edwards, on the other hand, believed the Bible is the inspired Word of God and therefore inerrant, but his trouble came from a faulty interpretation. He began with a wrong premise, divine sovereignty of the type that made absolute predestination necessary, and that erroneous beginning led him into a number of grave errors.

It should be observed here, though, that the error of Jonathan Edwards is not nearly as dangerous as that of Bishop Kennedy and the liberals. They are in error on a great many extremely important matters, but Edwards was correct on most theological problems. His theology would cause a few people to turn from God, but, though the preaching of liberals may be a little more appealing, they do not have a redemptive salvation through the blood of Christ. The liberals may interest more people, but they do not have a supernatural solution for their spiritually lost and dead condition.

T. DeWitt Talmage and Paul S. Rees presented the truth in such a convincing manner that men were won to the Lord through His great love, and, coming, were saved and made ready to live the Christian life here and were prepared for heaven

when their earthly race was run. Many preachers could learn valuable lessons from these two great warriors of the cross. They are theologically sound on the love and wrath of God and they present them with both intellectual logic and heart appeal. Though they both preached more on love than on wrath they did not neglect the latter, but put it in its proper setting. It would be valuable to read everything they have written and see how the two doctrines are treated in their over-all preaching ministry. That has been done quite extensively by this writer, but only those sermons that dealt definitely on the subject at hand were used in this thesis.

Preachers should preach much on these two doctrines if they would see more people won to the Lord. God's love can in no way be shown greater than by showing it in the face of great sin and sin cannot be adequately pictured without showing the wrath of God against it. And if some people cannot be won by love, it may become necessary for the preacher to frighten them into a knowledge of their danger by preaching some strong sermons on the wrath of God. This can only be done properly and effectly when it is preached in the context of His infinite love.

Yes, the doctrines which have been studied here are in perfect harmony and are extremely important themes for the preacher's sermonic ministry. They should not be preached in a half-apologetic manner. They may be preached positively and forcefully because they are genuine and solid.

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APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF CONTEMPORARY LIBERALS ON THE
SUBJECTS OF DIVINE LOVE AND WRATH

In a recent anthology entitled Contemporary Religious Thought¹ Thomas S. Kepler, Editor, has presented the views of religious leaders on six major topics of religion. The author claimed to have honestly and fairly endeavored to represent the major trends of religious thinking in these last stirring years. Conspicuous for its absence, however, is any position from an evangelical and conservative point of view. The section on immortality is of interest in this discussion. Doctor Arthur J. Brown, one of the men asked to contribute, presented a letter which he had written to religious leaders who had written books on the subject of immortality. The letter asked a pointed and interesting question on a phase that had been left untouched in the books. His question was: "What, then becomes of the clearly unfit in the future life?"² The replies to the question were given by the Right Reverend Charles Gore, The Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick, Professor James Y. Simpson, Reverend Professor John Bailie, Reverend James H. Snowden, Reverend Frederick C. Spurr, Reverend Professor William Adams Brown, and Professor Emeritus A. Seth Pringle-

1. Thomas S. Kepler, Contemporary Religious Thought (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1941).

² Ibid., p. 350.

Pattison. The answers are illuminating though in the main quite vague. It will be noted that they are all from a definitely liberal position.

Doctor Gore felt confident that "the character of God should give a confidence to everyone that he will deal in justice and love with every human soul he has created."³ But he did believe in some kind of a hell for those who continue to spurn God's love and mercy. His position however, was not very strong, because he did not base it solidly on the Scriptures. In other words, he believed in a hell not necessarily because the Scriptures said there would be one, but because he felt that that was the only answer for the problem.

Doctor Fosdick is outspokenly opposed to the hell that is described in the Bible. He wrote:

As for those who face the test of death utterly unprepared in spirit, the last I see of them is that they go down into an experience whose disaster needs no fanciful hell to make it worse. . . . This, however, does not for a moment involve in my thinking anything that can be remotely symbolized by torture chambers or arbitrary punishments or hopeless suffering.⁴

He went on to say that he almost believed in conditional immortality. He was certain that a soul's existence would end

³ Ibid., p. 352.

⁴ Ibid., p. 353.

if, in the future life, he proved absolutely hopeless. Doctor Simpson did not make statements as strong as those of Fosdick's, but the gist of what he said is summed up in this one quotation from his letter: ". . .I cannot imagine that any soul that looks to him consciously and deliberately in any measure, however vague of trust, can be cut off. . . ."5

Professor Bailie did not think that anyone was fit to enter into heaven in the light of God's perfection. He did believe that if it was at all possible that a person has completely lost the image of God he will pass out of existence. He said:

I am strongly disposed to think those right who insist that if there are any human souls who are so corrupt that the divine image has been completely effaced from them, so that they no longer have so much as the capacity to respond to the divine election and call or to lay hold by faith upon the grace of God, then such souls must pass into nothingness, instead of being (as our forefathers believed) preserved alive to all eternity in an everlasting chamber of horrors. But the question is whether we can believe that there are any souls of which this is true. . . .We must hesitate to say who it is who can deserve to be excluded, if we ourselves are royally accepted.⁶

Doctor Snowden had quite a combination of beliefs on the subject. He leaned toward conditional immortality, broad universalism, and evolution as the answer. He felt that the fact of evolution has strongly strengthened the idea of

⁵ Ibid., p. 354.

⁶ Ibid., p. 356.

immortality for he said:

The continuity of the life in this world with that in the next, due in part to our doctrine of evolution though it is plainly taught in the Bible, is now generally held and emphasized. This throws considerable light on the whole subject and lends itself to conditional immortality as falling in line with the survival of the fittest. I think evolution has strengthened the case for immortality and is our most important modern contribution to the subject.⁷

Doctor Spurr said the Bible was not dogmatic on the subject at hand. He was dogmatic though. He believed that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, but, that evolution is the means by which a person will become fitted for heaven. He declared:

I do believe for all in the evolution of the human soul in the world to come. It is not necessary to postulate a purgatory. It is sufficient to believe that the conditions of progress there are exactly as they are here. The same thing applies to lower grade souls. Whatever kind of soul we took over, we must begin there as we end here. I cannot see that there is anything in the Bible to warrant the dogmatic conclusion that the work of God in the soul ceases at death. Many criminals here are such by virtue of physical infirmity, brain lesion, disease, etc.⁸

Then he went on to speak of those who absolutely refuse Christ. He said he cannot give a full answer, but that there is a hint in evolution, for, just as a flower which does not advance to its proper perfection retrogrades to the form from

⁷ Ibid., p. 356, 357.

⁸ Ibid., p. 357.

which it came so if a man refuses to perfect his personality in Christ he will be obliged to survive in a lower form. And he suggested that in such an instance relative annihilation may be the answer. One thing that he was positive about was that "conscious, vindictive torment is unthinkable."⁹

Professor Brom believed in purgatory, but that without the superstitions of the Roman Catholic Church. He also believed in condition immortality, saying of it:

The real question, however, is concerned with the fate of those who, whether sooner or later, do not realize the Christian ideal. Are we to think of them as forever tormented in a hell of everlasting suffering, or of passing out of existence? For myself, I have no hesitation in accepting the latter alternative.¹⁰

Professor Pattison did not believe that personal immortality is an inherent possession of every human soul. He believed that immortality is for the one who did something to gain it, and that annihilation will be the result for the ones who do not gain it. Said Pattison:

Where life is lived entirely on an animal level, there seems no reason whatever to suppose that life does not come to an end with the death of the body. But where there are any stirrings of higher things, such desires faint and flickering as they may be, seem to justify the admission of the individual to further opportunity when this earthly stage is ended.¹¹

⁹ Loc. cit.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 358.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 360.

These are the results of men who have thrown the Bible overboard as the final authority and have substituted their own opinions. They have chosen to retain the love of God in their thinking, but they have lost sight of the other side of his nature.