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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ENGLISH ATTITUDES TOWARD THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION <i>Herbert Weisinger</i>	167
AUGUSTINE'S USE OF SCRIPTURE <i>Mervin Monroe Deems</i>	188
THEODORUS JACOBUS FRELINGHUYSEN <i>F. J. Schrag</i>	201
BOOK REVIEWS:	317
HUBER, RAPHAEL: <i>A Documented History of the Franciscan Order, 1182-1517</i>	Ray C. Petry

CONTENTS

BLAU, JOSEPH LEON: <i>The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance</i>	William A. Irwin
HILL, CHARLES LEANDER, transl.: <i>The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon</i>	John Joseph Stoudt
SWEET, WILLIAM WARREN: <i>Revivalism in America</i>	Robert Hastings Nichols
RIEGLER, GORDON A.: <i>Socialization of the New England Clergy, 1800-1860</i>	Irving Stoddard Kull
NICHOL, FRANCIS D.: <i>The Midnight Cry</i>	Merrill E. Gaddis
HERSHBERGER, GUY FRANKLIN: <i>War, Peace and Nonresistance</i>	Robert Hastings Nichols
A LIST OF ARTICLES DEALING WITH THE FIELD OF CHURCH HISTORY	
Compiled by James H. Nichols 228	
A LIST OF CHURCH HISTORY BOOKS RECENTLY PUBLISHED 235	

THEODORUS JACOBUS FRELINGHUYSEN THE FATHER OF AMERICAN PIETISM

F. J. SCHRAG
Chicago, Illinois

So distinctive is revivalism of American religion that for "almost two hundred years it is revivalism more than any other phenomenon that has supplied the land-marks in our religious history. . . . It would not be difficult and by no means unsatisfactory to write the history of American Protestantism from the standpoint of its periodic awakenings."¹

From the beginning of the eighteenth century a new period of philosophic speculation, formalism, moral laxity, and religious indifference gripped the European Continent. Yeast soon leavens the whole lump and so these influences were quickly felt among the people in the American colonies, which though predominantly dissenters from the mother country, were, nevertheless, still an integral part of European culture. The same blood was still in their veins and every road was still open toward the home lands. And even though the colonies varied greatly in their religious situations and background, religious decline was common to all. Characteristic of the age was the observation of Increase Mather when he stated, "Clear sound conversions are not frequent. Many of the rising generation are profane drunkards, swearers, licentious and scoffers at the power of Godliness."² Or, as Samuel Blair later analyzed the situation,

A very lamentable ignorance of the main essentials of true practical religion, and the doctrine nextly relating thereto, very generally prevailed. The nature and necessity of the new birth was but little known or thought of. The necessity of a conviction of sin and misery, by the Holy Spirit opening and applying the law to the conscience, in order to a saving closure with Christ was hardly known at all, to the most. There was scarcely any suspicion at all in general, of any danger of depending upon self-righteousness and not upon the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation.³

Rising up against this tide of irreligion and formality on

1 Peter G. Mode, *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity* (New York, 1923), 41.

2 William W. Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America* (New York, 1942), 273.

3 Abraham Messler, *A Pastor's Manual* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1853), 39.

the European Continent and particularly in Germany, was German Pietism. The importance of this emphasis against cold formalism was in its influence not merely on the Lutheran Church in Germany but even more on the revival of the various religious bodies, the members of which swarmed to the American colonies and became participants in the "Great Awakening"—that tidal wave of reforming zeal which gave to American life its landmarks of religious history perhaps more than any other phenomenon.⁴

In relating the extent of the revivals in his *Narrative of Surprising Conversions in New England*, Jonathan Edwards clearly reflects a development which is of tremendous significance.

But this Shower of divine Blessing has been yet more extensive: There was no small Degree of it in some parts of the Jerseys; as I was informed when I was in New-York (in a long Journey I took at that time of the year for my Health) by some people of the Jerseys, whom I saw: Especially the Rev. Mr. William Tennent, a Minister, who seemed to have such things much at heart, told me of a great awakening of many in a Place called the Mountains, under the Ministry of one Mr. Cross; and of a very considerable Revival of Religion in another Place under the Ministry of his Brother the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Tennent; and also in another Place under the ministry of a very pious young Gentleman, whose name as I remember was Freelinghousa.⁵

It is here that Edwards, whether he realized it or not, revealed the framework of the development of revivalism in colonial America. Had he but added to his list of the Tennents and "Freelinghousa," the German groups, he would have completed the list of the leading forces undergirding colonial revivalism.

It has been recently shown that revivalism did not have its beginning in New England, as is usually thought, but that numerous and varied were its beginnings and developments outside the Puritan stronghold. "Colonial Revivalism began in the Middle colonies where German pietism had prepared the way by its emphasis upon inner, personal religion."⁶ Herein rests the first tangible phase of "evangelical quickening" in the American colonies which was part of a world movement.

As already witnessed, Reformed as well as Lutherans of the Palatinate emigrating from Germany to Pennsylvania were

4 Mode, *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity*, 41.

5 Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighboring Towns and Villages of New-Hampshire in New England* (London, 1738), 2.

6 Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America*, 274.

under strong pietistic influences. Even more important in propagandizing pietism were the so-called "sect" groups; the Mennonites, Dunkers, and Moravians. Yet this influence, as already seen, although deep and significant, was somewhat static and inactive. Owing to the language problem and a strong doctrine of "other-worldliness," such influence remained for the most part within the boundaries of their own groups.⁷ It was not until revivalism, which knows no boundaries, took root, that pietism rose to its greatest influence in the new world. And well to the front of this new impulse stands the pietistic Dutch pastor—Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen.

Frelinghuysen was born at Hagen in Westphalia on November 6, 1692.⁸ He was not a Hollander but a German.⁹ He was the son of the Reverend Johannes Henricus Frylinghousen, pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church at Hagen from 1682 to 1728. Following some basic training in his home, Frelinghuysen studied under Professor Gilbertus (in Westphalia) and later under Otto Verbrugge, Professor of Theology and Oriental Languages at Lingen.¹⁰ Of no little significance was the fact that in securing his education he was much affected by the pietistic doctrine taught by Spener at Frankfurt in 1670 and by Francke at Halle.¹¹ He was ordained in his native country by Johannes Brunius, in the year 1717.¹² Besides serving as pastor in his own country near Embden, he also served in East-Friesland for a short time.¹³ More important for reputation's sake, however, was his call to the "subrectorship of the Latin Academy at Enkhuizen." In the minutes of this school (dated September, 1718) we read: "At last (they found) Theodorus Jacobus Vrelinkhuysen, who after being examined by the Curators, was elected

7 Charles H. Maxson, *The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Chicago, 1920), 5.

8 It was earlier believed that he was born at Lingen in East-Friesland. (See *Dictionary of American Biography*, VII; also Messler, *Memorial Sermons and Historical Notes* (New York, 1853, 165). However, records of his baptism point to Westphalia as the more probable place. (See Peter H. B. Frelinghuysen, *Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen*, Princeton, N. J., 1938, 15).

9 "That he began to preach in the Netherlands language, was in consequence of the advice of the Rev. Otto Verbrugge, late Professor of Theology and the Oriental Languages at Lingen (then his esteemed instructor). . ." (See Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*, trans. William Demarest (New York, 1856).

10 *Ibid.*, 15, 153-54.

11 F. H. B. Frelinghuysen, *T. J. Frelinghuysen*, 17.

12 T. J. Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*, 153 f. "I am now about 46 years old, and already in the twentieth year of my ministry, having been ordained to my office A.D. 1717, at East-Friesland. . . ."

13 James J. Bergen, "The 'Rebellion' at Raritan in 1723," *Somerset County Historical Quarterly*, III (July, 1914).

by the town-council and appointed conrector."¹⁴ This assignment, however, was short lived, for soon after the Reverend Mr. Sicco Tjady, "a godly minister" belonging to the Classis of Amsterdam, "interested himself, through the influence of the Reverend Bernardus Freeman, of Long Island, in procuring an evangelical and pious man"¹⁵ to answer the ever-increasing demand for Dutch ministers to the new world.¹⁶ Either Mr. Tjady was a good diplomat or Frelinghuysen saw the opportunity for greater service, for in 1720 (perhaps at the end of 1719 since in 1720 he was already stationed as resident pastor at Raritan)¹⁷ he set sail for America in the King George. After a short stay in New York, where he landed, he settled immediately as pastor of the Dutch Reformed church at Raritan, Somerset County, New Jersey, from whence his call had come. No sooner, however, had he landed in New York than it became apparent that he would face difficulties. He was invited by the local minister, the Reverend Henricus Boel, to preach from his pulpit.¹⁸ Frelinghuysen's omission of the Lord's Prayer at set places in the service at once disturbed the conservative host. It soon became evident that the new pastor had a different conception of religion. This was nowhere more clearly felt than among his own congregations in the Raritan Valley,¹⁹ where he preached his first sermon on January 31, 1720.

14 Quoted by P. H. B. Frelinghuysen, *T. J. Frelinghuysen*, 18.

15 Messler, *Memorial Sermons*, 166.

16 T. J. Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*, 6-7.

"When the call from the churches in New-jersey was received, a pious minister of the Classis of Amsterdam, named Sicco Tjadde, interested himself in procuring an evangelial minister to proceed thither. While inquiries were being made, Mr. Frelinghuysen passed through the town in which Sicco Tjadde resided, on his way to Emden, to assume the rectorship of the academy at that place, to which he had received an invitation, and put up for the night at the house of an elder of the church. When the hour for family worship arrived the young stranger was invited to conduct it. He readily consented, and after reading a chapter in the sacred Scriptures, gave a brief exposition, and concluded with prayer. The elder was so much pleased with his remarks and with his whole spirit and conversation, that in the morning, when he was about to depart on his journey, he exacted a promise from him to make his house his home again, on his return, and then hastening to his pastor, exclaimed: 'I have found a man to go to America.'"

17 *Klagte Von Eenige Leeden der Nederduytse Hervorade Kerk, Woonende op Har-etans, Etc., in de Provincie Van Nieu-Jersey, in Noord-America. Onder de Kroos Van Groot-Brittanye over het Gedray, aldaar en Elders, Van Do. Theodorus Jacobus Frilinghuisin Not syn Kerken-Raaden* (Raaden, 1725; trans. M. G. Hanson, 1876), i-ii. ". . . Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen came over to be our resident pastor in the year 1720. . ."

18 This occurred on January 17, 1720 (see *ibid.*, 51.)

19 Frelinghuysen served four churches in this region—Raritan, Three Mile Run, Six Mile Run, and North-Branch (later changed to Harlingen). These churches were already organized when Frelinghuysen accepted the call, for it is stated

Never before had the people of this valley witnessed such force, earnestness, and passion in the pulpit, His pointed sermons with their emphasis on guilt, faith, sin, holiness, repentance, the necessity of regeneration;²⁰ his introduction of lay preaching²¹ and his general advocacy of inner religion over against a mere outward form were strange indeed to congregations which knew nothing but formality and passionless orthodoxy and regarded ministers as church officials and functionaries and not as evangelists and "soul-savers." He so thoroughly presented regeneration and conversion as a crisis in the believer's experience "that almost none of his hearers dared claim that they had been converted." This is clearly stated by the opposition itself.

We welcomed him with joy and love, in the hope that his service would be for our edification. But alas! to our great sorrow, we, soon, and increasingly found that the result was very different. His denunciations uttered against all of us from the pulpit . . . and on all occasions, to the effect that we were all unconverted . . . were severe and bitter.²²

In his very first sermon Frelinghuysen attacked the general laxity of the congregation. "The outward performance of religious duties," he burst forth, "without a suitable frame of mind, He [the Lord] hates."²³ To ask his members to "lay aside all pride, haughtiness, and ideas of inherent worthiness, and humble themselves deeply before the Lord; and confess and acknowledge themselves to be dust and ashes,"²⁴ was indeed a strong dose for his wealthy members who were so content with their conventional religion. Without doubt most alarming of all was the declaration on the part of the new pastor that only the regen-

that the call had already been waiting two years. It was released by the Raritan congregations on June 5, 1718. (See *Extracts from the Acts of the Classis of Amsterdam, 1632-1739*, New Brunswick, N. J., I).

"The territory embraced in his charge was great for one individual to supervise. It extended from New-Brunswick to the north and south branches of the Raritan River, in length from fifteen to twenty miles, and in breadth from ten to twelve, comprehending nearly the whole of the present county of Somerset, east of the mountain, and at this time (1872) occupied by sixteen congregations of the Reformed Dutch Church. The place of his residence was about three miles west of New Brunswick; and thence he visited and preached at all the different points where his services were required." Messler, *Memorial Sermons*, 163-67.

20 P. H. B. Frelinghuysen, *T. J. Frelinghuysen*, 21.

21 Frelinghuysen "appointed from among the most gifted and experienced of his male members certain individuals whom he called 'helpers,' whose office was to expound the Scriptures in the meetings for prayer and conduct them with order, visit and converse with the anxious . . . and to catechise the youth." (See Messler, *Memorial Sermons*, 27). This practice by many was regarded a bold departure from the traditional church and hence a cause of great discontent.

22 *Klagte Von Eenige*, 1-11.

23 *Ibid.*

24 T. J. Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*, 26 f.

erated should be acceptable communicants. Only "penitent, believing, upright, and converted persons" could be invited to the Lord's Table, said the Dutch Domine. The following is Frelinghuysen's own analysis of his position on this delicate subject.

We also have a sanctuary under the New Testament—the Lord's supper, which has come in place of the Passover, and which, it is explicitly and solemnly declared, that none of the unconverted, who are still in their natural and unclean state, because not sanctified by the Holy Ghost, should approach; for the Lord has pronounced a severe punishment upon all who unworthily approach this sanctuary, and partake of these holy things. He has at the same time enjoined upon the overseers of the church, that they debar strangers and the ungodly, and put them from among them; that the covenant of God may not be profaned, and his wrath stirred up against the whole congregation. . . .

For whom is the Lord's supper instituted? It is not instituted for the dead; for they are already in their place, where they shall remain forever. It must also not be administered to the dying, for they are not in a state to receive it; nor to children, because they are unable to examine themselves, but to living adults; yet not to all who are partakers of corporeal life; since it is instituted only for the regenerated, who are possessed of spiritual food that spiritual men only can partake of, to their invigoration.²⁵

That this was then not observed, Frelinghuysen himself indicates.

Truly, it is manifest that the Lord's supper is now frequently thus desecrated; for not only does one unworthily approach; but how many of these who receive the sacred elements are either ignorant, or ungodly; as drunkards, slanderers, backbiters, profaners of God's name and day, vain and worldly-minded, or merely moral persons who do not possess, but hate true godliness! . . . I have three times (it is now the fourth time) administered the Lord's supper and urged this point, that the unconverted may not approach, and that the wicked must, according to our doctrine, be debarred. But what murmuring has this excited? how many tongues, set on fire of hell, have uttered their slanders? . . . I would ask you, who have been, and perhaps still are so greatly displeased on this account? Is not this the doctrine of the Reformed Church? . . . Why, make yourselves guilty of such slanders and backbitings? Say you that I speak too hard and sharply? must I not speak in accordance with the word of God?²⁶

On one occasion while administering the Lord's Supper (in the church at Six-Mile Run) Frelinghuysen is quoted as saying, "See! See! even the people of the world and the impenitent are coming, that they may eat and drink judgment to themselves."²⁷

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

²⁷ Messler, *Memorial Sermons*, 170.

It is said that many after having left their seats stopped and returned, "not daring to commune." The Domine's general situation here may well be compared with that of Jonathan Edwards, who, in 1748, was rejected by his Northampton congregation for seeking to enforce similar restrictions, limiting communion to actual religious converts. Evidence that a large number from his congregations were not converted Frelinghuysen found in the general laxity of attitude concerning youth.

. . . . Ye who not only with delight reflect upon the wanton extravagances of our youth, but also speak of them with such satisfaction that it is manifest you have never repented of them, recounting what heroes you have been in fighting and drinking, in card playing, in horse racing, in dancing, in acts of licentiousness, and the practice of deception upon unsuspecting females! Oh! were you truly penitent, you would be unable to think of them except with grief, or to speak of them, but with tears Ye aged sinners! that which should grieve, is a source of satisfaction to you²⁸

Important as this might be in the life of a Christian it was still more important that back of every good moral act rests a personal conversion experience. This Frelinghuysen most forcefully expounds in his famous sermon "The Righteous Scarcely Saved."

Nor is the righteous here, one who is in such thorough compliance with the requirement of the law. "Do this and thou shalt live!" Oh! no: for "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," (But they who) have received by faith, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. . . .²⁹ Unless we would directly oppose the word of God, we must acknowledge salvation to be a quite different thing from what is supposed by most men who yet hope to be saved: for they imagine that it is entirely well with them, and that they shall be saved, provided they avoid outward and gross sins; live honest and correct lives; perform the external duties of godliness, and diligently pursue the business of their calling. O wretched men! can that be true godliness, and the narrow way of life? Oh! no: outwardly to forsake sin, pursue virtue, and live correctly, is only in accordance with the practice of the heathen. . . .³⁰ Although God has expressly declared in his word, that something more is necessary to salvation. . . . men notwithstanding form so light an opinion of salvation, and imagine that they shall so easily acquire it. They do not carefully examine whether they be righteous, and are not concerned whether they be in a state of grace, and have an interest in Christ; but satisfy themselves with a bare and unfounded persuasion and place dependent upon the fact that they are baptised; that they have made confession of their faith; that they partake of the Lord's Supper: that they attend the house

²⁸ T. J. Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*, 162.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101 f.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

of God, and read his word³¹—upon these things, I say, they rely. . . . this they regard as certain. But know, O vain man! that thou shalt not thus attain salvation! These things must indeed be done, but are not of themselves sufficient.³²

. . . . But do you ask, are there none then saved, who do not experience such a conflict? No: none other. This conflict is the lot of one, more; of another, less; but there is not one, who has not some experience of it.³³

Herein rested not only the basic cause for the already present controversy both from within and without his parish, but also the basic clue to Frelinghuysen's thought. Here the Domine is a full pietist—even in the Spener manner. As with the German Pietists, although not setting forth a new theology in itself, it was new to his situation. The frontier had developed an individualism which was quite content with morality as the heart and essence of religion. A doctrine emphasizing a change of heart as essential for Christian living in conjunction with a deep sense of one's sin, was extremely foreign to the Domine's situation. For Frelinghuysen, as for Spener, there was no such thing as a Christian or a Christian act without a personal religious experience. Everything that the Domine did was directed toward a conversion experience or "experimental religion."

All gracious persons (says Frelinghuysen) are described by the Spirit of God as renewed ones. They are marked by new light in their understandings, since they are not only instructed in the letter of the word, but have an experimental knowledge of spiritual things, and are as effectually convinced as if they had actually perceived them by their senses: they see him who is invisible . . . they see themselves as the chief of sinners, Jesus as the fairest of the children of men, the whole world as a fleeting show, eternity as near at hand, having respect unto the recompense of reward.³⁴

But even more than that, "they are marked by a new and hearty service, being no longer content with the outward discharge of religious duties, of prayer, the hearing of the word, the reception of the sacraments, but desirous of doing these things in spirit and in truth."³⁵

Finally, these same individuals "are marked by an entirely new mode of life and conversation, since they show their faith by their works, not from the improper motive of being seen by

31 The similarity of this statement to that of Spener's in his main work, *Pia Desideria* (see chap. ii, p. 17) is indeed striking. It appears very much as though it was copied almost word for word, however, we have no direct evidence.

32 T. J. Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*, 114-15.

33 *Ibid.*, 117.

34 *Ibid.*, 255.

35 *Ibid.*, 256.

men, but to glorify God and edify their neighbor.³⁶ Thus "without renewal is no one a Christian; without it can no one entertain the expectation of new heavens."³⁷ In full accordance with and basic to the "notion of pietism," Frelinghuysen, in upholding the above doctrine, regards the civil powers as without authority concerning spiritual matters. Writing to the opposition in their second citation the Domine and his group state: "Know that we are very far from citing you by means of the civil power. We employ the power of the Keys, which is an ecclesiastical power. . . ."³⁸

Or speaking more directly on the subject of church and magistrates, Frelinghuysen declares,

Have then magistrates no power whatever over the church? They have not power in the church, but in relation to the church . . . the supreme, absolute jurisdiction . . . belongs to Jesus only, as Lord and King.³⁹

That such an emphasis would fall heavy on many of his hearers we have already seen. Yet perhaps even more than the doctrine itself, producing the immediate spark for difficulty and controversy were the Domine's methods. Preaching to his congregation on one occasion he declared:

Come hither, ye careless, at ease in sin, yet carnal and earthly minded, ye unchaste whoremongers, adulterers, ye proud, haughty men and women, ye devotees of pleasure, drunkards, gamblers, ye disobedient, ye wicked rejectors of the Gospel, ye hypocrites and dissemblers, how suppose ye it will go with you? The period of grace has concluded. All earthly satisfaction ceaseth. Your agonies and pains as to soul and body have no end, for ye shall be cast into that lake which burns with fire and brimstone, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever, where your worm dieth not and your fire is not quenched. . . .⁴⁰

Be filled with terror, ye impure swine, adulterers and whoremongers, and consider that without true repentance ye shall soon be with the impure devils: for I announce a fire better than that of Sodom and Gomorrah to all that burn in their lusts. . . .⁴¹

Strife and dissent were inevitable as a consequence of such preaching. Frelinghuysen's straightforwardness not only won him many enemies but also set him apart as one who was unorthodox and heretical. That the controversy grew more bitter and the Domine more determined, the latter himself indicates.

36 *Ibid.*,

37 *Ibid.*, 258.

38 *Klagte Von Eenige*, 7.

39 T. J. Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*. 77.

40 *Ibid.*, 311-12.

41 *Ibid.*, 313-14.

As far as I myself am concerned I little care what is said behind my back by ignorant, carnal men, who desire to substitute their own perverted ideas for God's Truth. They are greatly deceived, if they imagine that they will thus put me to silence; for I would sooner die a thousand deaths, than not preach the truth.⁴²

That he did not remain silent, even before this utterance, is shown by the publication of a small volume (1721) containing three sermons illustrating his views. The sermon subjects were as follows: (1) "The Poor and Contrite in God's Temple"; (2) "The Acceptable Communicant"; and, (3) "The Church's Duty to Her Members."⁴³ This work called out his friends as well as the opposition. Bernardus Freeman of Long Island, Guliam Berthulf, the pioneer in New Jersey, Peter Henry Darsius, and especially Jacobus Schureman,⁴⁴ the young minister and teacher who accompanied Frelinghuysen from Holland, now rallied to the Domine's cause. To meet the leaders of the opposition who had sought advice from Boel and accused Frelinghuysen of being unorthodox, they submitted the following declaration:

Accordingly we, at present convened, take notice of the evil report concerning our minister, to the effect that he is a teacher of false doctrine. And although Rev. Henricus Boel, and his brother, the lawyer, have not been appointed as Popes and Bishops over us, yet you correspond and consult with the said gentlemen, because they assert that our minister teaches false doctrine; yet they, in three year's time, have not been able to prove this, and, indeed, never will be able Your course tends only to discord and mutiny in church and civil life Our pastor has shown himself to be an active and earnest antagonist against the lives of many persons. He has exhorted them out of the Word of God and warned them in the name of God, that the wrath of God and eternal damnation are abiding upon them; and that unless they repent, they are bringing everlasting punishment upon themselves.⁴⁵

Such a procedure, however, was far from being satisfactory. An assertion of this nature merely called forth another publication; this time at the hands of the opposition, namely, the already mentioned *Klagte* of 1725. This work was a pamphlet of about 150 pages and represents a complaint to the Classis

⁴² *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁴ Both Frelinghuysen and Schureman were unmarried at the time of their coming to America. They lived together with the Henry Reyniersz family near Three-Mile-Run. Frelinghuysen later married Eva Terhune and Schureman married her sister Antje. The Frelinghuysens had five sons and two daughters. The sons were all ministers and the daughters married ministers. (See P. H. B. Frelinghuysen, *T. J. Frelinghuysen*, 33-34).

⁴⁵ *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, ed. E. T. Corwin (Albany, 1902), III, 2201-02.

of Amsterdam against Frelinghuysen.⁴⁶ It is of great importance, for in it we not only have further evidence of the nature of the controversy and hence of the Domine's thought, method, and technique—but also verification for our thesis. Of the many charges listed⁴⁷ in this Complaint, three may be briefly stated as constituting the heart of the whole difficulty: namely, (1) that Frelinghuysen would not admit to the Lord's Table those who could not give a satisfactory account of their Christian experience: (2) that he "insisted strenuously on a change of heart"; and; (3) that he preached doctrines contrary to the standards of the church.⁴⁸ The latter charge also included a complaint on the practice of excommunication. That these accusations were basic to all others is shown by the Complaint's many references to a new and "strange doctrine"—namely, that of a pietist.⁴⁹ Speaking of this tendency the dissatisfied state:

That it might appear to you that these summoners, whatever are their pretenses, really are outside of, yes, contrary to, the Reformed Church—followers of John Labadie. . . . Cornelius Tennesen, who with former pastors, abhorred the Cain doctrine of despair, and the Labadistical opinion concerning regeneration. . . .⁵⁰

And again on another occasion they declare:

They who designate us as a seceded congregation because of our fidelity, themselves together with their minister acknowledge, and, by their three citations over their own signatures declare themselves ready to be the Seceded congregation, straying from the pure doctrine and discipline, not wholly unlike those of Labadie, Koelman, and other Schismatics.⁵¹

Perhaps an even clearer indication that Frelinghuysen's pietistic tendencies were basic to the controversy, is a statement by the opposition concerning the effect of the Domine's preaching as well as his procedure.

Rev. Morgan⁵² observes that, under the ministrations of another, (namely Freylinghuysen) many of his congregation became entirely different people. These then remove and join themselves to a society which he [Mor-

46 A copy of the original Dutch manuscript is to be found in the Sage Library, New Brunswick Seminary, New Brunswick.

47 In all, there were seventeen charges directed against Frelinghuysen (*Ecclesiastical Records*, VI, 2352-55. See appendix for list of such charges and nature of Complaint, 165-66.

48 Henry P. Thompson, *History of the Reformed Church at Readington, New Jersey* (1719-1881), (New York, 1882), 11.

49 *Ecclesiastical Records*, IV, 2426.

50 *Klagte Von Eenige*, xi.

51 *Ibid.*, 29.

52 Joseph Morgan was a Presbyterian minister "but had the peculiar responsibility of serving both the Dutch and Scotch settlers of Monmouth County," in New Jersey.

gan] calls a sect and are close to Quakers and Anabaptists. . . .⁵³ Is it seeking to win souls to hold secret assemblies and conventicles, to which other anxious souls are not admitted, and at which a stranger, who does not belong to his cabal is silenced?⁵⁴

The similarity between these meetings and the pietists' *Collegia Pietatis* is again striking. Popularized by Spener, private conventicles were instituted to promote piety, study, and the diffusion of experimental religion. Like the *Collegia Pietatis* in Germany which tended to break down class distinction, the revival methods begun under Frelinghuysen also tended to disrupt exclusiveness. August Herman Francke's "attack on the 'lukewarmness and deadness of the clergy' as the cause of general religious apathy might well be compared with the vehemence of Schureman, Frelinghuysen, or Gilbert Tennent."⁵⁵

In view of such a far-reaching controversy it was but natural that the Classis of Amsterdam would write to the accused minister.⁵⁶ In reply to the question why he was so severe in his procedure, Frelinghuysen declared that Freeman and others had consented to such a course and that he considered excommunication to be a privilege of the Consistory and not dependent on a decision by the Classis.⁵⁷ The Classis did not take issue with Frelinghuysen but merely tried to caution him in his procedure. Writing to him again in June, 1728, they state:

We have already referred to the harsh expressions which you have used in your reply. . . . Also in your manner of exercising discipline, even excommunication, on certain guilty persons, did you act as prudently as is becoming to a minister, in such an important matter? Were there such errors in doctrine or life in those you dealt with, that they deserved excommunication? And even if this were the case, would it not have

⁵³ *Klagte Von Eenige*, 32-35.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁵ P. H. B. Frelinghuysen, *T. J. Frelinghuysen*, 57.

⁵⁶ The following is part of the letter written to Frelinghuysen by the Classis in June 1726:

"Reverend, Godly, and Highly Learned Sir, and Beloved Brother:

Some time ago there was placed in our hands the little book which accompanies this letter, styled "Complaint of Certain Members of the Dutch Reformed Church living at Raritan," etc., respecting the action of yourself and Consistory towards these Complainants, who are the authors and senders of the same. This complaint was laid on our table with the desire that we should give judgment upon it, and if possible, redress and prevent all irregularities which might be found to have happened on either side.

We have had this writing examined by our Committee. It is very prolix and contains many things worthy of no attention; nevertheless it contains evidences of great divisions and estrangements in your churches, whose glory should be Love and Peace. . . (See *Ecclesiastical Records*, IV, 2381 f.)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 2417.

been safer not to take such an important step without first consulting the Classis?⁵⁸

It can hardly be admitted that the Domine's dictatorial policy was the best procedure. Nor must he necessarily be defended in this.⁵⁹ The situation in which he found himself was extreme and perhaps called for a more tactful approach. Yet the fact remains that even though many from his congregations allied themselves with Boel and other New York clergymen who regarded him as heretical and smacking of pietism and Quakerism, in the end Frelinghuysen won out; even to the extent of winning many of the opposing leaders. Most convincing here are the Domine's own words.

Although our adversaries shut our churches, so that we were compelled to preach in barns, as was the case Anno 1725, showing by what spirit they were actuated; Yet, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Notwithstanding our opponents wrote a book against us, which appeared Anno 1725, full of lies, and false accusations, (as has been shown in their replies by two reverend brethren), the Lord has so ordered it that it has resulted in the furtherance of the truth.

... Although we had opposed to us not only uneducated wealthy country people, but also learned and acute divines (principally Dutch) we were yet not compelled to keep silence; for we had a good cause, a good conscience, and the Mighty One of Jacob on our side.

Although many complaints were preferred against us to the Rev. Classis of Amsterdam, so remarkably did the Lord aid us in our defence, that we were pronounced orthodox, and the disaffected were exhorted to peace, and a return to the bosom of the Church.⁶⁰

Not only, however, did Frelinghuysen stop the months of the opposition but his congregations in general began to thrive. "Revivals and 'ingatherings' followed in his wake; his labors were commended by George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and Jonathan Edwards."⁶¹ He trained several men for the ministry, advocated the establishment of a college and theological seminary and urged the Dutch churches to govern themselves instead of deferring to the Classis of Amsterdam.⁶² He greatly exerted his

58 *Ibid.*

59 Frelinghuysen himself admits that he had erred. (See *Ecclesiastical Records*, IV, 2459.) "That which the Classis demands of me, as the way toward peace, is this: that I should freely confess, that in several instances, things might have been said or done somewhat differently. . . To all this, I yield, out of love of peace, and from respect for the Classis. . ."

60 T. J. Frelinghuysen, *Sermons*, 353-54.

61 "Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen," *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Johnson and Malone, VII, 17-18.

62 Frelinghuysen "probably is the person who is responsible for the first suggestion of the establishment of a college in America for the education of Dutch youths. The college came into existence in 1766 (Queens college), changed in

influence by publishing several of his sermons for instruction as well as defence. Such methods enabled Frelinghuysen to reach beyond his own immediate congregations. The new revival was spreading from the Raritan Valley to other parts. This was even indicted by his enemies, when they declared,

Why did he not remain among the congregations to which he had been sent and over which he had been installed as pastor, and first of all seek to restore souls . . . why, then, did he so often, on Sundays, withhold from his own congregations their spiritual food, allowing himself frequently to be found in other places, and preaching there.⁶³

In sticking to his pietistic principles in face of all controversy and opposition, Frelinghuysen became a pioneer revivalist, whose significance, as already mentioned, was recognized by such leaders as the Tennents, Edwards, and Whitefield. It is in them, both in their testimonies and work, that we find the full fruition of Frelinghuysen as a basic factor in colonial revivalism. His most immediate significance, aside from the Dutch revival, lies in the influence exerted on the third phase of colonial revivalism⁶⁴—the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, particularly the graduates of William Tennent's "Log College."

Gilbert Tennent, the oldest son of William Tennent, Senior, who was to become the great figure in this next phase of revivalism, was called to the Presbyterian church at New Brunswick while Frelinghuysen's revival was perhaps at its peak. Precise information as to the earliest companionship between Tennent and Frelinghuysen is scarce, yet available extracts sufficiently indicate "how directly Frelinghuysen's interest in pietism was reflected in the Puritanism of young Gilbert Tennent."⁶⁵ The *Domine's* critics and a letter written by young Tennent himself provide more than sufficient evidence in this direction. The former writing to the Classis in 1726 (the year Tennent came to the Presbyterian Church in New Brunswick)⁶⁶ state:

In reply to your request for further information as to how matters stand

1825 to Rutgers college. . . He was an early advocate for the establishment of an ecclesiastical judicatory in this country, with more enlarged powers than hath hitherto been granted by the Church in Holland." (See Edward T. Corwin (ed.), *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1922*, 5th ed., New York, 1859, 335 f.)

63 *Klagte Von Eenige*, 101-02.

64 Maxson, *The Great Awakening*, 18 f.

65 P. H. B. Frelinghuysen, *T. J. Frelinghuysen*, 46. (See also Maxson, *The Great Awakening*, 27).

66 MSS., "Extracts from the Church Records—Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia" (Presbyterian Historical Society); see also *Minutes of Synod of Philadelphia, 1726*, 83 f.

with the English Dissenter (Gilbert Tennent) we reply: That this information appears from our previous letter to you, viz., that he preaches (in our churches) in the English language; and such information further appears from the paper inclosed. This says that he is an English Dissenter, and also indicates fully his collusion [zamenpan] with Rev. Frelinghuysen and his Consistory. . . . During these conjoint services of him and Frelinghuysen, he administers the Covenant Seals, mingling the English and Dutch languages with such other in the worship. Rev. Frelinghuysen preaches and Tennent prays and baptizes; and then together they administer the Holy Supper. . . .⁶⁷

In the light of so close a companionship Frelinghuysen's influence on the youthful Tennent is easily understood. Writing to Thomas Prince of Boston in 1744, Tennent describes such an influence on both himself and surrounding communities.

The labors of the Reverend Mr. Frelinghuysen, a Dutch minister, were much bless'd to the People of New Brunswick and places adjacent, especially about the Time of his coming among them, which was about twenty-four years ago.

When I came there, which was about seven years after, I had the pleasure of seeing much of the fruits of his Ministry; divers of his Hearers with whom I had the Opportunity of conversing, appeared to be converted Persons, by their Soundness in Principle, Christian Experience, and Pious Practice; and these Persons declared that the Ministrations of the afore-said Gentleman were the Means thereof. This, together with a kind letter which he sent me respecting the Necessity of dividing the word aright, and giving to every man his Portion in due season, thro' the divine Blessing, excited me to greater Earnestness in ministerial Labors.⁶⁸

William Tennent, Jr., a younger brother of Gilbert, whose work as a revivalist is highly praised by Jonathan Edwards,⁶⁹ also reveals the tremendous influence of Frelinghuysen's work. Writing about conditions in the early years of the great Reformer's ministry, he states:

Family Prayer was unpractis'd by all, a very few excepted; ignorance so overshadowed their Minds, that the Doctrine of the new Birth when clearly explained, and powerfully press'd upon them, as absolutely necessary to Salvation (by that faithful Preacher of God's Word, Mr. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghouse, a Low Dutch Minister . . .) was made a common Game of; so that not only the Preachers but Professors of that truth were called in Derision New-Born, and look'd upon as holders forth of some new and false Doctrine. And indeed their Practice was as bad as their Principles, viz., loose and profane.⁷⁰

Of still wider significance is the acknowledgment of the

⁶⁷ *Ecclesiastical Records*, IV, 2587.

⁶⁸ Thomas Prince, *The Christian History* (Boston, 1745), 13-18.

⁶⁹ Edwards, *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, 24.

⁷⁰ Prince, *The Christian History*, 299.

great Whitefield, who wrote from New Brunswick in November, 1739:

Among others who came to hear the Word, were several ministers whom the Lord had been pleased to honour, in making them instruments of bringing many souls to glory. One was a Dutch minister, named Freeling Housa, pastor of a congregation about four miles off New Brunswick; he is a worthy soldier of Jesus Christ, and was the beginner of the great work which I trust the Lord is carrying on in these parts.—He has been strongly opposed by some persons, but God has always appeared for him in a surprising manner, and made him more than conqueror through his Love. . . He has long since learnt to fear him only who can destroy both body and soul in hell.⁷¹

Frelinghuysen could have found no better place to spread his seed of revivalism than on Tennent soil. Gilbert Tennent became known on both sides of the ocean "as the foremost Presbyterian promoter of the Great Awakening."⁷²

71 Whitefield's Journal, November, 1739, quoted by P. H. B. Frelinghuysen, *T. J. Frelinghuysen*, 62.

72 Maxson, *The Great Awakening*, 16.