

ANNALS

OF THE

AMERICAN PULPIT;

OR

COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES

OF

DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN

OF

VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS

FROM THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE.

WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS.

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VOLUME IX.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
530 BROADWAY.
1869.

THEODORUS JACOBUS FRELINGHUYSEN.

1720—1745-51.

FROM THE REV. ABRAHAM MESSLER, D.D.

SOMERVILLE, N. J., January 15, 1848.

My dear Sir: It will afford me pleasure to contribute all in my power to enable you to communicate to the Church, through your forthcoming work, some account of the character and ministry of the venerable and excellent THEODORUS JACOBUS FRELINGHUYSEN. I shall, however, be able to furnish only an imperfect notice, consisting chiefly of a few statistics and anecdotes gleaned from tradition and the scanty records which still remain in the church to which he ministered.

THEODORUS JACOBUS FRELINGHUYSEN was born at Lingen, in East Friesland (now the North-west part of the Kingdom of Hanover), about the year 1691. He was a son of Johannes Henricus Frelinghuysen, Pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church in that place, and a brother of Matthias David Frelinghuysen, who settled in Horigen, Holland. He seems to have received his education chiefly in his native place, under the instruction of the Rev. Otto Verbrugge, who afterwards became a Professor at Groningen. He was ordained to the pastoral office at Embden, in his native country, by Johannes Brunius, in the year 1717.

He came from Holland to America, in the ship *King George*, Capt. Goelet, in 1720, or perhaps the end of 1719, as he preached in New York, January 17, 1720, and settled immediately as the Pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church at Raritan, Somerset County, N. J. A call from this church had been sent, some two years previous, to the Classis of Amsterdam, for their approval; which, according to the usages of their churches in this country, they were expected to fill up with the name of a suitable person, and, after ordaining him, send him out to fulfill its duties. In this way all vacancies were supplied, and a Christian ministry furnished to the congregations which had been collected in their Colonies here. The Rev. Mr. Seccoschaudy*, a godly minister, belonging to that Classis, it is said, interested himself in procuring an evangelical and pious man to fill this station. While the call from Raritan was waiting, and enquiries were being made for some one willing to accept it, young Frelinghuysen passed through Holland from East Friesland, on his way to Embden, having been invited to the Rectorship of that city. He put up for the night at the house of one of the Elders of the church of which Seccoschaudy was Pastor. The evening was spent in religious conversation, and, when the time for family worship arrived, the young stranger was invited to conduct it. He readily consented, and, after reading a chapter of the Word of God, gave a short and familiar exposition of its prominent truths, and concluded with prayer. The Elder was much gratified with his remarks and the fervour of his prayer, as well as with his previous conversation, and so entirely convinced of his piety and spiritual-mindedness that, in the morning, when he was about to proceed on his journey, he exacted from him a promise, on his return, to call upon him again; and then, hastening immediately to his Pastor, exclaimed,—“I have found out the man to accept the call from

* This name is sometimes spelled *Sicca jadde*.

America." Frelinghuysen, after visiting Embden, returned, according to his promise, to the house of the Elder, was introduced to Seccoschaudy, consulted in reference to the call, and agreed to accept it. The circumstances appeared providential, and, it is said, were always regarded by himself as having been a Divine intimation, pointing out to him the path of duty. He felt as if, when leaving the land of his birth, and the house of his fathers, he was like the Patriarch following the direction of the Almighty.

When he arrived, and entered upon the duties of his ministry, he found immediately a wide field of usefulness opening before him. The Church at Raritan had been organized since 1696, but was still feeble and scattered. It had enjoyed, previously to this time, only occasional preaching,—perhaps not oftener than four or five times a year. In such a condition piety could not be expected to flourish, nor the Gospel to produce much fruit; and the state of things which Mr. Frelinghuysen found existing on his arrival did not prove the contrary. The form of religion was retained, but there were only a very few in the church who manifested any degree of its power.

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, in length from fifteen to twenty miles, and in breadth from ten to twelve, comprehending nearly the whole of the present county of Somerset, and at this time occupied by thirteen 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. Near his residence was a small church, known at that time as the Church at Three-Mile-Run, since removed to New Brunswick, and now divided into two separate charges. The other points where places for public worship had been provided, besides Raritan, were Six-Mile-Run, Milstone and North Branch,—in all, five churches. But his heart was not appalled by the extent and weight of his responsibilities, nor his zeal abated by the difficulties and discouragements which it encountered. For twenty-seven years he laboured in this extensive field, with unwearied diligence and most remarkable success. The wilderness was converted into a fruitful field, flourishing like the garden of the Lord, and multitudes rejoiced in the hope of salvation. Here Whitefield found him in 1739, and made the following record in his journal:—

"At New Brunswick some thousands gathered from various parts, among whom there had been a considerable awakening, by the instrumentality of Mr. Frelinghuysen, a Dutch minister, and the Messrs. Tennent, Blair and Rowland." Jonathan Edwards refers to this work in his Narrative of the Revival of Religion in New England, in 1740, in the following words:—"And, also, at another place, under the ministry of a very pious young gentleman, a Reformed Dutch Minister, whose name, as I remember, was Frelinghuysen." Gilbert Tennent, also, in 1744, writing to the Rev. Mr. Prince, of Boston, thus notices the same revival of religion as the effect of his zeal:—"The labours of the Rev. Mr. Frelinghuysen, a Dutch Calvinistic Minister, were much blessed 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 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 this aforesaid 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, through the Divine blessing, excited me to greater earnestness in ministerial labours."—[See Prince's Christian History.]

These are the only records remaining of a most extensive and powerful revival of religion, the history of which has never been written, and now cannot be, for the materials have nearly all perished. In attempting, at this late day, to do the subject any justice, we necessarily depend almost wholly upon tradition. This agrees in representing the work to have been general, powerful and evangelical, resulting in the saving conversion of many precious souls to Christ. It characterizes the piety of those who experienced its power as being warm, practical and self-denying. Among its subjects the young were the most numerous; and, through a long life, they continued to manifest the genuineness of the change wrought in all their views and affections, being eminent as examples of faith, of piety and of prayer. What Tennent saw and admired in those with whom he conversed, was, to a greater or less extent, common to all. No one who had known in himself the power of the grace of God, could fail to recognize in them "the image of the Heavenly," or refuse to acknowledge the agency of the Holy Spirit, by which they had been sanctified. Years have rolled away, and the last of them has long since been translated to the immortal world; but neither the sense of the value of their influence, nor the conviction of the depth and reality of their piety, has ceased to be felt in this community.

After many researches in every place where there was any prospect of obtaining information as to the precise number who embraced religion, as the fruits of this gracious work, I have been obliged to abandon the hope of succeeding. No documents remain, throwing any light upon the subject, except at Raritan, and those are very brief and imperfect. The greatest number received at any one Communion, on confession of faith, was seven: the aggregate forty-four. This was certainly greater than the whole number of families included in the congregation at that time. If we suppose the work to have been equally extensive in the others, (and there is nothing to forbid it,) the aggregate would amount to two hundred and twenty. This is probably too large; yet all the traditionary recollections show the influence to have been general. No one points to a particular place as having been more specially favoured than the others, and thus the above conclusion is left unimpaired.

The most prominent peculiarity of the preaching of Mr. Frelinghuysen, which, in his day, and among those who were capable of understanding the Dutch language, was a subject of extensive remark, and finally of protracted controversy, consisted in those clear and discriminating views of the nature and necessity of the religion of the heart, which it conveyed in pointed language, and almost conversational familiarity. A very cursory reading of his printed discourses will show an unusual frequency of the use of interrogation, succeeded immediately by a pointed, pithy answer. In this way he seems to have taxed the attention of his hearers to the utmost, and rendered his whole discourse almost like a personal conversation between himself and each one individually.

The doctrines of regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, are nowhere more strikingly illustrated, or more earnestly advocated. He had evidently, in his own heart, a deep experience of their power. From an allusion to his religious expe-

rience, found in the preface to one of his volumes, it would seem as if he had, like Bunyan, been brought through deep waters and dark temptations before he embraced the hope of life through Christ—"I am a man," says he, "who has seen trouble."

He insisted firmly and earnestly on the necessity of regeneration to a profitable participation of the Lord's Supper. On one occasion, it is said, that, when administering the Communion in the church at Six-Mile-Run, he cried out, as he saw the communicants approaching the table,—“See! See! Even the people of the world and the impenitent are coming that they may eat and drink damnation to themselves.” Several individuals, feeling themselves pointed at, paused, after having left their seats, and returned, not daring to commune. In every instance, before acknowledging any one to be a Christian, he required a consistent account of his religious experience. In his view, conviction of sin and a sense of guilt always preceded faith and comfort in Christ. He may, in some instances, have erred in adhering too tenaciously to theory; for it was one of the charges of his opposers, that, in visiting the sick and dying, he always began by preaching the terrors of the law, and sometimes left them even without a word of comfort, though he could not know that he would ever see them again, and in some cases did not.

Now all this was in striking contrast to what the people had been accustomed to. Evangelical sentiments were, by no means, common, even among the Ministry of the Church, in that day. They had retained the doctrines of the Reformation, but the power and spirituality of that great religious movement,—that most copious effusion of the Holy Ghost, had, in a great measure, ceased to exist. All were not in such a lifeless state indeed, but many were; and the course of Mr. Frelinghuysen was spoken against in high places—he was called an enthusiast, because he insisted upon the necessity of a change of heart. But he heeded not the clamour. Pursuing a uniform and energetic course, and waxing stronger and stronger, as he gathered around him those in whose conversion he had been instrumental, and securing the confidence of that part of the Ministry of the Church who were men of spiritual-mindedness, he prepared the way for a great triumph of his principles.

In a word, the most extensive inquiry into the character of the Revival under his ministry, which has yet been made, has uniformly resulted in a conviction of its purity, the deeply experimental character of the work, and the Scriptural piety which it produced. My own convictions in this respect harmonize with those of all the others with whom I have conversed. It is believed that, even at this day, we are enjoying some of the fruits of that blessed work, in the attention to Gospel ordinances, and the general diffusion of piety, which characterize the churches now existing in the sphere of its influence.

The change effected was a great one. The whole spiritual life of the Church was involved in it. It went to uproot ancient customs; it attacked cherished hopes and convictions; made those last who had been first; and shewed the confident and secure that, while “having a name to live,” they were “dead in trespasses and sins.” It required all his energy to meet the crisis; all his love of truth to prevent him from sacrificing it for the sake of avoiding difficulties. But he never paused for a moment. He had known the love of God—how could he refrain from recommending its peace to his dying fellow-men? He

knew that the blood of Christ alone cleanses from sin—how could he fail to direct the inquirer to the life-giving fountain?

In a charge so extensive, and under circumstances requiring so much labour and attention to the spiritual interests of individuals, Mr. Frelinghuysen found himself straitened beyond measure. The expedient which he adopted, as a relief, was as novel as it proved judicious and successful. At the present day it would be regarded as a *very new measure*. He could not depend upon or secure the assistance of his brethren in the ministry, for there were none nearer than Hackensack and New York—perhaps he had confidence in only a few of them. But the anxious could not be left without instruction and prayer—he therefore appointed two of the most intelligent and pious men in each of his congregations, termed “*Helpers*,” who, in his absence, conducted the meetings for prayer, conversed with the inquirers, and instructed the young by catechetical exercises. The effect of the expedient was happy at the time. The selection seems to have been eminently judicious; for the individuals chosen continued to be regarded and to act as leaders in the religious services, and guides to the people, as long as they lived. They were viewed as a kind of under-shepherds, and several of them are yet spoken of as having been particularly eminent in their piety, gifted in prayer, and happy in the influence which they exerted. It has been noticed, too, in more than one instance, that very special blessings seemed to rest upon their descendants, as if their piety had come down to them as an inheritance from their ancestors.

But it must not be supposed that such a course did not incur censure; or that a ministry so efficient and discriminating in holding up to view the difference between formalism and true piety,—the religion of the heart as distinguished from that which is satisfied with a fruitless faith, could be exercised without opposition. Some of those who had been most prominent as the friends of the Church, felt themselves condemned by many of the doctrines which Mr. Frelinghuysen preached. His views of regeneration, and especially his insisting so earnestly upon evidence of a new heart as a preparation for the Communion of the Lord’s Supper, was at once resisted. “How can he know whether the heart is changed?” said they—“he sets himself up to be a judge of men’s hearts”—and, on such evidence, the whole was condemned and treated with ridicule, as visionary and enthusiastic. Several of his sermons were specified, and particular passages and expressions seriously censured. This led him, as early as 1721, to publish a small volume containing these very discourses, in order to show what doctrines he preached, and against what sentiments his opponents objected. The subject of the first is the Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit—Isai. lxvi, 2; of the second, the Lord’s Supper—1 Cor. xi, 29; of the third, Christian Discipline or the Power of the Keys—Matthew xvi, 19.

That I have formed a correct judgment in reference to the cause of the opposition to the ministry of Mr. Frelinghuysen, and that I am not unjust in attributing it to the doctrines which he preached, and especially to the fact that he insisted so strongly upon the necessity of spiritual influence,—a change of heart,—and held up prominently the difference between vital godliness and a mere belief of doctrines without practice, will be abundantly evident from the very vindication itself which his opponents thought it necessary for them to prepare and publish. It is contained in a pamphlet of one hundred and forty-six pages, (the title is lost so that I cannot give it,) and is an able and most ingenious defence of its

own principles; but only on that account more clearly justifying, to an enlightened Christian understanding, the whole course of Mr. Frelinghuysen, and proving the evangelical nature of his principles. This pamphlet Mr. F. answered, fully vindicating his whole course, and explaining and proving his doctrines to be those of the Reformation, and especially of the Church of the Netherlands. Thus it seems that the same spirit which drove Jonathan Edwards from Northampton, also blustered and became angry along the Raritan, when it was pressed by the Gospel; but here it was completely conquered and driven from the field! His language, in reference to the subject, in one of his sermons, is—

“ I may not here speak of what I suffer personally; so I have made no inquiry of what the opposition of natural men has led them to say behind my back, who speak not according to the truth of God's Word, but according to their own crooked conceptions. They deceive themselves greatly in attempting, in this way, to silence me; for I would rather suffer a thousand deaths than not preach the truth.”

As a specimen of the way in which, at other times, he saw fit to meet the obloquy of his enemies, I may mention that he had painted on the back of his sleigh the following doggerel:—

“ Niemands tong; nog niemands pen,
Maakt my anders dan ik ben.
Spreek quaad-spreekers: spreek vonder end,
Niemand en word van u geschend.”

“ No one's tongue, nor no one's pen,
Makes me other than I am.
Speak, evil-speakers, speak without end,
No one heeds a word you say.”

But perhaps you will think that, in all this, there was a spice of human nature. Be it so. I do not suppose the good man to have been faultless, or incapable of provocation—I paint no perfect character.

In process of time, what at first was mere dissatisfaction with the doctrines of Mr. Frelinghuysen, became organized and powerful opposition, and embraced some of the most wealthy and respectable families in his charge. It was no doubt formed by several clergymen of eminence in the Dutch connection; and, professing great attachment to the ancient forms and customs of the Fatherland, soon allied itself close with all those who cherished such feelings, until, finally, it resolved itself into the question of *Coetus* and *Conferentie*, and only died out after the Revolution, when the churches here broke off all connection with the *Classis* of Amsterdam, adopted a Constitution of their own, and began to move forward in the very course which Mr. Frelinghuysen had pointed out.

The publications of which I have spoken are all in the Dutch language. Copies of them exist in the Collections of the Historical Society in New York. The Sermons are of a high order of excellence. Direct, pungent, practical, they aim at the heart, and seem effectually to have reached it. It is questionable whether they are surpassed, in this peculiar characteristic, by any of their day. In my judgment at least, they have not been superseded, or rendered useless, by any thing which has since come forth from the press.

As a Scholar, Mr. Frelinghuysen was more than respectable, if not absolutely eminent. The fact of his having been called in his youth to such a place as the Rectorship of the Academy of Embden is sufficient proof of this. But we have that which is more direct—a small volume containing the Heidelberg Catechism in Latin, with blank leaves intervening, for the purpose of notes and observations, exists,

in which the preparations to preach on the different Lord's Days are made in that language, manifesting as great a familiarity with it as if it had been his vernacular, and constantly, habitually, quoting also the Greek, and writing it in characters quite caligraphic. Besides these evidences of scholarship, there are so many classic allusions found in all his discourses as to prove conclusively his familiarity with classic literature. I conclude, therefore, that he was unquestionably a ripe scholar in both the Latin and Greek Languages.

I am disposed to rank Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen among the eminent men of his age;—a compeer with Blair, the Tennents, Stoddard and the Mathers. I think it questionable whether any one exerted a wider influence, or benefitted the cause of practical religion more largely. Living for fifteen years amid the very scenes where it was felt, ministering in the very church, the infancy of which he fostered, and having had every opportunity to observe the deep reverence with which his memory is even yet cherished, I may speak earnestly, but not too partially. He was a great and good man. The cause of practical religion owes him much.

The exact date of Mr. Frelinghuysen's death is not known, though it was somewhere between the year 1745 and 1751. His age was probably less than sixty. His remains were interred in the grave yard at Three-Mile-Run, a short distance from his residence; but there is no stone to mark the spot occupied by his honoured dust.

He was eminently blessed in his family. He was married to a daughter of Albert Terhune, of Flatbush, Long Island, a farmer of respectability, and of wealth considering the state of the country at that time. Whether she survived him, or when and where she died, is not known. All his children were Levites. His five sons devoted themselves to the ministry, and his two daughters united themselves with ministers. *Theodorus*, his eldest son, was settled as Pastor of the Dutch Church in Albany about 1745. He is said to have been a gifted man, and a highly acceptable Preacher and Pastor. After labouring about fifteen years, he went to Holland to solicit funds for a Literary and Theological Seminary, and died there. His second son, *Johannes*, succeeded his father at Raritan in 1750, but died on the 14th of September, 1754, in the twenty-eighth year of his age. His death took place on Long Island, where he had gone for the benefit of his health. His sons, *Ferdinandus* and *Jacobus*, the former, Pastor elect of Marbletown, the latter, of Kinderhook, both died at sea, on their return voyage from Holland, in 1754. *Henricus* was settled at Rochester, Ulster County, N. Y., in 1756, and died the next year. His daughter *Anna* was married to the Rev. William Jackson, minister of the Reformed Dutch Church in Bergen, and his daughter *Margaret*, to the Rev. Thomas Romeyn, first settled at Oyster Bay and Jamaica, L. I. None of his sons, with the exception of *John*, at Raritan, left issue. His son *Frederick* served in the War of the Revolution, as a Colonel of Militia, and was commended for his conduct at the battle of Monmouth, in the official report of Gen. Washington to Congress. He was afterwards chosen to represent his native State in the Congress of 1784, and, finally, after the adoption of the Federal Constitution, sat in the Senate of the United States.

This attempt to do some measure of justice to the memory of a man to whom the Church of Jesus Christ owes a debt of gratitude, is now submitted to your discretion. If it shall meet your purpose, and do any good, however

small, I shall be sufficiently rewarded. Hoping that your laudable enterprise may prove eminently successful,

I remain yours sincerely,

ABRAHAM MESSLER.

[In 1856, the Sermons of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, translated from the Dutch, were published, together with a sketch of the author's life,]

JOHN HENRY GOETSCHUIS.

1741 *—1774.

FROM THE REV. JACOB SCHOONMAKER, D.D.

My dear Sir: It gives me pleasure to furnish, for insertion in your work, commemorative of distinguished American clergymen, a sketch of the Rev. John Henry Goetschius, who, I believe, has, by universal consent, a place among the lights of his denomination. The material for his biography is by no means abundant; but, as he was my maternal grandfather, it is probable that nearly all the authentic information now extant, concerning him, is in my possession.

JOHN HENRY GOETSCHUIS was born in the city of Zurich, in Switzerland, in the year 1714. Having received his literary education at the University in his native place, he migrated in early life to Philadelphia, with his father, whose name he bore, who was called and settled as the Pastor of the First German Reformed Church in that city. Here he prosecuted the study of Theology under the direction of the Rev. Mr. Dorsius, another minister of the German Reformed Church; and, after being licensed and ordained in that Church, preached for some time, to great acceptance, in the Reformed Dutch Church in Neshaminy, Pa. Thence he removed, in the year 1741, to Jamaica, Long Island, having accepted a call from the United Reformed Dutch Churches in Newtown, Jamaica, Success and Oyster Bay, of which he was the first settled Pastor. In consequence of his increasing popularity as a commanding pulpit orator, and of his extensive literary and theological acquirements, accompanied with an earnest piety and an untiring zeal, he was soon chosen as a Lecturer and Teacher of Theology in the Reformed Dutch Church; and no inconsiderable portion of the young men who entered the ministry at that day were under his theological instruction.

About this time commenced the great schism in the Reformed Dutch Church in this country, (the one party styled the *Cetus*, the other the *Conferentie* party,) which produced the most disastrous consequences, and, for a long time, even threatened the extinction of this branch of our American Church. It is not necessary that I should enter into the details of this controversy, as you will, of course, give your readers some account of it in your Historical Introduction. The subject of this notice, though a foreigner by birth, was a most influential member of the *Cetus* party. And soon after his settlement in the churches on Long Island, and especially after his earnest and searching ministrations had begun to be attended

* He had, for several years previous to this, been a minister in the German Reformed Church.