Frelinghuysen, The Dutch Clergy, and The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies

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The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies was a microcosm of those culturally diverse religious upheavals which erupted at the end of the 1730's, not only in New Jersey and New England but also in the British Isles and on the Continent. Small fires were breaking out spontaneously in widely scattered spots in the western world. In historically related, yet temporally unconnected, incidents, George Whitefield of England had been "born again" in 1735, "about seven weeks after Easter"; Howell Harris, a leader of the Great Revival in Wales, had shortly before "seen Christ" on Whitsunday; the same spring Jonathan Edwards had led what Perry Miller described as "the most spectacular revival that New England had yet beheld"; and the largest number of confessions to date were recorded in the Kerken-Boeck of Dominie Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen's Dutch Reformed Church at North Branch in New Jersey. By the end of 1739 Whitefield had arrived in the Colonies, as had also a shipment of Dutch tracts entitled A Summons to repentance, comprising sermons by Dominie Frelinghuysen. By 1740 towns and villages along the whole coast of British North America, in England, Scotland and Wales, in Switzerland, in the Netherlands, and in Northern Germany were convulsing in response to the appeals of awakening theology and experimental divinity. American Colonists who had originally come from these widely scattered areas were, as well, deeply involved in the Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies.

If, as I believe, these outbreaks were indeed coincidental and if their immediate origins were unconnected, what common strains, what inherent causes can account for such phenomena? Here we will focus on the Dutch Reformed of the Middle Colonies for one answer to this question, looking at them in relation to aspects of their theological concerns as well as their socio-religious backgrounds. Before doing this, however, two generalities should first be mentioned: (1) the churches initially involved in all the areas mentioned were primarily Reformed; (2) they all had been influenced by early seventeenth century English Puritanism and Dutch Pietism. The Dutch Pietists' writings had been translated into English and German, and the Puritans' writings into German and Dutch.

For Jersey and New York Dutchmen, as for many of the other Christians involved, the Great Awakening was the climax of revivalistic efforts begun in the seventeenth century. The roots of Reformed Pietism within the colonial church were planted by the New Jersey pastor, Guiliam Bartholf (1656-1726). Bartholf had come to North Jersey as a cooper at a time when there were no settled Dutch pastors west of the Hudson River. In addition to his cooperating, he undertook the tasks of lay-reader and of comforter-of-the-sick. Bartholf had been reared in the Dutch village of Sluis, near Middleburg in Zeeland, the heartland of Reformed Pietism. Here Willem Teellinck (1579-1629) had preached the awakening doctrines of self-examination and regeneration. Here he had mediated the Puritanism of William Perkins (1558-1602). Sluis had also been the parish of Gijsbertus Voetius' (1589-1676)
Utrecht colleague, Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620-1677) and later of his beloved pupil Jacobus Koelman (1630-1695). The ardent pietistic zeal of Koelman was communicated to his young parishioner Guiliam Bartholf. First directly through Bartholf and later indirectly through Frelinghuysen, Koelman was to have the greatest influence of any single Dutch Pietist on the developing points of issue among the Dutch Reformed Pietists in the Colonies. Indeed, Koelman himself almost accepted a call to New Netherland in 1682, a move which would have considerably altered this paper.

Koelman, like Teellinck, translated many English and Scottish Puritan works for the Dutch readers. These works were as avidly read in the Middle Colonies as were the original English texts in New England. Indeed, two works by Thomas Hooker of Connecticut passed from New England to the Netherlands and, through Koelman's Dutch translations, printed in the Netherlands, back across the sea into the hands of the Dutch settlers in Jersey.

Bartholf, brought up in this Koelmanist atmosphere, had imbibed the full spirit of it. On the urging of the pastorless congregations of Hackensack and Acquackanock (now Passaic), Bartholf returned to Sluis for examination and ordination. The formalistic pastors in New York sought to block his ordination, but Sluis was in the Classis of Walcheren in the Synod of South Holland. The Dutch churches in the Middle Colonies were under the jurisdiction of the Classis of Amsterdam in the Synod of North Holland. The Classis of Walcheren ignored the urging of both the Classis of Amsterdam and the Synod of North Holland not to ordain Bartholf. By the time he returned to the Colonies in 1694, Bartholf had been ordained, thus becoming the first settled Reformed pastor in New Jersey. At the time of his ordination, the records of the Classis of Amsterdam referred to him not only as a Koelmanist but also as a Labadist. The former he was; the latter he was not. Bartholf was reported as claiming in true Koelmanist fashion that he had turned to the Classis of Walcheren for ordination because half of the Classis of Amsterdam were unregenerated men. In seeking to stop his ordination, one New York pastor had referred to Bartholf as a “schismatic” of a “very restless spirit” and stated further: “By such persons much disquiet would be brewed, and much trouble caused to the churches and especially to the ministers.” In due course, however, Bartholf’s spirit of cooperation won from his adversaries their confidence and respect. He was zealous and untiring in his labors, travelling about, preaching, performing the sacraments, and even establishing new congregations. His contemporaries wrote of him: “His piety was deep, his judgement and tact superior, his grasp of the Bible clear and strong, his preaching reverent and spiritual, his intercourse with people cordial and magnetic.” Obviously Bartholf’s activities kept him so occupied in New Jersey that he had no time to spread his pietistic views in New York. Bartholf’s warm and mild-tempered ways no doubt also helped overcome the problems in his initial relationships with those New York pastors who had objected to his circuit-riding activities.

Bartholf’s call had read, “To preach on water and on land and by the way.” This he did with vigor, though one man could scarcely cover the whole of East Jersey, and so the congregations along the Raritan sought a settled pastor who could minister to them as Bartholf ministered to the congregations of the Passaic River valley. Finally in 1720 young Dominie Frelinghuysen arrived from the Old World to develop even more intensely the awakening theology first planted by Bartholf.
Meanwhile, New York had attracted two other young men of strong pietistic leanings: Bernhardus Freeman (1662-1743) and Cornelius van Santvoort. Freeman first labored in Schenectady and later on Long Island, and Van Santvoort first on Staten Island and later in Schenectady. Both their appointments, as too the later appointment of Frelinghuysen, were the direct result of the efforts of two ardent Dutch Pietists, one a pastor and the other an Amsterdam merchant, Willem Bancker. Freeman, though an untutored tailor, was an astute young man. Through the interventions of Willem Bancker, he sought ordination at the hands of the relatively independent Classis of Lingen (then on the eastern-most border of the Netherlands, though now a part of Germany). Bancker’s American brother, a layman in the Albany church, was urging the appointment of pastors for the vacant churches. The ordination and appointment of Freeman were irregular, if not illegal; hence, his relationships with the other New York clergy were clouded at the outset. Unfortunately, they continued to be a problem until his death in 1743.

In his early years in Schenectady Freeman ministered to the Indians, learning the Mohawk language and translating religious materials for the use of the Indians. In addition to his Mohawk publications, he wrote The Mirror of Self-Knowledge, a book of moral precepts, and *The Scale of God’s Grace*, a volume of thirty pietistic sermons. Though pietistic in content, the sermons were actually very dull and would scarcely have given rise to the evangelistic fervor which marked true awakening preaching.

Van Santvoort, in contrast to Freeman, was a well-bred, highly educated pastor whose ministry was marked by as great an absence of conflict as Freeman’s was marked by conflict. Van Santvoort had studied at the university in Leiden where the dominant influence was Johannes à Marck (1655-1731), the leader of one of the two major schools of Voetian theology. À Marck was neither preacher nor enthusiast, but his dogmatic and exegetical works supplied the theological structure underlying much pietistic thought. In addition to his theological influence on Van Santvoort, à Marck remained his personal friend throughout his life. During his Staten Island ministry he prepared a one-volume synopsis in Dutch of à Marck’s massive three-volume Latin commentary on the book of the Revelation.

Van Santvoort was called to Staten Island to minister to both the Dutch and the French and he regularly held morning services in Dutch and afternoon services in French. He also spoke fluent English, so that he was frequently called upon to fill pulpits in other churches. In 1742 he left Staten Island for Schenectady, where he ministered until his death ten years later. For Van Santvoort and for Freeman, evidence of the depth of their pietistic commitment is best discovered in the books they wrote to defend their colleague Frelinghuysen.

Frelinghuysen had come to New Netherland shortly after Van Santvoort. Soon their common interests laid the foundation for their continuing friendship. Their personalities were so different, however, that they were not as close friends as Freeman and Frelinghuysen. Freeman and Frelinghuysen also shared an antipathy to the New York clergy, particularly Dominie Henricus Boel (1692-1754) and his cohorts. Boel was the epitome of all the formalistic, legalistic, and anti-pietistic modes of the time. In the hands of the congenial Bartholf, pietistic doctrine had been difficult for Boel to oppose; and, furthermore, Boel’s senior pastor, Gualtherus Du Bois (1671-1751) was of a mildly pietistic nature, hav-
ing absorbed much of the Voetian position from his father. Frelinghuysen, on the other hand, was a man of a much more radical Pietism than Du Bois and of a much more irascible personality than Bartholf.

Frelinghuysen was born a Westphalian German, the son of a German Reformed pastor. He grew up in the pietistic atmosphere created in the Lower Rhine by the followers of Voetius and the Utrecht pastor Jodocus van Lodenstein. The Reformed churches of the Lower Rhine—as those of Lingen and East Friesland to the north—were deeply influenced by the theology of the Dutch Reformed. Though they abjured the teachings of De Labadie, the Westphalian Reformed responded to the waves of influence which came from both the Dutch Pietists at the University of Utrecht and also the pietistic voices from the German Reformed of the University of Herborn. Building on these youthful influences, Frelinghuysen studied first in Hamm where the pietistic feelings of the village pastor encouraged Frelinghuysen to move on to the University of Lingen, then firmly in the hands of Voetian Pietists. Arriving in Lingen in 1711, just a dozen years after Freeman’s ordination there, Frelinghuysen was soon to work through the theology of a Marck. Lingen’s professor of theology, Johannes Wilhelmis (1671-1754), had prepared a Dutch translation of a Marck’s Medulla, a weighty precis of his massive Compendium. So popular was this abridged work that it was still being reprinted in Dutch a century later. The last Latin editions were published in Philadelphia in 1824 and 1825 respectively. Here in Lingen Frelinghuysen first mastered the Dutch language as well as a Marck’s Dutch theology. He was also introduced to the basic structures of Dutch pietistic preaching, though these were to be much more finely honed in his first pastorate.

East Friesland, the field of Frelinghuysen’s brief but deeply formative fourteen months of ministry, had long been marked by the influences of Dutch Reformed Pietism, even though it was technically a German province. Here Jacobus Koelman had spread his teachings during visits early in the 1680’s. In the years following, ardent Pietists assumed major pastorates. Many of these East Frisians took their places at the head of the most radical churchly Pietists. Works by men like Eduard Meiners (1691-1752) and, particularly, Johan Verschuir (1680-1737) were to be among the most avidly read volumes in New Jersey’s pietistic congregations. East Frisian Pietism, rather than the milder forms of Voetian Pietism, was decidedly the theology brought by Frelinghuysen to the New World. It was akin to Koelmanism. In fact, Koelman’s followers wrote the catechism with which they supplemented the older standards. Each still defended his position on the basis of the Heidelberg Catechism. In the Netherlands the Heidelberger was used together with the Belgic Confession, and in East Friesland with the Emden Catechism. These earlier standards lent themselves to both puritanistic and pietistic explication while, at the same time, the opposing forces of social moderation and theological formalism built on the same standards. Indeed, it was the breadth of the Reformed position as set forth in the Heidelberger that made possible the coexistence of such diverse attitudes within one denomination.

Frelinghuysen left two principal legacies from which to reconstruct his thought and its influence. The first is a series of twenty-two Dutch sermons printed during his lifetime, five of which appeared in 1731 in an English translation by his lay assistant, Hendrik Visscher (1697-1779). The second is a series of publications about him, written in part by friends and
in part by foes. To these should be added the references to him found in the writings of such contemporaries as Gilbert Tennent, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield. Since none of these sources provides a structured theological position, one must turn to those writings which he most heartily commended. Chief among them is Verschuur’s *Truth in the Inmost Parts, or Experimental Divinity*. The latter part of the title became not only the general title by which the book became known but also the name for that type of religion deemed essential for salvation. It was the theology of rebirth, refined by the rigor of precisionistic, puritanical moralism. Proponents of this theology were dubbed “de fijnen” (the sanctimonians).

The theology of “de fijnen” was shaped not only by Voetian piety but also by a theological mixture created by men like Johannes d’Outrein (1662-1722). D’Outrein was one of a group of young theologians who sought to combine the more vibrant typological exegesis of Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669) with the pietism of Voetius. D’Outrein was a prolific writer and his works were popular among the New World Dutch as well as among those in the Old World. Frequently used for the instruction of children as well as adults was his *Short Sketch of Divine Truth*, a work which went through at least fifteen editions and was even translated into Malay for use on the mission field. Particularly prized by both Coccejans and Voetians was d’Outrein’s oft-reprinted commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism.

In addition to those theologians already mentioned, Dutch pietists most influential in the Colonies were Hermannus Witsius (1636-1708), the Brakels, father Theodorus (1608-1669) and son Willem (1635-1711), and Abraham Hellenbroek (1658-1731). The early works of Witsius were treasured by Pietists of all persuasions. Koelman praised especially his *Controversy of the Lord with his vineyard*, a “very edifying, persuasive, and soul-stirring tract.” Frelinghuysen also praised “the renowned Witsius” and particularly his *Controversy*. Indeed, most points of Frelinghuysen’s theology, as one deduces it from his sermons, are consistently paralleled in the imaginative earlier thought of Teellinck and these teachings were later reinforced by studies under Voetius and his colleagues. But as d’Outrein had moved from the pedantic preaching of the Coccejans to embrace the piety of the Voetians, so Witsius had moved away from the scholasticism of Voetius’ theology to embrace the covenant theology of Coccejus. D’Outrein enthusiastically recommended Witsius’ *Controversy*.

The Brakels contributed mightily to Colonial Pietism; probably more tattered copies of their works survive than of any others. Theodorus à Brakel gave Reformed Pietism some of its most beloved writings, chief among them *The Steps of the Spiritual Life*. The work has scarcely been out of print since it first appeared in 1670 and no known count has been made of its editions. German translations appeared in Switzerland and in Germany. The elder Brakel’s writings contributed a strong mystical tone to the pietistic cant of his followers. The precisionism of others is spiritualized in *The Steps of the Spiritual Life*.

Willem à Brakel prepared an elaborate three-volume theology, *The Reasonable Service of God*, frequently referred to by Frelinghuysen. It was the most extensive Dutch pietistic theology and the first of a long series of theologies to be written in vernacular Dutch rather than scholastic Latin. The “eminent practicality” of Brakel was praised. In the volume Brakel sought through knowledge of one’s self to recover Calvin’s doctrine of the knowl-
edge of God. The work stressed all the major points of Pietist doctrine from rebirth to moral precisionism. In the course of his writing Willem à Brakel refuted Arminianism, Labadism, and other "errorists." Yet in spite of refutations, the wide-ranging arguments of his mystically-tinged position cracked many of the doors his followers were to open.

Of all Dutch Reformed writings, Abraham Hellenbroek’s works received the broadest distribution in American eighteenth-century English and Dutch language editions. Hellenbroek’s early years of ministry had been undistinguished; but, in his seventh year, “it pleased the All-Sufficient One to reveal himself to [Hellenbroek’s] soul as a reconciling God.” He became the Voetian preacher of his time. In spite of a scattering of the usual antiquarianisms of his time, his preaching was simple and had great popular appeal. His first work to appear in English was A Sermon...from Canticles Chap. II, Ver. 15. “Take us the Foxes, the little Foxes that spoil the Vines: for our Vines have tender Grapes.” The text was actually excerpted from a homiletical commentary and not originally designed as a sermon. Its interest lies not only in the probing content of Hellenbroek’s work but in the fact that the text was translated by Hendrik Visscher (Freilinghuysen’s lay associate) and published in Boston in 1742 (at the height of the Great Awakening) appended to a treatise by Gilbert Tennent. Hellenbroek’s treatise was a strong attack on unregenerate corrupting clergy and, as such, fit well into the judgmental position of the Voetian Pietists—a position embraced and expounded most eloquently in Tennent’s The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry.

Most popular of all Hellenbroek’s works was his catechism. The Dutch text passed through innumerable editions and was still in use in the twentieth century. The first American edition appeared in New York in 1765. Like his Sermon, the catechism was translated by a New York layman, “a builder by trade.” Entitled Specimen of Divine Truths, the work sought to change catechizing from a mental exercise to a spiritual exercise. “Be not content that your Ears only have heard, but endeavor after a hearty Experience of those Things... and above all, it is thy Duty to shew, that those Truths you have made profession of, do not consist in Words but in Power, and that, in an Holy Conversation, for as much as it is a Doctrine leading to Godliness.” Hellenbroek’s Specimen passed through at least nine editions before the end of the eighteenth century and numerous editions in the nineteenth century. Its simple piety had a lasting influence on the Reformed Church both early in the widely used Dutch editions and after 1765 in the English-language editions. With the exception of almanacs, all of the Dutch language works printed in the Middle Colonies during the years of the Great Awakening were awakening texts, including one each by T. J. Freilinghuysen and his son Theodore, and two translations of Whitefield tracts.

These then were the chief pietistic voices heard among the Dutch during the years leading up to and through the Awakening. Their influence came through their books and through the pious laymen, who, as well as the domines, had accepted their teachings. The great contribution of the Reformed of the Middle Colonies was not to be found in their originality—evidence of which is singularly lacking—but in their adding to the American stream that awakening theology which marked the Pietists of the Netherlands and of northwestern Germany. Unfortunately, the thousands of Dutch pietistic sermons preached in the Middle Colonies have largely disappeared, except for the printed sermons of Freeman and
Frelinghuysen. It is to these sermons, then, that one must turn to reconstruct the outlines of Dutch Reformed awakening thought in the Middle Colonies.

"Experience" was the key to this theology and both Freeman and Frelinghuysen laid great stress on the explication of "experimental divinity." The experience to be achieved was "rebirth." The first steps were: "Consider your insignificance and unworthiness" and "Learn to know your guilt." On the positive side, Frelinghuysen added that true religion "is righteousness, it is peace, and it is joy in the Holy Ghost." Without the excruciating awareness of insignificance and guilt there could be no convicting of the sinner; without the affirmations of righteousness, peace, and joy, there could be no conversion. Rebirth was equally dependent upon both. It was, as well, the ultimate test. "The Spirit of God, which always knows best," asserted Frelinghuysen, "terms all unconverted as natural men, who are outside of God's fellowship, not united with Christ and not sanctified by his Spirit, godless and sinners, even though they lead modest and proper lives, yes, are even outwardly religious. All those who are still in a natural or unregenerate state are, without exception, godless and sinners." It was a personal, not a corporate concern. As à Marck had written, "by regeneration... one is not to understand the renewing of the whole world...but of the change in the individual believer."

The teachings of insignificance and guilt were easier to arouse in those who were economically and socially insignificant; and this was certainly the plight of many of the Jersey Dutch settlers. On the other hand, the most forceful opposition to Frelinghuysen's preaching came from the well-established Dutch settlers—those farmers, lawyers, and clergy alike, who were described by Frelinghuysen as "in the sieve of Satan." This meshed well with Frelinghuysen's observation that "the largest portion of the faithful have been poor and of little account in the world." In those areas where Frelinghuysen's ministry first took root, poverty was often coupled with that enforced isolation created by the endless drudgery of seeking a living out of the woods or out of the fields. In the towns this was paralleled by the weariness of long hours filled with servile labor. The resultant emotional starvation created a vacuum waiting to be filled by joy in the Holy Ghost, and other rapturous episodes which might mark the way. Violent rebirth and all of its preparatory ferment helped restore sorely needed hope and provided revitalized nerve for the future.

Typical of Dutch Reformed converts was Hendrik Visscher, the poor son of an otherwise unknown Raritan riverside farmer. He was Frelinghuysen's right arm through the years of religious turmoil created by their Radical Pietism. Visscher distinguished himself as lay preacher and as translator of the writings of both Frelinghuysen and earlier Dutch Pietists. Typical of younger pastors was Henricus Goetschius (John Henry) whom Frelinghuysen helped ordain in 1741. All three figures—Visscher, Goetschius and Frelinghuysen—also demonstrate the interrelatedness of the various Reformed churches both on the Continent and in the Middle Colonies. As noted before, Frelinghuysen had been born a Westphalian German, the son of a German Reformed pastor; Visscher's father had been an emigrant from the German Palatinate; and Goetschius' father had been ordained a Swiss Reformed pastor. Yet it was among the Dutch Reformed "in this so guilty land, this wilderness of America," that all three were awakening leaders.

One of the inherent contradictions of the Radical Pietists who remained within the
Reformed Church was the heightened effectual power of individual clergymen, while at the same time these same men, joined by numerous laymen, violently attacked many who filled the ministerial offices. Already Lodenstein had preached and written extensively against "the present-day lack of spirituality among the pastors" and "the corrupted ways of the so-called spiritual profession." Koelman, in a lengthy preface to a Puritan tract designed to awaken the clergy, had also assailed the multitudinous faults of "the faithless, the hireling, and the gluttonous" clergy. To this he added a prayer that God either "convert them or thrust them out." From the time of Frelinghuysen's arrival in New York, he had preached against the "unfaithful watchmen." At the ordination of Goetschius, Frelinghuysen provided theological underpinnings by quoting one of his Dutch professors: "As there always has been, and will be, a conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, so does the enmity discover itself principally in unsanctified ministers..." Such unnerving doctrines, coupled with the dearth of any kind of ordained clergy for the widely scattered settlements, only increased the anxieties of the colonists.

The preachers of rebirth confronted a homiletical problem; or, conversely phrased, a new method of preaching was a major factor in the revivals. It was a technique which Frelinghuysen had brought with him from East Friesland, one of the locales where the method had been developed. Hendrik Visscher had described it as "drawing one matter out of another, thereby discovering the state and condition of his auditors to themselves." Its origin lay in the philosophy of Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) and its perfecting owed much to many Puritans and numerous Pietists along the way. Using it himself as a carefully honed tool, Frelinghuysen instructed Gilbert Tennent in the method until it became a mark of awakening preaching in the Middle Colonies. Even Whitefield claimed to have further developed his own preaching style as a result of its effectiveness. The old formal structures which Frelinghuysen had learned in school were a constant critique to him, but he was a man guided rather than bound by critiques. This kept preaching from degenerating into ranting, even when the morning text was "Blow the trumpet in Zion."

The sacraments, too, raised perplexing feelings. In the widely scattered settlements the sustaining power of the sacraments was largely lost by the infrequency of their celebration. In addition, the experimental divines surrounded the sacraments by such high fences that many of those most in need of sacramental strengthening were cut off from baptism or debared from the Table. Pastors stressed the need of soul-searching self-examination, coupled with pastoral scrutiny of the parishioner's state. Frelinghuysen quoted Theophylactus to his parishioners, "Whosoever shall receive this sacrament unworthily, is as guilty as if he had slain the Lord himself; and shed the blood of Christ." Such teachings roused new fears and intensified feelings of guilt.

For the Dutch settlers throughout the Middle Colonies religious tensions were not only aggravated by the forces which commonly underlay awakenings throughout the western world, but also by the intensely personal animosities which had developed in many of the churches between the followers of Frelinghuysen's experimental divinity and those more staid adherents of conservative orthodoxy and traditional ecclesiology. Distresses generated by the seventeenth century struggles over the half-way covenant in New England and between Cocceians and Voetians in the Netherlands were renewed in the Middle Colonies in
the 1730's. By the time Whitefield arrived in New Jersey many of the Dutch Reformed had already chosen between the awakening doctrine of rebirth and the traditionalism set against it. In spite of this, however, in the year 1741 alone, Frelinghuysen added half as many members to his New Brunswick congregation as he had in the previous twenty years put together.

Finally, one further theological observation requires attention. The central Reformed doctrines of election and certainty of faith, while affirmed by Frelinghuysen and the revivalists, were cast nonetheless in a new form. The pietists had long struggled with these doctrines, particularly the classical statements of predestination. Though the churchly pietists by and large assented to the decrees of the Synod of Dort, they continually struggled with the seeming contradictions implied in telling people that they must be born again on the one hand, and then telling them that the decisions regarding their ultimate salvation had already been made by God himself. One wonders what Frelinghuysen meant by affirming the decrees of Dort, while remarking to his congregation that “in the day of judgment God will not deal with men according to election and reprobation but according to their obedience and devoutness.” While decrying Arminianism, these rebirth theologians, like Arminius himself, fell to using the cogent arguments of a high doctrine of grace to restore some logic to a fundamentally illogical dilemma. At the same time, lacking the astute theological perception of Arminius, they found no solution vigorously denying the theological implications of their own experimental divinity. Concerning certainty of faith Frelinghuysen declared, “Is this your ground, that you firmly hold and do not doubt, but that Christ is your Saviour, and that you shall be saved... but know that this ground is false... Oh! to the state of grace appertaineth somewhat else.” Assurance comes rather from the fruits of faith.

So new uncertainties confronted the comfortable and new opportunities were afforded those who had thought themselves lost among reprobates. Frelinghuysen's “summons to repentance” was clearly a break with Reformed theology according to Dort, and he and his like-minded experimentalists made the most of it. However, in the long run—indeed, often in the short run—awakened sinners could not maintain the pressure of such concentrated righteousness, peace, or joy in the Holy Spirit. As the Great Awakening became part of the history of the Dutch Reformed Church, its more zealous members turned their efforts towards ecclesiastical independence from the Netherlands and many of its lively spirits also, eventually, turned their thoughts toward political independence from England.

**Dramatis Personae**

The forms of name given are those forms found most often. At times, however, the Latin form was changed to Dutch (as Hermannus Witsius to Herman Wits) or to English (Johannes Henricus Goetschius). In other cases one finds variant spellings, as Bertholf for Bartholf.

- George Whitefield (1714-1770)  
- Howell Harris (1714-1773)  
- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)  
- Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1692-1747 or 48)  
- Guiliam Bartholf (1656-1726)  
- Willem Teellinck (1579-1629)  

- Gualtherus Du Bois (1671-1751)  
- Johannes Wilhelmius (1671-1754)  
- Eduard Meiners (1691-1752)  
- Johan Verschuir (1680-1737)  
- Hendrik Visscher (1697-1779)  
- Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764)
William Perkins (1558-1602)
Gijsbertus Voetius (1589-1676)
Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620-1677)
Jacobus Koelman (1630-1695)
Bernhardus Freeman (1662-1742)
Cornelius van Santvoort (1686-1752)
Johannes a Marck (1655-1731)
Henricus Boel (1692-1754)

Johannes d'Outrein (1662-1722)
Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)
Hermannus Witsius (1636-1708)
Theodorus a Brakel (1608-1669)
Willem a Brakel (1635-1711)
Abraham Hellenbroek (1658-1731)
Johannes Henricus Geetschius (1717-1774)
Petrus Ramus (1515-1572)