

Autobiography of Brother Anton Frey

This is Brother Frey. My full name is Anton Clemons Frey. I was born in the borough of the Bronx, a part of the greater city of New York, on July 1st 1895. My mother's maiden name was Marie Bergmann, who was born at Kaiserslautern in Germany on April the 12th 1873. She left Germany at the age of 17, coming to America, to the City of New York. She married my father at the age of 19 in 1892, and gave birth to me at the age of 22 years. She lived to the age of 95 years. That is, she had past her 94th birthday. Much of what I am today traces to her wonderful influence over the early years of my life in the home. She was a member of the German Methodist Episcopal Church, where I was also christened and confirmed.

For all of my childhood years, I attended their Sunday School, where in due time I became the librarian and in later years a teacher of a boys class until the time when learning that the Methodist Church was not really teaching the Bible doctrines and at that time I resigned and left the Methodist Church. It was however while I still was a member of the Methodist church, that in the Lord's overruling providences, I met Louise Anne Lidenberg, whose name I later changed, to Louise Anne Frey. We both came into an appreciation of the truth and were subsequently baptized into Christ at the Creation Temple at 63rd Street in the City of New York. Unfortunately neither one of us can remember the exact date, though we both feel that it was in 1915.

My father's name was Anton like mine and he came from Switzerland having been born in Aurau of Canton Aargau. He died at the age of 59 years. Aurau is in the German speaking section of Switzerland so that mother and he had no trouble in speaking and understanding each other. He was born into the Roman Catholic Church but changed when he married mother, becoming a Methodist Episcopalian. I do not believe I have ever seen anyone who was more loyal to an adopted religion than he was. He never missed the service on Sunday. And when the services were over he got up out of his seat, walked right out without stopping to talk with anyone and went straight home to his wife, my mother, who had been busily engaged in preparing the dinner. The old Methodist Church had two services a day, one in the morning and one in the evening, which he attended with mother, that is the evening service, and we two children, my brother and I went with them. He was a very peace loving man. I never knew him to argue with anyone. His influence upon me was also blessed too. During the younger days of my life, before I became acquainted with the truth, aside from attending the Sunday school services and the morning and evening worship services at the Methodist Church, I spent practically every evening at a Gospel Temperance Mission, where I came into contact with the seedier side of life, the drunkards and outcasts. Before this, in the Sunday school of the Methodist Church, under the tutelage of an old man a Mr. Pate, probably in his eighties at the time, who one Sunday taught us the lesson of Temperance. I guess I was about 6 or 7 years old at the time. But he so impressed me, that I went home that Sunday morning, and told my mother that I was never going to drink any alcoholic liquors, a pledge which I have never broken. While I was still in my teens, probably 14 or so, I was a very thin lad and probably looked as if I was going into a decline. Mother became anxious and started giving me egg-nogs. And

one day someone told her to put some liquor into it. But before doing so she told me about it. I told her that I would not drink the eggnog if it was spiked with liquor, and she told the pastor who then made it his business to talk to me about it. He tried to convince me that God had put everything on this earth to serve the needs of man, and among these needs of course was alcohol, and I should use it as a medicine. But he didn't convince me and needless to say Mother never put any liquor into my eggnogs. And then, as already set forth, I attended the Mission Services and I learned even more concerning the evils of the use of alcohol.

I came into an appreciation of the truth by way of an ad which appeared in the evening newspapers. The article concerned, as I now recall it, Armageddon, and there was a coupon, which when sent in to the Society, with twenty-five cents would get me a volume of *"Scriptures Studies"* bearing on the matter. I sent in the coupon with 25 cents. And soon Sister Tera Lundberg who later, I believe, became Sister Hutchings, came with a complete set of *"Scripture Studies"*—the six volumes. Now this is interesting for father had died, and I was the only one working to support the family, mother, brother and myself so that we did not have that much money to spend for books. I was keeping company with Louise. And one day she was to become my wife. And under certain circumstances she like myself was living at home with her mother, her father too having died, and she was the bread-winner. However, she was not earning enough and this made it necessary for her mother to work too. This she would do in the evenings after their having had supper. And so it was that her mother asked me if I would be gracious enough to stay with Louise on certain nights until she came home from her work. Of course, I was exceedingly glad to do this service and when her mother came home I would bid them "goodnight" and go home too. However, one evening on coming home from her work and taking out her keys in the vestibule to open the door of the apartment house in which they lived, she dropped two dollars, but was not aware of it at the time. And when I left, I passed through that same vestibule and picked up the two dollars. But I didn't go back, but I went home instead, intending on the next visit to find out if her mother had dropped those two dollars. And this is just what happened. And when I asked about it, they just looked at each other. Then having found out that the two dollars was Mother's, I offered it to her. But she said because of my honesty in the matter she would not take it and wanted me to have it. And thus did the Lord providentially provide the money to purchase the six volumes of *"Scripture Studies."* And this is the way that both Sis and I came into the truth. Of course there were many things which both of us had learned in the Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday school and in the afternoon of course and evening services, which we now had to unlearn. But Brother Russell's presentation was so clear, so logical, that it didn't take too long, and as already stated, we were both immersed. We were wedded by dear old Brother Hirsh on November 27th a Thanksgiving Day in 1919. In 1922, on January the 6th, our only child, our daughter Ruth, was born. She too was and is and will continue to be a rich blessing to both of us. For she in due time also consecrated her life unto the Heavenly Father.

I had not been in the truth too long, when I became identified with a small group of Associated Bible Students, at the home of a Brother and Sister Griffiths, at their home in the Bronx, New York City. A bit later, when we moved into Jersey City, New Jersey, we became identified with the Jersey City ecclesia, which then was meeting at the Bergen Square Hall of the Odd Fellows. Many and blessed were the gatherings that we had there. And it wasn't too long after this

that the ecclesia elected me an elder and this without ever having had me serve as a deacon. And while, as I have already said, we had many joyful and blessed seasons there, we also went through a number of trials through siftings when some of our brethren chose to separate from us. Those who would remain loyal, as it were, to the Society after J. F. Rutherford had made himself the president of the organization. Some separated because we would not endorse the Herald and the PBI, who did not accept Brother Russell as that faithful and wise steward. And some left so as to follow Brother Johnson and his so-called Epiphany enlightened saints. But it is interesting to note that these all left us.

I believe it was in 1923 that Brother David Dinwoodie joined the ecclesia at Jersey City. He came from Scotland and in due course was elected an elder. And others that served the Jersey City class as elders, these are not all but a few of them, Brother R. H. Hirsh, who wedded Sis and myself, Brother Chapman, Brother Dalstrom, Brother William Hollister, etc., etc. My references to the Jersey City ecclesia, up to this point, has the old Jersey City ecclesia in mind. There still is a Jersey City ecclesia, but it is no longer located at Jersey City, New Jersey, but at present it is located in Union, New Jersey. We ourselves are no longer identified with the Jersey City ecclesia. We are now members of the Staten Island ecclesia, which meets at Annadale in Staten Island, of New York City. However we do still serve the Jersey City ecclesia at Union, New Jersey, as a visiting speaker, often serving on their convention programs, etc.

For many years Br Russell had so arranged the schedules that on the first Sunday of every month, he would serve what we are prone to call the New York ecclesias. This consisted of ecclesias of all five boroughs of the City of New York, the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and Richmond, that is Staten Island and the nearby ecclesias of New Jersey, Jersey City and Newark also Westchester, etc. It was our sweet privilege to attend these services and to be blessed by his sweet messages in which he endeavored always to remind us about being diligent to make our calling and our election sure. It afforded us also opportunities to get better acquainted with this beautiful character. I was particularly interested in his reaction to the general public that came out to hear him. And so, it happened that on one Sunday night, after he had finished his discourse, he found his way into the foyer of the Creation Temple, to shake the hands of his auditors. I managed to get there too, to observe just what he did. On this particular occasion a woman, I cannot say as to whether she was a consecrated saint or not, but she reached out her hand to him saying, with a beautiful smile on her face, "Oh Pastor Russell, this was the most beautiful sermon. I enjoyed it so very, very much." And to this he responded, not with a "Thank you dear sister. I am so happy that you enjoyed it" but with a "Are you consecrated?" He seemed not to be interested so much as to whether or not she had enjoyed his remarks in his sermon, but rather as to whether or not she was consecrated. Of course if she was consecrated her remark would have meant much more to him than if otherwise. He also knew that the sooner the elect number was complete and had made their calling and election sure, that his position in the glory of the kingdom would be assured.

It was our sweet pleasure to be personally introduced to dear Brother Russell, and this was when Sister Grace Hollister, Brother William Hollister's wife, invited us over to Bethel in Brooklyn, New York, where in Columbia Heights, the Bethel Family resided. And on this occasion Brother Russell was alone and it afforded us the unique pleasure of direct contact with this wonderful man of God. I do not remember the date, but I shall never forget the occasion. It

was in the days of the old Jersey City ecclesia, that a dearly beloved Sister Zakosky opened her home to a private study, not under the auspices of the ecclesia. The study was to be Tabernacle Shadows, which she had asked me to lead. This we did for many, many years. Her home was not a very large one, but there were times when there were as many as 22 people to crowd into it for that study. Those were some of the most blessed gatherings that I am able to recall. And I am sure that many who attended those classes were greatly blessed. It was during those years that we moved away from Jersey City, to Staten Island, New York. Yet we continued for many years to lead that study, traveling back and forth from Staten Island to that sacred "Upper Room" on the corner of Palisade Avenue and Beacon Street.

In the earlier days of our consecrated life, while still identified with the Bronx ecclesia, we engaged in a great "tracting endeavor" and that was the Bronx. The Bronx was not a very small borough nevertheless our little ecclesia covered the whole Bronx with Bible Student Monthlies, supplied by the Society. And of course these tracts were in the languages; oft times for different sections of the Bronx: some Italian, some German, some English, some even in Hebrew or Yiddish. There were only about six of us to carry it on. The Society would send us the tracts and we would all get together of an evening and fold them so that they might easily be put into the letter boxes of the people that we intended to serve. Needless to say these were always very joyful occasions, and the conversations were in their very nature blessed.

When we moved to Jersey City and joined that ecclesia, we often engaged in a public ministry. Often we had conventions attended by many friends and served by consecrated brethren. There was at the time, a small group of Polish friends in the general area, who could not afford the expense of a general convention and I am so happy to say that the Jersey City ecclesia took these poor classes into account. There were times when we arranged to give these Polish brethren an hour or so on our programs, in which they could have a Polish speaker address them. Many a time I stood there listening to the Polish speaker, when I could not understand a word that he said except the name "Jesus" in Polish. But I could read the blessing of God on the faces of his auditors. These Polish friends were always very grateful for these privileges.

During the many years that we were identified with the old Jersey City ecclesia, there was a Greek brother, Tony Logothetou who, because of his disability to speak English fluently, never would accept eldership, but he found other ways in which he would serve his English brethren. The Society, after Br Russell's death, gave up the "Photo Drama" and in due time, sold the Creation Temple. Brother Tony made it his business to acquire as many of the glass slides of the "Photo Drama" as he could and the machine necessary for the showing of the pictures. Then independent of the ecclesia, he asked me to accompany him to the various classes so that they might hire halls and theaters, etc., where he would show the "Drama". Sometimes the classes desiring the showing could not afford the showing of it in four parts. This meant that we would have to take out some of the slides to give, as it were, an abbreviated version. This made it necessary for him to operate the machine and for me to memorize the materials appearing in the "Photo Drama" scenario for these slides. And so we proceeded in that manner. The appreciation of those who were privileged to attend these showings is beyond the ability of mere words to express. Thus it is that much of the harvest work was carried on in the days of yore.