



THREE LITTLE
FOXES

ABRAHAM KUYPER

edited by Steve Bishop

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PREFACE TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION

This is a preliminary, provisional translation of Abraham Kuyper's work, "Three Little Foxes" (*Drie Kleine Vossen*), published in 1901.¹ It first appeared as three series of articles written in *De Heraut* between 11 March and 23 December 1900. The book takes inspiration from Song of Solomon 2:15: "Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes" (NKJV).

Kuyper uses the metaphor of foxes spoiling the vines to illustrate three negative influences on the church: intellectualism, mysticism, and practicism (activism).

In his critique of intellectualism, Kuyper makes it clear that he is not decrying intellectual activity as such. His concern is in the distinction between genuine faith which resides in the heart, and mere intellectual understanding. Kuyper sees intellectualism as a threat in the Reformed church in that it may overshadow the emotional and practical dimensions of faith. Preaching should avoid being intellectual but should connect to the listeners' entire person, integrating their intellect, emotion and spiritual needs. He advocates for a balanced approach that avoids the extremes of intellectualism and emotionalism, ensuring all aspects of faith are nurtured.

However, Kuyper's critique reflects the biases of his time, particularly in his use of gender and geographical stereotypes. Kuyper's concern about intellectualism overshadowing faith naturally extends to his critique of mysticism, where he differentiates between genuine spiritual experiences and those that may lead believers astray.

Although Kuyper was an intellectual and an activist, he recognized the importance of true mysticism and sought to differentiate it from false forms. He valued personal experiences with God but cautioned against mysticism that disregarded or bypassed the authority of Scripture. He believed that

spiritual insight should be grounded in the teachings of the Scriptures rather than solely relying on subjective experiences.

Kuyper distinguished between true (*mystiek*) and false (*mysticisme*): “*Mystiek* is the good, the necessary, and the indispensable. *Mysticisme* is its degeneration, its corruption, its gradual decay.” For Kuyper, false mysticism was problematic because it ignored the need for divine revelation. He emphasized that our understanding of God is limited, and while God reveals Himself through various means, mysticism should not seek to bypass or undermine the ordinary means of revelation.

True mysticism involves a deep and intimate communion with God based on His revelation, while false mysticism distorts this longing for communion through unhealthy imaginations and sinful tendencies.

Kuyper argued that it is undeniable that revelations and visions occur, but the mystic must demonstrate that their experiences serve the same purpose as those in Scripture. He cautioned against false prophets who relied on their own heart's revelations.

False mysticism, according to Kuyper, leads to five detrimental outcomes: confusion of the dispensation of times, fostering spiritual self-exaltation, despising the Word, destruction of the Church's essence, and the risk of immorality. However, he emphasized that healthy mysticism should not be banished from the Church out of fear of false mysticism.

The antidote to false mysticism, according to Kuyper, is Scripture. He emphasized the importance of relying on the Scriptures as the source of knowledge of special revelation and the control that the Word should have over all mysticism.

Kuyper concluded his thoughts on mysticism by emphasizing the need for balance. He stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy relationship between intellectual understanding and personal spiritual experiences, as well as the significance of a church bound to the Word and its confession.

Kuyper's teachings remind us to seek a balanced approach to mysticism and to ensure that our experiences align with the teachings of Scripture.

Kuyper coins the term *practicism* to describe the third “fox”. Kuyper defines *practicism* as an over emphasis on action and doing. He gives three examples, what he terms as the three Zs as the Dutch terms all begin with the letter Z: *Zending*, *Zondagsschool* and *Ziekenverpleging*. These are missionary work (*Zending*), Sunday school (*Zondagsschool*), and hospital care (*Ziekenverpleging*). At first glance, these may seem like unusual examples, as all three are typical Christian vocations. However, this may be precisely why Kuyper chose to address them. His main concern is that all three have become detached from the church or home and have become activities of their own. He is concerned to emphasise that true Christian practice does not reduce faith to action. The focus on doing may inadvertently lead to legalism, where faith becomes based on action rather than on a relationship with God. His concern also is that a shift from faith to works will undermine the basis of Protestantism and overlook the importance of doctrinal confession and theological underpinnings.

In his critique of nursing and hospital care he is concerned that it may undermine family care. He asserts that nursing should be a family responsibility. Some of his comments on this seem a little off tangent to his main point. For example, he seems concerned that nurses are called “sisters” and that their black and white uniform when worn in public “resembles mourning attire”. However, his main concern is that “Nursing belongs in the home and should be performed by family members”. This of course when he was writing was in the early days of hospitals. Henriëtte and Johanna Kuyper, two of Kuyper’s daughters, were later both nurses in Hungary during World War I.

Practicism focuses on the will, and this can overshadow the importance of the intellectual and the emotional aspects of faith. All are necessary for a balanced Christian life.

Kuyper's teachings underscore the importance of maintaining a balance between thinking, feeling, and action—between the head, heart, and hands—in Christian discipleship. His successor at VU Amsterdam, Herman Bavinck, recognized the value of this approach, recommending that these insightful articles be compiled into a single volume due to their excellent quality. While some comments may reflect the era in which they were written, Bavinck's high regard for this work remains justified.²

Steve Bishop, Presteigne, Wales

Kuyper's Preface

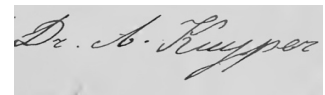
In the Song of Solomon (2:15), Sulamith complains about "little foxes that spoil the vineyard." Such little foxes continually sneak into the vineyard of the Lord, and it is our duty to hunt them down.

I believe I have detected three of these little foxes in the articles reprinted here, and I harbored a quiet hope that I might help curb their destructive activities within a narrower circle.

As is known, Rev. Dijkstra critiqued what I wrote about the disappointing results in the mission field in a pamphlet, and I responded to that critique.³

I naturally leave that controversy aside in this edition.

However, my esteemed critic will see ... that he has not spoken on deaf ears. I have significantly tempered my initially sharp expressions, and I thank him for his noble words, which prompted me to do so.



Amsterdam
27 June 1901

INTELLECTUALISM

Introduction

A sin to which Reformed church life is vulnerable is intellectualism, the dominance of the intellectual approach, the one-sided focus on the power that resides in the realm of concepts.

Three actions within us must function in balance: three actions represented by the head, the heart, and the hand. The head symbolizes intellectual labor, the heart symbolizes the emotional movement of mysticism, and the hand symbolizes Christian works. When our church life is in balance, and there is balance in our personal and ministerial life, then head, heart, and hand must work together in the proper proportion for the complete expression of life.

However, that balance is continually lost. The proper proportion is repeatedly broken, the harmony that should prevail turns into discord due to one-sidedness, and thus you see various circles and ways in which three one-sided directions emerge.

First, there is the practical direction, which disregards the intellectual aspect of our religion, is indifferent to the purity of the confession, pays little attention to heresies, and does not value mysticism much. Instead, this direction overemphasizes "Christian works": philanthropy, missions, evangelism, asceticism, and association life of all kinds, starting with Sunday school. Always busy, constantly doing something, competing with one another in numerous forms of dedication, especially attracted to what has an extraordinary character.

Second, there is the emotional direction, which clearly diverges along two paths. On the one hand, the deeper emotional path of mysticism. On the other hand, the shallower path of emotional stimulation. For confession and the investigation of truth, those who walk these paths have as little concern as those in the practical direction. Even preachers who have abandoned the

Scripture are welcome here, as long as they delve into the mysticism of the soul, stir emotions, and populate the world of imagination.

Third, there is the intellectual direction, which is unaware of the busyness of Christian works, holds sovereign disdain for emotional stimulation, and feels nothing for mysticism. But this direction stands firmly for the truth, seeks its strength in confession, does not tamper with the Scripture, and considers every heresy a threat.

Can the church of Christ afford to miss one of these forces? Certainly not. The church must weigh the truth on the gold scale. It must be nurtured by the warmth of mysticism. It must also be diligent and abundant in powerful activity.

Thus, the fault lies not in the zeal of the intellect, nor in the zeal of the emotions, and not in the zeal of action, but solely in the fact that this threefold action loses its proper mutual connection, becomes skewed, becomes one-sided, and loses balance. Then there is, for one, coldness and sluggishness in sharper intellectual analysis; for another, an overstimulated emotional response with sluggishness and dullness; and for the third, a self-satisfied bustling about, but with a superficiality that is alarming and with a conceptual confusion that torments the confession.

Sharp thinkers, but cold of heart and slow of hand. Warm-hearted people, but who achieve little and have no well-grounded knowledge of the truth. Finally, overzealous Christians, but shallow in their feeling and even shallower in their thinking.

Of course, we do not mean that every Christian can be classified into one of these three categories. There are many who are neither sharp thinkers, nor hard workers, nor deep feelers. There are many who have somewhat deep emotions, who do a little, and who have a partial understanding of the truth. There are also, alas, those who accomplish almost nothing, are only

occasionally touched in their feelings, and who, if not pushed by others, do not concern themselves with the truth.

There are also mixed phenomena. Brothers and sisters who have feelings and achieve something, but who are weak in their confession. Others who value the truth and are diligent, but whose feelings go no deeper than a millimeter. And again, others who are zealous for the truth and know mystical experiences, but who leave "the work" to others.

The church is so diverse. Certainly, being converted or unconverted makes a fundamental difference, and preaching must continually address this, as calling to conversion is the church's vital task. But preaching can and should be more distinguished. It would also certainly enrich and bless preaching if it addressed the distinctions between the persons of feeling, action, and intellect, and their mixed appearances.

A Warning Against Intellectualism

However, this time we limit ourselves to a warning against intellectualism, that is, against the one-sided and out-of-context intellectual direction. Later, the one-sidedness of the other two directions will be addressed.

Intellectualism had to be addressed first because Reformed churches are almost inherently vulnerable to the danger of intellectualism. This must be clearly understood to comprehend and resist the intellectualist without rejecting him outright.

You must always aim to win, to soften, to heal. Even if you confront the intellectualist with the usual phrases of "dry rigidity" and "abstract dryness," you will not win him over. The intellectualist is very aware that he is defending a serious interest. He has seen the busy people moving through the entire church, and the emotional people laughing and weeping until all objective truth had merged. This has made him see the necessity of emphasizing the Confession again. To uphold the Confession, he has pushed all aspects of truth back to the foreground. Precisely because he

had so little interest in those aspects of truth, he has clung to them one-sidedly.

This must be appreciated in him. You must have an open eye for the good in his intentions. Above all, you must not for a moment underestimate the importance of the full truth of the Confession. On the contrary, you must fully align yourself with him in this regard. Only then will you find the way to his heart and help him see the gaps that disfigure his heart and life.

All church life demands that a certain emphasis be placed on the activity of the intellect. The church, to remain the church, rests in its Confession. As soon as it allows the Confession to fade into the background, church life imperceptibly transitions into the life of individual believers, societies, or Christian associations. The church disintegrates, and in its place appears what is known as community life, which then immediately dissolves into loose, disconnected groups.

We have experienced the misery of this in the 19th century and witnessed its devastation. The official church was abandoned, and people began to evangelize and form societies on their own. Thus, the Church sank into disrepute and stood as the ruin of a burnt-down house, in which no one could live.

Now, things have improved among us. There is again attachment to the church. It is recognized that no individual activity can replace the action of the church. Thus, the church has regained its honor among us. But the danger again threatens that the strength, life, and energy of the church may dissolve into individual expressions, associations, and connections if the bond of confession is not properly maintained.

This explains why the intellectual direction is gaining ground again. All church restoration inevitably leads to this. When it comes to confession, the debate for truth is revived, and the debate for truth demands clear intellectual analysis. Emotion tends to obscure rather than clarify.

This danger is particularly imminent in our Reformed churches. Our churches, by their nature, lead to a thorough and detailed knowledge of the truth among their members. In contrast, in Rome, the layperson relies on the judgment of the church. The Baptist depends on his inner light. The Lutheran relies on the *Ecclesia docens* (teaching church). But among us, Reformed believers, it is a rule that at least the well-grounded, deeply instructed believers know the Scriptures themselves, to be able to inspect the entire structure of the building of truth with their own eyes. In the 16th and 17th centuries, with our family catechism, every layperson who counted was a theologian in miniature; and even now, there are quite a few laypeople among us who know the truth more accurately than many preachers.

However, while this is an advantage and represents an unusual strength for us Reformed, and indeed it can and must be said that church restoration among us has only become possible because of this, it undeniably brings a serious danger. That danger is also primarily the overemphasis on the intellectual direction, the poison of intellectualism.

A Warehouse Metaphor

Intellectualism is so seductive. You sit so comfortably in the office, instead of getting your hands dirty among the bales and barrels in the warehouse or on the loading dock.

Do you understand this metaphor? When goods are shipped, a shipping document or bill of lading is included, and that bill of lading is nothing but a piece of paper, but a piece of paper on which everything worth knowing about the shipped goods is literally stated. According to Article 507 of the Commercial Code, it must include the name of the shipper or loader, the name of the consignee, the name and residence of the captain, the name and type of the ship, the nature, quantity, and marks and numbers of the goods, the place of departure and destination, details regarding the freight, and the signatures of the captain, loader, and shipper.

So, there are two things: (1) the actual goods that make up the cargo, and (2) the papers that together indicate what has been loaded onto the ship. For each shipment, this is the bill of lading, and for the entire cargo, it is the freight list.

Naturally, all those papers together are worth no more than a half guilder; the value lies exclusively in the goods stored in the hold. But even though all those papers are intrinsically worth nothing, the office manager much prefers to deal with those papers rather than with the stored cargo or what is stored in the warehouses. The papers clearly indicate what goods are in the ship or warehouse. With the papers in hand, he knows everything about them. He has all the necessary data in a convenient, usable form. While handling and calculating those papers, he can remain comfortably at his desk. He doesn't get his hands dirty. He is not at risk of injury from splinters or nails. He can view everything in the ship or warehouse with a single glance.

Equipped in this way, he records in his books what the bill of lading, warehouse receipt, freight list, etc., show. After recording these entries, he totals them and subtracts. Once his calculations are complete, he knows exactly his property or profit.

Had he not had those papers and had to search the hold of the ship or check the warehouses himself, the work would never end, endless confusion would reign, and he would never find out precisely, as the available stock constantly fluctuates.

The office is therefore the indispensable mirror of the entire operation. In the office books, the exact image of everything stored in the ship or warehouse, what is removed, and what is added is reflected. It is only with this reflection that the office works.

Whether it is raw materials being traded, the office has besides those papers and books only samples, i.e., small quantities of sugar, grain, or

tobacco for testing, so that buyers can examine them. But those samples themselves have no intrinsic value. Those who receive them get them for free. So much so that Parisian houses now send samples or specimens to anyone in our country who requests them. All without charge.

For clarity, transparency, convenience, concentration, calculation, and trade, those books, papers, and samples or specimens are all valuable. Only, they represent no real worth. They are nothing but an illusion. A shadow, a reflection of the real substance.

The real essence of the matter, the actual thing, is not those books and papers but the goods themselves, which are sailing in the ship or stored in the warehouses.

Thus, it is with all intellectual abstractions, with all concepts and formulations, with all confessions and catechisms, with all dogmatics and handbooks.

They are all so practically useful. Everything is so convenient and easy. They are indispensable for handling matters. Only, in themselves, all of this has no intrinsic value. The actual, essential value is not in those abstract concepts, but in the realities and things of which those concepts are mere reflections.

But even here, one becomes confused through use. One starts to regard the bill as the money itself. One forgets that, in itself, it is also nothing but an abstraction without any real value.

One then speaks of faith. One analyzes faith into its main, subordinate, and ancillary concepts. One sharpens its distinctions against superstition and disbelief. One differentiates, divides, parcelizes, describes, and defines, and sets up a broad defense against all heresies concerning the concept of faith. One measures the powers of faith. One determines its origin, content, and function. In short, one shows that one knows everything about faith. The bills of lading of faith are neatly in order. Nothing is missing.

But one easily forgets that all this, without more, still holds no real value for salvation, because salvation does not depend on the concept of faith in the book, but on the living faith in the heart. One views the banknote of faith as if it were faith itself. If one then says, "All well and good, but with this banknote I can still get the money," the question arises whether one has never heard of a run on the bank.

This is what we mean: When times of crisis, danger, or "collapse" come, everyone suddenly rushes to the bank to withdraw their money. The bank is stormed. There is no getting in. People fight in the corridors of the bank to be the first to get to the counter. When this rush continues, the fatal news suddenly comes that the bank has ceased its payments.

It is also the same here. In ordinary times, your finely professed faith may suffice. But when crisis hits and your heart is besieged by adversities, then all your concepts, formulations, and logical explanations are of no use. What counts is the real faith hidden in the cellar of your heart. If it is not there, you are spiritually bankrupt. This is repeatedly observed.

When storms arise, you see a simple person in the land, a stranger to the world of concepts, but who performs wonders with the mustard seed of genuine faith in their heart. On the other hand, the learned man, with all his treasure of concepts and definitions but without the living faith in his heart, often suffers shipwreck.

Thus, the intellectualist sinks in the waves, while the simple believer continues to float on the inspiration of his heart.

A Gendered Difference?

The danger of intellectualism lies more in men than in women. Not that there are no women who mature intellectually and stand high, nor that there are not men who would benefit from some additional training in the "upper loft." But, taken in their respective kinds, men tend more than women to reason, while women are more of a feeling nature.

When the power of Confession starts to wane, it is usually the woman who first lets go of the Confession, and only after her does the man. Whether a preacher preaches the full and pure truth interests a woman less than whether he captivates and moves her. A book that serves only to distinguish truth from error is generally left unread by her, whereas she devours a book that engages and stirs her through its emotional content. She seeks something for her life, her heart, and her imagination, and is deterred by a strict argumentative style, especially the long sentence, and even more by the disruptive interjection.

De Heraut provides a test case.⁴ Among the thousands of readers of our magazine, there are thousands of female readers as well; but by far the majority of our female readers start with the meditation or the second article. They skim through the first broad page but do not read it. They do not dare to engage with it. It is too profound for them. Also if they skip one piece, they lose the thread. They must remember what the broad piece was about the previous time.

There are certainly some who, even after years, follow these more intellectual discourses and even credit them with enlightenment of their consciousness. But if we estimate that this elite among women constitutes ten percent of each thousand subscribers, we are surely not underestimating.

Women who are drowned in intellectualism are indeed rare exceptions; those who are intoxicated by feeling are more common. It is different with men, especially among the masculine men. Even within this gender, you find today feminine imitations, both in the way they avoid somewhat challenging reading for their unaccustomed brains and in the way the elixir of feeling has become an attractive temptation for them. A lack of masculinity that troubles you; that makes you glance at the heads of “The Steel Masters” or wonder if you could also conjure them onto the shoulders of your contemporaries; and that makes you fear a reverse feminism.

But of course, such weakened men do not set the tone. The characterless find their just punishment in being powerless. They do not determine the direction in which life moves. Only the man of skill and knowledge has this power. The man of foresight and policy. The man of character and consciousness.

This elite of our gender thinks, thinks deeply, and it is especially to their constant reflection and contemplation of things that they owe their strength, influence, and energy. They are the ones who take the floor in the family, in social organizations, in business, in schools, in the church, and in the state, guiding minds in smaller or larger circles through their words.

Not that women do not also exert influence. They themselves are well aware of it, and men experience it repeatedly. But this influence carries a different type, impacting more on the reality of life, more on being than on thought.

However, when it comes to expression in words, formulating thoughts, setting rules, and outlining programs, they yield the place to the other gender and listen. Not without criticism, it is true, but still sensing that in the world of thought, by striving for laurels, they would reveal their own ineptness.

The tone-setters, the interpreters, the leaders among the stronger sex are well aware of their intellectual superiority. They therefore strive to keep those weapons sharp. With a “little woman, you really don’t understand this,” the woman is then put in her place in the family. Since she is not called to act or speak outside the family, and since men monopolize all deliberative and decision-making assemblies, it is so understandable that in setting the tone, interpreting, and leading, not only the man but the intellect within the man continually takes the foreground.

In the Church, according to Scripture, only the man will speak, and thus in the consistory and all higher meetings, only the man will handle and decide

ecclesiastical matters. In the school, the woman may have secured a place of honor, but still, in the actual teaching, you hardly notice any feminine influence. In our association life, the feminine element may have entered its peculiar domain, but still, the statutes are drafted by men, and when it comes to important decisions or correspondence, men's councils are called upon. So it is throughout life. At the notary's office for deeds, at the bar when pleading, in the press when political leadership is concerned. Finally, it is also the same in government documents, government offices, at the ministerial table, and in the States and Councils.

You always hear the man, plead the man, write the man, and it is the man who leads in the world of thought.

Moreover, it is the "man of the word" who sets the tone. Not the artist, not the diligent worker, not the businessman, but the man who can speak and write. The man who excels in speaking and writing is obviously a person whose thinking is stronger than others and who possesses a significant part of his strength in his intellectual excellence and maturity.

This, in public life, naturally leads to intellectual one-sidedness. To a predominance of intellect over feeling and willpower. One reasons, elucidates, explains, organizes, formulates, advocates ideas, and soon imagines that things will naturally proceed as intended because one has outlined and ordered everything so clearly.

Especially with preachers, one often encounters that they have meticulously reasoned a topic and imagine that this reasoning will do the work; until they discover the next day in their congregation that the stone they threw into the stream made a beautiful series of ripples but then sank, leaving the stream as it was.

We do not refer to the hollow sermon, full of sound but empty of content. Such a sermon does not count as preaching at all. No, we mean a thoroughly processed subject, argued rigorously, clearly as glass. Something

that leaves no room for criticism. Yet, even then, one repeatedly encounters the disappointing outcome that the effect was as good as zero.

Nevertheless, it is perfectly understandable that the overall leadership in our associations, our churches, the state, and even in our conversations suffers from a one-sided intellectualism due to the predominance of the masculine element.

Do not say that we should mix in more of the feminine element to form a counterbalance, because where this has been tried, the inevitable result has been that either the women themselves absorbed the bacillus of intellectualism, becoming a sort of monstrous amphibians, or they infected the men with the bacillus of feeling, leading both to fall into the ditch, like the blind man guiding the cripple. In circles where this occurred, all energy eventually dwindled. No, men must improve themselves, not by becoming half-women but by becoming full men and complete human beings. What we need are not thinking and reasoning heads on a stick, but heads with a heart underneath and legs set in motion by real life. Learning a lesson, reciting a lesson, and if necessary, teaching a lesson is valuable schoolwork, but school is for life, and life does not follow the rules of school.

Do not imagine that our fight against intellectualism aims to become an advocacy for sensualism, i.e., for the one-sidedness of feeling, or a bait for the willful men who seek their Christianity solely in works, sacrifices, and busy activity.

Our protest is against each of these three one-sidednesses, and equally against all three. For things to improve, we must be men of faith, and feeling has this peculiar quality of stimulating our inner life as such, addressing all three aspects of our life: our active thinking and willing, and our passive feeling.

One must address each of these three one-sidednesses in turn, and whoever decides to address each of the three must choose which one will be dealt

with first. It is therefore logical to first combat intellectualism. This order is commonly followed, and notably among us Reformed people, this one-sidedness of intellectualism is the first and most evident in our church life.

However, this is not the case everywhere or with all individuals. We have already noted that men are more susceptible than women and that the dominant influence of men on ecclesiastical terrain sometimes excessively promotes the one-sided intellectual direction, i.e., intellectualism. Now we draw attention to the fact that this varies significantly by region and person.

A Geographical Difference?

Our country may be small, and our provinces not many in number, but the difference between regions in our small country is far from negligible.

What recently occurred in Appelteren would have been inconceivable in many other provinces; specifically, the provinces of Gelderland and Zeeland have historically been inclined towards sentimentalism and mysticism.

Holland and Friesland stand in sharp contrast. In these two provinces, a more sober tone prevails, and fanaticism does not take hold so easily. Not only can one categorize our country into circles where one region is more prone to emotional excess and another to intellectual predominance, but even within each province, the general mood of the people can sometimes vary noticeably.

In Zeeland, for instance, Walcheren has always offered more resistance to one-sided mysticism than South Beveland, and north of Zeeland, the mood in North Holland has always been much more sober than in South Holland.

These differences have their origins in the type of people that originally inhabited these regions. Saxons, Franks, and Frisians are the three major tribes that settled here centuries ago, and these three tribes had differing natures. This was also due to the ancestors of these tribes. Historically, the

Saxons were known for their tender feelings and their inclination towards the mystical and sentimental. Thus, it is not surprising that the descendants of the Saxons still tend towards similar one-sidedness.

The Franks, from the beginning, were different, and so were the Frisians, who were cooler and, if you will, more withdrawn in nature, less easily swayed by their feelings, but more exposed to the danger of allowing their intellect or will to achieve dominance.

Those who are familiar with the different regions of our country also know that the variations in church life in Gelderland and Zeeland are quite different from those in Holland and Friesland.

Of course, this should not be taken too strictly. No province remains entirely homogeneous. People move back and forth. Marriages connect families from very different provinces. Exceptions are found everywhere. But generally speaking, our knowledgeable readers will not find it controversial that the tone of life, the manner of existence, and expression significantly differ in the mentioned provinces.

The influence of God's Word has also blunted many of these one-sidednesses; in regions where the preaching of the Reformed truth has historically been the purest and most powerful, you encounter much less of the tribal one-sidedness.

In Zeeland, for example, the classis of Walcheren has historically been one of the best, and the healthy influence of this classis is still visible on that island. A beneficial restraint has been placed on the one-sided emotional life in Walcheren. The same can be observed in some villages in Gelderland. Everywhere where good, pure preaching has stood the test of centuries, the mood of the emotional life has been normalized.

Therefore, in those regions where feeling is at risk, one should not say or think: "At least we are protected from intellectualism here," because sensualism is also sinful. But it does follow from what we have said that it is

especially provinces like North Holland and Friesland where one should be cautious against intellectualism. While the preaching of the gospel in Gelderland and Zeeland has the calling to bring the emotional life under the discipline of the intellectual life, the same preaching of the gospel in Friesland and North Holland has the task of melting the hardened feeling and countering the one-sidedness of intellectual dominance.

There should not be a single, uniform preaching throughout the country. But different for one region than another, just as in Paul's days the preaching was quite different when dealing with original Jews compared to former Gentiles.

It should be noted, however, that historically the influence emanating from Holland and Friesland has been much greater than that from the more mystically inclined regions. The population of Holland has long far exceeded that of the eastern regions. But even aside from numbers, Holland's wealth, the location of the largest cities in Holland, the residence of the government in Holland, and much more, caused Holland to set the tone much more. Sometimes too much, and especially sometimes too one-sidedly. Since in these tone-setting provinces intellect rather than feeling predominated, it was naturally the case that intellectualism received steady nourishment from that side.

Personal Temperament Differences?

However, as stated, this is not only a matter of region but also of personal temperament.

Even within families, there is a difference where one family is more inclined towards sentimentality, while another is more intellectually oriented. This same difference can be seen sometimes even among members of the same family, often as a result of marriage. When two people from families with different temperaments marry, it is often observed that their children exhibit very diverse characters. One may have a more reserved character, whose feelings are almost never visible, while another has doors and

windows always open, showing you everything that goes on in their heart. In connection with this, one might be moved to tears by their feelings, while another is more stoic, sometimes to the point of being insensitive, but clever and rational.

Those with a more intellectual disposition are often prepared for academic study. Not always; not only they, but certainly more than others, especially in families from the agricultural and lower middle classes. Such a young person is known in school as “bright,” and the plan arises to have him study. This inevitably results in finding among educated people, in general, more individuals inclined towards one-sided sentimentality.

Academic study brings with it the danger that this one-sidedness is exacerbated, especially among those who are known among their peers as the most compact thinkers.

Thus, it is natural that the influence emanating from preachers tends to be too intellectual. This is also sometimes attributed to a tendency towards more objective preaching; and we do not deny that this plays a role. But still, the other factor we have pointed out is undoubtedly much stronger in its effect.

Those who have studied find that they have learned to think deeper and sharper, their strength, their weapon, their prowess. What could be more natural than that they have a certain preference for the field where they know they are stronger, stronger than others?

Thus, your personal disposition, as well as the differences in gender and region, contribute to increasing the danger of intellectualism.

The Literary Field

Where the problem, the danger of intellectualism, lies, is especially understandable today due to the prevailing movement in the literary field. It is likely that later there will be an opportunity to describe and evaluate

this literary phenomenon separately. For now, it can only be said as much as necessary to illustrate the harm of intellectualism, as it is directly related.

What gave our young literary figures a taste for the impressionistic tendency of the younger French school was, we do not say exclusively (oh no, for there were other motives at play), but certainly for a significant part, that "passion for reality" that Allard Pierson⁵ coined.

One began to feel an increasing sense of seasickness when listening to those pompous clichés, with which our half-listening, half-drowsy people were persistently bored in poetry and prose. The good ones are not to be spoken of here, and with an exception for rare gems of better origin, the dead classicism increasingly left the impression of what apostolic language in other areas had branded as "sounding brass" and "tinkling cymbal."

It was an old-fashioned display case for the mirror panes, but with an empty shop and an even emptier warehouse behind it. Each speaker, before or after, gave the impression of using a language and style that was born of the lips and had never made acquaintance with the heart.

It was always wood, laboriously and diligently gathered together; but no green twig, where the life sap from the root might be squeezed out, appeared. It was a speaking and reasoning over and singing of "fire and glow and brilliance," but one became cold and frozen. It resembled classical automatic language, but no tone from the human heart echoed back.

Appearance without substance. The younger school then angrily opposed this. These young daredevils were not deterred by the irritated dignity of the mutually admiring old gentlemen. They defied their lightning bolts. They tore off the classical straitjacket that had begun to press on them as well. Then they began to speak, write, sing, mostly in wild, sometimes in subdued, and occasionally in exquisitely fine language. They gave no form,

as long as they felt it came from their genuine being, from their own sensation, from their own warm feeling.

The serious fault to which this impressionistic school is guilty, we do not address here. That is outside our current scope. Our intention is not to critique the new literary school, but rather to shed full light on the precious element in its literary position; and that precious element was that it auctioned off "nature and truth" to free us from the reasoning and the curse of classical generalities.

Without even remotely implying that our pulpit would be saved if our preachers would let the new guide-style resound on the pulpit, we do not hesitate to state that what often robs our preaching of its effect is nothing other than that same fundamental error which the new literary figures so mercilessly, yet so completely accurately, criticized in our earlier versifiers.

The outcome spoke for itself. The products of the cold ground on which our people had so far often been received were simply put aside unread. They either found no buyers, or buyers for the bookcase, especially if the binding made a good impression. The mass of printed material, which in the broad circles of our respectable and civilized people has been added to the bookshelves without ever being read, is incredible.

There are exceptions. Some poets, by God's grace, have managed to captivate the ear of our people, at least in limited circles. But the mass, gathered without segregation, has not been read by our people. [Jacob] Cats was scorned, but Cats at least managed to captivate his entire people for over two centuries;⁶ and precisely that art our nineteenth-century poets, with a few princely figures among them, never mastered. Even the best among them were never what one could call popular. Ten or twelve mediocre poems by Genestet,⁷ well. Da Costa in in our circles,⁸ and Schaepman⁹ among the Roman Catholics, resonated with their songs, but even so only for a few of their songs; but the "consumed" by the people, the common poetry of those days did not achieve.

The new school, on the other hand, has from the start captivated, grabbed, and pleased. Its errant ethics alienated it from our circles. But if you hear about the book trade, the gentlemen in this market can clearly show you with figures from their ledgers that the somewhat wild writings of the youth are selling well and now dominate the market.

Similar success is now spoken of by many of our experiential preachers. Even many an inexperienced "exerciser" attracted the people. Here too, the same stimulus worked. People felt, when these men were of the genuine kind, reality. Not with everyone, for experiential preaching can also be imitated. That often sounds initially very beautiful and deceives for a time. But soon one also begins to notice that one is dealing with imitated feeling instead of language from the heart, and then of course "imitated feeling" is even more annoying than classical dignity and dry reasoning about generalities. But when the true experiential preaching came to the fore, there was always an audience, and one could see from the churchgoers that they enjoyed it. In both full and empty churches, there is much teaching.

Well, that fact decides. Not for experiential against object-oriented preaching. In that contrast, it is quite different. But for preaching where spiritual reality lies behind it and where the heart participates, against preaching of the dry, though inflated, intellectualist. The people, rightly, do not want a notary in the pulpit.

A notary is an indispensable and deserving man in his own field. He has an accuracy in taking records, describing estates, and drawing up wills that one envies him for. But it remains to him foreign goods, goods that are not his, for which he has no memories, and that appear only as objective goods in his documents.

Hence the deadness of notarial language. Most accurately, in precisely legal form, perfectly arranged; but his documents are simply unreadable, and far more signatories sign documents without really understanding anything

about them. It is this notarial character that disfigures all intellectualistic preaching, making it tasteless and therefore often so unenjoyable. Exegesis, doctrinal distinction, trilogical categorization, subtle heresy checks, formal language, or even language that turns bombastic—yet it all leaves the unrefreshing impression of cold, notarial minutiae. You do not feel that the speaker himself feels it, and therefore it does not affect you or draw you in. There may be fireworks in the words, but there is no fire from the heart that ignites the fire in your heart.

You listen as they reason about your most valuable possessions, but you do not taste the fruit of the noble vine. It is said repeatedly that it concerns your soul, your eternal salvation, your blessedness, and your eternal life. However, while listening, you often find yourself even further from your soul than when you first sat down to listen.

If you were genuinely dealing with your soul, were in anguish over your sins, or stood at the gates of eternity, and such a sermon began to be read to you, you would pray and plead for it to stop, and for someone to actually address your soul.

We certainly do not wish to exaggerate and acknowledge that preaching also serves other conditions and purposes. We are currently considering the matter from one side, and therefore must be somewhat one-sided.

However, the main point we are contending against should now be apparent. The notary on occasion—fair enough. You cannot do without him from time to time. However, the notary every Sunday—that is unbearable, that ruins the church, that renders preaching powerless, that has no grip on the people. It does not edify; it does harm.

For clarity, we have so far only discussed the intellectualist danger that infiltrates the pulpit and renders the public Ministry of the Word and Prayer soulless. We will address this more closely later. For now, it is

important to point out how mistaken it is to believe that the one-sidedness of intellectual direction is a malign bacillus that only affects preaching.

If only it were so! But naturally and unfortunately, the reality is quite different. We add "naturally" because it cannot be otherwise. As preaching is conducted, so the type of congregation evolves, i.e., the peculiar form of its religious expression.

Look at Scotland, England, and America, where half a century of Methodist preaching has alienated the once robust and cordial Presbyterian churches from the confession of truth and deprived them of deeper religious feeling, leading them to almost entirely engage in external busyness and endless activity, and driving them towards a one-sided will direction.

There are regions in our country where an expert, village by village, can directly point out the consequences of the type of preaching that had predominated for a long time; especially in villages where the same preacher has spiritually guided an entire generation for thirty or more years. For it is true that in more than one place, excessively one-sided preaching has led to reaction, but this was precisely the cause of the spiritual schism that has devastated such a church.

There is no doubt that one-sided intellectualistic preaching will, though not immediately, but very definitely over time, also leave an intellectualist stamp on the life of the congregation in such a church.

On one hand, this will manifest happily in that such a congregation's knowledge of the truth increases and gradually instills more importance. For the free sovereignty of the Lord of Lords, for the absolute authority of the Holy Scripture, and for the deep mystery of justification by faith, there is gradually a clearer awareness. Especially the catechism preaching regains its place of honor. Catechism instruction has sometimes become almost a half-lecture under the influence of intellectualism. Although not everyone can follow the complicated reasoning, there are always those who enjoy it.

Gradually, more members of such a congregation will emerge who regain a grasp of the confession, understand the struggle for and with the truth, read about it, think about it, and ultimately come together to continue their study of the truth.

Another good result is often that the appreciation and knowledge of the Holy Scripture in such a congregation increases. The truly sad habit of preaching year after year on, say, two hundred texts repeatedly is, where intellectualism prevails, not to be feared. On the contrary, such preaching aims to gradually reveal the entire content of the Holy Scripture to the congregation, compare Scripture with Scripture, and explain the chosen passage of the Holy Scripture in detail. This fosters a spirit of inquiry, removing the utility of the Bible reading in the family. People start reading to understand, and at least some become more knowledgeable about the Bible.

Thus, we see that we are not blind to the positive side of intellectualism. On the contrary, a Reformed church that neglects the work of the mind, the study of the truth, and serious reflection on the articles of the Confession must spiritually impoverish and fall prey to various sectarian and heretical spirits.

The Need for Balance

Yet, if this work of thinking is not rightly balanced with immersion in the mysticism of the inner life and with vigorous will expression in the struggle against the kingdom of Satan and for the kingdom of God, neither that precious knowledge of the truth nor that meticulous Scripture study will be able to ward off the coldness of minds that eventually freezes all spiritual currents within.

This happens imperceptibly as follows. In every congregation, there are youthful and mature members who are intellectually richer and those who are less gifted. Those who can think more easily and are better suited for intellectual inquiry are naturally drawn to the one-sided intellectual

preacher more than others, whose dullness often irritates him. Only the former's judgment on his preaching is valued by him. He delights in engaging with such individuals and helping them advance. Thus, the impression arises as if only these more intellectual congregation members constitute the core of the church community.

The others may try to keep up, but they cannot, and soon they have to give up. Thus, withdrawing to their own realm, these less knowledgeable members remain without guidance or edification. As a result, the distance between the more intellectually developed and the others grows ever larger.

Gradually, intellectual knowledge begins to replace spiritual ability. Intellectualism starts to become a test of genuine conversion, and those who cannot keep up with this intellectual path descend to a lower rank, remaining in struggle for their entire lives without ever experiencing the salvation of election as the basis of their comfort.

Initially, this is accompanied by some tenderness and the seriousness of piety lends a higher character to the intellectualism. But the inherent evil in the principle is unstoppable. It always works through to its conclusion. Thus, the congregation approaches the dangerous point where historical faith is mistaken for true faith, and it seems as if grace was promised not to the humble but to the more knowledgeable.

Not that in such a phase there would not be profound reasoning about the vast difference between historical and true faith, and not that all characteristics of true faith would not be analyzed sharply, but it increasingly remains at the level of the prescription. Fewer people come to get that prescription of the medicine from the Great Apothecary.

In the first rising generation, this process does not gain such momentum, because the seriousness of earlier periods is still present, and those who led the intellectual inquiry were genuinely converted men and women. This tempers the problem for many years. But already in the second generation,

the essentially pious content of this intellectualism becomes weaker. Eventually, the tenderness of conscience is seen as narrow-mindedness and it does not take long before the sin that has been lurking for so long creeps in, meaning that this high intellectualism eventually reconciles itself with a rather careless lifestyle.

If this comes to pass, the leaders and preachers will surely protest against it, but almost inevitably, they will have to apply their intellectual one-sidedness to moral life as well, i.e., to meticulously analyze what is permissible and what is not, and apply the results of intellectual research to what is acceptable and what is not.

This will control the excesses for a time. There will be scrupulous precision. Before one realizes it, one has strayed onto the path of the Scribes of Jesus' day.

Thus, everything becomes formal. The spiritual field of the congregational life becomes barren and gray. All freshness, all enthusiasm, all warmth fades away.

Then inevitably, as always was the outcome with such a development: the congregation eventually falls into indifference and unbelief. If a backsliding preacher comes who passionately criticizes these barren formalities and hair-splitting, the older generation may hesitate, but the younger generation will follow in droves. They feel that they have been fed stones instead of bread, and they cheer the man who comes to deliver them from these unbearable constraints.

Thus, the sad outcome has been in hundreds of churches as an inevitable consequence of intellectualism, which emerged around the middle of the previous century. Especially in our northern provinces, the Groningen preachers were eventually greeted with cheers by the overwhelming multitude.¹⁰ Thus, it would inevitably happen again now, if not for the

constant effort and warnings against every resurgence of this intellectual one-sidedness.

However, we feel that the old objection to what we have presented repeatedly arises—whether this approach diminishes the objective nature of preaching and leads to emotional sentimentality. Although this debate would be better addressed separately, a response to this understandable objection is necessary here.

The Ministry of the Word can only possess an objective nature. When we speak of the Ministry of the Word, we acknowledge that there is a Word of God that has come to us from past ages, possessing a self-contained revelation. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken away. It speaks to us as a historical testimony.

This in no way suggests that God is no longer working in us or in others' hearts. The phrase "Listen, my children, to what God has done in my soul" retains its unchanging right. However, experiential matters should never replace or take precedence over the objective ministry of the word. Furthermore, the word should never be evaluated based on personal experiences; rather, experiences should always be evaluated based on the word of God.

The apostles themselves had a different experience because they only had the Old Testament, and the New Testament was still forthcoming through them. They also had the unique privilege of personally witnessing, hearing, and touching the Word made flesh. However, this exception applies only to them and not to anyone else. For us, we must believe, as Jesus Himself prayed, "through their word."

Moreover, what the apostles offer us is not experiential in the sense commonly understood today. It is the experience of their fellowship with Christ in the flesh or their encounters that were directed towards the whole Church and not limited to their personal application. Even on the road to

Damascus, it was not Paul's personal conversion that was the main focus but his calling to apostleship and mission among the Gentiles.

Therefore, nothing should detract from this: The Ministry of the Word consists of bringing the ancient Word of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, to the congregation, explaining it, applying it to their situation, and binding it to their souls by men filled with power and the Holy Spirit.

The minister does not proclaim himself, his own conversion story, or his spiritual experiences but rather preaches the Word, the Revelation of God, the gospel, and Christ. He himself is the subject, and Christ is the object. Thus, in faithful preaching, the subject diminishes, and the object takes centre stage. In addition, when the preaching becomes truly excellent, the audience forgets the preacher altogether and is solely focused on Jesus.

Even the question of whether the minister himself is a chosen vessel, one already blessed, one deeply led by the Spirit, should not preoccupy the congregation. Only the church council should exercise discernment in this regard, and no council has received from Christ the infallible gift to pass judgement on someone's spiritual state. The church council, if functioning properly, recognizes in the Church of the Lord nothing but believers and children of believers and acknowledges the possibility of hypocrites among them. However, it does not know these hypocrites. As soon as they begin to reveal themselves through unbelief or scandalous behaviour, the council acts with church discipline. Such discipline should naturally be applied to the ministers first and foremost, as they require extra scrutiny, also for the sake of the congregation.

As long as a preacher shows no signs of unbelief or serious misconduct, the church council considers him a believer and praises the manifestation of his faith in the power and fervour of his words. The council cannot conduct further investigations, and no one outside the council has the right to do so. Any other system would lead to a selection process outside the council, not carried out by those called to do so but by self-appointed individuals. In addition, who would then evaluate these individuals? Furthermore, this

system would generally result in choosing uneducated individuals in the prime of their lives for the Ministry of the Word, based on their long life experiences and spiritual discernment. Since these experiences would still need to be evaluated—considering how much imagination and false delusion can masquerade as experiences—there would still be a need for experienced men who could provide the true meaning of the word. Thus, through the detour of personal experiences, one would ultimately return to the usual Ministry of the Word.

History's experience in this regard has spoken most decisively. Indeed, no matter how many groups initially rejected the Ministry of the Word to allow free speakers of spiritual experiences in the congregation, one by one, they all suffered for their error and ended up either disappearing without a trace or appointing regular preachers once again. Take, for example, the Anabaptists,¹¹ who initially rejected the notion of "teachers" and emphasized free speech. See how they eventually came to train ministers and appoint them everywhere, just like us.

This point must not be challenged: the Ministry of the Word must exist and continue. The Ministry of the Word is not about the preacher's personal experiences but about proclaiming Christ. The assessment of whether a preacher should be rejected can and should be made only by the church council (or classis), and even then, only to decide if he has renounced the faith or if his conduct causes offense.

However, strict adherence to this does not excuse the preacher if he only acts as a dispenser of medicine instead of also appearing as a knowledgeable and loving physician.

Herein lies the crux of the difference.

In the Word are all the means of grace that can be administered to us by people, and rightly so, the Holy Scriptures have been called the “Divine pharmacy for all soul’s ailments.”

Thus, it is precious and good that the Minister of the Word is familiar with this pharmacy; that he knows all the medicines that are available there; that he, having examined each medicine thoroughly, knows its exact name and how it should be prepared for use.

But what, I ask you, does the poor sick person gain if he hears a precise and complete list of everything available in the pharmacy read out to him, if there is no pharmacist who examines his illness and provides him with a prescription for that specific ailment, including instructions on how to take the prepared medicine?

He will die of his illness, even if he could be transported to the pharmacy and his bed spread in the midst of the full pharmacy.

Therefore, the good preacher must be both: a physician and a pharmacist; a doctor and an apothecary. This is precisely what intellectism rejects. It reduces the preacher to being merely a pharmacist, ultimately leaving everything to the pharmacist behind the counter. There is chemical knowledge, herbal knowledge, poison knowledge, down to the smallest and most specific details, and the rich pharmacopoeia is known by heart and repeatedly recited. Oh, certainly, healing is available here for all sickness and all soul's ailments, and anyone who says what he needs can be healed. But precisely because the sick do not come to know this last aspect, the pharmacy remains untouched, and spiritual sickness persists and worsens.

We admit this is a metaphor, and like all metaphors, it has its shortcomings. But souls thirsting for God understand this metaphor quite well.

Certainly, they also seek the pharmacy, but first the pharmacist, who probes their wounds, examines their illnesses, explains to them what they are suffering from, and then clearly and explicitly indicates from the Word what the prescription is that fits their ailment.

If they do not learn this, and are continually pointed to the rich pharmacy in general terms, and hear constantly about the pharmacopoeia, sometimes with Latin terms, they leave the church just as comfortless as they came, feeling alienated from a sermon that, without intending to, mocks the suffering of their soul.

Applying the Word is not just about saying two or three generalities that every listener already knows. No, applying is penetrating, not into one's own subjective life, but into the objective needs of the congregation, and providing a prescription for each need that matches the specific ailment.

If you say, "This is ten times more difficult," we agree wholeheartedly. But only those who sow with tears will reap with joy. Preaching is difficult. But also, when it is done well, the reward is so beautiful.

We dare to hope that our protest against intellectism will have weeded out the emerging weeds here and there. Nonetheless, we must issue an equally serious warning against tipping to the other side.

By the "other side," we mean that the clarity of confession should not be sacrificed to a certain desire to be primarily warm and impassioned.

The danger here lies in the stark difference in personal inclinations. Some are almost naturally reasoned, while others are inclined to let the flow of their emotions, swaying and undulating, sweep over any emerging reasoning. For the former, speaking comes naturally as long as they can reason; for the latter, words flow from their lips as long as they can work on their feelings by letting their own emotions have free rein.

This difference can never be entirely eliminated, and the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to each person as He wills. Both elements are necessary, and both are granted by Christ to His church. Therefore, in churches with multiple teachers, it is a blessing when both elements complement each other, and in churches with only one teacher, it is certainly not undesirable that both elements alternate during vacancies.

Provided, and this is paramount, that both elements remain under the control of the principle and are not sought in dry abstraction or unclear mysticism.

The clarity of confession has always been strongly emphasized in our Reformed churches. The Holy Spirit has worked in two ways: on the inner person and on our consciousness. It has always been maintained that faith comprises two elements: an inward, (i.e., a firm) trust in personal application, and also, a firm belief that the revealed truth is indeed the truth. That latter element must never be abandoned or even neglected out of fear of intellectism.

We must consider not only the change in our inner being but also the change in our consciousness. Although life and clarity are closely related, they are distinct; and just as it would be unreasonable to advocate for clarity without life, it would be equally absurd to advocate for life while disregarding clarity. There is revelation, i.e., there is disclosure, there is indication, there is communication of truth to us. This truth stands in full splendor against the world's lies. It is our privilege as Christians to walk in the light of that truth. Thus, the entire concept of both Confession and Preaching of the Word rests on this. Confession is always about affirming a certain truth that is contested or denied by others.

One who confesses must affirm something, something specific, something well-defined. It is not enough to say, "I confess Christ," because that confession naturally invites the question: "Who do you say that I am?"

Certainly, the range of thoughts for one person may be narrower and more extensive than for another. A confessor of Christ who acts as a scholar has reflected on more issues than a common laborer. There is a more concentrated confession and a broader expanded confession. But even if it is wrong to ignore this difference, every Christian must still be required to have his own personal Christian confession as extensive as the scope of his

thoughts. His entire thinking, the entirety of his human consciousness, must always be governed by the principle of God's holy revelation.

Regarding this, the theory of "complex faith" has been proclaimed, meaning that the ordinary Christian is incapable of evaluating all issues on his own. If he simply declares that he believes what the church believes, this was considered sufficient for him.

However, the Reformed church has always opposed this. It has rightly perceived that this creates bondage and would foster clericalism. For this reason, it has demanded that every Christian, according to the measure of the gift given to him, have insight into what he professes and be always ready and able to give an account of the hope that is in him.

The Holy Scripture provides not only facts but also thoughts, representations, and ideas. This revealed truth must be aligned with our conditions and ways of thinking. It must speak to us in our consciousness.

Where various opinions are derived from the same Scripture, including false and true ones, the Church, in its Confession, has sifted the true from the false and thus sought to promote unity of clear and precise understanding of the Holy Scripture.

This sifting between truth and falsehood has been the work of centuries, and the church has always valued this clarity and precision, won at the cost of immense intellectual effort, even the blood of martyrs, and has sought to prevent this clarity from being obscured by the infiltration of sectarian deviations into darkness and obscurity.

Thus, preaching must continually aim to drive back the confusion of error and maintain the old clarity of confession.

The demand that our faith also live for our consciousness; that not only the heart is strengthened but also the mind is enlightened, must therefore never be rejected; and there was strength for our churches when, in better times,

the clear insight into our faith and confession was common, if not to all, then certainly to most. Where, in some churches, there are still men and women who have matured in the knowledge of the truth and can pass this knowledge to the next generation, they are a blessing to the entire congregation.

Thus, there is no question of our warning against intellectism negating or undervaluing this clarity in confession and clarity in preaching. On the contrary, what we fear is that intellectism might cloud this clarity.

The erroneous path that scholasticism ultimately took in the Middle Ages illustrates what we mean.

Those who lose themselves in subtleties during intellectual inquiry, exhaust themselves in endless abstractions, and become entangled in what might justifiably be called hair-splitting, do not clarify what they intend to argue but obscure and divert from clear understanding.

One who examines a face up close with a magnifying glass sees an unpleasant jumble of features and lines, pores, and fuzz, but misses the impression of the living face and can ultimately no longer recognize the person.

Thus, it is here. Detailed, refined study is excellent for the scholar, who must achieve more accurate knowledge through it; but the result of that study must be a clear and precise understanding that he can then communicate to others without leading them into all these dry processes.

It is the living impression of the truth that he must possess and convey to others. The power of this communication must be sought and found not in showing others his own abstractions but in speaking and witnessing with the exactness of expression that corresponds to it, in a context that opens up even to the simplest listener.

This goal will be achieved if he does not isolate his intellect from his heart and his heart from his faith, but if his whole living person works together to grasp, comprehend, and convey the living truth.

In this way, he will seek contact not only with the intellect of his listeners but with all that is in them. He will not isolate their minds from their inner existence, nor their inner existence from their life; and conversely, he will not separate God's truth from the living God, nor the doctrine of salvation from the realm of salvation above. In this cooperation of his entire person with the entire person of his listeners, and of the truth he preaches with the reality of the invisible world, he will completely overcome intellectism and allow the triumph of clear, bright faith.

MYSTICISM

Our threefold expression of life is symbolized by the head, heart, and hand. The dominance of the head over the heart and hand leads to intellectism, but likewise, the dominance of the heart over the head and hand leads to mysticism. After warning against intellectism, we now want to briefly discuss the nature, essence, and danger of mysticism.

We speak of mysticism, not Sensualism. Although the latter could also be discussed, it would lead to misunderstandings. Sensualism is simply an expression of emotion, with an emphasis on sentiment. However, in the realm of religion, it is not an ordinary sentiment that creates a separate sphere. Sentiment – feeling— in the sense of a lightly stirred soul, is merely a mode of affectation and expression. It is a mode of expression and affectation that occurs in all areas of life, without being limited to the realm of religion.

The focus here is on the heart, and sentiment exerts its false influence not on the heart, but on the nervous system. Butchers, due to their constant exposure to blood, often have highly sensitive nerves and can be very sentimental without it having anything to do with their hearts. Rough sailors, likewise, due to their constant exposure to danger, often have weak nerves and are often compassionate by nature, without it proving anything about the state of their hearts. So it happens that various other people, due to temperament or their life experiences, are easily moved to tears and constantly swing between crying and laughter, without it revealing anything about the condition of their hearts. The heart beats in the more reserved and less demonstrative individual with tears often more earnestly and deeply than in the emotionally volatile person for whom sentiment has become second nature.

Sentimentality and Nervousness

During the days of the Reformation, when the heart felt deeply and spoke, this sentimentality was far from prevalent. It was only towards the end of

the nineteenth century, when people indulged more in moonlight and solemnity, and Rhijnvis Feith [1753-1824] was the beloved poet, that this tender sentimentality arose. When it infiltrated the church, the effectiveness of a sermon was measured by the number of women who fainted. The handkerchief was a key ingredient, and women with a predisposition for fainting were indispensable for the reputation and fame of a celebrated preacher.

Reading the sermons that targeted this sentimentality, one is repulsed by the nauseating sway in which strength was sought. For example, one can read the jubilee sermon of the late Dr A. Kuyper, who was a preacher in Amsterdam at that time. He claimed to have crossed the Amstel River with his staff, akin to crossing the Jordan River, and had now become a leader of two armies in Amsterdam.

We are fortunate to have moved beyond this susceptibility to nervousness. Reformed women were never suitable instruments for it. What happened in the Veluwe region under another preacher Kuyper at that time, which also spread to Zeeland, was an exceptional occurrence. Sleeping in church still occurs among us, but fortunately, fainting is almost non-existent.

Even if, in certain circles, there is still occasionally a disproportionate influence of sentiment felt, it is not a widespread phenomenon that requires confrontation. Furthermore, even where this phenomenon arises, it does not possess a specific religious character.

People who are prone to tears cry just as readily when witnessing a fire or another accident, or when they are angry, and their anger cannot find expression in bitterness. This should not be misunderstood as an attempt to render the nerves inactive. We have our nerves from God, and the ability to express what fills our hearts through the vehicle of our nerves, making it perceptible to others, is undoubtedly a divine gift for which we should be thankful.

This is not a common phenomenon that requires eradication, and in no case does this phenomenon, even where it occurs, bear a specific religious character. People who are prone to crying cry just as easily when they witness a fire or other accident, or when they are angry, and their anger cannot find expression in bitterness.

We do not understand this as if we wanted to render the nerves inactive. We have our nerves from God, and the ability to express what fills our hearts through the vehicle of our nerves and make it noticeable to others is undoubtedly a divine gift for which we should be grateful.

There is also a rigidity that repels, a silence that makes one cold, an insensitivity that closes one's heart. In some regions of our country, this rigidity is even considered an evil that must be combated. We are not marble statues or wax figures, but living individuals, and that life must come forth and show itself. It shows itself also in our eyes, in our facial expressions, in our handshake, in a friendly smile, in the heartfelt word, and, if there is truly compassion for the pain of others, also in the tears from our eyes.

Such a nervous response is healthy and beneficial. What we criticized in sentimentality is not that healthy response, but the pathological nervous expression. An expression of nervous disorder that does not propagate from the heart to the nerves but is born in the nerves themselves.

However, as stated, the fundamental evil in religious matters does not lie in this functioning of the nerves but in the undisciplined functioning of the heart. Taken in that form, it presents itself not as sentimentality but as mysticism. Mysticism, as such, is distinct from mystic. *Mystiek* is the good, the necessary, and the indispensable. *Mysticisme* is its degeneration, its corruption, its gradual decay.

The Filioque and False Mysticism

The difference between these two is best felt in relation to the Filioque. As is known, Filioque is the term of the confession regarding the Holy Spirit, which the Roman and Protestant churches uphold and which the Greek Church has deleted. Filioque means and from the Son.

The difference now consisted in the fact that the Greek Church confessed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (and not from the Son), while on the other hand, the other Christian churches confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son, that is, *Patre Filioque*. The dispute over the Filioque, therefore, revolves around whether the Holy Spirit proceeds solely from the Father or also from the Son, and in this lies the fundamental difference between true mysticism and false mysticism.

As is also known, false mysticism is nowhere more prevalent than in Russia, and the peculiar sects that constantly arise in this vast empire, the most well-known of which is the sect that walled up its best members alive in stone quarries, repeatedly demonstrate to what extravagance this mysticism leads.

If one asks how this is related to the Filioque, here is the answer.

If the Holy Spirit does not proceed solely from the Father but also from the Son, then the works of the Holy Spirit are bound to the Revelation of the Son, as Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit taking from what is His and declaring it to us. With this confession, the work of the Holy Spirit remains bound to the work of the Son. It does not go beyond the redemptive work of the Son but is connected to it and flows forth from it. Where we believe we perceive the work of the Holy Spirit within us, it is self-evident that the Word remains our touchstone, and we know that any internal working that does not correspond to this Word, that goes against it or surpasses it is not a work of the Holy Spirit but either a play of our own spirit or an influence of demons.

Therefore, there is a connection, a bond with Christ, a bond with the incarnate Word when we hold on to the Filioque. There is a connection to

the flesh and to the written Word. Then discernment and distinction are possible because the Filioque always remains, and only in the Revelation of Christ does the Holy Spirit manifest Himself. There is a connection between the great work of our Redemption and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. To add to this as well, there remains a unity of correspondence between our inner and our churchly life, for the Church is the manifestation of the work of the Son.

On the other hand, if the Filioque is omitted, if the work of the Holy Spirit is detached from the work of the Son, and thus detached from the Word and the Church of Christ, then it becomes something in itself, something separate from Christ, something separate from the Word, something separate from the Church. Once this separation is accepted, it cannot be otherwise than that this mystical work of the Holy Spirit is soon regarded as superior to the work of Christ, above the Word, and above the Church.

Already the Anabaptists did not hesitate, even in the days of the Reformation, to present it in such a way that, yes, for ordinary people and for children, the Scripture was good enough, but those who received the work of the Holy Spirit within themselves stood on a higher plane and therefore no longer needed the Scripture. An "enlightened" person had outgrown the Scripture. From the Scripture, they moved on to Christ, and likewise to the Church. The result was that most of these fanatics eventually rejected the Scripture, then the Church, and finally even Christ. They had ascended to a higher plane. They received direct communion with the Eternal Being. They possessed their own inner light; the common light by which others walked had lost all allure for them.

But then it followed that every measure, every norm, and every touchstone disappeared for distinguishing true from false influence, and that eventually the unhealthiest imaginations, the most foolish representations, the most sinful inspirations were attributed by all sorts of hotheads and fanatics as the voice of the Holy Spirit. There is almost no sin one can imagine –adultery,

debauchery, murder, and whatever else—that has not been committed in the name of the Holy Spirit.

The Origins of False, Unhealthy Mysticism

There is some reflection required to understand clearly and distinctly what is meant by false mysticism. It always arises from the sentiment of Psalm 42, from the "panting deer," and therefore it is fitting for us to treat everything related to mysticism with a certain tenderness. "Then my soul longs for God?" That is the soul's cry. It is the thirst for the living God. The soul's longing for communion with the Eternal Being. A desire that can sometimes degenerate into presumptuous curiosity, just as there are people who want to delve into the depths of Satan. But usually, it does not start that way.

Typically, it begins as a need to love, in a vague, infinite sense. Just as in the heart of a young man or a young girl, there can arise a vague desire to be in love. Not being in love with a specific person, but in general. This does not necessarily mean being in love in a sensual sense. We do not say that it does not often play a role or sometimes come into play as the outcome also shows how the most mystical sects eventually degenerate into the service of sinful desires. But it doesn't have to be that way. What God said about Adam, that he had no helper corresponding to him, is meant in a holy and pure sense. Our human nature is not meant to remain alone. One can ultimately modify their disposition to the point where they find happiness in celibacy, whether as a man or a woman, but then something within us is always broken, and the person who is compelled to remain alone and acknowledges their disappointment until death is much higher than the distorted one who has gotten over it and now adapted to their unnatural condition.

A man is only half a human being without his other half, and a woman is likewise only a half being, fitting with a counterpart. This is inherent in our whole being, in our whole nature, and not solely in a single inclination. Thus, the longing for affection is inseparable from the yearning of our being and nature; there is a longing that cries out for satisfaction, a going out of

the heart toward what it knows and feels can only be found in another heart. Although it is a rare exception for this longing, this desire, when it becomes concentrated on a specific person, to be devoid of any feeling of disappointment, it remains true that this personal concentration is the most natural and healthy.

However, preceding the directing of one's heart and affection towards a specific person, there is almost always an impersonal longing, a longing without a specific object from which it emanates. This is not the case with a young child. But as the years go by, this awareness awakens in the heart, and it is an exception for it to be awakened by a particular person. It can happen, and it occurs, but it is the exception. Hence, usually, once a certain age is reached, and the heart is not stifled by pride and self-sufficiency, that vague longing arises not to be loved but rather to love, and then that rapturous, indefinite, unrestrained character emerges, losing itself in elusive ideals. This is often more pronounced in girls than in young men. It is more prevalent among Germans than among the Dutch, and among Germans, particularly among the Saxons.

This naturally arising need for love, this longing to love, can sometimes lead to a search for a higher love, a love that transcends earthly relationships. Commandments, of which Jesus himself said that they are like one another. It is one emptiness in the heart; one feeling that something belongs to our hearts that we cannot give ourselves; one realization that we are created and destined to exist for something else; to give ourselves to another and to experience solitude in blissful communion.

Now, in a human heart that still functions somewhat purely, two impulses are born from this, both arising from our creation. Because we are creatures, created in God's image, our soul yearns for God; and because we are created as men or women, our hearts long for the love of one who can be our other half.

These two impulses diverge and operate independently as soon as the urge to love a human being becomes concentrated on a particular person. At that point, this finite love stands distinctively opposed to the Infinite, which knows no limit or measure.

However, as long as the longing for a human being has not yet been directed towards a specific person, and thus remains vague, indefinite, and hovering, especially in elevated natures, the distinction between these two impulses is weakened. It is then, on the one hand, a thirst for the love of the Infinite and, on the other hand, a thirst for the love of the undefined. So, both sensations flow into each other. Especially the worship of Jesus often served as the connecting link. Indeed, in Him, both the Infinite and the defined exist. There are examples in history that show how these two impulses we mentioned merged into one impulse, directed towards the Son of God and the Son of Man. A fusion that, depending on one's disposition and soul, sometimes led to rapturous, holy worship, and other times to sliding into lust lurking behind the holy mask.

It is during the life stage we have indicated that the first seeds of unhealthy mysticism, i.e., mysticism, typically sprout in the youthful heart. The sickly-mystical sects have often targeted young men and especially young women of those ages. Yet, this inclination usually subsides in most of those who were deceived once they marry or even just become engaged. However, in others, this unhealthy inclination is further nurtured, and it is in these individuals that true mysticism finds its carriers and interpreters.

This almost always diverges in two directions. The sickened longing of the soul either leans towards the spiritual or the sensual side. If it inclines sensually, it leads to a deeply sinful course that ultimately ends in the most brazen immorality. If it triumphs and takes spiritual paths, it blazes up in holy zeal, which sometimes enables astonishing self-sacrifice and self-mortification but almost always accompanies extraordinary self-elevation. Already in the early centuries of Christianity, there were monasteries that housed men and women whose holy, ecstatic dedication would have

embarrassed you. But the terrifying scenes that played out among Anabaptist leader Jan van Leiden's¹² followers in Munster were known in the past and have repeated from century to century, albeit on a different scale.

When the human longing for the other half that belongs to us transcends concentration on a specific person and dissolves into a longing for God, it lends something passionate to the desire for God. Conversely, when love for God flows into human love directed towards others, it ends up pushing aside every moral barrier and ultimately sanctifies the most unholy for the lost sense of the soul.

These extremes of mixing two desires in our hearts occur exceptionally, at specific times, with specific individuals, and under specific circumstances.

Need for Caution

If the Church of Christ exercises discipline over souls, there is no need to fear such excesses. It is fitting for us to always be extremely cautious. We know how a small spark can ignite a great heap of wood. From time to time, we hear of remarkable occurrences in our country that serve as a warning to us. Even among Reformed believers, there are occasionally exposed sexual relationships that show how the Devil of mysticism still prowls like a roaring lion.

However, as such, it should not be considered a general danger, nor should it be equated with intellectism. It is also worth acknowledging that the Reformed Confession and Reformed church practice place a wholesome rein on any unhealthy mystical inclination.

The more common evil among us usually does not lean towards either extreme but consists of an impure direction given to piety. This danger does not arise in people who are hard-hearted and find no blessedness in piety. However, when true piety reigns in a family, a circle, or a congregation, where godliness does not merely consist of external practices

and intellectual debates on deep matters, but instead softens the conscience and drives it toward God, seeking soul's delight in love, one often sees a leaning either towards excessive activity or excessive enjoyment. It is the disruption of the proper balance between these two that allows mysticism to take hold.

A contagious atmosphere arises easily, an impressive manner of interaction and fellowship, something overly spiritual that does not set you free but oppresses you, and under which your own soul suffers as long as you do not allow yourself to be seduced by it. These always questionable spiritual conditions persist with such power because they indeed find their foundation and origin in the desire of many souls to have a closer, more intimate, hidden communion with the Eternal Being. This is naturally wonderful. It is only in the manner in which that communion is sought that the fault lies.

Mysticism Distorted

At this point that mysticism comes into play. Mysticism, in its purest form, is the pursuit of a deep, intimate communion with the divine, with God. However, as with any human endeavour, mysticism can be distorted and misinterpreted. False mysticism arises when the longing for communion with God is twisted and distorted by unhealthy imaginations, foolish representations, and sinful incitements. It can lead to a departure from the true path and the embrace of misguided beliefs and practices.

Do you understand what it means when it says that God, in order to reveal Himself, hides? If so, then you will also understand that a desire arises to penetrate through that concealment. Although it may not be possible, one can imagine that it is. To live based on this imagination is the root of unhealthy, and later sinful, mysticism.

Let us further explain this somewhat brief and fragmented explanation.

Unless God Himself wills it, no creature can comprehend anything about Him, let alone know or understand Him. If God had not endowed a portion of His creatures with the ability to comprehend, perceive, and know, not a single creature would ever have known anything about God. God would have existed for Himself from eternity to eternity. "Known to Himself, and no one else." It could have been a magnificent world, a true paradise with abundant plant life, teeming with life, pleasure, and song, even richer and more beautiful than the animal world we possess. And yet, as long as neither angel nor human, nor any other rational creature, had arisen in that world, that entire magnificent world would have never even suspected the existence of God.

If we want to know God, or at least something about God, He Himself begins by giving us an eye and an ear, and in the strictest sense, we know or understand nothing about God except through His own act. When God makes us able to see, then we see; when God makes us able to hear, then we hear. Otherwise, it remains eternal darkness and a silent grave-like stillness around us and within us.

Now, God has given us the eye and implanted the ear within us, and in connection with this, He has also given us the understanding, the comprehension, and the ability to perceive. All of this is His gift. But let us assume that our human nature possesses this gift. It may be weakened by sin, but as such, it still belongs to us as humans.

But now, let us go further.

Now, two possibilities can be considered: either that God can be spied upon, searched, and comprehended in His essence by us against His will, or that the creature can only perceive anything about God to the extent that God allows Himself to be seen and heard.

This distinction applies to our own lives as well. In the Levant,¹³ whether in Algiers and Tunis or in Egypt and Istanbul, no Oriental woman is ever

seen. She is there, and she may be allowed into the house and even go out on the streets, but as soon as a stranger could catch a glimpse of her, she covers her face. Thus, you see an appearance that, apart from its forms, reveals nothing more than woollen, linen, or silk fabric; and it is only the voice you hear that tells you that you are dealing with a living being, a human.

This same distinction continues constantly. An old peddler, sitting in the marketplace with his scrap metal, sits there in public, for all to see. Any skilled photographer, if the peddler's face is interesting, can capture it and later sell it as a study. But no one can possess the portrait of a noble lady unless she herself bestows it. This goes even further. Perhaps there are a hundred or more people who know us by sight and would recognize us, but in our hearts, we allow only a very few to see inside. Unless we openly display our heart's secrets (which also happens), only those very few individuals, with whom we have intimate relationships and to whom we reveal ourselves in quiet confidence, truly know us.

So, there is much in the world that we perceive when it pleases us, but there are also things in the world that we can only perceive if they intentionally and willingly reveal themselves to us.

I can dig into the ground and see what substance it contains. I can chemically analyse various substances and observe their effects. This is true of a plant and, to a certain extent, even of an animal. Although the stars are far away, humans have eventually discovered means to spy on them even to the point of determining their composition through spectral analysis. But when it comes to a living human being, this is different. If the examining judge encounters someone pretending to be mute, he cannot obtain anything from him. A human being has the ability to reveal himself and the ability to remain hidden, even the ability to deceive through pretence.

Now let us transition from humans to angels. You believe that angels exist, you believe that they work, and you admit that they can also work upon

you. Particularly when it comes to the evil angel called Satan, you know this all too well. Yet, except for those few cases reported in Holy Scripture of angels appearing, you lack any means to spy on, discover, or observe angels. You know what has been said about them and what has been told to you, but you do not see, hear, or know the angels themselves. An angel can reveal himself, and this has occurred on rare occasions, but an angel can also remain hidden, and this is the norm, and you are powerless in the face of it. If you try to force this, you can only rely on your imagination. You can imagine what an angel looks like, how they might whisper certain things to you, but it is all a play of the imagination. Deceptive play. The end result remains that the world of angels is separated from you by an impenetrable curtain.

And now, the Eternal Being. Regarding the Eternal Being, you have no means whatsoever to perceive or discover it unless God Himself has provided you with such a means. But what is certain is that no creature can ever discover, spy on, or perceive anything of God against His will; rather, it is only through His will and with His will. Therefore, there is no knowledge or science of the Almighty except to the extent that He Himself wills and intends it, giving you knowledge and science. In short, it is only to the extent that He reveals Himself.

God's Self-Revelation

God has chosen to reveal Himself, and He continues to do so. He reveals Himself so that we may know Him. Consequently, it is both a sin and a mistake to consider that God reveals Himself to us in any way contrary to His will. Our understanding of God is entirely dependent on His self-revelation.

It reveals, from that revelation to take no notice, as if to represent himself differently than He reveals himself in His revelation to us. The way in which God reveals Himself is outside of us and within us. Outside of us, in all creation, "for both His eternal power and divine nature have been understood and seen from the creation of the world." But also, outside of us

in history. Outside of us in prophecy. Outside of us in Christ. Outside of us in the Word. Outside of us in the church.

Then within us. Through our God-consciousness that He created within us. Through our cognitive ability. Through our conscience. Through the work of the Holy Spirit within us. But no matter how far this revelation outside of us and within us extends, it is always a revelation in and through the creature, in and through the created, through phenomena, through appearances, through deeds, through words, or whatever it may be, but always, and here the emphasis is placed, these revelations come to us through and in the world. So, if you imagine God on one hand, and the world on the other hand, and yourself as being in that world, then God never reveals Himself to you outside of that world, but always through that world.

You are in, God's throne is outside of that world, and therefore every ray of divine light that will reach you must pass through that world to reach you. The full revelation is Christ, but when the Word becomes flesh, that is, assumes human nature from this world. So, if you think of God and the world, then all revelation from God is a revelation that enters into the world and comes to you through the world. Revelation of God outside of the world could only exist if you could go out of the world, leave behind everything that is from the world, and thus come to God. However, that is precisely what you cannot do. At least not in this life. Therefore, in this life, you are absolutely bound to the revelation of His Being, which comes to you through and in the world. This also applies to the Holy Spirit within you. Because He is in you and you are in the world, and you perceive the work of the Spirit only in a human way.

Therefore, theology belongs in science. Science is the knowledge of the cosmos, that is, of the world. If, therefore, the knowledge of God was to come to you outside the world, then theology would be outside of science. Now, on the other hand, since all revelation, both general and special, goes

through and in the world, it belongs to the cosmos, and thus the science of this revelation is a part of science.

The Problem of Mysticism: Short Circuiting Revelation

But now consider false mysticism. With this, mysticism is not satisfied. It does not want to be content with this revelation of God that comes to us through and in the world, but it wants to seek access to God outside the world; it wants to reach communion with God apart from revelation; and thus, by disregarding the world and the revelation that has arisen in it, it wants to grasp the essence of God directly.

It may give this the name of meditation, contemplation, or whatever else, but its aim is always to penetrate into the essence of the Most High God apart from the revealed means. It cannot rest on the fact that God reveals Himself only through the veil of revelation. It wants to remove that veil, that curtain, and does not rest until it imagines that it has God, sees God, and enjoys God directly, immediately, without any intervening action. That is what we said, that by revealing Himself, God hides Himself. He reveals as much of Himself as He desires and thus prevents you from penetrating deeper. He wants you to stand respectfully before the curtain through which He reveals Himself and to withdraw your audacious hand whenever you attempt to push aside that curtain.

God in Christ, that is, in the incarnate Word, revealing Himself to you, but also hiding Himself from you behind the incarnation of the Word. The same is true of one person to another. We never see each other in our true essence. You have never seen the soul of your own child. You see before you a human bodily form, you see an eye, a face, you hear a voice, you see deeds, you notice expressions, but you never see the soul itself, as it truly is. In that respect, a person remains a mystery to you. You can only know one person in essence, and that is yourself. Therefore, it is entirely natural that this is even more so with the Lord our God. It cannot be otherwise; it must be so. He knows Himself and no one else. Outside of the cosmos, you cannot, and no human being can, penetrate into the essence of God. But

when someone is not satisfied with this, wants to force it, and strives to see and understand more and deeper, and then begins to indulge in imaginations, holding those imaginations as reality, then that unhealthy state of religion occurs, which is called mysticism.

Even when we discussed the Filioque, this became apparent. Yet now it is explained in its essence, and we will explain how it arises from that. All revelation from God is in or through created things, and now false mysticism wants to receive insight into the eternal and have a vision of the Eternal directly and in its own way, apart from those created things, without intermediate means. The thought of this arises, do not be surprised by this, when reading the Holy Scripture.

The Example of The Apostle Paul

Just think of the holy apostle Paul, whose letters stand in direct contrast to mysticism, and who constantly reports of wonderful things that happened to him, of revelations that were incomprehensible to him personally. Does he not relate himself how, fourteen years ago, "he was caught up to the third heaven"? A revelation that took place in such a mysterious way that he adds himself: "whether in the body or out of the body I do not know." But even though he himself cannot say whether he was lifted up with body and soul or with only the soul, he surely and explicitly tells us that he "was caught up into Paradise" and that in that Paradise he "heard inexpressible words," such words "which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Cor. 12:1-4).

Whether this, as some claim, refers to what happened on the road to Damascus or to an entirely different revelation, let that remain undecided; but it is certain from the apostle's explanation that something entirely extraordinary happened to him, something beyond the ordinary order of things, and something in which he felt he could boast as a sign of special grace.

Yet Paul remained in complete control of himself. His God cared for his soul. He keenly felt that such a revelation tempted him to pride and self-

exaltation. Should he not be an entirely exceptional person if such a thing were granted to him above others? Herein lies the difference between an apostle like Paul and the sickly mysticism: The sickly mystic gives in to the inclination toward spiritual self-exaltation, while the holy apostle opposes that inclination even as it arises in his own heart.

He is willing to boast, but not in a foolish manner. He acknowledges that the extraordinary revelations he received were not for his own glory, but for the glory of God. He understands that these revelations are not a measure of his own worthiness or spirituality, but rather a manifestation of God's grace and mercy. The apostle Paul further demonstrates his humility and wisdom when he speaks of a "thorn in the flesh" that was given to him, a messenger of Satan to torment him. He pleaded with the Lord three times to remove it, but the Lord responded, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

This is precisely the opposite of what you observe in mysticism. The mystically obsessed sink further and further into contemplation of such 'visions and revelations.' Whether they are true or imagined, they do not even investigate. They surrender themselves to it. They seek their all in it. They tell and recount them, embellishing them as they tell. In the end, for their own sense, they become an extraordinarily spiritually privileged person, in their own eyes an extraordinary object of revealing grace, and they are pleased when they realize that others also honour them as a special child of God because of these revelations.

The Distinction Between the Genuine and the False

This is the practical distinction between the genuine and the false. When extraordinary instruments were needed in connection with God's Special Revelation, who had to receive extraordinary revelations, God also provided them with the antidote so that they would not become a spiritual sacrifice of their extraordinary calling. On the other hand, those who walk in the imagination of visions and revelations do not appreciate the

importance of that counterweight and therefore, almost always to a greater or lesser degree, give themselves over to spiritual pride and self-exaltation.

The rise of mysticism can most likely be explained by the desire and inclination to apply to oneself and see realized in one's own life what happened to the instruments of Special Revelation in earlier days. Just as God revealed Himself to His prophets and apostles, so they want God to reveal Himself to their own souls. The distinction between what happened then to bring about Special Revelation and the life of Christians that was to follow once that Special Revelation was complete is not felt or understood.

They want it to be as it was then, just as it is now. When the imagination is vivid, and they believe they receive visions and revelations, they naturally look down on those who do not have these special experiences and instead hold to the light given in Special Revelation. They want a greater, a higher light. If they succeed in convincing themselves that such a higher life has fallen to their lot, it soon becomes firmly established in their minds that the light bestowed on them surpasses the light of the Word, and they begin to look down on the Holy Scriptures as if they were the ABC book for beginners, but something they have long surpassed.

The same thing is sometimes observed in the realm of ministry. Paul could declare, and had to declare, that he was called to the ministry not by men but by God Himself, so people then get the impression that a direct calling to the ministry is higher than a calling that comes to us through men.

Practically all the leaders of the mystical sects have risen in that consciousness; and those who regularly read *De Heraut* recall will remember from earlier years, how in an otherwise highly esteemed brother, but who since chose his own ways, we had to fight that same error, defended with appeal to Galatians 1:1.

Now it is quite true that this perception of having received visions and revelations does not go as far with everyone. There are even many who

look for it in nothing other than the fact that God brings certain words of Scripture to their minds, something which, in the ordinary sense, every child of God will confirm from his own experience. Only, and here you recognize the beginning of the error, those who lean toward mysticism do not look for something real in this, but something special, and are inclined to see in this presentation of the words of Scripture an extraordinary guidance from God.

They will therefore repeatedly tell others about it, and if they notice that this makes an impression, they multiply the incidents and go up in their own estimation. Going up in one's own estimation, is the invariable sign that a sickly and therefore sinful condition has entered.

However, different, and divergent the phenomena may be, mysticism almost always finds its origin in what the Scriptures themselves tell us of what happened to the prophets and apostles, and in part to the first Christians. It is therefore so wrong to fight mysticism by denying the possibility of such visions and revelations, and to present them in themselves as absurd. He who takes this path immediately contradicts Scripture itself, and cannot be convinced of error, because the mystic immediately refers to Scripture and presents you with numerous statements from it, which show how the holy men of God in former days actually received such revelations. Then you stand powerless.

Consequently, you would have to doubt what the prophets and apostles report about themselves. If you cannot do this, and if you ultimately have to admit that similar things happened to these holy men as these mystics claim about themselves, then you cannot escape the conclusion that they are on the same level as those holy men, and that you, who lack and deny such experiences of the soul, are inferior to them in spiritual worth. The Lord God has dealings with them that He does not have with you. The necessary consequence is that, precisely because of your misguided opposition, you strengthen the mystic in his intentions, instead of correcting him in his error.

In assessing and combating mysticism, at least in its formal aspect, it is rather important to, on the one hand, clearly recognize the possibility of such visions and revelations and acknowledge that they did indeed take place; and, on the other hand, derive from the motive with which they occurred at that time, the rule that explains why they do not occur again now.

If they occurred at that time for a specific purpose, with a clearly identifiable intention, then the burden of proof rests on the mystic who claims that they also happened to him, to demonstrate that they serve the same purpose and have the same intention in his case. If he cannot do that, but rather it becomes apparent that this purpose does not exist in his case, then the ground for his claims collapses beneath him.

It is especially important, in connection with this, to point out the fact that alongside the prophets, false prophets also arose who likewise claimed visions and revelations, but the Scripture testifies that they relied on the visions of their own hearts.

However, just as mysticism must be firmly resisted by our Reformed Churches because it confuses the dispensation of the times, fosters spiritual self-exaltation, ends up despising the Word, destroys the Church as the Church, and risks falling into immorality.

One should not banish healthy mysticism from the Church out of fear of false mysticism.

False Mysticism Undermines the Word and Church

Mysticism corrupts the dispensation of the times because it seeks to maintain, in this dispensation after the apostles, what belonged only to the dispensation of the prophets and apostles, namely, immediate inspiration.

It fosters spiritual self-exaltation because the person with the alleged "inner light" considers themselves more intimately admitted to the communion of their God than others and looks down condescendingly upon them as

privileged. It ends up despising the Word because the "inner light" renders the Word unnecessary and spares the effort of Scripture examination. It destroys the Church as the Church because in this manner religion becomes an individual matter between God and the soul, authority diminishes, and ultimately the institution of the ministry is undermined, and everyone acts independently, at most aligning themselves with their own circle. Finally, it risks falling into immorality due to the natural affinity between mystical love for God and the mystical nature of sexual love.

Five Evils of False Mysticism

History also shows how every prolonged movement stemming from the source of mysticism has led to these five evils. More could be added, but these five represent the historical trajectory.

But woe to the one who, in order to avoid this abomination, swings to the opposite extreme and, out of fear of mysticism, also banishes holy mysticism from the door of their heart. Then the heart withers, faith impoverishes, love wanes, all freedom departs from the essence of piety, and one shipwrecks their vessel on the rock of lifeless intellectualism.

Scripture as the Watchman

The sentinel guarding the border that separates true mysticism from sickly mysticism is the Holy Scripture. To attain knowledge of God and ourselves, it is not mysticism but the Holy Scripture that serves. Even now, after eighteen centuries, we will believe in Christ "through the word of the apostles." Did not Jesus pray for them, "and for those who would believe in Him through their word"?

Thus, there are not two sources of revelation of the knowledge of God: first, the Scripture, and secondarily, mysticism. The Scripture alone is the source of knowledge of Special Revelation, and there is no second source of "inner light."

What Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth, take from what is His, and reveal it to them, was written with respect to the apostles, not us. We are not like the apostles but dependent on them. What the mysticism of the heart does is not to increase that knowledge or add new revelation to that knowledge but to apply that knowledge to ourselves, explain it to us, truly make it for our own hearts, and transform it from objective to experiential knowledge and enjoyment.

Both are found in the one faith. Faith is not only an assured acceptance of everything that God has revealed to us in His Word, but it is also, at the same time, a firm, certain, and unwavering trust that all of that also concerns us and benefits us. The Word provides us with the objective description that reveals the matter to our consciousness, but the matter itself remains the mystery of our hearts.

The Holy Scripture cannot regenerate you; only God, through the Holy Spirit, can do that in your heart. However, from your heart alone, you would never understand what the act of God is, and it is only through the Scripture that you can come to know the new birth as an act of God. The new birth itself does not come through the Word; however, it is only through the Word that you can understand what the new birth is, and it is brought forth in your consciousness. This is also affirmed in 1 Peter 1:23.

Thus, it is with everything. That there is a Christ, who He was and is, what He did and suffered, and how He now lives in heaven to intercede for us—none of these can be known or understood except through the Word. The Word reveals these truths to our consciousness.

Praying, the Word alone teaches you. However, your personal connection to Christ and His connection to you is not worked by the Word alone, but by the mystic in the heart. It is what Calvin called the *Unio mystica*, the mystical union and incorporation into Christ.

Likewise, the Scripture speaks to you about the love of God, which should be your love for your God. But the fire of that love burns in the mystic of your heart. The Scripture instructs you about the necessity and manner of prayer. However, the blessed act of prayer itself is a mystical interaction between you and your God. One who disregards this is left with a splendid hearth, but without fire, a refined recipe, but without the medicine. It is like a painted loaf of bread that cannot satisfy one's hunger.

Even further, we shall speak.

Meditation and Contemplation

We mentioned earlier meditation and contemplation in a disapproving sense, and we will explain why. The system of meditation and contemplation, as a system, intends that we set aside our thoughts, silence all external impressions, sink into quiet and motionless pondering, and thus, detached from our own thoughts, concerns, and the world around us, wait for emotions, sensations, and upwellings, in order to seek communion with the Eternal Being, apart from life itself. This presupposes that we possess a separate higher sense or perceptual organ for this purpose and that it is through this higher sense organ that we perceive the immediate presence of God.

Even the principled mystics go further in this regard and consider that the highest is attained only when we lose ourselves, annihilate ourselves, and merge into God Himself. It is mystical pantheism. Through self-mortification, fasting, isolation, and much more, one strives to achieve this.

Unwittingly, the soul enters into an unusual, overstrained state. Eventually, it becomes ecstatic. The imagination runs wild, and it is impossible to say what a person in such states has not imagined, heard, seen, and felt. Taken in this sense, contemplation must be rejected. God is known not in frenzy and excitement, but in sobriety, clarity, and the calmness of faith.

However, it is quite different when the soul seeks to approach God from unity. A preacher who prepares his sermon only with his ideas, without bringing the living essence of his congregation closer to him while writing, preaches poorly. If you write a letter of condolence with mere phrases, without envisioning the grieving widow, you weary her, but you do not comfort her. In the same way, if you pray solely in prayer terminology, without lifting your soul to that Eternal Being whom you invoke, there is murmuring, but not true prayer.

There are zealous people who zeal for Christ but have never personally sought Jesus or had communion with Him in the sanctuary. In addition that is unspiritual; it becomes mechanical, lacking vital warmth, entangled in abstractions, unable to see the essence. Insofar as meditation and contemplation aim to counteract this dry intellectual and verbal activity, we applaud them.

However, there is a condition: all mysticism must always remain under the control of the Word.

It must be so, and for this reason: our hearts are susceptible to all kinds of impulses, influences, and intrusions. A word, an image, a representation can arise in your heart from God, from Christ, through the work of a good angel. However, similar things can also arise within you through the workings of your own sin, your own past, your environment, by Satan or one of the demons. Satan can even appear to you as an angel of light. Therefore, you lack all certainty that any experience, impulse, or suggestion is truly from God unless you verify it. You can only exercise this verification if you hold onto the Word. Not by distorting the Word according to your experiences or supposedly spiritual interpretations, but by taking the Word in its objective truth and clarity. Only when these two work together—on the one hand, the clear, distinct knowledge of the objective Word, and on the other hand, the mystical realization of the work of grace and the experience of grace in the heart—then there is that true assurance of faith that allows both elements of faith to come into their own.

Mysticism and The Emotions

Another circumstance deserves attention in this regard. Mysticism often finds a prepared field in a particular state of our emotional life. Not everyone's disposition is the same. Let us leave aside whether the classification into temperaments is accurate, as it is usually presented. However, it is certain that there are people who are easily moved, reserved, deeply conscious, superficial, tenacious, and those who jump from one thing to another, vengeful and quick to forgive. One person is cheerful, while another is melancholic by nature. With one person, you are amazed by their energy, while with another, you encounter a wilfulness that irritates you. There are stingy, materialistic people without feeling, and others who would generously give away their wealth. There are people with easy and difficult temperaments, those who are prone to anger and those who have self-control. In short, there is a whole range of people who attract you and people who repel you.

This original disposition rooted in nature and temperament is then, secondly, influenced by the body, especially the nervous system, by health, by exhaustion, and by overexertion. Thirdly, it undergoes the influence of experiences and life's lessons. In addition, there is the influence of suggestion, which refers to the immediate impact that influential individuals possess to subtly manipulate the spiritual life of others, also known as "mesmerizing" or "hypnotizing."

If a person with an already over-sensitive emotional life, an overstimulated imagination, and an overstrained religious life reaches a point where their condition becomes precarious, they become an easy target for mysticism. The person who is nervously disturbed cannot tolerate any form of institutionalized religion. Therefore, they reject confessions, churches, offices, discipline, and eventually even the Bible itself, seeking instead the freedom of spiritual activity, with inspirations, impulses, upwellings, emotions, visions, revelations, and, ultimately, wild fantasies.

Whether or not they will fall into this state depends on two factors. First, it depends on the individuals or circles they come into contact with. Second, it depends on their own temperament. A person with a great deal of spontaneous creativity can become wildly mystical on their own, without being influenced or led astray by others. However, in most cases, it is others who tempt and ensnare them. The ordinary no longer captivates or satisfies them. When they hear rumours of a person or group in their village or elsewhere where strange things are happening, they feel compelled to be part of it. That must be it. In no time at all, they become entangled in the snares of mysticism. If others have strange experiences, visions, or revelations, they must have them too. At first, they only hear about them partially. Then they immerse themselves in them. Finally, they claim to have them themselves. Eventually, even a psychiatrist would have difficulty distinguishing between spiritual-mystical delusion and partial insanity. Just think of Appeltern, where such doctors believed they had the authority to make judgments, even though they completely lacked knowledge of mysticism.

Furthermore, there is the influence of suggestion, which refers to the immediate impact that influential individuals possess to subtly manipulate the spiritual life of others, also known as "mesmerizing" or "hypnotizing."

We cannot elaborate on this further now, but it is a fact that certain individuals, through their gaze, their voice, their entire demeanour, can exert such extraordinary influence on others, especially on weaker individuals, that the latter almost follow them blindly and surrender themselves to them.

A suggestive power that works splendidly when emanating from a noble spirit but works most disastrously when possessed by a deluded or immoral person.

There is no doubt that in every circle where mysticism destroys the soul, there was or still is such a man or woman who can exercise such

suggestion. Since it is precisely the nervously overstimulated individuals who are most susceptible to such suggestion, it is quite natural that many of these unfortunate souls fall into the trap without suspecting it.

Thirdly, there is an immensely powerful force in the company of others. Someone who makes no progress when alone with the person they want to persuade will find the resistance already weakened when they introduce them into a group of like-minded individuals and strip them of their independence through the richness of the multitude. This is "the psychology of the crowd" (*la psychologie de la foule*), as it has been called, which exhibits completely different phenomena than the psychology of the individual, and to which too little attention has been paid in our Christian morality.

We owe to this power the seeking of the communion of saints, but also, when things go wrong, this same power becomes seductive, especially in exclusive, sociable spiritual circles. Many so-called "fellowships" that began spiritually but ended in the flesh provide evidence of this.

Finally, in the fourth place, there is the unknown soul force that presents itself in various forms and creates such peculiar phenomena in abnormal circumstances. The well-known Camille Flammarion [1845–1925], the great astronomer, recently published a work titled "*L'inconnu et le problème psychique*," in which he collected the allegedly reliable accounts available to us regarding signs of life from the departed, telepathy, spiritual communication, clairvoyance, the world of dreams, and premonitions—thousands of reports with location, date, and names of individuals—which led him to the conclusion that, apart from how it should be explained, certain relative truth cannot be denied to all these stories any longer. He will address hypnotism later.

However, regardless of one's opinion on this matter, it is a fact that magnetizers, hypnotists, Swedenborgians, and others refer to certain events, phenomena, and sensations that persist too strongly to be simply explained as products of ordinary imagination.

It is beyond doubt that pathological elements are involved; it is highly likely that they often reveal states of illness. Nevertheless, they justify the suspicion that indeed direct soul-to-soul influences can occur, which are not bound by our normal life relationships. Whether they should all be explained as stemming from sin or sickness, let us leave that open. However, it does appear to be established that under certain circumstances, the soul reveals powers unknown to us.

Especially as belief in the Revelation of Holy Scripture diminishes, millions and millions of people, even among the highly civilized class, are captivated by these phenomena. They could not believe the Scripture, so they turned to these mystical phenomena, which, in fortune-telling, card-reading, and much more, increasingly deviate onto an almost always sinful path. However, be that as it may, it is entirely natural that, if such workings exist, they also promote mysticism in an extraordinary manner.

Spreading beyond all scientific or ecclesiastical control, these phenomena fill the mind, arouse a thirst for such hallucinations, and seem to provide a certain basis for the feeling of truth and certainty in these spiritual ecstasies.

In Russia especially, one can see where these fanaticisms lead, and it will be seen that they are still increasing, and spirits will again become wild among us unless faith, together with science, erects a barrier against these excesses. Therefore, one must be cautious, even in our churches.

The Need For the Preaching of the Word

Let the intellectualist understand and comprehend that giving stones for bread precisely fosters the arbitrariness of mysticism; and let the emotional person realize that it takes so little effort to revive this mystical trend, but soon it would become evident that they cannot control the spirits they carelessly summoned.

Healthy church life, especially sound preaching, is the only preservative here.

In a congregation bound to the Word, churchly ordered, living in its confession, and taught through appropriate, psychologically interpreted truths in its soul's distress and soul's experience, mysticism will never break out. However, if there is one-sidedness, either by emphasizing the dry intellect to the forefront, neglecting the intimate spiritual life with God; or by regarding the confession and knowledge of truth as indifferent and thus relying solely on experience and emotion, then it only depends on the circumstances whether the congregation will be destroyed, and a rupture can also occur in our churches from which it will not recover in half a century.

Balance remains the lesson of wisdom. Maintaining a healthy relationship between the head and the heart is the demand that must never be neglected for the Church of Christ.

PRACTICISM

Introduction

The expression "intellectualism" is commonly understood; everyone has something to say about "mysticism"; but what exactly is "practicism"? To put it simply, it is a new term for a new issue, but it is a term that is easily understood and needed to describe a third excess, which runs parallel to intellectualism and mysticism.

intellectualism arises from an overemphasis on intellectual life. Mysticism emerges when the balance tips toward emotion. However, there is a third malady that requires clarification and remedy, which arises from a misalignment of the will.

This last illness, whose diagnosis and treatment we now consider, is new in form. Indeed, it is a "new issue of the day." Although a similar evil has always emerged in the Church of Christ, it had an entirely different character and appeared as self-righteousness, legalism, or other names of that kind at the time.

Insofar as practicism and these earlier forms both emphasize deeds, work, and the offering of sacrifices, there appears to be a similarity between them, but there is also a very obvious difference.

This difference is reflected in the names given to these efforts then and now. Back then, people spoke of "good works," but now of "Christian activities." While these are related, they are also two completely distinct concepts.

Self-righteousness focused on ensuring our spiritual state, on securing a guarantee of heavenly salvation, on merit and reward from God. Self-righteousness dealt with a deeply religious question, namely the proper relationship between faith and the fruits of faith.

It particularly opposed Luther's "sola fide" (by faith alone) and sought justification in the careless, sometimes deeply sinful, selfish, and loveless lives of those who, firm and strict in their confession, boasted in the sufficiency of their faith.

Even if there was a longing for a holier life underneath this, however, the main characteristic of this effort remained to earn here what would yield benefit in the hereafter. Self-righteousness might have also aimed to satisfy oneself and create an impression of piety, but it was ultimately meant as an instrument of salvation.

This is where what we call practiciness differs greatly.

Especially abroad, there are many circles of Christians who hardly concern themselves anymore with the question of how to be saved. They no longer truly believe in eternal damnation. The work of conversion continues after death, and at least those who have joined the Christians and confessed Jesus need not worry about their eternal salvation. Their salvation may be of lesser quality after their death or may be delayed, but it is no longer a subject of serious discussion, let alone fear or anxiety.

These people indeed place significant emphasis on the activity of the Christian, but this busyness has hardly any connection to the hope of eternal salvation.

Their pursuit and mindset have rather emerged from a peculiar mood that arose outside the Christian heritage in our century.

A strong sense of power has swept through the hearts of the children of this age.

Indeed, their power over nature has been remarkably increased, expanded, and enriched. The losses of past neglect were made up for. Discovery followed discovery. Even we, the older ones who gradually became

accustomed to the continuous rise of these new forces, are still constantly amazed by the wonders brought about by human energy and daring.

An exhibition like the one currently in Paris transports you to a magical world.¹⁴ You can hardly believe your eyes. Yet it is all the work of human hands that have harnessed this treasure of forces. Consider only the one man Edison, and what wonders of light and power are associated with his seemingly materialistic name.

Through these developments, humans have come to feel more powerful than ever, and it indeed takes a special degree of grace to feel oneself as a humble creature and sinner before God while living among the circles where these wonders are wrought and even contributing to them oneself.

Many worked in nature; but even more powerful was the energy in man, who subjected and mastered these energies of nature.

Luxury on earth became so refined, so immeasurably great in the more affluent circles, that it seemed as if one had overcome misery and could already enjoy life on earth so abundantly that longing for an even richer heaven was unnecessary.

This sense of power has now greatly strengthened the sense of will in humans. Nothing seemed insurmountable anymore. Everything was possible. For us, there were no more boundaries. Not that reason had been abandoned. On the contrary, our knowledge advanced in giant strides as well. However, knowledge was only a means; science served only as an instrument. Human greatness truly shone when one harnessed one's will for one's knowledge, thus maximizing our human energy.

This all-encompassing notion of the power and energy of our will was then theoretically elevated by philosophers into a system, thereby bringing the life of the will to the forefront with full, clear consciousness, so much so that eventually even in the Eternal Being, the supreme power of the will seemed

to be the highest, and among humans, all that was human was subordinated to the human will and its energetic expression.

"Not saying, but doing; not talking, but bringing things to fruition; not suppressing one's will, but allowing it to work through with the sharpness of a wedge—this became the fundamental tone of life's consciousness. Think of Ibsen. Circles that resisted this were pushed out of the center of life. Only those who went along with this current of will were truly children of their age.

Such fundamental currents in a particular period of life tend to influence church life as well, almost imperceptibly. The church exists in the world. It is not hermetically sealed off from it. Its members are citizens of society and naturally come under the influence of what sets the tone in the world.

Thus, there is no doubt that in the church as well—taking it in its broadest sense—this one-sided dominance of the will has come to reign, particularly in those parts of its heritage where action was the strongest. There are certainly small segments of the church that have kept themselves apart from this, but these often lead a waning life and remain without any influence on the life of the people and humanity.

These were typically sickly-mystical or overly-confessional groups, whose significance for public life and for the kingdom of God, in the broadest sense, fell below the freezing point.

However, apart from that, and taking the world as a whole, it is hard to deny that a busy, active church life has manifested itself, especially in the second half of this century. However, this church life was almost everywhere deprived of the tenderness of pious life and poor in doctrinal conviction, seeking strength almost exclusively in acts of will, in expressions of will, in energetic displays of willpower, whether through deeds or sacrifices.

This is what we call practicism. Though it would be more accurate to call it thelematism or energieism. Thelematism, from *Thelema*, which means “the will,” as opposed to intellectism, from *intellectus*, which means 'the mind.' Or energieism, as an indication of the one-sided dominance of energy. However, both of these terms would sound too strange. We therefore prefer the term practicism. “Practice,” “practical,” and so on are commonly known expressions. Thus, practicism is a word that, with some goodwill, can even be understood by the ordinary reader.

Yet there is no deception in this word. The practice of Christianity can thus be understood as synonymous with a godly life, a life of active piety. Thus, Voetius¹⁵ wrote about “the Practice of Godliness,” and our forefathers praised a Christian life, lived conscientiously, tenderly in the presence of God, and as in His holy fellowship.

This practice of godliness refers to both inner and outer piety, to a careful vigilance against sin, to a close attention to one's thoughts, words, and deeds, and to displaying, insofar as God grants it to us in His grace, the image of His beloved Son on earth.

In this sense, “Christian practice” has been believed and recommended as a Christian duty throughout all ages. It includes scrupulousness in confession and is so closely aligned with true mysticism of the soul that it is, in fact, inconceivable without that tenderness of heart. However, this is not what is meant by practicism.

Let it be clear that we are not judging the consciences of those who are fervent practitioners of practicism. Among them, there may be men and women in whom the practice of godliness shines brilliantly. We are discussing the direction as such, and it is best characterized by its excess in the Salvation Army,¹⁶ the most extreme example of the one-sided will-based orientation we have pointed out.

Even the military organization in which this Army operates is an outgrowth of this. Those who prioritize power naturally find the Army structure to be an ideal model. Although not all practiciness has drifted as far to one side as in the Salvation Army, all practiciness is fundamentally driven by the same mindset.

Confession has been reduced to a mere formality, a matter of rote. The mysticism of the heart is something each must know for themselves. Even the form of the church is secondary. The primary focus, both before and after, and always, is Christian works—or to put it in its English form: Christian works, and always works, works.

It is no secret to any of our readers what is generally understood by "Christian Works," also known as "Christian Activities."

The three Zs

The concept mainly relates to the three Zs: *Zending*, *Zondagsschool* and *Ziekenverpleging*: mission, Sunday school, and nursing. Although these three do not exhaust the vague concept, if you remove them, there is little left, except in large cities. After all, spiritual work aimed at drawing those who are distant to Jesus falls under the concept of mission, and prayer meetings are an integral part of the matter itself. There are also "Christian activities" among factory girls, for fallen women, among prisoners, etc., but these entirely lack the general character that the three Zs have. One might only add the temperance movement as a fourth S, if not for the fact that even absolute non-believers, as well as Social Democrats and Anarchists, are also advocates of temperance, making it impossible to still speak of anything specifically "Christian" in this context. As for the so-called "Endeavours," these originally did not belong to "Christian activities" at all and are much more in the realm of mysticism and post-Catechesis.

As a force in Christian life, as a general phenomenon, as a new manifestation of a unique pursuit, we can therefore suffice to point to the

three Zs as characteristic of practicalism. In work for mission, in work for Sunday school, and in work for nursing, this practicalism, as they say, broadly manifests itself.

The energy that has been put into these three in our nineteenth century, both in word and deed, is indeed astonishing. They represent a threefold action that has won over tens of thousands and millions, and by doing so, has shown itself to be entirely in tune with our age and to speak to the spirit of our time.

In itself, there is nothing wrong with this. Our Christian religion is flexible and rich and can adapt to all circumstances. What the holy apostle Paul wrote, that he was a Jew to the Jews, a Gentile to the Gentiles, and all things to all people, so that he might win them all, also applies to the difference in times. In the first two centuries, the great driving force of Christianity lay in martyrdom, and anyone who reads the annals of history is still astonished at the willingness, the complete surrender, indeed, sometimes the passion with which whole groups of young and old alike initially subjected themselves to the cruelest tortures, the most disgraceful dishonor, and the most terrifying death.

The crown of martyrdom then stimulated the holy ambition of all, and the blood of the martyrs proved to be the finest instrument for the propagation of the Christian faith.

Should this again prove necessary, it would be seen how even now the same holy drive would lead to similar results. Just think of the courage of faith with which "those of the Religion," and no less the Anabaptists in the 16th century, climbed the pyre, and also the tens of thousands of Armenians in Sassoun and surrounding areas, and the thousands of Chinese who recently chose death over the denial of their Savior and Lord."

However, for Christianity in general, our century does not bear the mark of bloody persecution. In this sense, there was no place for martyrdom.

However, persecution continued in a subtle way—through mockery and scorn, through ridicule and contempt, by displaying what is sacred to us under absurd misrepresentations, through marginalization and rejection, through compulsory education and political oppression, and, in more than one case, even in free Netherlands, through fines, imprisonment, or forced billeting. However, while we do not deny that such sharp and insidious opposition to Christianity sometimes requires even greater self-control, no one would claim that this kind of oppression led to martyrdom as it did in the first century or during the Reformation.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to briefly compare this practiciness with martyrdom because they share an inner connection. Practiciness stands lower; it does not stir such deep emotions in the human heart. Yet, it shares with martyrdom the fulfillment of the need to do something extraordinary, to express one's belonging to Christ in something that is specifically Christian. What is equally remarkable, both actions soon proved to be extraordinarily contagious, spreading spontaneously and freely from place to place, from country to country. Moreover, it soon became apparent that martyrdom also suffered from one-sidedness and exaggeration, so much so that the pursuit of martyrdom was often sought needlessly, passion replaced faith, and the serious shepherds of the flock had to repeatedly warn against a reckless and thoughtless pursuit of martyrdom.

However, even aside from this inner connection, it is important to note how each century and each era has its own distinct character, and how this change in circumstances and times also caused Christian action to take on a different and altered form on Christian ground.

In this sense, it must be said that the action of the three Zs is entirely connected to the peculiar conditions in which Christianity found itself in our century, and to the spiritual currents that broke through in the life of the world. It is also due to this connection with the spirit of the age that it owed its extraordinary rise. Although criticism is inevitable, it must be acknowledged without reservation that this adaptation to the driving motives

of the century in which one lived took place under the guidance of the King of the Church.

It immediately becomes evident that in this action of the three Zs, a judgment, and a harsh judgment, was passed on the institutional churches as they existed at the beginning of this century. In the leading countries, the churches of Protestantism had triumphed, and after that victory, they rested on their laurels.

One must understand how this unfolded. At the end of the Middle Ages, the Roman Church presented a pitiful spectacle of outward power and inward spiritual desolation. Almost everywhere, the religious sentiment expressed its spiritual and earnest protest against this. For this, Rome was chastised and disciplined by the Reformation, but not with the expected outcome that it would submit. On the contrary, as early as the Council of Trent, it began to reform itself.¹⁷ The deeply oppressed spring sprang back up, and in the 17th and 18th centuries, it systematically and through internal reformation managed to regain its lost position. The phrase "*pressa uberior*" (greater pressure) also applied to it. Although it had to endure a severe shock in the revolutionary tide at the end of the 18th century, it also emerged from this shock victorious, and as a church, it lifted its face in our 19th century with unparalleled splendor. Its actual powerlessness to set the tone was only due to the fact that the nations whose religious life it continued to lead had declined on the world stage and had, at least half of them, turned to unbelief and radicalism. However, as a church, it regained what it had once lost, and in its domain, Christian action continued to bear an almost exclusively ecclesiastical character.

However, it was not so with the churches of the Reformation. In the leading countries, they had triumphed. The governments of these countries had entered into a political marriage with them. Freed from all persecution, they soon rose to power and dominion.

They were not equipped for this. They had emerged as fighting churches. In their opposition to Rome, they had exhausted their best energy. The existential question of "*to be or not to be*" in this struggle had led them to organize nationally instead of ecumenically. Their internal unity and solidarity could no longer be expressed. They fell into deep dependence on the secular government. Just think of how in this country, after 1619, no General Synod could be held. Thus, national differences became ecclesiastical differences. These differences between the Protestant churches led to a restless, petty, dogmatic skirmish. When, finally, half-belief and unbelief also penetrated them, they lacked the spiritual energy, the freedom, and the capable organization to resist and manifest spiritual power.

After 1648, when the struggle for existence ended in triumph, their original strength was exhausted, and Pietism¹⁸ proved incapable of stopping the decline.

In that state, bound to political power and with that dryness of their own spiritual life, they no longer inspired reverence. They offered nothing that attracted people. Yes, those who lived with the church continued to live with it in a dull and tiresome way. However, all spiritual drive was gone. It had become a mannered and formalistic life. When, with the French Revolution, an entirely different spirit swept through the nations, no one even thought of seeking defense and salvation in these Protestant churches.

When one reads about the cowardly sins committed by the church at the end of the previous century how unprincipled officials and members behaved; and how shamefully the churches, even here in this country, were insulted and pushed aside because of this; one bitterly wonders how it was possible that the once so resilient and flourishing churches of our martyrs had fallen into such deep decay and such shameful powerlessness.

Yet the deeper cause was almost within reach. Rome's institutional church is the church, and Rome fundamentally refuses to acknowledge any organic

church life distinct from the institutional church life.¹⁹ It rejects any distinction between the visible expression and the inner essence of the church. That is why all the forces that arose from private initiative were successively attached by Rome to the institution of the church, whether in monastic life, in various orders, organizations, and institutions.

The Reformation fundamentally opposed this standpoint. It denied the possibility of placing the entire life within the framework of the church without harming the freedom of the Christian and without hindering his energetic personal development. Hence its distinction between the institutional and organic life of the church, commonly referred to as the visible and invisible church, although we admit that these terms do not entirely overlap.

As a result, the institutional church limited its activities and concerns to only what was strictly necessary, but without taking measures to develop the free life of the organic church and without properly regulating the relationship between this freer life and the institutional life.

This would have been required, but during the days of persecution, there was no time, and later there was neither the will nor the vision for it. Thus it happened that when the storm of the French Revolution broke out, our Protestant church conditions showed nothing but the meager skeleton of the institution, and the life of the organic church either entirely disappeared or had passed into the hands of the state.

This situation led, at the end of the previous and the beginning of this century, to the organic life of the church suddenly growing wild from its own roots, completely ignoring its ecclesiastical character, and effectively emerging as an opposition to the church.

The three Zs also all arose as actions outside of the church; and in Darbyism and similar movements,²⁰ this protest against the skeleton of the institutional church even led to a fundamental denial of the church as such.

Darby and his followers not only worked outside the institution of the church but also denied its right to exist. The Salvation Army, which was cautious enough not to take up this threatening position, instead won influential individuals from all churches as friends through gentle persuasion, is, in essence, an organization that takes the place of the church.

The zealots of this Army no longer feel anything for the church as an institution.

Missionary work

The rising spirit of the times at the end of the previous century also spoke in other ways through the emergence of practicisism. Two ideas particularly exerted influence: first, the love for the "noble savage," and secondly, the great expectations placed on education. Who does not immediately sense how the missionary zeal that emerged was linked with that love for the noble savage, and how the great work of the Sunday school was connected with the general mania for schooling? As a third factor, the high regard for association life led to both missionary work and Sunday school developing outside of the churches, in private associations.

One thing fed into another. The decline of the churches meant that no action originated from them, and the prevailing ideas of the time naturally pushed toward extra-ecclesiastical action.

The missions, unfortunately, were soon sorely neglected by the churches. Even where there was still some sense of duty to expand the church in our colonies among the natives, there was a complete lack of understanding that the church of Christ is inherently conquering and loses ground if it does not continuously expand its territory.

The so-called Christianization of Europe had gradually given rise to a feeling as if the task was completed. As long as paganism still held its ground in the East and North of Europe, the apostolic mission had not ceased. However, when it could be observed with some leniency that

Europe had now been entirely won for the Cross, a sense of complacency crept over Christendom. The discovery of America and the voyage around the Cape briefly gave a new impetus to the missionary work. However, when the struggle in Europe itself became so fierce and intense between the old and new churches, the idea of conquering the whole world for Jesus faded into the background, and neither in the Lutheran nor in the Reformed churches did a missionary zeal of sufficient strength awaken. Without fear of contradiction, it can even be said that the new action that emerged for the mission found nothing in the churches to connect with.

This action therefore arose entirely from private initiative, immediately gained strength through the society movement, and did not seek even the slightest connection with the churches. What is even more noteworthy, this action did not target the unbelief within its own circles, nor the paganism that had crept back into the heart of its own nation, but from the outset focused on distant, preferably very distant lands, especially those where the natives were still hoped to be found in their natural state. What is expressed in the evangelical hymns as "Hottentot, Moor, and Indian" pretty much encapsulated what was intended.

This resulted in the remarkable phenomenon that in London, where the center of the movement was located, two parallel actions arose: on the one hand, the action of unbelieving, philosophical people who established their so-called aborigines protection societies, and on the other hand, the believers who founded their missionary societies for those same aborigines (i.e., natives).

The Negro, in particular, was popular in those days: for the youth in the stories of Robinson Crusoe, for the philosophical enthusiasts in their protection of natural peoples, and for the Christian in the newly emerged missionary zeal.

This latter action did not go against the preachers, who often participated themselves and sometimes even led the action; but it was fundamentally

extra-ecclesiastical, and therefore had to become anti-ecclesiastical. This created difficulties in the mission, as one could not dispense with baptism, and yet it was difficult to leave baptism to each individual's discretion. However, due to the sympathy found among numerous preachers, this obstacle was also overcome. Two or three preachers could very well ordain a "missionary" and lay hands on him. Whether such preachers did this in the church at the ordination of a pastor or in a hall at the sending off of a missionary made no difference at all. The church council or the church had nothing to do with it. The "pastors" ordained the pastors. Whoever could do the greater was also competent for the lesser. So why wouldn't they be able to ordain a missionary as well? Once the missionary was ordained, he was competent for everything—preaching, administering the sacraments, and thus also administering Holy Baptism.

People in those days had become so completely estranged from the fundamental principles of church governance that it did not occur to anyone to find anything absurd in this. Anyone now seeking an explanation for the glaring absurdity that even to this day, very respectable ministers and professors continue this absurd practice and still participate in the ordination of missionaries in this way, must look back to the mindset of the people at the end of the previous century. It was from that time that this inherently inconceivable custom became ingrained among us and ingrained customs are stubbornly enduring.

People don't think about it. They simply go along with the routine and thereby perpetuate an evil that would otherwise immediately provoke aversion.

The intensity of the missionary movement that emerged cannot easily be overestimated. The movement that began back then has continued throughout this entire century and remains undiminished and vigorous. This movement has raised an amount of capital that seems incredible when calculated, and the missions still possess an annual budget that many states envy. Not only in terms of money, but also in personal dedication, much

has been sacrificed. Never and nowhere did they struggle with a lack of personnel. Not that the right people were always available—far from it. However, there was never a shortage of personnel as such. This is all the more remarkable because this missionary movement has claimed no small number of victims. Many have fallen as martyrs for the name of Christ. And yet, even this martyrdom never deterred them.

It should also be noted that this movement was characterized by its universal nature. It spread among all the peoples of Europe. It found its eager supporters among members of all churches. It reached all ranks and classes. Although there were differences in the degree of action, with England and the Moravians²¹ leading the way, this movement eventually encompassed the entire civilized world. America followed after us but is now in no way inferior to Europe. It was also noticeable that this movement increasingly blurred confessional boundaries. In the same society or association, men and women, even children, were seen working together who belonged by birth to very different churches.

In light of this, it is all the more surprising that the result of this extraordinarily widespread and energetic movement, generally speaking, has fallen so far below the most modest expectations. Some beautiful results have been achieved. Our success in Minahassa, Indonesia, was a triumph. The South Sea Islands sent joyful news. In Madagascar, it seemed that almost a whole part of the population was converted. However, when one examines the demographic balance and asks what percentage of the world's population in 1789 was Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Pagan, and compares that with the percentage today, one is disappointed by the gains achieved. It seems as if this entire movement has only touched the surface of the sea of peoples. Indeed, at times, it even seems as if, in some areas, we have regressed rather than advanced.

The expansion of Christianity and the retreat of paganism were remarkable in the first three centuries; it continued systematically and gradually throughout Europe in the Middle Ages; and after the discovery of America

and the great voyages, Roman Catholic missionaries succeeded in conquering almost all of America, as well as the Philippines and parts of China and Japan. Back then, the results were easily grasped, and progress was visibly made. Nowadays, however, although some small-scale successes have certainly been achieved, anyone who considers the enormous capital that has been sacrificed, the army of missionaries that has gone out and is still out, and then compares that with the results obtained, cannot help but be astonished by the absolute disproportion between the scale of the movement and the meagerness of the outcomes. This becomes especially apparent when one looks beyond the numbers presented, which are so often manipulated, and instead asks in which parts of the world the Church of Christ can now be considered newly established as a result of this enormous missionary movement.

Nevertheless, such a poor harvest has never discouraged the movement, and the sending of new sowers has always continued. This has happened to such an extent that one sometimes gets the impression that the action itself, rather than the intended result, was the main driving force.

“Engaging in missions,” advocating for missions, organizing prayer meetings, forming circles and societies, recruiting members, holding collections, opening bazaars, organizing missionary festivals, sending out missionary reports, having visiting missionaries speak, establishing missionary museums—in short, creating “missionary work” in all sorts of ways so that young and old, rich and poor could dedicate part of their strength to the mission—kept the flame of enthusiasm constantly burning with renewed vigor.

The true character of practiciness: be busy, always active, constantly be doing something: always something new. Activity in all forms, especially, activity that was kept free from all church disputes. An activity that found sympathy everywhere. Above all, an activity where purity of confession was not questioned.

On its own, it was wonderful that in our materialistic age, such strong action for a higher spiritual cause was revealed; but soon enough, the flaw at the origin of this action began to take its toll.

An unchurchly action can indeed aim at personal conversion but not at Christianization in the proper sense of the word. Consequently, it cannot emphasize the purity of Confession. For this reason, it gradually deteriorated into a vague Christian generality, where the Christian element ultimately became increasingly vague in concept.

Deviations from the faith also crept in among the missionaries. The authority of the Holy Scriptures was abandoned at the mission stations. Ethical and modern interpretations also penetrated among them. As a result, it has already happened, particularly in Japan, that in mission schools, tactics were used to combat Christianity that we would abhor here, yet were considered good missionary strategy.

Additionally, many English and American missionaries, unfortunately, sought political and commercial support all too often, and in return, they provided support to the politics and trade of their countries. As such, you can understand how gradually, at numerous mission stations, distressing conditions arose that did more harm to true Christianity than they revealed the gospel as a power of God unto salvation.

Although the drifting and wandering missions later returned to church paths, even then, it happened with so little principle and so little clear awareness that most church missions now are little more than copies of the Society missions, without considering the application of church principles to the work of missions.

Indeed, the hyper-practicism of the entire movement blinded it to the demands of Confession and mysticism.

The good in this missionary movement hardly needs to be highlighted. It involved a recovery of what the churches had neglected. The grand idea

that the Christian religion is a world religion, and that not only Europe but the whole world should be claimed for Christ, once again penetrated many people's consciousness. There was a renewed flow in the stagnant and thus become unfresh waters. An unprecedented action emerged. Prayer was once again recognized as a force in prayer meetings. Above all, people learned to give, to give a lot, to give ever more; and the thousands that were initially donated soon grew into millions. All these were praiseworthy and good things, to which, in the end, was added the desired effect that the division between church and church became less pronounced. One could at least look over the fence, and after several years, missionaries from various churches began to collaborate in the field of missions.

However, this beautifully engraved medal soon showed its downside, primarily that practicism in this entire movement quickly led to showiness, what one might call "showism" in English. This meant that there was a certain pressure to make what was done appear as significant as possible, to flatter the results, to ensure that everyone knew what was being done, to do it in a busy and loud manner, and to cater to the urge for what is now called publicity. The more dignified way in which the church used to work was abandoned; mission work was conducted in the way the world handles its affairs. Martha completely overshadowed Mary. The modesty of the sacred was shattered. "Life in the brewery"²² had become the slogan. It was as if the stimulus for this action came more from an external push than from the inner workings of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, prayer and prayer meetings were continually emphasized, but the outward manner in which everything was conducted sometimes left the painful impression that even in those prayer meetings, it was more about publicity and fundraising than about the essential power of prayer.

They dazzled with figures of collected funds and numbers of baptized individuals. Report after report, preferably with pictures and illustrations, aimed to capture attention. Endless associations and auxiliary associations and children's associations were established. All these associations had

boards and sub-boards, held meetings and annual gatherings, and at these gatherings, everything imaginable was attempted to attract many people. It had to be a success, or they were disappointed. Notable speakers were sought, performances with limelight were held, various items from foreign countries were exhibited, and even native people from distant lands were brought in to be seen. Everything was acceptable as long as it drew attention.

We depict this somewhat more sharply to make the phenomenon we criticize more palpable; but it is undeniable that this general trait characterized and accompanied the entire action. From this single phenomenon emerged a second: the excessive elevation of those who went into mission service. A very ordinary young man who volunteered for mission work and was trained became suddenly a highly interesting person as a missionary. A mere pastor could not compare. His portrait had to be displayed throughout the country. He had to appear everywhere. His travel by ship or boat was made into something so special that the details of it and the story were publicized in every detail. His wife, too, shared in this interest. She too had become a public figure.

Amidst this bustle and interest surrounding everything related to the mission, the entirely understandable, yet deeply regrettable evil emerged, namely that the account of this entire movement resorted to religious terminology that, while inwardly hollow, was intended to give everything a sacred character. Everywhere, "the Lord" was invoked, brought into play. In all that related to the mission, there was a special act of the Lord, in His order and governance, in His answering of prayers, in His inclining of hearts, in His preservation and protection, in the blessing He bestowed upon all, and this service was used as evidence that one was on the right path and had chosen the right person and the right means. If a ship with a missionary on board arrived safely through the storm, it was said that the missionary had been spared. Thus, everything was stamped with a sacred

cachet, and the public was led to a false impression, as if mission work was something extraordinary, requiring a completely separate worldview.

A method of doing things, all the more dangerous because it becomes so natural and one gets used to it so easily. Naturally, God's order and governance are present in everything; He inclines all hearts, and nothing can prosper without His blessing. Pious individuals notice this and a pious shopkeeper sees every customer who comes to him as someone sent by God. However, we still make distinctions in our speech to others, especially in public discourse. Piety is reserved, it does not flaunt its inner feelings. One notices God's actions for oneself, gives thanks in a small circle, but does not publicize it.

Publicly speaking about it is reserved for very significant events, extraordinary achievements, or very great sacrifices that make God's actions evident to others. However, this distinction was entirely lost in the mission field. Everything had to be made to seem extraordinary, everything had to be marked as something exceptional, and everything had to be publicly declared and trumpeted as having taken place under the special guidance of the Lord. Even if this was originally intended to be honest and sincere, it soon became a dead formula, repeated and spoken merely because it was expected, pushing the language of the heart aside for empty rhetoric or written words.

What had corrupted the clergy on a smaller scale spread on a broader scale here. Just as there were once broad announcements from a clergyman whose heart, after much struggle, was inclined by God to either go or stay, so now this was applied on a much larger scale, as if all were apostles, and every missionary had apostolic interest. It wasn't equally severe everywhere. The Salvation Army set all records. Nevertheless, this dangerous microbe of excess penetrated everywhere. It became the wildness, the coarseness, the self-satisfaction of a spiritually democratic busyness. Although we do not deny that God the Lord has brought much good out of this evil, this does not absolve us from the duty to address this wound. Deep down, there was

falsehood: falsehood in numbers, falsehood in show without substance, falsehood in the sacred formula. A falsehood that, unfortunately, is not alien to the church, but which reached unprecedented heights here, not seen in the church before.

Much more was involved.

The entire missionary effort suffered from this shocking inconsistency: it was fervent for the lost in distant lands but indifferent to the lost in its own vicinity. Zeal for missions shone brightly where no effort was made against the disbelief of one's own family members. In other parts of the world, the Christian religion had to be expanded; but among the heathens within one's own people, life continued as if the value of their souls was not considered compared to the soul of a Moor or Indian. There, the church had to be established, but in one's own city and village, the church was allowed to decline due to anemia. One willingly sacrificed for the mission, but found the smallest contribution to their own church too much. Everything was a pursuit of the extraordinary, of the exceptional, placing love for the ordinary and the usual entirely in the background.

This naturally extended from the church to the Confession. "What did it matter about a piece of the confession for which our forefathers had fought to the blood? What did it matter if Arminianism,²³ with its human self-exaltation, flourished once again! Among the heathens, one had nothing to do with that as long as one brought them the gospel. Whether this gospel was understood by some in a way that was completely contrary to our past and the treasure of truth entrusted to us, did not matter. It was and remained the gospel, and one could write the gospel for a mere penny.

Thus, all heresy and misunderstanding had free rein, and one became indifferent to a finer analysis of the truth; and when the denial of Scriptural authority gradually set in, and even the person and essence of the Savior were presented entirely contrary to the Scriptures, it was not permissible to

resist this. After all, even those who were lost were mission friends, and not the Scriptures, but missionary zeal became the standard for truth.

Thus, all heresy and misunderstanding had free rein, and people became indifferent to finer analysis of the truth. When the denial of Scriptural authority gradually set in, and even the person and essence of the Savior were presented entirely contrary to the Scriptures, it was no longer acceptable to resist this. After all, even those who were lost were mission friends, and not the Scriptures, but missionary zeal became the measure of truth.

Finally, there was the additional problem that missions, separated from the Church, became entangled with various political and commercial considerations. This was less the case here than among English and American missionaries. Their missions had to serve the glory of their countries as well. The missionaries led the way, followed by soldiers and merchants, and in many cases, the territories conquered were not truly for the kingdom of Christ but for the British Empire. Consider South Africa and the spirit that guided the missions there, as well as the hardships endured by the Boers due to the English missionaries.

Regarding the American missionaries, any expert can tell you how they often married their holy cause with the interests of the republic and commerce.

None of this is intended as a charge against the churches, which remain the principal culprits. They had neglected their task and forgotten their calling. The action that emerged from the heart of the believers stands out. Without that action, we would still be in the old mire. It is truly through this action that God the Lord eventually stirred the churches to jealousy and inspired them to renewed vigor.

However, even if this is fully acknowledged, one must not close their eyes to the dark shadow that hangs over the entire action. It lacked a connection

with the Church of Christ. It missed the proper balance between the action of the will, the emotions, and sanctified thought. It descended from the mountains like a wild torrent but did not carve out a channel enclosed by the desired banks.

It was practiciness. There was a need for expression of power, a need for external activity, a need for busyness, a need for results, a need for success. Everyone had to be put to work. To sustain this busy action, advertising had to be employed and to spiritually color this advertising, the sacred had to be dragged down, the tender conscience shaken, and the truth sacrificed. As a result, it now stands in the world as a force of incredible magnitude, yet without having shaken the heathen world powers or Islam, or even Europe.

The Sunday School System

Yet, practiciness found its fulfillment even more strongly in the Sunday school system.

practiciness is not about talking, but about doing. Not about thinking too much, not about feeling too much, but about achieving, carrying out, engaging in practical activities. One could hold meetings, small groups, prayer services, and collect and offer money for missions, and read reports, but in practice, actual missionary work was the responsibility of only a few. There was a lot of activity and busyness for the large crowd, but the actual doing, the work that made a difference, remained the responsibility of the sent brothers and the administrators of the association here.

Not so with the Sunday school system.

In Sunday schools, teachers were needed for every class, and such Sunday schools had to be in every village, no matter how small, and in larger villages, several of them, and in large cities, in great numbers.

For every one person who could actively serve in missions, one could use three, four hundred here.

Men and women. Old and young. Rich and poor. Anyone who was willing and had love for Jesus and His cause was needed.

Something that called for practical doing and personal involvement was found in the Sunday school system. Literally everyone who had the inclination could be put to work. There was a constant need for new staff. It was a phenomenon that continually expanded. It started in the neglected corners of the large cities. It spread from the city's depths to the remote corners of large villages. Thus, it advanced, naturally, without much effort, like oil spreading over a piece of soft paper. Gradually, Sunday schools were established even for the children of the wealthy. Everyone had to attend. Anyone who did not attend a Sunday school was considered spiritually lacking. It was a current that swelled, spreading its waves ever wider over the fields. Eventually, it became such a powerful force that unbelief began to imitate Sunday schools, and one even found modern Sunday schools opposing the Sunday schools of the Christian community.

Originally, the Sunday school was the twin sister of the mission.

Almost simultaneously, its new action was born. Born out of the churches' guilty neglect. Cast in the form that was most popular at the end of the previous century.

The church had neglected its duty to teach the children of the church. This was the case here as well, but even more so in other countries. In our country, catechism was still a rule. Elsewhere, it either never existed or had become a brief, dry formality just before "acceptance." In many churches, the Minister of the Word did nothing for catechism, and "acceptance" occurred with the mumbling of some incomprehensible sounds, without any assurance of knowledge of the way of the Lord or the way the young should follow to enter His kingdom.

Although it was not so dire here, catechism was still largely rigid, and in cities, it extended only to a portion of the incoming members of the church.

Especially in the large cities, the neglect and disregard were appalling. Anyone who sought to be "accepted" did not attend catechism at all. What would he do there? Those who wanted to be considered orderly citizens and thus also orderly church members went, but not to the minister (which was an exception) but to the catechist or catechist teacher, who tried to get their "students" through acceptance as quickly as possible. Thus, there was a small group of mostly respectable children with the minister, a somewhat larger group of semi-annual attendees with the catechist, and an immense mass that did nothing, was born, lived, and died without ever coming into contact with a church—spiritual vagabonds and their counterparts. This was still counted in the church's "soul count," but the church only held them nominally. Even King Willem I was irritated by this and sought to promote "membership" in his own way.

This neglect by the church then gave rise to the Sunday school. Driven by a noble desire to address the lost, attempts were made to lure neglected children from the streets into rented rooms on Sundays and speak to them about Jesus. A sunny ray of light penetrated the dark corners of our neglected urban neighborhoods. The question, "Do you not know that name yet?" so strikingly expresses the searching love that permeated these neighborhoods.

Despite any objections that might have arisen against Sunday schools, we will never join the harsh critics who are enemies of the Sunday school because of its unchurchly origins.

When the church is silent, it is worth recalling the saying that the stones will almost speak.

Moreover, we do not have in our churches a Lutheran *Ecclesia docens*. Witnesses of Jesus are also the members of the church. Fathers and mothers are under the obligation to "teach their children themselves or have them taught." Relying solely on the preacher is not in the root of Reformed life.

Especially if the ministers fall short in their duties, and the elders follow their example, and if the more zealous members of the church are excluded from the church council, there is no reason why willing and diligent members of the church should sit idly by. It is always better for one to hear about Jesus in an imperfect way than to have “Do you not know that name yet?” be proclaimed to the ears of a thousand or more baptized individuals.

Although it is to be praised that preachers today are of a different caliber and carry a much deeper sense of duty in their hearts, it is still shocking when they disdainfully look down on what was done by the members of the congregation during the time of the ministers’ severe neglect. Even though they are not personally responsible for that neglect, these ministers should realize that they are servants of the same churches that were once guilty of such gross neglect. They should understand that this debt also affects them and, instead of acting with arrogance, they should humbly resume the neglected task, appreciating what others have done, and being just in their critique of others’ work before the face of God.

We emphasize this to dispel any suspicion that we are condemning the Sunday school movement itself due to its practicistic flavor. On the contrary, it is quite the reverse. It is the Sunday school that saved the Christian church in the 19th century. Imagine its absence, and it is hard to say what dead slumber the churches would still be sunk in.

The second point common between the Sunday school movement and missions is that both drew their mode of operation from the revolutionary movement at the end of the previous century.

There was widespread animosity against the church at that time. No more church, but working in associations. Likewise, no more church, but seeking the public welfare through schools. This action is known to us from the establishment of the Society for the Benefit of the Common People, Nieuwenhuizen’s still powerful foundation.

There was resentment against the church. People wanted to distance themselves from the church. The church needed to be pushed aside. The school, the public school, was to become the sole institution of salvation. All strength had to be concentrated on the school. That highly esteemed school had to do two things at once: First, liberate the masses from the spiritual domination of the clergy, and second, provide them with education for life. Not outside of religion. No, with religion, and precisely because of that, it had to make the church redundant.

Thus, the school became a fetish in the circles of semi-believers and unbelievers. The school became a panacea. The school became the only true and good thing. Without the school, one was lost; with the school, victory was assured.

Now you understand that the men of the Revival, who gave the impetus to the Sunday school movement, did not idolize the school in the same way as the adherents of the Society did. The Revival was rather sharply opposed to the Society. However, this does not change the fact that they too fell under the general enchantment of the school idea and derived their focus for their youth work more from the school idea than from the church. Thus, it happened that the Sunday school system initially stood alongside, and partly against, the church in principle, and, abandoning the name of “Catechism” or “religious instruction,” chose a name taken from the non-church or quasi-church world, and was adopted from the realm of that anti-Christian action that arose in the Society.

What the Society people opposed in the mysticism of faith, the men of the Revival sought to convert into action for Christ, and so both the Society and the Revival found their way into the school.

The weekday school for secular life, the Sunday school for faith.

Although this whole action, less here than in America or England, soon sought its churchly context, using church buildings, and even coming under

the leadership of preachers in many places, this cannot change its origin. That origin was extra-church, anti-institutional, and it was cast in a form drawn from the revolutionary rather than the ecclesiastical life.

The name of school in Sunday school, which is now inescapable, remains to be regretted. That name of school has detached this education from Baptism. Detached from the recognition that even young children, by virtue of the covenant of grace, are members of the church body. Detached from the preparation for the Holy Supper. Torn from the sacred circle of the mystery. Secularized. It has distorted the whole idea of forming young children of believers into conscious confessors of the Savior.

This grievance cannot be minimized. This consideration must be upheld with full force. Only then will the Sunday school movement have a future for the Church of Christ if it comes to a principled conversion on this point.

For completeness we add the following.

The Sunday school stands in contrast to the Week School. It operated on the conviction that the weekdays were occupied, and that only Sunday remained free and open, so that all serious efforts to reach the masses should be tested not during the week, but on Sunday.

On the other hand, it was in the nature of the situation that preachers were often the most occupied on Sundays, making them unavailable on that day. Since the idea that elders should act actively had completely disappeared, it naturally followed that an action bound to Sunday had to bypass the church and its office bearers, and be entrusted solely to the members.

While money has often been called the nerve of war, it is even more so the nerve of all educational institutions striving for higher perfection. Our budget has seen, with amazement, how much the expenses for education have risen since the days of Nieuwenhuis, the founder of the Society.

One would have expected that the Sunday school would stand or fall with the solution of a tricky financial issue. And yet, this was far from the case. The strength of the Sunday school lay precisely in the fact that it required almost no money and relied entirely on voluntary commitment. This was made possible by two circumstances.

First, because on Sunday, classrooms were available in vast numbers everywhere, free, empty, and unused. The catechism classrooms at that time were mostly not in use; and furthermore, due to the cessation of all business, there was an abundance of space in larger buildings everywhere on Sundays.

Indeed, people later began to build for the Sunday school, and in America and England, new church buildings were also equipped with well-furnished rooms for the Sunday school; but in most countries, such luxury was unknown, and it remains exceptional for us.

The rule is that the Sunday school gets a room free of charge or for a small rental fee. Hence this made it so easy to continuously expand the Sunday school.

Had one had to build everywhere for the Sunday school, naturally, the costs and the associated organization would have presented an almost insurmountable obstacle. One would have had to establish associations with legal personality everywhere. Those associations would have had to secure loans. One would have had an entire administrative existence, and all the difficulties that our Christian weekday schools struggled with would have also befallen the Sunday school.

Instead, one was accommodated in a manner akin to lodging, without owning a building, staying with others. Thus, no associations or funds were necessary. Like a bird in the air, one would alight wherever a spot for one's foot was found, and then fly off again if the initial spot proved unsuitable.

In this way, the amount of money available remained free for essential items like furniture, wall charts, Bibles, inscriptions, prizes, schedules, etc., sometimes even for an organ, and one could do a lot to attract the youth by organizing Christmas parties or summer gatherings.

However, financial independence was maintained primarily through the second point, which is that all teaching at these schools was given for free by teachers who contributed more than they received.

Just as our elders and deacons serve without payment, something the congregations have never sufficiently appreciated, so too was Sunday school teaching given without a cent being paid to the teachers as remuneration.

It was service on Sunday. After all, one had the day off and above all, it had to be a service performed out of higher love for the sake of Jesus.

This does not mean that such a service should be considered superior to that of the paid ministers. Such claims have been heard, but they are false. If ministers had the week free and could practice a profession or trade that provided them with a means of livelihood, every preacher would gladly serve without payment on Sunday. But now, since it is decreed and ordained that the servant of the Word should live entirely for his office, every day of the week including Sunday, this comparison fails. Whoever lives for the gospel, according to apostolic ordinance, must also live from the gospel; living as a person, as a man, as a father, and living in such a way that his soul is not troubled by worries and needs, but can freely engage in his holy service.

Of course, if the same had applied to the Sunday school, its financial existence and growth would have been inconceivable. It could only grow and thrive through the service of unpaid love. Thus, it happened. It happened that Sunday schools now have a substantial army of tens of thousands of teachers who contribute more money than they drain from the Sunday school fund.

This was invaluable.

It occurred according to the principle that on the Lord's Day, anyone who can and is free must be available for service in the Lord's house, and that no earning is done in the holy.

It is the same idea that increasingly leads to dedicating also the auxiliary services in the church on Sundays voluntarily to the Lord. This was different in the past. Everyone was paid then: the sexton, the janitor, the chair renter, the pew attender, the stove operator, the organist, the cantor, the reader. All were hired hands.

However, this is improving, and on the free day, the service for the house of the Lord is gradually being offered voluntarily. However, it must be said to the credit of the Sunday school that it never deviated from its only good rule and could always rely on the free help and dedication of thousands upon thousands of teachers. On the other side, although emerging with a bright sheen, the Sunday school increasingly fell into the shadows on another related point.

Whoever teaches must be able to teach, and except for a few exceptionally gifted individuals, it is hard to dispute that only those who are properly trained can teach effectively.

Certain pedagogical requirements apply to all education, and almost everywhere there is a rush to ascertain, through an examination, whether these requirements are met before issuing a teaching certificate.

However, initially, such considerations were not applied to the Sunday school, and to this day, training for the Sunday school, followed by an examination and the issuance of a diploma, remains a luxurious idea that is only realized in a few Sunday schools.

The rule was, and still is, that one starts teaching in a Sunday school just like that. When a young man or woman approaches adulthood and shows

conversion to the faith, and a heart for the Lord's work, they are soon invited to teach in a Sunday school. They are approached by the person who runs or directs the Sunday school or by friends already teaching there. Those who later wish to leave usually ensure that they find a replacement.

Here lies the fundamental fault of practicisism.

Anyone who came to know the Lord and devoted themselves to Jesus had to immediately do something, had to act right away, and was, through their love for Jesus, naturally qualified for that doing and acting.

The goal, the only goal, was to lead the children to choose Jesus later on; why then, if someone chose Jesus themselves, could they not also draw others to Him?

It was so extremely simple. One just had to tell the children about Jesus. Who could not do that? "Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and his love" expressed exactly this idea, and anyone who had experienced this love of their Savior could tell about Jesus and His love.

In practice, however, it turned out very differently.

It went without saying that one could not simply recount every Sunday for three or four years, for an hour, the simple truth that Jesus came to earth to save sinners and now lives to pray for us.

Something much different had to happen. The children had to be grounded in the Bible. Therefore, anyone who wanted to teach had to know the Bible, understand it, and be able to convey its content in a child-friendly manner. This was where many faltered. The vast majority first had to look up in their Bible what they were supposed to cover. There needed to be a treatment plan, and preparation for the lesson was necessary. Schedules were drawn up. Handbooks were written, including the story, the explanation, questions to address, and comments to make. All this went beyond the church, operated on its own, and was often left to chance.

If one could say that there was always a uniform thought among all Christians about the Holy Scripture, about its interpretation, and about its meaning for life, there would be no danger.

However, that was not the case. There were various opinions and insights. That difference in insight was tied to differences in confession; and that difference in confession was linked to differences in the historical background of the church. Thus, it was inevitable that various divergent, contradictory, and false ideas crept in among the youth through these different biblical interpretations. Over the most difficult and complex issues, unauthorized individuals sometimes invented solutions that made no sense, or provided explanations from some book that were directly contrary to the church's confession. The result was that all unity of confession was lost; that various sectarian feelings were introduced, sometimes even driven; and that ultimately, the Sunday school, without intending or aiming to, acquired a very problematic aspect for the future of church life.

Much wise management will be required from the churches to guide the flow of the Sunday school in such a way that it does not become stagnant, and to avert the danger of destruction by flooding from the church field by building good dikes.

To shout: "Away with the Sunday school!" is spiritual vandalism. To say: "Do not touch the Sunday school!" is fanaticism.

The lesson of wisdom here will also be that the churches, without condemning the power inherent in the Sunday school to inactivity, should guide the energy within it in a good direction.

Nursing

The third "Z" in the acronym represents nursing. The youngest sister among the trio, but one that gained significant prominence, especially in the last twenty years, and ultimately also united with mission.

Here too, the church was at fault.

A fault not in that it broke with what had developed in the ecclesiastical hierarchy during the 16th century in this regard. This could not have been otherwise, and it will always repeat with every violent rupture. Even in construction, one often sees how a facade that you dismantle to rebuild it threatens the facade of the adjacent building and pulls it down with its fall.

Even if it must be candidly acknowledged that the hospital care that existed before the Reformation and still exists in Rome's church was wrongly completely disorganized by the Reformation, the fault lies not with the Reformed churches of the first period, but with those of the second.

In the days of the Reformation, no one would have thought of letting the existing hospital care fall into decay if it had not been almost universally connected to the monastic and religious orders. Since this was indeed the case, it was inevitable that the sharp resolution against the monastic orders would also abolish the organization that existed for hospital care. This was the simple logic of the facts, against which any criticism falters. Anyone who wishes to sharpen their critical scalpel meaningfully would need to oppose the condemnation of the monastic and religious orders, not the abandonment of the hospices.

What is condemnable, however, is that the Reformed churches, after long and anxious struggles, finally obtaining rest and peace, did not understand how the diaconal nature, including the reestablishment of hospital care in a manner consistent with our principles, was required.

And this has not happened.

As we have repeatedly pointed out, after the Synod of Dordrecht, and especially after 1640, a conservatism took over our Reformed churches, which cut off all further development.

Now that they had obtained what they desired, they were weary, utterly weary from the long struggle. The bacillus of intellectualism on the one hand, and of a detached mysticism on the other, infected the churches everywhere. Thus, in both the 17th and 18th centuries, not a single powerful figure emerged to inspire the churches with holy zeal for the great task that awaited them.

It is clear that Mammon played a role in this. If our people had been poor in those two centuries, the need would have taught them to pray and work, and the spirit of the people would have been sharpened and tempered. But just as the gold mines of the Rand greatly depleted Transvaal, so did the silver and even more the gold mountains accumulated from trade and shipping, deplete the spirit. Comparing 1672 with 1572, even with a magnifying glass, it is difficult to recognize the sons of the rebels of April 1st in the spiritual children of Cats. Everything had become complacent. Content with the present, there was no higher ideal. It was all peace and quiet, but also a satisfied bourgeoisie, and what was worse, a satisfied church. A contented church. A church that fancied itself to be there and to have fulfilled its calling, and that now sat idle, unwilling, and soulless on the monopoly of "orthodoxy" and "State Church."

The Scots, who were poorer and therefore remained fresher, came to our aid with their translated works, and a Scot came to Comrie who, even in the 19th century, kindled the smoldering flame, but even he was without a fraternal perspective, without new insight, only caught up in second-rate dogmatic disputes.

After 1672, there was no point in our contemporary church life that advanced further. We repeatedly noticed that the Government was also at fault here. It deliberately wanted the churches to fall asleep and was content that this way it had less trouble from its competitors. However, an inspired, proud church, clearly aware of its calling, would have reacted against this governmental restraint. This is precisely what the churches did not do. The

silver cord of authority bound and constrained. Government favor was an instrument of rule.

This explains why the institution of the Diaconies, which our Reformed churches initially promoted so powerfully, never advanced beyond its early stages. It soon became soulless due to stagnation in its development and was quickly reduced to a mere distribution institution, proudly displaying itself in the realm of charitable foundations.

This still has repercussions today. This is not only the case in the Fellowship Church but also among us; although we must gratefully acknowledge that the diaconal awareness among us is starting to revive, and that, even if we are not yet capable of doing great things, the sense and conviction that things must change and improve is awakening again.

At the end of the previous century and the beginning of this one, the situation here was extremely bitter and sad. Almost all diaconies had become lifeless institutions, purely administrative in nature, and all ecclesiastical, all consecrated, all higher consciousness had vanished from these bodies.

Much of what was once a mix of church and civic responsibility was simply absorbed by the Government during the Reformation, and many old almshouses were staffed by hired personnel. The church's involvement was limited to holding services there.

The almshouses that remained with the churches, or were later established through bequests, were mostly under the management of regents and regentesses who were mired in vanity and took their greatest delight in displaying their coat of arms and portraits in the Regent's rooms. The personnel they hired differed little from that in municipal almshouses.

No Christian spirit breathed through these institutions anymore. They had become mere regulation and administration. In almost none of these institutions could one find a trace of a high conception of the diaconal task.

It must be unreservedly acknowledged that the hospital care, which is now beginning to play such a fine role, has emerged more from the humanitarian drive of civic life than from the Christian drive of ecclesiastical life.

The issue of women was related to this. Although Scripture clearly taught that from the beginning women had a specific role to fulfill in the church of Christ, all involvement of women in diaconal matters was cut off among us. There were regentesses, yes, but they were mostly chosen from women of high social standing, who saw this role as a kind of honorary title and limited themselves primarily to gathering in the Regentess hall. Unfortunately, even among these regentesses, the national history does not mention a single one who, as a woman of Christian zeal, worked reformatively on the institutional system, bringing forth the light of a better dawn.

The prevailing spirit was even hostile to the involvement of women in church matters. They were not wanted. Their right to involvement was contested. It was also not recognized that women have gifts that men lack, and that these gifts could be used in the service of Christ.

Narrow-mindedness, short-sightedness, and parochialism set the tone. Thus, a harmful inertia developed. In this inertia, people continued to struggle, with no prospect of a revival of new life.

Something that must be stated clearly and without embellishment, because this spirit still affects us, and it takes indescribable effort and energy to shift a vehicle stuck in old tracks onto new and better tracks.

Yet, even if our voice against this remains, as it is, a “voice crying in the wilderness,” it should not silence us.

The church must not remain as it is on the diaconal front either. It must find the strength to develop further according to the demands of Holy

Scripture. To this end, it is urgently necessary that the cause of past evils be clearly understood because only those who recognize the mistakes of the previous generation can work towards the improvement of conditions for future generations.

It is evident that significant questions of church law are involved here, and the necessary corrections can ultimately only come from the Synod, not from the Diaconate alone. However, this also implies that our church law experts have the calling not to passively cling to the old and leave everything as it was, but to make changes that will make healthier conditions possible.

The fact that we discuss hospital care under practicism is justified by the fact that, like missions and Sunday schools, hospital care did not originate from the ecclesiastical root but emerged as a protest against the churches' neglect, arising from a general humanitarian movement that originated with the French Revolution, or, if one prefers, its ideological direction.

Not the church, but rather societal life, can boast of significant achievements here. The church also bears its share of shame in this regard. Humanism has outstripped it. Only after a spirit of mercy had awakened elsewhere in this field did church officials finally come to realize that a noble field for important work was open here.

However, even when office bearers became aware, they did not engage in this service in their official capacity and within the ecclesiastical context but mostly took it up individually.

In fact, it can be said that for the first time, with respect to missions, there is talk of church involvement in this new field.

"Organized hospital care" can be understood in broader or narrower terms. Naturally, there is hospital care in every household, whether through family members, friends, or regular domestic staff. Here, however, only organized care is discussed, and regular home care is entirely excluded. Even if we

limit our discussion to organized care, it is still quite different whether we are talking about hospital care for a single church, a single hospital, or a single hospital ship, or whether we are discussing hospital care as an enterprise or life work of a particular order or association.

A small rural church that designates one or two trained women or men to help care for the sick in the congregation in case of need has, albeit on a very small scale, organized hospital care. Similarly small in scope, but equally organized, is the care on a hospital ship, ambulance, or clinic. Only in larger hospitals or medical centers does this organization take on broader dimensions.

Nevertheless, this organization remains narrowly focused as it only provides care within a specific, narrowly defined area, such as in an almshouse, an ambulance, on a ship, in a church, or in a designated church district.

Hospital care is then not an end but a means. There is treatment of the sick and injured. An institution has been established for this treatment. Doctors are attached to the institution. There is a management that takes care of the house, ship, or ambulance. There are instruments and medicines.

Operations are performed. Baths are used. Massage and therapeutic exercises are applied. In addition, there is care for the sick. However, this care does not include the treatment by doctors or surgeons. It is not what the pharmacist or management does. No, "hospital care" refers exclusively to the assistance provided, mostly by women, to support the doctor and to help care for the sick.

In this sense, hospital care is secondary. It supplements the treatment. It is an addition to the treatment, to such an extent that previously, for such support services, untrained personnel were hired, whereas now trained nurses are employed, who have received education and training. Often, this means that while previously helper staff came from the ranks of domestic servants, now trained personnel, often young women from the middle or even higher classes, are recruited.

Yet, this auxiliary service still retains a limited character in that it would cease if the institution were to disappear. In wartime, an ambulance is organized and staff is recruited; but once the war is over, the staff is dismissed. A hospital ship sails with large fishing fleets; but once that is over, the ship is put into storage, and the nurses go home. Similarly, nurses are appointed for a new hospital but are dismissed when the hospital closes. Especially during severe epidemics, it is common for such temporary care facilities to be set up and then dismantled shortly thereafter.

Thus, to a certain extent, hospital care retains the exclusive character of hiring trained personnel from higher social classes, whereas previously untrained personnel from the servant class were employed.

In contrast, when hospital care is chosen as a main goal by an order or association, the concept takes on a much broader and different character.

In such cases, hospital care becomes the primary objective, rather than being a supplementary service. It then assumes a general character, no longer serving just one specific institution.

A group of individuals then unites in an order or society to pursue hospital care as a life task and dedicate themselves exclusively to it.

The motivation for this can be either a higher principle or merely the search for a livelihood.

The latter is the case if the association lacks any confessional character, does not offer services for free, and provides its services for a fixed fee. If someone needs help for a sick person, they contact the office of such an association, just as one would contact an office for goods transport, expeditions, or other services. You need a particular type of assistance. The association is set up to provide such help, and you pay a pre-agreed price for the service you receive.

For you, it is a matter of rental and payment, and for the association, it is merely a business, either to provide its members with a livelihood or to make profits.

Conversely, when hospital care is chosen as the primary goal from a higher principle, it is driven not by the search for a livelihood but by the urge of love to assist suffering humanity.

In such cases, it is not the search for a livelihood that drives the action, but the impulse of love to help suffering humanity. Genuine humanitarian services are thus excluded. Those who can pay do so, often in the form of a voluntary donation to the institution that provided the help. Even if little or nothing can be paid, an order or association dedicated to hospital care from a higher principle will never refuse its services as long as personnel is available. Indeed, hospital care for the poorest holds a special appeal for members of such an association or order, as the high motive works in its purest form.

The difference between an order and an association is of secondary importance here, and is most evident in that an order involves a more complete dedication of the person. One commits oneself for life to an order; from an association, one can withdraw if another life position arises. In an order, one foregoes personal account and lives off and works for the order. Admission to an order is granted only if the higher principle drives one; in an association, one can also be part of it if the higher motive is reinforced by the need for accommodation and livelihood.

Nevertheless, regardless of the form, this type of hospital care remains fundamentally different from the first type, as it always remains the primary goal in such an order or association, while in a hospital or ambulance, it only performs supplementary auxiliary services for a specific institution.

This distinction persists even if an order or association takes on hospital care in certain institutions or temporarily provides some of its members for

such an institution. It then operates in a mixed capacity. As far as the specific institution, establishment, or foundation is concerned, it remains auxiliary service, but for the association taking on the care, it remains the primary goal and sole activity. The monastic form chosen by the Catholics and now emulated by the Anglican Church in England, contrasts with the form of association which is more suited to Protestant confessions.

Conversely, it is also possible for a hospital or clinic to simultaneously offer home care. This is a second mixed form, combining both concepts. However, the fundamental distinction remains. Home care then becomes a branch of the hospital facility.

Therefore, the distinction should not be sought in home care versus hospital care. The principal difference in the realm of hospital care lies in the difference we have highlighted. There is either care in and connected to a specific institution, in which case it is auxiliary service, or care provided by a particular order or association, which makes it the primary goal.

A third mixed form is hospital care in the service of missions. In this case, it is connected to a specific institution in two respects. Firstly, because it serves a particular church, and secondly, because it operates in a specific hospital or clinic. It thus has the character of auxiliary service and belongs to the first category. However, in this special case, it is inconceivable without sharing the higher motive of the second category.

Missions ultimately aim to convert those outside Christianity to Christ. Admission to such a missionary hospital or clinic is primarily a means to gain access to individuals and families, and thus to pave the way for preaching Christ. However, this also means that one can only devote oneself to the care in such a hospital or clinic if one is driven by the love of Christ. This service requires not only being trained and educated as a caregiver but also being deeply committed to winning those who are distant for Christ, and thus having a heartfelt dedication to Christ.

Regarding practicism, it is evident that we are only dealing with hospital care to which one is dedicated from Christian conviction.

Hospital care in ordinary institutions and almshouses is therefore entirely outside the scope of practicism, as it is organized by the management of these institutions themselves. Practicism has no connection with that.

Ordinary institutional care in various hospitals and ambulances, as long as it is carried out by hired staff without other church ties, differs from previous practice only in that trained personnel is now used.

Thus, the discussion focuses solely on the various forms of hospital care in which especially young women of Christian conviction have sought and found a way to put their faith into practical expression. There is a need to not only confess the Lord but also to do something for Jesus. It is in this sense and spirit that many who otherwise saw their lives passing aimlessly have dedicated themselves to this particular work of mercy and devoted their lives to their Savior.

If one asks us what can be said about the development of hospital care; whether there is any nobler work to be imagined than to alleviate the suffering of those on their sickbeds; and whether it is not merely criticizing everything to offer disapproving criticism in this regard—then we will not spare any words of praise for hospital care—it is truly valuable—but we must also point out how, on every field, there are dead flies that can spoil the best ointment.

This is not primarily directed at the term “sister” or the “uniform,” although there is also criticism to be made here. Our criticism of this hospital care focuses on something else entirely, namely, its connection with Home and Church. Nevertheless, let us briefly discuss the term “sister” and the “uniform” as well.

The term “brothers and sisters” is used where there is an official or spiritual connection between people, even if not by blood. Freemasons have the

fixed custom of calling each other brothers. In church councils, there has also traditionally been a fixed custom of referring to one another as “brothers.” On a much broader scale, the minister of the Word in Christ’s church addresses the assembled believers as “brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Deviating from this fixed usage is the incidental use of the term brother when addressing compatriots, comrades, or fellow sufferers in serious moments, where the combination “brother” or “sister” is usually common. The word “sister” is not used in this sense. An address beginning with “Sisters” is not known to us. This is not because “sisters” are not of equal standing with “brothers,” but because women, unlike men, received less calling and talent for the public sphere of life, and because an address of “brother-men” implies a call to masculine fortitude, while “sister-women” would have the opposite effect. “Brother-men” appeals to heroic courage, while “sister-women” would appeal to tenderness of heart.

On its own, there is no fundamental objection to the use of the term “brother” in the aforementioned sense, provided that the term “brother” is only used to refer to believers. Believers profess to each other and to the world that they are born from one Father in heaven and are therefore called “children of God.” Where there is one Father and many children, the term “brother” is the only appropriate expression for the relationship in which these children stand to each other. Conversely, where this shared Fatherhood is lacking, the terms “brother” or “sister” can only be used metaphorically and not in their literal sense. Mutual connection does not create the relationship of brother or sister. The unique aspect of the relationship of brother and sister, as well as that of father and child, lies in the fact that this relationship is not established by our will or choice but entirely outside our control. One does not choose his brothers and sisters; one does not make someone a brother or sister by one’s own act of will, but by a birth independent of our will. All association or connection into a so-called brotherhood is, therefore, an inherently irrational concept. The

term “brother-in-law” and “sister-in-law” is only a healthy term because it connects directly to the essential brotherhood and is sufficiently distinguished by the prefix “in-law” to avoid confusion.

Meanwhile, based on the brotherhood that binds us as children of God, one can certainly use the term “brother” whenever one wishes to emphasize this shared spiritual birth from the Father of lights. The Moravians preferred to call their congregation “brother congregation,” originally meaning only that they were united as believing and confessing Christians. They did not deny that there were also children of God outside their circle but merely expressed by this name that they recognized each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Likewise, the origin of the term “brother” for the mutual relationship of office-bearers in the church was to honor their Christian character as children of God.

The greeting of church council members as brothers was not due to the office, as if the office first invoked the term “brother,” but because they wanted to honor their Christian character as children of God.

From this originally good and completely justified use, a completely different concept soon arose, as if one could make each other brothers or sisters through agreement, appointment, or association. However, this did not express a shared origin but was a title given to each other to express the intimate or close relationship in which they stood with one another.

Initially, this was limited to the holy domain. Those who, driven by a holy principle, united for a holy purpose formed a brotherhood or confraternity. Thus, the monastic system under the Hierarchy naturally adopted the term “brother” and, in connection with or independent of these orders, various brotherhoods were formed, such as the Scapulier Brotherhood, the Rosary Brotherhood,²⁴ etc.

This also found early following among those in some opposition to the Hierarchy, such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit,²⁵ the Brethren of the

Common Life,²⁶ etc., and in recent times, among Protestants, the Brotherhood of Adventists emerged, and Darbists are sometimes called “Brethren in the Lord.”

Later usage further departed from the original meaning, as the term confrater or confrère or brotherhood was used for various office relations, guild affiliations, or professional unity, even without any connection, as journalists, for example, commonly address each other as confrères.

So, initially: recognizing each other as children of God and thus as brothers born from one Father. Then: using the term “brother” when the being a child of God was emphasized. Later: using the term “brother” for uniting in the holy domain for a holy purpose. Further: “brotherhood” became a more common and general term for various associations and unions. Finally, completely estranged from the original meaning: referring to brothers and sisters, or confraters and confrères, to express that one was engaged in the same profession in a social sphere.

Thus viewed, there would have been nothing wrong in itself if Christian women who united to care for the sick in the name of Jesus had recognized each other as children of God, loved each other as children of God, and wished to work together as children of God in this holy service.

However, the practice in hospital care did not follow this path. It continually spoke of sisters, even where there was no mention of Christian confession; even when the circle was entirely outside any Christian faith. No one can claim that the original name was used in its purity here. The term “sister” in hospital care gradually expressed the same as “brother” in guilds or corporations. It merely indicated that people united by their own choice for that common work. There was no trace even of being born from one Father in heaven. As far as such associations were still somewhat religious, the term “sister” was nothing more than a following of the Roman Catholic brotherhoods or orders; and as far as hospital care entirely ignored Christ, it was merely a worldly confraternity.

In Catholic countries, almost all hospitals were traditionally served by order sisters. Thus, the term "sister" had become indigenous there. It is from this practice in Catholic countries that the term "sister" was also transferred to our hospitals.

This is most evident in the fact that the term "sister" is used as a title in its literal sense in hospital care. It is not only that people address each other as sisters, but nurses are referred to as sisters, completely independent of their mutual relationships. The management needs two sisters. A candidate applies to become a sister. The management is on the trail of a very good sister. The nurse is called Sister A or Sister B. There is a sister for the boys' ward, a sister for the children's ward.

Thus, "sister" has become a designation for a position, a role, an office, and this is in irreconcilable conflict with the genuine concept of sisterhood. In your home, if you have six daughters, you would never refer to one as a sister for the nursery or a sister for the household, or call her Sister Anna or Sister Petronella. In a family, when referring to actual sisters, the term "sister" is only used to express the familial relationship, never as a designation for her duties or as a title.

Based on this, among Protestant Christians, the use of the term "sister" for the role of nurse should certainly be discouraged. In this sense, the use of the term "sister" does not fit with us. Genuine sisterhood is completely missing from it. The word "sister" is thus rendered soulless, turned into a sort of title, and adopted from entirely different circles that operate from entirely different principles.

That women who know they have been transferred from death to life, and who are born of God, greet each other as sisters in Christ and love each other as sisters for Christ's sake, is excellent; but quality or title should never be sought in the term "sister."

Only the superficiality and spiritual shallowness of all Practicalism made it possible for the term "sister" to be so readily adopted by us and taken up by Protestant believers in this country in such an unthinking manner.

Thus, the term "Sister" for a nurse does not appeal to us. It is a name that does not originate from Protestant sources. This is not to say that everything from non-Protestant churches should be rejected, but because our forefathers, based on their experiences with the use of this term in connection with orders and monasticism, rejected it. They did not do so out of whim but according to the principle that guided them. If we were to take up such a usage again, it should be done without any pretense, and indeed while continuing to oppose all Papism. The possibility is not entirely excluded that our forefathers in the 16th century were mistaken on this or that point, or that under the influence of that mistake, they condemned and abolished something from the practice of their time that was in itself commendable and should have remained so. However, if that is the case, it should be acknowledged with knightly honesty; the fault and error should be confessed, and the abolished practice should be restored to its essential form.

However, that is not done, and so someone among us intends it. One does not want a monastery, an order, or a confraternity. One does not want vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. One wants to remain free to marry if the opportunity arises. One remains the owner of one's own property. If one wants to leave, one resigns. While lacking all that gives firmness and unbreakable bonds, and precisely because of that could present itself as sisterhood, one now merely adopts the title "Sister" and we are so far that, even in the case of illness, one says: "Wouldn't you want to get a sister?"—thus using the full expression that only fits an order.

This assumes a division of life into two parts. There is a sacred and a secular domain. The former is called the church, and the latter is the world. Now the sick person's family belongs to the world, but the nurse belongs to the church, and because in the church there are only brothers

and sisters, and this brotherhood and sisterhood even received an exponent here, such a nurse is not a miss or a lady but is a sacred type of woman and is thus called a sister.

In recognition of common grace, however, outstanding hospital care is also imaginable outside the sacred sphere, not only with knowledge and practice but also with much seriousness and dedication. Hence, it is not the church that comes to care in the world, but rather civil society and domestic life that possess their own care capabilities.

Thus, regarding the use of the term "Sister," which sometimes does not seem far from the "Mennonite sister."

The transition is evident. Not only were Anabaptist young women called "sisters," but they also wore a distinct attire, as is still the case with the genuine Quakers in England. In hospital care, that attire has reemerged.

This reinforces what we wrote about the use of the term "Sister." As soon as the term "sister" is associated with the sister's attire, the separation from ordinary life becomes even sharper.

The term "sister" separates the ear, the sister's attire separates the eye, and with variations in life, the visual aspect always has a stronger effect.

However, let us not be misunderstood about this clothing or attire.

It is also our conviction that each designated profession should be recognizable by its attire. Even now, one can see on the street who is a soldier, plasterer, butcher, blacksmith, or carpenter. A farmer and a sailor can be distinguished at first glance.

This is valuable. The attire should match and fit the person. Only the white attire of the butcher ensures cleanliness in handling meat, and hygiene benefits from it. So it is to some extent with every profession where the

worker comes into contact with specific substances or where a particular distinguishing mark is required.

On its own, there is nothing against this; rather, it is commendable that those who care for the sick should dress in a way that is most suitable for that care. One must be completely free in one's movements to be able to lift and help effectively. One should not wear attire that cannot withstand a stain. To avoid transferring the illness from one person to another, one needs attire that can be washed and thus fully cleaned and disinfected. Also, the attire should be simple; one does not dress up at the sickbed. We therefore gladly acknowledge that the clothing in which many nurses spend time in the patient's room meets these requirements in more than one respect.

Regarding this requirement, our concern with the most blue-tinted, washable, simple clothing, which is often worn for actual nursing, would only be the excessive uniformity. The color and cut do not need to be the same for every person and every institution. As long as the primary requirements of ease of movement, simplicity, and washability are met, various variations are conceivable, and such variations according to person or institution would attract us. It would maintain the freedom of individuality and the distinctiveness of a hospital without harming the matter, whereas the great uniformity constantly reminds us of the monastic system.

In England, this is often met to the extent that each association or hospital varies the service attire. There is nothing against this here; it breaks the monotony and uniformity.

However, our main concern is not with the attire worn while nursing but with the attire worn in public.

Black and white are the colors of mourning among us, and the street attire of our nurses closely resembles the mourning attire of our widows and

orphans. This expresses a thought, and that thought fundamentally implies that one has broken with the world, is dead to the world, and now, as one who no longer belongs to the world, walks through the streets of the world to the sickbed.

It is not surprising that this mourning attire sometimes contrasts strangely with the cheerful expressions and searching glances of those who wear it. Occasionally, it even caused offense.

Yet, where this is fortunately still an exception, it is difficult to deny that attire and self-awareness are in conflict here. For many nurses who seek nothing but a livelihood from nursing and otherwise act entirely like people of their years, no attire that expresses death to the world is suitable.

Most "sisters" are not like that. They need not be, in our view. However, then they should not create a display of it either.

Such attire only fits the monastic system if one has taken the three vows and expects nothing more from the world now and in the future.

Nonetheless, we do not go so far as to reject every kind of attire for our nurses on the street. Nurses must go out at various times alone. It is impractical to have them always accompanied. Their shift often starts when it is already dark. They must continually walk through lonely neighborhoods to reach the home of their patient. This could expose them to unpleasant encounters. Thus, there is something to be said for them wearing attire that naturally promises safety on such occasions. Even street rascals still have some respect for someone going to care for the sick. If they know this, if they see it from the attire, they keep their distance.

We also understand that an association or institution that sends nurses out in large numbers may find it easier to adopt a standard model of clothing. This is more economical. It is simpler and it makes less of a difference.

If everyone were completely free, female vanity would likely intrude too strongly, and one might try to outdo the other.

However, what is unnecessary is the use of such an unnatural mourning attire. Such an institution or foundation can very well introduce a uniform, simple, and distinguished attire that offers the same advantages without such false symbolism.

This will then vary depending on the spirit that animates the institution or association.

If an institution is driven only by ordinary civic factors without a higher principle, then the attire chosen can also be more ordinary and civic.

On the other hand, if an association is driven by a higher principle, and its nurses do not care for their own position nor have further expectations from life, then this more complete dedication can also be expressed in a more sober attire.

Especially if it is an institution where no salary is received and everyone lives solely from the funds or interest of the institution, without personal assets, such sobriety of attire is appropriate.

However, even then, it remains desirable to us that such attire is not permanent.

Just as a carpenter does not wear his work apron to church, and a plasterer does not wear his long white coat to a wedding, so the designated attire belongs only to the profession and the service, but only in that context. When one is outside of service and mingling as an ordinary person, there is no reason to wear such service attire. One can then dress like any other serious woman.

This is related to the other question of whether a young girl is the most suitable for this service. The Holy Scripture first points to our widows and

then, naturally, to our childless widows for all such services.

They have their years and their experience, and thus are naturally better suited for this service. It can also be assumed that those whom Scripture calls "true widows" will ensure that their choice of attire will not conflict with the requirement of simplicity and sobriety.

However, whether this is the case or not, the name of "sister" and likewise a fixed mourning attire in which one appears among people do not fit with our Protestant traditions.

Thus, it became clear to us that there is a sharp distinction between nurses who are nothing more than trained staff appointed by and for a specific hospital, and nurses who, from principle, dedicate themselves to this service for Christ's sake.

Secondly, the title "sister," which is now used even in secular institutions entirely outside of religious faith, should be disapproved as it is a term borrowed from Rome and, in that way, a completely empty and meaningless title.

Thirdly, a distinct attire for nursing, and partly even outside of nursing, is, in our opinion, desirable, provided it is not mourning attire, that it differs for each institution according to the requirements of nursing, and that it is not a uniform worn outside of service.

Now that these three points have been addressed, we come to the main issue, the nursing itself, in relation to the home and the church.

Nursing belongs in the home and should be performed by family members. This is the healthy rule; and if exceptions to this rule are justified, the reason for these exceptions must be evident.

Thus understood our forefathers, and they saw it rightly.

Sickness and illness are phenomena in life with which every family and almost every member of the family becomes acquainted. Illness in its various stages—being unwell, becoming sick, needing to go to bed, being ill, and being seriously ill—has a higher purpose for both the family and its members.

Already at the closing of a marriage, our churches state in the Marriage Form that “the married will commonly encounter many kinds of crosses,” and among these “common crosses” surely illness and disease are not the least.

The danger of illness and disease imposes on the household the duty to take various hygienic measures, with which our national cleanliness developed. Although this cleanliness mania was more driven by housewives than by doctors, it undoubtedly had hygienic value. Sweeping dust, whitewashing with a plasterer's brush, waxing, polishing metal, airing bedding, purifying all drain channels, closing the pantry, storing and covering all foodstuffs, and thoroughly checking all that the butcher brought, were actions that were practically antiseptic long before anyone had dreamed of bacilli or heard of the discovery by the Viennese professor. God himself taught our housewives this through the development of female instinct. Although it must be admitted that they underestimated the importance of the bathroom, it is also a significant part of the physical well-being of our people was undoubtedly due to the cleanliness mania of our old housewives.

However, the true significance of illness for the family only emerged when the illness was not merely feared but came. Then it caused a disruption in the ordinary tone of life and heightened seriousness. It called for increased care, more affection, and deeper dedication. The family bond was felt more strongly as soon as the doctor made his visit. The woman, especially the mother, but also the daughters, gained an importance in family life that somewhat pushed the man and the sons to a secondary role. The servant who helped felt herself as part of the family and was valued as such. The

distinction between day and night, which otherwise governs family life, diminished to make way for the single control of the entire family by the sickbed. Prayer gained more emphasis, warmth, and intimacy. Connections with the outside family were also strengthened when an aunt or sister-in-law appeared to help with the nursing. Thus, the serious illness of one family member brought about a complete turnaround in family life, and the extent of this turnaround was that the ordinary household order was disrupted, but in such a way that life became deeper and richer before God.

However, as much as we praise this, we equally acknowledge that the exceptions to the rule were worse than they are now. These exceptions were numerous, as they still are. They arose and still arise, firstly, due to poverty, when the family's home is too small to allow for a separate sickroom, and thus the sick person must be nursed in the same room where children play, food is cooked, and the entire family lives. Secondly, such an exception occurs with individuals living alone, without their own family, who are left to themselves. Thirdly, exceptions arose and still arise when the illness is contagious or when there are wounds requiring special nursing, not to mention dangerous surgical procedures.

In part, this was also addressed in the past through hospitals, but in those hospitals, everything that the family could offer was lacking, and one did not find the dedicated care that the Roman "sisters" used to provide from higher motives. Without fear of exaggeration, it can be said that in the past, nursing in the family was high, but nursing in hospitals was low.

It is therefore very understandable and commendable that in our time, there has been an expansion and improvement of the latter type of nursing. Although not everything in our current hospitals meets the highest standards, it must be acknowledged that, compared to old hospitals, they are model institutions.

While there may be justified complaints about the lack of spiritual elements and questionable experiments to which patients are often subjected, they,

from a material perspective, as physical nursing institutions, generally offer more than the best family can provide today. It must also be acknowledged that the presence in these hospitals of nurses who are not only trained but generally also belong to a higher status, offers much benefit through warmth, tenderness, and loving treatment.

There is nothing against having hospitals for the poor alongside general hospitals, where lonely, self-standing individuals can find shelter. Where the family is absent, the family cannot serve. Such patients still value careful and adequate care. Being cared for in a rented room, half-heartedly by the landlady or the servant, gives, apart from rare exceptions, a sense of abandonment that also morally harms the patient.

We also admit that there is something good in the fact that, in the case of prolonged and serious illness, the housewife can now find ready assistance from trained nurses who come to support her within her family. Not every family is fully grown. The housewife may be newly married and still lacking in experience. There are families without adult daughters who could assist and alternate with the mother. In all such cases, the strength of one woman is often insufficient. This gap can now be filled by a sister, mother-in-law, or other relatives. However, if these are also absent and the woman must handle everything on her own, it is fortunate if an experienced nurse from outside comes to her aid. Otherwise, the housewife may ultimately be overwhelmed, and the sick also suffer.

However, while we acknowledge this, and it is clear from this that we do not underestimate the progress of free nursing, we emphasize that the exception should not replace the rule, and that damage is done to family life and our national life if we increasingly accept the idea that nursing should only occur in the home and by its own personnel as an exception, with the rule being taken over by hospitals and employed nurses.

Once this approach is adopted, the housewife abdicates her high and noble calling at one of the most critical moments in family life.

A housewife and mother should, if anything, not be inferior to a nurse in terms of practical knowledge of nursing, and especially not in love and dedication. A nurse who comes into the home should not look down on the housewife as an inferior nurse, and the housewife should show that such a view is completely mistaken.

However, we face the difficulty that so many young women marry thoughtlessly, without being well-informed, and that many mothers do not realize that raising their daughters to be good housewives requires higher standards than merely attending a boarding school, learning social graces, and understanding fashionable dress.

The constant transition from a more instinctive to a more conscious life weighs heavily here. In the past, the instinctive life was much stronger. Now, it has diminished. However, in its place, we have gained more conscious living.

Good nursing in the home used to happen more naturally through tradition and practice. Today, we have more deliberately thought about proper methods of nursing, and there is much that one must learn to know. Previously, it came naturally from life practice. Now, one learns it in a course.

It is a mistake that mothers do not realize that their marriageable daughters must learn what the mother herself can no longer teach, but must be learned in other ways.

This applies to cooking, to the care of clothing, and also to nursing.

The education of a young girl should not only include learning languages, history, and literature but also thoroughly include learning to cook, manage a household, create clothing, and nurse the sick. No female education should be considered complete until it is clear that the young girl has acquired the necessary knowledge and practice in all these areas.

The absence of this leads to the domestic nursing by the household being more deficient, which in turn leads to the increasing transfer of nursing to hospitals or to relying on strangers in the home.

Without being overly purist, we must not conceal that this situation is not in line with natural ordinances.

Every mother in the household should be a professional nurse. The first-called. The self-designated. The one who can provide what no stranger can—the love of a mother’s heart.

The fact that so many die in hospitals without faith and love surrounding their deathbed is an indictment of the spirit of our age. Everything for the body, but nothing... nothing for the soul.

The fact that Practicalism has so undermined this natural order of family life, and increasingly gives the impression that nursing by strangers is the most natural and normal thing, cannot be regretted strongly enough.

Thus, a Christian love is revealed that is un-Christian in that it undermines the foundation of natural life, which is under the care of Common Grace, in favor of something extra, something extraordinary.

It becomes a “Christian” love that disrupts what should remain in its proper context, causing real damage.

The complaint remains that modern “nursing” significantly takes over the task from the household and the family.

A one-sidedness at the expense of the family, similar to how in earlier centuries the family flourished at the expense of the sick without families. Then, one thought it almost entirely the responsibility of the household and the family to care for the sick, leading to deplorable conditions in our almshouses, where incoming patients often lacked any proper nursing. Now it trends toward the opposite: in family life, neither the mother nor the

daughters have the practical knowledge to nurse properly, and almost all good nursing forces are concentrated in hospitals, clinics, district nursing, and so forth.

There must be two kinds of nursing: one for those who become ill within a family, and the other for those who become ill as individuals without a family. Additionally, the lack of a separate sickroom, serious contagion, or other factors can hinder good nursing in the home. However, the main rule must always be upheld: those who become ill while living in a family should be nursed within that family; those who become ill without a family should receive nursing in institutions or through organizations.

This means that more than one patient nursed in the family may not receive the precise, tailored, and fully developed nursing that a hospital could provide; but such a patient must bear this sacrifice for higher interests.

Also, as with education, many children would be more precisely and methodically educated if they went to a boarding school than if they are raised by their parents. Yet we resist the ideas of old pagan philosophers, which are reemerging, that seek to remove education from the family and transfer it to state commissions.

Not because we are blind to the damage many children suffer as a result, but because this is a consequence of sin, and due to the continued disintegration of family life, the overall damage to the state and church life threatens to become even greater.

If family life falls short in fulfilling its duties, we should not further weaken the family but remove the evil from the family task itself. This goal is never achieved by continually removing tasks from the family, but only by increasing and stimulating the awareness of moral responsibility within the family.

This applies equally to the inadequate care of our sick.

If many face difficulties in providing proper care due to cramped living conditions, then improve workers' housing and teach families to take in young children as long as noise would disrupt the peace needed for the sick. If there are insufficient resources for good nursing, address this by implementing nationwide regulations, similar to those in Germany, for families affected by illness, covering medical assistance, free pharmacies, supplements, and continuation of wages.

If the extensive ignorance of mothers in this area is a problem, then, as in the past, incorporate the art of good nursing into female education—something that would be as beneficial as teaching every girl to play on an impossible piano.

Thus, rebuild the household in good style and seek to provide natural nursing for most sick individuals in the usual way.

If this is your starting point, then let nursing outside the home flourish for the benefit of the mentally ill and those with serious infections who need isolation, and for the benefit of the solitary, family-less individuals.

This is the healthy method, beginning with respecting the ordinances set by God, organizing the care of the sick according to those ordinances, and only developing its strength outside when dealing with patients in extraordinary circumstances.

Yet modern nursing is moving against this.

This is most apparent in how so many young women dote on nursing outside the home, while they can hardly be persuaded to care for a sick family member temporarily.

When a servant in the home fell ill, no one thought to stay up with her at night; she was often neglected by more than one person. However, take the same servant to a hospital, and if the same girl is appointed as a nurse there, she will enthusiastically perform all duties.

This is not only true for sick servants but unfortunately also applies to sick siblings or even parents who had to stay in bed. There was never time. One had to keep going out. The idea of constant dedication never occurred. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to either leave one's sick unattended or to rely on servants.

However, give that same young girl a position as a nurse to care for patients in a foreign home or hospital, and suddenly a sense of calling, responsibility, and higher dedication awakens; and there is a passion, zeal, and enthusiasm that was never present in the own home.

This deserves condemnation, not only from non-believers but even more so from young girls of Christian confession. They should understand that God's ordinances demand respect. At the very least, they should realize that a drive is not sanctified if it only awakens in extraordinary situations with strangers, while remaining cold, indifferent, and ineffective in familiar life circumstances. You shall love your neighbor as yourself, but precisely for this reason, do not bypass those who are closest to you in your family to seek those who are less related.

Unfortunately, this reveals the same tendency toward the adventurous that we observed in mission work. There is a quiet sitting and silence when it comes to calling those still distant from Christ in one's own ordinary surroundings, while an extraordinary eagerness and zeal flare up when there are completely unknown Bataks or Javanese thousands of miles away to be won for Christ.

First working within one's own circle, and if time and strength remain, then dedicating oneself to those outside one's own circle; but, on the contrary, stepping out of our own sphere, in which God has placed us, to seek the extraordinary in a realm beyond, and being tempted by that extraordinary.

This clearly reveals that the faith displayed here is not of genuine quality but is tainted by a personal admixture of very dubious nature, not much

different from personal vanity.

Those who try to work for Christ at home and care for the sick within their household are not noticed and work in secret; they do not attract attention and are not on display. For them, the rule of Jesus applies: “What you do in secret, your Father who is in secret will see, and He will reward you openly.”

On the other hand, when someone presents themselves as a nurse, is called “Sister,” and walks the streets in the distorted mourning attire, they work in the public eye, attract attention, take a public position, and are praised for their dedication. This, especially for the young heart, is a great temptation, often with excessive allure and attractiveness.

Those who are well-grounded in the Word will resist this and first attempt to live out God's ordinances in secret, unseen and unnoticed, dedicating themselves seriously both to the care of the healthy and the sick within their own sphere, before considering whether special circumstances might require them to prepare for missions or external nursing work.

Then faith is truly evangelical, and Christianity is healthy.

However, practicism, the absorption of religion into “Christian work,” has no peace with this. Caring for your own sick at home is not “Christian work”; it is ordinary civic duty, in which one might feel that one’s faith cannot be expressed.

No, “Christian work,” as one might think, only becomes apparent when you step outside your home; what needs to be done with the unconverted is left to others; and even your Christianity must be demonstrated to the world in something special, extraordinary, and something that others do not do.

Certainly, the apostle has said that anyone who does not manage their own house well is worse than an unbeliever, and thus also that anyone who does not care for their own family properly denies their faith. But they know

better. The own house, the own family, does not matter. It is not counted among “Christian work.” To be “Christian” and to reveal faith, one must seize the special, seek what is outside the home, and elevate oneself in the extraordinary.

Therefore, there must be a protest against this victorious tendency in the name of true Christianity. This tendency must not be allowed to go unchecked, let alone be encouraged. Especially, the young girl who is led astray by this should not be exalted or flattered for what is a sin of Christian vanity in her heart.

Certainly, there are also those called to this work outside the home. Those who have begun by carefully fulfilling their Christian duty within their own sphere and who no longer find work at home, and see that help is needed elsewhere, should not only be allowed but must make themselves available in the name of Jesus and follow the calling that comes to them.

There are many sick who would otherwise suffer harm, and especially the followers of our Savior are called to step in where other help is lacking.

However, one feels that it is something quite different whether one sees the primary and highest Christian work in duty within the home or whether one, disregarding duty within the home, seeks the “Christian” in a one-sided manner in public activities.

Finally, the care of the sick must be viewed from the perspective of the church. In this context, we exclude non-Christian forms of nursing entirely and focus exclusively on active nursing undertaken in the name of Jesus by the followers of the Savior; nursing that is presented as part of Christian work, i.e., as an extraordinary manifestation of faith.

Here, it is crucial to emphasize that we regard this form of faith manifestation as higher than merely giving money to those in need. One who gives money does not engage in the suffering of life. One who sits by

the sickbed and cares for the sick gives more than money; they give their time, their person, their strength, and their love.

Such a form of sacrifice involves more intimacy, more of the communion of saints, and a higher dedication. This is equally true for related forms of care, such as the care of women in childbirth, those suffering from nervous disorders, the mentally disabled, the neglected, and so much more.

There are stages in the work of loving the unfortunate. In the first stage, one only gives money. In the second stage, one makes things for the needy or visits them personally. In the third stage, one takes on the care of their misery personally and dedicates oneself to it.

Who would not praise this? Who would not be grateful?

It is not as if everyone is granted the opportunity to make such a sacrifice of dedication. Only a few are given this opportunity. It is a grave mistake to view those few as a higher class of Christians.

This would be to overturn the order of life. Those called to live and work within their own home do not do something good but sin if they neglect their family life while performing acts of love outside their home.

The kingdom of God in the service of our Lord does not solely reside in nursing care. Our God must also be served in various trades and professions, in church, societal, and political realms. Those called to teach or work with the pen can exhibit as much warm dedication as those who sit by the sickbed.

Nursing care is only a small part of the vast, all-encompassing work that must be done day in and day out in the service of Jesus. It is not the service in which you work but the faithfulness and dedication with which you engage in your part of that great service that makes the difference.

The stages we mentioned are intended as three steps in care and education. If one focuses solely on this, it is indisputable that those who personally give themselves to the suffering reach the highest level of dedication.

However, if it is to be a revelation of faith, Christian conviction must also be involved. In public hospitals, the sick are not treated as sick individuals but as disturbed bodies, with only physical care provided. Ideally, one would prefer that the soul of the patient be disregarded. The scene of dying must be avoided. Even if the doctor clearly sees that death is imminent, they often conceal it, and pain-relieving medications are frequently used to obscure the end.

From this perspective, one cannot position themselves as a caregiver for Jesus. On the contrary, the care of the soul must also extend from the care of the body.

Not that the care of the body should suffer in any way. On the contrary, under Christian guidance, the care of the body should be even more careful, precise, and complete. However, the soul of the sick person requires the most tender care. For nursing care to be done in the name of Jesus, there must also be spiritual communion, a bond of faith, and communion of saints between the nurse and the patient; where this is lacking, the effort must be to cultivate it.

This cannot always be the case with every patient every day of their illness. There are sufferers who are unconscious, who lie in a stupor, who are overwhelmed by pain, and it would be foolish or cruel to attempt to speak to them.

However, when there is clarity, awareness, and relief, the patient's physical selfishness must be challenged. Patients are naturally inclined to think only of their bodies. Here, the holy art of nursing must reveal itself to elevate the patient to a higher state, to live in a holier atmosphere, and to inspire greater seriousness.

This, if successful, does not increase the pain but alleviates it. A patient who suffers with calm awareness before God presents a far more glorious spectacle than one who, like a sack of salt, can only complain and groan.

Certainly, there must also be reading from the Holy Scriptures, the reading of a spiritual song, and quiet, peaceful prayer; but this is by no means all. The high art of nursing in Jesus' name is to keep the patient in a holier state of mind, to live by the sickbed with God and before His face, and to pass on the mood of one's own heart to the patient.

Above all, Christian nursing must have a serious aim to let illness bear spiritual fruit, whether for this life or for the life to come. Many believe that seriousness at the sickbed only comes into play when death is imminent. This is a misconception. Every illness should advance the patient spiritually, cause them to reflect on themselves, reconsider their path, and rise from their sickbed renewed in spiritual courage.

It is especially at the approaching end that the Christian nurse has her highest calling to fulfill, so that the patient she cares for does not die like a dog. There is a preparation of the soul for death, taking into account the patient's past, what they leave behind, and the eternity they face.

The true nurse dies with her patient as her patient dies, accompanies them, so to speak, halfway into the valley of the shadow of death, and then returns to her other patients as if from another world.

This should be the case in home nursing, and it should be the same in hospital care.

In this respect, the church has nothing more to do in regard to nursing care than to nurture faith and cultivate it, and to teach the way of life, including in catechism and preaching, with regard to the sickbed and the deathbed. The sickbed, with all that Christian dedication requires, must be approached and viewed spiritually, so that the church remains a guide in this matter as well, and in regard to the deathbed, no less. Inasmuch as it is

clear that contemporary nursing care has entirely emerged outside the church, it must not be concealed that the poverty of preaching is also to blame for this. The preaching of the Word should have long ago, before the world took notice, initiated a move towards better and more careful nursing, both of body and soul.

However, the influence of the church on nursing care is still only indirect and does not yet take the initiative itself.

Therefore, the question must also be discussed regarding the extent to which it is appropriate for the church itself to initiate nursing care.

In fact, many churches today have taken steps, either through district organization or through the pastor's care, to designate some nurses who are then tasked with visiting and, if necessary, caring for the sick in their homes.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this, and Scripture even provides some basis for it. Just read what is stated in 1 Timothy 5:9-16:

⁹ Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once; ¹⁰ she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. ¹¹ But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when their sensual desires alienate them from Christ, they want to marry, ¹² and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house, and they are not merely idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say. ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us. ¹⁵ For some have already turned away to follow Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her assist

them; let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are real widows.

This passage is not entirely clear, as it does not explicitly state what duties were assigned to these widows. What is clear is that this passage addresses official care in the church; it mentions a widow being chosen; it implies that these women visited homes; they were to be of a certain age and known for having performed various acts of love.

The term "chosen" here should not be overemphasized, as the original term used does not imply an election but rather being listed. It is also difficult to accept that this passage refers specifically to nursing care, given the age requirement of sixty years, which might not align with such tasks.

It is more likely that these were women appointed by the church council to visit the female members of the congregation. The separation between men and women at that time was much sharper than today, and not every elder could gain access to the women's quarters. Therefore, it is not surprising that the oversight of women was assigned to women. However, it is excessive to deny these widows all diaconal service. For their appointment, it was required that they had "washed the feet of the saints, relieved the afflicted, and diligently pursued every good work" (verse 10), which are qualities indicating suitability for diaconal service.

Without delving into whether this office of widows was equivalent to the office of elder or deacon, it is evident that the apostle intended for female assistance to be utilized in the ministry of the church. If this has been entirely neglected for a long time, it certainly deviates from the apostolic rule. Only the matrons of our orphanages and old age homes still remind us of the original rule.

If it is clear that the church should seek official help from women for the ministry of church life, the next question arises whether the church should also seek this help for nursing care.

The general rule that applies to all church-related assistance should also be applied here: Where necessary care can be found within families or through private help, the institutional church as such has no calling to intervene. However, if there are neglected situations where no other remedy can be found, the establishment of the Diaconate shows that the church is also called to act.

What currently happens is often a private initiative by the pastor, outside the church council and the Diaconate. Not always, as we know. Specifically, in the Reformed churches, there are signs of a healthier approach. But in general, it can be said that these actions mostly represent the initiative of one or another pastor who collects money, asks a few ladies to help, and then organizes nursing care etc., according to his own plan.

It should be said of this: If no one else extends a hand, it is better to do something rather than nothing. However, many pastors would do better to use their influence to arrange this matter properly and orderly for the whole congregation.

In all the praise and appreciation that we gladly extend to the movement that promoted hospital care, it cannot be denied that, like the Sunday school movement and the missionary effort, it had a non-church origin. It did not consider any confession, sought its strength almost exclusively outside the church, chose the extraordinary over the ordinary, and, insofar as it bore a Christian stamp, fully fell under the theory of so-called "Christian Works."

Thus, on the basis of this theory of "Christian Works," after having subjected the three Z's we mentioned—missionary work, the Sunday school, and hospital care—to criticism, we must return to forming our judgment.

It is clear that this theory was nothing more than a one-sided reaction against intellectism and mysticism.

Intellectualism had placed an exclusive emphasis on doctrinal truth, and through exaggeration, it fostered the perception that the hearer of the law was righteous before God. In contrast, practiciness, following Paul, maintained that it is not the hearer but the doer of the law who is pleasing to God.

Similarly, mysticism had, against the cold orthodoxy of intellectism, highlighted the rights of emotional life, but in turn, it sought the source of truth solely in the emotional realm and positioned the essence of Christian religion in the sensation of feeling. Practiciness, on the other hand, rejected mere contemplation and emotional experiences, honoring feeling only as a driving force for actions, and emphasized "doing the truth" over confessing and feeling the truth.

Among the three symbols derived from human nature—the head, the heart, and the hand—intellectism chose the head, mysticism the heart, and practiciness, in turn, the hand.

Just as intellectism found its strength in thinking and mysticism in feeling, practiciness found its strength in the will. It aimed to emphasize doing, daring, and tackling, and to uplift Christian religion from its decline by demonstrating resilience, courage, and dedication.

On its own, this would have yielded excellent results, provided it had acted solely as a reaction and supplement to what was lacking in the other two directions. If practiciness had taken its place alongside and in connection with the other two directions, while also appreciating the relative merits of those other directions, it would have brought us an undeniable blessing.

Christianity cannot do without any of the three: neither doctrinal confession, nor the depth of emotional life, nor the active pursuit of deeds. Each of these three is inseparable from the essence of Christianity. They together form the holy cord that should adorn Christian religion. Only in the

complete harmony of these three does Christian life find its pure development.

However, the theory of "Christian Works" did not operate from this standpoint. On the contrary, it demanded all spiritual power for "Christian doing," elevated itself to the only valuable principle, and increasingly looked down from its imagined superiority on the zeal for purity in confession and the stirrings of mysticism. Zeal for confession was increasingly viewed as an obsession with trivial disputes, and the experiential life was underestimated as self-satisfying and thus useless, if not harmful, emotional indulgence.

This did not occur suddenly but developed gradually. The one-sidedness that characterized it drove it further in that imbalance, and ultimately this underestimation of confession and emotional life became systematic.

It has advanced considerably in our country, but especially abroad, it has been driven to fanatical extremes. Not in the sense that one would intentionally deny and reject the elements of confession, no, not that. Rather, it is believed that, fundamentally, Christian confession would indeed be the true one. Nor is it the case that the inner life of the soul before God is considered superfluous. Far from it. It is rather assumed that it is self-evident that a Christian must also experience intimate communion with God.

However, this remains a vague, superficial recognition, and beyond that, there is no real concern for confession or personal experience. One does not reckon with it for oneself, nor can one impose it on others if they emphasize it.

In a person who advocates for "Christian Works," all deviations from confession and all deficiencies in tender religious life are overlooked. However, neither the purest confession nor the deepest experiential life

holds any value in the eyes of practicers unless it is accompanied by "Christian Works."

These "Christian Works," and they alone, are the standard for judging whether someone is truly a Christian. Truly, genuinely Christian is therefore someone who advocates for missionary work, Sunday schools, or hospital care. To doubt their Christianity would be a glaring absurdity.

In contrast, someone who does not follow this path or even opposes it is considered a nominal Christian, regardless of how fervently they hold to their confession or how warm their heart's mysticism might be.

Therefore, church distinctions are, in effect, a hindrance, a lamentable remnant of earlier errors, something that should preferably be discarded and cannot be tolerated. The "confessional" is seen as the cancer gnawing at the tree of church life. Men and women of all confessions should unite for the practice of Christian life and, to avoid dispute, never speak a word about their confessional differences.

Doing something, accomplishing something, founding something, bringing something to fruition is what truly matters. Christianity exists not in words but in power, and power is that kind of strength demonstrated, exercised, and set into action.

Since in this display of power the "Christian character" must manifest, it follows naturally that doing, achieving, and establishing could not consist of things that non-Christians also do, and thus must be sought in something specifically Christian. Thus, one naturally arrives at the extraordinary, at what is done outside, at what is extra, and stands out.

Now, we acknowledge how generously and readily we admitted that both intellectism and mysticism, due to similar one-sidedness, made such a reaction in the practice of Christianity necessary. Also, how we agree without reservation that this push for "Christian Works" has led to actions that accomplished much that otherwise would certainly have remained

undone and was nonetheless desperately needed. Catechism fell short, and the Sunday school supplemented it. Pagan and Mohammedan lands remained unaddressed, and missionary work brought a light of hope. Similarly, the sick remained uncared for, and hospital care alleviated much suffering.

The downsides

But even this good must not obscure the downside. A downside that especially manifested in three ways.

First, practicism, through its one-sided drive, has fostered unbelief and apostasy. Indifference to confession has unconsciously led to indifference to the destructive criticism applied to the Holy Scripture. If two preachers stood opposite each other, one steadfastly holding to the Holy Scripture and the other essentially abandoning the authority of the Holy Scripture, preference was given to the latter, provided he advocated for missionary work, etc. In Japan, "Christian missionaries" allied themselves with Modernist missionaries and took sides against missionary preachers who adhered to the confession. Particularly, hospital care, in connection with various forms of care for the unfortunate, led to unnoticed collaboration with those outside the faith, not on a societal level, which would have been appropriate, but also under the Christian banner.

This was inevitable. Principally, what separates believers from non-believers is still always the confession of truth. Once people become accustomed to viewing the confession of truth as something incidental and see little harm in deviation from the confession, where then is the boundary? That boundary no longer lies in the Holy Scripture, it no longer lies in the confession, it can only be found in Jesus; but which Jesus is meant? At first, people said: "The Christ of the Scriptures," but once they abandoned "the Scriptures," this also no longer provided clarity. Thus, there was a shift from the Christ of the Scriptures to the Jesus of the Gospels, and since the Modernists continued to idolize the Rabbi of Nazareth, it naturally followed that, in the end, one could no longer distinguish between friend and foe.

The second downside lies in the tendency of practiciness to shift focus from faith to works, thereby undermining the foundation of Protestantism.

One cannot blame someone for this, as their counter-question is always whether we want a faith without works and whether they do not believe as well. However, the apostle has already addressed this dispute too clearly and convincingly to revisit it here. Everything comes down to the inclination of the soul and the question of where the emphasis falls, what inspires and drives one. In this sense, there is no doubt that in the circles of practiciness, works again overshadow faith. Concern for justification is no longer a priority if one can show that they are engaged in various Christian activities and excel in Christian work.

The third downside is that faith becomes sick and one-sidedly focused on the specifically so-called "Christian" and is diverted from ordinary human life.

Piety should manifest itself in character, inclinations, personal, domestic, social, and civic life, as higher meaning, finer life understanding, more honest conduct, more careful use of strength and time, deeper sense of duty, more tender sense of responsibility, and a readiness to be humble, meek, patient, and enduring, and then the specifics of Sunday schools, missionary work, etc., should be added.

Practiciness, on the other hand, agrees with all this and desires it as well but nonetheless directs almost all available energy exclusively towards that specifically Christian aspect. A young woman who quietly fulfills her domestic duties and is absorbed in them is essentially still just a good, civil child. To truly show herself as a Christian girl, she must, if necessary, set aside some of that domestic focus and primarily devote herself to what is considered one-sidedly "Christian activity."

CONCLUSION

After the individual discussion of the three diseases, which manifest respectively in the intellectual person as intellectualism, in the emotional person as mysticism, and in the practical person as practiciness, an essential concluding article now follows, dealing with the people of the opposite type. We might almost be inclined to call them the antitheses.

You are familiar with these antitheses of the intellectualist. They want nothing to do with all those dry dogmas. They have better things to do than study those profound old books. "What does one gain," they ask, "from all this abstract learning? All this study amounts to nothing more than hair-splitting and subtle points, which do not contribute to the peace of your heart. Besides, a person cannot solve these complicated questions. They are beyond our rational understanding. People have never become wiser from them. Most often, there is only strife, division, and bitterness. There are better and more useful things to do than to immerse oneself in various questions of rebirth and justification. Live as a pious and earnest child before the face of your God, and let it end there. Is it not true that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved? Well, I do that. I believe in Jesus, and so does everyone in my house. What more do we lack?"

The antithesis of the mystical exaggerator is no less confident in their stance. "Crying and weeping doesn't get you anywhere. That's women's work and doesn't suit men. Of course, one should have human feeling, but that excessive sentimentality leads only to various forms of unhealthy imagination. It's good for dreamers, not for those who are sober and awake and accustomed to doing their duty. There is no real substance behind these emotional people. It's more that they warm each other up and get each other going. One starts, and the others follow. And then it goes on and on. They make themselves and others believe the most foolish things. And

then they recount their various experiences, visions, encounters, and sudden thoughts in a flowery, sentimental, and mawkish tone. Amidst all these fine tales, they pay little attention to their own lives. That spiritual feeling soon turns into something quite different. And then anything goes, and everything is justified. We want nothing to do with that. We will have feelings of sorrow when we have fallen into grave sin, feelings for a fellow who is in need, and also feelings when someone dies, but otherwise, we want nothing to do with those emotional exaggerations.”

And similarly speaks the antithesis of the practicist. Not that he is against practice. He knows that Christianity does not consist in words but in power, and he lives by that. There is nothing to say against him on that account. Everyone has their sins before God, but otherwise, he can freely lift his head among people. His Christianity is the Christianity that Jesus taught: to love God above all and to love your neighbor as yourself. But what he does not like is the tendency to always want to do something special. The constant running to meetings and wreaths and associations of this and that. The paying of various contributions, giving in extra collections, and attending all kinds of prayer meetings. That is good for people in the Salvation Army, but one can see where that leads. Young girls who wander the streets in the evening, supposedly selling a *War Cry*,²⁷ and who achieve nothing in practical life. He does not have anything against Sunday schools, but he always understood that catechism is meant to teach children. Those people who are so fervent for missions might first start by converting the heathen in their own surroundings, sometimes even in their own kitchen. And nursing is, of course, good because a sick person needs care, but all that fuss is not necessary. When we have sick people at home, we take care of them ourselves, and if we can no longer manage, there is always someone to be found who will come to watch over them, and whom we then pay. What others want often amounts to nothing more than work-righteousness in the end. Faith is not enough for them. It all has to come from works, just as in the Roman times, and for that, they are too good

Protestants. One should not throw away the traditions of one's forefathers so thoughtlessly.

It is precisely in that banal criticism of the thoughtless, insensitive, and unwilling minds that the danger lies. At least in the other, there is still action. The intellectist is tirelessly engaged in his thinking. The mystic grants no rest to his feelings, striving to delve deeper into the essence of life. The practicist has a drive and need to be active in the kingdom of the Lord. They all sin through their one-sidedness. They sin through exaggeration. They fall into the traps of self-exaltation—the first through his profundity, the second through his experiences, the third through his accomplishments. Yet they all share one thing: they do not remain idle; they want something, aim at something, and strive to elevate their Christian existence to a higher level. They are at least under the impression that a Christian must be something different and more than just a regular, decent, bourgeois person.

This is precisely what is entirely lacking in their opposites. These individuals live on the surface. They immerse themselves in the ordinary, everyday tasks. They do not want to know of any effort. Self-satisfaction with their completely ordinary existence prevents them from spreading their wings. Their lives lack elevation, ideal striving, and effort. They are born on the same level, live on the same level, and eventually pass away on the same level. They show no more than superficial interest in anything. Believing costs them no effort, as they know neither the struggle nor the wrestling of the mind, and mostly believe in general terms without any specific detail. They have never deeply pondered any part of the truth. Therefore, the penetration of truth into their personal lives is also foreign to them. They confess sin, as everyone does. But the knowledge of sin, such that they are under the law and sunk in Adam, seems vain to them. They understand nothing of this. They are to love, and they do love their neighbor; but the mystery of love in the hidden depths of the soul, in communion with the Savior, and in the secret relationship with their God,

has never been revealed to their souls. Due to this lack of knowledge and depth of spiritual life, their outward lives also exhibit something harsh and unappealing. Longing, a desire to make special sacrifices, to exert oneself particularly, to step outside the ordinary realm of life, is entirely foreign to them. They go to their work, come from their work. They sleep and rise again in the morning. They pray before meals and give thanks at the end of the day. They read Scripture and go to church. To some extent, there is nothing to be said against them. Only, there is no burning love of Christ driving them, and therefore they speak never. There is no enthusiasm burning in their eyes. Their entire appearance and conduct lack any sign of having been transferred from death to life, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of God.

Now, we should not judge them too harshly. We know that some live such occupied, troubled, and constrained lives that they are almost entirely absorbed in daily concerns. We also remember that not everyone's spiritual gifts and talents are equally great, and that there are those too narrow-minded to delve into the mysteries of truth, too weak in feeling to explore the hidden aspects of spiritual life, or too lacking in strength to shine in the display of faith energy. The same demands cannot be placed on everyone. There are poor and rich also in spiritual terms.

Nevertheless, we must be careful that our protest against intellectism, mysticism, and practiciness does not reinforce superficiality and lukewarmness in its recipients. Reading what we wrote about the intellectist, it is likely that more than one person, who never took the effort to think deeply about the truth, might have thought, "Dr. Kuyper is right. I have never committed that." Similarly, someone reading our critique of mysticism might have said, "Well, I'm just glad I never engaged in that emotional exaggeration and those sickly sentiments." Just as well, reading our remarks on practiciness, more than one might have justified themselves, thinking, "I'm fortunate never to have fallen into that foolish obsession with Christian activities."

Thus, contrary to our intention, our critique might, instead of addressing unhealthy narrow-mindedness and problematic exaggeration, threaten life itself and become a pillow on which spiritual lethargy rests. It should therefore be clearly stated in the concluding article that we reject any misuse of our words.

Because we seriously warned against the dry, self-satisfied intellectism, it does not mean we have said anything against the duty of Christianity to think deeply about the truth of God, to assimilate it, and to come to a clear and distinct understanding of what one confesses.

Because we have sounded a warning against the unrestrained division of distorted mysticism, we have in no way overlooked the calling of God's child to live in their soul, to notice what is happening in their heart, and to experience the truth in their own soul.

Similarly, because we have pointed out the serious danger of seeking Christianity in mere extra-Christian activities, no one should attribute to us the intention of advocating idleness, inactivity, and the abandonment of all good works.

What we aimed for was merely to restore good proportion; to insist on the harmonious development of our entire Christian existence; to cut off what disrupts balance for many; and to awaken love for that higher standpoint where a balanced development of our thinking, feeling, and acting life is achieved.

Jesus spoke of loving God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, all our strength, and all our power; and what is often to be regretted is that our devotion to God focuses only on one or two of these factors, leaving the others unused and inactive.

This leads to incomplete, imperfect, and one-sided development. What should be, is full growth in Christ through all the joints of growth.

Notes

[←1]

Suggestions for improvement are very welcome—sends suggestions to allofliferedeemed@gmail.com.

[←2]

All the footnotes are editorial additions.

[←3]

T. Kuipers notes: “Even before Kuyper concluded the third series, the Rev. H. Dijkstra (1851–1922) published *De Zendingszaak. Een verzoek om eenige revisie. Open brief aan Prof. Dr. A. Kuyper, hoogleeraar aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam/Pretoria, [1901]). Dijkstra objected to Kuyper’s charges (in the series on pragmatism) of “secularism,” “superficiality,” and “sterility” in the practice of missions. Dijkstra’s brochure got Kuyper’s attention. In the preface to this reprint, Kuyper notes that he has toned down statements that were too strong. Kuyper very rarely made these kinds of alterations to his reprints. The preface is dated on the day of the second round of parliamentary elections—the day on which Kuyper and his coalition partners won the elections.”

[←4]

De Heraut was a Dutch newspaper. In October 1869 Kuyper began writing political articles in the weekly newspaper *De Heraut*. When the editor died in 1871, he took over as the editor in chief. Many of Kuyper's books began life as articles in *De Heraut*.

[←5]

Pierson (1831–1896) was a radical theologian, who denied the existence of Jesus.

[←6]

Jacob Cats (1577–1660) was one of the leading Dutch poets in the Golden Age of Dutch literature.

[←7]

Petrie Augustus de Génestet (1829-1861) was a Dutch poet and theologian.

[←8]

Isaac da Costa (1798–1860) was a Dutch Reformed poet.

[←9]

Herman Schaepeman (1844–1903) was a Roman Catholic orator, poet and statesman.

[←10]

The Groningers emphasized a heart approach to theology. They adopted an anti-intellectual attitude. They were prevalent in the Dutch State church; their influence was greatest around the 1840s and 50s.

[←11]

Anabaptists were a Christian movement that emerged during the Radical Reformation in the 16th century. The name "Anabaptist" means "re-baptizer," which refers to their practice of baptizing adult believers who had already been baptized as infants. The term anabaptist was often used by Kuyper in a pejorative sense to indicate a withdrawal from the world.

[←12]

Jan van Leiden (1509–1536) was a Dutch Anabaptist leader he turned Munster into a millenarian Anabaptist theocracy. He declared himself the King of the New Jerusalem.

[←13]

Levant is a historical term for the region along the eastern Mediterranean.

[←14]

The 1900 Paris Exposition, was a world's fair held in Paris, France, from 14 April to 12 November 1900. Its aim was to celebrate the achievements of the 1800s and to promote development into the 1900s.

[←15]

Gisbert Voetius (1589-1676) a Dutch Reformed theologian. He was influential at the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619). He was professor of theology at Utrecht and was the author of *Selectae Disputationes Theologicae* (1648–1669).

[←16]

The Salvation Army was founded by William and Catherine Booth in 1865. They combine religious mission work with social outreach. They do not practice baptism or communion.

[←17]

The Council of Trent was a 19th century council of the Roman Catholic Church prompted by the Reformation. It was held in three parts from 1545 to 1563.

[←18]

Pietism was a late 17th and early 18th centuries movement that emphasized personal faith, spiritual renewal, and a heartfelt devotion to God.

[←19]

Kuyper makes a distinction between the church as institution and church as organism. The institutional church is concerned with the ministry of the word and the sacraments; the organic church is the everyday activities of Christians in their daily activities as the body of Christ.

[←20]

Darbyism is a reference to the Plymouth Brethren movement. A movement initiated by John Nelson Darby (1800–1892). Darby formulated the theological scheme of Dispensationalism and the idea of a secret rapture.

[←21]

The Moravians, or the Moravian Church, are a Protestant denomination with roots in the Bohemian Reformation of the 15th century. They trace their origins to the teachings of Jan Hus, a Czech reformer. They are known for their early missionary efforts.

[←22]

The Dutch phrase "Leven in de brouwerij" literally translates to "Life in the brewery," but it is used idiomatically to mean bringing energy, excitement, or liveliness to a situation or place.

[←23]

Arminianism is a theological stance, named after Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch theologian, that emerged in the early 17th century as a reaction against the strict Calvinist doctrines of predestination. They rejected limited atonement and irresistible grace. They emphasized human free will.

[←24]

The Scapulier Brotherhood and the Rosary Brotherhood are both Catholic confraternities, which are lay associations of the faithful who are devoted to particular aspects of Christian piety and devotion. These confraternities typically have a strong devotional focus and are often associated with specific prayers, practices, and spiritual benefits.

[←25]

The Brethren of the Free Spirit was a mystical movement that emerged in the late 13th and 14th centuries, mainly in the Rhineland, the Low Countries, and parts of France.

[←26]

The Brethren of the Common Life was a pietist Roman Catholic community founded in the late 14th century by Gerard de Groot in the Netherlands.

[←27]

The *War Cry* is the magazine sold by the Salvation Army.