**Psalm 46: 5a ~ Prof. K. Schilder**

 (A farewell sermon held at Rotterdam-Delfsahave, Sept. 1933)

 Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is sometime ago, and then for the first time in my life, (more than five years ago) that I started work amongst you, directly as Your Servant of the Word, and for the first time on this pulpit with an introductory sermon. The sermon on that evening began with the familiar song of Luther:

 That Word above all earthly powers ~

 No thanks to them abideth.

Yes, that song of Luther, or better said; that song of Reformation, you know its beginning well:

 A mighty fortress is our God,

 A bulwark never failing;

 Our helper He amid the flood

 Of mortal ills prevailing.

Well, is it strange then, if in preparation for the time I worked among you I began with Luther’s Hymn, that I will now also end with it? Yes, that I will proceed with, not the song of Luther itself, but with that other, much older and much more glorious song, that took possession of Luther and inspired him when he composed his “song”. Strange that I will conclude my work among you with Psalm 46 that is.

Because, and this has been generally accepted not without justification, the 46th psalm formed the basis of that, well known to you, reformation song. And all the more reason too, for originally up to three times, the refrain:

 The Lord of hosts is with us,

 The God of Jacob is our fortress.

was written after verses 4, 7 and 11.

Well now, this Luther hymn, ~ which was sung with renewed fervor again by all kinds of people in those years that we lived together. With renewed fervor; ~ but also with more apprehension. For example in Germany (and this shortly after world war one) it was sung again at a commemoration of the birth of the Augsburg Confession. They sang it, but their voices wavered because while they were singing the foundation on which they gathered was shaking. Church and nation were in danger, and suffered disgrace. Later that nation rose again, but many thought that the national revival meant the overthrowing of the church. And then the *nation* sang again; a mighty fortress is our God, and thought: our shame becomes more and more invisible. And the *church* also sang again: a mighty fortress is our God and thought; our glory becomes more and more invisible. So people sing together “in their own way”, and the dangers become threatening. Everybody feeling *that it will go over or under*: “for still the ancient foe, his craft and power great and armed with cruel hate”…

Yes, that was in a foreign country.

But in our land (the Netherlands), was it any different perhaps? Didn’t, in those years we were bound together, the number of the unchurched increase, the masses of those over throwers of our foundations, if they could? the gathering of those who would mine our floors, the floors of national- and church buildings? Isn’t life, which at first used to come together, driven more and more asunder? Has the disintegration process, outside as well as inside the walls of the church, not continued? Yes we still sing our Luther hymn and God be thanked, and we learn to sing it better, deeper and more robustly. But sometimes it seems more that these lines;

 Did we in our own strength confide,

 Our striving would be loosing…

are more of an escape mechanism by which we retreat while maintaining our dignity, rather than a conscious choice of principle as it was in Luther’s day.

Truly, the song of Luther has come *into crisis* to use a contemporary phrase; is it true?

But ~ if the Luther song is in such crisis, how much the more Psalm 46 then, its prototype, the well from which it came forth? Is that psalm still true? *Is it still timely? Today?* In our time of distress?

Let us stop and remember that we have confessed and continue to confess the twelve articles. We believe in God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That faith is for all times. So the song of faith is for all times. Faith grasps the significance of history, and the song of faith expresses that significance. It declares to all who will hear that all times have significance in what our song of faith dares to express as a revealed secret.

And therefore we, as people of the church, do not crawl away although we see the banners of the storm of scorn toward God and church lifted high all around.

No, we lift our head high and carry the crown of glory; even if it is a crown of thorns.

And because we see the entire scope of history lit up in the prophetic word, therefore today we will see the light of God’s miracles and grace radiate over all of that history.

And will perpetrate our joy, not for one favorable occurrence in history but over all history of church, and nation and cosmos.

Therefore we will listen for:

***The miracle of the joy of Immanuel-fellowship****.*

And consider:

 1) the fact of the joy; a miracle *in* the *present.*

 2) the cause of the joy; a miracle *from* the *past.*

 3) the participants of that joy: a miracle *for* the *future.*

(So where our present, with its past, and future, is carried through the one foundational basis that rules and drives all history, there we have confessed (want to confess) our faith with respect to all world history with that communal song: psalm 72: verses 2 and 9)

**ONE**

In the first place, as we have said, our text teaches us to believe in, and to speak of the *reality* of the joy of the Immanuel-fellowship. That reality exists, and it exists *now*. In every “*now*” of the church. The streams of the river, as we read, *shall gladden the city of God*.

Let me say immediately that for the proper understanding of the text the word *“shall”* is not really at its place here. The power of the psalm, the intent of the song, read in the original text is better if you follow the right translation and, as is acknowledged of late, to be the only correct one. It does not say that the just mentioned streams of the river *shall* gladden, but simply that they *gladden* the city. Now, at this actual moment. Now, when the poet first sang it. Now, at those other moments when his composition was sung by the church, the Old Testament church. Now, at the moment the choir switches with the sopranos, and falls in three times with the emphatic;

 The Lord of Hosts is with us,

 The God of Jacob is our fortress,

And now when the sopranos return, after the first chorus had been sung just before our text, again exhorting with the solo song a second time.

The streams of the river *gladden* the City of God. So it is of gladness today that the poet speaks. And, take note, that present gladness in the city was not just true at the time of the poet’s composing, but will always be an authentic gladness , a joy “here” and “now“. No matter how we meet this verse in our lives, if we believe in it, or not, if we understand it, or not, if people rehearse it for the music, or simply sing it alone, if they discuss it or shout it out, if it is sung in war or in peace, ~ the song will always give expression of, and to, the tangible, the *present*, the *present-day*, the *every day* joy of the city, which is called the Immanuel city here.

City of Immanuel, we said; and we will come back to it. But you already understand why we speak so. First of all there is mention of a city in our text. Furthermore people sing in that city, indeed resounding in that thrice recurring choral *refrain* are the words: *The Lord of Hosts is with us.*  Well, recognize those words, *God is with us*, that is *Immanuel*. That name Immanuel is therefore so well known, and so beloved because it takes up the one theme of Isaiah’s prophecy: God with us. That is the truth, given and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

So there is, notice the phrase in our text, a city, which is the fellowship of the Messiah. It is a fellowship because it is a city and above all they sing there. They sing there together. A fellowship it remains for they sing above the water. Streams of a river. We will mention later what these streams signify. For now it is sufficient that the city has water, flowing water and that water gladdens the city of Immanuel now, presently.

So the question comes up: what is this city? Where can it be found?

Our answer can be brief. The city that can drink water by miracle is *Jerusalem*. The footnotes of some translations (Staten vertalling) already understood what it was about. They claimed it was Jerusalem. “Furthermore” they added in one breath, “and furthermore, God’s church”. So you also can say it this way; first a Jerusalem without, and then a Jerusalem with, quotation marks. The Jerusalem of the poet’s “here and now”, and also of the readers of today’s “here and now”. The Jerusalem that lies in the region of Palestine where you can still find it on the map. And also that other Jerusalem that is “above” which we, here below, call “the mother of us all” according to Galatians 4. The church of the Old and the New Testament. The church gathered, first from Abrahams natural offspring, and subsequently from all tongues and nations. Which does not come together except in its visible institution, in its form of “city”. That church now, that Jerusalem, has water. Flowing water. It is the church in its first dispensation and in its second. The church that lawfully continues from the Old Covenant into the New.

Perhaps someone will say, now, now, there is quite a difference here; that old city Jerusalem, and a Christian instituted church, here in Europe or America or elsewhere. And another, well seasoned perhaps, is clearly ready with his consequent suggestion; that water, he says, must it not be spiritualized? That must certainly be “spiritual water”? And that joy isn’t it most certainly ‘spiritual joy”?

We would answer that you must not “spiritualize” that water. For everything the bible says is always “spiritual” enough. Oh no, It is not for you to make the “water” miraculous by spiritualizing it. You must see that it **is** a miracle, in every today of the church in every age. During the various periods of Jerusalem’s history, and of “Jerusalem” through all of time.

There was a time when ordinary water was a miracle in that ordinary Jerusalem, so that ordinary water as a miracle is meant here, a gift of the wonders of Immanuel.

And times came, in which the communion of faithful people, of church people, who are meant here, removed from the constricting walls of Israel’s *city*, and country, to become *international* church *over* all the world. In those days they were sometimes distressed again; and if the distress was overcome by water, ordinary water then it also became a wonder of grace.

Only, one should remain with “ordinary water”. Water, flowing water is the source of life, of youth, and courage and strength. An easterner especially felt this way and immediately understands it. In the hot lands under the eastern sun he may walk for hours without water. Then coming upon water he drinks, and baths, he stands up and is refreshed. He gets up as one gets “*up from the dead*”. Not only the easterner in general grasped this, but in the old Jerusalem they understood it directly and more execrably. Indeed, even now Jerusalem is a dry city. No wide stream passes that city, no river delta spreads its arms to the right or the left of it. Water was scarce. So when the poet says; the water starved city has water, he says: listen, it is a wonder. A great miracle, how we rejoice! We live here and are not short. There is a power, a stream that renews our youth, that raises us from the dead.

Is it necessary to spiritualize here? No, only one thing is necessary; we must not go and “materialize”. We should simply understand our text in this way: The Immanuel city is preserved by a wonder.

In all her life, with all her existence that is, it thrives and blossoms by an ever present miracle. Pail by pail, thriftily? No, it flows. It comes streaming to the city. All the city, all its life’s sources. Her complete preservation, through a wonder.

The streams have water and no one has to scoop, no one to ration, pail by pail, sparingly, no it gushes. Streaming to the city.

Here is the same full blessing referred to in visionary language later in Revelation 12: a “women” that had to flee from the power of the dragon and its brood, into the wilderness. Into a wilderness with little water. Also without bread. People would say she will subsequently perish there. But the consequence of the miracle is different: she is fed in the wilderness, “in her place”. Yes, sustenance spoken for, and a place spoken for. And so the woman lives by the wonder in every “present” moment. That woman is also the church.

And so it is prophecy, again and again, that the church shall live in all her ages. In social, intellectual, economic senses. In a “religious” and faith significance. She has her *sustenance* in all that her life *entails*. And she rejoices from it because the wonder water *gladdens* her.

You have felt by now, congregation, that the psalm has perspective. It is a psalm of present-and-future. A song of prophecy, music for the future. But of such a future that the ’now’ of the writer remains bound to it by every possible, historically given means. We have no apocalypse here, but prophecy.

That is to say the poet pictures a future not far removed from his “present”, being intertwined with it in every thread. He sees a painting called the church. He sees its perspective. What is closest to him appears large, *his* Jerusalem, that city, with temple and palace, and priests and prophets and God’s covenant people. But the Spirit that drives him also lets him see something that lays far off, yet visible in the picture, very small yet real. The city in the *future*. The congregation of the saints grows and the boundaries of the city *spread* out.

It becomes a multitude no can count, becomes a city, but now with quotation marks.

It becomes the Immanuel-communion, the church in its later stages, even in its final configuration.

Drinking living water, for nothing, and by miracle, applies to that church. It just pours out, for nothing. Living water, life water, it flows, and streams toward the water impoverished congregation which otherwise would fade away.

And good use is made of grace and miracle; they drink and are glad.

People would like to know perhaps, which historical event of his day gave the poet valid material for this song.

But it is better to ask which specific event of his day made him see such powerful proof of the wonder of the miraculous preservation of the church so that he made and sang a new song about it.

We don’t actually know of one. There are some who like to guess and suggest, for example, that this verse arose from that hour of wonderful deliverance when the terrible enemy Sennacherib with his great army at the city gates had to suddenly leave his post by a miracle. For in the night God’s invisible sword had slain his thousands and sent him fleeing in haste. Others mean to say that the psalm orchestrated from a rescue in the time of Alexander the Great. And again others think of Isaiah’s time, when the Immanuel prophecies appeared, as the combined armies of Rezin of Syria, and Pekah of the ten tribes attacked Judah and were defeated.

It is possible but we don’t know. God has hidden the details of the events our singing forefathers experienced, since it had nothing to do with the particulars. It only comes down to what continues to happen in the church; for she could not maintain life on her own, hard pressed by the enemy and short of water. Water starved, more so in war then otherwise when not a few times a besieger tried to force the city to surrender by stopping up the water courses.

So, that city, that by nature has no water and in war has no use of its canals, who after all considerations must do without any water supplies.

See, that city now receives water by a wonder. It just flows to her. River streams, tributaries course right through the fortifications. And people must now sing “Immanuel”. Here is a protraction of that old wonder when Israel received her water, as also her manna, by wonder in the desert.

Even from a solid rock that was broken open by the Word.

Again it is the inception of the always new wonders that the church experiences in her existence and ongoing existence contrary to all human capabilities.

Immanuel, Paul already saw it; the miracles of the rock, Christ was inherent there, Immanuel. So He is also here, as the city, water poor and impoverished, the city that must perish lives through grace, through the wonder that is from above.

Jerusalem, it is here below, look at your map. But it is also “above”, the mother of all believers.

And, those who by wonder are born there are by that same wonder preserved there, and gladdened.

Yes, certainly, that is prophetic perspective. In the present lies the past, in the now lies what will be. And to make the amazement of the miracle complete we must pay extra attention to the position of the text verse. The psalm is separated into three parts; verses 2 to 4, after which “sela” you must imagine the refrain, accidentally left out by the copiers, then verses 5 to 8; and finally verses 9-12. Well, our verse is at the beginning of the second part of the psalm. The sopranos would have continued after the refrain of part one was sung.

And what does the first part actually say?

Notice; it says that faith does not fear, even if there might be, not just a passing drought, and not just the temporary damming of the water sources during a time of siege,

but a terrible natural disaster of the greatest imaginable upheaval extending to the diversion of all river beds, all constancy disturbed, all order changed to disorder!

Listen how the poet ultimately identifies the enmity that rages against the church with the upsetting powers of world destruction, which seek to disturb all orderly habitation.

It doesn’t matter to us anymore whether he is perturbed and worried about Rezin-Pekah, or Sennacherib, or Alexander the Great.

For those bygone anti-church, Anti-Immanuel, and Anti-*Christ* powers are all now seen within his prophetic field of view, not in an abstract fog but in the very concrete, all time encompassing Satanically driven “catholic, anti-God, anti-Christian power.

And he draws these in the colors of the painting of the permanent, growing and in the end *“last”* judgment.

If the world is consumed, if men turn everything inside out, if all volcanoes erupt, if mountains sink, or rise from the depths, if the dikes overflow, if all lands are covered and the bottom of the seas are laid bare, if therefore all present day sources of water are displaced and all present water fountains are stopped, if all natural water supply becomes a question for everyone, a new question, a matter for which there is no recourse; then we, in the church still have a solution. We know the one Solution: Immanuel. Immanuel, God with us. Wonderful. Counselor. Mighty God, everlasting Father.

And when the first part of the psalm had said along with Luther‘s hymn: *“did we in our own strength”* or water *“confide our striving would be losing*” then the clear sopranos return after the chorus, the Immanuel tribute, with the second canto, bringing us to a mini-paradise, With water, rest, order, consistency, green swards. Water clear as crystal. Joy and gladness.

Oh God of miracles, *this* Thou hast done. Everything had been cut off. Yahweh our covenant God.

Father of Immanuel, Thou hast done it, in Thy covenant, not by nature but from grace, not from creation’s continuity for that was torn down, broken through. No, Thou hast done it from Thy recreating wonders.

This water from the second part of the psalm does not come to the church through what was determined in God’s first creation, but from His second; redemption.

And even if the water is for a beleaguered church people, or bread for a hungry church city, or church money for a needy group of Christ’s poor sheep. If it is church prophecy in a time of scientific confusion. If it is church growth in the east in a time of church decline in the west, if it is the power of faith in a world that appears to have trumped all faith or worse refuted it, ~ *“do not fear, it is but water”.*

But, water from above, for this Jerusalem from above. Water from God-Yahweh, Our Father in Immanuel, in the church Jerusalem, which through Him by a miracle is the mother of us all.

Because this joy is the joy of *faith*. Born out of faith. Only in faith it grasps, and knows its object. It only drinks from the “stream of God’s delight”. *“Here”* in this institution, where I am, and forever shall remain, a living member of the church. *“Now”* in these disturbing times.

Therefore joy in the city of Immanuel is always a wonder. The hostile, satanic and antichristian powers of our psalm are presented under a twofold chimera of an all encompassing destruction of, not only nature, but also culture.

Of nature, for there is indeed a universal dislocation of nature.

Of culture, for there are world wars.

Nature and culture wherein men live and breath, both will be taken from him and human life will suffer total failure. Then only horror with be left.

But there is a “Goshen”, an island of joy, in the midst of this horror. The waters of God’s wonders gladden the city of God. Here and now. A miracle in the present.

With all its fountains stopped, and all water reserves cut off, yet a city that has self sufficiency, the one thing which all modern economic conferences seek in the areas of nature and culture. To be able to care for itself by continuous grace.

And that on account of Him, called Immanuel, who is *God* from God. In other words, self reliant in the complete sense, sufficient in Himself, who now became God-with-us, became man and entered our distress, our devastation, and confusion, our chaos and anarchy, Christ the Lord.

**TWO**

Yes it is this Christ who gives us this joy. He is the one, who by being God-with-us, makes us a fellowship of sufficiency, a Goshen, an island of gladness.

But if we say that, then we hear the voice of the world speak against us exactly on this point of our confession. They say yes, that is what we *have against* you, that you want to be an island of salvation in the middle of all misery. A Goshen of light, while all around gapes a deep chasm of *egyption* darkness. A sect of self sufficient members who pay no attention to the surrounding *dread* that breaks out in nature and in cultural devastation. Abandon your gladness rather, and don’t sing about it because that would be proof that you have not lost your tie with broader human society. Instead you church people stand with your backs to universal mankind and its furthest ties!

What shall we answer to that? Isn’t it true that the church, if it becomes an island of joy, loosens the tie with the life of greater mankind? Breaks away from it?

No, our psalm says it is not so. Certainly it is true that the world will organize itself in a broad world alliance, an awesome unity, in its final distress.

Listen, verse seven says the nations are in uproar, the kingdoms unite into one world union.

But they unite against the city of self sufficient joy, against the Immanuel fellowship of isolated gladness. Against the church.

Yes, ~ and now they say that their bond, and their covenant, bind together all people ~ except those of the church ~ and that therefore their Great-Covenant, their Great Unity brings universal mankind together. But this is not true. For in order to give title of the covenant of universal humanity to the universal bond of humanity one must know what that original, actual, true, real and pure humanity is.

Well, to know that, to recognize the real man again we must return to paradise. God created man there, after His own image, and good. Only what is left connected to that first man is human, as it is created after God. So Christ was true man, again. Whatever is contrary to this is anti-godly, and anti-christian. In the strictest sense therefore anti-human.

What will they do now?

They complain about Jerusalem’s isolation and shout shrill words against that *“island”* of blessing. But the enmity *itself* does its *best* to ensure the Immanuel fellowship is isolated. Why else does it assemble its recruits and soldiers to war against that “island”?

Furthermore, ~ when the enemy says; ‘we are mankind’, then the psalm *denies it* and says; ‘you are anti-christian, and anti-god, and so also *anti-man*. **The true, the original, the pure-unspoiled humanity is here.**

Within the Immanuel fellowship that is.

Because, for this is our *second* thought, please note the cause of the joy that fills the soul here. The cause is a miracle, made by God, in which His direct authority speaks and appeals to us.

It is a miracle from the past. From which past? From the latest reformation? No, from much earlier. From the history of the first congregation? No, earlier. From the latest state? No, it is from the past, not of Pentecost, and not from Zerubabble, and not David, nor Saul, nor Othniel. Also not from Moses, and not of Jacob, nor Abraham, nor Shem and Noah, not from Seth and not from Adam’s first dwelling place outside paradise.

It is from the past of the ***first paradise itself***.

A miracle from our pre-history, from the very, very first turnings of the earth. Till now we have contented ourselves with saying that it was water, and very miraculous.

But now we pay closer attention to the way this water is presented. The poet calls it: “a river whose streams”. So our translation says it. We can translate it more vividly and accurately: a river whose arms.

Well, congregation, with this remark the writer points back to paradise. He sees a river with wide branches; arms of the river going around and through the city. By going right and left these streams will reach everyone so all have access to the water. No, these arms should not be the thin rivulets which pilgrims search for on their long journeys. There must be water wherever there are children of Immanuel. All of the water must flow from tributaries of the same central river. Here we have a picture of one river just like there is only one Lord of the one miracle. From that one river branches go from east to west, from north to south, to all sides, where ever people of the Immanuel fellowship live.

There is no doubt that the poet thinks of paradise. There was a stream there too, which carried life to all parts. “Now a river went out from Eden to water the garden and from there was divided into four arms”, Scripture tells us. And, according to commentator Dr. G. Ch. Aalders, “the representation given here is this; that in the land of Eden, where paradise was, a great river, which watered the garden, had its source and then divided into four separate streams”. Indeed hat old paradise was removed yet will return. We know that it will come, as all “Martha’s” say, “in the resurrection of the dead” (John 11: 24). But Christ still says to these Martha’s, as he does in this Psalm, being Author of all Psalms: the resurrection certainly, and paradise yes, these are things of the last day; but *also* of today. I **am** the ressurection and, like paradise, life. Do you believe it? The present miracle reaches for the future, but it comes from the past as well. Future wonders are present wonders and also of long ago. Here too the poet does not separate himself even for a moment from the Jerusalem of his days.

As the wonder of grace and restoration, he sees this Jerusalem, with everything that lies hidden there, through the grace of regeneration.

He sees this church as a result of the power that seeks the restoration of the old, once existing, paradise, the origin of all things.

He has uncovered the truth again for us here.

For, what was this paradise? Was it beautiful trees, and blue sky, being blissfully energetic? Whoever thinks this and goes no further should be ashamed.

Paradise was covenant. *Covenant* with God. It was *service*. *Covenant service*; action that rests, duty-bound but free, obligation yet voluntary. Those trees, and the rivers, and all the wealth was the *house* of the covenant communion, its “venue“, its sphere.

But covenant, that was the essence.

Do you understand why the poet dared to take the symbols of paradise to explain the secret of church rest.

Yes, he saw the restoration of the covenant. The covenant with God. Covenant-communion again in the national communion. It is brought back to what it was originally.

And though men may scorch all the trees around them in the heat of battle and world war, and they plug and dam off all water supplies, the poet knows that the rivers from the world’s beginning will gladden the city with branches broad and wide and accessible by all.

Whoever thirsts, come and drink of the water of life for naught.

Because paradise is not only trees, and field, and sky, and sighing for satisfaction. It is covenant. Along with the covenant there *once* was a complex of *outward* wealth. *Later* the wealth that can be seen will return *again*, thirty fold, sixty fold, and one hundred fold. But the *tie* between that ancient *past* and the distant *future* runs through *the present*. For now already God preserves His church by wonder: as long as it is church-food, bread and water are certain. There is peace from outside as well as inside. There is harmony between inner and outward relationships and that is life.

What does not live like this may be in the church but is not of the church.

This *by* grace having enough *in* grace, are real church goods. It is paradise property, in line with the covenant.

Now the writer of the psalm knows enough. The Jerusalem he sees he sets in the evening glow of the last century, a true perspective. He continues speaking of the last things. But not only that, for he also sings of things of the day, and so also things of the first day. He knows that history is not what man can *see* and *evaluate*.

History is not a complex of so many burnt or unburned “real” trees, of so many stopped or unstopped water courses, and so many clouded or unclouded skies. History is governed by SALVATION history which runs straight across it and is its mystery.

And the poet of Psalm 46 sees the same as the Revelation to John pictures it.

How all green grass is burnt, and all green wood burnt up, and thunderheads cover the sky from all directions Yet it also teaches us that thus the gates of paradise are opened again, are *already open* in faith. The rivers flow in paradise for, and not through, Adam’s works. They flow on account of the covenant.

Through the covenant God has again given to His church what it needs. It is the same covenant providence as in the old paradise. Only now it is, not the first, but the second Adam by whom the covenant pours its blessing on everyone, and who sends the water to every corner of the city.

So this psalm is indeed the song of the *birth* pangs of the *“new”* world, although it prophesies the *restoration* of the *old* at the same time. For when Yahweh “makes something *new* on earth” then that is a *restoration* of the old. The *power* which accomplishes the work, the *will of grace*, that moved it, the *law of redemption* which sanctions the work, certainly they are *new*. For the rest grace is always restoration, a return of God’s world to Him who created it.

So the church is also not a new, posthumous discovery of an embarrassed God who would yet rescue something from a burnt out world. Oh no!

Since Psalm 46 can bring together present, past and future, because in all three one history, and over all three one Counsel of God enlightens us,

so we also see in this psalm the church now pictured as the *new* mankind and *in that (again) as the old.*

The Immanuel fellowship is the voluntary multitude seeking inwardly after the law of God, and so at peace with God. It is the style out of which the church lives its life and is from God’s side always *fitting* in its existence.

That is called paradise restored”. In the broadest sense Its fountain of existence is not tapped from what is visible to the eye, for then it could be stopped up. It comes from that other world of God’s souvereign grace. Where no moth or rust destroy, where no thieves break in and steal, where there are no earthquakes to move the rivers and no enemies to fill the wells with stones.

 Leave gaining and shaming, and robbing and burning.

 Lay waste, lay waste the nations,

 Allow the thunder, the winds and storms.

 What does it harm, what harm to the righteous?

… do you have the courage, to also recognize and call these streams of the river, the river branches, paradise realities, when blood flows, when the city is besieged, when distress looms? Ah, sometimes we dare not. That is apparent from the tendency of many to think that those “rivulets” of the church are so small at first sight. That they are but small insignificant freshets, over against those mighty streams which give opportunity for the world to have its pleasures. So they say, “that little church” and “that big world”.

But then they comfort themselves by saying: ~ just wait, later we will receive the great, the everything, and the world nothing.

But such ‘christian-speak’ is justly scorned by Nietzsche, and with good reason by all those who walk past the church today. Do you think that this is what is was about; big rivers for the world and little rivers for us?

Is there perhaps only a difference of more or less between world and church?

No, and no! The streams of the great world city, and the branches of the Immanuel city; these are separate streams, flowing from two kinds of worlds. The streams that spring up from horizontal sources, and therefore stoppable by natural or cultural catastrophies …are for the city of the Antichrist.

But rivers with their own branches, which cannot be channeled, and which gush down by God’s grace from above, and so never flow from springs that dry out. Yes, these are for the city of *Christ*.

So it is not a difference of more or less, but the totally other difference of a perishing nature and culture on the one hand and a never to be restrained grace on the other hand. A difference of miracle or no miracle.

Aquaducts from paradise for every living function of the church, in all aspects of life.

That is grace.

We would have been forced away from these steams again with the first Adam if we did not know that the second Adam is our guarantor that the stream does not wonder away from us and we not from it. Therefore we will maintain what we have sung in Psalm 87.

**THREE**

But the number of miracles is not yet complete. A road also travels from the past to the future with this now always appearing wonder: the *participants* are themselves the proof that a miracle takes place *for the* future. Because they are qualified here with the name ‘city’. The arms of the river of paradise gladden the CITY of God.

Who is that city, where is it? It is, as said earlier, that the poet first looks at his own city, Jerusalem, with its streets and lanes, its pools and gates, and enemies. But he binds to it the reality of the *whole church*, of all ages.

For him Jerusalem is the city of *Yahweh*, the *covenant* God. He calls it city of *God* here. And no wonder, *as we saw already in our second point*, for he puts the emphasis on the return of the old, restored. Think about that paradise river. For him the city of God is, as church, the pure, new mankind. *New* in so far that it can be built and preserved only through the *wonder* of restoration. Yet still old, as the **wonder**-of-restoration is a wonder-of-**restoration**. Yahweh is called God in recreation. “God” in the *creation*.

Therefore his ultimate boast is that, by extraordinary grace, the city again exhibit’s the image of the first creation.

Therefore he calls it God’s city, not in order to deny the new thing that God does,

but to go back, with the blessings of Yahweh to the God of *creation*, from whom everything is and to whom everything returns.

The city of God. Just as God’s mountain is pictured elsewhere. In Psalm 48, and the river of God in Psalm 36 or 65.

God’s city, Jerusalem, also now in the present days of the poet, is still a city of siege, and defense, and still having towers and battlements, and gates for attacking and defending. Notice, if we take that as criteria, then it is a city of Enosh, (an enosh-city), a city that could easily capitulate. But now that the paradise-light has fallen over the city the writer recognizes the church institute in that concrete historically specified city as institute; and in that church-institute the church-organism. He sees in that Church-organism the freedom of paradise and also paradise bondage.

Therefore his city is for him a city of God, even if it is weak, and of little account in the cities of the Pan-Asia of his day.

And because that little enosh-city, having only frail generals, is city of God and remains God’s city in power. And the poet fills himself with that second word, “city”.

Gladdening ~ the present.

River of paradise, the past.

And city ~ the future. Now the picture is complete for depth is brought into it for see: *all of world history* is in it. Because it is prophecy for the future that there is and remains a city, and that paradise water flows through ‘a’ city. The old paradise did not know of a city. The four streams, the four arms of the one Eden river went far in search of lands and distant places. But there were only two people to be found where they fanned out. The Bible begins not with a city but with a garden. It all remained pastoral countryside, but the two people were the parents of all mankind. And all that mankind comes together in a *visible institution*.

After the fall into sin the free movement of free arcadian souls is repressed by the hectic construction of a city. And this by the descendants of Cain in there bravado against frail Enosh. This Cain city of sin grows and becomes mature when all kingdoms, and nations equip themselves in world war against the church, then *there* is the “city”, not of Enosh, the unarmed and frail, but of Cain, the tyrant, the antichrict.

But now God, as Yahwe, has gathered a *church* for Himself. He restores free life in her and the will to freely gather, as organism, for the paradise garden is a picture of her inner freedom.

But she is also gathered as a *“city”* and then as *institute.* That is what she is in order to be a counterpart to the city of Cain. Having her own address, own defence, own basis of operation, also in her approach to those outside. But at the same time there comes a glorious urgency in the permanence of her city administration which was already hidden from of old in the first people.

She must give herself city form for she has a Head, who is *also* King, a Father, who is *also* Souvereign.

She has an *assembly*, that wants to be an *assembling together*.

She has a freedom that binds. She knows *patriarchs* who become *regents,* first-rates who receive the chair of honor. In heaven also the church receives *city* form and the beautiful walls, which saved from attack, and protected the city, are demolished there.

The name of that city is guarantee of a *permanent institution*. Listen how Psalm 46 says that world wars rage and everything seeks to wipe out the city. Yet she remains, even as city. The heavenly flock of the future will not consist of refugees who have barely escaped from the fire. No, even in the end time the church remains a city. Her institutionalized form is guaranteed, even if her members are scattered everywhere. That city structure remains protected even after the world conflagration.

So everything comes together in the vision, and is gathered into one. Garden and city. Beginning and end. The question from the beginning asked in the end.

No garden without a city for that is a proposition without a question.

No city without a garden for that is an organism without institution. Yes, this “city” is now the firm anchor amid all that succumbs as prey to everything which confuses and destroys. She is the harmony that is only given back through God’s grace. If you keep afloat only by the powers of nature you will succumb. All will be over when the mountains and the sea are uprooted from their places. And culture also will not be able to keep her balance, the world wars its latest discomfiture: devastations driven to earth by God.

But the same Yahweh also focusses on His garden and His city. The garden is an abundance of food, and the city a multitude of partakers of this food.

Such is the kingdom of heaven.

**Amen**

Here follow some words spoken at the farewell.

Well, congregation, when we loosen the ties between us somewhat today, we can lookback to the work done in the past (five years). These where the contents, and following that the background of everything I was allowed to say to you. Not nature and not culture but only grace engages and works that salvation. There is no place outside, there is only life inside. So the power of the keys was administered among you. But we have also had to say to each other that the grace of Yahweh does not lock you outside of society as freakish sectarians. But it is restoration. Yahweh-city, becomes God’s-city which grace brings back into the primordial bond, into paradise.

So I called you small in the initial, and large in the later word. If you were healthy children of the church then you would also be so in nature, culture, in the city, the government, the nation, among the citizenry.

Wasn’t that proper? Didn’t it come from the Word, as Calvin opened it? TBC…

*Read Psalm 46; Text is Psalm 46: 5a*

*Sing ~Ps. 76: 1, 2*

 *Ps. 72: 2, 9*

 *Ps. 87: 1, 2*

 *Ps. 87: 5*

 *Ps. 46: 2*

Vondel, freely translated.

When those enemies impend

And the wild heathen

From his camps descend

And us imperil: in every place

Surround us

Is God for us able as

A might that would crush them

Our help when in state

Of suffering and of pity

Be frightened we will not

In intimidating moment.

If trembling as a reed

The ground around us, and

Mountains tumble in the sea’s

Abyss, their hulks

Spread in length and breadth

If God exacts His power

All the cataracts do foam

And the mountains sink below…etc.