Commotion along the IJssel and by the Waal a.d. 1561
and the riddle of a pseudonym in the Family of Love

In August 1561 the Zutphen schoolmaster Herman Leuw was caught in Zwolle arranging the distribution of a heretic booklet printed for him in Nijmegen by Petrus Elsenius. Dr Maria E. Kronenberg devoted an article in Het Boek, 28 (1944/6), pp. 55-78, to the case, which was reprinted in her collected essays Over mensen en boeken. The punishment meted out to both - the schoolmaster was not allowed ever to return to Zwolle, the printer had to close down his business - was comparatively light. Only the books were burned. Dr Kronenberg had to report at the time that no copy had come to her notice. As Mr Paul Valkema Blouw tells me, this is still the position today.

This article is intended both to touch up what Dr Kronenberg tells about the event and to bring into the open a difficult point which has so far remained undiscussed.

Zwolle records of 25 August (Appendix I, cf. Appendix X) state: 'De boecken by sommige gelcerden gevisiteerd sijnde sijn den Geystlicken geloeven in vollen (= vele) articulen contrarierende bevonden worden' [the books having been inspected by several scholars were found to contradict clerical belief in many articles]. If I understand her correctly, Dr Kronenberg summed this up rather ironically: 'Dadelijk worden geleerde heren uitgenodigd deze boeken te onderzoeken.' [At once learned gentlemen are requested to examine these books] (p. 99); a little later she speaks of 'bevoegde lieden' [competent persons] (p. 100). And quite right too: they were, as the Nijmegen authorities expressly declare (App. V), 'doctissimi viri et Domini,' very learned men and 'Heeren,' that is to say, clergymen. Perhaps the secretary of Zwolle had them in mind when he wrote that the books contradicted 'den “Geystlicken” geloeven' [clerical belief] rather than what he no doubt meant: 'den Christlicken geloeven' [Christian belief]. The wording in which Zwolle might be led astray by them' ('vp dat Niemantz daer miede verleidet werde') and which Deventer uses in a prohibition against whoever might 'scatter' ('spargieren') anything conducive 'to scandalising his neighbour' ('not scandalizatie synes naesten') (p. 99) had been chosen in this form under the influence of the local clergy, cf. Matth. 24.11 and 18.6-7.

1 I quote from the book, but for the Appendices from the article.
2 Appendix I.
The town of Deventer became directly involved in the affair, for Master Herman testified that he 'had received the text from the hands of the late Pastor of Deventer' ('uth handen van den zaligen Pastoir van Deventer solde untfangen hebben'), 'adding to this that he did not know whether or not the same was its author' ('seggende dan noch, dat hie niet en wist off dieselve autor daervan sij offic niet'). The man referred to was Johannes Phoconius, until 1558 reader at the Chapter school in Zutphen, then until his death in February 1560 pastor of St Mary's, Deventer. In this connection the discovery of 'the original' ('dat originaell') during the raid of Master Herman's house in Zutphen was very important. Deventer clergymen must have accompanied their town's messenger to Zutphen in order there to investigate, together with Zutphen clergy, who had written the text: in both towns Phoconius's hand was known and examples of Herman's handwriting were available in the school. The result is known to us from a brief note in the Deventer Reizeboek [Journey-book] dated 5 September 1561 (p. 97). Zwolle is informed by Deventer that as regarded 'Master Herman being the author of the booklet The Paradise, published deceptively under the name of the late Pastor Phoconius' ('Meyster Harman genaempt wesende die Auctoer dess Buexkens tparadyss gemompt uthgegaen in den naem dess zaligen heren Pastoers Mr Johannes Phoconiij'), the conclusion has been reached that it had been 'written in the hand of Master Herman and much had been added and taken away' ('met Meyster Harmans handt gescreven, ende vuyl by ende affgedaen').

These last words led Dr Kronenberg to assume that Herman had made many corrections, additions and deletions in his manuscript. But for a schoolmaster this is surely not very probable. It seems to me that this is a reference to Revelation 22.18f. where those who hear the words of prophecy of this book are told: 'I warn every one who hears the words of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book [Revised Standard Version]' ('Soo wie yet toe doet tot desen dingen/over dien sal Godt toe doen dese plaghen/die gheschreven zijn in desen boeck. Ende ist dat yemandt vêmindert/de woorden van den boeck deser profetien/diens deel sal Godt wechnemen vanden boeck des levens' [so in the Roman Catholic translation by Van Winghen, the Protestant Liesveldt Bible uses 'daar toe zettet' and 'daer afdoeit']. It is therefore the judgment of the Zutphen and Deventer clergy which we are reading here: the text written by Master Herman was in many points heretical.

3 Appendix VI.
4 Appendix II.
5 Appendix IV.