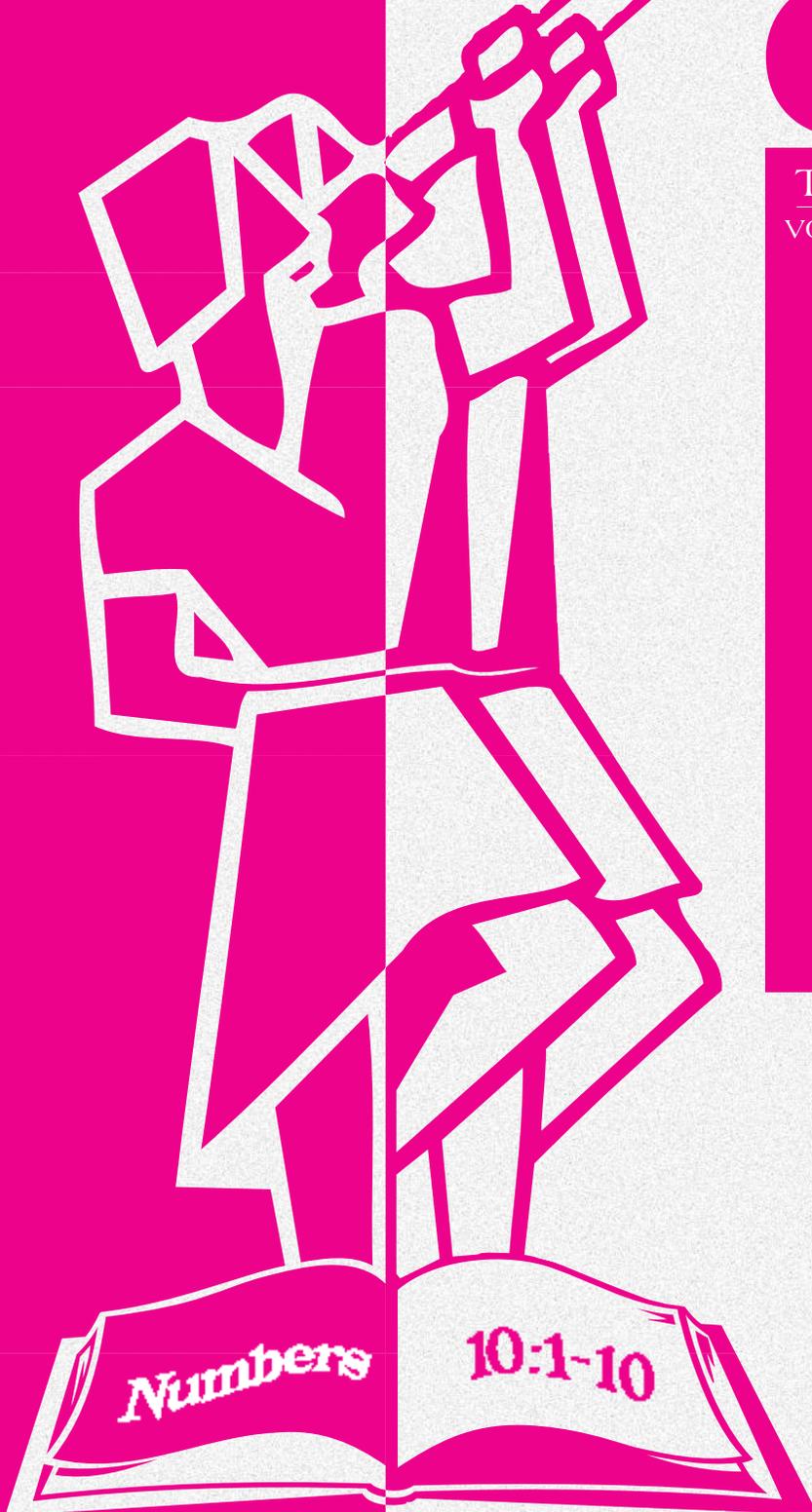


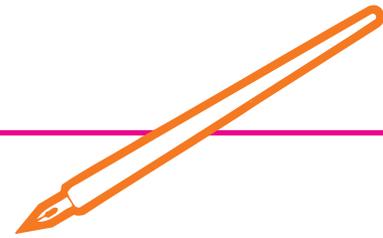
Clarion

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*Urban Missionary
Rev. Frank Dong*





Reality: What is it?

Later on in this issue, there is an article which will serve as an introduction to a new year of study, in particular at a secular university. This editorial deals with the basic question: "What is reality?" Study at university has as objective the diverse aspects of the universe, that is, of the world in which we live and to which we belong. We also can call this objective: man and his world as it stretches out to remote galaxies.

Through the study of his world, mankind has gained an immense amount of knowledge about the earth with its workings and possibilities. This knowledge has provided man with the ability to build this world into the technologically advanced dwelling place it is today. This, too, is part of the present reality.

The most important "element" of the real reality is missing: God.

What is reality?

For what is reality? A dictionary says that reality indicates "actual existence, true state of affairs" or "an actual fact." Another defines reality as "the state or quality of being real or of existing in fact." Its collective meaning is "the real world." In the secular world of science, the agreement has been made (see the article) that this reality in which we live must be factual. This means that man must be able through his science to verify the factuality or real existence of a matter. Proving that something is real is done by a combination of careful scientific observation and rational conclusions. Here man is in the centre of reality. Man, with his scientific insight, is again the measure of things, just as in the classical period of the Greek and Roman world from about 500 BC to about 500 AD. This is reality today in the university and very much in our world as a whole. Thus, the reality is man and *his* world.

However, this is not a true description of reality and, therefore, not the real reality. The most important "element" of the real reality is missing: God. Man has pushed the living active almighty God out of this assumed reality, even though He created the universe, heaven and earth, with all that is in them, and even though He remains actively involved by his upholding and governing of all things. It is He who made man to have dominion over his earthly creation with the task to cultivate (develop and build) and guard it in the service of God and to his glory.

The living and active God

The living active God has revealed his creating of all things in Genesis 1-2 and throughout the Scriptures. He has disclosed in the Scriptures his continued active involvement in the world of man in his upholding and governing of what He created. A few examples from his Word are sufficient to

show this. God's active rule and work in nature is expressed beautifully in, e.g., Psalm 104:10-11, "He makes springs pour water into the ravines . . . They give water to all the beasts of the field." And, "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth, wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart" (verses 14-15). Further, "The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. You bring darkness, it becomes night." This is the time for animals of prey to go out. In the morning, "the sun rises, and they steal away . . . Then man goes out to his work, to his labour until evening" (verses 22-23). All these things are said to be God's works which He accomplishes in his wisdom (verse 24): "How many are your works, O LORD. In wisdom you made them all. The earth is full of your creatures." See also Genesis 9:14, Leviticus 26:3, Deuteronomy 11:14, Psalm 65:9-10, and Psalm 147:8-9. In Psalm 147:5-18 it says that God makes snow and hail and also causes them to melt away again. In the New Testament, Christ says to the disciples: "Your Father in heaven . . . causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45). And regarding sparrows, sold on the marketplace He says that "not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father" (Matt 10:29). God feeds the ravens; He makes the lilies and the grass grow, and He clothes them with beauty (Luke 12:24). God sustains the earth with its flora and fauna. This is not just the poetic language of faith. It is all that and a reliable description of reality.

God not only notices everything that everyone does, but He also rules everyone's life.

Important here also is Colossians 1:15. Paul says there that "all things hold together in" Christ Jesus, God's Son. Hebrews 1:3 adds that God's Son does this sustaining of all things "by his powerful word." Words can express one's will; this will is the result of one's thoughtful plan or purpose. In other words, when the Son upholds all things by his powerful word, this means that He upholds the entire creation with his almighty power, by which He first created the world (verse 2), according to his, that is, God's plan and purpose. Upholding includes governing. Not only God the Father but also God the Son is from moment to moment actively busy in upholding and in ruling the entire creation.

With regard to God's active involvement with us, humans, we read, "Does He who implanted the ear not hear? Does He who formed the eye not see? Does He who disciplines nations not punish" (Ps 94:9-10)? And, "The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good" (Prov 15:3). See also, e.g., Psalm 33:13-15 and Psalm 139.

God rules man's life

God not only notices everything that everyone does, but He also rules everyone's life. This includes bringing punishment or blessing. In Proverbs we read about man making his plans, but "the LORD's purpose prevails" (19:21). We also read in Proverbs, "from the LORD comes the reply of his tongue (16:1); and, "the LORD determines his steps" (16:9). That God's purpose prevails in the lives of people is expressed even stronger when He is compared with a potter and man with a lump of clay with which the potter does what pleases him (Isa 29:16, 45:9, Jer 18:5, Rom 9:20-24). The revelation of God's punishing anger is mentioned in Romans 1:18-25. The working of God's grace is written about in Ephesians 1:11 where it says that believers are "predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will." Moreover, we read in Romans 8:28f, "we know that in

all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose."

The real reality

Our conclusion is obvious: the real reality is in the first place the living and active God, without whom nothing in this entire creation can exist even for one split second. Both men and his world totally depend on Him, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, we acknowledge the truth of Psalm 14:1, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" We acknowledge that when we study man and his world (reality), but do not reckon with the triune God as the active cause, the reason, and the purpose of "all things," that we are such fools. Thus we understand why God's Word states our human calling in these words (also when studying reality): ". . . whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col 3:17). 

What's inside?

Prof. J. Geertsema's editorial deals with the subject, "what is reality?" He is eager, however to expand on the topic and to present another article in the next issue of *Clarion*. This should be helpful for all of us who live in a world which foolishly does not reckon with the reality of the living God. But this should be particularly helpful to students of a secular university where the teaching and mentality is decided humanistic. May you be edified by Prof. Geertsema's writing.

Speaking of what is reality, we have Dr. C. Trimp's next article regarding the confession of true and false church. In today's situation, is it still correct to use terms like "true church" and "false church?" Our churches are sensitive to this question since we have been accused by some as holding to the opinion that we are the only true church. Dr. Trimp's article is thought-provoking and informative.

Rev. Frank Dong was ordained on Ascension Day to be an urban missionary among the Chinese in the greater Vancouver area. Great enthusiasm has surrounded the calling and ordination of Rev. Dong. In this issue of *Clarion* there is a report on his ordination and inaugural service. It includes a fascinating story about how the Lord led Rev. Dong and his family to this point in their lives. The Press Release of the Classis where brother Dong was examined is also found in this issue. May the Lord grant his blessing on this ministry!

Rev. J. de Gelder has provided us with an interesting and informative *Hiliter*. We can learn a lot from what is going on in other congregations. Rev. de Gelder also supplies us with some of his insights and reflections.

Earlier we received Rev. P. G. Feenstra's first installment on the topic of angels. He shows the work of angels from a clear redemptive-historical approach. What we learn about angels gives us great comfort about Jesus Christ who brings about reconciliation between God and us.

Dr. C. Van Dam has reviewed several books for the readers of this magazine. His reviews should help us to make some informed decisions concerning additions to our library.

A new monthly column will appear on the pages of *Clarion* dealing with educational matters. In fact, the first article appears in this issue. You may remember that we used to have a column entitled, *School Crossings*. Since we value Christian education so highly, it is with great thankfulness that we may again have a column dealing with educational matters. The first article is self-explanatory. It makes some exciting proposals and promises to be a blessing to our readers.

Last, but not least, we have a poem by Janey Van Seters on Psalm 139.

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Can an old confession be current?

By C. Trimp

Article 29 of the Belgic Confession

In Art 29 of the Belgic Confession the Reformed doctrine speaks of the true and false church. Within the community of churches in the Netherlands this article has become a much discussed and even infamous topic. Many people urge us to place it in a museum of antiquities, and if that can't be done because of church regulations or other difficulties, we are still expected to at least gradually forget about this article and not bother our children with it. If there is one part of the Belgic Confession that has outlived itself, then it surely is this bit of 16th century leftover.

The fact is, that at one point in history this portion of our Reformed confession was written as an aid to believers who wanted to join Christ's church (the true church) wherever God establishes it (see Art 28). Art 29 also wants to make it clear that no person has the right to separate from Christ's church. Furthermore it wants to convince us of the necessity to make careful decisions based on God's Word in days of persecution, crisis and great distress. For we live in a world where Christ's church is surrounded by deceit, poor guidance and confusion. When we need to make decisions and choices, we ought not to be delayed and diverted by irrelevant side issues. This would, for example, be the case when we would disregard the church of Christ because of its insignificance and invisibility (for example, underground churches in France). Or when the falsification of the church is not noticed because people are so in awe with the outer pomp and splendour of the Roman institute. The marks of the true and false church help the believers to discern clearly and to ask sound questions: Is the gospel of Christ's grace taught? Are the sacraments administered as Christ instituted them? Is discipline exercised as a weapon against sin or as an instrument of hu-

man power display? Is the relationship with God recognizable in the lives of church members, in their knowledge of their misery, in their understanding of redemption and sanctification of life? In short, is the obedience to the Word of Christ – Christ's easy yoke – recognizable in the lives of office bearers and other church members?

The marks of the church cannot be recognized upon neutral observation. They are only spiritually discernable and therefore are for the guidance of people who bow down to God's Word, love the gospel of Christ and do not wish to wander off in days of distress.

We can and may not speak about the true and false church in a "static" fashion.

Process and dynamics

In our first article Dr. J. van Genderen spoke to us about the true church which can become a false church. This does not happen overnight, but eventually, through a process of degeneration. In earlier articles we have tried to imagine what factors could stimulate such a process. We have every reason to take to heart van Genderen's words on the progressive character of degeneration and to consider its implications. In other words, we can and may not speak about the true and false church in a "static" fashion.

When we – following the words of Dr. K. Schilder – say that we are not allowed to speak about the marks of the church in a "static" fashion, which means, separated from the daily activities of the living Christ¹, then certainly the same applies to the issue of "true" and "false" church.

An example of dealing with both these issues in a "static" fashion: at the

Reformation we were re-taught the confessional language of the church (after years of dominance by Kuyperian terminology: "pluriformity," more or less "pure revelation of the body of Christ" etc.). We called on all believers to "come with us" and "to do as us" – without priding ourselves. On the contrary, we did it with "fear and trembling", because we were speaking heavy words and realized we were called to do so. In faith we realized we were Christ's church and we demonstrated this by calling ourselves "true church." At the same time we had learned (mainly from K. Schilder), that it is not in line with the Reformed confession to speak of the "true church" in the plural sense. After all, God doesn't want two churches of Christ side by side, at one and the same location. "We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church" (Art 27 BC).

When someone in this situation reasons as follows:

- there is only one true church;
- we are the true church;
- therefore, all other congregations at this location are "false churches;" they speak in a "static" fashion, both concerning themselves and the believers in other church formations. Undoubtedly he draws out an extremely clear and easy to use map, but he forgets one thing: the dynamics of Christ's presence in a confused world, the active intervention of the living Lord of the church against the power of temptation and dispersion. Such a seemingly logical reasoner disregards the temporary character of each institute and apparently has no knowledge of Christ's work in other institutes. Or maybe he thinks that Christ is tied to the route that he himself was taught over the years. This person actually speaks about an abstraction when he uses the words, "Christ's Church" or "false church." He brings forward a few terms which logically rule out one another. But he does not see the Head of

the Church, nor does he pay attention to the work done by that Head. He also does not ask himself in what stage of process is the life of his own institute and that of other institutes.

True and false church are not labels

The marks of the true and false church are not labels, handed out by a central office somewhere and, once acquired, to be applied by us so they will be inextricably attached to every institute that has received this treatment. The processional character of history – including church history and history of salvation – ought to make us humble, with regard to ourselves as well as other church institutes. Tomorrow the living Christ can bring about a reformation in an institute that we had already removed from our attention.

The false church begins with you and me, as soon as God leaves us alone to fend for ourselves. Being a church is not a result of good human qualities. *Staying* a church is also not something to take for granted. When someone does not understand these things, and yet talks about the church in the manner of the man in our example above on, he talks pointlessly while “he has lost connection with the Head.” (See Col 2:19).

The question arises whether in this perspective it is still meaningful or possible to keep using the confession as worded in Art 29. We can categorize without too much difficulty the differences between the Reformed and Roman Catholic Church under the terms “true” and “false.” “These two churches are easily recognized and distinguished from each other” (Art 29). Usually we also don’t have too many problems categorizing the sects from past and present times. However, it will probably not be as easy to label all the different “Reformed” churches. Therefore, if we assume that Art 29 is permanently current, we are still left with this pressing question: when can one in good conscience speak of a “false church?”

K. Schilder answered this question by stating that an institute becomes a false church when a yoke different from the one Christ gives becomes a *basis*, a *standard*, and a *principle for the church assembly*.² (In addition to articles 28 and 29 he also referred to Art 32 of the BC) This is how the believers in the sixteenth century spoke with regard to Rome. And likewise it is how the believers at the time of the Secession in

1834 spoke with regard to the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church. This is also how the Act of Liberation spoke with regard to the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Synodical). In all these cases the final decisions, which consisted of acts of excommunication, have been regarded as crucial course deciding factors (and as such the end of the process).³

Dealing with such important characterizations in a non-“static” way also implies that we cannot keep statistics of them, or supply the appropriate labels from stock. Throughout history one constantly has to make new decisions, while realizing (and, in the case of a negative decision, also hoping) that each decision is as provisional as the church institute itself. The church, not blind to the developments within its circles and on guard for shifts and changes surrounding it, has chosen its own way – also since the beginning of the 19th century, when radical changes began to reveal themselves in the situation of church life.

Can it still be considered useful to insist on using the old confessional terms “true church” and “false church?”

Dealing with Article 29 of the BC

There is no doubt that at this point many readers ask themselves, now with renewed urgency, the question stated before: can it still be considered useful to insist on using the old confessional terms “true church” and “false church?” What is the use if at any given moment the configuration of the church can change? Are not both terms the result of our need for conceptional and logical reasoning, while there is never an actual reality that correlates to it? A century ago already this opinion was voiced by none other than Dr. H. Bavinck. He wrote that the “true church” in absolute sense cannot exist here on this earth, and that the same goes for the “false church.”⁴ “True” and “false” are, according to this philosophy, mostly concepts required by our reasoning intellect and not by actual facts and God’s revelation regarding these facts.

If this were the case, it would be wise for us to bring this type of terminology to a halt (and all quarrels and misunderstandings with it). Yet at the same time we would be robbing the Reformed confession of its strength and current character.

Of course it was known all too well in the 16th century, as it is today, that “there is not one church which completely lives up to the demand of God in all areas of doctrine and life, in preaching of the Word and sacraments” (Bavinck). Why else would they have fought so passionately for the preaching of “justification by faith alone?” The Reformers were not fanatical perfectionists. Also, with regard to the term “false church,” it is according to Bavinck a contradiction in terms. It cannot exist in absolute sense “since she would be church no longer.” “False church” in fact only applies to the Roman Catholic Church “in as far as it was pontifical.” Here again we are struck by the abstract way of reasoning. A false coin “in absolute sense” is indeed not a coin if we look at the term from a financial institute’s point of view. But this reasoning only takes into account one aspect of reality. Just like fraud represents an enormous reality directed against society, the same is the case with the “false church.” Temptation, appearances, and deception are kept alive in this world through her. As much as the “false prophet” in Jeremiah’s days represented a horrific practice and was definitely not regarded as a logical absurdity separate from the reality of people’s lives, in the same way this will not be the case with the false prophesy about which our Lord speaks to us in his Revelation to John. A logical contradiction – because a false prophet “in absolute sense” is no longer a prophet? Wishful thinking! The appearance of “the false prophet” will be a bizarre, but definitely not an unappealing event and exactly because of that, it will represent a terrible reality. It has been revealed to us so that we can be on our guard! In the same sense the apostle spoke to us about the “logical” unreality and the tangible, real functionality of the “so-called gods,” which are in the world (1 Cor 8:4-6).

Not even the argument brought forward by Bavinck concerning the “false church,” which argues that remnants of Christ’s church can be found within the false church, can hold water in this case. In this regard G. Visee has

correctly said the following: “the place of origin of the Roman Catholic Church is not Mecca, but Jerusalem.” Even in the false church this truth can be found.

The number one heresy of our century: everyone’s choice ought to be respected in a tolerant, pluralistic society.

Confession – a human pretence?

When faithful children of God gather under the authority of God’s Word, recognizing Christ’s presence through the Holy Spirit (according to Matt 18:20 and 28:20), and they speak as follows: “we are here together as church of Christ, as his catholic church on location,” they speak correctly. These are words born from thankful discernment of Christ’s church- gathering work. This is what is meant by these words: we know that we are the true church. This is the way in which the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) have expressed their love for the confessional language since 1944. However, in my opinion they have missed (or at least seriously underestimated) the point that the expression “true church” is no longer understood. Over a period of at least one century the actual meaning of this confessional expression has changed in such a way that people around us now believe this phrase to have the meaning of “perfect church.” As we saw earlier on, H. Bavinck actively supported this.

As a result, people around us cannot help but regard the people in the Reformed Churches (Liberated) as arrogant and self-assured people. We don’t even want to mention the fact that many members of this church often have substantiated this opinion because of “static” reasoning, as in the example earlier on in this article. It would do the members of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) well if they kept this in mind and endeavoured to avoid possible misunderstanding all together.

In this context I would also like to ask our critical readers the following question: what in fact would happen if a number of faithful children of God would gather for a worship service and they expressed (possibly explicitly)

that they do *not* present themselves as the church of Christ on location, and that they seriously do not believe (and nobody ought to second guess them on this point) that all believers and outsiders have the obligation to join them, because they do not possess these types of pretensions and conceit? In that case the believers are ashamed of their own name: *church of Christ*. They prepare themselves for the number one heresy of our century: everyone’s choice ought to be respected in a tolerant, pluralistic society. Even in church matters the customer is always right. Clients and customers have their own inalienable rights and the churches would be wise to approach the people with good sale offers and compelling window displays, for otherwise the potential buyers will go to the competition instead. Nowadays we call this “religion-shopping.” It is not accidentally an American product. It is a brightly coloured and revealing word. It shows us that religious individualism and denominational classification bring their own mottos. Not God’s choice, but our preference constitutes the gathering of the congregation. Because “religion-shopping” and “denomination” as such are arch-nemesis of the catholicity of Christ’s church, they are both driving forces behind the falsification of the church.

“Confession” of the church and “ideas” of the people

“The true-church idea has caused a lot of damage.” This statement from the mouth of J. Douma was publicized in large print recently in the Dutch newspaper *Nederlands Dagblad* (Aug 5, 1994). We counterbalance this idea with the “true church” *confession*. The true church confession has for centuries already made known to the congregation its own nature. It has tried to make the congregation aware of the great disaster of falsification. The opin-

ion (held by H. Bavinck and many others) that there is no such thing as a “true church” in absolute sense, is just as much a human view point that has caused a horrendous amount of damage to the faith in Christ’s church: her qualities and her marks. In the end, Bavinck’s description is also no more than a “true church *idea*” that cannot be reconciled with the intentions of the Reformers. For they knew all too well that even the true church of Christ shows merely a beginning of the new obedience, and furthermore that throughout the centuries there have been wolves *inside* and sheep *outside* of the fold.

The confession has definitively not aged.

Human ideas concerning this confession are apparently capable of growing quickly into ideologies to the “right” and to the “left” (see 2 Cor 6:7). It is wise to pay attention to this and to take it into account.

But all this cannot warrant the removal of the confession’s function to witness the truth and be a weapon against falsification. In that sense the confession has definitively not aged. On the contrary, it will more and more prove its contemporary truth in an enchanted world filled with the appearances of godliness (2 Tim 3:5 and 4:3, etc.).

Next time we will conclude this series with a short (!) article. We would like to make a few comments on our calling with regard to the current disension in the church.

¹See amongst others *VWKerk* I, 205ff., II 245ff, and 409ff.

²*VWKerk* III, 370.

³Compare here G. Visee in: *Dienst*, I (1948), 201 and C. Veenhof in: *Dienst*, 2 (1948), 51.

⁴Compare *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4th ed. 1928-1930, IV, 300. 



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An historic event: the ordination of our urban missionary Rev. Frank Dong

By Sarah Vandergugten

Ascension Day, 2000.

It is an evening service to commemorate the momentous occasion of our representative, Jesus Christ in the flesh, ascending to take His place at the Father's right hand. There He continues to direct all things in heaven and on earth. This evening we would become fully aware that this ascended Lord directs individuals and congregations in such a way that His church gathering work moves forward. Together again. It's a rare occasion when two congregations meet for a single service. Though it has been twenty-four years since Langley was instituted as an offshoot of Cloverdale, many faces and families are still dearly familiar. Church was full. There was a celebratory mood in the air. All evening, the singing led skillfully by organist Frank Ezinga, would be splendidly joyous. Shortly before 7:30 p.m., Pastor James Visscher escorted Frank Dong, his wife Jian Hui and their daughter Connie to the front pew. One can only imagine what thoughts were going through their minds. Who could have imagined this ten years ago?

Pastors Jan Huijgen of Cloverdale and James Visscher of Langley shared the ministerial duties for this special event. Promptly at 7:30, Pastor Huijgen mounted the stairs to the pulpit, as office bearers from both congregations filed in to take their places. We settled in to listen. Pastor Huijgen centred the evening's message on Paul's words to Timothy, "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (2 Tim 1: 13,14). He noted that Christ's ascension is more than an historical fact. The ascended Christ gives power to His



children, also to this new missionary and the missionary congregations. Pastor Huijgen developed his theme, encouraging Br. Dong (and us all) to be strong and courageous by continuing in sound doctrine and by guarding the gracious gift.

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.

The thought of beginning an urban mission project can be overwhelming. What can one man, even with the support of many, do? Is it a matter of marketing strategies and good commercials? No, the simplicity of the message is astonishing. Just as Paul stated, we come with no superior wisdom or eloquence. We come with the message of Christ and Him crucified. Yet we

know that faith is taught by faith, not by passing tests of knowledge and expertise in doctrine. The purpose of religion is a relationship with God in Christ. As Paul was awestruck that God wanted to use him as an instrument to bring the word of life to the gentiles, so we humbly begin the task of urban missions. True, it's a grand project, but we're simply passing on what we have received. The Spirit has not left us guessing. We have the Word. Over the course of time, God has directed history in such a way that summaries and documents have given continuity and unity of faith. These confessional statements, though not the end of all discussion, provide a helpful pattern for sound teaching.

Treasures in jars of clay

Timothy is instructed to guard the good deposit that was entrusted to him. This rich deposit is placed in a fragile jar. The power is in the deposit not in the receptacle. The power

comes from the Holy Spirit, given in the laying on of hands, when office bearers are commissioned to a task (cf. Acts 8: 17 ff; 13: 3). The clay jar remains fragile, but the deposit is of immense worth, meant to be shared. This is the task for our Urban Missionary; this is the task for us all.

We responded to Pastor Huijgen's timely message with the fitting words of Martin Luther's glorious hymn: "Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing. Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing. Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also." Fitting words.

Ordination and laying on of hands

It was time for Pastor Visscher to take the pulpit. He read the form for the ordination of missionaries. At the appropriate time, Candidate Dong stepped forward to make his solemn commitment. Connie slipped her hand into her mother's. "I do with all my heart," sounded resolutely from Frank's lips. He kneeled. Six elders, three from Cloverdale and three from Langley and the two ministers placed their hands over Frank's head. Pastor Visscher intoned, "God, our heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy office, enlighten you with His Spirit and so govern you in your ministry that you may fulfil it obediently and that it may bear fruit to the honour of his Name and the expansion of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ. Amen." What a solemn and glorious moment!

The familiar strains of Psalm 134 filled the air: "The Lord now bless you from above; From Zion in his boundless love." Yes, that's the only way by which this Urban Missions Project will experience success. "Blest be his great and holy name."

Greetings from far and wide

Once the service was over, it was time to welcome Frank, Jian Hui and Connie into our midst. Many churches sent messages of congratulations and pledges of support. Pastor Huijgen read letters from J. Moesker (Carman East), J. VanVliet (Lincoln), J. Ludwig (London), A. deGraaf (Maceio, Brazil), C. Stam (Hamilton), R. Eikelboom (Calgary), T. Lodder (Taber), J. Van Popta (Coaldale), W. Wielenga (Lynnden) and D. Moes (Vernon). Local pastors (E. Kampen, C. VanSpronsen, and P. Holtvluwer) and one from Al-

berta, E. J. Tiggelaar (Barrhead) extended words of welcome and support on behalf of their congregations.

Three special guests were given the floor. Prof. J. Geertsema offered greetings on behalf of the Theological College in Hamilton. He noted that the four years of study had strengthened the ties between the professors and students. Frank had come as a stranger, but soon felt at home. The Lord had granted faith, insight and perseverance. Frank studied diligently, seldom content to say that he'd done enough. Prof. Geertsema often had to reassure Frank, "Don't worry. It will be all right." His confidence was based on the fact that the work of Jesus Christ was evident in Frank. And it was all right. All necessary exams were passed, and now this great day had arrived. An incredible journey. If we were not yet convinced, the next speaker, fourth year theology student Carl Vermeulen made it crystal clear that the Lord is at work in the lives of individuals, calling them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Carl spoke on behalf of his home congregation, Kelmscott in Australia. He related in a most entertaining manner Frank and Jian Hui's remarkable story.

"I do with all my heart," sounded resolutely from Frank's lips.

Frank and Jian's Story

Frank and Jian were both born in north-east Mainland China. They've known each other since early childhood. Fifteen years ago, Frank and Jian Hui were – as Carl put it – heathens. Both had university degrees and successful careers in business. As years went by and in order to advance professionally, Frank needed to learn English. His teacher was a Baptist preacher. His textbook was the Bible. One detects the finger of the Lord being placed on Frank. "You are mine. I need you for a special task." Frank did more than learn English. He became convinced of the truth revealed in Scripture. So did Jian Hui.

Frank wanted to learn more. This would necessitate a move out of communist China to Australia. Plans were

made to study business there, but the authorities caught wind of Frank's other intentions, namely to learn more about the Christian faith. Frank was almost arrested, but managed to make it safely to Australia. Jian Hui and Connie remained in China. Once it became known that Jian Hui was also a Christian, life became very difficult. Jian Hui lost her job; their money was confiscated; they lost their home. But they did not waver.

A remarkable chain of events

Through a remarkable chain of events, Frank came into contact with our brothers and sisters in Kelmscott. One day, Frank was traveling on a commuter train, and found himself seated next to Karl's (now) father-in-law, Mr. Bruning. This brother was reading some Christian literature. Intrigued, Frank began to read along, over his shoulder, but soon came to a word he did not understand. "What does that word mean?" he asked. And so the contact began. They introduced themselves and exchanged phone numbers.

A few Sundays later the phone rang at the Bruning's. One of the children answered, but could not understand what the stranger was trying to say. Presuming it was a wrong number, the phone was hung up. Dad Bruning, realizing who it might be, phoned Frank's number, but he'd moved in the meantime. Thankfully, Frank was persistent, and tried again the next Sunday. That's when the strong ties between Kelmscott and the Dong's began. Kelmscott was also instrumental in negotiating Jian Hui and Connie's move to Australia.

It was not long before the Dong's made another big move, this time to Hamilton, Ontario. Having been called into God's marvelous light, Frank and Jian Hui had no greater desire than to pass knowledge of this light on to their fellow countrymen. Perhaps the road would lead back to China.

Greetings from Ancaster

A third out-of-town guest picked up the story from there. Br. deJong spoke on behalf of Ancaster congregation. The deJong home became the Dong's first Canadian home. The deJong's presumed that on the first day in Canada, the Dong's would sleep in, to recover from jet lag. Not so. Seven in the morning found the Dong's neatly dressed, sitting on the sofa in

the living room. Frank was studying the catechism, in preparation for his interview at the Theological College later that day. And so it went. Six days a week, twelve months of the year – for four years Frank studied. What a challenge to learn Biblical languages and then read and write theology in a yet unfamiliar tongue. Frank’s studies were blessed with success. The Dong’s became much loved members of An-caster congregation. Jian Hui can apparently cook a banquet from a dormat, so to speak. Connie is known for her radiant smile, her love of music and her ability to read one or two books per day.

Closing

Pastor Huijgen drew the formal part of the evening to a close. We all headed over to the Credo gym to enjoy a time of fellowship and refreshments. It had been a remarkable evening.

Light of the world

Sunday, June 4th, Rev. Dong had the pleasant but rather unique task of preaching his inaugural sermon twice, once in Cloverdale, once in Langley. He chose as text, Matthew 5: 14- 16, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl . . . let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Pastor Dong developed this theme: As the light of the world, we must shine before men. He examined the nature and position of the light, the radiance of the light and the purpose of the light.

Two thousand years ago a star shone brightly into a dark world near Bethlehem. Today’s world is also dark – morally, spiritually and theologically. How should we respond to such darkness? Shall we isolate ourselves? No, we must listen to the command of Jesus. He told his disciples and He tells us, “You are the light of the world. You must shine.” We, justified sinners, sanctified by the Holy Spirit have become bearers of the light. We’re like the moon, whose light is dependent of the light of the sun. We reflect the radiance of the Son.

Pastor Dong developed this theme: As the light of the world, we must shine before men.

Visible Christians

In Biblical times, lights were placed on stands, so that their radiance could penetrate throughout the house. Our stands today are wherever the Lord has placed us: in school, in the workplace, in our families, in amongst our friends and neighbours, in all our relationships. Christians are intended to give light all over the world, to every nation. If a light does not shine, it is useless. If a lighthouse does not shine its light, shipwrecks will occur. Christians who do not shine their lights become responsible for the shipwrecked lives of those around them. In fact, they will

shipwreck their own faith. What kind of a light are you?

What is the world supposed to see? Well, our good works are like rays of light. Light penetrates the darkness, exposes evil and shows the way out. We need to provide that light to demonstrate the radical difference between a life lit by Christ and the life of darkness. But our deeds are not enough. We need to talk to our neighbours. Why are we doing what we do? Why are we not doing what they do? This work of evangelism is meant for all church members. Don’t just pray. Participate actively in fulfilling your calling as light of the world. Let’s pray that the Chinese people in the Greater Vancouver area come to us to see and to seek the light. Let’s make sure they don’t get cold feet because everyone walks by them. In us they must see Christ.

As we shine brightly, the focus remains the glory of our heavenly Father. If others come to Christ through our efforts, there is no reason for self-glorification. We are simply being obedient to Christ’s command. But, we may not shut ourselves in. We must penetrate the darkness and point the way to Christ. Let’s shine brightly, that those in darkness around us may see Christ shine brightly in us, and give glory to the Father.

With these inspiring and invigorating words, Pastor Dong sent us on our way. We pray that the Lord will bless this Urban Missions Project. May all who hear Christ’s command be empowered to do his will. You are the light of the world. There’s work to do. **C**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

In the July 7th issue of *Clarion*, Rev. Slaa writes in his meditation on page 314: “As a result, the king of Egypt married Sarai!” I would disagree with this statement. Sarai was taken into Pharaoh’s house as we read in Genesis 12:15. The question then arises, did Sarai immediately become Pharaoh’s wife or did the

LORD prevent this from happening? The NIV, NASB, and RSV all translate Genesis 12:19 in such a way that Sarai became the wife of Pharaoh. However the KJV gives a different testimony by recording Pharaoh saying to Abraham, “Why saidst thou, she is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife.”

Pharaoh had not yet taken Sarai to wife. The LORD had intervened and prevented this by plaguing Pharaoh and his house. Therefore, even though Abraham feared man and put his wife in jeopardy, yet Sarai was kept chaste. Sarai may have been in Pharaoh’s house, but they were not husband and wife.

Rick Duker, Edmonton

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By J. de Gelder

Niagara

The fact that in this and the coming years several churches hope to celebrate their 50th anniversary, hopefully sparks new interest in the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches. A few years ago the four churches in the Niagara Peninsula established a history committee, and in *The Family Post* of Smithville and Attercliffe I found the following note:

The Historical Society of the Niagara area churches continues to collect and record items of historic nature pertaining to the area churches. We are successfully gathering profiles of families that came to the area in the early days. We thank those who have donated photos or other items of interest. We are storing all information photos and print on disc as well as in our albums.

Perhaps some that have lived in that area but have moved out to other parts of the country can also contribute to the collection. I am sure it is all very welcome.

Lincoln

As I have mentioned before, liturgical matters always make for interesting considerations and discussions. In the Lincoln bulletin I read:

You are all familiar with the words: ‘Lift up your hearts to the Lord,’ which the minister or serving elder says after the announcements are made at the beginning of the worship service. There appears to be some confusion as to what that really indicates. This confusion is compounded by the fact that precisely at that point we rise from our seats. The office bearers would like to draw your attention to the word “heart.” When these words are spoken, we are directed to focus our attention to the throne of God, from where we expect our help. So the intent of this statement is to prepare our heart and mind for worship. To make this more distinct and clear, it was decided to first request the congregation to rise. Then the words “lift up your hearts to the Lord” will be spoken. In this manner the physical rising from the seats, and the lifting of our heart is more appropriately separated.

When asked to lift up your heart, it should be more than just a few feet.

Grand Rapids

In Grand Rapids the consistory informed the congregation:

Since most ministers and their congregation use order of worship A of the *Book of Praise*, the consistory has decided to change back to this order of worship to be in harmony with the churches in our federation.

I have no problem with either the A or B order of worship, but I am curious what made the brothers conclude that in most churches in the federation the A order of worship is followed.

Rockway

Another topic that appears on a regular basis in several bulletins is the discussion with local United Reformed Churches. Usually the reports speak with thankfulness about encouraging meetings and growing consensus. In Rockway this development has come to a decisive point.

A proposal for implementing a closer relationship with the Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church was discussed at length. Given the advice received from the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity stating that the Committees for both federations are of the view and hopeful that implementation by way of pulpit exchange will D.V. be available following General Synod Neerlandia 2001, it was decided that our Council will wait until this broader assembly takes place before seeking to implement our recognition of the Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church as a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ in this manner.

Kerwood

In the Kerwood bulletin, *The Messenger*, Rev. Van Woudenberg wrote about their contacts with the URC in Wyoming:

Once again the consistory had another good meeting with the Council of Covenant Christian Church at Wyoming. This time a number of members of the council of the Strathroy URC were in attendance as well to observe how the talks are going. Once again we found it mutually edifying. It is good to become familiar with each other's practices also in order to make each other reflect on how things are done in one's own congregation and how improvements could perhaps be made.

Ancaster

The Ancaster consistory adopted a set of “Requirements and Expectations for Membership in the Canadian Reformed Church of Ancaster,” to be given to those who seriously seek membership in the church. It reads as follows:

- A. To become a member:
 1. Regular attendance of the worship services (as a rule morning and afternoon services).
 2. Completion of the “Introduction to the Reformed Faith” class.
 3. Acknowledgement before the elders that the Lord Jesus Christ is your Saviour from sin and the Lord of your life.
 4. Demonstration of adequate knowledge of the Bible and the Reformed teachings.
- B. What is expected of members:
 1. Continued regular attendance of the worship services.

2. Participation in the life of the congregation, e.g., joining one of the Bible study groups.
3. Regular voluntary contributions to the church in accordance with how the Lord has blessed you financially.
4. Inform one of your ward elders if you will not be able to attend the worship services on a given Sunday.
5. Expect two elders to visit you at least once per year to discuss with you your faith and life with the Lord.

C. While in the process of becoming a member: Besides faithful attendance of the worship services and the in A2 mentioned class, you are encouraged:

1. to attend a Bible study group. This will meet the goals of learning more about the Bible and getting to know better other members of the congregation.
2. to begin contributing financially to the church, as the Lord has blessed you.

Much of it may sound very self-evident for longtime members of the church, but it is definitely helpful to give clarity to those who seek to become members.

Brampton

The congregation of Brampton was informed about a change concerning the Lord's Supper celebration:

The consistory has decided to have the first part of the form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper read the week before it takes place. It is the part that deals with the self-examination to which we are called every Lord's Supper celebration. It gives us an extra opportunity to consider our relationship with the Lord, to see whether our lives are in keeping with His rich promises of salvation, and in keeping with His holy and righteous demands, as summarized in the Ten Commandments.

It is a recommendable goal. There is no doubt about that. But I was wondering: will this first part of the Form then again be read on the Sunday of the actual celebration? I don't think that it has ever been the intention to cut the Form in two, and the effect would be that the call to self-examination would be eliminated at the celebration of the sacrament. The fact that we try to explain to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that a verbal warning for the Holy Supper is not sufficient does not mean that we don't need a verbal warning at all, does it? There is, of course, nothing wrong with reminding the brothers and sisters of a proper preparation for the Lord's Supper on the Sunday before. Although, in my first congregation there was an elder who was not very much in favour of special "preparation sermons." Every sermon should lead to self-examination, he used to say.

Winnipeg

You can do more with your catechism instruction than teaching the kids. Rev. van Raalte of Winnipeg-Redeemer came up with the following:

I hope to be able to put together a one month course on the Nicene Creed. You will find the history surrounding this creed to be very interesting and instructive. My intention at this point is to invite the rest of the congregation to join the senior catechism students on the Tuesday nights at 9:00. The students will be required to come

but for the rest of you attendance will be voluntary. Our class is usually one hour long.

This is an effective way of teaching a post-confession class. And if there is some interest, it is encouraging for the catechism students too.

Armadale (WA)

In Armadale's short report of the consistory I read the following:

A discussion takes place to initiate catechism classes in a classroom setting rather than the present set-up where students sit around the table in the consistory.

That's funny! For myself I have always tried to avoid a typical school classroom setting as much as possible, and found the set-up with students sitting around the table much more beneficial.

General

In a pastoral column in one of the bulletins I read this:

A few weeks ago I mentioned a specific matter prior to prayer, without going into much detail. It appears that doing so has caused some tongues to wag. People seem to need all kinds of details about a situation before they can pray for the brother or sister concerned. I find that sad. If someone has a broken leg, we can pray for him or her publicly. But if someone faces a spiritual need, about which not all the details are available for public consumption – then the result seems to be a fair bit of gossip. If someone needs to undergo an operation of a sensitive personal nature, cannot we pray for that brother or sisters in a general way? Does not our disciplinary process teach us to pray for a brother or sister who is under the first step of discipline – without mentioning of names? Why cannot we just pray along in church and in our homes, without knowing all the details of every specific situation? As consistory we are endeavouring to inform and involve you as much as possible in the joys and sorrows of brothers and sisters in the congregation. That way we can be a hand and a foot to one another. For this to be of benefit, we need to learn to curb our curiosity and quit gossiping. If you have questions about this, please read what James 3 says about the destructive power of the tongue.

And his next-door colleague wrote:

One thing I would like to stress: when we wonder why young people do certain things, why don't we go up to them and talk it over with them. My experience of late is that young people (especially in the category of 18-plus who have made profession of faith) hate it when all kind of things are said about them, whilst they are never personally approached. Let us also in these instances act according to Matthew 18 and not judge rashly and unheard. Having the spiritual well being of one another at heart we should openly address the issues with the persons concerned and not speak behind their back.

These things were, of course, written by a minister for one particular congregation. But let me not mention which congregation(s) to avoid the idea that the situation in church A or B must be really bad. After all, could it not have been written by many of us, for many congregations?

That's why you find it here.



Angels from the Realms of Glory (Part 2)

By P.G. Feenstra

The angels serve in the presence of the Lord as his attendants and messengers. They worship and adore his majesty and follow his instructions and directives. A primary function of the angels is to maintain contact between heaven and earth, between the Creator and his creatures. Unquestionably, therefore, the fall and disobedience of our first parents did not leave the angels untouched. Their task was at stake. Therefore, throughout history, the angels are intensely involved and keenly interested in God's redemptive deeds. Reconciliation through Christ will result in the restoration of the angels.

Angels as guards of the glory of the Lord (the cherubim)

The first time angels are mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 3:24. The Lord drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden and He placed the cherubim in the garden to guard the way to the tree of life. We read, "So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." By guarding the way to the tree of life these angels function as messengers of God's punishment but also of his grace. They barricade the way to the tree of life because eternal life is no longer to be found in an earthly paradise. Adam and Eve must look ahead to the promised seed of the woman, the Messiah, who will open the way to the paradise of God.

Cherubim also protect God's glory and his holiness in the tabernacle and temple. They were embroidered on the curtain to the holy of holies. Two golden figures of cherubim spread their wings over the ark of the covenant, covering the mercy seat. It was from this location that the Lord promised to dwell among His people: "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark

of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel"(Ex 25:22).

These pictures portray how the cherubim protect the glory of the Lord and proclaim the need for reconciliation and atonement. They kept Adam and Eve away from the tree and the people of God out of the holy of holies. If they had not done so, the people would have been consumed by the wrath of the LORD. For eternal life comes with a price: the blood of the Lamb must be poured out in the complete forgiveness of our sins. This blood speaks of the sacrifice which will bring atonement and eternal life. Instead of a glittering sword, the LORD will bring harmony, peace, reconciliation and the prospect of entering the Paradise of God.

Reconciliation through Christ will result in the restoration of the angels.

In the prophecy of Ezekiel the cherubim carry the glory of the Lord of hosts. They are involved when the glory of the Lord leaves Jerusalem (Ezek 10) and when it returns (Ezek 43:1- 4). The cherubim are instrumental in the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. They guard the glory of the Lord and they direct God's people to the only way to eternal life.

Climbing Jacob's ladder?

Angels not only protect God's glory but they guard the church too. They are sent forth to serve those who will inherit salvation (Heb 1:14). These ministering spirits protect the people of the Lord so that God's redemptive plan is completed. Jacob was assured of this by the Lord in his dream at Bethel (Gen 28:10-22).

Jacob dreamt that there was a ladder set upon the earth and the top of it reached to heaven. The next thing he

noticed was the presence of angels. These angels were not seen coming *down* from heaven and then going back up again. They were going *up* and down. Their starting point was the earth and not heaven!

I'm sure some of you are familiar with the song, "We are climbing Jacob's ladder, we are climbing Jacob's ladder, we are climbing Jacob's ladder, soldiers of the cross." In the quoted song we have an example of how a text of Scripture can be completely misread and misinterpreted. The message of the dream is summed up in Genesis 28:15, "Behold I am with you (Emmanuel) and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." The Lord is present with Jacob and that's why the angels are going up from the earth and down again rather than down from heaven and back up again. They are present as his attendants. These messengers go forth from the LORD and return to Him. No wonder Jacob responds to the dream in the way he does. For when he wakes he says, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I did not know it How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven"(Gen 28:16,17).

Angels, Jacob and Jesus

Jacob's dream corresponds with what Christ tells a prospective disciple in John 1:51. In the person of Jesus Christ the Lord comes to the earth as our Emmanuel. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) is a central message of this account of the gospel. Jesus tells Nathanael that he will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him: "Most assuredly I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The angels will ascend and descend upon His person. Since the purpose of Christ's coming in

the flesh is to unite heaven and earth there is no need for a ladder. He is the ladder! He is the way, the truth and the light. Christ bridges the gap through His atoning work. He concludes his ministry on earth with the comforting words, "Lo, I am with you always to the close of the age" (Matt 28:20).

Jacob saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He heard the voice of God. We have progressed further since there are things that we have been told into which angels long to look. We have the revelation of the Lord concerning the advent of Christ. We live in the age of the Spirit and have his presence in the min-

istry of his Word. Wherever the Word of God is opened and proclaimed you have a house of God – a gateway to heaven.

On his way back from Paddan-Aram Jacob again sees angels! We read in Genesis 32:1,2: "So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them he said, 'This is God's camp!' And he called the name of that place Mahanaim." The angels form an army, demonstrating a show of force. They function in the battles of the Lord. The Lord calls his church and his angels to arms against the forces of Satan.

From the books of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua and Judges we learn that the Lord

sent out those same angels who ascended and descended upon Jacob at Bethel to protect, guide and lead Jacob and his children so that they might enter the land of Canaan in safety. The angels serve those whom the Lord has called in his sovereign good pleasure. The Lord is in control and his counsel of redemption will be fulfilled. Therefore, live each day in the assurance that the holiness of the Lord will be protected by his angels. At the same time, believe the LORD God of your salvation gives his angels charge over you to guard and keep you in all your ways (Ps 91:11,12). 

Meditations on Psalm 139

By Janey Van Seters
June, 2000

*Lord God, you know us so well,
You know our most secret thoughts,
The ones we fear to reveal
To even our closest friends.
You know our hidden motives
When we do our "good deeds."
Before we even speak a word
You know our meaning.*

*We try to hide from you,
Concealing our secret sins.
But in the farthest reaches of space,
Or the deepest caverns of the sea,
On the wings of the morning
In the bleak hours of night,
Your presence is always there.
Even the dark is as light to you,
We stand exposed before your piercing gaze.*

*We rise early and are busy till night,
Stress and frustration wear us down.
A flood of worry engulfs us,
Some are short of money, others short of time,
We feel guilty for what is left undone.
We face challenges from every side,
Aging parents, rebellious children,
The sudden loss of those we love.
Leaving family and friends, we feel rootless,
You call us to Brazil or Irian, or down-under.
But you are there, O God,
Even there your hand will guide us,
Your right hand will hold us fast.*

*In our beginning you were there,
You formed us with great precision
In the secret darkness of the womb.
You knit us together skillfully
On the loom of your love.
You saved us from the untimely death
Threatening the unborn of our day.
You taught us to value life, both new and old
A precious gift of your hand.
You gave us homes and families
To nurture and protect us
And teach us your wonderful ways.*

*You helped us build our own homes
Founded on the rock of your Word.
Without your boundless grace
They would have been destroyed.
You help us fight our enemies
Satan, the world, and our own flesh.
Satan seeks to devour and corrupt
Our homes, our marriages, our children.
He sows discord in our fellowship
And apathy in our hearts.*

*Our hearts, ah yes, you know them, Lord
How inclined they are to evil,
Enthroning the idols of self,
Of possessions, of status and success.
Keep us humble, knowing well
That without your grace
We could not so much as move.*

*The world too is our enemy,
Not your marvelous world
Of awesome grandeur and
Breathtaking beauty!
The world of the iridescent butterfly,
The industrious ant,
The lily of the field, arrayed
In greater glory than Solomon!
But the world of false illusions,
Cheap thrills and broken dreams.
The world that beckons our children
And leaves them with dust and ashes.
Protect them, Lord, with the armour
Of faith, your word and Spirit,
Secure in your covenant love.*

*Teach us to truly hate evil,
Separating ourselves from the world
And those who seek to destroy
Your kingdom and righteousness.
You know our anxious thoughts
When we read our morning paper.
Grant us your lasting peace.
The contentment of knowing your will
Is good and perfect for our lives.
Purify our sinful hearts,
Lead us in joy to our everlasting home.*

By C. Van Dam

New study aids for the new season

2 Corinthians in Fifteen Outlines

L. Selles, *2 Corinthians in Fifteen Outlines*. London, Ontario: ILPB, 1999. 96 pages, soft cover. \$11.95 CAN

Six years after the death of our beloved teacher and colleague, Professor L. Selles, we are enriched with the publication of his studies of 2 Corinthians. This follows the 1993 publication, also by the Inter-League Publication Board (ILPB), of his outlines on 1 Corinthians.

The fifteen outlines given on 2 Corinthians testify to the work of a very careful steward of the Word of God. This letter of the apostle Paul is not an easy one to interpret but Professor Selles through careful and painstaking exegesis makes the meaning clear. For instance, 2 Corinthians 3:17 reads "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom." What does that mean? Liberals have used it to deny the confession of the trinity of God. Although we cannot do full justice to Professor Selles' clear discussion with a short summary, suffice it to say that he shows from the text itself and its context that the apostle does not make the Lord synonymous with the Spirit (after all the text speaks of "the Spirit of the Lord"). The Lord and the Spirit are inseparable, although distinct as persons, and they give the freedom to the children of God.

The setup of this work is designed for maximum benefit for study societies. Professor Selles has organized his interpretation in a very clear and logical manner and then followed it with questions for discussion. These questions not only deal with the biblical text but also touch on and directly address important issues that Christians face today.

Although it is not mentioned in this booklet, I would like to note here with gratitude the indispensable role that Professor J. Geertsema played in getting Professor Selles' work to press.

This work is highly recommended!

The Acts of the Apostles

C. van den Berg, *The Acts of the Apostles*. Volume One. London, ON: ILPB, 1999. 137 pages. Soft cover; \$ 11.95 CAN

Rev. C. van den Berg is the minister of the Reformed Church (Liberated) of Amersfoort-East in the Netherlands. These nineteen outlines on Acts 1-14 were originally published in Dutch and are here-with presented in English translation.

Rev. Van den Berg gives a brief running commentary on the text and then at the end of each outline raises questions for discussion. These questions often link the material to current questions, such as whether women can participate in the election of office bearers (pp. 14, 60), whether a repetition of the speaking in tongues would be possible today (pp. 21, 97), and whether each believer has his own guardian angel (p. 111).

These outlines too can be recommended!

You . . . God's Child and You . . . His Guest

P.C. van Wijk, *You . . . God's Child and You . . . His Guest*. London, Ontario: ILPB, 2nd edition revised, 1999. 61 pages, soft cover. Price unknown

This is a most welcome reprint of material earlier published separately by ILPB. *You . . . God's Child* explains in a very simple and moving way the meaning of infant baptism and *You . . . His Guest* does the same with respect to the Lord's Supper celebration.

This is a booklet that parents can give to their children and discuss with them. It could also be used with great profit at school. In any case, this is a beautiful tool to help bring across to our offspring the beauty and demands of God's covenant with us and our children. It is also a great thing for parents to read again and ponder. Highly recommended!

The above outlines can be ordered from ILPB, Box 783, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 4Y8.

A Pioneer in Social Reform

R.H. Bremmer, Johannes C. Sikkel: *A Pioneer in Social Reform*. Neerlandia, Alberta: Inheritance Publications, 1998. 46 pages. \$ 6.95 CAN; \$ 5.90 US

This booklet, translated from the original 1976 Dutch publication, gives us a meaningful insight into the thinking of Rev. J. C. Sikkel as he struggled for a biblical response to the problems labour faced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rev. Sikkel (1856-1920) was a Reformed minister who distinguished himself as a preacher of the gospel. He was also a strong prophetic voice which warned against the anti-Christian character of socialism. As a disciple of Abraham Kuyper, he applied Scripture, be it in his own way, to the crisis in labour and capitalism which he and his contemporaries faced. He was far ahead of his time in, for example, proposing a system whereby the perennial conflict between labour and management be replaced by a model of cooperation and consultation.

A drawback of the booklet is that it tends to take for granted a certain amount of background knowledge of the Dutch scene which may be asking a bit much for a typical Reformed English speaking reader today. On the other hand, a careful reading of this material will make clear the relevance of much of this material for the type of questions which Christians in labour and management still face or should be facing in our day. In his conclusion, Bremmer himself notes two things that we can learn from Sikkel. First, Christ's command to love your neighbour as yourself is fully valid in the social sphere and thus we all have a tremendous calling and task respecting interpersonal relations. Second, "we must – in cooperation with others who confess Scripture to be their only guide for socio-economic life – reflect on how and in what way we can make Scriptural ideals reality in the enterprise and factory. We are called to positive action and then from a few people a great power can emerge" (p. 46). 

By A. Kingma

A New Column!

School Crossings, a column about educational matters, has not appeared on the pages of *Clarion* for several years. Brothers N. VanDooren, A. Witten, and T. Vanderven, and perhaps others before them, have penned the column, but for different reasons, they have retired from this worthwhile activity for other worthwhile ones.

Since then, very little discussion has taken place on the topic of education, specifically on the topic of Christian or Reformed education. Because education of covenant children is intimately related to the faith and church life of all Reformed people, we asked the editors of *Clarion* if we could begin a monthly column to further the topics and discussions on Reformed education begun in *School Crossings*. We really hope that in this column we are able to accomplish two main objectives: 1. To share our schools' current activities and events; and 2. To discuss the continual need and form of Christian or Reformed education.

I am using the royal "we". Presently, we are four teachers in three provinces: Br. Otto Bouwman, principal of Tynedale Christian School in Calgary, Alberta; br. Peter Veenendaal, teacher at Dufferin Christian School in Carman, Manitoba; br. Keith Sikkema, teacher at John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario and br. Arthur Kingma, principal at Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School in Attercliffe, Ontario.

What causes us to start now?

The lack of articles discussing Christian or Reformed education has been one incentive to start now. The editor of *Reformed Perspective* laments this "lack" also (Jan 2000, p. 5). He urges people to write about Reformed education in *Reformed Perspective*. It seems that very few want to discuss educational issues anymore. And why? Is it because we lost our "first generation" leadership – those who set up the schools – and because the second generation hasn't picked it up? Is it because we are polarized in our ideas of

Christian education as far as east is from west? Is it because educators are too busy, and "non-educators" don't dare write about these topics? Or is it because we simply accept our schools as a given and that there is no real issue about the need for Reformed education? These six reasons and more obvious or not so obvious reasons may all be contributing factors to the little written dialogue about Reformed education.

It has been a year ago that the last Canadian Reformed Teachers Association (CRTA) magazine was published. I don't know when the magazine began, but I do have issues from the 70s. Regretfully, this magazine passed away quietly last summer. No one seemed to notice. No teacher sounded the alarm. No school board wrote a letter in concern. The editors were relieved of a "burden" and the readership didn't share any regrets. Yet, some do care. Some parents and teachers care. We want our Canadian Reformed community to care too, not just to care about a magazine that is history, but to care that Reformed education continues, and as it continues, that our dialogue and understanding of it continue too. Thus, the unobserved and unlamented death of the CRTA magazine has been the primary reason for us to begin writing now.

Reformed education is truly for everyone.

We purposefully decided not to continue the CRTA magazine. We felt that its organizational structure was flawed with a too-small readership and with too few contributors. It depended too much on a couple of busy teachers or principals to make it work. We want to share our discussions with a wider readership. We want this column to benefit all stakeholders in education – parents, staffs, boards and their committee members. Because we wanted to reach this wider audience, we decided that it would be better for us to write in *Clarion* rather than to write to a specific teacher audience. Reformed education is truly for everyone. We all

do it, whether in sending our students to "our" local Canadian Reformed school or whether we are paying membership fees for it, whether in teaching in it, or whether in being involved in its governance as board members, etc. We hope that writing on the pages of *Clarion* will benefit us all.

Issues covered

Readers are often curious: What will they write about? We want our column to deal with deeper philosophical issues. We like to discuss why our schools were set up. We like to discuss what makes our schools different from the Christian school down the road, if it really is any different. We like to discuss how teachers can teach Reformedly or Christianly. We like to discuss whether covenant education is still a term we should use. We like to talk about parental schools. Or how about topics like home schooling, co-operative learning, and the need for curriculum development? What about the agony of up sizing or downsizing our schools? These would be some of the deeper issues we like to cover.

We also like to discuss more practical and current issues with which our parents, students, teachers, or board members must regularly grapple. We like teachers and parents alike to discuss student motivation, the "piggy" syndrome (bullying), dress codes, how do we discipline, educational programs, methods or books, or perhaps even an article or two on the various roles of education committees. We also like to share old stories about our schools' beginnings or about school founders. Sharing what the Australian schools or the Dutch schools do could also be worthwhile. The old *School Crossing* column did cover some of these topics, and so did the old CRTA magazine, but let us dialogue on these issues again so that we get further in dealing with them.

Until now, some schools have faithfully upheld the practice of sending school bulletins to each other, and thus

schools have kept up contact with each other. Schools also have kept contact with each other at conventions or at principal meetings. These contacts are good and worthwhile, but we feel that it is just as worthwhile for board members, committee members and even parents to keep up contact too. To share articles and information that are of common interest to all parents, or to all board members, or to all education committees, is a good way to start this contact.

May our covenant God bless this endeavour. We want us together, from British Columbia to Ontario, and even to readers beyond Canada, to grow in our understanding of a Reformed education that is based on God's Word and a response to our faith.

Peregrine School Survey

by K. Sikkema

In the *Peregrine School Survey* we want to rove "from sea to sea" to share things happening in and around our schools. More like pilgrims than like falcons, we consider that we train children for citizenship in heaven, and that the bond of faith compels us to rejoice together in the blessings we receive, and to offer encouragement when some struggle. We intend to touch down in two or three provinces every fourth issue of *Clarion*. Items for this column will be gathered from local school magazines, and we ask that each school sends a copy to the Peregrine Teacher at *John Calvin School, Box 280, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0*. Feel free to draw our attention to an item that warrants broader attention!

Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School in Smithers lost several experienced and hard-to-replace staff members. It carefully considered the essentials of a full program for grades 1-12: "1. *The education has to be based on God's commands and in full agreement with the Reformed faith*; 2. *The education has to meet certain quality standards since the terms 'quality education' and 'Reformed education' must go hand in hand*; 3. *In order to offer this kind of education we need teachers that can meet these requirements. We are not convinced that . . . as long as the students are in our own school and we have somebody from our church there to keep them busy . . . is a responsible alternative.*" This year, the school will have grades 1-8 only. May the Lord strengthen and encourage parents, board, interim-principal and other staff alike to responsibly continue with their tasks – espe-

cially when He places challenging, new, different or expanded roles and expectations on their shoulders.

Some time ago, Parkland Immanuel Christian School in Edmonton gave special attention to singing the praises of our God. This has been done since the beginning of time, and will continue through all ages. Singing is an important part of school music programs. Besides psalms and hymns, the children also learn "fun songs like the 'Grand Old Duke of York'", but "the most important part about singing is that through it we can praise God our Creator. If our lives must be in preparation of the future, then it is imperative that we train ourselves and our children to sing to God's glory every day, at home, in church, and in school."

A school evaluation team consisting of three educational leaders spent many hours last year to identify strengths and areas for further consideration at Maranatha/Emmanuel in Fergus and Guido DeBrès in Hamilton. Other schools are awaiting this adrenaline-rushing evaluation during this coming school year. May such evaluations be blessed and may they help all stakeholders to be more focused on the awesome task of training children in the way that they should go.

Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School (ACRES) has a Grounds Development Committee for its 100+ acre property. They voted to develop a park-like setting to make "ACRES property one of the best school properties in Ontario." 

O Light, whose beams illumine all
From twilight dawn to perfect day,
Shine thou before the shadows fall
That lead our wandering feet astray;
At morn and eve thy radiance pour,
That youth may love and age adore.

O Way, through whom our souls draw near
To yon eternal home of peace,
Where perfect love shall cast out fear,
And earth's vain toil and wandering cease;
In strength or weakness may we see
Our heavenward path, O Lord, through thee.

O Truth, before whose shrine we bow,
Thou priceless pearl for all who seek,
To thee our earliest strength we vow;
Thy love will bless the pure and meek;
When dreams or mists beguile our sight,
Turn thou our darkness into light.

O Life, the well that ever flows
To slake the thirst of those that faint,
Thy power to bless, what seraph knows?
Thy joy supreme, what words can paint?
In earth's last hour of fleeting breath
Be thou our conqueror over death.

O Light, O Way, O Truth, O Life,
O Jesus, born mankind to save,
Give thou thy peace in deadliest strife;
Shed thou thy calm on stormiest wave;
Be thou our hope, our joy, our dread,
Lord of the living and the dead.

Edward H. Plumptre, 1864



Press Release of the Classis Pacific West of the Canadian Reformed Churches Meeting in Surrey, B.C. on April 25, 2000

On behalf of the convening church, the Maranatha Church at Surrey, Rev. C. VanSpronsen invited the brothers to sing from Psalm 96 and read from the same Psalm. He welcomed all of the delegates, as well as the deputies for Regional Synod (Revs. R. Aasman and R. Schouten) and Candidate and Mrs. F. Dong.

The Church at Smithers reported on the credentials and stated that they were found to be in good order. Several churches had instructions.

Classis was declared constituted and the following officers were appointed to act as executive:

Chairman – Rev. C. VanSpronsen
Vice-Chairman – Rev. J. Visscher
Clerk – Rev. E. Kampen

The agenda was updated and adopted.

The documents relating to the call extended to Candidate F. Dong were received and dealt with. Classis proceeded to examine Candidate Dong. He presented a sermon proposal on Job 19:25 - 27. After an evaluation of the sermon, Classis decided to proceed with the examination. Rev. E. Kampen examined on the OT passages of 2 Samuel 13 and Psalm 99, as well as on Church Polity. Rev. C. VanSpronsen examined on the NT passages of Matthew 22 and James 1. Rev. J. Huijgen examined on the knowledge of Holy Scripture, Ethics and Diaconiology. Rev. J. Visscher examined on Doctrine and Creeds, as well as on Church History.

After the examination on these various subjects was completed Classis judged the results in closed session, received the advice of the Deputies, and decided to admit Candidate F. Dong to the ministry of the Word in the Canadian Reformed Churches. He was informed of this decision and asked to sign the Form of Subscription. After doing so, prayer of thanksgiving was offered, Hymn 6 was sung and missionary-elect F. Dong and his wife were congratulated.

Br. A. van der Heide submitted an appeal against the decision of council of the Maranatha Church at Surrey to use individual cups in addition to the common cup. Classis judged that he did not supply sufficient reasons why this decision should be suspended, although it did judge that a number of issues remain to be discussed between him and the council.

A letter was received from Classis Alberta-Manitoba which informed us that a decision had been made to divide their Classis into two. Henceforth, there will be a Classis Alberta and a Classis Manitoba. This will affect the number of delegates to be sent to Regional Synod.

A letter was received from the Church at Willoughby Heights regarding the date of the next Regional Synod West. Classis advises the Church at Willoughby Heights to convene the next such Synod on December 5, 2000.

A number of overtures were received from the Church at Willoughby Heights on matters relating to the text of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Forms of Ordination and the Form of Subscription. These were received, discussed and recommended to Regional Synod West for consideration by General Synod 2001.

A church visitation report of a visit made to the Church at Cloverdale was read and received.

The treasurer of Classis, Mrs. Bernice Meints, presented her report for 1999 and everything was found to be in good order. She also submitted her resignation. Classis appointed br. K. Bulthuis to replace sr. Meints and thanked her for her efforts on behalf of Classis.

A report was received from the Church for the Inspection of the Archives.

Question Period according to Article 44 CO was held.

The preaching arrangements for the vacant churches of Houston and Smithers were continued as requested. Classis Pacific East will be approached to help out should those vacancies still exist in the fall.

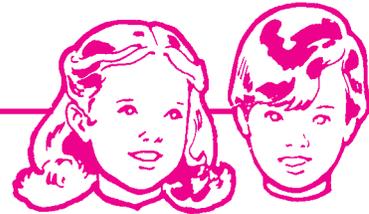
The following appointments were made:

- a. The convening church for the next Classis: the Church of Willoughby Heights
place: Langley (Willoughby Heights)
date: June 6, 2000 (alternate date: October 3, 2000)
 - b. The proposed Executive:
Chairman: Rev. J. Visscher
Vice-Chairman: Rev. E. Kampen
Clerk: Rev. J. Huijgen
 - c. Committee for Examinations: Rev. C. VanSpronsen and Rev. J. Visscher
Examiners:
Exegesis OT
– Rev. E. Kampen
Exegesis NT
– Rev. C. VanSpronsen
Doctrine and Creeds
– Rev. J. Visscher
Knowledge – Holy Scripture
– Rev. J. Huijgen
Church History
– Rev. J. Visscher
Church Polity
– Rev. E. Kampen
Ethics
– Rev. J. Huijgen
Diaconiology
– Rev. J. Huijgen
 - d. Church Visitors – Rev. J. Huijgen, Rev. E. Kampen, Rev. C. VanSpronsen (c), Rev. J. Visscher.
 - e. Church for the Archives – Smithers
 - f. Church for Inspection of Archives – Houston
 - g. Treasurer – Br. Ken Bulthuis
 - h. Audit Church – Cloverdale
 - i. Committee on Financial Aid to Theological Students – M. VanDriel, R. Mulder, J. Winkel (c).
 - j. Committee on Financial Help to Needy Churches – H. Leyenhorst, P. VanderGugten(c), H. VanDelden.
 - k. Deputy for Preaching Arrangements Vacant Churches – Rev. E. Kampen.
 - l. Appointed to represent Classis Pacific West at the ordination of the Candidate F. Dong: Rev. C. VanSpronsen.
- Personal Question Period was held.
Censure ad Article 34 CO was also held.
The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.
The Chairman requested the brothers to sing Hymn 58 and led in prayer.
The Classis was closed.

For the Classis,
J. Visscher, e.t. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Back to school again. Another class, another teacher, possibly some new friends. What a wonderful experience, don't you think? And going to a Reformed school is a blessing from the Lord. Think of how, when our Grandpa's and Grandma's moved to Canada, they had to send their children to a school. What a hard decision that must have been, when they decided to start a Reformed school wherever they were, so that we could be taught from the Bible all the things we need to know. If you don't know very much about it, ask your grandparents. I'm sure they would love to tell you about all their struggles those many years ago.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

September Birthdays

- 1 Jordan Lodder
- 2 Jessica Verhelst
- 4 Brandon Van Amerongen
- 9 Cheyenne Bergsma
- 9 Adena Feenstra
- 16 Ashley Tuininga
- 20 Chelsea Kampen
- 22 Sarah Schulenberg

SEARCH FOR a PEN PAL

Kristina Fenema has been requested to write to Jennifer Post again.

Unscramble the Bible Names

by Busy Beaver Jennifer Post

- HND AZREZB _____
- EUNUC _____
- HRAAS _____
- NJOH _____
- CBOJA _____
- ACAHR AIHZ _____
- MDAA _____
- SIACA _____
- SEUA _____

JOKES

by Busy Beaver Rhonda Wiersma

- What are three words most used by students?
"I don't know".
- When are farmers cruel?
When they pull corn off by the ears.
- When is a doctor most annoyed?
When he is out of patients.
- What happens when the chimp twists his ankle?
He get a monkey wrench.
- What do you get when you cross a great detective and a skeleton?
Sherlock Bones.

FARM MACHINE WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Jolene Breukelman

H A R V E S T E R H I F I J N K H
 A C R O P C H O P P E R M O O N A
 R A P B Q C R D I C E R F S T G R
 V T P W C I N R U J S A T V I U V
 E V X L F O R A G W A G O N L W E
 S A R E O F I R P N S U V O L M S
 T W O X Z W Y O X A P T B C D D T
 E E T G H A R V E R S T R E R F E
 R G A H A Y W A G O N R M D I H R
 W I V G J K L D Y C K D L R L M W
 A F I H N Y H O Q Z B L P E L Q A
 R R T S T R A C T O R L T T C V G
 E W L X Y B Y Z S A H I B N O D O
 L E U F A G W H L I J T I A L M N
 A N C O P Q A R S T D D U L V W X
 B L O W E R G X Z Z A N B P C D E

- FIND:**
- TRACTOR
 - DISC
 - BALER
 - HARVESTER
 - FORAG WAGON
 - CULTIVATOR
 - CROP CHOPPER
 - HAY WAGON
 - PLANTER
 - BLOWER
 - HARVESTER WAGON
 - NO TILL DRILL
 - PLOW