

# *Our Symbol of Hope*

A koala drinking from a fireman's water bottle is an image that has become a symbol of hope to many affected in the terrible aftermath of Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires<sup>i</sup>. The image provided a much-needed picture of hope in a week filled with news of despair. A total of 173 people are confirmed to have died in the fires with around 500 injured, 2,029 homes destroyed, 3,500 structures demolished and thousands more damaged and the total burned area is over 4,500km<sup>2</sup> (450,000 hectares, 1.1 million acres).<sup>ii</sup> Yet, despite all the death and destruction, this very much alive koala beat the odds.

Death is pretty real; even a reality we might try to ignore. But death is what keeps us counting birthdays. The passing away of loved ones leaves a very real, aching and empty place behind with only memories in its wake. Death and Satan try to extinguish the light of hope within us but the message of Easter gives Christians an eternal perspective of death that fills us with hope.

<b>Volume 14</b>	<b>Issue 2</b>	<b>April 2009</b>
	Editorial — R Pitlo	1
	Hello & Welcome — E Terpstra	3
	Twilight – A Review — B Pitlo	3
	A Deliberate Sin — C Vanderven	5
	Walking Bibles — M Terpstra & R Pitlo	7
	Why Bother With Contender — B Pitlo	9

# Our Symbol of Hope

CONTINUED

RITA PITLO

Indeed, God is our vindicator; He has overcome Satan and death forever. He sent His only begotten Son Who suffered and died on the cross to make the perfect payment for our sins. Lord's Day 16, question and answer 44 describes Christ's suffering on earth but especially on the cross as unspeakable anguish, pain, terror and agony by which He delivered us from the torment of hell.<sup>iii</sup> And on the third day He rose again, overcoming death so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He had obtained for us by His death. Indeed, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.



Still, resurrection seems so unreal. It's a strange thought that our bodies now, are like seeds, yet to become flowers. Bodies sown in corruption, raised in incorruption. Sown in dishonour, raised in glory. Sown in weakness, raised in power. Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. And resurrection is hardly realistic to most of the world. Life after death? That's too good to be true! Something perhaps even the wildest visionary never dared to dream! So this Easter, and every Easter, the sceptical will grasp onto something more tangible like chocolate eggs and long eared bunnies.

Leading chocolatier, Thorntons, have created a purple, pink, yellow, green and turquoise Easter egg combining this motto "Passio Factionis" (passion for fashion) with the Dutch family coat-of-arms. Another famous 2008 Easter egg has

been designed by David Beckham's tattooist, Louis Molloy. And, in London, chocolate maker Julien Regnaut has an egg on sale for \$1,200.<sup>iv</sup>

But Easter is not cute like a bunny or pretty like a coloured chocolate egg. It is a deadly serious life and death paradox. As Christians, we know there may be storms ahead, there may be violence and sorrow, death and destruction; however because on that first Easter morning the

angel declared, "He is not here; He has risen!" we may boldly declare, "O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>v</sup> Death no longer feels so final. Fear of the unknown loses its grip on us and the stabbing pain of grief may be diminished. Because Christ has risen from the grave and His resurrection is our symbol of hope. Eternal everlasting life is our certain hope.

RITA PITLO

<sup>i</sup> Sam bears testimony to generosity 04/04/09  
<http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuID=2&ContentID=134300>

<sup>ii</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009\\_Victorian\\_bushfires](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_Victorian_bushfires)

<sup>iii</sup> 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44

<sup>iv</sup> Easter, a time of new hope/Bryan Patterson/March 23, 2008  
<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,23416126-24909,00.html>

<sup>v</sup> 1 Corinthians. 15:55-57

*Hello and welcome to our second edition...*

*If you had been thinking that it was a long time between Contender publications, then you are correct. This edition is unfortunately published two weeks late. When the deadline for submissions expired, if I remember correctly we had just one item to be included in the magazine. It was hardly enough for a wholesome read. However after some hard work by our editors in the following two weeks we have some interesting and up building articles to share with you. We hope you enjoy them.*

*The older youth who attend youth clubs, more than likely will remember the anonymous survey which we presented. We thank you for the feed back which we received. Whilst we have not quite received all the surveys back yet, certain trends do become obvious. It was not the intention to present all of the data; however we share with you a summary of information we have gleaned from the data. Perhaps it may seem a little negative – however may that be a stimulus to encourage a wider number of contributors and a greater number of readers. Perhaps when all the surveys are in we will be able to produce some graphs to highlight some of the more important data.*

*In our next edition we intend to include a theme. There will be a focus on: **THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF MONEY**. Therefore if you are feeling tender to our cause and rich in knowledge on this topic, or you would simply like to share some thoughts, please contact one of the editors, or contact me via the email address on the back of this magazine to include something for publication.*

*Until next time,*

*Eric Terpstra  
EIC*

## TWILIGHT – A REVIEW

BRENDAN PITLO

It has become the *Harry Potter* for girls, but don't think that only teenage girls and boys are into it. Just like *Harry Potter*, grown women and men are reading and enjoying it, even in our circles. In fact, the *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer has become a smash hit with a whopping 10 million in print, and this in a culture which has largely neglected its literary dimension. And now that Summit Entertainment is releasing film adaptations of the novels, it is high time a Free Reformed position is voiced.

The series focuses on the burgeoning love relationship between a human 17-year old girl named Bella and a vampire named Edward Cullen, who along with the rest of his group have learnt to slake their thirst on animal blood rather than human blood. Of course, there are "bad" vampires and also werewolves as well as ignorant humans which complicates the story and provides an

unusual backdrop to an otherwise rather ordinary, if not awkwardly written, teen drama. Clunky writing aside, there are more dangerous aspects to these novels than most realize.

Stephanie Meyers has made no secret of the fact that she has little knowledge of vampires and werewolves. This is a problem. Vampire literature is not and never has been a suitable genre for the Christian reader largely because of what it once stood for.

The history of this genre goes all the way back to the 1400s, to Vlad Dracula of Wallachia, an unspeakably cruel Romanian prince with a penchant for impaling his subjects through their bodily orifices leaving them to hang until death. At his death, many believed he was transformed into a demon along with his followers, giving rise to the vampire legend.

Abraham Stoker in 1897 wrote *Dracula* and added a lot of fiction to the old legends, and it became immensely popular with an audience obsessed with the Gothic “other” as an expression of their aversion for modernity. It has remained popular with young readers of this genre who find enjoyment in its darkness, melancholy and a dislike for modern culture and ideology. Today some of these people are known colloquially as “emos” and are identified by their dark clothing, outrageous hairstyles, heavy makeup and excessive jewellery.

In *Twilight* Edward Cullen fits many of the stereotypes associated with emos. His immaculate and beautiful outward appearance does little to mask the fact that he is the archetypal brooding male, which is heavily (if not nauseatingly) romanticized throughout the series. And yet Bella worships him, even calling him godlike and desiring to lose her soul and become a vampire herself so that she can spend eternity with Edward. One cannot help but think of how we view our relationship with God, desiring to sacrifice us ourselves and to be in His image and to desire to spend eternity with Him, and it is disturbing that Bella feels the same for Edward.

A worrisome aspect is the way the series dabbles in various other aspects of witchcraft. Alice, another vampire, has an ability to foresee the future and this holds the key to various plot twists in the series. Such abilities are seen generally as little more than expressions of the occult, and as we know from Deuteronomy 18:10-12, these are “an

*...there is one aspect of Twilight that remains the most troubling, and that is its sexually-charged atmosphere.*

*abomination to the Lord.”* Should our entertainment then involve such occult practices? Some might argue that she only uses it for the good of her coven, but since when did the end justify the means?

Those in favour of the series argue that there are many Christian themes, reflecting

the fact that Stephanie Meyer is a Mormon. For instance the Cullens’ refusal to give in to their old vampiric nature, that is their lust for human blood, and their struggle to remain true to their principles allegorically mirrors the Christian struggle against

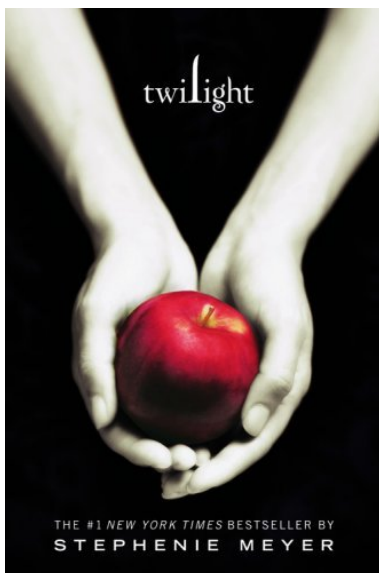
the old sinful nature. Similarly Edward refuses to change Bella to a vampire because he felt that her soul was precious and should not be discarded so readily. A

discussion of the afterlife is a central theme in the novel, with Edward believing that vampires will be punished eternally for their misdeeds, another reason why he did not wish the same fate for Bella. Such discussions may in fact prompt the reader to self-examination.

However, there is one aspect of *Twilight* that remains the most troubling, and that is its sexually-charged atmosphere. The relationship between Bella and Edward goes beyond your average romance and is deeply affected by teen angst and confusion about rising sexual feelings for each other, which in turn is disturbingly mixed up with Edward’s struggle to not drink her blood. Edward the vampire is against exchanging pre-marital sexual relations while Bella is quite willing to discard her virginity. Still they never make love until they are married, and some would argue that the sexual tension between these two characters are a realistic expression of youthful struggles with feelings for the opposite sex.

However, the problem is that a large proportion of the series’ readership is younger youth, particularly girls. Should they be reading such sexually-charged fiction in a culture that is already obsessed with sex? Would this perhaps awaken desires that ought not be awoken? In Song of Solomon we read: “*Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.*” (Song 2:7)

Sounds overdone, but it is surprising what effect the written word can have on the mind. Why do you think the Bible is in written form? I would argue that *Twilight* is not a Christian series and is not ideal entertainment for youth, particularly those who have not done their Profession of Faith and are not yet strong in resisting temptation. Perhaps next time you hit the bookstore, pick something a little less angst-driven and lot more Spirit-filled.



# A DELIBERATE SIN

CHRISTINA VANDERVEN

It's interesting to see how well people can avoid admitting the truth, and look the other way about a certain issue. It's a common enough occurrence, and it wouldn't require a lot of deep thinking to come up with a personal example. Maybe it's something simple, like not seeing the dusting that needs doing, the lawn that really should be cut or the homework that needs finishing. But what if it is something that is a battle between life and death and you are refusing to open your eyes? By now you're probably wondering what I'm on about, with this dire warning and cryptic sentencing. I'm talking about drinking. Don't cringe, and don't tell me that you've heard it all before. If you really had listened to it before, then we wouldn't need this conversation because you should have corrected your mistakes.

As Christians we're called to help one another, to point out pitfalls and be a shoulder to lean on. In fact, in Matthew 18:15-17, there is a very clear cut path a Christian should follow in order to correct a fellow believer. It starts with talking, then with bringing others in and going to the church. I would like to consider this article as step one. I want you to think carefully and deeply about what I'm going to say, and to please examine your own life. I can't force you to realize things you don't want to, but maybe, with the help of the Holy Spirit, this just might make you see which path you are on. I also expect that this is not an issue for all people, which is wonderful. But maybe you'll notice it in a loved one's life and then you have a duty to God and to your neighbor to say something.

Now, I'd like to be very clear what we are going to discuss so I don't leave you confused and leave room to make gray areas where there are none. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word 'drunk' as to be rendered incapable by alcohol. Just to be obvious, I am talking about the same thing as being "hammered", "sloshed", "trashed" and any

other of the myriad of words used today. God does not teach us to practice sin in moderation, in fact we are told to flee from it. Flee does not mean take two steps and turn back around to watch, it means to run over the horizon and then to keep on going. In fact the Bible goes to say something even stronger than that in 1 Corinthians 5:11: "But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is a...drunkard...with such a man do not even eat."

*I am talking about the same thing as being "hammered", "sloshed", "trashed"*

There are over seventy-five references in the Bible about drinking alcohol. Virtually none of these are positive. That alone says something of substance right there, does it not? You might be quick to point out the text in 1 Timothy 5 where Paul tells him to drink a little wine. But note that this is for a health reason, not for fun and the emphasis is on a *little* wine. If you permit, I'd like to take a look at some of the more powerful texts in regards to drunkenness. Proverbs is known for its more practical advice, and in chapter 23: 29- 35 it warns against excessive drinking. "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine...do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper..." The results of drinking are obvious to anyone.

Also in Deuteronomy 21:18-21, it has this instruction: "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take

hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard. *'Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death.'* This text is so blatantly clear it's incredible. The son was a profligate (shamelessly immoral), rebellious and a drunkard. And they killed him for it. They executed him because his behaviour was not in accordance with God's laws.

This is our God, the same God who watches over our lives and will judge us on the last day. God doesn't change, so what makes us think the result will be any less dire with us? In fact, it will be worse for us because we have been washed and cleansed and made pure through Christ but we are throwing ourselves back into the mud.

Deliberately. Everyone knows what happens when you drink too much; to claim otherwise would be outright lying. In Matt 18:7-9 Jesus tells his followers what to do about such deliberate sins. He says, "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two

*Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example*

ands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire." In relation to the article, it would be better to never drink again than to risk eternal death. It's a very simple question that you need to ask yourself, what is more important to you? Will it be eternal life or that extra drink? I hope you know what to choose.

The Bible is so clear on what we should do instead. There is a beautiful passage in Romans 13 that sums up what I am trying to say. "The night is nearly over, the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery.... Rather, clothe

yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." We are to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, to make it absolutely obvious that we are Christians to those around us. If someone saw you in a bar, or weaving down a street would they think "Ahh yes, it must be those good Christians kids I hear so much about."?

I thought not. I think everyone goes through a rough patch sometime during their lifetime where the boundaries are tested in order to see what it's really like 'out there.' But that doesn't excuse such behavior. As Christian young people we have a very definite calling to each other and to the Lord: "Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love in faith and in purity." 1 Tim 4:12. We are to be an example to those around us, and all too often we fail this miserably. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. We are called to be "sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk, get drunk at night." 1 Thess 5:5-7.

What I want, is for you to come to the same conclusions that I have, I want to share the truth that has been pointed out to me over and over again in the Bible. I want you to feel the Holy Spirit tugging you back onto the path that you are called to, to give serious thought to what the Bible really says about drunkenness. I want you to be on that straight path my friend, because it tears my heart to even contemplate you not being there at the finish line. Come back to where you are called to be, take His hand, and don't let go again.

*Text from the NIV.*

# WALKING BIBLES

MELINDA TERPSTRA & RITA PITLO

*“Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”*

These verses are so easily read over, but so much more difficult to put into action. They reminded me of a story I once read...

His name is Bill. He has wild hair, wears a T-shirt with holes in it, jeans and no shoes. This was literally his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He is brilliant. Kind of eccentric and very, very bright. He became a Christian while attending college. Across the street from the campus is a well-dressed, very conservative church. One day Bill decides to go there.

He walks in with no shoes, jeans, his T-shirt, and wild hair. The service has already started and so Bill starts down the aisle looking for a seat. The church is completely packed and he can't find a seat anywhere. By now people are really looking uncomfortable, but no one says anything. Bill gets closer, and closer, and closer to the pulpit, and when he realises there are no seats, he just squats right down on the carpet. Although perfectly acceptable behaviour at a college meeting, trust me, this had never happened in this church before!

By now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick. About this time, the minister realises that from way at the back of the church a deacon is slowly making his way toward Bill. The deacon is in his eighties, has silver-grey hair, and a three piece suit. An upright man, very elegant, very dignified, and very courtly. He walked with a cane and as he starts walking toward Bill, everyone is saying to themselves, “You can't blame him for what he's going to do. How can you expect a man of his age and background to understand some college kid on the floor? It's for the best anyway.” It takes a long time for the man to reach Bill.

During this time the church is utterly silent except for the clicking of the man's cane. All eyes are

focused on him. You can't even hear anyone breathing. The people are thinking. The minister can't even continue preaching until the deacon does what he has to do. Everyone is waiting. And now they see this elderly man drop his cane on the floor. With great difficulty he lowers himself and sits down next to Bill and shares his Bible with him, so he won't have to sit there alone. Everyone chokes up with emotion. When the minister gains control, he says, “What I'm about to preach, you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget. Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some people will ever read.”

It is tempting for us to dismiss an anecdote like this. That type of thing wouldn't happen in our church. After all, we have ushers that would make sure any visitors got a seat. And surely someone would make them feel welcome no matter what they looked like. But in giving in to these thoughts, we miss the very valid point that this story makes. We may be the only Bible some people ever read. And if we aren't living out the Word, we give a distorted picture of what it means to belong to God. Obviously we aren't the Word of God, but by living out God's Word, we point to the true Word: Christ and the riches of life with Him.

How do we live out God's Word? Hebrews says we are to “*let brotherly love continue*” (Heb 13:1).

*Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some people will ever read.*

John says it a little stronger: “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves*

*is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*” (1 John 4:7, 8).

John goes on to explain how this brotherly love is founded in the love of God toward us. The love that caused Him to send his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*” (Heb 13:11). Love. It's that simple and that difficult.

Although Hebrews mentions strangers, our love for one another should start with our own brothers and sisters in our own community. While Peter says to “*honour all people*”, he calls us to

*“love the brotherhood...”* (1 Peter 2:17) and John says that *“he who does not love his brother abides in death”* (1 John 3:14). As young adults we have grown up with the internet, and are used to having help and assistance at the click of a button. Our generation happily embraces the iWorld with our mobile phones, laptops and Facebook profiles. While these social networking tools can be useful, they can make it easy for us to forget the importance of the communion of saints. This exhortation to the Hebrews can easily be translated to us; older youth of the Free Reformed Churches. We are to *“let brotherly love continue.”*

The Bible teaches us a lot about love. I just want to highlight a couple of key points. Firstly, love is action; it's more than a feeling or preference; it's a decision, a commitment, a way of behaving. Jesus teaches us to *“love one another as He loved us.”* (John 13:34) And in Mathew 25 Christ gives us a clear example of how we can do this for He says; *“...I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me... assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”.*

In the story of the Good Samaritan, the one who showed love to his neighbour was the one who acted. He went to him, bandaged and dressed his wounds, carried him to an inn and paid for him to be taken care of (Luke 10:30ff). Therefore the call to brotherly love is then also a call to action. If we speak of loving each other without showing it in our conduct, we do not really love.

Secondly, love is putting others before yourself. Philippians 2:3 says, *“in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”* This is closely related to the first point. Putting others first requires action. The greatest manifestation we have of love is in God sending His Son to die on the cross in our place. Christ made the ultimate sacrifice of love for all of us by dying in our place. He exemplifies love. And He showed what it means to put others first.

Love calls for us to show Christian hospitality. It shouldn't surprise us that this requires action, or that it often means putting others first. Showing this hospitality in love is a matter of faithfulness and loyalty to that love by which we have been redeemed and which unites us to all who are our

brothers in Christ. In John's third epistle he commends a man called Gaius and says: *“Beloved, it is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers, who have testified to your love before the church”* (3 John 5).

The Bible makes clear that although our love needs to begin in the communion of saints, it doesn't stop there. Both Hebrews and 3 John make mention of strangers. In the example of the Good Samaritan cited earlier, the Samaritan was a stranger to the man who fell amongst the thieves; he wasn't even part of the Israelite brethren, yet it was he who truly showed brotherly love. In Matthew 5, Christ goes even further by exhorting us to love even our enemies. *“For if greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?”* (Heb13:47)

*...it is a loyal thing  
...when you render any service  
...especially to strangers*

Living out God's Word involves love for our neighbour; those within the communion of saints, and others who cross our path. It calls us to act and to be ready to put others first. This love may not always be returned or well received. By actively living out God's Word, we will be subject to ridicule. However, Peter says, *“if you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you... if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter...”* (1 Pet 4:14&16).

When we are faced with these sorts of difficulties we can remember why we love. Our brotherly love is rooted in the love of God which was manifested in the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is because of that love that we are called to love, that through us people are able to see the true Word of life. At the same time we may rest secure in that love of God for us in Christ. For we know that Christ is *“the same yesterday, today and forever”* (Heb 13:8). He is the strong anchor amid our sufferings and uncertainties; so by clinging to Him and the eternal perspective we have in Him, we can truly say, *“what can man do to me?”* (Ps 118:6). In thankfulness, let us therefore praise Him continually, not just in words but also in deeds.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.barnabasohio.com/TheSonShineLine/tabid/66/Default.aspx> A Devotional; Inspirational message from Bob Creamer

# WHY BOTHER WITH *CONTENDER*?

BRENDAN PITLO ON BEHALF OF THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

## *An analysis of the Survey results*

Fair question? After all, many people reading this right now will only be quickly skim-reading it before church starts, after which this magazine will probably end up as a floor mat on the bottom of their cars. Sounds harsh, but if it isn't true, we would like to see evidence to the contrary.

Recently we conducted surveys amongst some of the youth clubs to gather feedback and to gauge public opinion of our magazine.



And the results were somewhat grim. We did notice that some don't actually receive *Contender*. We are linked directly to the Una Sancta, so if people are not subscribed to the Una Sancta, they won't receive *Contender*. This is because *Contender* was originally founded as a youth section inside the Una Sancta and was intended to get the youth involved in reading and contributing articles. Even though we are now a separate magazine, our mandate remains the same. Since a Una Sancta subscription is only \$28 a year, it is actually the perfect Dutchie deal... 2 for the price of 1!

Unfortunately we were struck by the fact that even many of those who do receive it, ticked off that they only read it "sometimes." Some of these we translate to "hardly ever" not because we're cynical but because it is human nature to downplay our own slights even in an anonymous survey. A popular comment was that people would like to see more variety in submissions from different people and less input from the editorial committee. But flip over their survey to

the question "Would you ever submit an article?" and many have ticked "No." How ironic.

Now we can rage about our lack of readership but the obvious fact is that we would only be 'preaching to the converted' because the ones that need to hear it are not reading it. In fact, that has been a criticism of our magazine. But it's a fallacy. The name of our magazine is not *Converter*, but *Contender*. It stems from Jude 3 where Jude says to his readers: "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to *contend earnestly for the faith...*" It was never about trying to convert people or to win arguments. It was about exhorting each other, contending with difficult questions and raising attention to issues that need to be raised.

*a Una Sancta subscription is only \$28 a year ... 2 for the price of 1!*

Similarly, comments like "we want more relevant articles" and "lifestyle application" were common, but again, most of these admitted they've never submitted an article themselves or that they only read the *Contender* "sometimes." The other problem is that some have submitted articles that had far too much attitude or read more like business propositions. We cannot include articles like that, and even if we did, they would be knocked back by our adviser who does the final yay or nay saying once our committee has included them for print. 'Rage on the page' articles aside, we do feel that lifestyle articles are important and that these sorts of submissions do not require special expertise or extensive research. After all, we are all enrolled in the University of

Life. So why don't we see more of such submissions?

Indeed, after the results of the surveys came in, we feel slightly disheartened and ask ourselves, have times changed? Is it not necessary to write exhorting others to "*contend earnestly for the faith*" anymore? Do we all have perfect faith? Or do we think that we can just rest on our laurels and not "*work out our salvation with fear and trembling*?" (Philippians 2:12) Perhaps that's why as editors we struggle to fill the quota of pages. Usually the submissions that come in, come from the editors themselves as a last resort, or by the same small handful of diligent readers. This was also reflected in the surveys. Many people indicated that they would in the future submit an article, but most also ticked "No" to whether they had ever actually done so.

Are the Free Reformed youth in Australia becoming Laodiceans? (see Revelations 3:14-19) We doubt whether it's a lack of enthusiasm in general, as if us youth are a bit lethargic these days. Instead it seems more like a misdirected enthusiasm. Zeal to study Scripture is replaced with a zeal for the weekend. And not the going-to-church-on-Sunday part of the weekend.

Perhaps there are those out there who would love to submit an article, but simply don't have the means, or at least think they don't. The thing is, submissions do not necessarily have to be articles. Letters to the Editor commenting on previous articles would be great: speak out if you disagree or agree with an article! We also enjoy receiving poetry from our more lyrically minded readers. Mini-articles and small thoughts are greatly appreciated. In short, a submission to *Contender* does not have to be a

theological epic. It just has to be the words of someone who has that zeal to contend for the faith.

Of course, a certain level of professionalism is expected. Submitting a limerick that cleverly rhymes Moses with roses is not upbuilding. On the other hand, submitting a massive dissertation on the doctrine of election and reprobation is also not upbuilding. The *Contender* is, after all, a youth magazine. Articles should be readable, upbuilding, relevant and especially aimed towards the youth.

Some of us have had the privilege of completing TEE English in high school and should be quite familiar with article analysis. We're not out to win a Pulitzer, but still, try inverting the techniques you learnt from article analysis to create your own articles. Those looking to refresh or learn more tips about article writing or poetry should Google it or even contact the English Department at the JCCC for some helpful material. Converting introductions used at Bible study clubs can be useful as well. If you hear a particularly good intro, encourage that person to submit it to *Contender*. However, we must emphasize the need to re-work the intro into an article, rather than submitting it untouched with the words "Thank you" still at the end.

Put your research skills to the test. Read the Bible, cross-reference, consult commentaries, read articles by Reformed authors. You will find that you will enjoy being able to study a portion of God's Word or a facet of Christian life in such detail. We should be doing this daily anyway.

And it shouldn't be too difficult. If we are truly zealous for the study of God's Word, it will come out in our reading and writing.

## SURVEY

*Please do not sign your name on this survey. This is an ANONYMOUS survey.*

Of course, we all have different talents and not all of us are able to string a decent sentence together. However when the survey results came in, the majority said the magazine was not in general too difficult or high-tech to read, so we do not see any need to simplify things. Even if it is, we as the Contender Committee encourage you to not let that deter you from reading *Contender* or even contributing. If you find that articles need to be simpler, there will be others that feel the same way so why not contribute an article that is more your level? At the end of the day, virtually all of us can at least read. So read!

This is why Timothy begged his readers to study God's Word, saying that we are *incomplete* if we are ill-versed in our Scriptural knowledge:

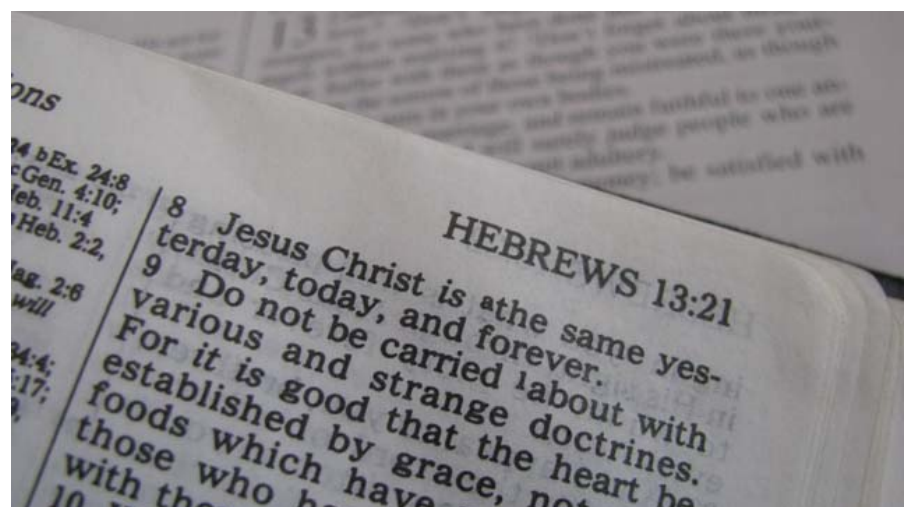
*"...from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:15-16.)*

True, we all have busy lives. Who has the time to research and write articles unless there's academic credit or brownie points with the management up for grabs?

Well, we should make time. In fact, it should be one of our principal activities. When God gave out the Law of Moses this is what He commanded: *"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall...talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates..." (Deut 6:6; 7b-9)*

Obviously we don't have to scribble the Ten Commandments on our front doorposts, but the message is clear. God is expecting diligence from His covenant children. Zeal. An *obsession*.

So grab your Bible and open up a Word document. The deadline is in four weeks.



*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever”*

**Aim:**

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

This magazine will encourage its readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. Its basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the Una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

Editorial Board:	Eric Terpstra (EIC)
Joel Bosveld	Brendan Pitlo
Rita Pitlo	Ben Schoof
Julian Slobe	Katie Wagenaar

Layout: Monique Bruning

Editorial Address:  
[eherpstra@westnet.com.au](mailto:eherpstra@westnet.com.au)