

## ASTERIX VS CONTENDER

I typically embark on my Sunday afternoon reading with some of the comic action heroes such as Tintin or Asterix. The Contender usually lands on my lap fairly grudgingly after I've read...and re-read Asterix's cheeky puns or Garfield's apathetic quips in the latest of my little brother's library books.

Meanwhile, world events weave a dissonant symphony worthy of Cacophonix himself. Over the past several weeks I made a point of familiarising myself with them on the ABC 720 radio station at work.

Before you condemn me for getting old way too young, allow me to explain. I failed miserably in general knowledge quizzes when I was younger. It can be embarrassing to realise you don't know the name of the current leader of the opposition and his political position, or the horse who won the last Melbourne Cup. As a solution to this problem I prescribed myself sporadic stints of talkback radio, of which ABC 720 is the add-free option.

### Volume 15, Issue 4

June 2010

Editorial - <i>J Schiebaan</i>	1
Hello & Welcome - <i>B Pitlo</i>	3
Letter to the Editor - <i>C DeVos</i>	4
Response - <i>B Pitlo</i>	5
The Fourth Commandment - <i>C Bergsma</i>	6
Evangelism or Spreading the Word - <i>D Ballast</i>	8
Newsworthy News - <i>B Pitlo</i>	10

## ASTERIX VS CONTENDER (CONTINUED)

There has not been a dull moment over the past weeks. Newsworthy stories appear, disappear, resurface, overlap and entwine. You get the sense of a disconcerting lack of control.

As I write this, the PM is in WA promoting his controversial mining super tax, which is already affecting the stock markets. From this vantage it looks as if he will still be at it long after you read this.

Two Aussie soldiers were killed in Afghanistan, a war that some experts are tipping could last at least another 10 years.

The tenuous relationship between North and South Korea is exploding, bringing fears about devastating nuclear attacks. I could go on by mentioning the Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli soldiers on the humanitarian aid flotilla and the worrying economic impact of the debt of some European economies.

Polarising issues such as euthanasia and climate change frequent talkback radio as a symptom of the lack of credibility that most Australians attribute to Christianity. Only God knows what will dominate the news at the time you read this.

It is glaringly obvious that this article doesn't even scratch the surface of the list of things that demand our attention and prayers. While the task of preventing this world from being enslaved by the Devil may seem impossible, we



know that Christ has already won the battle for our own souls. The confidence we have in our own future inspires action from each one of us.

Although it suits all of us to nurture a secretive faith, God requires us to shape the world around us with Christ's love. (Matthew 5:13-16) Our actions don't have to be bold or extraordinary. There is no need to change the world single-handedly, and certainly, the events in the news lately are beyond our immediate reach. Often, the idea of exposing our values to ridicule stifles the flame of witness that we are called to be. However, it is natural that, at first, we only begin witnessing in very small ways.

But witness we must. Only on the road of experience can the flame mature and give light to our surroundings.

Although difficult, this road starts simply. Most importantly, God's Word should form the basis of our lives. Supporting literature and discussion develops our understanding of His Word. We can study the arguments of unbelievers to form opinions and counter-arguments to be ready to defend our faith if the opportunity presents itself. Our witness will be used as part of God's bigger plan. Let the Contender fuel your flame of witness to facilitate the illumination of your surroundings with God's love.

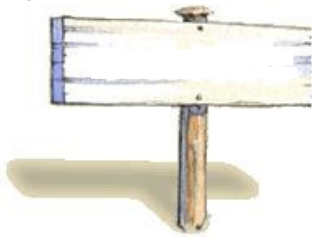
**By: Joshua Schiebaan**

quotable

### Quotable Quote

**"I cannot imagine how the clockwork of the universe can exist without a clockmaker"**

**- Voltaire**



HELLO  
&  
WELCOME

## Hello and welcome to another edition of the Contender

### *From the EIC*

After a lack of submissions last edition, we received a flurry of responses from our readers, and in order to get back on schedule (and also because a prominent member is “due” this week...) we have fast forwarded this edition.

We have a letter to the editor from Camille DeVos and I have taken the opportunity to write a response. Dwayne Ballast has provided us with an article on evangelism originally published in *Olilamp*, the South African version of *Contender*. Cameron Bergsma has submitted an article about the fourth commandment originally based on a speech he did. A hearty thankyou to these contributors. Also, though science is not my forte, I've provided a Newsworthy News topic on artificial life-forms and their implications for Christians.

We have to say goodbye to Annette ten Brinke and we thank her for her contributions and wish her well in her ongoing studies. This means we need a replacement committee member,

preferably female. If you wish to join, please send your application to the email address on the back of this magazine.

Following a suggestion from Camille DeVos in her letter to the editor, we have decided to follow up on her idea of staging a competition for a new cover-page for *Contender*, which will, DV, be instated sometime in the future. We will not set a deadline for this as yet, but if you have a particular talent for the creative arts, we invite you to submit a cover-page for *Contender* as part of a competition.

Bear in mind the theme must carry on to the back cover of the magazine, similar to the existing cover-page.

After all, as the saying goes: a picture is worth a thousand words...

*God's Blessings,*  
**Brendan Pitlo**



quotable??

## Not-So-Quotable Quote

**“Politicians are going to be judged on everything they say, but sometimes, in the heat of discussion, you go a little further than you would if it was an absolutely calm, considered remark. Which is why the statements that need to be taken absolutely as gospel truth is [sic] those carefully prepared, scripted remarks.”**

**- Tony Abbott, making a non-scripted statement on the 7:30pm report 17/05/2010.**



# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Words can be used to build up and to bring down. In the last edition of the *Contender*, the EIC's *Hello and Welcome* contained some strong words in which he made some generalisations about how the youth manage and spend their time.** While I understand that you, as a committee face the challenge of getting enough articles for each edition of the *Contender*, it isn't reasonable to accuse all of the youth of poor time-management and a wrong focus on the superficial matters of this life when you do not receive anything to publish.

A message can be delivered in many different ways. I found the manner in which the EIC has asked for contributions rather disappointing and that the message was spoilt by sarcasm and an underlying sense of frustration. Setting the tone for the whole article, we read the comment: "with all the Free Reformed youth spending time meditating on Him, no one has found anything worthwhile sharing." Moreover, scattered throughout the article were several flippant comments about time management, how we'll spend eternity and the editors fixing up spelling mistakes. I think these criticisms are neither edifying nor encouraging youth to contribute. For most of us, writing an article doesn't immediately flow from reading something inspiring, and a lack of articles does not mean that there is a lack of meditation on God's Word; something that the EIC also accuses the youth of doing. We need to be encouraged to contribute, not compelled by a sense of guilt.

My suggestion is that as a committee, you also put more effort into getting others involved in writing for the *Contender*. You implore us to be more proactive in encouraging others to submit articles but maybe the committee itself should be more encouraging. Approach individuals who you know have the time and ability to write an article and ask them to write something, maybe even suggesting a topic for them. Develop a system so that in each edition there is a submission from one of the churches, an article about a recent free topic that they had or a nice introduction. Go back to having topical editions, so that people know what to write about and do not need to think of an interesting topic. Find articles that have been published elsewhere, reprint old ones (with permission of course), conduct interviews or even ask a minister or senior member of your congregation if they will be interested in submitting something. The possibilities are endless. Oh, and while I'm firing suggestions, it would be great to have a cover designing competition just to make the whole magazine a bit more interesting.

Language is a powerful tool that God has given us to communicate with others. We should use it wisely so that we can build each other up in our faith and love for the Lord.

Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."

**By: Camille DeVos**

## In response,

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**While I acknowledge that some of the expressions I used in the *Hello and Welcome* may be misconstrued as sarcastic or flippant, I assure you, they were not intended to be.** Perhaps this shows the limitations of my own writing style. However, I do wish to point out that if there are those who feel affronted by my strong language, it would seem that their consciences have been pricked. The writer says that people shouldn't be compelled by a sense of guilt, which seems ironic, because if they are, that presupposes that there is something to feel guilty about. Is there?

It is also noted that a "lack of articles does not mean that there is a lack of meditation on God's Word." I am sure (and pray) that there are many youth that meditate on God's Word and that don't necessarily submit their thoughts to *Contender*. But when we don't receive a *single article*, even after postponing an edition, and that this has been a downward-spiralling trend for a number of editions, it seems that the time for flowery, feel-good "encouragement" is over. Instead, an admonition is necessary, which is what I tried to provide.

All the same, I am exhorted to be more "encouraging" in my writing style, and I humbly thank you for that exhortation, being mindful of my need to continuously build others up in the faith and not cut them down. If you wish to read a more "encouraging" article, I refer you to one that I wrote last year on exactly this topic (Volume 14, Issue 2). In it, I encouraged people to submit articles and attempted to give some guidance to those who find it difficult to come up with ideas as well as how to go about writing one. As a committee, we have collected detailed surveys from the youth clubs, recommended more diverse material such as poetry and artwork to inspire the more creative among us, overhauled the presentation of the magazine to appeal to the

flamboyance of youthful expression and we have indeed tried to incorporate topical editions which were not as successful as we hoped. As for the cover-page, we have a large surplus of that design in stock and since we are a not-for-profit organisation, we can't just throw these away simply because readers are bored with it.

We thank you for the suggestions that you provided to help us be more proactive. Yet they are a little presumptuous, as if we haven't been doing these things already. In fact, it is in the process of doing exactly those things that we encounter the excuses I mentioned such as "I don't have time" or "I don't know how to." You call these "generalisations" and I agree, they are purposefully generalised. It would be rather time-consuming, as well as inappropriate, of me to name and shame every individual case that we encountered, or to mention any exceptions. But we assure you that the trend is most certainly there.

At the end of the day, if readers expect a polished magazine such as *Reformed Perspective*, *Clarion* or *Una Sancta*, they are being unreasonable. *Contender* is a magazine by the youth, for the youth. As the committee, we are simply volunteers that give of our time to edit and collate articles, often with considerable stress on our own schedules. Both my wife and my mum will assure you that my own time management skills are atrocious. Yet we all enjoy our work and take our responsibility seriously, as time permits. Ultimately, if this was a private organisation, you would be correct in suggesting a grand-scale proactive approach like some other well-funded organisations in our circles are able to. However, since it is a collective effort, the responsibility is to be shared collectively. And that means it is our readers that are to be more proactive, not just us.

*From the EIC*



## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

### “REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY”

We've heard it so many times before... in fact if you are age 21, and started attending church at age 5, you would have heard it on about 832 Sunday mornings. The fourth commandment is also the longest commandment in which God goes to great lengths to explain the apparently simple command 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'. So why do we struggle to be motivated enough to roll up on Sunday afternoon if the Eagles or Dockers are playing or V8 super cars is on TV? Why would we rather go for a four wheel drive between services, than spend time with our family and friends discussing the Word of God? Why do we look forward to the end of a church service more than the beginning of it? It shouldn't be that hard should it? After all God has only asked for one day out of seven. (Just for the record, I sometimes struggle with these questions myself!)

The first church in Jerusalem didn't seem to have these problems. Acts 2: 42-47 tells of a church devoted to and united in the worship of their Saviour. In fact they were so excited about honouring their Saviour that they "continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people" (vs 46,47). You really get a sense of the deep and heartfelt joy that these Christians shared with each other. Not only that, but they did it on a daily basis! Wouldn't

it be awesome to experience these same emotions in our Sunday worship and indeed through the whole week?

But how can this be achieved? It sounds so complicated and so much effort is involved! The fact of the matter is that it is neither too complicated nor too hard! John Calvin makes the point that doctrine is the bond of brotherly fellowship, and that it opens the door to God that we may call upon Him. The conclusion then is that wanting to worship our Maker and enjoying the benefits of Christian fellowship, comes from studying the Word of God! Whilst our human nature wants to do its own thing on a Sunday, the Word of God instructs us otherwise. And until we study His Word, we will never know God's will. What better day is there to study the will of God than on 'our day off'?

God's will is revealed in fairly clear terms in the fourth commandment. Firstly He tells us to 'remember the Sabbath day'. The day of rest was instituted at the dawn of creation in Genesis 2 when God rested from His creation of the universe and thus set the model for the cycle of labour and rest. We read in verse 3 that God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. Deuteronomy 5:12 tells us to keep the Sabbath day holy. Thus the command is clear that the day of rest is to be different from all the other days of the week and set apart for the worship of God. The

three reasons for this are:

1. To imitate God... He rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2)
2. To allow our employees and ourselves a break from our daily task (Deut 5:14)
3. To remember that God delivered his people from Egypt (and has delivered us from slavery to sin!) (Deut 5:15).

At the end of the day, there is no list of things that can or can't be done on a Sunday. As a kid I never understood why mum and dad wouldn't let us ride our bikes on Sundays, but other kids could! It's only as I've gotten older, that I've realized the point wasn't that riding bikes on Sundays was wrong, but that this was their way of making the Sunday different from the other days of the week. Perhaps we all need to have a look at how we spend the day of rest. Are the things we do conducive with worshipping our Maker? Perhaps the TV and computer would be better in 'standby' mode, the motor bike left in the shed, and that unfinished project left 'unfinished' for one more day! If the

Sunday is a scar on your weekend, or an inconvenience that interrupts an otherwise



enjoyable long weekend, or a day when those things you didn't get to during the week can be done, then you need to have a good hard look at what God asks of you!

He has only asked for one day of dedicated worship... how hard can it be? You wouldn't forget a public holiday, so how can you forget the day of public worship! This is the day to remember and reflect on the awesome works of a God who not only made you, but also upholds you by His providence (LD 10)! Out of all the people in the world, He cares enough about you to know the number of hairs on your head! Don't you think you could take one complete day out of your busy schedule to worship Him? Then, and only then, can we truly sing the words of Psalm 122, "I was glad when they said to me 'let us go into the house of the LORD'".

**By: Cameron Bergsma**

References:  
 Annotations to the Heidelberg Catechism by J Van Bruggen  
 Calvin's commentaries Volume XVIII  
 Promise and Deliverance Volume IV by S.G. deGraaf



## EVANGELISM OR SPREADING THE WORD?

### Biblical Meaning and Evidence

Defining the word *evangelism* is very difficult as it comes in the form of a verb, noun and a job description. Different denominations will interpret it differently, and have consistently confused it with missionaries, mission work and evangelicalism. Its origin is from the Greek word *aggelia* which is translated literally as ‘proclaiming the gospel’.<sup>1</sup> When the word is used in the Bible the context is when an apostle or preacher goes out to preach or proclaim the gospel. Matthew 11:5, Acts 5:42 Ephesians 3:8 are just a few examples to consider. The word *evangelise* is simply used for proclaiming the content of the gospel and an *evangelist* is the person who does that.<sup>2</sup> It’s what your minister does on the pulpit every Sunday. It’s what Timothy was commanded to do in 2 Timothy 4:5, where Paul charged Timothy to ‘be watchful in all things endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfil your ministry’. The practical difference between an evangelist and

a missionary is: one preaches the word in the church, and the other is sent forth to preach it to other peoples.



The message is the same, but one is to existing believers, the other to non-believers. When I’m talking to my university friends or work mates about the Gospel, am I then evangelising or being a missionary?

### Practical Living

The first thing we need to understand is that the congregation was never called to evangelise. This is a mandate given to those eligible and ordained to do so. But what about Matthew 28:19; our mission mandate? This mandate we read of in Matthew 28 is not all inclusive. Christ commanded His disciples to act as office bearers and to administer sacraments to *all nations*. All nations were *not* to do this. Let me repeat, nowhere in Scripture are *all* believers called to evangelise or to preach the word.<sup>3</sup> Evangelism and mission work are two tasks that belong to the organised body and operations of the church, which are done in a godly manner with appropriate control mechanisms in place to prevent heresies and false teachings entering the churches. We do not evangelise when we share the riches of the gospel with our neighbour. So what are we doing?

I agree with Rev. PKA de Boer *that the congregation’s role is to operate as a light to the*

#### Footnotes:

1. The Clarion pg. 11 (PKA DE BOER) Evangelism or Home Mission (1) (unknown)
2. Una Sancta Vol 54 (RM Retief) What is Evangelism? (1) (2010)
3. The Clarion pg. 11 (PKA DE BOER) Evangelism or Home Mission (1) (unknown)

*world* as we find in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus was speaking to multitudes of people (note the difference of audience then in Matthew 28).<sup>4</sup> We know the content; we are a light of the world, set on a hill where we cannot be hidden. This is not a mission mandate, rather the *attitude and spirit of the communion of saints*. Is this an argument over words, with no real change of the result? Rev. RM Retief identifies the difference well when he explains that the calling of all believers is *to serve others with the gospel*<sup>5</sup> not to preach it themselves. The light serves a purpose, for others to see it and for it to act as a guide or beacon to the promises of the gospel, drawing others to hear the evangelist in church on Sunday. As youth, let us not confuse the difference as it changes *how* we do things. Evangelism is a God-given mandate which is governed under our church order. Being a light is doing good works so those outside the church may glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).



### Within the Church

In Scripture we are taught that operating as a light begins with people in the church.<sup>6</sup> The communion of saints in our home and local congregation is the foundation of enabling us to display a bright light. This light must first shine bright in our churches before we consider displaying it outside. The fuel of the light is our faith. By faith we display thankfulness to God with good works. Once again, Rev. RM Retief describes it nicely when he explains that our faith is personal, but it's not private.<sup>7</sup> We must be able to share it with our fellow brothers and sisters, because if we can't share with them, we have

no hope of sharing it with people we come in contact with outside of our churches. I don't think I'm far off in my assumption that faith expressed in good works amongst us as youth is fat and lazy with lack of proper exercise. Consider your own life, topics of conversation, forms of entertainment, bible study and church attendance and the last time you actually went out of your way to do something for a struggling brother or sister.

### Outside of the Church

Knowing that we will never achieve a perfect burning light within the church, we must consider ways and methods that the world can view what light we can offer. I know of many outreach projects under way that involve assisting orphanages, prison fellowship, providing basic human contact and assisting under privileged people of all varieties. These projects are most commendable, but I fear how they are done may not always be correct because of the way we understand evangelism. If we contribute to these projects (which I encourage you all to do) remember our purpose there as youth is to shine as a light, a beacon that leads these people to church on Sunday to hear the wonders of the gospel proclaimed for themselves. Let's not, with a burning zeal, hastily shoulder the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel (evangelising) ourselves. Rather let's do as Jesus commanded, simply use the talents God has given us to do good works so that others may glorify our Father in heaven. We must always remember that the goal of shining as a light outside the church is so the people in the world that you interact with will one day sit with you on the church benches.

**By: Dwayne Ballast**

#### Footnotes:

4. The Clarion pg. 15 (PKA DE BOER) Evangelism or Home Mission (1) (unknown)
5. Una Sancta Vol 54 (RM Retief) What is Evangelism? (2) (2010)
6. Una Sancta Vol 54 (RM Retief) What is Evangelism? (1) (2010)
7. Una Sancta Vol 54 (RM Retief) What is Evangelism? (2) (2010)



# Newsworthy News

Published: 27th June 2010

## MAN CREATES WORLD'S FIRST SYNTHETIC LIFE-FORM

Dr. Craig Venter has made headlines around the world after allegedly creating the world's first synthetic life-form. The controversial project took 20 scientists more than a decade to complete at a cost of around \$40 million. Immediately, Creation Ministries International received gloating emails from various atheist sources stating things like: "You can now make life from no life in your own lab. No need for a God, just a man." Another said: "New life forms can now be produced in a dish. So much for saying man can't create life. Keep defending your deep seated belief though, people depend on you." So is this true? Are we now able to create life, and more importantly, should we?

It is crucial to take note of a few details regarding Venter's project. His team built the genome of a bacterium and then amalgamated it within a cell, to create the world's first living synthetic life form. They also included "watermark signatures" within the cell which help the scientists prevent its release into the environment, presumably in case the cell gets an

idea from Hollywood to go out and mutate and start a zombie apocalypse. Also, there are a number of glaring contradictions. The most obvious is the fact that the machinery of an existing cell was used. While the DNA was "created" from scratch, it then had to be incorporated into an existing cell before it would "live".

And the implications for evolution theory are not all that profound. For instance, the problem with DNA is that it is chemically very difficult to make. To get a large DNA molecule is difficult enough, and the ordinary chemical synthesizers that make DNA are only about 50-80 letters long in these cases, whereas Venter needed a string exceeding a *million* letters. Another problem is that these synthesizers use complex starting materials called deoxyribonucleotides and while these were slowly but surely created in a lab, evolutionists would need a stretch of the imagination to claim that such materials just happened to meet each other in the primordial soup of chemicals that apparently existed after

the alleged Big Bang. Even then, it needed to be chemically activated so that the molecules would join up. In this primordial soup, the required mixture of molecules would not have been available. Venter had to use proteins found in yeast just to join large lengths of the DNA.

Realistically, Venter's team hyped up their achievement, and the media were happy to oblige. James



Collins, a bioengineer from Bolton University, pointed out that the word “synthetic” doesn’t apply in this case, because clearly the genome itself was plagiarised (apparently from mastitis, a disease affecting goats) and required existing cell machinery to even function. Even the evolutionist geneticist Steve Jones called the fanciful claims about it “utterly absurd” saying that “what had been done in genetic terms would be analogous to taking an Apple Mac program and making it work on a PC – and then claiming you have created a computer.” It appears that for the time being, artificial life-forms are still relegated to the science fiction genre.



Suppose it wasn’t. What if a living organism had really been created by a team of scientists? Does that mean we as Christians were fools and the Big Bang started everything and therefore this magazine is a complete waste of paper? Far from it. In fact, Venter’s experiment (and any future successes) only proves what creationist scientists have been saying all along. And that is: the incredible hardship and basic impossibility of such a cell forming without the existence of an intelligent being, whether God Himself, or a team of scientists with a \$40 million payroll and 15 years of research. It proves that life was not a random occurrence, a fluke of epic proportions. It proves intelligent design.

Ultimately there is nothing anti-Scriptural about such experiments. Contrary to popular opinion, by doing so we are not “playing God.” God gave us humans dominion over creation (Genesis 1:28) which means we are permitted to muck around with the genes and DNA of plants and animals. However, this dominion does not extend to fellow human beings, which is why we oppose cloning or any other human cell manipulation. When we fell into sin, “creation was subjected to frustration” and “groaning as in the pains of childbirth...” (Romans 8:22) If we can help monitor and improve the condition of our planet and the diseases and trauma it can cause, we are simply observing the Genesis 1:28 mandate to have dominion over it and to subdue it. So long as it is done with Colossians 1:9 and James 1:5 in mind: that we seek our wisdom from above.

**By: Brendan Pitlo**

References:

“Was life really created in a test tube? And does it disprove biblical creation?” Jonathon Sarfati, May 2010. <http://creation.com/synthetic-life-by-venter> Creation Ministries International website.  
 “Craig Venter creates synthetic life form” *Guardian* Ian Sample May 2010 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/may/20/craig-venter-synthetic-life-form> Guardian UK website.

PICTURES: “Was life really created in a test tube? And does it disprove biblical creation?” Jonathon Sarfati, May 2010. <http://creation.com/synthetic-life-by-venter> Creation Ministries International website.

**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 of 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:**

Brendan Pitlo (EIC)	Rita Pitlo (Layout)
Joel Bosveld	Chris Steenhof
Joshua Schiebaan	

**Submissions to:**

b\_pitlo@hotmail.com

**Article Deadline for Next Issue:**

17th July 2010

**Next Issue Distributed:**

8th August 2010