



CONTENDER

“contending earnestly for the faith...” Jude:3

Welcome to a new year of the Contender.

It has been quite a while since our last edition, but we are back and looking forward to another year of publication. We hope and pray, that this year will be a fruitful year and that we may all be willing instruments in the hand of the Master, being used to further His kingdom.

A new year brings changes for all of us. Some are starting new jobs, some are starting apprenticeships, others are off to university, others of us are at a loose end, so to speak, not quite sure of what they will do. Changes bring challenges.

Contender is a magazine for the youth of the Church. It is put together to promote Reformed values amongst the youth of the Church at this point in time. It is not a publication for the past, nor for the future but for the present. So we hope to keep it current, addressing issues which affect the youth today. To know what affects the youth of today,

requires interaction. We need to know what issues raise their heads today. What kinds of challenges do you have to deal with? We are all shaped by our experiences and we need each other's guidance in times of change, especially in order to remain faithful to the Word.

There has been one major change for the Contender. Matt Schiebaan resigned from the committee. Matt has been here for some four years and put a lot of effort into the Contender. Finding people to contribute articles and helping to put the magazine together is not a small job, but Matt has been a willing and capable editor. Matt, thank you for the work which the Lord has allowed you to do and for your efforts on the committee. We trust that the Lord will continue to be with you in all you do.

May we all have a blessed weekend.

■ **Mick ten-Haaf**

April 2002 Vol 7 Number 1

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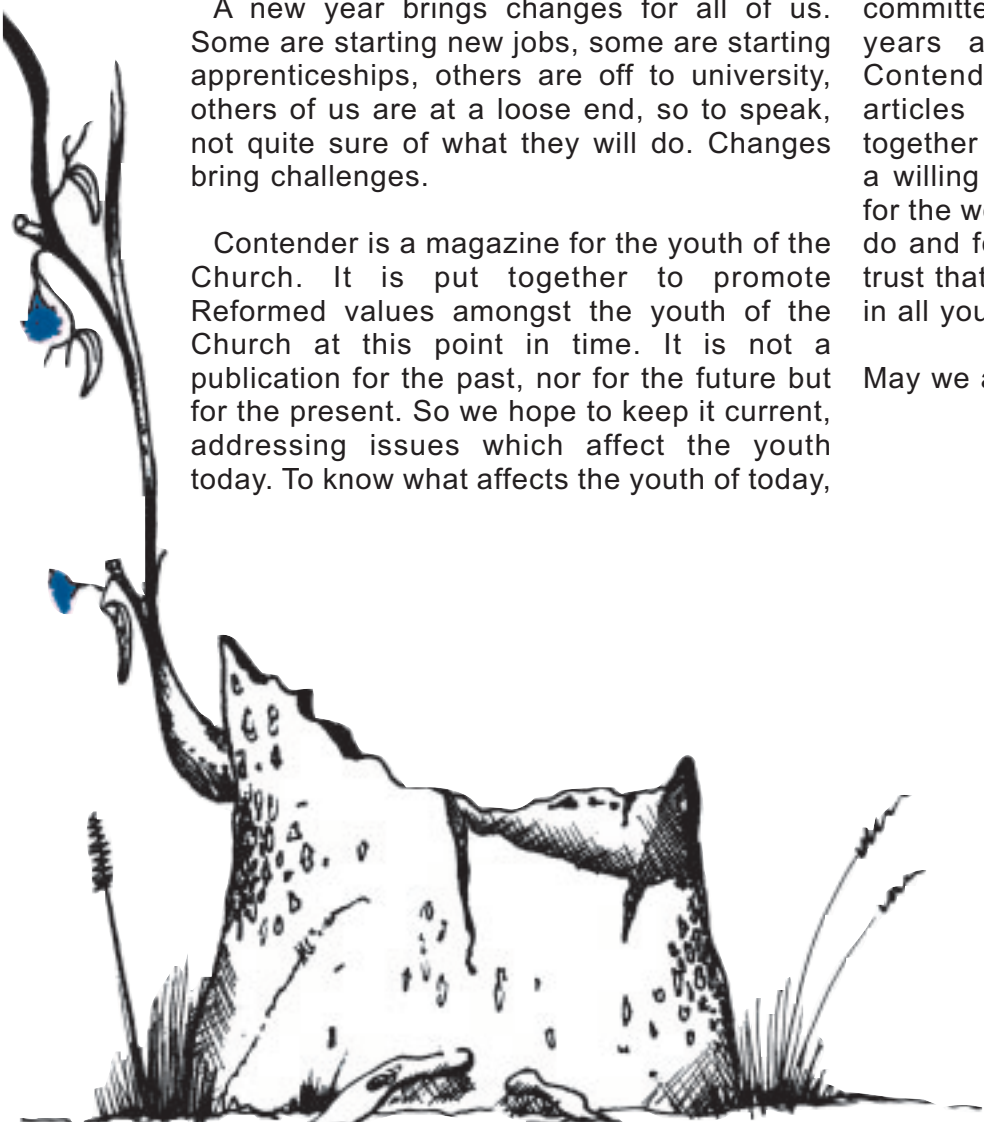
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**MAGAZINE FOR THE YOUTH OF THE
FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

Coming Soon

In later editions of the Contender, we hope to deal with a number of themes. We invite you to contribute your thoughts on the matters.

- At the beginning of May, we will, D.V., deal with **the Bible**. We hope to examine questions like inerrancy, infallibility, translations, etc. The dead line for this edition is **25 April 2002**.
- In the following edition we hope to deal with **Developing a Christian Mindset**. The deadline for these articles is **22 May 2002**.

If you feel that you would like to contribute something, please let a member of the editorial committee know so that we can coordinate things. Remember time flies so be prepared. We look forward to your response.

Of course, if you feel that you wish to contribute an article on any other topic please send it in. We are always looking for material.

the editors.

Jihad - A Holy War?

It is now more than six months since the attack on America and the felling of the twin towers. In the time since the horrible events of September 11 we have heard the media refer to the acts of terrorism as a jihad or a Holy War. That is a holy war against America and the Western World. The events of September 11: are they simply an act of terrorism or are they a part of the Islamic Jihad? Are the Islamic fundamentalists representatives of the true Islam, or are they a terrible deviation of an otherwise peace loving religion? Is this war against Afghanistan really a political one against international terrorists, or is it a spiritual battle against a demonic, militant and imperialistic religion known as Islam? As a Christian in a multicultural society it is prudent that we understand the happenings around us, the beliefs and actions of those we may encounter in our daily walk of life.

The central issue in regard to these questions is the meaning and

origin of the word "Jihad". The word "Jihad" basically means to "struggle" or to "strive". Muslims understand it to be an effort or struggle to bring righteousness and peace on earth. According to Islamic beliefs, greater Jihad is the warfare against sin and all that is against God and the teachings of the Koran (Quran). It is the personal struggle each Muslim wages to be a true believer and follower. The Koran urges one to stay on the straight path and to strive in Allah's cause. Lesser Jihad is the traditional holy war launched in the name of Allah against the enemies of God and Islam. Thus according to Muslim belief, jihad is both a personal and community commitment to defend and spread the religion of Islam.

It should be noted that the god (Allah) Muslims refer to is not the one true God we as Reformed believers put our trust in. There is no category in Islam for the one true God with a triune nature. "The messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was

only a Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him", the Koran says. "So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not, 'Three.' Refrain: better is it for you. God is only One God" (Surah 4:169) Note: Surah refers to chapter of the Koran.

Even though some passages of the Koran may be similar, its teachings in no way represent that of the Bible. Those who believe that Allah and God are the same god are only deceiving themselves. The god of Islam is nothing more than a false god, Satan in disguise.

In order to understand the origins of Jihad it is necessary to take a look at the life of Muhammad, the author of the Koran and the founder of Islam. The section of his life worth noting in regard to this article is the foundation of his hatred for the Jews and Christians. (For a more complete account of Muhammad's life and his beliefs refer to Koens

series of Articles in the Una Sancta vol 48 (24) - Vol 49 (5)). At the time Muhammad received his initial 'visitation', there were over 300 gods being worshipped in Mecca by pilgrims who came there each year to pray at the Ka'aba, a small cubic building that housed a black meteorite and effigies of the various gods. One of those gods was Allah, the moon god. Muhammad decided to proclaim that there was only one god -and he selected Allah as that god. That's the reason the crescent moon became the symbol of Islam. Muhammad also proclaimed that he was the prophet of Allah. Initially, Muhammad expected the Jews and Christians to receive his new revelation. Thus early passages in the Koran speak admiringly about Jews and Christians. These passages are used by Muslims in the West to proclaim that Islam is a tolerant religion, for example Surah 5:82 which says "You will find that those who are nearest in love to the believers [Muslims] are those who say, 'We are Christians.'" However the Jews and Christians rightfully rejected Muhammad's teachings, and Muhammad responded fierce fully against them and later passages in the Koran speak of them despairingly:

✦ Surah 5:51 commands Muslims not to take Jews and Christians as friends.

✦ Surah 9:29 commands Muslims to fight against Jews and Christians until they either submit to Allah or else agree to pay a special tax.

✦ Surah 2:65-66 and 5:60 contain references to Jews as "apes and swine to be despised and rejected".

This message did not fall on deaf ears. Many of those who survived Muhammad took up the sword, as directed by the Koran and have devoted themselves to advancing Islam through military might. Within a century of Muhammad's death, Islam had conquered Saudi Arabia, the entire Middle East, central Asia, large parts of India and southern Europe.

The Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran

was the modern day Islamic spokesman who revived Muhammad's vision of world conquest. He called for a renewal of true Islam to accomplish three purposes:

1. To overthrow the "secular" rulers of Islamic countries (like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt), just as he had done in Iran,
2. To take back the land of Palestine for Allah, exterminating Israel in the process, and
3. To conquer the rest of the world for Allah.

Notice the first priority was the transformation of secular Islamic countries into religious states ruled by the Koran. Then would come Israel and the world. In a proclamation made by Osama bin Laden in 1998, he listed the same goals and prioritised them in the same order. He then identified the United States as the prime obstacle in achieving these goals. Accordingly, he called on Muslims everywhere "to comply with Allah's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it". The attacks on the world trade center are the fulfillment of bin Laden's proclamation.

Muslims in the west argue that Islam is a peace-loving religion made to look militant by a number of extremists. Events throughout history, including more recently the events of September 11 have demonstrated how far from the truth this is. The Koran itself preaches intolerance towards all other religions and not only condones military action but commands it:

✦ Surah 5:33 says "[For those who do not submit to Allah] their punishment is...execution or crucifixion, or cutting off of hands and feet, from the opposite sides, or exile from the land".

✦ Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war (Surah 9:5).

✦ Fight in the way of Allah ... and slay them [the unbelievers]

wherever you find them and drive them out... and fight them until ... religion is for Allah (Surah 2:190-193)

Concerning jihad, the Koran guarantees Paradise to those who fight for Allah (Surah 4:74). It promises instant paradise for those who die in battle (Surahs 9:111 and 47:5-6). Dying for Allah is presented as better than living: "And if you are killed or die in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all that others may amass [of worldly wealth]" (Surah 3:157). Martyrs are promised a sensual and luxurious life in paradise (Surah 52: 17-22). It is no wonder that these misguided followers of Islam are so willing to take their own life and at the same time the lives of countless non-Muslims.

To say that the Islamic jihad is a holy war is wrong, it is not from God, but rather from Satan. It is however a spiritual war in the sense of the antithesis between God and Satan, between the followers of Christ and those who reject Him as the Son of God. Is the war on Afghanistan a political one against terrorism, or is it a spiritual one against a demonic religion known as Islam? It is undoubtedly clear from what is written in the Koran and from history, that we are not engaged in a political war against terrorism, but a war against Islamic Fundamentalism. But even more substantive, it is a spiritual war against the forces of Satan.

The huge block of over a billion Muslims presents the greatest political and military threat to the Western world and the greatest missionary challenge to the Christian Church. Jesus is about to return. The Bible says He will not return until the Gospel is preached to all the world (Matthew 24:14). Communism collapsed and the former Communist countries are now open to the Gospel. The final barrier to be overcome is Islam. Let us pray that the events of September 11 and the resultant retaliation on Afghanistan may bring about new opportunities for the spread of the Gospel through out the Middle East. Let us pray for

the Islamic world, that Muslims everywhere see the light and come to repentance.

■ Brad Spaanderman

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CROSS ROADS

Missiology is the name given to the Churches task of mission. It is that task of the Church which deals with sending heralds of the Gospel to all nations of the world in response to the direct command of Christ. Such a task involves careful examination and reflection. There is no end to the possible pitfalls and Satan will do what he can to thwart the efforts of the Church. In the following article Isabel examines some of the background to mission work.

Is it 'Mission Impossible'?

Mission science includes a study of the church's mission obligations and opportunities in regions where the Gospel is not yet known. In this article we focus on less familiar terms, "Unreached People Groups" and the '10-40 Window'.

Unreached People Groups (UPG's)

Mission studies reveal that about 25% of the world population are still 'unreached' by the Gospel. This massive portion of about 2 billion people is usually referred to as the "Unreached Peoples Bloc" or "Least Evangelized Peoples". Unreached People Groups (UPG's) are "pockets of humanity, ethnic or tribal groups, without the Gospel". The people speak a common language, share a unique culture, but have little or no access to Scriptures.

Leading mission workers have recently emphasized a lack of mission activity and service to this one-fourth of the world's population. Less than 1% of all missionaries, pastors, teachers and Christian workers serve those living in UPG's! In addition, globally, less than half a cent per Christian per year goes to this one-fourth of the world for mission support and aid.

Unreached People Groups are significant in that they also have no indigenous community of believing Christians among them! They have yet to hear the Gospel, establish a church, and become capable of spreading from there. Furthermore, a typical UPG, even if it does have some Christians, does not have adequate numbers or resources to bring the Gospel to others. So they often cannot carry out evangelism projects among the rest of their people, without receiving cross-cultural (overseas) assistance in some way.

Religions among Unreached Peoples

Many nations in Unreached People Groups regions were once strongholds of Christendom when the Gospel first went out. However, Christianity has since been eroded by the influence of Islam and other false religions. Thus major blocks of UPG's include Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Communists, the Chinese, and Tribal Groups. Together these people form a total of about 8 000 different religious/ethnic groups, many of which are identified as UPG's.

The goal by many mission organisations is to reach the most people, in the least time, by the best possible means - and to sustain the outreach until independent churches are planted. We may too quickly assume that people from such religions are resistant to the Gospel (ie. Muslims) - but often it is simply that they have never heard or understood the Gospel of Salvation presented clearly to them in their own language and culture.

The 10/40 Window

The term "10/40 Window" in mission studies refers to a region around the earth between approximately 15o South and 40o North of the Equator. This 'Window' area includes about 3.5 billion people in a rural, almost forgotten 'bloc' - with about 85% of the world's poorest, most abused and persecuted people. Many are below 25 years of age, or are refugees inside and outside of their own countries. Over 2 billion of these 'Window' people have never heard of Christ or the Gospel - nor will they have access to it in the near future in their language.

The 10/40 Window also holds the headquarters of

virtually every major non-Christian religious system in the world! However, it has only 27% of the world's total mission and evangelism force - and few are involved with UPG's. In fact, a total of about 1 800 UPG's have been identified within the "10/40 Window" alone. These people are some of the poorest in the world - spiritually and materially. To bring the true Christian message there, requires persistent, focussed, long-term work. As well as education, translation work, prayer and support.

Barriers to reaching the 'Unreached'

Many factors stop UPG's from being 'reached' with the Scriptures. Past and present barriers to bringing God's Word include poverty, disease, lack of education, an unwritten language, no Bible in the language, persecution, fleeing their countries, a nomadic lifestyle, and false religions. Reaching UPG's with the Gospel is also difficult for non-indigenous people, who need to learn a new language and culture, cope with poverty or illness, and obtain visa's, etc. Hence the high turnover rate of non-indigenous mission workers from overseas.

People in UPG's often live under repressive governments, where preaching the Gospel is opposed or restricted. Furthermore, many living in this '10/40 Window' are Muslims who often know little about their own or other religions... but if they do 'convert to Christianity' they face torture, death, prison, or become refugees. Many UPG's are refugees driven from their homes by injustice, violence, disease, famine, persecution, and/or war. The war could be racial, territorial, political, or a type of religious 'holy' war (ie. Jihad). (Sudan is a good example). Overall, Christians today are the most persecuted religious group in the world!

Fear, and the seeming futility of persecution and death, can be a great hindrance to effective missions and church planting. Some aid may reach them, but poor people who may be always 'on the move' are hard to reach and establish churches with the Gospel of true Comfort!

In Ecclesiastes 4:1 we read - "I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter - On the side of their oppressors there was power, but they have no comforter." Surely, mission impossible?

Strategies used to reach UPG's

Strategies used to bring the Gospel include teaching

and training indigenous people from the UPG in their own country or overseas. They also include sending non-indigenous Christian mission workers (teachers, English teachers, health workers, aid workers, skilled technicians and other workers, etc) into the Unreached People Groups. The aim is to plant and establish churches with a solid basis in the Scriptures, which are capable of autonomy - but to 'plant' a single church takes 25 to 40 years usually! ...Indigenous people need thorough training.

According to many mission groups "A global effort is needed to reach the thousands of unreached people who have no indigenous Gospel witness" in the 10/40 Window and elsewhere. Some are concerned because about 80% of missionaries and evangelists work in established churches in developed countries, but only 20% work to bring God's Word in developing countries! However, we confess that Christ shed His blood to purchase men for God out of every tribe and tongue. We know God fulfills His promises. Our Lord is the strategic coordinator of His outreach to bring His Word to His own. Truly, mission possible!

May God use us in His strategies to complete the mission mandate He gave - to share the wealth of His salvation, to His praise. In Romans 10:14-15 we read that it is a glorious task to preach His Word. Let us be faithful witnesses, prophets at home and abroad, by the strength of His Spirit. Through us, weak vessels though we are, the Lord gathers, defends and preserves to Himself "a great multitude ... of all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages..." (Rev. 7:9). They, and us included, may look forward

to a glorious future where God will dwell with them, and they shall all be His people ... with no more sorrow, crying, tears, pain or death anymore (Rev. 21:3-4). May we be faithful in our tasks, working with His calling!

'how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?'

Romans 10:14

■ Isabel Postmus

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- ❖ Towards 2000 - Pray, Give, Go.(pamphlet published by World Changers Ministry)
- ❖ A Time for Central Asia (pamphlet published by People International)
- ❖ The Unfinished Task (pamphlet published by Networking Churches through the Window)
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Apathy - “A Deadly Disease”

There is a disease spreading rapidly among us. No cure has yet been found. The bugs circulate among us all. No one will know when the disease will strike again and yet again, kill. Amazingly, no one seems to take precautionary measures. Yet surely, if there is a dangerous disease around we take the correct measures to prevent the spread of it, or at least prevent its attack on our own person and family? Or do we?

This disease has already struck more people than anyone will care to admit. Oh, we don't see the disease on the faces of the affected. However, we see the effect of it in their hearts, which spreads like wild fire among friends, and even family members. The disease I speak of is apathy. According to the Macquarie dictionary, the word means: “lack of feeling; absence or suppression of passion, emotion, or excitement. A lack of interest in things others find moving or exciting.” We can all relate to the meaning of this word. Be it at school or work when you just ‘can't be bothered’ working or are having ‘one of those days’. Either way apathy rubs off onto everyone else and affects the whole group of people. It becomes dangerous however, when this attitude shines through in church life. The relaxed attitude of the society in which we live is rubbing off onto us as youth. This comes through in the change of attitude towards secular ‘entertainment’ venues. A few years ago going to the pub after club was a sign of sure rebellion, now it is just a ‘social place’ and a place where one goes to have a ‘good time’. We are the future, and if that much changes in just a few years, should we be worried about the change in the future? What are we doing to stem the flow of this disease, or are we taking it in our stride as ‘change’? We need to act on the apathetic attitude now, so that we can fight against the power of the evil one, who makes the most of the apathetic attitudes that seems to be

fashionable in the church today.

What protective measures can we take to guard ourselves against this rapidly spreading disease? We need to arm ourselves with the word of God. In Ephesians we read about putting on the armour of God so that “you may be able to withstand in the evil day.” How can we withstand the evil days if we are apathetic to Church, Christian societies and youth study clubs? So often, too often, we give ourselves excuses. Excuses such as ‘you're only young once.’ Yes, we are only young once, which is why we have to serve God. He requires this of us NOW, not when it suits us. We cannot make God wait while we satisfy our own selfish whims and desires. The Preacher writes in Ecclesiastes 12: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth... before the silver cord is loosed... or the pitcher shattered at the fountain.”

My people are
destroyed for
a lack of
Knowledge

Hosea 4:6

What is our reaction to the state of the youth in the church? Do we recognize this as apathy? Do we fight against it body and soul so that we may be equipped to go out into the world? Our apathetic attitude now causes us to not want to fight against sin. Most of us are quite happy listening to our music, going to the nightclubs. “It's good fun, and if you really think

about it, there's nothing really wrong with it. It's only the older generations that don't like it.” Sad? Yes, it is. But what is worse is that no one recognizes this as apathy. Apathy strikes and wins again, and not one of us is aware of it.

There definitely seems to be reason for concern about the standard of church life among the Youth. Our concerns are related to comments, which fear that the spiritual standard of the youth is very low. The interest in activities of the communion of saints is falling swiftly. Bible study clubs of different ages often have the minimum of attendants at the regular meetings. The study of the Bible itself does not

seem to be very zealous and consequently fails to produce fruit. Activities arranged specifically to help us go out into the world, equipped with the word of God, are poorly attended. The result of this is that, unarmed with the word of God we go out and are tempted or fall into a state of disinterest.

Going into the world without the Bible as a backdrop and with-out the excitement over what Christ has done for us is like soldiers going into battle without weapons. Hosea says this well in chapter 4:6 “ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” A very low percentage of members are willing or convinced to give attention or support to the social or political activities in the community. Sensational points on the agenda are needed to make people interested in whatever it may be. We need discussion to analyze points and to stimulate strong willingness to return to the love that we first had, before it happens that we totally became become delinquent and refuse to acknowledge God as our creator. The Apostle Paul warns his colleague Timothy: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.” (2 Timothy 3:1ff)

As youth today, we face the society Paul describes here. We see it reflected in ourselves. We too are sinful. Yet, how can we arm ourselves against this society and guard our future and that of the coming generations if we are already now apathetic?

Apathy is a strong force that Satan uses to tear us away from God. It seems to be that Apathy is a fashion. Fashionable, because we all are swept along like a shell on a sandy beach. Why does apathy seem so appealing, and if it isn't appealing then why do we have so many uninterested youth in our midst? Why is it that so few people arrive at TSC meetings and social functions? Why are SPYSC meetings ignored? Why is club attendance low? Is this because we are all so strong in faith that we don't need to be encouraged by those around us? Certainly not, for if this was the case, this disease, called apathy wouldn't be able to strike as readily as it has. We need to watch out for diseases such as this that can creep in unnoticed and pollute the whole congregation, and the generations that come after us.

The Apathy disease is dangerous. Don't be fooled. It is out there, right among us and it's attacking you.

■ **Emily van Dongen**

The Answer

I'd like to say you're wrong,
your arguments are too powerful.
I'd like to prove to you
that what you say isn't true.
I'd like the chance to explain
my point of view about what you say.
You deride the existence of God,
you make it an excuse to hide behind.
You say that faith in God
saves from questioning our existence.
You question existence, then,
and share with me your answers.
See, after all your searching,
you still haven't found an answer.

See, how your heart and mind
still question everything you tried to explain.
See, I have found the answer,
that settles existence in heart and mind.
Allow me to tell you
the answer that I found.
Allow me to convince you
that what I found is truth.
Allow me to help you on the way
that my answer reveals.
It is God, who created all.
It is God, who controls all.
And it is God, who holds the answer to all.

■ **Jessie Groenewold**

What does the future hold?

Do you ever wonder where society is heading? Why so many things that used to be unacceptable are gradually creeping into normality? Why nothing seems to be 'wrong' anymore?

Mr Rene Vermeulen is making a trip to Perth to speak to the youth, and other interested persons, on the moral decline of society. He plans to make use of the books "Deadline" and "Dominion" by Randy Alcorn and will delve into issues such as abortion, euthenasia and homosexuality.

Everyone is very welcome to come along to what promised to be a interesting and enlightening discussion.

Place: Armadale High School
Date: 8pm, Wednesday 10th April 2002

Need more information?
Call Natalie on 9498 1602 or
email natalie@businessnews.com.au

The Contender can be viewed on
the web

<http://www.frsa.asn.au/contender/>

The Contender cover page is one inspired by a most biblical prophecy as well as incorporating an also well known piece of Australian flora: The Gum Tree.

Based on Isaiah 11:1 "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." The design reflects God's continued care for his people; also his people in Australia.

■ Russel Bergsma



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 it's readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act Biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. It's 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.

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The deadline for materials to be used
in the next issue is 25th April