

CLOSE TO JESUS

SURROUNDED BY DRAGONS

ADVENTIST REVIEW

WEEKLY NEWS AND INSPIRATION FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

OCTOBER 20, 1994

Facing the Annual Council

HOW
DID
THEY
VOTE?

HOW

1995 GC Budget
Downsizing the GC Executive Committee

DID

Eliminating Barriers for Publishing Houses

THEY

Women's Ordination

VOTE?

Moonlighting Ministers

The writer of a letter to the Faith Alive column of August 25 was "irate, confused, embarrassed, and disgusted" to find out that his pastor was moonlighting. Welcome to the real world.

I am a "typical pastor" in the sense that at the end of seminary I found myself saddled with \$20,000 worth of student loan debt, a wife who wanted to stay home and raise our children, and two children on the verge of entering the SDA school system. Yet I was making less than I had been in my previous employment.

The church remuneration scale booklet talks about "a spirit of sacrifice." These words sound like a nice way to say, "We are not going to pay you much, but that's because you work for God, so it would be wrong to complain." Yet I am supposed to be sacrificial in my own giving, keep both kids in SDA schools, wear decent clothes, drive a decent car, and participate in all church activities.

I love my church. I love my job. And most certainly the Lord is providing. But please let us not look down on pastors (or other denominational employees) who are struggling with trying to stay one step ahead of bankruptcy.

Joseph Wamack
Associate Youth Pastor
Kettering, Ohio

According to the General Conference *Working Policy*, Calvin Rock is correct in stating that ministers are not allowed to moonlight.

However, the North American Division *Working Policy* changed in 1986 to allow sidelines. It modified the GC policy by stating that employees should refrain from sidelines that have "the effect of diminishing their influence and/or infringing on the time and efficiency of the work to which they are assigned."

A further paragraph states: "Salaried employees who anticipate receiving additional remuneration beyond their salary on a regular basis for services given, in connection with denominational or extra-denominational assignments, shall do so only with the full

prior knowledge of their respective employing organization and where appropriate, on the basis of a written agreement" (p. 424).

Members need to be careful how they address this issue, since the door has been opened for moonlighting in the North American Division.

J. David Newman
Editor
Ministry

The Information Highway

I am grateful for "In Search of Significance" (July 7). I have discovered a tremendous blessing from computer technology and on-line services. Cruising through the religion bulletin board of the service to which I subscribe, I find questions from individuals who are seeking for better understanding of the Bible, and this is another forum that I have found to give a Bible study. Imagine it—Bible studies through E-mail!

I used to be wary of computer technology. Praise God for anything on earth at our disposal that can be used for good.

Willie Hucks, Pastor
Kenner, Louisiana

In shifting rapidly into high gear, perhaps thought should be given to those who may be left in the dust.

The *Review's* video format *OnLine* and ADRA's *WorldStory* videos have been a means for the local congregation to keep in touch with the mission and focus of the world church. They have helped to encourage feelings of brotherhood across social, cultural, and racial lines and discourage feelings of ethnocentricity.

Reducing *OnLine* and *WorldStory* availability to only those who have access to satellite is regrettable. Many churches, as well as individuals, are not financially able to speed onto the information highway.

This decision should be rethought. These resources should be available to all Adventist churches, not just an elite number who have more financial resources.

Linda M. Floyd
Muskegon, Michigan

OnLine Edition and WorldStory can still be obtained via videocassette. Call 1-800-901-7171 or write Adventist Communication Network, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600.

Concerned Christians

Under "Perfect Pitch" (Letters, Aug. 18), I read: "A coalescing of concerned Christians could become a mighty force in combating many of the social and moral evils that abound in our society."

Does this mean getting out of comfortable homes and communities and going into the poorer parts of the cities (versus missions in exotic places) and helping the people with jobs, education, hope, medical care, etc.? Or does it mean a "mighty force" of "concerned Christians" controlling what I can read, see, and hear as a way to "make our country a safer and more wholesome place"? Does it mean that they know what is best for me?

Having lived and traveled in other parts of the world, I can envision what a "mighty force of concerned believers" can do for the world, including segregation (race, sex, religion), inquisitions, wars, etc.

Concerned Christians who truly help people, and thereby society, rarely get the visibility and credit, because theirs is hard and discouraging work. Deliver me from "concerned Christians" as a "mighty force."

Paul C. Chapin
Wayne, Pennsylvania

Serious Thinking

As a member of this wonderful remnant church, I just had to take a small moment of your time to say how encouraging I find the articles in the *Review*, and also its eye-catching covers. As articles call attention to the times in which we are living, they can't help showing people that this is a church that stands up for Jesus. As the *Review* goes through the mail system it is bound to create some serious thinking.

Audrey O'Harra
Silver Springs, Nevada

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Associate Editor Roy Adams
Associate Editor Myron K. Widmer
News Editor Carlos Medley
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Ginger Church
Consulting Editors: Robert S. Folkenberg, Matthew Bediako, D. F. Gilbert, Robert J. Kloosterhuis, A. C. McClure, Kenneth J. Mittleider, Leo Ranzolin, Calvin B. Root, G. Ralph Thompson
Special Contributors: Bryan Ball, M. E. Cherian, P. D. Chun, Israel Leito, Edwin Ludescher, J. J. Norley, Jan Paulsen, L. D. Raelly, Ted N. C. Wilson, Joao Wolff
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Dare We Put Out the Welcome Mat?

Almost a year ago we put out the welcome mat on a Welcome Home Sabbath for more than 500,000 former or inactive members in North America.

Many came, but most stayed away.

Dare we try it again?

Before we answer yes too quickly, we must consider its ramifications, for when we invite former and inactive members to worship with us, we immediately put ourselves and our churches on trial. And can we stand the heat of such intense scrutiny?

I would hope so, but if our churches could not hold the attention and interest of more than 500,000—some say up to 1 million—former and inactive members in North America, can we do it now?

We can count on at least two natural factors to favor our attempt without effort on our part:

First, as young people get older, marry, and have children, the responsibilities of parenthood often nudge them to seek opportunities for the spiritual nurturing of their children.

Second, as people grow older they usually experience more difficult times, personal pain, and often loneliness, moving them also toward God to find peace and to find comfort in the fellowship of others.

No Guarantees

But these natural factors only *favor* our attempt to attract and minister to such people. In no way do they guarantee that these people will choose *our* churches to find the spiritual nurturing, comfort, and friendship they so much desire.

That's where our part begins: to be attentive to the needs of all people—those who have left and want to return, and those who stay by every week and also desire to have solid spiritual nurturing.

During North America's drive last year to reclaim "missing members," I received a pile of letters on the subject. Out of them I kept one in my files because of the great challenge it sets forth before us to meet the spiritual needs of such a *diverse* group of Adventist Christians.

She says we should

forget all the fluff

at worship, and let

Christ and His goodness

shine forth.

The letter comes from a well-educated woman who moved with her husband to a new city and began her search for a new Adventist church home. Some of her reflections and pleas bear noting as we consider the issue of meeting people's spiritual needs. I share only excerpts from her three-page letter:

"After visiting most churches in this metropolitan area, I sense that a common element is missing—the ability to share openly the love of Jesus and the incredible sacrifice of His death that offers us salvation. In many cases the Sabbath morning services have become empty, meaningless rituals. I have repeatedly gone to church with an incredible hunger and come away starving.

"I have often wondered, if I were a secular person seeking spiritual meaning in my life and I wandered into an Adventist church, would I find some-

thing worthwhile? After hearing sermons on rock collections, a pastor who said he didn't find the time to prepare a sermon, and worship services given solely by children, I am not surprised that many churches are at least half empty on Sabbath morning.

"How can you think of asking missing members to return? To what? One special Sabbath program in November is simply not enough. What happens after that? If we offer little to our missing members, what will we offer to the unchurched of our communities?

"I hold no vendetta, only an enormous pain in voicing these concerns for my church, and a great desire to find a church in which worship is simple, interesting, thought-provoking, Christ-centered, and challenging. Forget all the fluff. People don't need a lot of bells and whistles to be drawn to church. Just give them something they can sink their 'spiritual teeth' into. If this occurs, the 500,000 people you're looking for just might come rushing back."

Not Representative?

This lady is certainly not representative of everyone, but neither can we say she is not representative of many. Our busy back door might support some of her concerns.

So do we hold another special Sabbath for all the "missing members," or do we bypass such an effort and strive to make *every* Sabbath morning so Christ-centered, so spiritually thought-provoking, so friendly, that whoever walks in—the unchurched, the missing, the inactive, the regular members—will want to come back again and again?

I vote for the latter! And *we* are part of the solution!

MYRON WIDMER



What a Bargain!

I don't know about you, but I relish the discovery of a good bargain. When it comes to such major purchases as a car, computer, or refrigerator, I often go to great lengths to find the best available price.

Before making a large purchase, it's common for me to spend months of extensive reading and research, visiting retailers and distributors, consulting with knowledgeable friends, and talking with sales personnel before the formal negotiations start.

By the time a purchase is completed, I've gained some new friendships and have learned enough about the product, the market, and buyer psychology to sell the product. I've always believed that God provides a faithful steward, who consistently returns tithe and gives a liberal offering, with the exact item needed at a discounted price, if not at wholesale.

Many years ago while living in Berrien Springs, Michigan, I had a deep desire to purchase a piano. Having studied music in my childhood, I longed to get a piano for the home to experience the joy of hearing hymns on Friday nights and to rekindle my musical talent.

When I visited a few local music stores, the message hit home quickly that new pianos were expensive. After playing a few spinets, uprights, and studio models, the realization came that a grand piano was what I needed. And of course, that was out of my reach financially.

No Stone Unturned

Still, I took on the challenge of finding an affordable baby grand piano and began a search that took nearly four months. Leaving no stone unturned, I went to a library and searched telephone books from surrounding cities

and towns in Michigan and Indiana. I then telephoned innumerable music retailers and drove hundreds of miles, visiting stores in Detroit and Grand Rapids, Michigan; and South Bend and Elkhart, Indiana.

I also scanned the classified ads sections of various newspapers for previously owned instruments. After searching in three states I ended up with little more than fatigue and frustration. But God intervened in a miraculous way.

While all this was going on, a friend of mine who also lived in Berrien Springs had purchased a piano. He informed me that a friend of his had a grand piano in storage in New Jersey and was looking to sell it. I contacted the gentleman and traveled to New Jersey to inspect the piano. It turned out to be the brand I wanted and the exact size I needed. And the price was affordable.

Lessons of Life

This experience taught me a number of lessons. For example, I learned a lot about myself and just how much value I place on getting maximum value for each dollar spent. The experience also showed me that God takes a personal interest in our happiness and longings. He will go to great lengths to reward those who are faithful to Him.

However, beyond these lessons, the experience deepened my appreciation for God's most valued gift: salvation. I'm thankful that God's salvation plan doesn't carry a price tag. I don't have to drive across town or draw two or more merchants into a bidding war to get an affordable price. With Christ I don't have to clip coupons or search the newspapers for sales to stretch my limited dollars. He has put eternal life in reach of everyone's budget.

Though access to the kingdom of

heaven is free to all who accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour, its value cannot be measured. In Matthew 13 Jesus uses two short parables to describe the value of salvation.

He says: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matt. 13:44-46, NKJV).

Ultimate Price

As I read this passage, the value of salvation hit home to me. As the author of salvation (Heb. 5:9), Christ alone knows its true worth. He paid the ultimate price for it with His death at Calvary. By shedding His blood, Christ reconciled us to Himself, and He opens heaven's door to us today.

Through Christ's salvation we are forgiven of our past sins. His grace gives us the power to live free from sin today. And by His resurrection He brings hope for eternal life.

What could be more valuable? Does anything else compare? When I think of God's priceless gift, the glitter of the world loses its luster and the pleasures of this life pale in significance. All our suffering and sacrifice become meaningless as we meditate on this invaluable treasure.

What a bargain!

CARLOS MEDLEY



GC vice president Calvin Rock (left at podium) and GC secretary G. Ralph Thompson (right) officially open the Annual Council meeting.

ANNUAL COUNCIL 1994

With more than 200 agenda items, 180 adjunct committee meetings, and more than 600 pages of materials, this year's Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee will go down in history as one of its most significant meetings. More than 300 leaders from around the world took part in the eight-day assembly held October 3-10.

This year's council was a key one because it was the last full meeting of the GC Executive Committee before the 1995 worldwide GC session in Utrecht, Netherlands. All agenda items for the church's quinquennial business session must be processed at an Annual Council.

Before the meetings started, one could guess that this council would be extraordinary. Preliminary meetings spawned intense debate and dialogue as the church's top leaders grappled with sensitive issues.

Many leaders expressed concern over tight financial projections for 1995. Others voiced apprehension over changes proposed to tighten the linkage between the different levels of church organization. They felt that the proposed changes would give too much authority over lower constituent organizations by the next higher organization.

Among the numerous items discussed were landmark changes in church management recommended by the GC-appointed Commission on World Church Organization, new procedures that will radically change the church's publishing work, revisions in the *SDA Church Manual*, amendments to the GC constitution and bylaws, a request to allow divisions to decide for themselves the issue of gender-inclusive ordination, and the 1995 GC budget.

Church Management

Perhaps the most far-reaching item discussed by the committee was the report of the Commission on World Church Organization (COWCO). This large body spent three years studying every facet of church management, from the local church to the General Conference, and recommended significant structural changes.

Linkage. The first group of recommendations from COWCO suggested greater linkage between the General Conference, the 11 world divisions of the GC, union conferences, local conferences, union missions, and local missions.

From the start, many committee members voiced heavy opposition to a measure that would say the General Conference president works as the "chief executive officer" of the church. Many felt that the wording vested too much power in the GC presidency and sounded too much like a secular corporate hierarchy. After a lengthy discussion, the wording was changed to say that "the president is the first officer."

The next linkage recommendation passed, but only after considerable discussion. It designates officers of higher organizations as ex officio members of the executive committees of lower organizations. These officers would have voting rights, but their total vote could not make up more than 10 percent of the regular committee membership present.

Another provision under the linkage group sparked a debate that lasted nearly two hours. Under the proposed measure, ministerial credentials for the officers of divisions, union conferences, and local conferences would not be granted by the local organization but by the next higher organization.

Several committee members voiced fervent opposition to the measure, believing that higher organizations could use the issuance of credentials as a way to control lower organizations.

"My own people [constituents] would have a very difficult time understanding why I would have credentials extended from a higher body when I'm directly responsible to them," said Lake Region Conference president Norman Miles. "They would feel that I'm neither responsible nor responsive to them."

"This is a fundamental change in the way we do business." He continued, "This is a corporate model, not an ecclesiastical model, and will do more harm than good."

Ministry editor David Newman asked a question that highlighted the control issue. He asked, "What if a union decides a local conference president should not have credentials and the body that elected



GC president Robert S. Folkenberg gives the keynote address.

By Carlos Medley, Adventist Review news editor.



Susan Sickler, of Dayton, Ohio, voices her opinions on recommendations for structural reorganization. Right: On October 8 GC personnel put on a Sabbath school program at nearby Sligo church that emphasized missions. Those in black clothing represent countries where the Adventist Church has not entered. Those in brightly colored costumes represent countries with an Adventist presence.

the officer wanted to retain him?"

Allegheny East Conference president Alvin Kibble said, "Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, the perception of the organization's effort to grab power from the local entities would be strongly felt with the passing of this item."

Kibble continued, "I wish to remind the body that local conferences were primary in the organization of the church and the larger hierarchy developed subsequently to serve and not to rule."

Susan Sickler, of Dayton, Ohio, a member of the commission, said, "I would beg that we give the Holy Spirit room to operate and not try to claim a hierarchical control that will cause people to fight against us."

After a number of committee members spoke, the measure was amended so that officers of union and local conferences would not be included in the resolution. The only officers to be affected under the new policy would be the division officers.

General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg explained that the proposed policy already was in operation for union missions and missions. And since division officers are elected at GC sessions, few would see any problem with those officers receiving their credentials from the GC.

All of these measures, which involve changes to the GC constitution and bylaws, will go to the 1995 GC session for final approval.

Realignment of GC Departments. The Commission on World Church Organization also recommended a realignment of the General Conference's departments. The most significant change proposes another restructuring of the Church Ministries Department. After nearly 10 years since five departments were combined into one, the proposal that passed dismantles the Church Ministries Department into four separate departments: Personal Ministries and Sabbath School, Stewardship, Youth, and Family Ministries. This would bring the total number of departments up to 13.

GC Executive Committee Size. Another major proposal of the commission calls for a change in the makeup and size of the GC Executive Committee. Under the new proposal, the committee size would be reduced from 362 to 240 regular members. Division departmental directors and associates of GC departments would no longer be members, and it eliminates many invitees. The measure does allow local conference presidents in the host division of the Annual Council to attend with voice and voting privileges.

GC president Robert S. Folkenberg said that historically a large number of committee members, including some union presidents and division departmental personnel, could not attend committee meetings because of the cost of travel. At the same time, many invitees, who were not bonafide committee members, attended with voting rights.

With the new arrangement, each committee member will be enabled to attend the GC Committee's two annual meetings because the GC will pick up the tab for many of the members. Again, these voted changes must go to the GC session in 1995 for approval.

Elections and Appointments. The COWCO study also proposed changes in the way the General Conference implements some personnel appointments. No longer to be elected at the GC session will be the associate directors of GC departments and the GC Auditing Service, associate secretaries of the Ministerial Association, the director of the General Conference Archives and Statistics Service, and division departmental personnel. Instead, these will be appointed either at the first Annual Council after the GC session or in the respective divisions.

Rudy Henning, associate director of the GC Publishing Department, vigorously opposed the action, saying the appointment instead of election of associates would downgrade these positions, making them unattractive for qualified people. "You will not get the highly qualified experts that departments need today," he said.

Henning said keeping the same system of election provides many benefits, including the promotion of closer unity between church officers and departmental leaders, opportunity for world delegates to select departmental leaders, and the professional appeal to higher-quality personnel.

In response to Henning's remarks, the GC president said the commission did not intend to downgrade associates, but to give departmental leaders more time to search, "with job descriptions in hand," for the best personnel.

Gender-Inclusive Ordination

North American church leaders called a special meeting of the division committee on October 3, immediately before the commencement of the Annual Council, to discuss the issue of gender-inclusive ordination for the NAD.

This meeting overwhelmingly voted the following action: "To request the Annual Council to refer the following action to the General Conference session for consideration: The General Conference vests in each division the right to authorize the ordination of individuals within



NAD president Alfred C. McClure spoke out on publishing issues and gender-inclusive ordination.

its territory in harmony with established policies. In addition, where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender. In divisions where the division executive committees take specific actions approving the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, women may be ordained to serve in those divisions."

On October 9 the Annual Council took up this item. In presenting the request, NAD president Alfred C. McClure reminded the committee that the General Conference officially voted to ordain women as local elders in 1984. He also referred to [a Spring Meeting] action in 1974 that opened the door for the ordination of women elders.

"Since that time, hundreds of churches have elected more than 1,000 women as local elders," he says. "For 20 years they have been serving with credibility and acceptance in their congregations.

"By invitation of their church, women have attended seminary for two decades. What kind of message do we send to young women who wish to respond to the call of God if we welcome them to professional training where they sit in classes with male peers who in a few years will be accorded full recognition of their calling while they are made to feel inferior by a less-than-full approbation by their church?"

While the church has granted women all the privileges of ministry except the organizing of churches and the ordaining of others, McClure says the North American Division is in an untenable position.

"Because North America has applied these General Conference



GC president Robert S. Folkenberg (second from left) responds to committee members' questions.

actions in a way we felt was fair and right, we now find ourselves in a position seen by many as discriminatory, unethical, and even immoral," he said. "It's hard to stand in front of the many people who have questions and provide a logical, defensible answer."

McClure appealed to the committee to try to understand the need for women's ordination in North America. He assured the delegates that North America would still be a loyal supporter of the church even if the action was turned down.

The item produced lively debate. Several speakers made clear that while they supported referring the request to the GC session, they did not support the intent of the request.

After further discussion, the Annual Council voted, with only a few dissenting votes, that the NAD request should be referred to the 1995 GC session for consideration and decision.

Landmark Publishing Policies Voted

Historic changes voted to the church's longstanding publishing policies probably will fulfill their aim: lower prices and wider distribution for Adventist publications.

Under the voted policy changes, the church's publishing houses will have the opportunity after January 1, 1995, to market their books in areas that have traditionally been closed to them, and divisions will be able to design their own literature evangelism programs without having to follow detailed General Conference policies.

Proponents of the new policies believe that they inevitably will lead to greater availability of the books and possibly lower costs. However, some executive committee members worried that the changes would result in stiffer competition, forcing some publishing houses with higher production costs to possibly go into a "survival mode."

Under the policies still in force until 1995, publishing houses have a specified territory, and no other denominational publisher can sell in that territory except through that publishing house. As a result, books with limited appeal or smaller distribution are either unavailable in some areas or have their prices marked up to cover the costs of getting and distributing the materials.

Ron Appenzeller, director of the Publishing Department at the General Conference, gave an example of what has been occurring: "We have four divisions served by the Spanish language. While they have been cooperating very well together, we feel this will bring even better cooperation because there will be a movement to develop literature together and to produce it in larger quantities, which will lower the prices.

"This scenario will take place not only in Spanish-speaking countries but other countries too. In some countries with many minority languages—North America, for example—we feel they will be better served if they're able to get their literature in their language *direct* from the original source rather than having to go through another publishing house" and its consequent markup in price.

"It will enable them to get a greater variety of literature, and hopefully it will enable them to get this literature at a lower cost. We think, too, that it will increase the service, because there will be some competition in the area of service to the individual consumer, and we think this will be of benefit in that area particularly."

Some committee members raised concerns that such competition could result in the loss of one or more printing facilities.

"While it may appear advantageous to some to create so-called free trade that recognizes no boundaries, no barriers, and no territories," said Alfred C. McClure, president of the Adventist Church in North America, "I would submit that we could very well find ourselves reducing our ability to accomplish mission through the loss of significant assets and organizations provided for that mission."

Much of the debate centered on two words in the statement, namely, that "the publishing houses should work in cooperation with other church

By Rick Kajiura, assistant director of the Communication Department at the General Conference.

organizations, including sister publishing houses, *whenever possible*." Some interpreted "whenever possible" as encouraging cooperation, while others believed it allowed publishing houses to enter another's territory without approval or cooperation.

Warning that such arguments are based on doomsday scenarios, Israel Leito, Inter-American Division president, said, "I would rather assume that we are all responsible leaders who are respectful of each other, of each other's territory, of each other's ministry, and of each other's mission in a given territory."

The policy's final wording (prepared after being referred to a small committee for refinement) said that publishers desiring to market products in another division's territory shall negotiate with the publishing house/division administration serving the territory and that, in case of a dispute, a three-person arbitration committee at the General Conference would settle the matter. In addition, the policy was reworded to include this statement: "Publishing houses may fill orders from [individuals and churches] outside their territory provided the products ordered are not for resale or commercial use."



Shirley Van Vliet, lay committee member, discusses an item before the Annual Council.

are not for resale or commercial use.

Ron Appenzeller says he is happy with the results of the vote. "We had asked for a totally free market—a free, world market," Appenzeller said, "but the consensus was that the world field was not ready for that. So this is a step in that direction."

As part of the revised policy, divisions will now have the responsibility of developing, documenting, and managing their own literature evangelism programs within their territories. Until now, literature evangelism programs were governed in detail by General Conference policies. However, many felt that because of changing times and cultural differences the literature evangelism program needed to be flexible to meet the needs of a given area.

"It has become increasingly apparent that the wide variety of dynamics in the world church are simply too vast to be able to be managed under one world policy," said Robert S. Folkenberg, president of the General Conference, of the proposed changes.

As a result, large sections of the policy were deleted to allow divisions the freedom to set up their own guidelines. Neal C. Wilson, former General Conference president, cautioned against fragmenting the literature evangelism ministry too much, noting that some of those policies were used to defend the church's position during the Proctor antitrust lawsuit—that the church has the sole right to set policies on the pricing and distribution of Adventist-produced materials.

Other Actions in Brief

In other business, the General Conference Executive Committee:

- Voted to recommend to the GC session that the name of the Far Eastern Division be changed to the Asia-Pacific Division to more fully

reflect its territory, and to adopt wording that is both contemporary and without colonial connotations. The recommendation will go to the 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht, Netherlands, for final approval.

- Voted to declare 1997 as the Year of Health and Healing.

- Recommended to the GC session that the Zaire Union Mission be divided into the East Zaire Union Mission, with headquarters in Lubumbashi, and the West Zaire Union Mission, with headquarters in Kinshasa.

- Approved policies for organizing and discontinuing conferences, missions, unions, and unions of churches.

- Approved the formation of six formal discussion groups to be held at the 1995 GC session for delegates. These groups will provide world delegates the opportunity to give extended input and make recommendations on key issues facing the church.

The groups will discuss the use of Scripture in the life of the church; relationships among the community of believers; trends among Seventh-day Adventists in viewing the historicity/authority of the Bible; family violence; religious liberty; and initiatives to governmental, executive, legislative, and regulatory bodies regarding the import/export taxation and distribution of tobacco in light of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's historical position.

GC president Robert S. Folkenberg expects each group to prepare recommendations to help church leaders develop proactive plans in each area.

- Approved a document prepared by the GC Health and Temperance Department and the Institute of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency that highlights some alcoholism and illicit drug use among Adventists and proposes a strategic plan to address this problem.

The 22-page document, titled "Upholding Abstinence: Meeting a Global Challenge," was developed in response to findings in the General Conference Youth Survey and the 1993 World Survey Report that indicated some lessening of support among Adventists for abstinence from alcohol and illicit drug use.

The concept paper proposes that the world church uphold abstinence as a fundamental belief and recommends that each of the church's 11 divisions develop long-range plans to help make abstinence a core belief of all Adventists.

- Received a report on membership growth, delivered by Don Yost, director of the GC Department of Archives and Statistics. Yost says Adventist Church membership topped the 8 million member mark earlier this year. As of June 30, 1994, members totaled 8,173,663, up 5.8 percent from June 30, 1993.

For the 12 months ending June 30, the number of people joining the church through baptism and profession of faith was 650,864, up from 623,948 for the same period the year before.

The November 17 Adventist Review will report other actions from Annual Council, including the 1995 GC budget and other financial items, a report on the Communication Strategy Commission, proposed SDA Church Manual changes, and more actions from the Commission on World Church Organization.

During the next six months, the Adventist Review will provide background and perspective for all major agenda items slated for the 1995 GC session.

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:21, NKJV).

This promise to the church of Laodicea is one of the most amazing in all the Bible. Perhaps we've grown so accustomed to hearing about Laodicea's slipshod spiritual condition and dangerous complacency that we've forgotten how wonderful is the promise held forth to overcomers in Laodicea. But think of the exalted privilege of sitting down with Christ on His throne!

Scripture reveals at least five major blessings connected with this privilege:

1. The blessing of intimacy and communion with God in the heights of His majesty and power (see Jer. 17:12). God has condescended to meet us in our lowly estate, that we might be elevated to meet Him in His supreme glory, not as mere spectators of that glory, but as participants in it.

The invitation to sit with Christ on His throne is not a passing favor extended to us as tourists in a palace. Rather, it's a permanent investiture, signifying an eternal change of our status in the universe. Yet we will never think ourselves worthy of that honor, but will ascribe all majesty and praise to God, not to ourselves or to one another (Ps. 115:1; Rev. 5:11-14).

2. The blessing of learning from God. No greater seat of learning relative to temporal government can be found than in a nation's capital—from its official libraries, archives, and documents. By parity of reasoning, no greater seat of learning relative to the divine government can be found than the throne of

God, where the records of life are stored and from which all heavenly messengers are dispatched by a God who presides over the universe in supreme wisdom and love (Dan. 7:9, 10).

At the representation of this throne in the earthly sanctuary Moses met with God for instruction to guide the Israelite nation (Ex. 25:22). And at heaven's throne, in the sanctuary, we also meet with God for instruction, pardon, restoration, and peace (Heb. 4:15, 16; 6:19, 20; 10:19-22).

God's throne is the source of wisdom and good judgment (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 20:11, 12); from it goodness flows forth to fill every receptive heart. And to be on the throne hereafter with God means that we will be in eternal connection with the source of all truth and righteousness in the universe.

3. The blessing of joint heirship with Christ. No one is permitted to sit on the throne of God but members of God's royal family. And no one but the humble will be there (1 Peter 5:5, 6; Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:7-11). Our being placed with Jesus on His throne denotes our induction into the full privileges that

come with being sons and daughters of God (Eph. 2:6, 7). To be the son or daughter of a king is to be a prince or princess, not just in name, but in fact—it is to be a royal heir.

Those whose lives have been cleansed and transformed by the blood of the Lamb and who have known the fellowship of His sufferings (Rev. 1:5, 6; 5:9, 10; Phil. 3:10-14; 2 Tim. 4:5-8) will have this honor conferred upon them by the King of kings. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

When an earthly monarch dies, the eldest son or daughter is crowned the new king or queen. But Christ died for us and lives again, that we might be coheirs with Him on His throne forever. As coheirs our inheritance is a universe full of shared blessings exploited by none and enjoyed by all (Rev. 21:7).

4. The blessing of coregency with Christ. The redeemed on the throne of God reign with Him there (Rev. 1:5, 6; 5:9). One phase of that coregency will involve participation in the final work of judgment during the Millennium (Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 20:4).

An

The other side

Awesome of Christ's message to Laodicea Privilege

BY BRIAN JONES

Other aspects of our rulership with Christ have yet to be revealed. But we may be sure of this much—tyranny, pride, and self-promotion will have no part in this calling. Those who thirst for power here and use it ungraciously will never sit on the throne with Jesus. “For a throne is established by righteousness.” “Mercy and truth preserve the king, and by lovingkindness he upholds his throne” (Prov. 16:12; 20:28, NKJV).

One aspect of our reigning with Christ in future glory will be the joy of serving as His ambassadors to testify of the wonders of His redeeming love to a universe that has never experienced spiritual ruin, ransom, or reunion. Our testimony to unfallen worlds will make more vivid and inspiring to them the high achievements of Christ in His atoning work for us all (Heb. 2:9-13).


5. The blessing of victory through Christ. About those with Christ in the end, John wrote that “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of *their testimony*” (Rev. 12:11, NKJV). Overcomers are born-again people who put their faith not in themselves, but in Jesus. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he

that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4, 5; cf. 4:4).

The five glorious blessings enumerated above are signified by our sitting with Christ on His throne. They open to us the whole compass of eternity with its endless joys and privileges, all experienced in the closest imaginable partnership with God. God reveals these truths to whet our appetite for the glories of the world beyond.

To Those Who Follow

Now His throne is presented to us as Christ’s mercy seat, to which we may come freely at all times to receive mercy and grace to help in time of need. If we frequent His throne now as supplicants and learners, we will someday occupy it as priestly kings and queens, crowned with Christ’s righteousness, serving Him with resplendent honor and ineffable joy.

All this comes to Laodiceans who follow the victorious Captain of their salvation to triumph and victory. May the “eyes of [our] understanding [be] enlightened that [we] may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph. 1:18, 19, NKJV). 

Those who thirst

for power here

will never sit

on the throne

with Jesus.

An Awesome Privilege



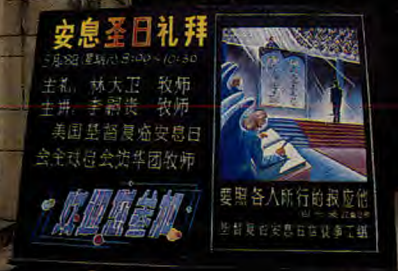
Brian Jones is a pastor serving in Frametown, West Virginia.

CHINA



ON TO SHANGHAI AND HANGZHOU

Vignettes of believers, evangelism, seminaries, and the new Adventist-run hospital.



BEYOND THE GREAT WALL



PART THREE



NANJING AND SHANGHAI—Our train is hot and crowded, but for almost five hours we savor our front-row seats in a travelogue-style ride south through China's rural countryside. Rice paddies, goose farms, luscious gardens, small towns, and manufacturing centers whirl past our sight.

We are nearing the end of our historic visit to the People's Republic of China (the first official Adventist delegation in more than 45 years), and our minds are filled with two weeks of unforgettable memories—of both the impressive country and the commitment of more than 157,000 Adventist believers.

For most of us, this trip is a dream come true. All the fascinating sights, sounds, and scents are new to first-timers like me. But for former missionaries Milton and Helen Lee, this trip is a homecoming. They were born here as children of missionaries, went to school together and courted here, and became missionaries themselves.

And our visits with government and Protestant church leaders have fulfilled a dream too—of asking and getting

Top: Pastor David Lin (left) and GC vice president Robert Kloosterhuis bring greetings to the 1,000-plus Adventist believers at the Shanghai church.

Center: A sign in the courtyard of the Shanghai church announces an upcoming Revelation Seminar.

Bottom: Pastor David Lin's bicycle is his main transportation on the busy streets of Shanghai.

some promises for filling the specific needs of Adventist believers (see part 2, in last week's issue).

So much could be said about our visit, from the scrumptious 20-course vegetarian meals (Chinese, of course!) to meeting with seminary students, viewing the world's tallest Buddha statue, and conversing with a Tibetan monk. But vignettes of our trip must do.

For our second Sabbath in China, our group worships with Adventist believers in three cities. I join the group attending the 1,000-member Shanghai Adventist congregation, where David Lin is pastor.

Elder Lin, now in his mid-70s, is a living example of those who refused to give up their faith during so many difficult years. He was imprisoned for six and a half years during the Cultural Revolution, and for another 18 years he had to work in state-run projects away from home.

I ask Elder Lin why he continues working here—since he could retire and with his wife join their married children in the United States. He replies that he feels half his life has been stolen from him and he wants to give what energy he has left to God's cause. What dedication! He is representative of so many other committed believers here. One pastor of a large congregation has asked to retire four times but can't because no one else is available to take his place.

Besides pastoring, Elder Lin has just finished a Chinese translation of Ellen White's book *The Desire of Ages*. It will soon be printed by China's only Christian press—the first Adventist book printed here since 1949.

As usual, worshipers pack the Shanghai church for worship and to hear a sermon from Elder Lee. After a delicious Chinese meal hosted by Bishop Shen and the National China Christian Council, we join the afternoon Bible study in the sanctuary with about 200 eager participants.

At the entrance to the Shanghai church (used by Adventists on Sabbath and others on Sunday) a big poster announces a Revelation Seminar (see photo). I am pleased to see such a poster—the first I've seen here—because the common type of public evangelistic seminars held in other countries is not allowed.

Any public evangelism in China must be done *in* churches and without advertising outside the church audience—that means no radio, TV, or newspaper ads, and no signs or brochures. The only good point is that such a policy has forced Christians to become personal soul winners among family and friends, and not wait for "professionals" to do their soul winning. The result is thousands of baptisms and a growing number of Adventist churches and house churches—more than 1,050.

Sunday morning I join GC vice president Robert Kloosterhuis as he preaches to more than 1,000 Christians at the All Saints church. And here we see our first group of children in church. Although Sunday schools don't exist for them, the church has formed a wonderful children's choir, which performs for our worship service.

The modern Amity Press, the sole Christian publisher in China, is the press that will print 10,000 copies of *The Desire of Ages* before the end of this year.

As we tour the press we learn that the publishing house has printed more than 2.5 million Bibles in the past two years. This year they are working hard to fill their largest order yet—2 million Bibles.

The director says that an incredible demand for Bibles, hymnals, and other Christian literature is outstripping their capacity. Praise God for the awakening in China to Christianity!

In Hangzhou we visit one of China's 13 seminaries and are elated to find two Adventist young people. Of the four seminaries that we have visited on this trip, we have found only three Adventists! Two of the three are women, which mirrors the overall enrollment in the 13 seminaries.

Eugene Hsu, GC liaison with Adventists in China, comments that women play a very important role in the work here. "They are the majority in Adventist congregations. Some of them pastor large congregations of more than 1,000 members. And they are especially active in leading house churches."

He notes that when women are ordained as local elders, they perform all the religious duties of a full-time pastor, including baptisms. "Sister Wu, who is 70-plus, baptized more than 500 persons in May of 1992, and 620 in June of 1993!" says Elder Hsu. "And Sister Su prepared 500 people for baptism in September of 1993!"

With all ordained Adventist pastors here (about 20) in their 70s and 80s, young seminary-trained Adventists are crucial to the future stability of Adventist beliefs in China. Yet many cannot come, or choose not to come, to the united Protestant seminaries.



Two Adventist seminarians (second and third from the right) are flanked by the young lady's father (right) and three Adventist pastors.

That's why our delegation held discussions with the Protestant leaders who oversee ministerial training to ask for new methods of training for Adventist believers. Please pray for this critical endeavor.

In Hangzhou we also visit the new 400-bed hospital that opened in December 1993 and is being administered by Adventists for five years as a teaching hospital in cooperation with the local province and medical school.

By any standard around the world, this is a first-class medical center, and probably the best in China. It was built with a donation from Hong Kong philanthropist Sir Run Run Shaw, who said he would fund it (here in his home province) only if Seventh-day Adventists would run it. Loma Linda University accepted the challenge of overseeing the construction and is now, with funding from the General Conference, coordinating the medical staffing.

As we don surgical robes, hats, and booties, we join hospital president Dr. David Fang for a tour of the surgical suite, peek in on a brain surgery in progress, and then tour the rest of the hospital and clinic. What a witness for Adventists!

BY MYRON WIDMER

Two weeks isn't enough to see everything in China, but it's sufficient to catch a glimpse of how God is working through Chinese Adventist believers to share the gospel in a land with more than 1 billion people who don't believe in *any* religion at all. Please pray for our Chinese believers and support those programs assisting Adventist believers in sharing the gospel.



Myron Widmer is an associate editor of the *Adventist Review*.

Helping Chinese Believers

BY EUGENE HSU

Chinese Adventist believers have successfully proclaimed the gospel for 45 years without personnel and financial assistance from abroad.

But years of complete isolation from the world church have deprived them of sharing many precious opportunities: the rich heritage of the Adventist movement, the abundance of religious literature, the systematic education and training of leaders and workers, and the inspiration from interacting with the rest of the church family.

Realizing the needs of Chinese Adventist believers, the Adventist Church has been working diligently to provide avenues of assistance. Here are a few.

■ **Literature Work.** Adventists are conducting an extensive publishing and literature ministry. Thousands of Bibles, Ellen White's and other religious books, pamphlets, and sermon and song tapes are sent into China every month. Most of the literature, of course, needs to be translated and printed in simplified Chinese characters.

■ **Radio Programs.** Each week, 124 hours of Chinese programming is prepared and then broadcast by Adventist World Radio's shortwave station KSDA

on Guam, including 44 hours of programming for newly created time slots. An additional 21 hours is broadcast from Siberia. The broadcasting is in four different languages: Mandarin, Cantonese, Fujianese, and Hakka. Tibetan is the newest language program currently in production.

Listeners send in hundreds of letters monthly, and many enroll in the Voice of Prophecy Bible school. Stories of conversions resulting from listening are told one after another.

■ **Training Courses.** Since the education and training of gospel workers is an urgent need in China, and since this must be done by local people, we can help develop materials outside China. A comprehensive training course for lay preachers is being prepared. We hope this will help train 1,000 of them in the next three years. In addition, the *College on the Air* program on AWR since 1993 offers systematic ministerial courses. About a dozen promising young ministerial students are studying in the Philippines and the United States.

■ **Language Teachers.** Since 1991, more than 150 English language teachers have been sent to China. In addition to teaching in government colleges and universities, they have done an enor-

mous amount of witnessing by their distinctive Adventist lifestyle. Many also have been able to give Bible studies, resulting in some baptisms.

■ **Health Programs.** Besides the Adventist-run hospital in Hangzhou, many Adventist health-care institutions outside China have established relationships with hospitals in China, sending teams of professionals to work with or to teach their Chinese counterparts.

Also, the China Project Organization, a group of Adventist health professionals led by Drs. Harvey Gimbel and Wayne McFarland, has provided 15 workshops and seminars since 1991 for health professionals on healthy lifestyles and health behavior change.

While many health programs sow gospel seeds that may bear fruit in the future, other health projects produce immediate results. The Yanji Sanitarium NEWSTART program, sponsored by Eden Valley Institute in Colorado, is one example. Since its opening in 1990, 300 patients have attended the live-in seminars. Seminars are conducted seven times yearly with 7-15 patients and 5-10 trainees. As a result, they have 275 Adventists attending 10 house churches.

■ **Community Work.** In the past few years Adventist Development and Relief Agency has begun some small community projects in China—well drilling, experimental apple orchards, and goose down and honey production.

We pray that all these community programs will break down barriers, establish friendships, and serve as the bridge for the acceptance of Jesus Christ in this land that is the most populous on earth and the greatest challenge to Christianity.



Eugene Hsu is the General Conference liaison with Adventist believers in China and secretary of the GC Eastern Asia Committee.

Learning From Our Mistakes



By Miriam Wood

Once in a while I receive a letter that is so on target that I must share it in its entirety.

Thirty-three years ago I married a man who was not a Christian. So when I read in this column about a woman engaged to marry someone not of her faith (*Adventist Review*, Feb. 24, 1994), I couldn't keep from saying something.

Through the years my husband has been very good to me. When we married, I thought I could change him. I tried hard to do so. But of course, it didn't work. Since then, I've tried only to be an example and pray for him.

However, it doesn't change the fact that at times I'm asked to cook food that I cannot in good conscience eat; sit through a TV program that to me is trash; or travel needlessly on the Sabbath. He watches TV during the Sabbath, so I spend that time reading in the bedroom.

I belong to a very small church, so there are no Friday evening services that I can attend, and no close friends to spend the Sabbath with. When I'm at church I am neither single nor married, so in a sense I don't fit into either group.

Every year I go to camp meeting, class reunions, and Sabbath services alone. I'm sure he feels as lonely as I do, because he goes to bars and other places alone. We don't share the same friends, we see eye-to-eye on very little, and our tastes grow further and further apart.

I know it isn't right to wish for something to end the relationship, but truthfully, there are times when I do. You spoke the truth when you said in your reply to the letter that "we have

to remember that Adventism is much more than a set of beliefs. It is a way of life."

I don't know how many people become Adventists *after* they are married. But if they do, I'm sure there's a "time of trouble" before it happens.

Dear one who wrote, pray much about the step you are about to take—and remember me.

As a young woman who works in one of our large institutions, I am both hurt and puzzled over a practice that may seem trivial, but it represents a mind-set that I don't understand.

When there are meetings in which both men and women participate, a chairman almost invariably introduces the men first. Then, when introducing the women, he often refers to them by their first names. Men are addressed by their titles, such as Doctor or Elder, but women are Mary or Sue or whatever.

Why are women not accorded the same dignity and respect as men? Is there any way to change this?

Perhaps your calling attention to this practice may effect a change where needed.

While I haven't personally encountered much of the sort of thing you describe, I have seen variations, such as a woman being introduced as Miss or Mrs. the first time, but from then on being referred to by her first name, while the men continue to be titled.

In some areas, and in some organizations, this is a habit that has been around for a long time. Trying to change it is like attempting to move a glacier with a little red wagon.

But try not to let this obvious discour-

tesy deny you the blessings that are there to be had, even though conditions are less than ideal.

During the past winter we had such bad weather (snow and ice, etc.) that one Sabbath few people were able to get to church. That day there was a shortage of Sabbath school teachers, and a certain man was asked to teach my class. He used to be a member of the church and he now attends regularly, although he gave up his membership for reasons I do not know.

He had obviously studied the lesson thoroughly, because he taught excellently. However, some of the members criticized the superintendent for asking a nonmember to teach. What do you think?

I understand the criticism of his being asked to teach, for the word "teacher" implies that the individual teaching subscribes to the material he/she is teaching. If one refuses to be a church member, clinging to his own opinions on certain doctrines, it seems quite contradictory to ask him to teach.

However, in an emergency things are done that would not occur under other circumstances. I would make sure that the pastor is aware of the situation and is working with the man toward rebaptism. Of course, if he refuses to make his declaration of loyalty to the Adventist Church, I don't think he should teach even in emergencies.

Miriam Wood, author of 16 books, is a retired English teacher whose lifelong hobby has been "observing human nature in all its complexity."

How Does the Church Make Decisions?

BY CARLOS MEDLEY

When the 1995 General Conference session meets in Utrecht, Netherlands, June 29 to July 8, approximately 2,600 delegates from the Adventist Church's 11 world divisions will be voting on scores of resolutions, guidelines, constitutional changes, policy amendments, and *SDA Church Manual* changes. Many world leaders will also be elected for the quinquennium.

As numerous items reach the floor for discussion and vote, their placement on the agenda represents the end of a long approval process that often takes months, and at times years, to complete.

The GC session, a world business meeting held every five years, brings together the church's largest governing body. No other meeting garners such a representative body from all areas of the world. However, agenda items for a GC session are normally determined at the Annual Council session that precedes it—in this case, the October 3-10, 1994, meeting.

The resolutions must go through a number of committees before reaching the GC session. Usually they are made at the request of a division or department of the General Conference. To illustrate the process, here are two items that could very



well be discussed in Utrecht.

Far Eastern Division Name Change. In 1993 Adventist leaders in the Far Eastern Division (FED) discussed the possibility of a name change. "The term *Far East* is a colonial term that comes out of a period when the British controlled the area," says Larry Colburn, an associate secretary of the General Conference. "It has negative connotations. People often ask, 'Where are we far east from? Certainly not Singapore or Japan.'"

"Today the territory within the division is more commonly referred to as the Asia-Pacific region. So

our leaders want the division's name to reflect this," Colburn explains.

To gain input from area church leaders, the division polled each of its 12 unions. In November 1993, at the division's year-end business session, FED president P. D. Chun reported on the findings of the survey. The division then sent a request to the General Conference Secretariat for a name change to the Asia-Pacific Division.

The Secretariat staff voted its approval and forwarded the request to the General Conference Administrative Committee in early 1994. From there the request went to the General Conference Division Officers and Union Presidents Committee (GCDOUP), which approves every item

for the GC Committee's Spring Meeting.

Though FED officials had hoped to begin using the new name this year, members of the General Conference Executive Committee felt the item should go to the Utrecht GC session.

In order for this item to get on the GC session agenda, it must be placed on the agenda for the Annual Council meeting October 3-10, 1994. Before final approval of the Annual Council, it must again be approved by the GCDOUP Committee.

By the time the action is finally discussed in Utrecht, eight committees will have seen the item within a period of 20 months.

SDA Church Manual Changes. The GC session is the only time that changes to the *SDA Church Manual* can be approved. Here again, the changes come to the session only after a long approval process.

Currently the General Conference's Church Manual Committee (CMC) is proposing an amendment that would alter Chapter 14, which outlines procedures to be used in organizing and disbanding churches.

The proposed modifications would delete all the words "disband" and "disbandment," substituting "dissolve," "dissolution," or "expulsion" in their place. The changes also would bring clearer procedures for a conference to follow in expelling a church for disciplinary reasons.

The proposed changes came in response to suggestions made by the General

Sign In, Please

If you're planning on attending the General Conference session in Utrecht next summer—even if you're not a delegate—you will be asked to sign in at the Find-a-Friend area.

Identification badges will be given to all delegates and guests, guaranteeing their admission into the auditorium and exhibit halls. A record of the names of delegates and visitors will also assist in the locating of individuals in case of emergencies.

Conference Office of General Counsel. Robert W. Nixon, the Adventist Church's general counsel, said some of the current procedures for disbanding churches are ambiguous. In March 1993 he suggested to the GC Secretariat that the *Church Manual* Committee examine Chapter 14.

The *Church Manual* Committee began its work on the amendment on May 11, 1994. The proposal then went to the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on May 31. ADCOM did not accept the proposal, and sent it back to the *Church Manual* Committee for revisions. On July 28 the CMC discussed the amendment again, making further changes, and sent the revised document back to ADCOM.

On August 9 ADCOM referred the document back to CMC a second time for more revisions. CMC discussed the item again on August 31. A subcommittee was appointed to work on the document again.

While this article was being written, the

subcommittee was doing its work. If the group successfully completes the changes, the new revision will go to the GCDOP Committee, which would either refer the amendment back to CMC or recommend it to the 1994 Annual Council meeting. At that meeting the document could still be referred back to CMC, or be recommended to the Utrecht session. By the time this item reaches Utrecht it will have been discussed in eight committee meetings over a period of more than a year.

This process by no means can prevent new items from arising from the GC session floor. However, these procedures do limit them, and it helps to prevent chaos in such a large gathering.

Maurice Battle, an associate secretary of the General Conference, explains: "It is necessary that church leaders from around the world give their input before an item reaches the GC session, in order to maintain unity and ensure that policies are workable in the church's diverse language

and ethnic groups.

"With churches in more than 200 countries, we must make sure that the items are relevant to our members everywhere."

Building a worldwide consensus isn't easy. It takes repeated negotiation, dialogue, and diplomacy. And time is often the most effective tool to use to craft a strong, solid, and wise decision.

For information about everything from travel to lodging to ground transportation to the General Conference session, call Travel Lite Company at (800) 327-8338.



Carlos Medley is an assistant editor of the Adventist Review.

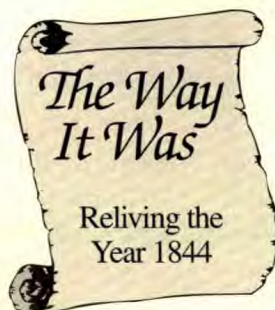
Only Hours Left!

Just two more days until Jesus' return! Excitement and sober reflection characterized the Millerites, who awaited His coming.

For years Millerite leaders urged believers to heed Jesus' counsel to "occupy till I come." In 1843 the editors of the *Signs* advised "that all should act conscientiously, and pursue their business just as they would wish to be found employed whenever the Lord may appear."¹ Although some leaders eventually changed their minds and urged people to sell some or all of their possessions,² William Miller never adopted such a position.³

But now with the long-awaited day just before them, many Millerites did in fact quit their jobs or cut way back. They wanted time to witness to nonbelievers as well as to prepare their own hearts for the cataclysmic day.⁴

The *Midnight Cry* dated October 19, 1844, included an editorial that urged: "Think for eternity! Thousands may be lulled to sleep by hearing your actions say: 'This world is worth my whole energies. The world to come is a vain shadow.' Oh, reverse this practical sermon, *instantly!* . . . If indispensable duty calls you into the world for a moment, go as a man would run to do a piece of work in the rain. Run and hasten through it, and let it be known that you leave it with alacrity for something better. Let your actions preach in the clearest tones: 'The Lord is



coming.' 'The time is short.' 'This world passeth away.' 'Prepare to meet thy God.'"⁵

Each responded in his or her own way. Many believers followed the advice of Joseph Marsh and George Storrs, two of the more outspoken leaders, and sold or gave away their possessions.⁶ Others, like Miller, who had expended so much of his own time and money through the years, did not sell their farms or homes.⁷ In cities

and villages shopowners closed their stores; children were pulled out of school.⁸ Some believers in New Hampshire had not planted crops in the spring of 1844.⁹ Now with time so short, a few of those who did plant in the spring did not harvest their crops before the Lord's expected return.¹⁰ Through word and deed, faithful Millerites were testifying that they believed Jesus really was coming.

¹ Quoted in George Knight, *Millennial Fever* (1993), p. 206.

² See Knight, pp. 206-210.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴ See F. D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (1944), pp. 251, 252.

⁵ Quoted in Nichol, p. 236.

⁶ See Knight, p. 207.

⁷ See Knight, p. 210.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ A. W. Spalding, *Footprints of the Pioneers* (1947), pp. 70-72; J. O. Cortiss, "Joseph Bates as I Knew Him," *Review and Herald*, Aug. 16, 1923, p. 7.

By James R. Nix, associate secretary, Ellen G. White Estate.

GUIDE'S GREATEST STORIES

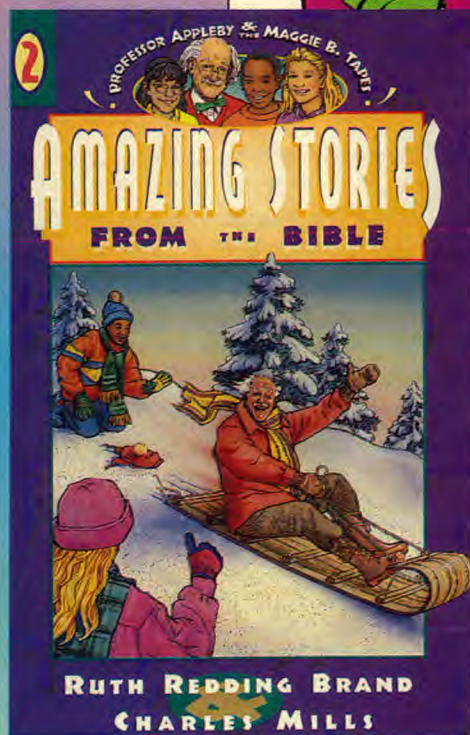
Especially
for Young
Readers



by Randy Fishell

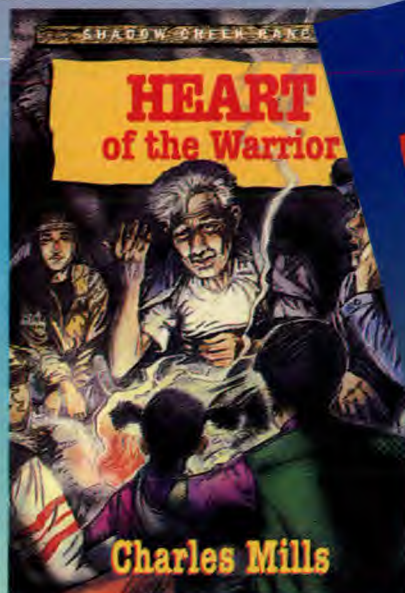
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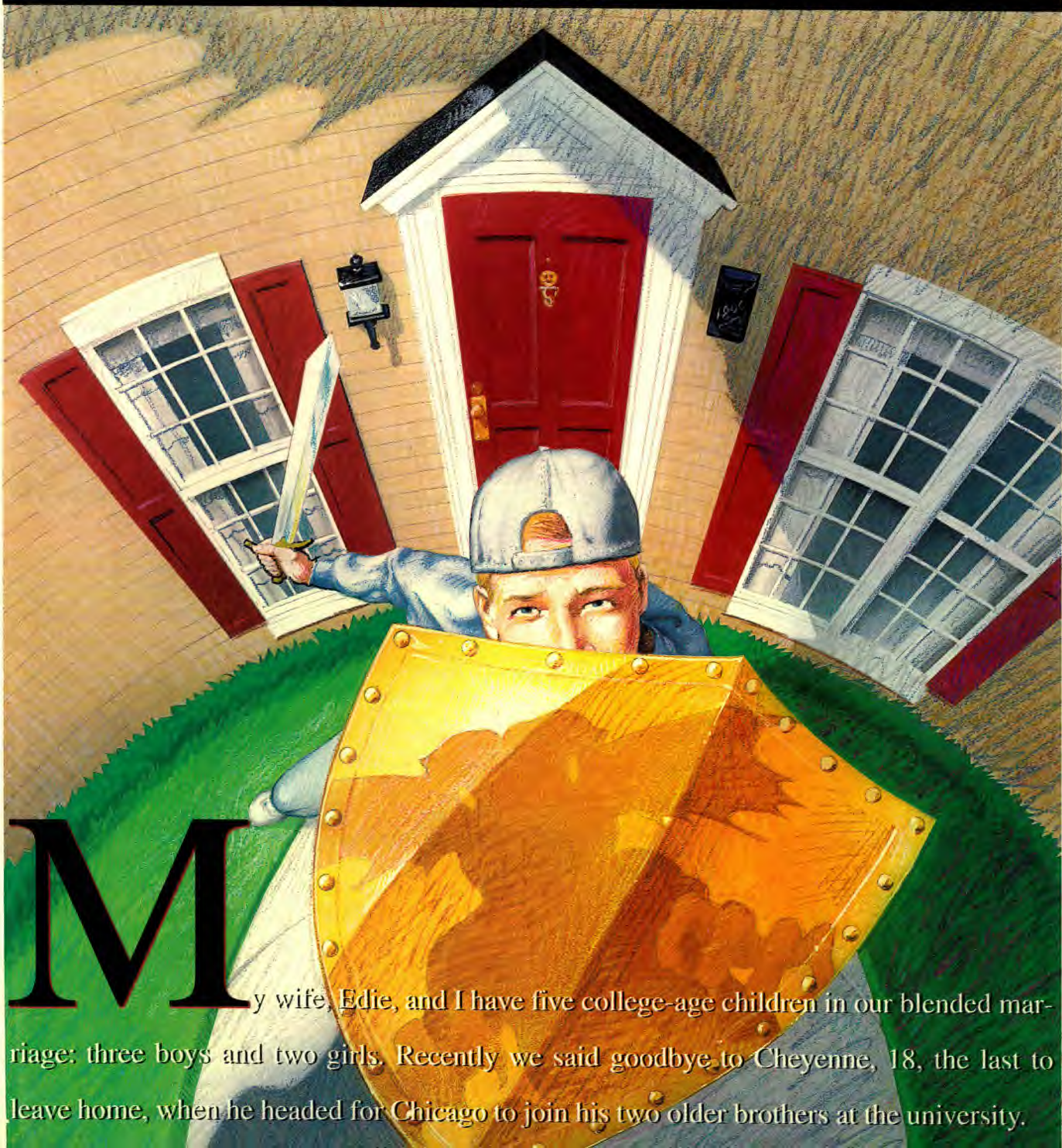
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Loose Among the Dragons

BY JERIS BRAGAN

*The challenge
of letting go of
our children as
they grow up*



My wife, Edie, and I have five college-age children in our blended marriage: three boys and two girls. Recently we said goodbye to Cheyenne, 18, the last to leave home, when he headed for Chicago to join his two older brothers at the university.

In the midst of anxiety and nervousness, he forgot to hug his mother as he rushed off to the plane. Tears filled her eyes from hurt feelings.

"Boys his age are like that," I said, remembering a similar oversight on my part when I left home for the first time. "Don't be surprised if you get some extra hugs when he comes home on vacation."

Three months later he was back, and I was right.

Parenthood is a mixed blessing. Intermingled with the joy of birth, first smiles and steps, graduations, and marriage, there are dirty diapers and terrible twos, followed all too quickly by the anxiety and restless nights of the terrible teens.

Letting Go

But maybe the hardest part of parenthood is simply turning children loose. Physically, a mother first turns her baby loose when it's delivered. But that only begins the process. We turn loose when we first leave the baby with a sitter, when we first leave her at the church nursery, and when he leaves for his first day of kindergarten.

Inevitably—and so quickly—"How was school today?" has to be asked long distance, and too soon we're asking about new jobs and grandchildren.

The mother of Moses faced this problem of turning loose 3,500 years ago. When she couldn't hide her baby from the soldiers any longer, she made a little basket of bulrushes, daubed it with pitch, and put Moses in it. Trusting Moses to God's care, she turned the basket loose in the reeds along the Nile River, where Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe.

So quickly time passes for us, and then—like Moses' mother—we have to put our own children in some poorly woven little basket of experience and set them adrift in a risky world. Knowing how dangerous this world is, how can we keep bringing newborn infants into life?

1. We can trust God as we turn children loose.

Ancient mapmakers used to decorate the edges of their maps—out beyond the explored areas of continent and ocean—with fearful pictures and the words "*Here be dragons!*"

Out in the unknown of time, out in our children's tomorrows, *here be dragons*, and their names are Nuclear War, AIDS, Violence, and Economic Uncertainty. Most of us with teenagers have lain awake at night listening as the midnight sirens wail, wondering about the dragons.

If you've ever been a parent, you know immediately how Moses' mother must have felt when she set her baby adrift on the waters of the Nile. Parenthood comes riddled with anxiety and fear under the best of circumstances. And young parents are so new at it! God puts the hard job of raising a baby in the hands of two kids who have never done it before, and it all moves so quickly.

In so many ways our children start leaving us long before we've woven their baskets tightly enough. There's always a little more pitch to be daubed on to make them safe. But while we're weaving baskets and mixing pitch, they're already leaving, drifting right out through the reeds into a hostile, often unfriendly world.

From Moses' time to our own, it has been the painful task of parents to overcome their anxieties, to trust God and His world enough to start turning loose, to wait patiently and see what comes among the reeds of the future to claim them.

2. It's worth the risk.

If you wonder whether it's wise to bring a child into the world, ask the same question about your parents. Should they have brought *you* into the world? Was life any easier back in the turbulent twenties, the depressed thirties, the violent forties, or fifties, or sixties? Should they have decided the risks were too great?

Moses' mother had to put him adrift on the river in a fragile basket. When our own children leave home, we also feel they are too young, too much at risk.

I saw a cartoon that showed the end of a game. A bystander was scolding the winning couple and saying, "You wouldn't have won if you'd played it safe." Ironically, those who have made the greatest achievements in history would not have won if they had played it safe.

This is true not only of history but of our own lives. The chances are, for example, that if any of us had played it safe, we wouldn't have married when we did.

Richard Armour wrote a poem that portrayed a bride "stooped over her cane," whose footsteps are feeble and halting, on her way to marry a groom who "in a wheelchair comes riding."

Who are these frail and failing lovers now at last meeting at the altar? They are, Armour confides, that rare couple "who waited till they could afford it."

The same thing is true of babies. There is no convenient time to have a baby. There never was. The greatest Baby of all was born at a very inconvenient time: the parents were on a journey, and there was no room for them at the inn.

Risk produces life. Most of us know that whatever muscles we've grown, whatever strength we've developed, whatever character we've gained, it has emerged as a consequence of our struggle with life's many dragons. And we prevailed in that struggle because someone trusted us and God enough to turn loose, sending us on our way out through the reeds of life.

3. God's grace is sufficient.

Suddenly we're not just talking about parents and their newborn—we're talking about all of us who are dealing with life's challenge.

Right now, for all of us, the certainties and uncertainties pull at each other. The known and the unknown dance continually together in our lives, one leading at one moment, the other the next.

Sometimes I think we don't give ourselves enough credit. It takes courage to live this life, to move out through the reeds toward an uncertain future. But that is the wonder of life and the meaning that comes in the struggle.

Yes, there *are* many uncertainties. No, we don't know exactly how the journey will turn out. But faith keeps us risking and trying.

John Bisagno said: "Faith is the heart of life. You go to a doctor whose name you cannot pronounce. He gives you a prescription you cannot read. You take it to a pharmacist you have never seen. He gives you a medicine you do not understand, yet you take it—all in sincere, trusting faith."

And that describes Moses' parents as they set him adrift among the reeds. It describes Moses as he struggled to free his people. It describes David as he fought, Amos as he preached, and Jesus as He died.

It's never all ease and success for God's children. Life isn't like that. It's a mixture of joy and sorrow, achievement and failure—all surrounded by the love of Christ. Fears, yes, but hopes too. And in the blend of the two, we find life taking on joy and meaning for us.

So send those little ones out with your love. Cast them adrift, for here among the dragons is thanksgiving and generosity, courage and loyalty, family and friends, jobs worth doing and grandchildren and retirement.

And always, even among the dragons, we have the sure faith that God "will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge" (Ps. 91:3, 4, RSV).



Jeris Bragan writes from Nashville, Tennessee.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Watching for Nessie

BY EDNA MAE OLSEN

The Loch Ness monster, "Nessie" as it is affectionately called, is known the world over as the mysterious creature that inhabits Loch (Lake) Ness in Scotland.

The story of this monster isn't new. History records reports of Nessie being seen as long ago as A.D. 565. Since then, countless stories have been told about the creature's appearance. Ancient documents more than 600 years ago describe "an enormous fish without fins" that struck fear into those who worked on or lived near the lake.

Sixty years ago an amateur photographer claimed to have taken a picture of

Nessie gliding through the water, moving about 20 miles an hour and then disappearing into the lake's deep, dark depths. Though fuzzy, the photograph appears to show an enormous eellike creature with a small head and four shiny black humps.

Few people claim to have actually seen Nessie, despite the fact that thousands visit the lake every year in the hope of catching a glimpse of it. Amateur photographers and Nessie watchers, biologists, and other professional people from all over the world keep a constant vigil beside the lake hoping to spot the monster. Vast

rewards have been offered for valid information on it. Boats patrol the more than 700-foot-deep lake equipped with complicated sounding devices in an effort to lure shy Nessie out of hiding. Despite all the hours spent searching for the monster, it refuses to show itself.


Isn't it astonishing how many people devote so much time to waiting and watching for something that may not even exist! People watch and wait for all sorts of things. But soon the greatest spectacle the world has ever seen will burst upon us—the return of Jesus to this earth in great glory. "Every eye shall see him"—not just a privileged few. Yet how few people watch and wait for Jesus. The Bible talks a lot about watching and waiting, not for some trivial thing, but for the great and glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus.

Those watching for Nessie are often disappointed, but it doesn't deter them from continuing to stare at the waters of the lake. Let those of us who are waiting for Jesus be as alert and awake as the Nessie watchers in Scotland. Jesus is coming again—soon!

AS SPECULATION
BUILDS, LET'S KEEP
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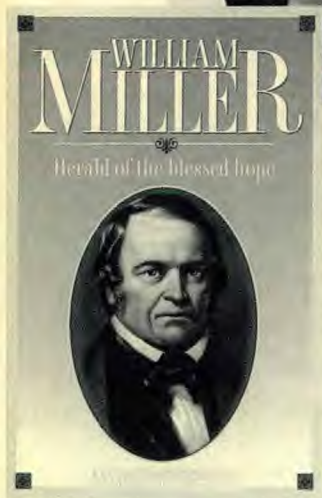
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Images of God

One of God's clear commands to the Israelites was that they should not make "any graven image."¹ Inhabitants of the surrounding nations regularly bowed down to images of animals. Israel was to be distinct. On Sabbath, their worship day, the Israelites were to focus their minds on the Creator, not on a man-made object.

Help and Hindrance

Strange, then, that a little later in Jewish history God commanded Moses to make a serpent out of bronze and put it on a pole. Anyone who was bitten and looked at it would be saved from the venomous bites of a plague of snakes.²

It was almost inevitable that some people would think that the bronze serpent had magic powers. And they did. A form of worship developed around it. They burned incense to it. It was King Hezekiah who finally decided that enough was enough. The king destroyed the very bronze serpent that Moses had made.³

This is often the way with images: the Infinite is so far beyond our comprehension that we need help to focus on God. An image can help us to do that. But attention often switches from God to the image. We begin to worship the image.

We all do it. In some religious traditions the images are physical objects that worshipers venerate. For others the images are of a more subtle type. They are the concepts we use to think about God. These concepts can provide positive or negative images.

Among the most common positive images is that of friend—God, our Father, friend, or bodyguard—always there and on our side in time of need.

Maybe we think of God as a counselor or refuge—someone we can run to with our problems. Perhaps we see God as a team coach who keeps us and our team ready for action. Or maybe an artist or gardener who always creates the best effect with the materials available.

There are also many negative images of God. Some see God as the everlasting policeman, unsmiling and ready to impose fines for



Some see God

as the ultimate

senior citizen—

wise but lacking

in excitement.

any infringement of the law. Some see God as the ultimate senior citizen—full of wisdom but lacking a sense of excitement.

Or perhaps God is a sort of eternal assembly line worker, interested in mass-producing disciples who will pass quality control. Maybe God is a judge ready to hand out stiff sentences, or a referee who seeks fair play.

If we are honest we will admit that we operate with these kinds of images. Many of them are helpful. None of them are adequate. A victim of child abuse will have difficulty with the idea that God is like a father. Those mourning the premature loss of a child will have difficulty with the image of God as bodyguard.

We need to be able to say "God is like this," or we shall be left with a very abstract understanding of God. But inevitably our God is too small—our pictures of God are, that is. We focus on one image and exclude another.

The greatest danger is that we make God in our own image. We exactly reverse the arrangement at Creation. We suppose that God approves of the people, things, values, and attitudes that we like. We believe that God disapproves of the things that we reject.

It is an error religious people have always fallen into. This is not just a theoretical matter. Our images of God have great practical importance, for they deeply affect our lifestyle and the way we treat others—particularly those who disagree with us. They influence the habits of thought and action we adopt.

Our pictures of God are too small. Like Hezekiah, we need to learn when it is time to destroy our inadequate images and find new, more helpful ways to see God for ourselves.

¹ Ex. 20:4.

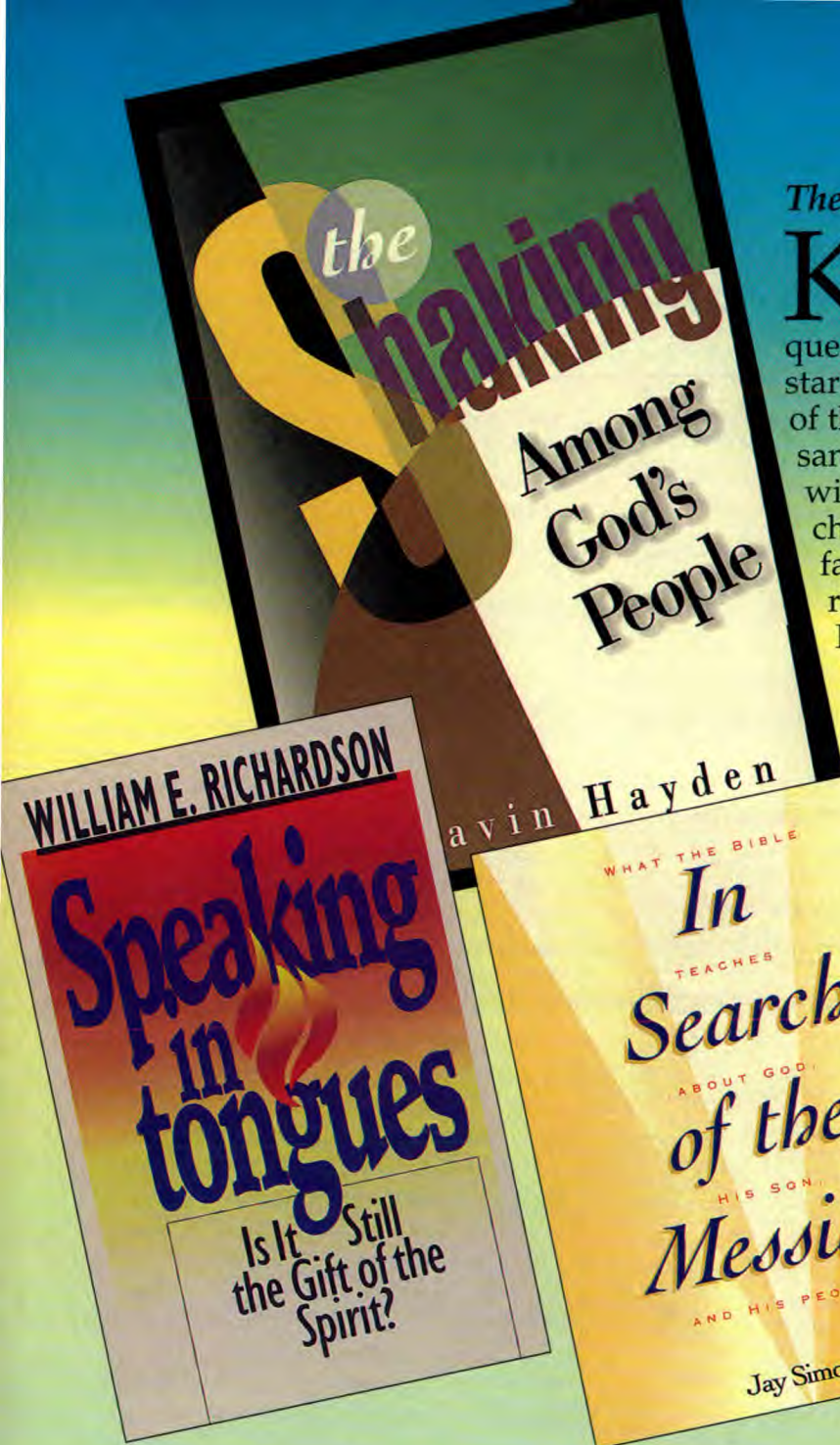
² See Num. 21:4-9, RSV.

³ 2 Kings 18:4.



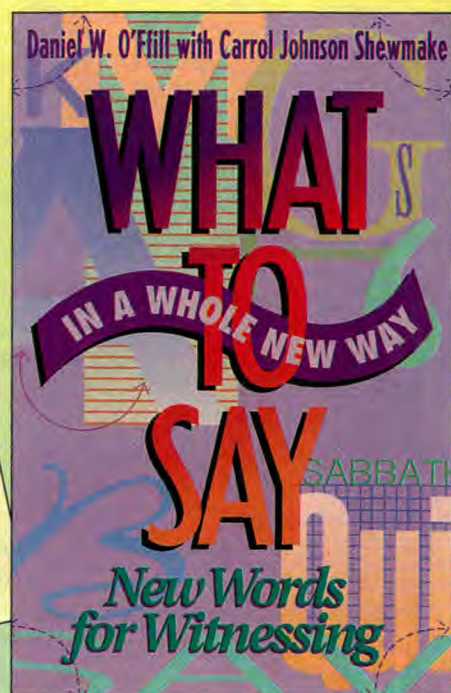
Michael Pearson is author of the book Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas and is head of the Department of Theological Studies at Newbold College in England.

BY MICHAEL PEARSON



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