

# Who's in charge here?

By DEAN MERRILL

Modern life has invented a new verb called *stressing*. It means you're concerned, upset, troubled, worried, uneasy. When 17-year-olds say things such as, "I'm really stressing about my calculus test tomorrow," I know what they mean. I stress too—only about different things: the darkness in our culture, the way things seem to be sliding into an ever-worsening swamp.

With bad news breaking every day about our government, popular entertainment, crime rate, sinking level of morality...where is God? Is He still sovereign? Of course we affirm the doctrine, but what does it really mean in the 1990s?

Every Christian I've met believes God was in charge of this world at the beginning: He was the all-wise and all-powerful Creator in Genesis 1.

Similarly, there is widespread agreement that God will be in charge

of this world at the end. One day He will sit as Judge of every man, woman, boy, and girl. No one will argue with His decisions on that fateful day. Our eter-

nal destiny will rest in His hands.

But what about here and now, in the interim? Is He in charge of the present, or has He sort of lost His grip momentarily? Has America spun off into a renegade orbit of which He is unaware, or else impotent to correct?

I don't believe that, and neither do you. Then why do we act that way?

In thousands of churches every week, Christians stand and sing the popular chorus, "Our God reigns, our God reigns..." (Isaiah 52:7). But by the time they've scanned the Sunday paper after lunch, they're right back to stressing about what the local school board did the previous week or what the latest tax reform bill failed to include.

This is the New Evangelical Deism, after the philosophy of the 18th century that said God had perhaps created the universe in the beginning but then wound it up like a clock and left it to run on its own. The deists looked around and said, in essence, "There's nobody here to manage things but us. We're in charge for the foreseeable future. God, if there is still a God, is too far away to get involved." Such a perspective is clearly unbiblical.

Have our actions become deist, even while our creed remains orthodox?

It is time for us once again to hear the thunderous voice from Sinai: "The whole earth is mine..." (Exodus 19:5, NIV).

It is time for us to quake at the declaration of Job, whose personal suffering didn't becloud his spiritual perception when he said: "His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed? He moves mountains

without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble.... If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?' " (Job 9:4-6,12).

Catch the bemused sarcasm of the Lord: "If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it" (Psalm 50:12).

This is the God preached by Paul to the skeptical crowd at Athens: "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24). Paul had the nerve to declare that fact in the midst of the world center for philosophy and academics, teeming with all sorts of pagan theories. "My God is the one in charge," he insisted.

God has not lost His sovereign grip on the scepter of the universe. He is still Lord of all.

Granted, He puts up with a lot of nonsense in His domain. We want Him to strike flamboyant sinners dead in their tracks. God seems to say, *Don't rush Me. I'll get around to dealing with each dictator, each rock star, each abortionist, each adulterer in My own time. You'll see.*

As a Steven Curtis Chapman song says, "The Lord of the gentle breeze is Lord of the rough and tumble, and He is the King of the jungle." It's a pretty crazy rain forest where you and I live, with all sorts of scary sounds and prowling beasts. But the Lion of the Tribe of Judah is still in charge. And He is not even close to stressing. ■

Dean Merrill serves as vice president of International Bible Society. He attends Living Springs Worship Centre (Assemblies of God) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where Bob N. Towell, Jr., is pastor.

