

Good advice for young people

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Taking Control: A guide for youth.

Various authors.

Published under the auspices of various Melbourne ecclesias by Printland Publishers, India.

Available via the Printland Website, www.printlandpublishers.com.

Price: £1.20, inclusive of postage. Credit card payment facilities are available.

FOR MANY DECADES the Brotherhood has recognised the need for books which specifically address the challenges young people face in the modern world. Examples from earlier decades include Brother Alfred Nicholls' *Youth at the Crossroads* and Brother George Booker's *A New Creation*. Although the Word of God and human nature do not change, the evolving nature of society means the challenges young people face express themselves in different ways. For this reason there is a need to vary the way in which the challenges are addressed to ensure the message remains relevant and accessible.

In Melbourne in the 1960s a group of ecclesias published a booklet entitled *Youth and Life*, the authors of which were Brother David Goodman and Brother Dave Walker. In 1997 this work was revised and updated under the guidance of Brother Rob Hyndman. That new edition, published by the Sunday School Superintendents of the Blackburn, Boronia, Canterbury, Chirnside Park, Clayton, Ringwood and Tecoma ecclesias, is entitled *Taking Control: A guide for youth* and, like its predecessor, is aimed at teenagers. The booklet was reprinted in 2006 by Printland Publishers in India.

Comprising thirty-four chapters in only thirty-five pages, the booklet uses straightforward lan-

guage to discuss a range of topical issues. Practical advice is offered to assist young people in their walk. As an example, a short chapter on prayer is followed immediately by one entitled "An action plan for improving your praying". Consecutive chapters on sport, drinking, smoking and drugs are followed very appropriately by a chapter on coping with temptation. The brief nature of the chapters and the relatively simple syntax of the sentences enhance readability, especially for young readers. The use of modern graphic art also adds to the appeal of the booklet to its target audience.

An example of how challenges for this age group have evolved may be seen in the book's handling of marriage. The original work from the 1960s included sections on marriage and weddings. These were especially relevant for teenagers in the 1960s when the average age at which people married was much lower. They have been omitted from the more recent publication, although there is still a chapter on engagements. (The preface makes the point that marriage is dealt with in other works, of which Brother Harry Tennant's *Steps to True Marriage* is an example.) On the other hand, sections on television, videos and homosexuality have been added.

It is a real challenge to discuss complex issues briefly and in simple language, but the compilers have largely achieved this goal. The chapter on baptism might have placed more emphasis on the putting to death of the old man rather than concentrating on it almost as a rite of initiation. It would also have been interesting to know the source of an extremely powerful quote from a geologist on page 15.

These are, however, very minor reservations and they do not detract from the great value of the booklet. It is heartily recommended to young people, their parents and all who work with youth.