

# From the G.C. President

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**O SEQUEL:** The intellectual property of the church, such as copyrights and trademarks, requires our careful stewardship. Leadership is ever mindful of the importance of these assets; and of our continued responsibility, on behalf of all church members, to protect them from misuse.

You may recall in the February 4 edition of *From the G.C. President*, I expressed concern and frustration with persons who acted in such a way as to put in jeopardy the church's intellectual property. I am pleased to report that the Spirit of God has moved in a positive manner resolving one of the problems identified. As a consequence, an organization which had been providing a CD-ROM product containing some of the writings of Mrs. White, which we believe used materials belonging exclusively to the Ellen G. White Estate, announced it will discontinue the production and sale of this product. The Ellen G. White Estate, in turn, has agreed to allow any who had purchased their product to upgrade to its updated Version 3.0 CD-ROM, expected later in the year. I am grateful for the way God has led and the Spirit manifested by all parties in reaching this decision.

**O ON A PERSONAL NOTE:** A pleasant, but very busy weekend at two colleges wrapped up a week dominated by endless hours at the computer trying to catch up with a seemingly interminable backlog of writing tasks. It was the frenzied pressure and pace of last week's activities that led me to skip last week's edition of *From the G.C. President*—for which I apologize. To conclude last week, Friday I traveled to Pacific Union College to celebrate alumni homecoming festivities.

(With tongue placed firmly in cheek) I acknowledge feeling only somewhat slighted that my quasi-alumnus-status was overlooked or unrecognized (was this deliberate?) in spite of being the **only** aviation student to secure a commercial helicopter rating with their aircraft—a dubious honor the uniqueness of which (like Humpty Dumpty) was due to the unfortunate, untimely, ignominious, undignified, yet irreversible demise suffered by the helicopter shortly after it completed its service on my behalf. (Now back to reality!)

My time at PUC was fully utilized: Friday evening I spent a couple of hours with the theology faculty; met Sabbath morning for an hour with most of the theology students; spoke for the worship service (distributed by satellite to the North American Division); fellowshipped with the administrative team over lunch; participated in a 90-minute discussion (with a panel and large group of students and faculty) regarding the Annual Council action on "Total Commitment to God"; and finally, participated in an hour-long interview over KCDS (PUC's college station) responding to the questions of those who called in with questions or observations.

Immediately upon concluding the radio broadcast, I was driven to San Francisco to catch a flight to Southern California in order to attend several Sunday morning meetings at La Sierra University. The next morning, Dr. Charles Teel, professor of Religion and Society and director of the Stahl

Center for World Missions, showed me a few of the highlights and memorabilia of Fernando and Anna Stahl—pioneer missionaries to Peru and the Amazon. Afterwards, I spent some pleasant and productive time with the staff of the La Sierra University Church followed by a meeting with the university's administrative team and the religion faculty. The theme of both gatherings was to clarify the objectives and processes which underlie the '96 Annual Council action on "Total Commitment to God" insofar as it is applicable to congregations and institutions of higher learning.

It's Sunday afternoon and I am drafting this segment during a flight whose excess bumps and scheduled midnight arrival are smoothed by the comfort of being homeward bound!

**O BUMPER STICKER** (seen during Friday's drive to Pacific Union College) which captures the essence of modern society's obsession with image over substance: **"Jesus is coming—look busy."**

## Off the Back Burner

**Segment #61:** We have noted in previous segments Ellen White's regard for common sense. But for Ellen White common sense, informed by a plain "Thus saith the Lord," was God's way of helping us apply truth while considering time, place and circumstance. Far from being a nineteenth century version of "situation ethics," Ellen White's appeal to common sense always began with a "Thus saith the Lord" and always led the child of God to reflect the character of Jesus.

Her appeal to God's honor and human responsibility related to every area of a Christian's life. For example, what to do when sincere people make styles of dress a matter of church debate. Again biblical principle and common sense provided good counsel: "The dress question is not to be our present truth ... Follow the customs in dress so far as they conform to health principles. Let our sisters dress plainly ... having the dress of good, durable material, appropriate for this age, and let not the dress question fill the mind" (Bio., Vol. 4, p. 333).

She showed her humor on one occasion as she described the careless dress of some women: "Their clothing often looks as if it flew and lit upon their persons" (CG:415). Or, "Sisters ... should not put on clothing which would make them look like images to frighten the crows from the corn" (1T:464).

Far from being a killjoy or a cranky "saint," Ellen White was known by her contemporaries as the sunshine of her home and a trusted counselor. Her appeal to hope rather than fear, always mingling duty with common sense, led many individuals, in their personal lives as well as in their church duties, to trust this messenger from the Lord.