

From the G.C. President

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O DATELINE INDIA: Last week I joined Neal Wilson and Lowell Cooper (immediate past president and associate secretary of the General Conference assigned to Southern Asia) in India to report to the Southern Asia Division Executive Committee regarding the health of Dr. M.E. Cherian, president of the Southern Asia Division. Since Dr. Cherian suffered an aneurysm and faced major brain surgery earlier this year, I asked Pastors Wilson and Cooper to travel to India, meet with Dr. Cherian and his family and consult with the specialists who are caring for him, as well as the chairman of Loma Linda University's department of neurology, to ascertain Dr. Cherian's ability to lead this challenging division. Though any decision dealing with a vice president of the General Conference must be made by the GC Executive Committee, it was appropriate that the Southern Asia Division committee be fully informed regarding the information gathered and the recommendation that, for the sake of both Dr. Cherian's recovery and to address the major issues facing this division, the GC Committee should elect a new division president.

Though the GC Committee has neither received nor acted upon the report, we did begin the initial consultation process for the selection of a new president as defined by GC Policy. Please continue to remember Dr. Cherian in your prayers that his recovery will progress so he can continue to offer the division the benefit of many decades of experience and vision.

✓ **Mission service celebrated:** During the worship service last Sabbath morning at Spicer Memorial College, we celebrated Pastor and Mrs. Gordon Jenson's mission service of more than 48 years in India. They began their service in India in 1948 and, except for a break of about one year, have continuously served God's cause in India in pastoral ministry, various secondary schools and, for the last 20 years or so, at Spicer Memorial College. The demonstration of affection from the young people at Spicer provided ample evidence that Gordon and Betty Jenson have touched the lives of countless young people with their love.

✓ ***It Is Written* blankets India:** Near the end of '95 Pastor Mark Finley called me about the opportunity to blanket India with the *It Is Written* weekly telecast. Since then millions of this subcontinent have been able to hear the Word of God. *It Is Written's* effectiveness is evidenced by the letters received each week at the Communication Center in Pune.

✓ **Spicer Memorial College,** the Southern Asia Division's premier educational institution, with a heritage of providing high quality education at a very low cost, is facing serious growing pains. I visited the women's dormitory, built to hold 150 students, but which today houses over 600. Sleeping two to a bed, with many more on the floor and even under the stairs, the young ladies desperately need housing relief.

✓ **Global Mission Pioneers:** Almost 200 Global Mission Pioneers completed their training prior to serving for the next four years to establish congregations in 100 unentered areas of the Southern Asia Division. These Pioneers will serve in Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldiv Islands, the Andaman and Nicobar Island Regions. Last week 40 of the 50 teams began working in the northern India Hindu state of Haryana.

O ALBANIA: Monday, April 21, two church workers, who were forced by large-scale political unrest to leave, returned to Tirana. Pekka Tahti and Sean Robinson (Mission president and director of ADRA-Albania respectively) resumed their duties. Their reports indicate Tirana is now quite safe during daylight hours. The same is true for most other cities but a curfew

remains in place and travel in the countryside still entails major risks. If the situation continues to improve other workers will return to Albania in a few weeks.

O IRAQ-PRAYER REQUEST: The Iraqi Ministry of Education decided that all exams from the 1st through 12th grade will be government exams and that exams will be given every other day. So all 20 Adventist children in these grades will face problems since they are all scheduled for examinations on either two or three Sabbaths. Last Wednesday, members in Iraq fasted and the children and parents decided not to take exams on Sabbath, regardless of the consequences. Please join our members in the Trans-European Division praying for our children in Iraq.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #62: As we continue our series on the abuse of inspired writings I must emphasize that, whether the scriptures or the Spirit of Prophecy, the primary element which determines whether a correct understanding is reached is the reader's attitude. Attitude is even more important than academic training, important as that may be. The Jewish leaders with their scholarship did not recognize Jesus. On many occasions, Ellen White emphasized Christ's counsel in John 7:17: "The perception and appreciation of truth ... depends less upon the mind than upon the heart. Truth must be received into the soul; it claims the homage of the will. If truth could be submitted to the reason alone, pride would be no hindrance in the way of its reception. But it is to be received through the work of grace in the heart; and its reception depends upon the renunciation of every sin that the Spirit of God reveals" (DA: 455).

Thus Ellen White gave this promise: "Everyone who diligently and patiently searches the Scriptures that he may educate others, entering upon the work correctly and with an honest heart, laying his preconceived ideas, whatever they may have been, and his hereditary prejudice at the door of investigation, will gain true knowledge" (3MR 430).

The same attitude that must be present when searching the Scriptures must also apply to the search for the truth in the writings of Ellen White. But studying God's revelations requires both an honest inquiry and a willingness to comply with divine instruction. Ellen White said it simply: We must be willing to obey the truth if we indeed are searching for it: "Whenever men are not seeking, in word and deed to be in harmony with God, then however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture, and it is not safe to trust to their explanations" (5T 705).

Ellen White warned that an interpretation may be wrong if accompanied by an unChristlike spirit. In the context of the 1888 Minneapolis Conference, she wrote to those who were antagonistic to her, to A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner: "These testimonies of the Spirit of God ... have no weight unless they are stamped with your ideas of the law in Galatians. I am afraid of you and I am afraid of your interpretation of any Scripture which has revealed itself in such an unChristlike spirit as you have manifested and has cost me so much unnecessary labor. ... Let your caution be exercised in the line of fear lest you are committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. ... I am afraid of any application of Scripture that needs such a spirit and bears such fruit as you have manifested" (9MR 330).