

From the G.C. President

May 27, 1997

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O MONGOLIAN BAPTIZED: What a joy it was for me last Sabbath afternoon to baptize Munkjargel, a seminary student from Mongolia. I first met Munkjargel in October, 1993 when I visited that previously unentered country to baptize Brad and Cathy Jolly, the first members led to Christ by AFM missionaries, Munkjargel, a well-educated journalist, befriended the Jolly's during their early, difficult days in Ulaan Bataar, the coldest capital city in the world. His curiosity turned to interest as he began to study the Bible. When he requested additional books, we sent him Ellen White's Conflict of the Ages series in Russian from our publishing house in Russia. In 1996, after reading the books through many times, he wrote to Mike Ryan telling him that he had given his heart to the Lord, asked to be baptized, and placed himself at the disposition of the Church. Global Mission arranged for Munkjargel and his family to move to Andrews University to prepare for the gospel ministry.

Brad Jolly's testimony was another high point of the service. Suffering from a potentially fatal disease, Brad opened his heart, told how for five years he felt like a total failure, and noted that "failure" seems to be the raw material from which God molds victory. Brad and Cathy laid everything on "the line" by going to Mongolia and proved the days of heroic mission service is not limited to bygone years.

O A MATTER OF HONESTY-PART II: In the February 4 edition I shared one painful issue of integrity with which church leaders wrestle. Here I'll share just a few more.

! In response to an inquiry regarding an employee, the president/manager considers troublesome or non-productive, he/she describes the employees' virtues in glowing terms yet neglects to mention the weaknesses, reasoning (sadly, correctly) that candor could lead to litigation, and so transfers a problem and costs to another organization.

! The church/school/other organization suffers a loss that is covered under the policy they purchased from Adventist Risk Management Inc. Rationalizing that they are doing it "for the church," they overstate the value of their loss enough to offset their deductible—effectively stealing from their brethren.

! It seems that some members already enjoy eternal life—literally! They never die! They may have been buried, moved away, or have simply disappeared decades ago, yet they continue to be listed as members—for the purposes of computing the number of delegates to attend Sessions. I wonder if the number of baptized members attending church services on a given date might be more accurate.

! How should members and leaders react on discovering that a minister, teacher, or other leader overtly or covertly, actively or passively, denies our fundamental beliefs, and feels at liberty to undermine the faith of those he/she serves? Should the absence of absolutes, central to today's pluralistic environment, determine the reaction of leaders or members?

The issues of honesty and integrity are difficult to address. This becomes evident when attempts to do so result in division and confrontation (and even litigation) and so are undertaken with greater caution and lesser frequency than necessary. The price of this caution is distrust. And so the dilemma continues.

O THE NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION staff will fly

from Singapore to Korea on June 16 to occupy their recently purchased office. The new address is: Sahm Hee Plaza 5th floor; 66 Chuyop-dong, Ilsan-gu; Koyang-city, Kyonggi-do; Republic of Korea, 411-370. Telephone & fax numbers are: Country code-82; City code-344; Telephone 910-1500; Fax 919-4412. Thank you for taking note of this information.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #65: Our series on how a misunderstanding of revelation/inspiration can lead to an abuse of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White continues. In a significant letter to a young physician, David Paulson, (a remarkable man of faith instrumental in establishing Hinsdale Sanitarium and Hospital) Ellen White guided him away from verbal-inspiration when she wrote: "In your letter you speak of your early training to have implicit faith in the testimonies and say, 'I was led to conclude and most firmly believe that every word you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under any and all circumstances, was as inspired as the Ten Commandments.'"

She continued: "My brother, you have studied my writings diligently, and you have never found that I have made any such claims, neither will you find that the pioneers in our cause ever made such claims.

"In my introduction to The Great Controversy you have no doubt read my statement regarding the Ten Commandments and the Bible, which should have helped you to a correct understanding of the matter under consideration." Ellen White then quoted substantially from her own introduction to The Great Controversy and from an earlier pertinent statement found in volume 5 of the Testimonies" (See 1SM:24-31).

To understand the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, the important difference between thought revelation and verbal inspiration must be clear. Although verbal inspirationists claim to enjoy greater security in possessing the exact word from God, they have great difficulty trying to explain what appear as "errors" and "contradictions" in both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. The incorrect assumptions of verbal inspirationists have led many who have tried thoughtfully to study the Bible or the writings of Ellen White into unnecessary confusion and loss of confidence in inspired writings.

Those who understand the prophet to be God's "penman," not His pen recognize God works through the mental processes of His messenger, inspiring the thoughts but, under the guidance of the Spirit, allowing the messenger to choose the way the thoughts are to be expressed. Ellen White's personal introduction to The Great Controversy has given us clear insight as to how prophets work. Recognizing that discrepancies may exist in the Bible and that "perfect order or apparent unity" may not be clear at first glance, she concluded: "All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth" (1SM:21, 16).