

From the G.C. President

June 2, 1997

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O EVACUATION FROM SIERRA LEONE: The political unrest in the West African nation of Sierra Leone reached crisis proportions with the coup that took place last week. Three missionary families, who originally went to Sierra Leone to work at our hospital in Masanga and were relocated to Freetown when the hospital closed due to guerilla warfare, were assisting ADRA with a refugee program. These missionary families, who were evacuated to Guinea-Conakry, have faced considerable trauma.

Eugene Laguno and his two children were held at gunpoint three times last week. Their house was completely looted and they lost all their possessions. Feeling that Eugene had not given them all his money, the looters threatened to kill his children.

The St. Clairs' had a similar situation in that their home was ransacked, and they were forced to flee with nothing but the clothes on their bodies.

Dr. and Mrs. Rostan (who had experienced a previous attack in which they were beaten and their house looted) expected the apartment building in which they lived to be attacked. As night fell, they prayed for God's protection. In the darkness, Dr. Rostan watched as a truck loaded with armed men stopped in front of their building. Several men jumped off the truck, headed towards their building and beckoned others to join them. Just then a man in the truck called them back to the truck. They returned to the vehicle, and the Rostan's were spared any personal attack. The next morning they left for the safety of a hotel in the city and were evacuated on Friday.

O ARMED ROBBERS made off with K11,500 (US\$8,500) from Pacific Adventist University near Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on Thursday, May 29. Office staff were forced to provide access to the cashier's office containing income from the university's farm sales and shop. Although the staff and student body are shaken by the events, they are thankful that no one was injured. Police are continuing investigations.

Pacific Adventist University, with an enrollment of 250 undergraduate students, is the major tertiary institution for the Pacific islands of the South Pacific Division. It is about 12 miles from Port Moresby.

O FROM "SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST" we recently received the following letter from a long-time Adventist World Radio (AWR) listener.

"Beloved Pastor: You introduced me to the true light through your sermons and religious programmes. These spiritual programmes which I heard from the *Voice of Hope* shook me and stirred my soul. My situation can best be described with the words of the Apostle Paul, 'Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you' (Eph 5:14).

"I thank the Lord that you caused me to examine my situation and come to see the light. I studied the Bible ... for over a year. During this time, God's Word kept growing within me with the help of the Holy Spirit. My joy became complete on Sabbath, May 3, 1997. On this day I buried my old life in the water of baptism and started in the newness of life.

"After my baptism, I stood up and talked about my experience with the Lord. I spoke about your radio messages

that first introduced me to the Saviour. I am so happy now, even though I lost the support of some relatives and friends, but I gained Christ!"

We are discovering that some of the most difficult places to work in the world are being reached by Adventist World Radio and not only are individuals being baptized, but entire congregations have been organized! Thank the Lord for the global ministry of AWR.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #66: In continuing our series on how people abuse the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, we must recognize that Biblical writers and Ellen White were not infallible. Infallibility is a characteristic of God alone, not His messengers. Although God revealed His messages without error, His messages were conveyed to and through fallible messengers. That is why Ellen White called the prophets "God's penmen, not His pen" (1SM:21). And that is why she said bluntly: "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible" (Ibid., 37).

Therefore, infallibility is not "on trial" in the prophet's words but what *is* at stake is God's infallible authority given in the fallible language of His messengers. God's messages breathe with infallible authority, not infallible language. Although God speaks through fallible men and women, we do not have a fallible message. On the contrary, for those reading prophetic messages, the search for accuracy depends on the reader's faithfulness to the rules of Biblical interpretation which are uncontaminated by human philosophical presuppositions and a faulty concept of revelation.

I previously described some of the problems inherent in "verbal inspiration"—that God dictated the words that the prophets used. This flawed thinking has led men and women to strange conclusions through the years, such as to believe that we live on a flat earth because Isaiah referred to the "four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12, KJV). These distortions arise when defenders of the Word do not allow for the human, fallible side of God's communication process.

By recognizing that prophets are God's penman, not His pen, we are spared the anxieties that arise when we note what seems to be discrepancies when different Bible writers referred to the same subject or same event. Consider the frustrating task a verbal inspirationist has trying to reconcile Matthew's genealogy of our Lord with Luke's. Or why does Genesis 15:13-16 seem to offer a different length of time for the Hebrews' sojourn in Egypt than we find in Exodus 12:40? Or look at the four different records we get when we read what each gospel writer said Pilate ordered to be placed over Jesus on the cross. No wonder Ellen White stated with clarity: "The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. ..." (1SM:20).