

From the G.C. President

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O DISSIDENT GROUP RETURNS: A year ago an “offshoot” group, that in 1949 broke away from our church in Indonesia, indicated its desire to rejoin the Seventh-day Adventist constituency, according to a report I recently received from Pastor V.F. Bocala, president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. Since expressing their desire to reunite with the church, leaders have conducted basic-orientation seminars in all their congregations. On August 24 the “Bandan Hukum”—which is the Seventh-day Adventist legal body in Indonesia—will meet to take action regarding accepting these congregations into fellowship along with their 22 church buildings and other properties. Then on November 19, the newly unified and integrated church is planning a major celebration in Jakarta. Government officials and the media have taken note of this reunification, unprecedented in Indonesia, and plan to participate in the celebration. Isn't it wonderful to see evidence of the Holy Spirit at work among us?

O It Is Written HIGHLIGHTS: ✓ Web Page—Since January, 15,000 have visited the *It Is Written's* Web site, managed on a volunteer basis by graduate students Darrell and Cheryl Hosford (who are also conducting 400 Bible studies in 16 countries via this “page”). Pastor Finley told me of a medical student in Sacramento who visited the *It Is Written* Web page, enrolled in the *Voice of Prophecy* “Discover” Bible course offered on this page, and was just baptized into the church pastored by Pastor Doug Batchelor. Another person in Finland provisionally came across the page and was baptized two months ago. A young professional in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. who “wondered what that building was” as she repeatedly drove by the General Conference headquarters, stumbled across the *It Is Written* Web page, began taking Bible studies and is now attending one of our Adventist churches in the area.

✓The recent Nielsen Rating Report indicates that again *It Is Written* ranks in the top ten of the 500 religious television programs in the United States, and ranks seventh in reaching the 25-49 age group. The survey showed that 192,000 families watch *It Is Written* in just 35 cities alone.

✓Cuba Evangelism—*It is Written* has accepted the enormous task of leading out in planning for an island-wide evangelistic series in Cuba scheduled for early 1998, some of which may be distributed by satellite to the Americas.

O PROGRESS IN ERITREA: Three baptismal services have taken place in Eritrea as a result of Global Mission pioneers who began serving there in September 1996. Of the nine people recently baptized, six were from an unentered area in the southeast.

O STUDY IN CONTRASTS! On the one hand: Today almost 20,000 Global Mission Pioneers are dedicating at least one year to establish a congregation in an unentered area. Since Global Mission was launched, almost 13,000 new congregations have been planted, and hundreds of thousands are hearing the gospel through the media ministries, “Discover” and other Bible courses, personal witnessing and public evangelism.

On the other hand, this past weekend, (while in Portland to worship with the more than 10,000 attending the Oregon Conference Campmeeting) I spent several hours on Friday being interviewed by two reporters from a major secular

publication. These two professionals told me that they had requested this interview because former denominational employees told them stories so out of character for a church organization, that they wanted to hear the church's side. I was happy to give them information that I hope will counterbalance the distorted information they had received.

One cannot but contrast the influence those who are involved in leading souls to Christ and strengthen the cause of God, with the others, who are willing to publicly discredit the church they profess to love, even if souls are lost as a result.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #73: Continuing the series on how the “weight of evidence” confirms our confidence in the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings, we have seen how the first two tests (harmony with previous prophets and fruitage of ministry) apply to Ellen G. White.

The third test, according to 1 John 4:2-3, is whether a prophet tells the truth about the how and why Jesus came to this earth. Ellen G. White's consistent focus on Jesus as the center of both her spiritual life and her theological principles emphasizes how convincingly she cooperated with the “Spirit” of prophecy. Unambiguously, she unfolded the Biblical story of how Jesus came to this world as a human being, “made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb. 2:17).

The fourth general test is that a genuine prophet's predictions come to pass. In earlier segments we discussed several astounding predictions and their fulfillment. Probably Mrs. White's most powerful predictions relate to the end-times, prophecies given when their fulfillment seemed utterly impossible, and, to many, ridiculous. No more! The passing of years since those predictions has only deepened our confidence in her credentials as God's last-day messenger.

One of the more practical tests of a prophet is found in the quality changes that the prophet's messages make in the lives of adherents. In reviewing the chief findings of the 1980 research done by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, we read that “those who regularly study the writings of Ellen G. White are also more likely to be stronger Christians in their personal spiritual life and in their witness to their communities than those church members who don't.”

Perhaps more significant than all the other characteristics of those reading the writings of Ellen G. White was the finding that “82 percent of the readers usually or always have daily personal Bible study, while only 47 percent of the nonreaders do.” The difference of 35 percent was the largest relating to any question in the survey.

Those who read Ellen G. White place a higher value on Bible study than those who do not read her. Further, those who regularly read the scriptures and Ellen G. White's counsel are much more likely to share with others the fresh inspiration they are constantly receiving from these sources. In other words, it is those who read Ellen G. White who best understand the Bible and the mission and message of our church.