

From the G.C. President

August 4, 1997

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O NEW ON THE WEB: Check out the “GC Presidential” Web site (<http://www.adventist.org/gc/presidential>). There you will find pictorial reports of my last two trips (Trinidad and Nova Scotia). I hope to do this with each trip.

O DATELINE PUGWASH: Pugwash is the village in Nova Scotia, located on the south side of the Northumberland Straits—better known to some as the St. Lawrence Seaway—where Canada’s Maritime Conference camp meetings have been held for the last 48 years. Last weekend, I joined 500 of the 1,700 members from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island who met at this beautiful site for inspiration, praise and fellowship. Evangelism and mission was the common thread throughout the program.

Sabbath afternoon I visited with Rhoda Spencer and Angus Lanceleve. Rhoda was a single, retired teacher, whose father had left her some property on the island of Cape Breton in northeast Nova Scotia overlooking Lake Ainslie. Although she had nobody to help her, and though there were no Seventh-day Adventists for many miles, she decided to build a chapel and raise up a congregation. Then she met Angus Lanceleve, a widower, who although not a Seventh-day Adventist, agreed to help her—not only with his time and talents, but also with finances as well.

They began construction in August 1993, and eleven months later, in July 1994, the chapel was dedicated, debt free. They not only built a chapel, they also fell in love. On July 23, 1994, they were married in the new chapel. Now a group assembles each Sabbath to worship God. But Angus and Rhoda Lanceleve are looking for someone who enjoys witnessing to help them, and also individual(s) to hold a crusade in their chapel. If you know of anyone who might help, please call: 1) Elder Bob Lehmann, Conference President, at (506) 857-8722, or 857-8723, or 2) Angus or Rhoda Lanceleve, at (902) 258-3817.

O MONGOLIA: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is now one of the few officially registered Protestant churches in Mongolia. This is a major breakthrough that opens up new doors of opportunity for the church. Munkjargal, a Mongolian currently studying at Andrews University, worked tirelessly preparing an application for registration. Registration has been granted for a year, which is standard for registered non-government and religious organizations. This is a new day for our work in Mongolia. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in this country.

O SRI LANKA: More than half the Global Mission pioneers working in Sri Lanka today first became Adventists through the work of another pioneer, Antony Alexander. Antony has brought hundreds of people into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including many Hindus and Buddhists. Now a pastor, Antony asks his Mission leaders to send him to areas where there are no churches. He, his wife and five children are currently working in Vavuniya, in Northern Sri Lanka, a dangerous area on the frontline of the war between the Sri Lankan Army and Tamil forces. Although concerned for his family’s safety, Antony believes now is the time that he’s most needed in this area.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #75: We are continuing our series on how confidence in the Bible and Ellen G. White’s messages can be grounded on the evidence. Because these messages come in an imperfect container, God Himself invites us to weigh the evidence: “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa.1:18).

When God invites us to reason with Him, He is not playing word-games: He truly appeals to our reasoning skills. Often Ellen G. White challenges the reader to recognize that our reasoning powers are intended to make us “intelligent Christians.” That means that Christians “are not requested to believe without evidence.” In making this search for belief, “we must put away all skepticism, all exaltation of our own ideas. We must humble our hearts by repentance . . . praying for true enlightenment” (Review and Herald, Mar. 8, 1887)

God, true to His nature, does not coerce, compel, or force anyone to believe. He invites men and women to respond to sufficient evidence. He will never “force faith.” “None are compelled to believe. God gives sufficient evidence that all may decide upon the weight of evidence, but He never has, nor never will remove all chance [opportunity] for doubt, never will force faith.” (Letter 12, 1868, cited in Bio., vol. 2, p. 276. See also Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 675, 676.) Ellen G. White summarized it well when she said that although “God has given ample evidence for faith, He will never remove all excuse for unbelief” (GC:527).

For some, this appeal to reason and the recognition that reason seems to be insufficient seem to be contradictory. But not really! This tension forces us to recognize that our presuppositions determine how we reason and thus the way we weigh evidence. In spite of claims to the contrary, presuppositions drive historians, scientists, and theologians to predetermined conclusions, often unconsciously. This explains why paradigm shifts occur occasionally when researchers suddenly begin to see the same world through different lenses (note Copernicus, Einstein, Pasteur, etc.) Those lenses are presuppositions that determine the way we look at evidence. Self-evident truths are usually human constructs or paradigms that determine how a person weighs evidence.

One of the most illuminating examples of presuppositions (bias, prejudice, etc.) driving a person contrary to the light of truth is the reaction of the religious leaders in Jerusalem to Jesus. After the resurrection of Lazarus, an undeniable fact with many witnesses, these leaders were even more determined to kill Jesus (John 11:47-57; Matt. 26:59, 60). Though these leaders were intelligent, they also were prejudiced; their reasoning powers were driven by their presuppositions. Their reasoning powers gave them “reasons” why they should reject the resurrection of Lazarus! Jesus did not fit their presuppositions. He was a threat to their theoretical pronouncements. They were driven not by calm reason and an enlightened conscience, but by what they wanted to believe. Their reasoning powers were turned upside down—instead of reason leading them to truth, it now led them to find “reasons” for rejecting truth!