

# From the G.C. President

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**O DELEGATES TO THE '97 ANNUAL COUNCIL** spent Tuesday and Wednesday addressing issues related to the role of the Scriptures in the life of the Christian under the Message and Mission theme selected for 1998—"Experience the Power of God's Word." Transcripts of the inspiring messages which were presented each day are available on the CompuServe "Adventist OnLine Forum" and GC Webpage and audio tapes may be ordered from the General Conference. Thursday and Friday delegates made such progress through the agenda that we anticipate concluding our work a day early, on Monday evening.

Sabbath was a wonderful day for the large group of delegates who attended services at the Capital Memorial Church in downtown Washington. Thirty-six members of the international diplomatic corps based in Washington (including six ambassadors) met the church leaders from their respective countries who were attending the Annual Council and together attended a prayer breakfast prepared by members of the Capital Memorial Church. Afterwards a large group of these guests remained for the divine service during which Jack Sequeira, senior pastor, presented a powerful, gospel-centered message to an overflowing congregation.

**O PAUL HARVEY:** According to a recent report from a fellow pastor, during his September 25 broadcast, radio personality (in the USA) Paul Harvey said:

"Women have been honored on American postage stamps for more than 100 years; starting with one woman who was not an American, Queen Isabella in 1893. Since then, 86 women have been honored ranging from Martha Washington to Marilyn Monroe; also many women authors like Louisa May Alcott, Emily Dickinson, Willie Cather and Rachael Carson.

"But I can name an American woman author who has never been honored thus, though her writings have been translated into 148 languages. More than Marx or Tolstoy, more than Agatha Christie, more than William Shakespeare. Only now is the world coming to appreciate her recommended prescription for optimum spiritual and physical health: Ellen White. Ellen White! You don't know her? Get to know her."

**O DR. BRYAN BALL**, who has served as president of the South Pacific Division (SPD) since 1990, informed the SPD Executive Committee of his plan to retire at the end of this year. Dr. Ball, a native of England, served eight years as chair of the theology department of Newbold College followed by six years as president of Avondale College prior to his election as division president. In 1994 Oxford University Press published "The Seventh-day Men," Dr. Ball's research of Sabbath keeping in 16<sup>th</sup> century England. Upon his retirement, in cooperation with Oxford University, he will research other topics that are of particular interest to Seventh-day Adventists. I wish Dr. and Mrs. Ball God's continuing blessings and thank him for a job well done.

Permit me a reminder regarding church organization. The process for the selection of division leadership varies significantly from that of local conferences and unions. Since

conferences and unions are based on constituencies, they elect their own leaders. A General Conference Session is also a constituent assembly made up of delegates from the unions around the world. But since divisions are divisions of the General Conference and do not have separate constituencies, division officers are elected by the world church, a function which, between General Conference Sessions, is performed by the General Conference Executive Committee. So, in harmony with GC Operating Policy, while attending the SPD's year-end meetings in November, I will consult with the Division Executive Committee prior to presenting a recommendation for a new division president to the General Conference Executive Committee for the final decision

## Off the Back Burner

**Segment #83:** In our continuing study of the Great Controversy Theme, as unfolded in *Steps to Christ*, we discovered the primary reason for Jesus to come to earth was to tell the truth about God who had been terribly misrepresented by Satan. One of God's attributes that is just the opposite of Satan's character is that God does not coerce. Though all-powerful, He does not intimidate. He appeals and invites, but never overpowers either angels or humans by sheer force of any kind.

But at the heart of Satan's conflict with God is his charge that God restricts freedom. Freedom has been the issue from that first moment when Satan insinuated that submission to God limits one's potential, hampers individuality, and dampens real happiness. How can God defend Himself against that kind of attack? Only by letting the two opposing principles be demonstrated. In answering this charge, God would not use force of any kind for to do so would prove Satan's point. The awful experiment of who is right about freedom is being played out for all the universe to watch.

In many ways throughout *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White emphasizes this contrast between God and Satan: "The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. 'Come now, and let us reason together,' is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator" (SC:43, 44).

In inviting men and women to cooperate with His sin-destroying power, Jesus "does not force the will. ... [If] 'we WILL not accept His grace, what more can He do?' (SC:34).

Freedom is God's fundamental gift to His creation. Only within freedom can love arise. Only with freedom constrained by love can the universe be eternally secure. What a risk—but what a treasure!