

From the G.C. President

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O RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT ASSURES ADVENTISTS: Victor Krushenitsky, PARL director of the Euro-Asia Division, reported about his meeting in which Genrich Michailov, a key Russian government official, asked him to “Please tell all Seventh-day Adventists that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will not be hurt by the new law.” He assured Pastor Krushenitsky that all Seventh-day Adventist congregations will be recognized since our church organization has been registered in Russia for more than the necessary 15 years. He further stated that a) we may continue to invite foreign evangelists, b) we will be able to organize congregations in unentered areas, c) our students may defer military service until after completing their studies, and d) ministers will not be called into military service.

While relieved to receive this report, we understand that this is, nevertheless, a period of transition and we must continually ask God to intervene so that His cause will not be restricted.

O NARIE CAPILITAN, who with her husband Pastor Faustino Capilitan served as front line missionaries from the Philippines to the extremely remote Maridi Secondary School in South Sudan, died as a result of cerebral malaria and the non-availability of timely transportation to medical care. She was laid to rest in the Philippines last week. These dedicated missionaries who left the comforts of home and family in their service for God paid the supreme sacrifice. Please remember Pastor Faustino and his family in your prayers.

O 2,700 AFRICAN CHURCHES BUILT! In the past three years, nearly 2,700 churches have been built in Africa which can accommodate about 1 million worshippers—many of whom are new believers. This is 10 percent of the entire world church membership. In Africa, church buildings are an evangelistic tool. In most parts of the world, the standard procedure is to establish a congregation and then build a church. But in Africa, church growth seems to be just the reverse. If a building is built, it soon is filled to overflowing. The practical obstacle is most frequently buying the corrugated tin roofing material (at an average cost of US\$1,400 each).

The “Church Roofs for Africa” is a joint project between Global Mission, the North Pacific Union, and the generous funding from a North American family. Just last week, this family met with African church leaders who were attending Annual Council. These African leaders expressed their heartfelt thanks for the generous help they had received. When the donors invited the African leaders to describe their needs for church and school buildings, these totaled 3,270 more churches and 604 schools. What an opportunity! I thank God for the vision and sacrifice of these donors and the evangelistic zeal of our believers in Africa.

O GLOBAL MISSION: The vast majority of Global Mission pioneers working on the frontlines around the world are young people. However, back home even teenagers are catching a vision for supporting frontline mission work. Recently two young Americans, Justin and Christina (aged 14 and 12), donated their money to support a Vacation Bible School in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which also served as a training program for VBS teachers. As a result, 1,300 non-Adventist children attended Vacation Bible Schools in nine provinces. In

a thatched-hut church in Svey Rieng Province, more than 100 children and adults crowded to hear the program. On the second day a mother said to one of the teachers, “My child said he just had to come back to church today because Jesus loves him.” This was a child who had heard only one Bible story, the story of creation.

O ON A PERSONAL NOTE: I regret missing last Monday’s edition of “From the G C President” but Annual Council, other pressures and time constraints made it impossible to complete before heading to the mountains for an oft-postponed period of peace and quiet.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #84: In our continuing study of the Great Controversy Theme, as unfolded in *Steps to Christ*, we noted that the chief issue in the Controversy is over who can be trusted, God or Satan. Satan lies and misrepresents God while God patiently waits until all the universe can see who is right.

No one can fully understand the fiendish mind of Satan—not only his lies but his malignant enjoyment in causing misery. But the truth is that he, not God, is responsible for all misery. We note: “It was the tempter’s purpose to thwart the divine plan in man’s creation, and fill the earth with woe and desolation. And he would point to all this evil as the result of God’s work in creating man” (SC:17).

One of the false charges Satan has leveled at God is that He is responsible for suffering, pain, and death. This lie has been repeated and amplified throughout history and is the main reason why most religions, pagan or Christian, have some kind of appeasement factor built into their beliefs. After all, if God has the big stick and is responsible for pain and death, then humans are wise to placate Him, doing whatever it takes, even if it means sacrificing our children and mutilating our bodies. But the God Jesus revealed is totally unlike the Being Satan has made Him out to be. When Jesus was accused by the caviling Pharisees of exercising the powers of Beelzebub, He replied: “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. . . . If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:26, 28).

Again Ellen G. White spoke clearly about where God fits in when we suffer: “It is a mistake to entertain the thought that God is pleased to see His children suffer” (SC:46). God, as our Heavenly Father, chooses life and happiness for His earthly children, not death and sorrow—as the Bible makes abundantly clear. The purpose of His law (His counsel on how to avoid unhappiness), so we could “shun those indulgences that would bring suffering and disappointment, that would close to us the door of happiness and heaven” (SC:46).

No, God is not what Satan makes Him out to be—an All-Powerful God who grinds His earthly children into submission and compels them to say, “Thank You, Lord; Thy will be done!”