

From the G.C. President

November 17, 1997

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O DATELINE VANUATU AND AUSTRALIA: Last Monday morning we dedicated 11 acres of land in Port Vila, Vanuatu, site of a new primary and secondary school. The need for the latter is urgent since our boarding academy (on a remote northern island) is already filled to capacity with 300 students.

Our next appointment was with Jean-Marie Leye, the Roman Catholic President of the Republic. We discussed his intention to revise the constitutional provision of religious freedom in order to keep out certain religious organizations. Discussing this dangerous proposal took up a major portion of our visit.

Monday noon, we flew north to Luganville on Santo, Vanuatu's largest and northernmost island. After checking into the hotel, I was invited to climb onto a parade float (made to look like a boat), commemorating the arrival of the first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to a nearby Atchin island. The procession, including over 1,000 members, walked across town to the site for the welcome ceremony and evening meeting. As part of the "custom welcome ceremony," members dramatized the 1912 arrival of the first Adventist missionaries to Vanuatu, Elder and Mrs. Calvin Parker.

In 1912, Anglicans and the Presbyterians divided up the islands between them. Neither group welcomed the Adventist missionaries. Parker told the British Commissioner of their willingness to work among the most dangerous groups. The Commissioner, over objections of the religious leaders, authorized the Adventists to work in Vanuatu but sent them to the cannibals of Atchin island. Seven Methodist missionaries had been killed and eaten on a nearby island and they were confident the Adventist missionaries would soon suffer the same fate.

The Parkers worked on Atchin for seven years without one baptism. Some Adventist leaders urged them to move to another island. But the Parkers returned to Atchin, changed their methods, and began to work with the children. This time they were successful and the work in Vanuatu prospered.

Tuesday morning, before returning to Port Vila to catch my flight to Australia, a speed boat took me for a quick visit to the adjoining island, site of Aore Adventist Academy. Located on a tropical beach, this school has one of the most beautiful settings I've ever seen. After meeting with students and the community, we headed back to the airport to fly back to Port Vila and continue my trip to Australia.

While in Sydney, I visited the new Adventist Media Center that is nearing completion. This first-rate facility will expand SPD's contribution to the church's global television system.

Friday morning, I visited Sanitarium Healthfood Company's corporate office and their large (26,000+ square meters /almost 7 acre) adjoining plant (one of seven). SHF is one of the larger manufacturers of breakfast cereals in Australia and New Zealand whose operations provide a major source of revenue for the SPD's mission program.

Friday afternoon, I flew south to Melbourne, just across the Bass Straits from Tasmania. Sabbath morning, I worshiped with almost 5,000 believers, then joined Pastors Mike Ryan and Gary Krause for an afternoon festival of Global Mission. Sunday, I returned to Sydney and later that evening, I had the

opportunity to worship and study the Word with many of our members from the greater Sydney area.

Monday morning, I had worship with the staff of Sydney Adventist Hospital and toured this, the largest private hospital not only in Sydney but also in all of eastern Australia. In the afternoon, I participated in some of the Division pre-meetings which will lead to the selection of a new division president for which we have scheduled a meeting of the General Conference Committee by video & telephone conference call—more about that in the next edition.

Note: pictures and a report on this visit to Vanuatu and Australia at: <http://www.adventist.com/GC/Presidential>.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #88: In our last segment we noted that in *Steps to Christ*, Ellen G. White swiftly moved to the heart of God's response to Satan's misrepresentation of His character. She noted that the answer to Satan's charges are found in what Jesus said or did because His simple agenda was to "reveal" the Father (Matt. 11:27, John 1:18; 14:8, 9). When we are told that Christ identified Himself with the human race "by ties that are never to be broken" (SC:14), we are staring at the mystery of love. We are contemplating an event that angels have not fully grasped—that Jesus "took human nature upon Him" (SC:72).

What kind of human nature? He took our "liabilities" (SC:14). In *Desire of Ages* (p. 117), Ellen G. White wrote that Jesus "took humanity with all its liabilities... We have nothing to bear which He has not endured." What does all this mean? Again she wrote: "Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity... He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life" (Ibid., p. 49). But regarding His nature she warned; "It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery" (5BC 1129).

He came not as a heavenly prince, cuddled in warm, soft blankets, hovered over by a team of imperial pediatricians and three shifts of nurses; not as a dazzling angel compelling everyone's attention and respect; not even as a superstar teacher who would galvanize the admiration and affection of both young and old. No, He came as a baby, as every helpless child enters this world. "Why?" we ask. Answer: To confront Satan's lies, Jesus had to "give" Himself to the human race by identifying Himself "with the interests and needs of humanity. . .by ties that are never to be broken" (SC:14).