

From the G.C. President

January 5, 1998

Robert S. Folkenberg

OCELEBRATING SUCCESS: On the first Sabbath of 1998 it was my privilege to worship with the almost 900 members of the Avon Park, Florida Seventh-day Adventist Church. On January 3 Pastor Doug Jacobs led his congregation in celebrating the 50th anniversary of Adventist presence in this growing central Florida community. Of course, Avon Park was very different in 1947 when the Florida Conference decided to establish the work in what was then an unentered area. Just a year later, in 1948, a small group of Adventists had established a hospital, church and school! During my stay there I toured the new Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center which opened its doors in October. The story of Avon Park is just one of many success stories that reflects the hard-working history of Adventism. These stories encourage me as I look ahead to the challenges of 1998, primary among them is the work in Cuba.

OCUBA IN '98: In February of this year *It Is Written* will coordinate a nationwide evangelistic meeting on this Caribbean island that is in such need of the healing powers of Christ. I am pleased for an opportunity to participate in such a providential opportunity and I solicit your prayers as the Cuba team, which includes all 85 pastors in the Cuban Union, prepares for this effort. I am very thankful for this window of opportunity to share the Adventist message with the Cuban people. Just as it is thrilling when the "window" opens, so it is equally disappointing when a "window" closes.

OGUYANA VISIT POSTPONED: It is most unfortunate that my visit to Guyana, which was scheduled for this week, was postponed due to political unrest resulting from contested elections. Guyana is part of the Inter-American Division and it was the wisdom of the IAD leadership that helped me make the difficult decision to postpone this trip for a more favorable time. The original mission of this visit was to encourage the work among the Davis Indians who live in the interior of Guyana. I again invite you to present before God those who struggle to advance His Kingdom in the face of dangerous and difficult circumstance while thanking Him for the abundant evidence of His blessings of this movement around the world.

OAWR GUAM, BACK IN BUSINESS: As many of you already know, all four AWR transmitters had to go off the air due to antenna damage after a recent, devastating hurricane. I am pleased to report that all transmitters are back on the air as of New Year's Weekend.

Off the Back Burner

Segment 95: We have been listening to Ellen G. White unfold the Great Controversy Theme in her book, *Steps to Christ*. In our last segment we noted that God is willing to risk His case in the controversy by appealing to our reason, not by compelling, overwhelming demonstrations of His power. God will do His part in revealing as much about Himself as we are able to receive; that is, the evidence that He is not what Satan has made Him out to be. Of course, humans will not be able to answer every question that thoughtful minds can think of and inevitably there will be "mysteries that overpower the mind in its research" (SC:107). If that were not so, we would not be in the presence of the Eternal One. But even the nature of the mysteries will "inspire the sincere seeker for truth with reverence and faith" (SC:107).

For us today, without the benefit of talking to Jesus personally as Palestinians did 2000 years ago, God's chief means of communication are the Bible and its quiet interpreter, the Holy Spirit. The Bible has been the means of connecting us with Him, "whom having not seen, you love: (1 Pet. 1:8). Yet, "in the Bible [are] many things which [we] cannot explain, or even understand, and Satan employs these to shake [our] faith in the Scriptures as a revelation from God" (SC105). So the question remains, how do we bridge this gap between the truth about God and our limited reason? That is the beauty of God's understanding of the human predicament--He makes sure that the brilliant intellect can be satisfied as much as the unschooled laborer following a plow.

How does He do that? "God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith" (SC:105).

What a remarkable arrangement: the infinitely wise God is resting His case on our willingness to trust the evidence. In other words, in the judgment, nobody will ever be able to say that God is unfair. Nobody will ever say that he is being judged by a law or a standard that he could not understand. All will bow down to a very gracious God who made Himself sufficiently known "at various times and in different ways" (Heb.1:1) so that we are all without excuse.