

From the G.C. President

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OTentmakers: Full-time professionals, full-time ministers! Not long ago I had opportunity to fellowship with the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. During my time on retreat with these dedicated educators I learned about the tentmaking ministry of Dr. Bruce Moyer, a professor in the Institute of World Missions. The purpose of Bruce's program is to recruit, train and nurture Adventist church members to use their occupation as platforms for outreach. Just this week I have heard from Bruce with a success story from the ministry of a tentmaker recruited to service in 1996. Again, it is my pleasure to share with you stories of Adventists who, through their gifts of the Spirit, are impacting lives and affecting positive change in their sphere of influence.

The Tentmaker of Eritrea: Dr. Menassie Abraham is an Eritrean physician working at the Agordat Hospital. Recently, a man named Kiflai came to the hospital for treatment. Kiflai fully believed that he would probably not be cured of the disease that plagued him. But, this hopeless man found a Christian friend and dedicated physician in the person of Dr. Abraham, who encouraged Kiflai. Dr. Abraham prayed with him regularly and when the doctor realized that Kiflai had never read any scripture previous to his hospital experience, he brought him a Bible and the two gentlemen began to study together. Today, Kiflai is a baptized Christian. Kiflai stated that he was so impressed by Dr. Abraham's care and concern that it was not possible for him to reject the offer of salvation!

What an important life-lesson for us all! It seems too easy to believe that a simple formula of dedicated Christianity, genuine concern, and competent professionalism can reap the reward of a new and changed life. I believe in this "tentmaker's formula" for success and its ability to be effective no matter the cultural, ethnic or political boundaries that challenge us.

Off the Back Burner

Segment 96: We have been looking at the place of reason in our responsibility to hear God's side of the story as described by Ellen White as she unfolds the Great Controversy theme in the book, *Steps to Christ*. We learned that Satan has made it appear that God expects "blind submission, an unreasoning control." But the truth is that God "appeals to the intellect and the conscience" and "does not force the will." As a God of love, "He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given" (SC:43).

When we think about Satan's attack on God's strategy to appeal to our intellect, we note that it is the intellect that has been under attack in the twentieth century, in both Christian and secular circles. For too many, even to use the word "intellectual" is to suggest something "anti-spiritual," or

"high-brow." But in the great controversy, the spiritual and the intellect are inseparably joined. To by-pass the intellect in the pursuit of truth is to invite a fundamental obscuring of reality.

I think of the late University of Chicago professor, Allan Bloom and his best-seller, *The Closing of the American Mind*. He argued convincingly that since mid-century a massive upheaval in the way people think has occurred, that higher education has trained a whole generation against real thinking. His indictment exposes the chief error of our time: nothing is absolute, all is relative. We see evidence of his charge everywhere, whether it is in how we make up laws, how to govern a home, how to decide ethical standards, etc.

And the Adventist Church has not been immune from this tidal wave of relativism. We hear or read that we ought to feel more (translate that, "think less,") that we ought to "listen" to God more without an equal emphasis on dealing with the Spirit through Biblical study. Feeling in worship supersedes an intelligent interchange between a thinking worshiper and a thoughtful revelation from God's Word. In other words, experience is in and thinking is out. This is simply a modern form of what happened to Cain, he began to "feel" what is right without listening to the quiet authority of God. Relativism was in, authority was out!

The whole point of the plan of salvation and the Great Controversy Theme is that sinful, self-absorbed, self-gratifying minds are to be "transformed" so that we "will be able to know the will of God--what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect" (Rom. 12:1, TEV). Satan will do all he can to amuse us, to enchant us, to cause us to "feel good,"--and then have us call it worship and Christian "experience." The only way that we can see clearly when Satan attempts to captivate us with "signs and wonders" is to be "fortified" with objective truth as revealed through God's messengers (GC:593).

The test we all must face is not "What works," or "What seems to be right for me," but "What's true" and "What's God's will"? The battle for the mind is over Satan's deceptions and God's reasonable appeals. When we listen to God's appeal to reason, we respond with mind and spirit, sensing that God's plan is exactly what satisfies our deepest longings for meaning and freedom from all that enslaves.

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