

From the G.C. President

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OScholarships Received: The General Conference Women's Ministries department just passed along the very good news that 48 Adventist women will receive tuition assistance this year through the Women's Ministries Scholarship Fund. Lynnetta Hamstra, scholarship program coordinator, mentioned that more scholarship applications were received than any other year since the program began in 1993. The money to fund this scholarship program has come from the sales of six women's devotional books. So far, a total of 277 women have received tuition assistance through this program, 56 in the Southern Asia Pacific Division alone!

In a recent letter to the Women's Ministries department, one of the scholarship recipients wrote, "Thank you so very much for this special contribution you are making not only to my studies, but to my life as a whole. I am absolutely thrilled! Because of your contribution to my schooling, I will become a better women and will continue to serve others in whatever circumstance the Lord places me." I applaud the Women's Ministries department for a very pragmatic approach to empowerment. They have not only found a meaningful way to support their constituents, they have found a successful and creative way to fund the program. This is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Rwanda: The February 9 issue of *Newsweek* carried an article about Seventh-day Adventists in Rwanda. A retired pastor from Rwanda, who fled to the United States during the civil war in 1994, was arrested for genocide and crimes against humanity. The article in *Newsweek* was prompted because he was released in December. This article compels me to mention Adventist Church involvement in the Rwanda crisis. For instance, ADRA provided tremendous relief efforts for Rwandan refugees – and continues to provide relief. The article does not mention the reconciliation efforts of the Adventist Church in Rwanda. During my 1996 trip to Rwanda I visited sites where thousands were massacred. I interviewed survivors and listened to their stories. I met with government leaders of the highest levels and with both Hutu and Tutsi church leaders—including those in the refugee camps—and spoke to at least 75,000 members. And at each opportunity I addressed the need of, and suggested processes for, reconciliation. Church leaders have continued to make reconciliation a matter of the highest priority, bringing together the sides of this conflict so that they can become true Christian brothers in Christ.

Our believers in Rwanda have endured – and still endure – unbelievable hardships. We need to remember

them in our prayers, both for their physical safety and for the healing of spirit that only Christ can bring.

Off the Back Burner

Section 100: We have been discovering that Ellen White permeated *Steps to Christ* with the Great Controversy Theme. One of the reasons why so many have discovered this book to be so helpful lies in its directness and simplicity. Most people long for assurance, for some certainty, that they are in the right relationship with God.

Ellen White does not write in ambiguous language. Nor does she contribute to a cheap gospel as she examines how to be "sure": "There is no evidence of genuine repentance, unless it works reformation. If he restore the pledge, give again that he robbed, confess his sins, and love God and his fellowmen, the sinner may be sure that he has passed from death unto life" (SC:59). Further, "every burden is light; for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure" (Ibid).

Then she speaks of "the true test": "We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. . . . Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law" (SC:61).

The whole point of the Great Controversy Theme is to "place ourselves in right relation to God . . . that we may be transformed into His likeness, and be restored to fellowship with the ministering angels, to harmony and communion with the Father and the Son" (SC:22). "Right relation" is another way to say "righteousness"—an old English word that meant "right-wise-ness." We have remnants of this old English spelling when we think of anything moving "clock-wise," or "counter-clock-wise." "Righteousness" refers to created beings who are in harmony with the way God thinks—that is, when we are in "right relation to God," we are "right-wise," not "counter-right-wise." The phrase "righteousness by faith" is simply an English phrase that describes the person who is in "harmony with the will of God" and "in right relation to God,"

That is the "test," the way we know for "sure" regarding our relationship with God. Are we comfortable with all the light that God has kindly given us? Or do we argue with it, put it off, or make excuses that it doesn't apply in our circumstances? Which way are we walking—right-wisely, or counter-right-wisely? Only a person in his or her quietest moments knows the answer.