

From the G.C. President

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Robert S. Folkenberg

■ **HJR 78, Voice Your Opinion:** House Joint Resolution 78, the proposal by Congressman Ernest Istook of Oklahoma, calls for an amendment to the United States Constitution which will permit an increased role of religion on public property. This resolution is likely to come to a vote in the House of Representatives later this month. The language of the bill is as follows: "To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience. The people's right to pray and recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, or traditions on public property (including schools) shall not be infringed. The Government shall not require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, initiate or designate school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion."

GC and NAD Public Affairs and Religious Liberty staffers have urged me to encourage you to write your representative expressing opposition to HJR 78. They believe uncertainties about the meaning of the proposal and how courts of law will interpret it raise serious questions about the negative effects of HJR 78.

■ **A Breakfast With the Dobsons:** Last Friday a small group of GC employees and myself met for an early breakfast with Dr. James and Shirley Dobson, founders of the Christian ministry, *Focus on the Family*. The Dobsons were in Washington to celebrate the National Day of Prayer on Thursday. As part of the National Day of Prayer celebrations, Dr. Dobson invited the Adventist men's chorus *Christian Edition*, to perform at ceremonies in Washington. After breakfast on Friday morning, the Dobson's joined the GC family for worship as *Christian Edition* led our devotional time.

As the US news journals have recently pointed out, this is a challenging time for the Dobsons and *Focus on the Family*. Dr. Dobson is bravely "drawing a line in the sand" by holding legislators accountable for, among other things, placing a halo of morality on that which is immoral. As Adventists, we believe it is not the role of a church to manage government. Principles cannot be legislated, they must be born. However, each of us can hold our legislators to principles and that is what Dr. Dobson is doing.

■ **A Satellite Q&A:** It is a wonderful, but rare occasion when I have opportunity to talk with Adventist school children. Last week I simultaneously connected with students at five Adventist Elementary Schools in NAD through video conferencing technology. During this informal question and answer time, the students and I talked about the duties and role of a church president, and the educational requirements needed to serve the church. But most important, we talked about Jesus and the priority that He must take in all our lives. A special thanks to these students for their time and thoughts on faith and service.

■ **The FTP Survey:** A sincere thank you to the many FTP readers who have responded to last week's survey. We now have a very thick file of thoughts and opinions to assist us in making FTP a better publication. If you have not sent your FTP survey back to the GC Communication Department, please do so as soon as possible.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #113: This week and next I will share another story illustrating Ellen White's statement in *Testimonies*, Vol.5, 671, that at times God revealed to her things from the past, and the present, as

well as the future, including the faces of individuals who she did not know that later she recognized. Such visions were always given by God for a purpose. The vision of January 3, 1875, helped expand the thinking of our pioneers regarding the world-wide work needing to be done. In 1874 Adventists had one publishing house, one sanitarium, and were building a college, all in Battle Creek. That year we also sent our first official overseas missionary to Europe.

The dedication of the new Battle Creek College building was set for January 4, 1875. James and Ellen White had been persuaded to delay their return to California, where Elder White had recently started *The Signs of the Times* in Oakland, until after the service. In December influenza swept through Battle Creek. First the White boys, then James, and finally Ellen all came down with it. On Sunday, January 3, 1875, Mrs. White was so ill that it seemed there was no way she would be able to participate in the dedication service scheduled for the following day. A doctor was sent for. After examining Mrs. White he said that she possibly had pneumonia and should be taken to the sanitarium immediately. What was Elder White to do? He and Ellen had altered their plans so she could be there to speak the following day at the dedication service.

Being a strong believer in the power of prayer, James White sent for Elders Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner. Although running a high fever and chilling, Mrs. White was wrapped in blankets and brought downstairs from her bedroom where she was placed in a rocking chair. The ministers knelt around her and began to pray earnestly for her healing. After each one had finished, in a hoarse voice Ellen began to pray. Suddenly she paused. The stillness was broken by a cry of, "Glory to God! Glory to God," and she was in vision.

The men got up from their knees and waited for the vision to conclude. For about five minutes Ellen White remained motionless. Then, throwing back her blankets, she rose to her feet and began walking back and forth in the room, wringing her hands as she exclaimed, "Dark, dark, all dark--so dark!" She then seemed to see something else, and exclaimed, "A light, a little light, *more light, MUCH LIGHT!*" She then sat back down and remained motionless for another five minutes or so. The vision ended, and Ellen White began to breathe normally again.

James White, knowing that immediately after his wife came out of vision everything around her looked dark, knelt beside her and asked if she wanted to tell them what she had just been shown. "No, not now," she replied. So after assisting her back upstairs to her bedroom, James White accompanied the other men back to the Review office to greet those who were arriving for the closing of the Bible Institute that evening, and the dedication of the college building the next day.

Throughout that day, James White kept wondering about his sick wife at home. As quickly as he could do so, he left the office and made his way home through the snow. Going immediately to her room, rather than finding her still sick, she was up, dressed, and busily writing. Ellen White had been completely healed. Elder White told his wife about the meeting in the church that evening, and inquired if she would like to attend. "Certainly," she responded.

Next week I will share the fascinating sixteen-year long story regarding this vision.