

From the G.C. President

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To Nairobi via Nebraska: On Sabbath morning, May 8, I had the opportunity to speak at an early morning worship service specifically for community leaders from the Union College area in Lincoln, Nebraska. Later that morning, I delivered the baccalaureate address to the Union College graduating class during the second worship service. Both experiences highlighted the positive impact that a successful Christian institution can have on every level of its community. That impact is especially clear this time of year as we graduate young men and women who, by virtue of faith and training, choose to better every community in which they find themselves.

From Nebraska, I headed directly to Nairobi where I arrived at 8 am on Monday morning and held an airport news conference with the Kenya Television Network. I went to Nairobi to meet with the Eastern Africa Division Executive Committee (EAD). The EAD convened a meeting of conference, mission, union, and division and institutional officers to participate in a strategic planning session. As leaders, we all realize that we cannot be satisfied with doing things the way we have always done them. New challenges call for new goals. Specific objectives and financial outcomes with action plans to achieve these objectives were outlined. I believe this to be one of the most important meetings to be held in this division in recent years.

An On-going Dialogue: After Nairobi, I arrived in Geneva, Switzerland in time to join the group of theologians representing the Seventh-day Adventist Church who have for four years (1994-1998) met with their counterparts representing the Lutheran World Federation. These discussions were held in the city of Cartigny. Each day began with joint worship led alternatively by Adventist and Lutheran participants. The team representing the Seventh-day Adventist Church are the following: Bert Beach (co-chair of the meetings), Neils-Erik Andreasen, John Graz, Johan Heinz, William Johnsson, Pardon Mwansa, Aulikki Nabkola, Jan Paulsen, Jonathan Pauline, George Reid, Angel Rodriguez, and William Shea. Among the Lutheran federation at this meeting was Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation.

Allow me to summarize for you the interactions of these two groups over the last four years. During the preliminary session held in 1994, the participants of the Adventist/Lutheran dialogue agreed to a thematic approach. During meetings since, they have discussed such topics as justification by faith, the law, authority of scripture, ecclesiology, and Ellen G. White, among other topics. Last week's meeting dealt with eschatology, a topic which has only seldom been discussed in bilateral conversations between churches.

Some Adventists wonder if we are compromising any of our beliefs by engaging in this dialogue. Actually, the converse is true. From the Adventist perspective, this dialogue has provided an opportunity to communicate to Lutherans around the world that Adventists are not a legalistic sect that believes in righteousness by works, but a vibrant Christian denomination. The Cartigny meeting approved the 17-page final report (which will include the papers presented) which summarizes the Adventist/Lutheran discussions to date. The report is available on the General Conference Home Page (www.adventist.org). Select "Presidential Pages," "Travel Highlights" and the "Lutheran Report" listed in connection with the trip report. The meeting closed with an Adventist communion service at Collonges, France on Sabbath, May 16.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #114: Last week I gave the setting for Ellen White's vision of January 3, 1875. Ellen White had agreed, after being healed in answer to prayer, to attend the evening meeting in the Battle Creek church. Uriah Smith was the speaker. Among other things, he told about her vision and healing earlier that day. Mrs. White then was invited to speak. Rather than recounting the vision, she offered a brief greeting to those present for the college dedication the next day.

January 4, 1875, was a high day! The first Seventh-day Adventist college building was being dedicated. One of the speakers was Ellen White. After telling of the importance of Battle Creek College, and why we must train young people to carry the message to the ends of the earth, she recalled her vision of the previous day. "In the vision, the world was spread out before me," she said, "and I saw darkness like the pall of death. The earth was covered with darkness." Then she described lights beginning to come up here and there until the whole world was encircled in light. She added, "I have been shown printing presses in other countries, printing the message in many languages, and it was scattered like the leaves of autumn."

At the time, we had only one press in the entire world, located there in Battle Creek. And our organized mission work outside the United States, barely three months old, was centered in Switzerland. James White was very interested in what his wife had been shown. "Ellen," he asked, "can you name any of those countries?" "No," she said, "the angel didn't say. But if I should ever see those printing presses, I should recognize them.--Oh yes," she said, "Australia was mentioned." At that time no thought had been given to Australia. But Elder S. N. Haskell, who was present, determined to go there. Ten years later he opened our work in Australia.

In 1885, Ellen White went to Europe. Approaching the new publishing house in Basel, Switzerland for the first time, she told those with her that she had seen the building before. Upon entering it, they took her on a tour, eventually arriving at the press room where two men were working. After being introduced to them, she inquired, "Where is the other one?" "What other one?" a startled Elder B. L. Whitney, who was conducting the tour, wondered. "There is an older man here," Mrs. White replied, "and I have a message for him."

It was then explained that an older man did also work in the press room, but he was downtown on business right then. The next day when Mrs. White met him, she recognized him and gave him the message that she had been given for him ten years earlier in her vision.

A few months later, in Christiana (now Oslo), Norway, she recognized the presses in the publishing house there. She then shared with them counsel that had been given her in 1875. Likewise, in 1891 when she first visited the Echo Publishing Company in Australia, upon stepping into the composing room, she said, "There's trouble here. There's confusion here." Again, she had a message for one of the workers, a message that had been given her sixteen years earlier.

We do not know how many of the church's publishing houses were shown to Ellen White in 1875, but we are aware of at least those three. Today, Global Mission evangelism continues to fulfill that vision as light from the gospel brightens more and more of the dark corners of the world. (This and last week's stories are condensed from Arthur L. White's *Notes and Papers Concerning Ellen White and the Spirit of Prophecy*, 1974 ed., pp. 344-347.)