

From the G.C. President

June 1, 1998

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■ **Q & A at Gulf States Campmeeting:** Summer was in full bloom during my visit last Sabbath to the Gulf States Conference Campmeeting held at Bass Memorial Academy near Hattiesburg in Southern Mississippi. I enjoyed worshiping and interacting with the pastoral staff during the early morning service. Then, during the second service, it was my privilege to explore the richness of the Gospel with Campmeeting attendees. I was asked to open the afternoon service and did so with a report about Pentecost '98 in South Africa. Then I asked the congregation if they had any questions about their church. It is obvious through the questions asked that the members of the Gulf States Conference care very deeply about the future of the work. I am very thankful for the dedication to faith that was the foundation of each question asked. Allow me to share with you one of the most stimulating questions from Sabbath afternoon's Q and A. The question went something like this: "You've visited the church in many parts of the world. Each has its own positive and negative elements. What do you see, characteristic of the church in North America, that reflects most detrimentally on the growth of our Church?" I responded that probably the greatest obstacle in the highly industrialized nations (not just North America), is that many of our members are looking for some system, approach, or structural change that will bring about renewal, reformation, explosive growth, and the latter rain. But, experience has demonstrated that there is no substitute for the motivation that results from life in Christ. The person, renewed by the joy and transforming power of the gospel, will take personal ownership of our message and mission to share Christ with the world. Growth is not the result of a finely tuned system or corporate models, but the inevitable effect "radical discipleship" in the life of the believer. There just is no substitute.

■ **HSI Lowers Tuition:** Home Study International (HSI) has announced reductions in overall prices for Preschool, Kindergarten, and Grades 1-6. As of July 1, 1998, the average cost per student for all grade levels K-6 will be US\$472 per student, well below the national average of US\$546. For more information about HSI, please call 800-782-4769 or visit their web site at: www.hsi.edu. I hope every parent who doesn't have the option of placing their child in an Seventh-day Adventist school will consider the HSI home-schooling alternative.

■ **Women's Ministries Celebrates 100 Years:** Did you know that it has been 100 years since Women's Ministries was started in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Mrs. Sarepta Myrenda Irish Henry accepted the Adventist message in 1896, and shortly after, felt the Lord calling her to develop a ministry for Adventist women. Also, Ellen White invited her to begin a "woman ministry," so Mrs. Henry was granted a ministerial license from the General Conference and in 1898 became the first GC Women's Ministries Director. Mrs. Henry felt that women who studied the character of Christ and applied the principles of His life would have a mighty power in their homes and families. Unfortunately, shortly after Mrs. Henry's death, Women's Ministries became inactive but was revitalized at the 1990 GC Session. Today Ardis Stenbakken and Lynetta Hamstra minister to and train Seventh-day Adventist women through the GC Women's Ministries Department.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #116: This week we recall the story of a man that Ellen White had met, and for whom she tried to work. His name was Stephen Smith, and he was living in the vicinity of Washington, New

Hampshire. In October 1851, James and Ellen White attended a conference there with about seventy-five in attendance. All except Stephen Smith and one other man accepted Ellen's visions as being from God. Not only did Stephen object to the visions, but he was so hostile against other views held by the rest of the group that they withdrew the hand of fellowship from him (Letter 8, 1851). Things had calmed down sufficiently by the following year so that Stephen was readmitted to membership, but before long he was once again following one off-shoot after another. Again he was dropped from membership. His out-spoken opposition made it impossible for the Washington congregation to do anything else

In spite of Stephen Smith's bitterness toward Ellen White's visions, God still sent a message to him through her. Calling for his mail at the post office soon after, Stephen Smith was handed an envelope with Ellen White's return address on it. Not wanting to read anything from her, but not quite willing to throw the letter away, he took it home and placed it in the bottom of a storage trunk. There, for the next twenty-eight years, it laid, unopened and unread. And during those years, Stephen Smith--if possible--became even more difficult to get along with.

In time, Stephen and his wife, Matilda, who had remained a member of the church, moved to Unity, New Hampshire, about 12 miles (19 km) from Washington. Sometime in 1884, Stephen picked up a copy of the *Review and Herald* to which his wife subscribed. The lead article was by Ellen White. After reading it, he thought to himself, "That's the truth." In the months that followed, Stephen continued reading the articles each week by Ellen White. Slowly there came a change in him. His words and actions began to soften, enough so that his wife and others noticed.

The following summer, Elder Eugene Farnsworth returned to Washington to visit his parents. It was announced that he would preach the three Sabbaths he was there. Stephen decided to attend. After Elder Farnsworth had finished talking about the Seventh-day Adventist Church--a movement of prophecy, Brother Smith rose to speak. Recalling the bitter man he had known earlier, Elder Farnsworth wondered if he should allow Stephen to speak. The old man quickly calmed everyone's fears by saying he had not come to criticize. After briefly reviewing his experience of following one off-shoot after another, he acknowledged that none of them still existed, only the church remained. "Facts," he said, "are stubborn things. But the facts are that those who have opposed this work have come to nought."

The following Thursday, Stephen Smith remembered the letter he had received from Ellen White years earlier. Finally, he wanted to know what it said. In it, God had shown her the course his life would take if he did not settle into the truth. The following Sabbath, Stephen was back in church. This time Elder Farnsworth spoke about the gift of prophecy in the remnant church. Again Brother Smith was on his feet, holding the letter he had read for the first time two days earlier. He acknowledged that he had been wrong in his opposition to the visions; he now knew they all were from God. "Any man who is honest must say that they lead a man toward God and the Bible," he told them. How tragic that the solution to Stephen Smith's unhappiness lay all those years there in the bottom of his trunk, unread and unheeded. (Condensed from Arthur L. White's *Notes and Papers Concerning Ellen G. White and the Spirit of Prophecy*, 1974 ed., pp. 351-354.)