

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

July 20, 1998

UPDATE

Papua, New Guinea Update: It is feared that up to 3,000 people have been killed as a result of the tsunami, or tidal wave, that hit five large villages in the area surrounding Aitape on PNG's northwest coast. Global Mission had only recently established a group of new Adventist believers there, with five baptized members and 30 studying in a baptismal class. The Adventist Church has sent a medical team from Sopas Adventist Hospital and an ADRA team is providing clean drinking water for survivors in the Aitape region. Also, the PNG Adventist Community Services volunteers are working in four care centers that have been established in the past several days. ADRA South Pacific Division has established an appeal fund to help the people of Aitape. Donations to this fund can be sent to the ADRA International Office in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Pentecost '98 Update: Brad Thorp, director of AGCN, recently reported that the combined total baptisms from Pentecost '98, the satellite evangelism event in Africa, is more than 16,000 people! Angola and Mozambique of the Euro-Africa Division (EUD) also report recent baptisms, although the specific numbers are not yet available. A strong and consistent follow-up to Pentecost '98 continues. The EAD (Eastern Africa Division) reports 3,122 people attending baptismal classes and the SAU (Southern Africa Union Conference) reports that over 500 are still preparing for baptism. Pastor Thorp says he conservatively estimates an overall total of over 22,000 baptisms from this first-ever, continent-wide outreach event.

Pastoral Education Program Begins

in the Baltics: Griggs University, Newbold College, and the Trans-European Division (TED) have entered into a formal partnership to offer an economical and flexible pastoral education program in the Baltic Union. The first class of 32 working pastors began classes on July 5. Students will be offered a variety of methods to complete their course requirements without having to disrupt their pastoral and family responsibilities. Dr. Joseph Gurubatham, president of Griggs University, tells me that he anticipates pastors from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Albania, Poland, and Greece will take advantage of this new training program. Newbold

College will manage the program and provide most of the faculty for the intensive courses and, upon completion of the program, Griggs University will confer degrees in Theology or Religion.

FOCUS ON FAITH

The Crisis over Scripture (cont.): In our first segment we took note of the influence of the creation/evolution debate on our church. We listened to Ariel Roth who wrote that "the history of other major Protestant churches suggests that were we once to lose confidence in the authenticity of the creation account, we would soon lose confidence in the validity of Genesis 1 through 11 . . . [and in] the Bible as a whole."

Unfortunately, this is exactly what is happening in some places in our church today. Accommodationists are trying to reconcile the Bible with contemporary scientific thought including the reinterpretation of the six

days of creation to represent millions of years. In consequence, questions are raised not only in regard to the creation story but also concerning the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Some Adventists no longer believe in a worldwide flood. They explain Genesis 6-9 with a local flood in ancient Mesopotamia. However, the question has to be asked, if the flood was only in one part of the world, why did God tell Noah to build the ark? All he had to do was to tell Noah to move elsewhere on the planet.

A second reason for the crisis over Scripture in the Adventist Church is the gradual acceptance of a modified form of the historical-critical method by some of its scholars.

The historical-critical method is an offspring of the Enlightenment in seventeenth century Europe. The French philosopher, Rene Descarte, raised doubt to a universally valid principle and changed philosophical, scientific, and religious thinking forever. The Enlightenment taught that all truth including truth contained in Scripture is rational, and what is rational is capable of proof. The historical-critical method, therefore, sought the eternal truths concealed in biblical history by purifying it of all inadequate forms. In the process Scripture was stripped of all supernatural elements since they are not verifiable by rational proof. ■

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