

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

August 10, 1998

UPDATE

1998 ASI Convention: I was delighted to participate in the ASI Convention held in Palm Springs, California August 5-8. Under the theme "Sharing Christ in the Marketplace," most meetings were uplinked by 3ABN to the North American Division, enabling thousands of others to participate in the inspiration of the occasion.

The theme focused on witnessing to others of the hope that burns within each believer. Speakers included Russell Burrill from Andrews Theological Seminary and *Net '98* evangelist, Dwight Nelson, and also a large number of laymen who told of soul-winning initiatives.

ASI leadership selected a cluster of projects to be underwritten by the Sabbath morning offering. These projects included a series of global soul-winning initiatives, such as *It Is Written's* "ACTS 2000," providing hundreds of bicycles for lay-missionaries in Africa, and providing 250 church buildings for congregations in as-yet-unentered areas in India, as well as helping many self-supporting institutions in North America. Attendees broke into applause when the total amount given or pledged was announced at the close of the service. It was in excess of \$3.8 million, enough to underwrite the entire list of projects.

I also took the opportunity to participate in "eXcite '98" at La Sierra University, where a 500+ group of committed young people from all over North America met and are taking ownership of the Church's message and mission.

Dr. Cherian Dies: I regret to report the death on August 7 of Dr. M E Cherian, immediate past president of

the Southern Asian Division. A tireless and committed leader, first at Spicer College where he served for more than 30 years, Dr. Cherian directed the Division based in Pune, India for seven years. We have lost a highly-respected leader, and on behalf of the world church send our deepest sympathy and condolences to his family.

FOCUS ON FAITH

Postmodernism: In segment four we discovered that there is a paradigm change from modernism to postmodernism taking place in society. But what is postmodernism? Postmodernism has its roots in the writings of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), who claimed that God is dead and that man, therefore, has the opportunity to create his own world. Nietzsche taught that knowledge of things, as they actually exist, is impossible. Knowledge and what we call truth are only human creations -- illusions in our minds. Through our language we create reality, but it is separate from the external reality.

Modernism says humans are biological machines, postmodernism says humans are cogs in a social machine. Modernism believes that mankind is progressing upward; postmodernism says progress is only a code word for western imperialism. Postmodernism is a reaction against the scientific world-view of modernism.

As Christians, we agree with postmodernism's rejection of reason as the final authority. For Christians, Scripture is the final authority. We agree with postmodernism's rejection of

the scientific method as the only way to knowledge, because for Christians knowledge also comes from revelation. However, what postmodernism offers is worse than what modernism gave us.

1. Postmodernism teaches that reason and rationality are cultural biases and that truth -- especially God's truth -- does not exist, because truth is relative. Truth is not discovered, it is manufactured by a group or an individual for him/herself. Therefore, all lifestyles, religions and world-views are equally valid. The only sin in postmodernism is criticising someone else's views or moral choices. Christianity, therefore, is no longer unique and has no right to make Christians out of Buddhists or Pagans.

2. Central to postmodernism is the belief that people are the product of their culture. Scripture, therefore, is not God's Word, but a record of man's religious experiences in a particular culture. Thus, one cannot accept what it says as binding for today.

3. Since for postmodernists language is never objective, we will never know what the authors of Scripture wanted to say. We can only know what his words mean to us. Therefore, postmodernism calls for a reader-centred method of interpreting Scripture, where personal bias and opinion is paramount. The reader is free to generate new meaning in biblical texts, because what is important is what the text means to him. This puts Scripture under the authority of the post-modern reader. ■

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