

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

August 31, 1998

UPDATE

South Korea—Potential Realized:

On the last part of a recent work itinerary that took me to the Nevada/Utah Campmeeting and to Taiwan, I completed the trip with a tour of the Adventist institutions of South Korea. What I found in Korea was a vibrant and growing denomination making full use of its potential. Since the Seventh-day Adventist Church began to work in Korea in 1904, the church has grown rapidly to almost 145,000 members meeting in 904 congregations who are led by 550 pastors and chaplains. Membership is increasing at a rate of almost 20 new individuals per day! The church in South Korea provides a unique and extraordinary example of initiatives that are possible when virtually 100% of its members faithfully return their tithes and offerings to God. Allow me to offer you some examples of those initiatives in this issue of FTP. Fifteen academies serve 5,971 students while 2,900 students attend ten primary schools. Each academy provides a full-time chaplain for each of the grade levels. This, of course, directly affects the percentage of students who remain faithful to their church. At Korean Sahmyook University the Adventist Church has the largest enrollment in Adventist higher education with 4,200 students. For this new school year 10,343 people applied for the 1,620 openings available in the freshman class. This 500 acre campus is recognized by the government as the most beautiful institution of higher learning in South Korea. Another success story is the Seventh-day Adventist International Language Institute, and the adjoining language school in Seoul. One hundred and thirty

five professionals teach conversational English to 16,000 students at 22 schools scattered throughout Korea. Each school is equipped with a chapel and services which the students are invited to attend. Carefully planned spiritual activities have led an average of 300 students to be baptized each year. As a result of these and many other initiatives the church in South Korea is filled with intelligent, highly-motivated members that are making a significant contribution to the mission of our faith.

FOCUS ON FAITH

The Old Testament Canon (cont.):

In our last segment we summarized the historical-critical view of the development of the Pentateuch. Over the last hundred years, many changes and additions have been proposed, but in its basic outline the source-critical theory of the origin of the Pentateuch is still one of the main stays of the historical-critical school today.

Ellen White in her days recognized the destructive work the critics were doing and wrote: "The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, and reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God's Word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives" (AA 474). Some Adventist scholars, unfortunately, have accepted many of the conclusions of "higher criticism" in spite of this clear statement from the pen of inspiration.

How long the Old Testament canon took to reach its final shape we cannot say. Many scholars believe that there were three stages in the formation

of this canon, roughly corresponding to the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible (Law, Prophets and Writings) as given in the Babylonian Talmud. Others believe that there is only a twofold division in the Hebrew canon, namely "law and prophets" (Luke 16:16) or "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29), and that a three stage formation of the canon cannot be supported from the ancient sources. Robert D. Wilson, for example, gives sixty early lists of manuscripts of the Old Testament and declares that "no two present exactly the same order for the books comprising the Old Testament canon" (*Studies in the Book of Daniel*, 1917, p. 38).

The Pentateuch (Torah) certainly was the earliest part to acquire canonical status. The "book of the law", placed beside the Ark of the Covenant to indicate its importance (Deut 31:26), was also called "the book of Moses" (Neh 13:1). It was the divine rule for faith and life, and people were continually urged to obey its precepts. "This book of the law", said God to Joshua, "shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success" (Josh 1:8). It is repeatedly referred to in the Old Testament (Josh 8:31; 2 Kgs 22:8; Neh 8:1), and still today forms the basis for orthodox Judaism. ■

Robert S. Folkenberg