

# From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

September 21, 1998

## UPDATE

**One hundred years in Peru:** On my way to the Annual Council meetings in Brazil, I stopped in Peru for several days to celebrate with our 300,000 strong Church 100 years of Adventism in this enchanting South American country.

It was in August of 1898 that a group of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries arrived in Peru from the neighbouring country of Chile. From our earliest days there, Adventists have influenced Peru's religious, social, and political history. It was our insistence on religious freedom for all individuals that significantly contributed toward a religious tolerance clause in the national Constitution of Peru.

My visit to Peru began on Wednesday, Sept. 16 with a stop in Cuzco, a famed city of the ancient Incan Empire, and subsequently of the Spanish Conquistadors, where together with Pastor Ruy Nagel, president of SAD, we were welcomed by some 300 students from our church school. In the evening we worshipped together with hundreds of believers from the surrounding areas. The following day, we also marvelled at the ancient "Lost City" of the Incas, Machu Picchu.

On Friday morning, we proceeded to Lima where I had the privilege of meeting with the country's Congress leadership, including three Seventh-day Adventists who are members of the Peru parliament. Victor Joy-Way Rojas, president of the Congress, presented me with a special congressional citation, spoke of the country's high esteem for our Church, and commented on how our schools provide a solid moral and ethical foundation to the Peruvian community.

In the afternoon, we were guests of Lima's Police Motorcycle squadron named "the Gideons." Formed by Ramiro Rojas Chavez, Peruvian

National Police general, a Seventh-day Adventist, the unit is served by a full-time Adventist chaplain, and includes nearly a hundred police officers committed to spiritual values and integrity.

We then proceeded to meet with students and faculty at the Church's educational flagship, the Peru Adventist University located in Ñaña, a suburb of Lima Together with the work of ADRA which is well recognized in the country, Adventist education in Peru is an example of faith in action.

The highlight of my trip, however, was Sabbath, September 19, as I joined more than 18,000 church members at Lima's Arauta Coliseum to observe their centennial anniversary. It was pleasing to be a witness to the Church's ongoing program of being present and active among those who are searching for a better today and a better tomorrow in Peru

After, our full program in Peru, we boarded a plane for Asuncion and Iquazu Falls.

Please continue to pray for your church leaders as they meet in Brazil over the next week to discuss issues which will impact our Church well into the next millennium.

## FOCUS ON FAITH

**The Witness of Qumran:** In our last segment we considered the witness of the Septuagint. In this segment we will look at the manuscripts from Qumran.

The discoveries made at Qumran, near the Dead Sea, in 1947 and the years following, have greatly increased our knowledge of the Hebrew text prior to the time of the Masoretes (A.D. 500 - 950). However, they provide little information about the origin and

limit of the Old Testament canon.

The remains of approximately eight hundred manuscripts have been found in the eleven caves of Qumran. Two hundred and two copies or about one quarter are biblical manuscripts.

The book of Psalms is present in the largest number of copies (36), with the next two being Deuteronomy (29) and Isaiah (21). Of the others, only Exodus (17), Genesis (15), and Leviticus (13) break into double figures. At the other extreme, not a single recognizable scrap from a manuscript of Esther has been located, and the same is true for Nehemiah. (J. C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 1994, p. 31).

One of the scrolls (4QMMT) mentions a threefold division of the books of the Old Testament: "[And also] we [have written] to you that you may have understanding in the book of Moses [and in the words of the p]rophets, and in Davi[d]" (Ibid. 149). However, there is no evidence that the people at Qumran had a closed canon. All we can say is that most but not all the Old Testament books are referred to in the Qumran literature. Sixteen of them are cited as authoritative with introductions like "it is written," "God said," etc., and seven were the subject of commentaries - Isaiah, Psalms, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakuk (Ibid. pp. 150-153).

On the other hand, a number of apocryphal books were also known and used at Qumran. 1 Enoch, Jubilee, and The Temple Scroll, were frequently cited, but there is no evidence that they were considered canonical and no commentary was written on any of the apocryphal books. ■

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