From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church October 12, 1998

UPDATE

A Good Beginning: Two years of preparation and planning exploded into reality on Friday night, October 9, as the first worldwide Adventist evangelistic campaign, NET '98, began. Brad Thorp, special assistant to the GC President and coordinator of the Adventist Global Communication Network (AGCN), estimates that there are 6,700 downlink sites around the world that have the potential to receive Dwight Nelson's presentations from the Pioneer Memorial Church. In Papua, New Guinea (PNG) alone, four locations are broadcasting to an estimated 40,000 people. And, when the signal fails due to technical problems (subsequently resolved), the PNG NET '98 coordinators kept the meetings going with previously-taped Kenneth Cox presentations. In Romania 47,113 people attended the first meeting. At the La Sierra University Church 900 attended opening night, approximately 300 were not church members. The Adventist Church in Venezuela will broadcast the entire series on four cable stations and 3ABN broadcasts NET '98 to115 cable systems in the United States.

In the village of Branceni, Romania many attended the first night. But then a massive power failure left the entire town without electricity. However, the NET '98 organizers refused to give up. They managed to find a generator and announced to the village that the evening program would be presented as planned. At the moment that the satellite signal was to be received via power from the generator, the electricity was restored to the entire village.

The stories and statistics continue to roll in and the numbers are impressive. "Overall, the beginning of NET '98 was an outstanding success. Of course, we have some start-up technical problems with satellites and transponders, but we are very thankful for all God is doing to bless this effort," said Pastor Thorp.

The success of NET '98 is due to a merciful God and a worldwide team effort among our church family. Special thanks goes to many around the world for their tireless work and sacrifice. But a special thanks goes to the members of the Pioneer Memorial Church who are serving as a Christian host to the world through this massive satellite event.

FOCUS ON FAITH

The Witness of the Christian Church (cont.): In our last segment we looked at the discussions at Jamnia and the witness of Melito of Sardis and Origen. The first writer to use the word *canon* in the sense of "the canon of Scripture" was Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria. In his defense of the Nicene Creed he mentions the book *Shepherd of Hermas* as "not belonging to the canon" (*On the Decrees*, p. 18). In 367, in an Easter letter, Athanasius listed the following 22 books as belonging to the Old Testament canon: 1. Genesis; 2. Exodus; 3. Leviticus; 4. Numbers; 5. Deuteronomy; 6. Joshua; 7. Judges; 8. Ruth; 9. 1 and 2 Kingdoms (Samuel); 10. 3 and 4 Kingdoms; 11. 1 and 2 Chronicles; 12. 1 and 2 Esdras (Ezra-Nehemiah); 13. Psalms; 14. Proverbs; 15. Ecclesiastes; 16. Song of Songs; 17. Job;18. The Twelve Prophets; 19. Isaiah; 20. Jeremiah, with Baruch, Lamentations, and the Epistle. 21. Ezekiel, 22. Daniel (*NPNF*, series 2, IV, p. 552).

Athanasius has the same number as Origen, but he lists Ruth separately from Judges, includes Baruch and the "Letter of Jeremiah" in the book of Jeremiah and omits Esther. He includes Esther with Sirach, Judith, and Tobit in the books "which are not indeed included in the canon, but have been appointed from the time of the fathers to be read to those who are recent converts..."

Jerome (345-419) who produced a Latin version of the Bible called Vulgate (L. *vulgata* for "common") accepted only the Hebrew canon as authoritative. After listing the twenty-two books as found in the Talmud he says, "What is not found in our list must be placed amongst the apocryphal writings" (*NPNF*, series 2, VI, p. 490). He distinguished between canonical and ecclesiastical books. The latter, he judged, were circulated by the Church as good "spiritual reading," but were not recognized as authoritative Scripture. Augustine (354-430), however, did not recognize this distinction. He accepted all the books in the LXX as of equal value, noting that those designated as apocryphal by Jerome were of either unknown or obscure origin. Augustine's point of view prevailed, and the apocryphal books became part of the official Roman Catholic Bible at the Council of Trent (1544-63).

Martin Luther and the other Reformers rejected the Apocrypha and returned to the Hebrew canon which since then has become the hallmark of all Protestant Bibles. ■

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