

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

October 19, 1998

UPDATE

NET '98 Update: We have now completed the first full week of NET '98, and it has been a very successful one. Of the 33,800 people who attended last Wednesday evening's meeting in Romania, 10,955 were guests. So far, in this European country, there are small churches where non-Adventist attendees out-number the members several times over. In the Euro-Africa Division (EUD) more than 20,000 guests attended last week's meetings. I just received an e-mail informing me that four cable stations in Italy will broadcast the NET '98 series free of charge. In Australia (SPD), a secular society where faith grows slowly, 2,020 guests are attending. But, the success of NET '98 in Australia is found in that division's ability to connect with the mass media. In Mildura, Victoria a local cable television network is re-playing Pastor Nelson's sermons free of charge—sometimes twice a day. The translations are being recorded for Italian radio. And, a radio station in Alstonville, New South Wales will broadcast the meetings as well.

Technology and Dedication

Combine: All of this good news would not be possible without the many church employees and volunteers that have combined their talents with this new technology to make NET '98 a success. At the Pioneer Memorial Church (PMC) there are over 300 volunteers! Members are directing traffic, planning and staffing an entire children's ministries program, and greeting guests. Andrews students, Nick and Ben Zork, Glen Lester, Elia King and Kellie Wilson are among the young artists that have written and performed original music to compliment program themes and

events. Every pew in the PMC sanctuary has a volunteer called a row leader. This row leader ministry is coordinated by Reger and Katherine Smith, retired employees of Andrews. That's a lot of pews and a lot of volunteers! And, seminarians are working at NET '98 and gaining valuable evangelistic experience. "The vision for NET '98 is global outreach, but without the help and warmth of our local volunteers, all the technology would not be nearly so effective," commented Pastor Skip McCarty of PMC

FOCUS ON FAITH

The Apocrypha: Segment 14 dealt with the view of the Church Fathers in regard to the Old Testament canon. In this segment we take a look at the Apocrypha. During the period between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100 many books were written by Jewish authors. Some of them found their way into the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (LXX) and were at times quoted in the same way as the books of the Old Testament. However, there is no evidence that these books were ever regarded as canonical by the Jews. When in the first century A.D. the Jewish canon was more clearly defined these books were declared to be non-canonical.

The Greek word *apocrypha* meaning "hidden" was originally applied to books which were unsuitable for public reading because of the esoteric nature of their content. After A.D. 70 when these works fell into disfavor in Judaism, the term apocrypha came to mean heretical or spurious.

The books of the Apocrypha in the order in which they appear in the

English Bibles are: (1) 1 Esdras; (2) 2 Esdras; (3) Tobit; (4) Judith; (5) Additions to the book of Esther; (6) Wisdom of Solomon; (7) Ecclesiasticus (Sirach); (8) Baruch with the letter of Jeremiah; (9) Song of the three young men; (10) Susanna; (11) Bel and the Dragon; (12) Prayer of Manasseh; (13) 1 Maccabees; (14) 2 Maccabees.

The Apocrypha was first given canonical status by Greek-speaking Christians, who assumed that because they were included in the LXX they were part of an "Alexandrian canon" (Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 154). During the early Christian centuries most Greek and Latin Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian cited the Apocrypha as Scripture, and local synods in Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) justified and authorized their use as Scripture. Only a few voices were raised in protest during that time. One of them, as indicated above, was Jerome in the 4th century who regarded them as non-canonical. In the Vulgate, however, he included the Apocrypha in accordance with church practice, despite his reservations on this matter.

The Reformers distinguished between books that were authoritative for the establishment of doctrine and those that were not. Doctrines supported by the Apocrypha are: (1) the dead can still pray (Baruch 3:4); (2) prayer for the dead (2 Macc 12:44); (3) almsgiving delivers from eternal death and purges sin (Tobit 12:9); (4) the doctrine of purgatory (The Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-6). ■

Robert S. Folkenberg