

# From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

November 9, 1998

## UPDATE

**Faith in the Philippines:** For ten days I have been working in the Philippines which houses the new headquarters for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. In this archipelago country in Asia there are one million Seventh-day Adventists! During this visit, I met with Joseph Estrada, President of the Philippines. Several days before my arrival, President Estrada signed two executive orders that will have a tremendous impact on Adventists in his country. The first will release a TV license to the Adventist Church in Manila. The second will allow Adventists to take licensure examinations on days other than Sabbath. Also, President Estrada used our meeting as an opportunity to announce the appointment of Pastor Bien Tejano as the new Philippine ambassador to Papua, New Guinea. Pastor Tejano is an Adventist and the public affairs director of the Adventist Church in Manila.

**Meeting the Needs of Nicaragua:** ADRA is responding to the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch. To date, Central American officials estimate the latest hurricane to hit this region has killed more than 10,000 people. Washed out roads and bridges are making relief work and communication difficult. In Nicaragua, the first 940 metric tons of food arrived via a Boeing 747 cargo plane on Saturday night. ADRA Nicaragua is collaborating with the United States Agency for International Development, Save the Children, and Project Concern International in responding to the food needs. Food distribution began

Sunday morning in many affected areas. This food will feed more than 156,000 people for the next two weeks. There are 10 more flights scheduled to arrive soon with a total of 1,120 metric tons of food. In Ocotol, Nicaragua the ADRA staff built a "plank and barrel" raft they are using to ferry food stocks across a flooded river. Once across, the food is loaded onto trucks and transported to towns five hours away.

## FOCUS ON FAITH

### The

#### **Formation of the NT Canon:**

Having concluded our study of the Old Testament canon in our last segment, we now turn to the New Testament canon.

In John 14:26 Jesus promises his disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things, and remind them of what Jesus had told them. He would also guide them into all truth and tell them what was yet to come (16:13). Christians believe that what we have in the NT is the written deposit of the fulfillment of these words of Christ.

For about two decades after the cross, the message of Jesus was proclaimed orally. Then, beginning in the early fifties of the first century, Paul's letters began to appear. During the sixties of the first century, the three synoptic Gospels and the book of Acts were written, and by the end of the first century, when John wrote the book of Revelation, all the books of the New Testament were completed.

As was the case with the books of the Old Testament prophets, the writings of Paul and the other apostles were immediately accepted as authoritative because the authors were recognized as authentic spokesmen for God. And, they themselves were conscious of the fact that they were proclaiming God's message, not merely their own opinions. In 2 Peter 3:15,16, Peter equates Paul's writings with the Scriptures; Paul in 1Tim 5:18 follows up the formula "Scripture says" with a quote from Deut 25:4 and Luke 10:7, thereby equating the Old Testament Scriptures with the New Testament Gospel; and in 1Thess 2:13, Paul commends the Christians in Thessalonica for accepting his words as "the Word of God."

In the formation of the New Testament canon, which took place over a period of about 250 years, apostolic authorship became the primary criterion for acceptance of individual books into the canon. At times, this criterion was applied somewhat loosely. In the case of Mark, the "private secretary" of Peter, for example, his Gospel was seen as a record of Peter's teaching. This is based on the statement of Papias (c.60-c.130), the bishop of Hierapolis, who wrote, "Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of His followers, but later, as I said, one of Peter's." (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III. 39). ■

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