

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

November 16, 1998

UPDATE

Home from Bangladesh: Last night I returned to Washington from my first visit to the country of Bangladesh. On this trip I participated in the dedication of Bajitpur Seventh-day Adventist Maranatha Seminary, an educational complex built in seven months due to the outstanding support and leadership of Garwin McNeilus and Maranatha Volunteers International (MVI). This project is one of more than 200 which are being constructed as a lay initiative by MVI. The school is an impressive complex with over 100,000 square feet of new construction. It houses a primary school for 300-400 students, a high school for 600-800 students, and an orphanage with accommodations for 300. It was an extraordinary and touching experience to watch the 76 children currently housed at the old barracks-style orphanage walk together across the campus to take possession of their new home.

The Prime Minister: Also, it was a unique privilege to meet with the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, who graciously received a small delegation of Adventist leaders at her private residence. At this meeting I presented the Prime Minister with a donation to assist the national disaster relief efforts under way due to this year's terrible flooding. And, I thanked Prime Minister Hasina for her support of religious liberty. Of the 700,000 secondary students in Bangladesh schools, 200 are Adventists. The Bangladeshi government has supported our students by allowing them to take examinations after sunset on Saturday.

Pollywog Industries: The last stop before leaving Bangladesh was at

Pollywog Industries, a business initiative operated by the Bangladesh Union. It is designed to provide employment to the most destitute women in society. Only those whose household income is less than US\$25 per month are employed. They make toys and cross-stitching for a wide variety of products which are exported and also sold to tourists visiting Dhaka. Were it not for Pollywog, most of these women would be condemned to a life of prostitution or begging. For more information on Bangladesh please visit the following web site:

www.adventist.org/gc/presidential

NET '98 has come to a successful conclusion! Please visit either www.adventist.org or www.net98.org for a report.

FOCUS ON FAITH

The New Testament Canon (cont.): In the last segment we saw that the primary criterion for the acceptance of books into the New Testament canon was apostolic authorship. In the case of Luke's gospel, its author was early identified with "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col 4:14) who was a travelling companion of Paul (Acts 16:10). Because of his close association with Paul, it seems that "something of Paul's apostolic authority rubbed off on him" (Bruce, *Canon*, 257). We do not know how much Paul influenced Luke in writing the Gospel, but Irenaeus (died 195), the bishop of Lyon, said, "Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel proclaimed by him [i.e., Paul]" (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.1.).

Other tests of canonicity

included antiquity -- the book had to belong to the apostolic age; orthodoxy -- it had to be in harmony with the rest of the New Testament; and catholicity -- it had to be accepted by the greater part of the Christian church. Above all, however, the inspiration of the books had to be acknowledged by the churches.

At the end of the first century all the books of the New Testament were in existence as the possession of particular churches or individuals to whom they were addressed. They had to be collected and accepted by the church at large before the canon of the New Testament could be said to exist.

Sometime after Paul's death a collection of his letters, bearing the title *The Apostle* began to circulate among the churches. Soon after the fourth Gospel was completed, the four Gospels were brought together in another collection called *The Gospels*. Thus during the second century most churches came to possess and acknowledge a collection of inspired books which included the four Gospels, the book of Acts, thirteen of Paul's letters, 1 Peter, and 1 John. The other seven books (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation) were disputed and took longer to win general acceptance.

The early church fathers, Clement of Rome (flourished c.100), Polycarp (c.70-155), and Ignatius (died c.115) quoted from most of the New Testament books (only Mark, 2 and 3 John, and 2 Peter are not attested) in a manner indicating that they accepted these books as authoritative. 165). ■

