

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

November 23, 1998

UPDATE

ADRA and American Airlines Team

up: In the month of November American Airlines (AA) made significant donations to ADRA's relief efforts in Honduras. AA designated a 757 to fly 80,000 pounds of relief materials to Honduras for ADRA distribution. The materials were collected and donated by Seventh-day Adventist Churches located in or around the Dallas, Texas metropolitan area. ADRA Honduras is also preparing to deliver 11 tons of medical supplies and general medications to hospitals, clinics, shelters, and health care centers around the country over the next three months. These supplies were donated by Heart to Heart International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Olathe, Kansas.

Ministering in the Philippines:

During my recent trip to the Philippines, Ray Dabrowski, director of communication for the GC, travelled with me to assist in media/government relations, wrote the following report about what we learned first-hand regarding the ministry of Adventist women there. "Mrs. Mellie Viloso coordinates a remarkable variety of activities of Adventist women in the metropolitan area of Manila. Women's Ministry is providing assistance in three government-operated centers for sexually abused women and children, as well as a home for seniors. 'Today we give them food and clothing. The next step is counseling,' said Mrs. Viloso. In the Gao Church, Lydia M. Cudiamat, a lawyer and insurance underwriter has just concluded her second evangelistic effort this year with a baptism of eighteen. She told us that after embracing Adventism, she

proceeded to win her family for Christ. The list is impressive—her father, her husband, nine children, a brother, two sisters-in-law, seven nephews, a cousin, two neighbors. 'I just love them to Christ. That was His method—loving and identifying with them,' she says. On her list of victories is a neighborhood of thieves and drug addicts who now live as responsible citizens. Lydia is one of a group of female evangelists who have brought several hundred souls to Christ this year."

GO '99: The international young adult missions conference will be held at Andrews University from December 29, 1998 through January 2, 1999. I want to encourage all young adults who have an interest in missions and/or those who wish to nurture "mission-mindedness" in a new generation to attend. For more information contact: GO99@juno.com or call 800-937-4236.

FOCUS ON FAITH

Reasons for the Canon: In our last segment we mentioned the criteria of canonicity and the fact that most of the New Testament books were accepted early in the second century as inspired and authoritative.

The need to clearly define the New Testament canon came through the appearance of certain heretics and the challenge of spurious writings claiming apostolic authority. Marcion, for example, a wealthy ship owner from Sinope in Asia Minor, came to Rome in 140, stirred up trouble in the church, was disfellowshipped, and organized his followers into a rival movement to orthodox Christianity. His

churches were numerous and influential throughout the Roman Empire for more than a century and caused strife and dissension in the churches. Marcion rejected the Old Testament and drew up a canon which consisted only of edited versions of the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's letters (he excluded the letters to Timothy and Titus). Through the editing he removed what he believed were interpolations introduced by those who followed the twelve apostles rather than Paul, "...who in Marcion's eyes was the only faithful apostle" (Bruce, *Parchments*, 99).

The second century also saw the appearance of a growing number of Christian writings which claimed to relate unknown details about Christ and the apostles. Many of these books were written by Gnostics who stressed salvation through secret knowledge. A number of "infancy" gospels supplied details from the hidden years of Christ's life. Numerous books of Acts related the deeds of Peter, Paul, John and most of the other apostles, and several apocalypses described accounts of personally conducted tours of heaven and hell by the apostles.

In view of these developments church leaders were forced to define the canon of the New Testament more explicitly. They began to investigate the evidence upon which any book was considered inspired and authoritative, and to guard against spurious Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses they published lists of those books known to have been written by the apostles or their associate:

