

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

December 7, 1998

UPDATE

A Donation to Mission: Recently, some members of Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI) made a generous donation to Global Mission. They contracted with the Review and Herald Publishing Association to print 25,000 sets of picture rolls. Global Mission will distribute these evangelistic tools to GM pioneers and other frontline workers all around the world. Each picture roll will contain 114 full-size color pictures by Harry Anderson, Clyde Provansha, and other classic artists which illustrate Bible stories and doctrines. "Next to the Bible, this picture roll is the single most valuable tool the pioneers can take with them to their unentered targets," says Jackie Ordelheide Smith, coordinator of GM pioneers. The picture roll is printed on a thin mylar plastic that is mildew and tear resistant, and lighter than regular paper. Unlike traditional Sabbath School picture rolls, there are no Bible texts at the bottom, allowing pioneers flexibility to adapt the illustration to their own language and culture. With the picture roll, each pioneer will receive a script in his or her local language, listing related Bible texts and lessons that can be taught with the illustration. Nearly, 19,000 GM pioneers, speaking more than 1,000 different languages and dialects are working to establish new congregations.

The Internet supports NET '98: Due to the visionary dedication of two young Adventist professionals, Daryl and Cheryl Hosford and their associates, NET '98 had a very extensive Internet web site. During NET '98 the web site averaged 500,000 "hits" per week. The potential of the Internet as an evangelistic

support tool is immense! In the future it will be critical for every leadership office to have Internet access. This will make the dissemination of materials regarding corporate evangelistic efforts much more efficient. Some new resources to assist satellite evangelistic efforts has just been posted to the AGCN web site (<http://adventist.org/agcn>) and they are the following: A Satellite Evangelism Preparation Manual, five training videos, and the 1999 AGCN broadcast schedule. I encourage you all to visit this web site and study these training materials so we are better prepared to meet the challenges of future campaigns.

FOCUS ON FAITH

History of the Canon (cont.): In our last segment we indicated that some New Testament books were accepted quite early, while others took a long time before being admitted into the canon. During the third and part of the fourth century the sifting and testing of books continued. Some came to be acknowledged as canonical others as apocryphal. Eusebius (265-339), the bishop of Caesarea and father of church history, made a careful study of the usage of these books in the church and reported that twenty-two were generally acknowledged as canonical, namely the four Gospels, Acts, the letters of Paul (including Hebrews), 1 John, 1 Peter, and Revelation (though some still rejected it). The other five, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John and 3 John were still disputed. "Among the spurious books," says Eusebius, "must be placed the 'Acts' of Paul, the

'Shepherd', and the 'Revelation of Peter'; also the alleged 'Epistle of Barnabas', and the 'Teaching of the Apostles', together with the Revelation of John, if this seems the right place for it: as I said before, some reject it, others include it among the Recognized Books" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.25). From this we see that by the time of Eusebius the Wisdom of Solomon and the Apocalypse of Peter were definitely excluded from the canon.

During the latter half of the fourth century, the New Testament canon received its full and final form. Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, in 367, in order to eliminate the use of certain apocryphal books in church, listed in his Easter Letter the 27 books of the New Testament. "These are fountains of salvation," he wrote, "that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these" (*NPNF*, 6:552). Thus, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so we believe, the twenty-seven books in the New Testament were recognized as authoritative (canonical) by the church at large.

Thirty years later the Third Council of Carthage (397) accepted the list of the twenty-seven books as canonical and decreed that "nothing should be read in church under the name of the divine scriptures except the canonical writings" (Bruce, *Canon*, 233). With this Third Council of Carthage, the canon assumed permanently the form and content we now have. ■