

From the President

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

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UPDATE

Choosing a New God: Between now and December 31, 1999, the hype and hysteria about the dawning of a new millennium will only get louder. Will the year 2000 computer problems trigger worldwide financial collapse and communications chaos? Will prophetic paranoia sweep the religious world? Once the year 2000 arrives, millennial fever will eventually cool down and attentions will focus on the next sensational story, like the economy or the election of a new president somewhere. But, there are more important things going on in the universe than these. Far more important is choosing the god you will serve. Have you chosen one yet? Are you sure it is the right one? Let's get a clearer picture of two familiar gods. The god of law versus the god of grace. The god of justice versus the god of mercy. The god of works versus the god of faith. And if we reach back into the Old Testament, we could add the god of wrath versus the god of love. So we have a problem here, my friends. Do we choose the "warm and fuzzy" friendly god who seems to represent our best chance to be saved? Or do we choose the god of commandment-keeping to preserve ourselves and others on the straight and narrow way? As we move into 1999, I want to clearly state that there is just one God, and just one plan of salvation. And, when we get a clear picture of this God in His Word, then all the verses about law, grace, judgement, works, and faith come together and make perfect sense. God's plan of salvation is not based on our behavior, work, or our

performance. It is not based on anything we can offer. It is rather based on what Christ has done for us and in our place. Obedience is not the basis of our salvation. Love is. But, obedience is the test and obedience provides us the evidence of that love. As 1999 begins and a new millennium draws nearer, I pray that we all will gain a deeper understanding of this one, true God.

FOCUS ON FAITH

The Uniqueness of the Bible: In the last segment we concluded our brief study of the languages of the Bible. We will now consider the uniqueness of the Bible.

1) The Bible is unique in its origin: It was written by more than forty authors over a time span of 1500 years in three different languages, on three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe). Yet the authors, although dealing with hundreds of controversial subjects, spoke with a harmony and continuity which is unsurpassed in human history. F. F. Bruce summarized it well when he said, "The writers themselves were a heterogeneous number of people, not only separated from each other by hundreds of years and hundreds of miles, but belonging to the most diverse walks of life. In their ranks were kings, herdsmen, soldiers, legislators, fishermen, statesmen, courtiers, priests and prophets, a tentmaking Rabbi and a Gentile physician, not to speak of others of whom we know nothing, apart from

the writings they left us. The writings themselves belong to a great variety of literary types. They include history, law (civil, criminal, ethical, ritual, sanitary), religious poetry, didactic treatise, lyric poetry, parable and allegory, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs and diaries, in addition to the distinctively Biblical types of prophecy and apocalyptic. For all that, the Bible is not simply an anthology; there is a unity which binds the whole together. An anthology is compiled by an anthologist, but no anthologist compiled the Bible" (*Parchments*, 88). The reason for this unity, of course, is that "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

2) The Bible is unique in its distribution: The Bible was not only the first book to be translated into another language (Greek), it is also the most translated book in history. In 1996 the whole Bible was available in 355 different languages, the New Testament in a further 880 and Bible portions in a further 932, making a total of 2167 languages in which parts of the Bible have been translated. No other sacred or secular book comes even close.

Every year millions of Bibles are distributed world wide. Why is the Bible still the world's most wanted book? Because the truths revealed in it "...meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life." (1 SM 26). ■

