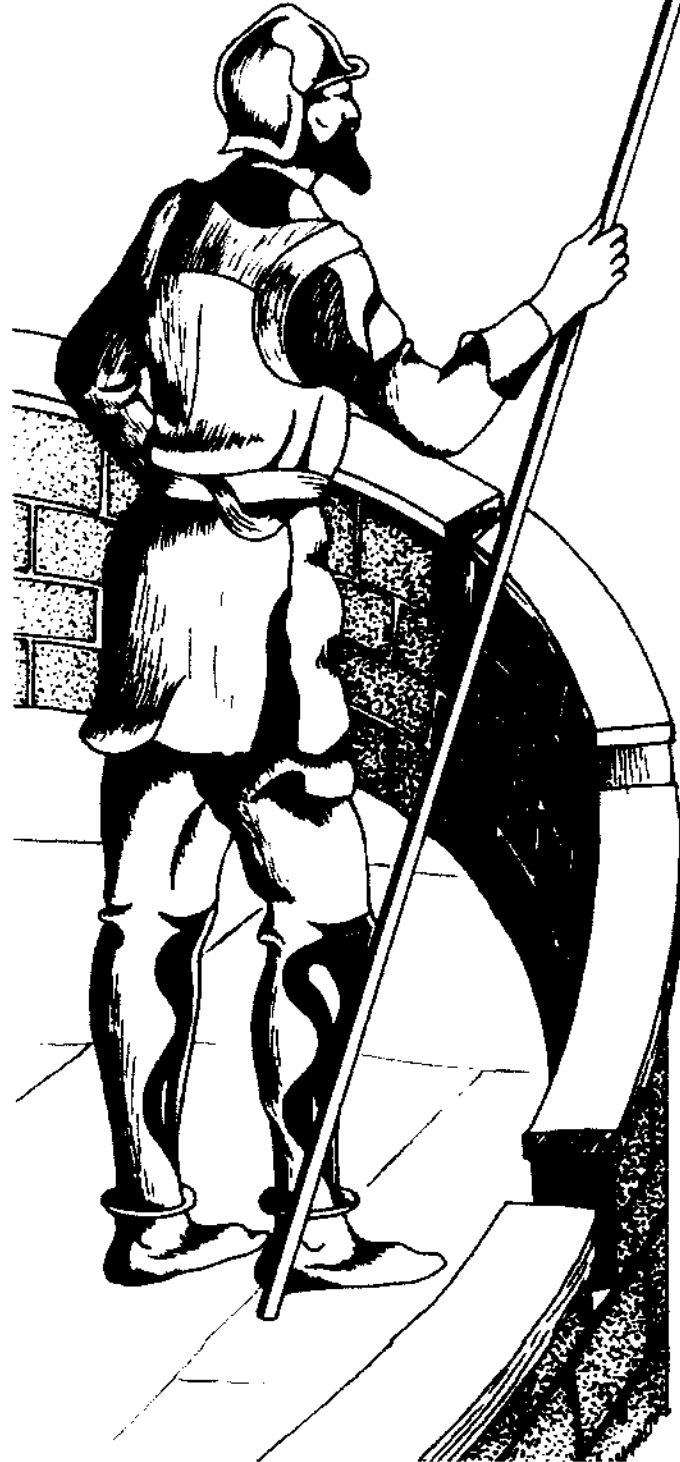


*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
'he hour and the end!"*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



EVANGELICALS & CATHOLICS TOGETHER (Part Three)

WHAT IS "ORDERED LIBERTY"? SEE LET'S TALK IT OVER.

The final section of the accord between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics - "We Witness Together" - returns to the admission of the "points of serious tension between" the two communities. Recognizing that "bearing witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ and his will for our lives is an integral part of Christian discipleship," the conferees agree that the "goodwill and cooperation between [them] must not be at the price of the urgency and clarity of Christian witness to the Gospel." However, they stated that "our Lord made clear that the evidence of love among his disciples is an integral part of that Christian witness." Here are three words, either written or implied, that are put in tension - the Gospel, love, and truth.

To witness together as Christians implies a witness to the same Gospel, and speaking the truth as it is in Jesus. Love does not cover the preaching of two different Gospels. We can recall that in the churches of Galatia, two gospels were being proclaimed, but Paul declared one to be a perversion of the true Gospel. (Gal. 1:6-7) Again it is a return to the same age old question - Is truth unique, or is it multifaced?

Admitting that in the United States and elsewhere both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics attempt to win "converts" from one another's folds, they now agree that such evangelization undermines "the Christian mission" by which they "are bound by God's Word" and "to which [they] have committed [themselves] in this statement." This gets down to exactly what "authentic conversion" is. They define it as "conversion to God in Christ by the power of the Spirit," and quote the explanation as given in the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversation of 1988. The first and last sentence of the section from the Conversation quoted is most interesting. They read:

"Conversion is turning away from all that is opposed to God, contrary to Christ's teaching and turning to God, to Christ, the Son, through the work of the Holy Spirit. ... Individuals respond in faith to God's call but faith comes from hearing the proclamation of the word

of God and is to be expressed in life together in Christ **that is the Church.**" (Emphasis supplied)

To further the common ground between them, and yet bridge their manifest differences, they indicated that "authentic discipleship" can take different forms because "there are different ways of being Christian." While all are to be one, it does not mean that "we are all to be **identical** in our way of following the one Christ." This is the very concept of the ecumenical approach outlined by now Cardinal Cassidy at the Seventh Assembly of the WCC in Australia, when he stated - "We (Roman Catholics) are not working towards **uniformity** among the Churches of the world. We are working towards **unity** in faith and communion." (See WWN, 1(95), p. 4) The Sermon on the Mount teaches "one gate" and "one narrow way" leading unto life. (Matt. 7:13-14)

The next point the accord addresses is proselytizing, or "sheep stealing." The statement indicates there is "a necessary distinction" between this activity and "evangelizing." Then the conferees declared - "We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community for purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement. At the same time, our commitment to full religious freedom compels us to defend the legal freedom to proselytize even as we call upon Christians to refrain from such activity." This is indeed a remarkable commitment to religious liberty, but is the right to witness a freedom granted by the State - a "legal freedom" - or is it a part "of the free exercise thereof," that is beyond law? This language, and the expressions found in other sections - "ordered liberty," and "the right ordering of civil society" - leaves questions as to where these conferees actually stand. Yet they affirm that "any form of coercion - physical, psychological, legal, economic - corrupts Christian witness and is to be unqualifiedly rejected." What will some of these men do when Revelation 13 is fulfilled? Do the men representing the Roman Catholic community in this Accord who have reverted to Rome from a Protestant heritage, such as Neuhaus and Dulles, actually believe that Rome has changed?

There is a note of expediency in the approach to the non-proselyting stance advocated in the document. They state - "In view of the large numbers of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor prudent to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community."

In the section - "We Hope Together" - the conferees had stated that "Misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and caricatures of one another, however, are not disagreements. These distortions must be cleared away..." Now in the final section, they return to the same theme, noting that "bearing false witness against other persons and communities, or casting unjust and uncharitable suspicions upon them, is incompatible with the Gospel." They indicate that "In describing the teachings and practices of other Christians, we must strive to do so in a way that they would recognize as fair and accurate." In principle, one can agree with this assessment, but would Rome ever agree as "fair and accurate," the description God has given in the prophecies of the Bible? Does God lie? Never!

In considering "the many corruptions of Christian witness," these representatives of the Evangelicals and Roman Catholics confessed that they had "sinned against one another and against God," and asked "for the grace to amend [their] lives and that of [their] communities." But in the next breath they declared that "repentance and amendment of life do not resolve remaining differences between us." They cite what is perceived as "a major difference in our understanding of the relationship between baptism and the new birth in Christ."

Here is indeed a "major difference." Roman Catholicism holds that "the sacrament of baptism" (infant baptism) bestows a new birth, thus all Catholics start out in life, "born again." (Isn't this the way some Adventists teach that Christ was incarnated - "born, born again"?) Because of the "sacrament of baptism," Catholics perceive of conversion as growth in grace, "the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed." Evangelicals, for the most part, on the other hand, hold that conversion is to be followed by baptism as a sign of the new birth.

Having noted this difference, and the difficulties involved, they declared that these "must not be permitted to overshadow the truths on which we are, and by the grace of God, in firm agreement." They agreed to respect each other's perception, and act toward each other's active and spiritually alive members as "born again" Christians and not subject to proselyting by the other. The actual wording of the agreement would appear to mean that if a Roman Catholic who is "born again" should elect to live as a "christian" in the Evangelical community, his "infant baptism" would be recognized as a valid baptism. The text reads:

"Those converted - whether understood as having received the new birth for the first time or as having experienced the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed in the sacrament of baptism - must be given full freedom and respect as they discern and decide the community in which they will live their new life in Christ."

The "Conclusion" reflects the possibility that "Our Lord will return tomorrow." This coming of Christ has been reflected in other parts of the document. They spoke in "We Contend Together" of a confidence that He will crown their "efforts when he rightly orders all things in the coming of his Kingdom." In noting their differences, they admitted that "these differences may never be resolved short of the Kingdom Come."

The concluding paragraph reads:

"We do know that his promise is sure, that we are enlisted for the duration, and that we are in this together. We do know that we must affirm and hope and search and contend and witness together, for we belong not to ourselves but to him who has purchased us by the blood of the cross. We do know that this is a time of opportunity - and, if of opportunity, then of responsibility - for Evangelicals and Catholics to be Christians together in a way that helps prepare the world for the coming of him to whom belongs the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

‡

NEUHAUS' OBJECTIVE

"I take that gospel to be what the Reformation said it is: God's justifying the godless by grace through faith because of Jesus Christ. There are other ways of formulating it, but that is the gist of the matter. In my theological understanding of the Christian reality, I am indebted to innumerable men and women. In eclectic fashion, I have no doubt taken thoughts from each and turned them in directions that they probably did not intend and might not approve. But the two to whom I am most indebted are Arthur Carl Piepkorn and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The late 'Father Pieps' of Concordia Seminary, St Louis, taught me and many the meaning of evangelical catholicity, and of Lutheranism as a movement of gospel reform within and for the one church of Jesus Christ. To him I owe my devotion to an ecumenism that seeks to heal the breach of the 16th century in restored communion between Rome and the Reformation."

(The Christian Century, July 11-18, 1990, p. 672)

LET'S TALK IT OVER

In this issue as we talk things over concerning ECT, it will be a longer session, and will cover the material in all three parts of the series. It is true that I made comments along the way, and some of these may be repeated for emphasis, or further elaborated upon.

The one item which engages the consuming interest of certain "independent" ministries is absent in the document, ECT - a Sunday Law, or seeking to enforce the sacredness of Sunday in any aspect. Not even a suggestion is made that a law enforcing the observance of Sunday would help improve the morals of society. The reason for the absence of such a suggestion has not been explored by those who are seeking to make capital out of "A National Sunday Law" publication. This absence becomes even more astounding when the document plainly states that the "church corporately" has "a responsibility for the right ordering of civil society."

There are certain factors of history which the illiterate propagandist, seeking only the sensational, overlooks. The close of the 20th century is not the same as was the close of the 19th century. History is not static but dynamic. The America of today is not the America of the 1890's. The religious agitation which marked that period is not found in today's American society. Also a new force has entered - Islam, with its holy day as Friday.

Couple this fact with the design of the Papacy to reach the Islamic world. In his book, Crossing the Threshold of Hope, John Paul II, quoting from the Vatican II Declaration Nostra Aetate, wrote: "The Church also has a high regard for the Muslims, who worship one God." (p. 91) Add to this the rapprochement between the Papacy and Israel. The Pope considers the children of Israel as "our elder brothers," and notes that "in the Catholic Church it is significant that dialogue with the Jews takes place in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which is also concerned with the dialogue among various Christian communities," (ibid., p. 150)

Into this document, ECT, there is woven a fine thread relative to "the coming Kingdom." In connection with this anticipation, the conferees contended that they "seek to secure to all a greater measure of civil righteousness and justice, confident that He will crown [their] efforts when He rightly orders **all** things in the

coming of His kingdom." (Emphasis added) Here is the door that will open to the religious legislation of which prophecy speaks. For according to prophecy, "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3) It dare not be overlooked that this verse from Isaiah was used by John Paul II to close his Apostolic Letter, "Redemptionis Anno," in which he envisioned his hopes for Jerusalem. (See Exhibit #9, The Hour and the End)

The danger inherent in our failure to program into our eschatology the dynamic of history, is that when "all things" are ordered in the supposed Kingdom of Christ set up by Satan himself is that it will be too late for these deceiving voices, and those who continue to be deceived by them, to alter their course and be prepared for the close of probation. "The final movements will be rapid ones." (9T:11)

In our discussion of the document (ECT, Part 2, p. 5, col. 1), we noted a certain key word which was used in relationship to "liberty" and "civil society." The American nation with its Constitution and Bill of Rights is spoken of as an "experiment in **ordered** liberty." Christians as a corporate body are to be responsible "for the right **ordering** of civil society." These expressions are clearly of Neuhaus' formulation. The "experiment in ordered liberty" is used in his book, The Catholic Moment, published in 1987, in which he looked to the Roman Catholic Church in the United States to assume "its rightful role in the culture-forming task of constructing a religiously informed public philosophy for the American experiment in **ordered** liberty." (Quoted in Current Biography Yearbook 1988, p. 420) What is meant by the word, "ordered"? It is used again in the document in connection with the Roman Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession. A "ministry **ordered** in apostolic succession" is contrasted to the Biblical and Reformation concept of "the priesthood of all believers." "Ordered" in the context of this use, can mean, "limited," "circumscribed," "regulated," and "restricted."

This meaning attached to "the American experiment" is not the way I have read the history of the founding of this nation. The First Amendment declares plainly "that Congress shall make **no law** respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." "No law" removes "**ordered** liberty," as it respects religious freedom, as an acceptable

alternative. Yet the ECT document reads: "We strongly affirm the separation of church and state." The conferees agreed to "contend together for religious freedom."

If pressed on this point, Neuhaus could justify his position from the Scriptures. James, after quoting two of the Ten Commandments to illustrate his point that to break one commandment is to be guilty of the transgression of all, declared that each is to speak and act in harmony with "the law of liberty." (James 2:10-12) This is **ordered** liberty. The point that is overlooked is: Who is to do the ordering; Who is the final judge? To the Church that task was not committed, but reserved to the Son of man. (John 5:22) The Church is limited to moral persuasion - "Go... teach all nations." (Matt. 28:19)

A careful look at how the "American experiment" is interpreted casts light on the objective of **ordered** liberty. While confirming the separation of church and state, the document adds - We "just as strongly protest the distortion of that principle to mean the separation of religion from public life." Substitute "Church" for "religion," and you obtain a more accurate picture of what this "distortion" is perceived to be. It is the Roman Catholic position that the Church is above the State, and should thus dictate public policy, as well as being supported by the State. If one wishes the documentation for the Roman Catholic position, he should carefully observe the chapter, "Americanism Versus Romanism," in Facts of Faith, pp. 256-272.

ECT speaks of "legitimate diversity," thus using the present theme of the ecumenical dialogue - "unity in diversity" - but warns that this "should not be confused with existing divisions between Christians that obscure the one Christ and hinder the one mission." Where does all this lead? To seek to make one's way through this maze of rhetoric is confusing. The ultimate will be the fulfillment of the prophecies of Revelation 13 & 17. However, as noted in the first segment of this analysis, the issue of Sunday sacredness is not even mentioned in this essay, and certain things, unspecified, for the "right ordering of civil society" are left to "the coming of [Christ's] Kingdom." I repeat this point for emphasis so that the present time be not clouded by speculation for personal profit. We need to take off the colored glasses that certain "voices" want us to wear.

Next we need to carefully observe the things

which ECT says they are united upon, and the issues which still separate them. Doctrinally, the concepts of agreement are far fewer than the concepts of disagreement. They affirm together:

1) "Jesus Christ is Lord." However, the Roman Catholic would affirm this with reservations. For him, there is another Lord. Pope Leo XIII in his Great Encyclical Letters, declares - "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty." (p. 304) In this encyclical, the pope has capitalized all pronouns referring to himself and to God. (See Facts of Faith, p. 61)

2) "Justification [is] by grace through faith because of Christ." While Neuhaus claims he accepts the gospel to be what the Reformation said it is, he waffles indicating that there are other ways to formulate this statement. (See his Objective, p. 3, col. 1) The statement as affirmed in ECT is not the Reformation position, nor the Pauline, which adds - "by grace **alone**." The Council of Trent, which was to heal the divisions caused by the Protestant Reformation "avoided the ill-disguised Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism of Eck, Pighius, and other early champions of Rome, and worded its decrees with great caution and circumspection; but it decidedly condemned the Protestant doctrines of the supremacy of the Bible, the slavery of the natural will, and justification by faith alone." (Philp Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. VII, p. 600) How then can they affirm together a common belief on justification by faith?

[Pelagius (circa, A.D. 400), a British monk, set forth the position that "each person is created like Adam, with perfect freedom to do good or evil. Hence an entirely sinless life is possible, and man can save himself by his own good works." (Qualben, History of the Christian Church, p. 121) While many would likewise reject the Pelagian position as did the Council of Trent, they still opt for its formula of faith plus works, rather than the Pauline and Reformation position - by grace alone]

3) "There is one church because there is one Christ and the church is His body." To the Roman Catholic, "one church" means only one thing - the Church of Rome. For the Evangelicals divided in various denominations, what does "church" mean? Interestingly when the two groups listed their differences, three of the ten point of disagreement involved this concept.

4) The "Scriptures... are the infallible Word of

God." Which Bible? What about "tradition" and the "teaching magisterium" of the Pope?

5) "The Apostles Creed...[is] an accurate statement of scriptural (sic) truth." With this Creed written in full, they closed what they affirmed together.

What really did they affirm together, apart from the Apostles Creed, and that they were "all brothers and sisters in Christ"? Actually it was a facade to obtain one objective - a united front to secure social legislation with religious overtones for "the right ordering of civil society."

The differences listed were ten in number but could be reduced to certain major concepts regarding what constitutes the "Church;" what is the authority in the Church; its ministry; the Sacraments; and the relationship to Mary.

Is the Church a local congregation raised up as the consequence of preaching the Gospel in which all its members have equal access to God through the mediation of Jesus Christ, or is the church an integral part of the Gospel, a universal communion with a ministry which stands as a mediator between the individual member and Jesus Christ?

Is the sole authority for the believer, the Scriptures, or is the Scripture to be interpreted by the Church through a teaching Magisterium?

Is Baptism, and the Communion service, symbols of grace, or a means of grace? Is the Lord's Supper, an eucharistic sacrifice, or a memorial meal? Does baptism of itself regenerate, or is it a testimony to regeneration?

It is obvious that these are major areas of differences. How can two walk together with these unresolved differences? Again the bottom line is that these differences, though admitted in the accord, were muted so as to achieve a working alliance "for the right ordering of civil society" which includes public education and its support, the protection of the "family" from moral evils, "a vibrant market economy," an appreciation of Western culture, and certain goals to be reflected in American foreign policy. The church's agenda is to become the agenda of the State.

If what we are seeing take place between the Evangelicals and the Roman Catholics was

restricted solely to their communities, we could sit back and watch the unfolding of the drama. This, however, is not the case. Segments of the Adventist Community are moving Romeward.

Cornerstone Connections, the SDA Youth Quarterly (3rd Qrt., 1994) in the first lesson, "The Great Assembly," sought to convey "the beginning days of the Christian church." The section for Wednesday (pp. 8-9) listed some of the beliefs of the early church. One, as listed, reads: "Christ commanded us to eat the Communion meal as often as we could (sometimes every day)." Another described worship on the Sabbath as only a Jewish custom. It read: "Many of the Jewish **customs**, like worshiping on the Sabbath, eating only clean meats, should be observed." (Emphasis supplied)

The doctrine of "righteousness by faith" was introduced. The youth were told that "simply stated, it means that we cannot do **anything** to help ourselves to be saved; Christ's death **alone** can do that." (emphasis theirs) Then the youth were told:

"The evidence is that while they had not studied it as carefully as modern-day theologians, they did understand. The center of their worship service was the **agape** (love) meal. It was like a potluck at your church in which people remembered Christ. A part of the meal was the **Eucharist** (thanksgiving), which we refer to as the Communion. By taking a portion of bread and a sip of grape juice, they relived the death of Christ on Calvary for their sins.

"We today have Communion every three months and sometimes on special occasions. Early Christians celebrated Communion each Sabbath, and at times during the week."

They were then asked the question - "Do we today place as great an importance on the Communion, the Eucharist, and trying to represent Christ?"

On the adult level, the recent controversy over the book, Beyond Belief, involved not only the regular church, but also major "independent ministries." While the book voiced serious error, the response from certain "independent" voices echoed the dogmas of the Council of Trent. (See WWN Extra, 94-1) Unless we stay close to the Word of God, none of us are exempt from the influences of the teachings of Rome, for Romanism is merely a religion to satisfy the carnal heart.

What is the answer? There is only one. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto [we] do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in [our] hearts." (II Peter 1:19)

Prophecy not only reveals the future for us, but it also outlines the events which have led up to that future. In that outline of events, God reveals how He looks upon certain powers which move across the stage of history. To Daniel, God revealed the course of human history from Babylon to the time when the saints shall possess the kingdom. An orderly succession of prophetic symbols passed before Daniel - a lion, a bear, a leopard, and finally a non-descript beast. (Dan. 7:1-8) These four beasts were four kingdoms which were to dominate the earth. (7:17, 23) Two factors concerning the fourth beast need ever to be kept in mind: 1) This beast continues till it is "given to the burning flame." (Rev. 19:20) 2) The "little horn" which speaks is never removed from the beast, but is ever nourished by it. (7:8)

History gives us the orderly succession of world powers from Daniel's day - Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia and Pagan Rome. Out of Rome arose the Papacy. God is simply telling us in prophecy that the Papacy is merely baptized paganism. It is humanized - the "little horn" has "eyes like the eyes of man," but the heart which sustains its life is the heart of the beast from which it arose.

God charges this "little horn" power, the Papacy, with blasphemy - it speaks "words against the most High;" with murder - it wears "out the saints of the most High;" and with lawlessness - it thinks "to change times and laws." (7:25) Paul defines this "Lawless One" (*ho anomos*, II Thess. 2:8) as "the mystery of iniquity." (ver. 7) Thayer, in his Greek Lexicon, defines the very designation, *ho anomos*, ["that Wicked," KJV] as "he in whom all iniquity has as it were fixed its abode." (p. 48) He may be "the Man of the Year" to the editors of Time, but to God, he is the embodiment of the Source of all evil.

In the Book of Revelation, in which God declares are revealed things "which must... come to pass," the same four symbols of Daniel 7 are united in one non-descript beast. (13:2) This beast is stated to derive its power and authority from "the dragon," which in turn is defined as "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan." (12:9) This beast is pictured as joining in the design to gather the leadership of the nations of earth to

"the battle of the great day of God Almighty."
(16:13-14)

Those who believe the prophetic Word of God will not become entangled with the Papacy through any of its agents, neither will God's people become involved with those who have been deceived and who have joined in an accord with Rome.

We need to bring this issue closer home. While we can say, we have not joined in this ECT accord, nor signed the document, yet there are those in the Community of Adventism who are doing the very work of the Enemy seeking to re-interpret the prophecies of Daniel and the Book of Revelation so that their force is either mitigated, or completely annulled.

One of the most subtle deceptions being promoted today by one "independent" voice is that while he interprets Daniel by the historic hermeneutic, he interprets the Book of Revelation by the Jesuitical futuristic scheme. Truth is being mingled with error. Confidence in the method of interpretation which has stood the test of history and the assault of the Jesuits, Ribera and Alcazar, needs to be restored. The inroads of Rome, and the encyclicals issued by Leo XIII decrying "the American experiment" must be known and understood. The one book which brings this all together is Facts of Faith by Christian Edwardson. If you have not obtained a copy of this book, do so immediately. Even though postal rates have risen, we will still make it available to you for US\$10.00 postpaid. Send your order to the Adventist Laymen's Foundation, P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854. (In Australia, write to P. O. Box 846, Belmont, Victoria, 3216; Au\$12.00 postpaid)

In this whole picture, there remains one thing to watch. What will be the official attitude of the regular SDA church to this document - ECT? The formulators of the document plainly stated that it did not speak "officially for our communities," but they forthrightly declared that in this document, they intended to speak "to our communities." It cannot be overlooked that since the fateful SDA-Evangelical Conferences of 1955-56, the leadership of the Church wish to be known as "Evangelical," and accepted by those Churches which their spiritual forefather perceived as "Babylon." They can no longer accuse the Protestant world of being a "confusion" of religious concepts for within the community of Adventism be they regular voices

or "independent" voices, confusion reigns.

A recent editorial in the Adventist Review (January 5, 1995), noted a dialogue between a delegation from the Lutheran World Federation and a group from the General Conference headed by B. B. Beach. The conference was hosted at Marienhoehe Seminary in Darmstadt, Germany. As the conference progressed, "a fascinating dynamic began to emerge - each side kept quoting Luther! We began to realize that we were all children of Luther." (p. 4) This is almost a re-echo of the ECT whose conferees discovered themselves as "brothers and sisters in Christ."

The Adventist-Lutheran Conference had for the Adventists one objective - status. They did not want to be considered as a "cult." Is this our commission? Or are we commissioned to proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus, and let the status take care of itself? Did Jesus ever arraigne a dialogue between Himself and the Sanhedrin? When Nicodemus came for a dialogue, how did Christ conduct it? Did Elijah offer to dialogue with Ahab and Jezebel's religious counselors? Dialogue is one thing, to come together to promote truth or to refine perceptions of truth is another. Otherwise truth and error are ever to be in confrontation.

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Note: All direct quotes from the document - Evangelicals & Catholics Together were taken from First Things, May, 1994, pp. 15-22.

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