

## **Joint Statement of the World Evangelical Alliance and the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

### **Introduction**

1. Theological conversations took place on August 6-9, 2007 at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, between theologians representing the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Adventists) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA/Evangelicals). This was a follow-up meeting to the theological conversations that took place at the European Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic, August 8-11, 2006.

1.1. These conversations took place in an atmosphere of amicable Christian fellowship and study, building on the history of increasing fellowship, trust, and cooperation in various countries.

1.2. The key purposes of these conversations were not to explore any formal joining of organizations, but, rather to better understand each other's beliefs and working methods and to explore possibilities of fruitful cooperation among local churches and in national alliances. This is especially important in view of secularism and the worldwide growth of non-Christian religions and ideologies, representing a challenge for Christians to come together and witness for Christ.

### **Our common faith**

2. The participants were pleased to be able to ascertain an extensive commonality of belief and spirituality. Adventists can subscribe to the WEA Statement of Faith. (Document attached below). They fully accept the authority and supremacy of the Word of God, the Trinity, the divine and human natures of Christ, salvation by faith in Christ alone, the importance of prayer, personal conversion, and sanctification, and hold dear the blessed hope in the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the final judgment. There was agreement that there should never be any date-setting regarding the Second Advent.

### **Points of disagreement**

3. Despite the wide sweep of fundamental doctrinal and theological agreement, some areas of disagreement were also found.

3.1. While agreement exists on the importance of a weekly day of rest and worship, according to the Fourth Commandment concerning the Sabbath day, there is disagreement as to the specific day. Evangelicals celebrate Sunday, the first day of the week, as the day of the Lord's Resurrection, while Adventists celebrate the seventh day of the week as the memorial of creation and redemption in Christ.

3.2. There was disagreement on the Adventist teaching regarding the Heavenly Sanctuary and the related pre-Advent judgment. Based on their interpretations of the Books of Daniel and Revelation, Adventists understand that the pre-Advent judgment began in the year 1844. Evangelicals do not share this understanding; in their view, it lacks clear Biblical support. However, Adventists believe that this Biblical interpretation helps them to see more clearly the urgency and global setting of the missionary task in preparation for the Second Coming.

3.3. The theological conversation also looked at the authoritative role of Ellen G. White (1827-1915). In their presentations, the Adventist participants made clear, as did E.G. White herself, that her role is secondary and subject to Scripture and is to be judged by it. Adventists derive their doctrines from the Bible and want them to be tested by the Scriptures. While acknowledging the significant and Christ-

centered role of E.G. White, the Evangelical participants question any authoritative or inspired role on her part for the whole Church.

### **Areas of cooperation**

4. Because of the common ground of shared beliefs that the conversations revealed, Evangelicals and Adventists see the possibilities of working together on shared endeavors. At the same time, they recognize the right and even responsibility of all churches who may cooperate with each other to uphold and follow their own distinctive doctrinal teachings. The principles of religious liberty, tolerance, good will, and respect are to prevail in all cases.

4.1 The participants in the conversations are grateful to God for the fraternal spirit that pervaded the discussions and are happy to consider those with whom they met and discussed as brothers and sisters in Christ. They recommend various areas of cooperation where advisable, such as prayer, Bible study, Bible society work, religious liberty, and meeting the crying needs of society in the spirit of Christian love and fellowship.

4.2 Having greatly benefited from this experience, the participants also propose that their respective bodies encourage an on-going process of theological discussion at all levels.

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18)

### **World Evangelical Alliance Statement of Faith**

We believe

In the **Holy Scriptures** as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct,

One **God** , eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Our **Lord Jesus Christ** , God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His Personal return in power and glory,

The **Salvation** of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit,

The **Holy Spirit** , by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ,

The **Unity** of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ,

The **Resurrection** of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

For further information about the World Evangelical Alliance and the Seventh-day Adventist Church see their official websites (<http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.org> and <http://www.adventist.org>).

**World Evangelical Alliance Delegation**

Dr. Rolf Hille, co-chair (chairman of the Theological Commission of the WEA)

Dr. Jürg Buchegger

Mr. Bonn Clayton (only 2007)

Dr. Herbert Klement

Dr. Ian Randall (only 2006)

Mr. Sven Wagschal (only 2007)

Joined by

Dr. Reinhard Hempelmann

Pastor James Kautt

**Seventh-day Adventist Delegation**

Dr. John Graz, organizer (secretary of the Council on Interchurch/Interfaith Relations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church)

Dr. William G. Johnsson, co-chair (assistant to the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for Interfaith Relations)

Dr. Niels-Erik Andreasen

Dr. Bert B. Beach

Dr. Kwabena Donkor (only 2006)

Dr. Eugene Hsu (only 2006)

Dr. Teresa Reeve

Dr. Angel M. Rodriguez

Joined by

Dr. Denis Fortin (only 2007)

Dr. Roy Gane (only 2007)

Dr. Miroslav Kiš (only 2007)

Dr. Peter van Bemmelen (only 2007)

## Press Release

### **Spirited Discussions Mark Evangelical-Adventist Meeting**

Representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) met at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, August 5-10, 2007, for theological conversations. The discussions, which were warm and cordial, featured lively exchanges of views.

The current conversations were a follow-up to the initial round of discussions held in Prague, Czech Republic, August 8-11, 2006. Most of the participants this year also took part in the Prague meeting.

Dr. Rolf Hille, chairman of the Theological Commission of the WEA, and Dr. John Graz, secretary of the Council on Interchurch/Interfaith Relations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, organized the conversations. The theological discussions were jointly chaired by Dr. Hille and Dr. William G. Johnsson, assistant to the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for Interfaith Relations.

The WEA was also represented by Dr. J4ü5rg Buchegger, Mr. Bonn Clayton, Pastor James Kautt, Dr. Herbert Klement, Mr. Sven Wagschal, and joined by Dr. Reinhard Hempelmann; and the Adventists by Dr. Niels-Erik Andreasen, Dr. Bert B. Beach, Dr. Teresa Reeve, and Dr. Angel M. Rodriguez. Four professors from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary made presentations and participated in the discussions: Dr. Denis Fortin, Dr. Roy Gane, Dr. Miroslav Kiš, and Dr. Peter van Bemmelen.

The conversations revealed a common love for the Lord and his Word, and a large measure of theological agreement. The Adventist participants could agree wholeheartedly with the WEA Statement of Faith, which focuses on the Bible as the Word of God, the Trinity, the person of Jesus Christ and his saving work, justification by faith, prayer, conversion, sanctification, and the Second Coming of Christ.

At the same time several areas of disagreement became apparent. The Adventist teachings regarding the Sanctuary and the pre-Advent judgment, the role and authority of Ellen G. White, the Sabbath as the day of worship for Christians, and human nature and destiny led to spirited exchanges.

The participants concluded that, despite disagreement over these distinctive Adventist beliefs, the large measure of common ground allows for Adventists and the WEA to cooperate, where advisable, in areas of shared interest.

Those involved in the conversations developed a joint statement of their findings and recommendations. This will be forwarded to the respective governing bodies.

The WEA represents some 420 million Evangelical Christians in 128 countries drawn from many denominations. The Adventist Church has 15 million members in more than 200 countries.