

## **EVANGELICALS AND ADVENTISTS TOGETHER?**

Recently Catholics and Evangelicals have begun to work more closely together. Are Adventists and Evangelicals beginning to link together? What is the Evangelical gospel? How is it different from the Adventist gospel? Why is all of this important?

### **Dennis Priebe**

Much has been written and said about the Evangelical - Catholic alliance that has shocked many observers. It would have been declared to be impossible just a few decades ago, but perhaps just about anything is possible in the nineties. To restore morality and Christian values in our decaying American society, some Evangelicals and Catholics have decided that their differences aren't so large as previously believed, and they have united on common beliefs to present a more united front in order to change our society.

Seventh-day Adventists are not a part of this new unity, because we believe that doctrines are vitally important to faith, and doctrinal differences cannot just be swept under the rug so we can pretend they don't exist. But the question remains, Are there more subtle linkages between Adventists and Evangelicals than most Adventists realize? Are we in danger of slowly becoming part of the Evangelical Christian world without even realizing it? Let us examine some recent public statements.

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### **What Is the Evangelical Gospel?**

In the April, 1997 Adventist Review there appeared an article with the title "Will the Real Evangelical Adventist Please Stand Up." In it were these statements: "I consider myself a true evangelical Adventist. I hope you do too.... I wish everyone in the church were an evangelical Adventist, because inherent in the word 'Adventist' should be the concept of 'evangelical' " "What is it, then, to be evangelical," and particularly to be an "evangelical Adventist?" We need to know what that means? We can't just use a word and assume that everyone knows what it means. The first thing to understand is that "evangelical" is not a synonym for "evangelistic." Now Evangelicals are evangelistic in their outlook, as they endeavor to lead people to the new birth. But the term "evangelical" is broader than that, and it defines a certain group with definite beliefs.

A few weeks after this article appeared in the Adventist Review an individual wrote, "As a Christian

broadcaster at KARM radio, I come into contact with many of other denominations who call themselves 'evangelical Christians.' I feel a very definite connection with these dear brothers and sisters as we look at the cross. They and I are all saved by faith in Jesus... This article gave me the confidence to move forward, proudly claiming the title of an evangelical Christian." (June 12, 1997)

Perhaps we need to understand a bit of history right here. Before 1955 nothing was ever mentioned about being an evangelical Adventist. But then some discussions took place between the leaders of our church and the Evangelical leaders Barnhouse and Martin. Since that time Adventists have been a little more comfortable with the term "evangelical," and coincidentally, there has been considerable turmoil in the Adventist Church over the meaning of the gospel.

To be completely fair with the evidence, we need to ask an Evangelical what is meant by the term "evangelical." Kenneth Samples has written some very fair and objective articles about what he has seen happening in the Adventist Church. but what I am most interested in is his statement of the differences between evangelical and traditional Adventism.

By the mid 1970's, two distinct factions had emerged within SDA. Traditional Adventism, which defended many pre-1950 Adventist positions, and Evangelical Adventism, which emphasized the Reformation understanding of righteousness by faith. This controversy soon gave way to a full-blown internal crisis which severely fragmented the denomination...

The major doctrinal issues which united this group [Evangelical Adventism] were:

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1) Righteousness by faith: This group accepted the Reformation understanding of righteousness by faith (according to which righteousness by faith included justification only, and is a judicial act of God whereby He declares sinners to be just on the basis of Christ's own righteousness). Our standing before God rests in the imputed righteousness of Christ, which we receive through faith alone. Sanctification is the accompanying fruit and not the root of salvation.

2) The human nature of Christ: Jesus Christ possessed a sinless human nature with no inclination or propensities toward sin. In that sense, Christ's human nature was like that of Adam's before the Fall...

3) The events of 1844: Jesus Christ entered into the most holy place (heaven itself) at His ascension; the

sanctuary doctrine and the investigative judgment (traditional literalism and perfectionism) have no basis in Scripture.

4) Assurance of salvation: Our standing and assurance before God rest solely in Christ's imputed righteousness; sinless perfection is not possible this side of heaven...

5) Authority of Ellen G. White: Ellen White was a genuine Christian who possessed a gift of prophecy. However, neither she nor her writings are infallible, and they should not be used as a doctrinal authority....

The following positions were taken by Traditional Adventism in response to the doctrinal debates:

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1) Righteousness by faith: Righteousness by faith included both justification and sanctification. Our standing before God rests both in the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ (God's work for me and in me). Justification is for sins committed in the past only.

2) The human nature of Christ: Jesus Christ possessed a human nature that not only was weakened by sin, but had propensities toward sin itself. His nature was like that of Adam after the Fall....

3) The events of 1844: Jesus entered into the second compartment of the heavenly sanctuary for the first time on October 22, 1844, and began an investigative judgment. This judgment is the fulfillment of the second phase of Christ's atoning work.

4) Assurance of salvation: Our standing before God rests in both the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ;... As Jesus, our example, showed us, perfect commandment keeping is possible.

5) The authority of Ellen G. White: The spirit of prophecy was manifest in the ministry of Ellen White as a sign of the remnant church. Her writings are inspired counsel from the Lord and authoritative in doctrinal matters....

As the above doctrinal comparison showed, the differences between these two factions were indeed significant. The differences could essentially be reduced to:

1) the question of authority (sola scriptura vs. Scripture plus Ellen White), and 2) the question of salvation (imputed righteousness vs. imparted righteousness). [Christian Research Journal, Summer, 1988]

In another article entitled "The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventism," Kenneth Samples traced a bit of history.

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The Adventists had released a publication previous to Martin's, entitled Questions on Doctrine (QOD). This controversial volume affirmed, among other things, that Adventists did not regard Ellen White's writings as an infallible or canonical authority, and that salvation was solely a gift of God's grace-not the result of works. QOD also repudiated such commonly held traditional Adventist doctrines as the notion that Christ had inherited a human nature affected by the Fall, and an understanding that last-days believers would achieve sinless perfection. QOD was a clear statement of what would later be known as evangelical Adventism....

Evangelical Adventists were united in their understanding of righteousness by faith: It was justification only; sanctification was but the accompanying fruit... A vocal and perfectionistic segment within Traditional Adventism has classified Evangelical Adventism as a "new theology," which destroys Adventism's true identity. [Christianity Today, February 5, 1990]

In the first article quoted from, Kenneth Samples had a concluding analysis and appeal for Adventism.

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Presently, however, it would appear that traditional Adventism is at least aberrant, confusing or compromising biblical truth (e.g., their view of justification, the nature of Christ, appealing to an unbiblical authority). It must also be stated that if the traditional camp continues in its departure from QOD, and in promoting Ellen White as the church's infallible interpreter, then they could one day be fully deserving of the title "cult," as some Adventists recognize..... Our criticism of Adventism should not be interpreted as an attack from an enemy, but rather concerned words from a friend, who earnestly prays that the present leaders of SDA will honor Scripture and the gospel of grace above their own denominational distinctives.

The bottom line in all of this is that Adventism is being asked to be part of mainstream Evangelical Christianity. When Walter Martin wrote his book in the 1950's, Adventism was not included among the cults because of the positions we took in Questions on Doctrine. We are being warned that if we renege on the points we conceded then, we will be placed back in the "cult" category. The issue is becoming

rather direct: Will we be Adventist or Evangelical?

Because of the controversy aroused by the book Questions on Doctrine, Walter Martin became a little skeptical of what was really happening in Adventism, so he contacted the General Conference after 1980. calling for the Church's official statement reaffirming or denying the validity of the positions taken in that book.. This is the answer he received from Dr. Richard Leshner, a vice-president of the General Conference. "You ask if Seventh--day Adventists still stand behind the answers given to your questions in Questions on Doctrine as they did in 1957. The answer is yes." (Kingdom of the Cults, 1985 edition, p. 410) In this book, Martin discusses Adventism under the title "The Puzzle of Seventh-day Adventism." He says that the turbulence within Adventism "is more extensive than any turmoil in the organization's history." It is tempting to look through rose-colored glasses at the good things that are happening in the Adventist Church, and assume that all is relatively positive and peaceful. But as others view us from outside, that is not what they see, and many Adventists are extremely concerned about the turmoil of the last twenty years.

The question remains: Should we all be evangelical Adventists? Is this the everlasting gospel which must be proclaimed to all the world before Jesus comes? Or is this the most subtle deception Satan has ever unleashed on Adventism, in an all-out attempt to derail the mission of Adventism right on the borders of the Promised Land?

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## Righteousness By Faith

In the Review article urging all Adventists to be evangelical Adventists is the following question: "What does an evangelical Adventist believe?" Unfortunately, two answers are given to this question. Answer #1: "That by faith in Him and what He has accomplished for me and what He is doing in me, I am accepted in Christ right now, deemed perfect, holy, and righteous in the sight of God." Answer #2: "Justification is, technically, not to be 'made worthy,' but to be 'accounted worthy.' Whatever change God brings about in us, our salvation must always be based upon what He has done for us. The Lord declares us worthy."

Compare these answers with the comparison between Evangelical and Traditional Adventists by Samples. The Evangelical position is that we are accepted by God through justification alone, which is what Christ does for us. It is a judicial act of God by which He declares us righteous. The Adventist position is that we

are accepted by God through justification and sanctification, which is God's work for us and in us. In other words, when He declares us righteous, He makes us righteous at the same time. Answer #1 above is the Adventist gospel, while answer #2 is the Evangelical gospel. Surely such opposite answers to the same question will only lead to more confusion and misunderstanding among most Adventists.

To be absolutely sure we are understanding the Evangelical gospel correctly, let us dig a bit deeper. Recently John Ankerberg hosted a discussion among leading Evangelicals regarding the unofficial meeting of the minds between Evangelicals and Catholics. They were very concerned that this union betrayed the gospel. They said that regarding the gospel, we must not negotiate, but we must be narrow. They said that truth takes precedence over tolerance. They believed that the document "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" was too vague and compromising. The issue for these pastors and scholars was the gospel itself. For them, the gospel, "by faith alone," meant justification declared apart from sanctification. That is about as simple and direct a statement that can be asked for. This is God's work for us, not in us. The Evangelical position is very clear on this point.

Perhaps it would be well to note in passing that the understanding of E. J. Waggoner on this point was quite different. In his book, Christ and His Righteousness, he said, "To justify means to make righteous, or to show one to be righteous." (p. 51) "Let us first have an object lesson on justification, or the imparting of righteousness." (p. 57) The gospel message of 1888 understood justification to be much more than an outward declaration of righteousness. When Christ declares us just, He makes us just at the same time, which he does by imparting His righteousness to us. The Evangelical gospel is in direct opposition to the 1888 gospel.

In another Adventist Review article we find the Evangelical gospel again. "Though what Christ has done for us once and for all at the cross (justification) remains experientially inseparable from what He does in us (sanctification), what he has done 'for us' and what He does 'in us' are still two different aspects of the gospel that must be kept theologically distinct." Now just why must they be kept distinct? "From the foundation of accepting personally that Jesus 'bore our sins,' we have a born-again experience that leads to regeneration and renewal in Christ. Yet the new birth and the new life aren't what save us; rather, they're what happen after we become saved." This is precisely the Evangelical gospel. The new birth and regeneration do not save us, but they occur after we have already been saved. They are the fruit of salvation rather than the cause of salvation. Two questions must then be asked. How long after we have been saved will they occur? Are they essential to the saving process, or are they something nice to have

as a result of being saved? "Once we accept what Christ has accomplished for us, we go from condemnation to acceptance, from alienation to reconciliation-and these legal transformations, all based on Christ's death, lead to a born-again experience. When we're no longer condemned by God.. .our life changes, and that change... begins with the new birth." ["Shocked by Isaiah 53" May, 1997]

The Evangelical gospel teaches that we are accepted by God and reconciled to Him by being declared righteous. The new birth is not part of the process which leads to acceptance and reconciliation. Justification by faith is the legal declaration that we are forgiven, and that alone saves. Everything else, including the new birth, regeneration, renewal, and sanctification, is the result of already being saved. In other words, anything that happens inwardly, experientially, does not save. This means that even if there are serious problems with our inward experience, we are still saved, as long we remain legally justified. This is pure Evangelical Christianity, which is quite foreign to the Adventist understanding of the gospel.

Perhaps it might be useful to again compare this gospel with the 1888 understanding of the gospel. A.T. Jones asked a very important question. "Will the ten commandments accept any doing from anybody that comes short of God's own idea of what is right doing? No... .When the ten commandments will accept nothing short of that, how are the requirements of the commandments to be met in any man's life who has not the mind of God? It cannot be done." The Evangelical answer to this question is that we must be covered by Christ's imputed righteousness. Since we will never be able to keep the commandments in this way, we must be declared righteous on the basis of Christ's death on the cross. But Jones' answer is quite different. "Then is it possible for any man to render to the ten commandments what only they will accept, without having the mind of Jesus Christ itself?... .Therefore, it follows that I must have the personal presence of Christ Himself. What is it that brings to you and me the personal presence of Jesus Christ? The Spirit of God." (1893 General Conference Bulletin, pp. 245-246) We will be able to be completely obedient to God's law by having the mind of Christ within us. This is the personally experienced presence of Christ which comes to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. This sounds very much like the new birth and regeneration. This very important question receives two quite different answers from the Evangelical and the 1888 perspectives.

There is a very practical aspect of the Evangelical gospel which is stressed often by those who espouse it. Most often a statement is quoted from the book *Steps to Christ*. "The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts." (pp. 57-58) This statement is used to support the Evangelical belief that we do not lose our accepted

standing with God (the imputed righteousness of Christ) when we sin. As long as we do not reject Christ we remain saved, even while sinning. As long as the tendency of our lives is gradually upward, we are not lost by occasional misdeeds. Some have even suggested that David was not in a lost condition while he was committing adultery with Bathsheba and plotting the murder of her husband. I believe that this inspired sentence is badly taken out of context and misused to support the Evangelical gospel.

The preceding sentence says, "If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact." The following sentences read, "Our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are." The question that Ellen White is addressing is very simple: How can I tell if I have been converted or born again? How can I be sure that my heart has been renewed by the Holy Spirit? The answer is: By the tendency of the habitual words and acts, not by occasional good deeds or misdeeds. I will not be able to tell by one or two good things that I have done, or one or two mistakes or slips that have occurred. I can know if I have had a genuine new birth experience by the overall tendency of the life. This paragraph does not, I repeat, does not address at all my current status of acceptance while I am involved in a sin. It is not answering the question: Am I in a saved condition while I am sinning? It is addressing the issue of how we can test a person's claim that he has been born again. The only way you can be sure is by a genuine change in the character and habits.

Perhaps an illustration will help. Had David been born again? How could you tell? By the tendency of his habitual words and acts. When he was fleeing from Saul, he did not always do everything just right-there were misdeeds-but did that mean that he had never been born again? Of course not; the tendency of his life showed that he had experienced a genuine new birth. When he refused to take the life of Saul-a good deed-did that prove that he was born again? By itself it would not; we would need to observe the tendency of his life. Now when he was involved in his "occasional misdeed" with Bathsheba, did that mean that he had never been born again? No, it did not. His new birth had been proved by a life of obedience. But when he was involved in this sin, excusing and rationalizing what he had done, was he accepted by God (in a saved condition)? This is the important question for our consideration. Some Evangelicals will say that he was saved during this time, based on the Evangelical gospel, but what does God say?

"It was when he was walking in the counsel of God, that he was called a man after God's own heart.

When he sinned, this ceased to be true of him until by repentance he had returned to the Lord." (PP 723)  
"David trembled, lest, guilty and unforgiven, he should be cut down by the swift judgment of God." (PP 722) When would David no longer be guilty and unforgiven? When would he again be accepted and saved? When he confessed his sin, with heartfelt repentance. In passing we note that David only came under conviction of his great sin and need for repentance after a personal confrontation with a prophet of the Lord.

To summarize, we can know that we have had a genuine new birth because of the general tendency of the life. The reality of our new birth is not based on an occasional good deed or misdeed. Our claim to be Christians must be judged by our habitual words and acts. But the sentence from Steps to Christ is being used to prove that I am still in a saved condition while I am sinning, as long as that sin is not habitual. Indeed, this may be the most misused statement on this subject in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Because of a false gospel, buttressed by misunderstandings of Romans 7 and the above sentence, and driven by a desperate need to feel saved while experiencing more than occasional misdeeds, some believe that David was in a saved condition all during his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, and many believe that we are in a saved condition while we are participating in known sins.

I believe that a false assurance of salvation is currently the most serious error in righteousness by faith currently being taught in Adventism. Some time ago our most serious error was legalism, but the pendulum has swung dramatically. False assurance is going to cost the eternal salvation of more Adventists than legalism has ever cost. We are literally talking about hundreds of thousands of sincere Adventists who trust what they hear and read. I, with countless other Adventists, want to have the assurance of acceptance with God, and when the Evangelical gospel offers this to us, based on apparent evidence from inspiration, it is very easy for honest, well-meaning people to grasp false assurance, much as a drowning man will grasp anything that floats.

Please notice how different is Ellen White's perspective on the issue of salvation while sinning. "Their constant stumbling and falling reveal that they have not maintained a stern conflict with their besetting sins. They have not depended wholly upon Christ, because they have not realized that they are in peril of being overcome by these sins.... If we could understand how deeply we injure our own souls and cause unhappiness to those around us by giving loose rein to unsanctified thoughts and unholy actions, we would strive to put them away. We would cooperate with God in working out our own salvation. It is the

inclination to excuse our moral defects that leads to the cultivation of sin. We must never forget that God ascribes sin to the one who transgresses--Satan triumphs when he hears the professed follower of Christ offering excuses for his defects of character. Sin unrepented of, unconfessed, can never be blotted from the books of God's record. Through faithful, thorough confession of sin, the heart is cleansed from its moral impurity. There must be a forsaking of the sins the Lord has reproved, before the soul can stand acquitted before God, humbled and repentant, realizing that he has served Satan, pleased him, glorified him, and dishonored his Lord." (Signs of the Times, Dec. 13, 1899) Stumbling and falling is not just an occasional misdeed to be passed over lightly or excused. The only remedy for sin is confession and forsaking of it. Only when we have forsaken the sin we are involved in can we stand acquitted before God. We cannot be sinning and be acquitted before God at the same time. One gospel teaches that we can be saved while continuing to fall into sin, and one gospel provides healing from all sin.

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## **The Human Nature of Christ**

A very important difference between the Evangelical gospel and the Adventist gospel is in understanding how Christ met and overcame temptation during His life on earth. This issue has tremendous significance for how we meet temptations in our daily lives. In the book Questions on Doctrine is this statement: "Although born in the flesh, He... was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam." (p. 383) The word "exempt" appears in a quite different context when James Cardinal Gibbons referred to the doctrine of Mary: "She alone was exempt from the original taint." (The Faith of Our Fathers, 88th edition, p. 171) Do Adventists really want to say that Jesus was exempt from inherited tendencies? Do we want to hold the Immaculate Conception doctrine, just one generation removed? Literally, the only difference between the Catholic and Evangelical teaching is one generation. Instead of Mary, Jesus is the one who got a special exemption. Sometimes we try to cover up the equivalence of these teachings by saying that Jesus had a Miraculous Conception, but words are only a disguise for the reality that these teachings are identical.

L. E. Froom, one of the main contributors to Questions on Doctrine, answered the question "How did He escape the taint of sinful heredity?" in this way, "There is but one answer: His human nature came into being by a direct and miraculous intervention, the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost.. divine, creative miracle brought to pass this new union of Godhead with Humanity, begun in the womb of Mary, which assured freedom from the slightest taint of sin. The human element was not determinative in that origin." ("The Tremendous Truth of the Virgin Birth," No. 1, pp. 3-4; No. 2, p. 15) This says that Jesus' human

nature was not inherited from Adam through Mary, but it was specially created in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. He avoided sinful heredity by eliminating the hereditary process. In this way He could be free from "the slightest taint of sin."

However, books and articles written in the last few years deal with the nature of Christ in a slightly different way. They recognize that Christ was not exempt from the entire hereditary process, and so they select certain parts of Christ's nature which were inherited and they select other aspects of inherited nature from which He was exempt. It is currently very popular to say that Jesus was affected but not infected by sin. It is currently fashionable to say that Christ accepted our innocent infirmities (hunger, pain, sorrow, etc.) but not our tendencies to selfishness, pride, jealousy, anger, and all the other negative aspects of a fallen nature. The bottom line is that Christ took a partly fallen and partly unfallen nature. This is currently the "official" position in our colleges and universities. In its practical effects, this position comes out exactly the same as the position in Questions on Doctrine. It is not hunger and pain which cause our temptations and inner struggles; it is the fallen tendencies oriented to self which pull us in the direction of sin. If Jesus never experienced these pulls from within, then it would be absolutely impossible for Him to be tempted in all points as we are. He could never feel the needs and drives and emotions which come directly from the negative tendencies of a fallen nature. The Christ of Evangelical theology is a long way off from the human condition in which we all struggle for victory. If Christ was truly exempt from the real fallenness of fallen nature, then we are simply dealing with the most sophisticated version of the Immaculate Conception doctrine that human minds have been able to invent.

It is of some interest that a few voices from outside Adventism have seen things from a different perspective. Dr. Harry Johnson, in his book The Humanity of the Saviour, defines fallen human nature as the nature "which has been affected by the sin and rebellion of previous generations, a nature which produces temptation in all of its seductive power, a nature with dreadful power and potentialities for evil." He says that this "fallen human nature...was assumed by the Son of God at the Incarnation, and that 'sinlessness,' understood in terms of obedience, and an unbroken relationship with God, refers to the incarnate life of Jesus." Christ "assumed what was imperfect, but He wrought out of it a life that was perfect." (p. 27) What a refreshing breath of fresh air in the superheated theologizing which looks for loopholes to exempt Christ from our human condition. Christ simply entered our human reality at the place where it was 4,000 years after Adam's fall. He truly became our Elder Brother and our Near Kinsman. This is the position which most Adventists believed and taught until the 1950's, when we began to search for ways to escape the "cult" label and be included in mainstream Evangelical Christianity.

Another voice from outside Adventism, J.A.T. Robinson, said, "Traditional theology, both Catholic and Protestant, has held that Christ assumed at the Incarnation, an unfallen human nature... .But, if the question is restated in its Biblical terms, there is no reason to fear, and indeed the most pressing grounds for requiring, the ascription to Christ of a manhood standing under the effects and consequences of the Fall. At any rate, it is clear that this is Paul's view of Christ's person, and that it is essential to his whole understanding of His redeeming work." (The Body, a Study in Pauline Theology, pp. 37-38)

To put it very simply, the question is, Was there a break or alteration in the heredity which Mary passed on to Jesus? Was Jesus exempted from part of that heredity? The answer in Evangelical Christianity and Evangelical Adventism is "Yes." In this view a break is demanded to protect Christ from being a sinner by nature. The real issue, of course, is the definition of sin. If sin is the fallen nature with which we are born, then we must go to any length of theorizing to protect Christ from being tainted with the sin of our fallen nature. It is always the definition of sin which drives conclusions on the nature of Christ. In pre-1950's Adventism this definition of sin did not exist, so Adventism was very comfortable with the conclusion that there was no break in the hereditary line of Christ. To the question, "Did Christ receive a normal heredity from Mary?" the Adventist answer has always been "Yes."

If Christ did not take our fallen nature, then who in the universe has proved that obedience to God's law is possible in a fallen nature? You and I certainly have not. One of Satan's major charges against God and His law is that fallen human beings cannot obey God's law. If Christ did not take our fallen nature, then who in the universe has yet proved that Satan is a liar? If no one has disproved Satan's claim, then we are not one step closer to the end of the great controversy than we were when Adam and Eve sinned in Eden. What is at stake here is whether the Atonement provided by Christ really can restore a sinful world to perfection and harmony with God's law for all eternity. Can Christ really be our Saviour if Satan's charges remain unanswered?

One very thoughtful author in current Adventism has offered these words for our reflection. "The most urgent post-Fall issue is not perfection, as is assumed, but the integrity of the spirit of prophecy and of Adventism itself. Deep feelings can be expected when leaders seek to enforce a position (pre-Fall) identified with the continuing disintegration of the Advent faith that threatens our movement." The nature of Christ is not a minor issue, and it cannot be set aside as irrelevant. Our understanding of

Christ's human nature has a great deal to do with our understanding of the mission of Adventism and the issues in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

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## **An Appeal From the Past**

When Elder Robert Pierson retired from the Presidency of the General Conference, he pled with our leaders and our educational institutions to be loyal to the pillars of our faith. "Already, brethren and sisters, there are subtle forces that are beginning to stir... There are those who wish to forget the standards of the church we love. There are those who covet and would court the favor of the Evangelicals; who would throw off the mantle of a peculiar people; and those who would go the way of the secular, materialistic world....Fellow leaders, beloved brethren and sisters, do not let it happen! I appeal to you as earnestly as I know how this morning. Do not let it happen! I appeal to Andrews University, to the seminary, to Loma Linda University. Do not let it happen! We are not Seventh-day Anglicans, not Seventh-day Lutherans. We are Seventh-day Adventists! This is God's last church with God's last message." (Adventist Review, October 26, 1978)

The question comes back to us with full force? Are we to be Evangelical Seventh-day Adventists? Is this the way Adventism will fulfill its mission as a movement of prophecy? Or is this Satan's plan to deceive "the very elect" and derail Adventism right on the borders of the Promised Land? It is always the hidden danger that is most likely to trip us up, and I believe that this is the greatest hidden danger we are now facing. Where did the real danger to the inhabitants of Troy lie? Was it from the armies outside the walls, or the innocent-looking wooden horse they had just pulled within the city gates? Where no danger is obvious, the greatest danger exists. We are inviting Evangelicalism within our gates right now, and we are urging all Adventists to be Evangelical. As we read articles and listen to sermons, are we in danger of saying "Amen" in all the wrong places? We need to be more perceptive listeners and readers, so that the difference between Truth and Error is sharply apparent. We can only complete our mission and fulfill our destiny if we are real Seventh-day Adventists. Let us never dilute our gospel with a gospel which is really no gospel at all, but the most clever counterfeit Satan has ever devised to confuse Christians and discredit God.

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