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LUTHERANS AND ADVENTISTS IN CONVERSATION

PD asked B. B. Beach, who co-chaired the recent four-year discussions with the Lutheran World Federation, to answer several of the most-asked questions about the meetings.

• **Just what was at stake for us in the discussions?**

Lutherans are the majority church in half a dozen countries in which we witness, and in which we are regarded as a cult, or at best, a sect. Discrimination is rampant and access to the public media ranges from difficult to impossible. Had the talks gone badly, the consequences could have been significant; thanks to God the results were positive.

• **In a desire to be accepted, did our theologians fudge on any issues?**

No attempt was made to sweep any Adventist belief under the carpet, either for public relations or ecumenical goodwill. Every nook and cranny of our 27 fundamental doctrines were explored.

• **What rapport could result when doctrines—and even the approach to Scripture—differ so widely?**

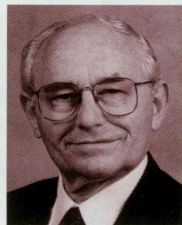
The purpose of the conversations was not to achieve some form of church unity but to better understand each other. For one: Adventists in some ways are heirs of the Reformation and thus children of Luther, whom we hold in high esteem. It was also agreed that Adventists and Luth-

erans alike agree on justification by faith alone, and that both hold the decalogue to be important and relevant. These understandings lead to the conclusion that Adventists should not be viewed as a cult or sect but as a Christian world communion or free church—the latter being the designation of churches not allied with the state or not “established churches.”

Further, the conversations suggested possible cooperation on religious liberty issues, promoting Bible study, meeting human needs, and how to observe the day of worship and rest in a secular society. On these matters, the Lutheran spokesmen felt they had something to contribute to us.

• **What were the most sensitive areas of discussion?**

Adventist eschatology and self-understanding—for example, the concept of the “remnant,” which precipitated considerable discussion. Ellen White, when seen as an authority under the authority of Scripture (the “great light”), did not produce any shock waves. Likely the most intense moments resulted from discussing the “mark of the beast,” which you’ll read about elsewhere in *PD*.



B. B. Beach