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10-1-1999

### Review of Affirmations and Admonitions: Lutheran Decisions and Dialogue with Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches by Gabriel Fackre and Michael Root

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#### Recommended Citation

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spiritual guides of the past, brief as they are, and of the presence of Adventist missionaries from Europe around the world should serve to both inform and inspire.

*Heirs* is thus recommended for the general reader as well as the scholar. It should be in all academy and college libraries and would constitute an interesting supplement to courses in denominational history.

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RUSSELL L. STAPLES

Fackre, Gabriel, and Michael Root. *Affirmations and Admonitions: Lutheran Decisions and Dialogue with Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. xi + 124 pp. Paperback, \$16.00.

The six essays found in this book were presented at the 1997 Hein-Fry Lectures in eight seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). In these lectures Gabriel Fackre, Abbot Professor of Christian Theology Emeritus at Andover Newton Theological School in Massachusetts, and Michael Root, Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Ohio, discuss three ecumenical proposals that were to be voted on at the ELCA Assembly in the summer of 1997: the Lutheran-Reformed Formula of Agreement, the Episcopal-Lutheran Concordat, and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. The first of these proposals represents years of discussion aimed at establishing full communion between the ELCA and three Reformed churches: the Presbyterian Church in the USA, the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ. The second proposal also sought to establish full communion between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church. The third document was a first step in a worldwide process between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church to test whether a consensus has been reached on a doctrine that has divided the churches of Western Christianity. The first and third proposals were accepted by the 1997 ELCA Assembly, while the second was rejected by a narrow margin of six votes less than the two-thirds majority needed. (Note: In August 1999, the ELCA Assembly voted to accept a revised version of the Episcopal-Lutheran Concordat. At the same assembly full communion with the Moravian Church was also accepted.)

Fackre's two first lectures focus on what Lutherans have to contribute to other churches (chap. 1) and what Lutherans might learn from others (chap. 2). He understands ecumenical dialogues to mean that each church not only teaches something to its dialogue partners (affirmations) but can at the same time be taught something (admonitions). As an outsider from the United Church of Christ, he believes Lutheranism's understanding of justification by grace through faith contributes two important theological concepts to other denominations: that God condescends to be in solidarity with humanity, as understood in the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and that redeemed humanity is still sinful (*simul iustus et peccator*) and inhabits a sinful world, hence is in constant need of justifying grace. On the other hand, Lutherans hear from others that justification by faith must be heard in the context of the sovereignty of God over us and that the effect of the justifying grace of God imparted to us operates to produce growth in the Christian life.

In the third chapter, Fackre addresses the perennial ecumenical issue: how can

these bilateral agreements be put into practice? Since the beginning of the ecumenical movement, the implementation of agreements has always been a touchy subject, and well drafted documents have often been laid aside by the general membership of churches involved in the discussion. Fackre believes implementation can only start at the local congregation level, where people sincerely desire to see the unity of the church and are willing to reach out to others. The local community of faith should therefore be the focus of all ecumenical efforts if churches want to see these ecumenical agreements become a reality.

In the second section of the book, Michael Root also presents in three lectures his perspectives on the three documents. In chap. 4, he articulates how a dynamic, trajectory concept of the church can help denominations embrace ecumenical documents. Lutherans understand that as a gift of grace from Christ, the unity of the church is constituted by "the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly" (67). Root views such a unity as a dynamic concept because the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments imply a living-out of the word and sacrament in a life of communion and fellowship of love and witness (76, 80). Hence, ecumenical agreements are not to be viewed as a human effort trying to create the unity of the church but, rather, are a search to live out that unity in a way appropriate to the gospel and the present context.

In his second lecture, he proposes a pragmatic ecclesiological criterion to evaluate the acceptability of consensus documents, one that asks whether they offer sufficient doctrinal agreements to allow the churches to enter into full communion without violating each church's essential beliefs. For Root, the burden of proof is in favor of church unity. Using this criterion, he attempts to show how these documents demonstrate the needed consensus for the ELCA to enter into fuller fellowship with Reformed and Episcopal churches while, at the same time, allowing churches to have "internally differentiated consensus" in matters of doctrines where a total agreement on every aspect of doctrines is not needed in order to say they are in fact preaching the same gospel (83).

In his last lecture, he wrestles with the practical implementation of imperfect consensus agreements which often carry with them an aura of compromise, a sense of relativism and pluralism of truth. The fear Root addresses "is whether a common life in communion with the churches of the Concordat and the Formula will violate the integrity of the church . . . [and] lead to an erosion of the classical core of Christian belief within the ELCA?" (107). Although cautious, Root's conclusion is positive: "Adopting the proposals would mean being ready to listen and learn from others, but it need not mean retreating from fundamental Lutheran commitments" (109).

Now that we are more than two years beyond when these lectures were given and the historical votes taken by the ELCA, it may appear to many that this work is already dated and almost irrelevant. However, Fackre and Root make meaningful contributions to the field of ecumenical studies. Although at times the sales pitch is on, as both authors try to convince their audiences to accept the three documents under discussion, and give their own interpretations as to what the documents really intend to say, they both share valuable insights into the future of ecumenical dialogues and the ecclesiological mind-set needed to further the

cause of ecumenical fellowships. Fackre's concepts of gifts shared and received and Root's pragmatic ecclesiological criterion are key ideas that, I believe, will foster the future development and grassroots acceptance of ecumenical agreements between churches. Furthermore, their joint insistence that more latitude be given to the local congregations as the primary place where ecumenical agreements are truly accepted is also a concept that will mark the future of ecumenical dialogues.

Although more could have been said about the internal ELCA struggles regarding the three ecumenical documents referred to (which should have been added in an appendix), the book nonetheless makes a good contribution in showing some of the struggles a denomination faces as it debates the pros and cons of accepting such agreements. Unfortunately, neither author deals openly with the fear of doctrinal relativism and pluralism that is so prevalent in all denominations involved in ecumenism. Addressing such concerns would have added a valuable contribution to this work.

For a nonLutheran audience, it is at times surprising to read how important the various historical Lutheran documents (the Augsburg Confession, in particular, and other parts of the Book of Concord) are to Lutheranism and how they take on a very normative role in the definition of doctrines and ecclesial self-identity within ecumenical dialogues. Obviously, Lutheranism insists on the primacy of Scripture to define its beliefs and practices, yet through Fackre and Root's lectures, one gets the sense that it is Scripture as understood historically through these influential documents (see for example pp. 30-31). Indirectly, and perhaps unconsciously, both Fackre and Root demonstrate in their lectures that one of the perennial challenges to ecumenical dialogues is not necessarily how each denomination understands Scripture but how historically normative documents, such as confessions of faith, can be harmonized; a challenge not easily overcome when a denomination's self-identity is closely tied to these confessions.

In spite of a few shortcomings, I believe *Affirmations and Admonitions* is a publication that will take its place among the trendsetting works in the field of ecumenical studies. If the basic ideas presented in this book are implemented by other denominations, we may see more of them adopting fellowship agreements in the next decade.

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DENIS FORTIN

Gitin, Seymour, Amahai Mazar, and Ephraim Stern, eds. *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE In Honor of Trude Dothan*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998. xix + 481 pp. Cloth, \$90.00.

The archaeology of the Philistines and the establishment of their connection with the Aegean world owes much to the interdisciplinary research of scholars throughout the Mediterranean who have long searched for intercultural relationships. Perhaps no one has impacted our knowledge of this people more than the brilliant and charismatic scholar, Trude Dothan. This *Festschrift* is the published volume of the first international symposium held by the Philip and Muriel Berman Center of Biblical Archaeology, which took place in Jerusalem April 3-7, 1995, at the Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Thirty-five of the forty papers presented by leading international scholars from foremost institutions appear in this handsomely designed book that will serve as a state-of-the-art volume well into the next millennium.