

1-1-1976

Confessions in Dialogue

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Recommended Citation

Threinen, Norman J. (1976) "Confessions in Dialogue," *Consensus*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol2/iss1/4>

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

CONFESSIONS IN DIALOGUE

NILS EHRENSTROM

Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975
266 Pages, S Fr. 12.50 (Canadian \$4.90)

Confessions in Dialogue is now in its third edition, revised and enlarged. In its present form it is even more complete than are previous editions, although for a Canadian Lutheran who is aware of the five-year regional dialogues with Roman Catholic participants, it is a bit disappointing to find only the Canadian Lutheran-Reformed conversations covered.

One of the values of the present volume is that it does cover forty-six separate dialogues throughout the world (over half of them involving the Roman Catholic and about a third involving Lutherans). Although most of the conversations have taken place in Europe or North America, other areas - Australia, Japan, the Philippines and South America are also covered. Almost half of the book is devoted to a description of these various dialogues.

Of greater general value than the description of the various specific dialogues, however, are the chapters on aims, methods and procedures, and subject matters. The book identifies twenty-six topics which were dominant themes of the various discussions. Understandably, one of the most frequent themes was the Eucharist and the matter of intercommunion.

A very interesting summary analysis of shifts in self-understanding is contained in the chapter on "Concluding Reflections". The Anglican and Roman Catholic trends identified are particularly helpful. Unfortunately the Lutheran and Reformed trends are treated together and this analysis is less useful.

In making recommendations regarding the future of bilateral conversations one of the points made is that "part of the testing of consensus statements in the churches is the task of communicating them to a wider readership". Although the present volume does not share the actual consensus statements, it provides basic information about what conversations have occurred, what documentation has been published and where it may be obtained.