Book Reviews

Stefan Höschele, *Interchurch and Interfaith Relations. Seventh-day Adventist Statements and Documents*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 2010, 185 p.

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In volume 10 of *Adventistica – Interchurch and Interfaith Relations. Seventh-day Adventist Statements and Documents* – Stefan Höschele offers a collection of over 40 texts regarding the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) towards different Christian Churches and world religions. The importance of this work consists in the fact that this it is the first comprehensive compendium on the SDA's interchurch/interfaith relations. Stefan Höschele is lecturer in systematic theology and mission studies at Friedensau Adventist University, Germany.

Höuschele – who, in this case, is more an editor than an author, since he has merely selected and put together texts written by others and added introductions for every document – gives, however, sufficient explanation so that the reader can understand the context and purpose of each text included in the collection. The book covers a period of over 150 years and is systematically divided into three parts.

The first part, “Interchurch Relations: Resolutions, Statements, and Other Texts”, is the longest in the book and includes official statements and resolutions and texts concerning the way the SDA relates or should relate to other Christian Churches and world ecumenical bodies. In general terms, it can be said that the selection of the texts included here is very good. However, taken separately, some of the documents inserted in this section seem very irrelevant to the subject of interchurch relations (i.e. “Fundamental Beliefs”), and the reader can pertinently wonder why the author/editor of the book opted to mention them, but it transpires that only if one considers them in the company of the others, they have an important role in gaining a good general idea of the way Adventists view the subject. Three important ideas are clearly visible throughout the first part, even though the presentation of documents

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and statements shows a certain development and progression in time. Firstly, an emphasis on the SDA's own identity is considered crucial for any attempt at interchurch relations; secondly, the recognition of other Christian churches that lift up Christ before men as a part of divine plan for evangelization, which leads to a certain measure of collaboration at various practical levels; and thirdly, the maintenance of observer/guest status in ecumenical bodies, rather than full membership, based on an ambivalent position of criticism and collaboration.

The second part, "Interchurch Relations: Dialogue Documents," covers more recent times, and includes records/reports of meetings and dialogues between SDA theologians and clerics and representatives of ecumenical bodies, Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic and Evangelical delegates. The tone of the dialogues is more theological, which shows a certain degree of development and growth in interchurch relations. Even though they each cover slightly different topics, these dialogues manifest an overall readiness for understanding diverse Christian Churches, an openness for exploring common beliefs, and an authentic respect for differences.

The final and shortest part, "Interfaith Relations", focuses on the attitude of the SDA towards other world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and towards secular people. It also contains short statements concerning peace, religious freedom and tolerance. The tone of the texts is courteous, indicating a readiness to look for common ground which can serve as a basis for mutual respect. It is important to note that while the statements concerning the relationships to different religions are not official, they were composed by missiologists and others involved in interfaith relations, which may explain the much more complimentary language compared to the previous two parts.

Interchurch and Interfaith Relations proves to be a valuable book for scholars, students of ecumenism, religious studies and comparative theology, and even for other readers interested in understanding Adventism, not only by the mere gathering of the documents, but also by providing very detailed information and footnotes on sources for further reading. The volume edited by Hörschle is a successful contribution to the process of grasping the challenges and opportunities of the relationship between diverse religious traditions.