

Gabriel Fackre, 'ecumenical evangelical' theologian, dies at age 92

Fackre was influential in the formation of the United Church of Christ and wrote the five-volume work *The Christian Story*.

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [March 14, 2018](#) issue



Gabriel Fackre. Author photo from Eerdmans Publishing.

Gabriel Fackre, a theologian who called himself an ecumenical evangelical, died on January 31 at age 92 at home in Oregon City, Oregon.

He taught at Lancaster Theological Seminary and Andover Newton Theological School (now Andover Newton Seminary at Yale), where he was professor emeritus of Christian theology.

James Ernest, vice president and editor in chief at Eerdmans Publishing, wrote in a tribute about getting to know Fackre first as a teacher at Andover Newton. “He was indeed both ecumenical and evangelical in his aims and achievements, and also very centrally—to use a word that I think I heard him use more than anyone before or since—ecclesial: he was very much a theologian and teacher *of* the church, *for* the church.”

Fackre was influential in the formation of the United Church of Christ through a 1957 merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches.

Along with his wife, Dorothy Ashman Fackre, who was also an ordained minister, he pastored churches near the Chicago stockyards and in Pennsylvania steel mill towns for 12 years. The couple also wrote several books together, including *Christian Basics: A Primer for Pilgrims* (1991).

He is the author of *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (1993) and the five-volume work *The Christian Story*, completed in 2007.

Fackre wrote for the *Christian Century* beginning in the late 1960s. In a 1999 contribution, “[Ecumenical admonitions](#),” he made a suggestion about what conservative evangelical voices could offer mainline traditions. Evangelicals might admonish ecumenists “not to weaken the particularity of Christian confession or ignore the personal and penal dimensions of Christ’s work.”

“One learning from the long ecumenical struggle with key doctrines is the place of mutuality,” he wrote. “To get the fullest grasp of a Christian distinctive, we need the wisdom of the whole body of Christ.”

A version of this article, which was edited on February 26, appears in the print edition under the title “People: Gabriel Fackre.”