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Too Good to Miss

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

TOO GOOD TO MISS

J. Robert Jacobson

Calgary: Foothills Lutheran Press, 1977

105 Pages

It has been said that one should never review a book written either by one's friend or one's enemy. This reviewer is taking a chance that exceptions are allowed since we consider the author of "Too Good To Miss" a friend. We worked both with the JCILR Theological Committee, which the author chaired, and with the JCILR Committee on Function and Form, the work of which he tends to be rather critical. This fact caused this reviewer to have very mixed reactions to "Too Good To Miss" and we hope the value of the review is not negated by these reactions.

In "Too Good To Miss" the author shows his masterful ability to draw from an abundance of sources to support his thesis. His thesis very simply is this: There is an "evangelical principle" of life among God's people which is to determine the structure of the Church, this "evangelical principle" being that greatness among God's people must be measured in terms of serving, never in terms of lording. The author shows how this principle is supported by the New Testament's description of the Church. Then he focuses on how this principle should have resurfaced to transform the structures of the church as a result of the *sola Scriptura* and *sola fidei* emphases at the time of the Reformation but was frustrated by the ultimate wedding of the structures of the church to those of the state. Since the Reformation, church structures have been influenced by the various theological movements in Europe and by the ideals of democracy in North America.

Having dealt in laudable fashion with the "evangelical principle" in Scripture and church history, the author launches into the primary purpose of the book, i.e., to apply this principle in support of his view of what the church structures ought to be in the proposed Lutheran Church in Canada. His proposal is that the congregational model be extended to every level of church organization. The function of the "bishop" at the regional level and the "archbishop" at the national level would be pastoral and their call would be permanent. Diaconal functions would be in the hands of lay persons.

The author's proposal is tantalizing; yet one wonders whether his "apology" for the contents of the "Mission Statement" of the JCILR Theological Committee doesn't at times get in the way of the development of his thesis in this section.

Another distraction is the very specific reactions in the book to the study document of the JCILR Committee on Function and Form. Not only does it date


the book very severely (by the time the book was published some of the objections had already been taken care of in the final report of the committee) but it conveys a decidedly negative dimension to a very excellent positive thesis. At least that is the view of this reviewer.

"Too Good To Miss." It's a book which offers good insights and some interesting proposals. Whether one finally agrees or disagrees with the author, it provokes thought about an area which has usually been relegated to the realm of *adiaphora*.

NJT


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