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Prospect and Promise of Lutheran Unity in Canada

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

PROSPECT AND PROMISE OF LUTHERAN UNITY IN CANADA

WALTER FREITAG

Calgary: Foothills Lutheran Press, 1974.

95 Pages. \$1.95

Looking at what historical writing has been done on Canadian Lutheranism, one gains the general impression that there has been an antiseptic isolation of Lutherans from one another and from their Canadian context. It is therefore refreshing to have a book appear which attempts to see Canadian Lutheranism wholistically. Although the study does not seem to be based on any new research data, it does a good job of putting known facts into better perspective, particularly on the subject of identity and autonomy.

In approaching the subjects of identity and autonomy, the author points to three forces which shaped the history of Canadian Lutheranism - the immigrants themselves, the Lutheran bodies in the United States, and the Canadian situation. Many of the similarities and dissimilarities among the Lutheran Churches in Canada came about because of the interaction of these forces.

What some may regard as a shortcoming of the book is the fact that specific Lutheran groups are singled out to exemplify stances identified as being "hindrances to any prospect for Lutheran union." Although the author eventually says that the Lutheran Synods in Canada contained a mingling of orthodoxy (orthodoxism?) and pietism, people with a Missouri or Haugean background may feel that they have been caricaturized.

The style of the book is distinctive. The reader gets the feeling, at times, of being confronted by an oral presentation in written form. The frequent use of dashes and exclamation marks supports this impression.

The *Foreword* of the book expresses the hope that the book would be used as a source for discussion groups in Lutheran congregations. For this purpose, the final, summation chapter would be particularly valuable. In it Canadians are confronted with the challenge of better carrying out the mission of the church in this country through the establishment of a single Lutheran Church. It is this goal which needs to be kept central in the merger negotiations in progress and by all Canadian Lutherans no matter what their commitment to a merged church.