

5-1-1996

There's Got to Be More: Connecting Churches and Canadians

William D. Huras

Alfred Durichen

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

Recommended Citation

Huras, William D. and Durichen, Alfred (1996) "There's Got to Be More: Connecting Churches and Canadians," *Consensus*: Vol. 22 : Iss. 1 , Article 21.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol22/iss1/21>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

realizes the potential weaknesses of the testimony of an insider, but this has not stopped him from speaking out. We are the richer for it.

Above all, *Behind the Mitre* is both "a lament" and a prophetic appeal. Clarke's radical actions against NAFTA had embarrassed the bishops to the point that they fired him from his ecclesiastical position. However, there is no spirit of vengeance in this book. Rather it is "a lament for the loss of moral leadership on the national stage at a time when the gap between rich and poor is rapidly expanding" (p. xiv). But that is not all. *Behind the Mitre* is also a ringing prophetic appeal for Christians to rekindle hope by organizing and pursuing justice from the "grass-roots". The book's concluding chapter and appendix inspire and guide us in that direction. *Behind the Mitre* may describe Catholic episcopal evolution in a sorry direction, but the book is ecumenical in its analysis and appeal. Clarke's own words confirm that fact: "Finally, it is my fervent hope that telling this story will encourage all people of faith, not only Christians but also those from other religious traditions, to deepen their spirituality by becoming more actively engaged in the struggles for justice and the transformation of the world. For the 'cries of the victims are the voice of God' in our midst" (p. xv).

Oscar Cole Arnal
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary
Waterloo, Ontario

There's Got to be More! Connecting Churches & Canadians

Reginald W. Bibby
Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1995
153 pp.

I must admit that I approached Bibby's latest book, *There's Got to be More* with a degree of scepticism. When I am confronted with statistics and surveys I'm reminded of Winston Churchill's comments on Gallup Polls during the Second World War. Early in the war, September 30, 1941, a member of the opposition asked the Prime Minister how England could live with the gloomy results of the latest polls.

Churchill replied: "Nothing is more dangerous in war-time than to live in the temperamental atmosphere of a Gallup Poll, always feeling one's pulse and taking one's temperature."

I believe the same reply needs to be given by the church to the many pessimistic surveys of our day. Our call to be faithful disciples in this generation cannot be compromised by statistics that talk the language of gloom and doom.

Reading this work by the now famous-within-Canada religious sociologist at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta was, nonetheless, both

helpful and challenging. Some of his observations are familiar to us as part of "pastoral conversations" we enjoy with one another. Some of his insights, however, are innovative and offer us both encouragement and challenge.

When he speaks of Empty Pews and Empty Lives and tells us that "the spiritual, personal, and social needs of an increasing number of people are not being met by the churches" we tend to agree. I say "tend to agree" because the relation between cause and effect is more assumed than proven. In any event, we cannot be indifferent to the reality he describes.

That "parents are the key to the religious future of young people" is a truth we should know. The question for us has to be "have we acted with money and personal resources to address this reality?" When Bibby reminds us that "the churches, in the eyes of many Canadians are not associated with openness, generosity of spirit and sheer joy" we are wise not to be offended but rather to reflect on whether the shoe fits.

The chapter on Ten Key Findings has many similar comments that, if heard, are worth the price of the book. Some of these could be termed "good news".

It may come as a surprise to us when Bibby asserts that our people aren't easy to chase away from their churches. They "can be chastised, ignored and removed from church lists—and they frequently are. But they don't really leave." The author picks up on this theme in a later chapter and strongly recommends that we discard the categories of "active" and "inactive" and think rather in terms of degrees of affiliation. I found this chapter (the Five Crucial Implications) the most helpful and also the most challenging.

I was pleased that Bibby was prepared to make concrete suggestions but I am not as confident as he about the value or even ethics of the record keeping policies of the Mormon Church. That we can and must do a better job of following our people as they move about the country is true. The mobility of modern society is a challenge in itself and the author has correctly confronted us with it. We may not buy his solution but do we have a better suggestion?

I welcome Bibby's latest book and recommend it as good reading for all who love their church.

William D. Huras
Eastern Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada
Kitchener, Ontario