

# Consumption replaces commitment

## Book review

as the nostalgic longing for the return of Christendom — Christian schools, hospitals, businesses. He even has difficulty with the Biblical images of the church as "salt" or "leaven" seasoning and shaping the cultural world. He doesn't believe those approaches can "stand up to

culture." In keeping with his appreciation for transcendence, Bibby finds it "sociologically interesting" that the Catholic church remains firm on limiting the priesthood to males and in opposing divorce. What Bibby regards as cultural corruptions of the church are women clergy, inclusive religious language, and homosexual clergy. They are cultural intrusions that have no

Biblical basis for their presence in the church. "Take, for example," he writes, "some recent developments in the United and Anglican churches that many leaders have heralded as progressive advances. The willingness to consider ordination of women and homosexuals, along with the movement towards more inclusive theological language, hardly had their beginnings in revelation or scriptural authority."

In 1946, two of three adult Canadians attended a Sunday worship service. Forty years later, only one in three make their way to the nation's places of worship. According to the uniquely Canadian research of a University of Lethbridge sociologist, Reginald W. Bibby, Canada's religious groups are largely responsible for the country's drop-off religion as a consumer item to be added to life's shopping list. Rather than saying to people, "This is what religion is," they have been much more inclined to say to the public: "What do you want religion to be for you?" Religious consumption has replaced religious commitment.

Bibby, nurtured in the Nazarene church and trained as a Baptist minister, contends in his 271-page book, *Fragmented Gods — The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Irwin Publishing Inc., \$12.95), that Canadians are really church "drop-ins" rather than church "drop-outs."

On the basis of that discovery, he chooses to include maintenance of religious affiliation as potential for Canadian church growth. On the other hand, the book's "poverty" reference describes the public's preference for religious fragments rather than the "full meal deal." Toronto Anglicans, Quebec Catholics, Alberta Lutherans, Atlantic Presbyterians or B.C. Baptists have not left their church but select only fragments of their faith such as the services for rites of passage — baptism, weddings, funerals. For Bibby, the selective practise of religion produces a poverty of faith and reduces religion's ability to influence all aspects of life.

In assessing Bibby's view of culture and religion, some familiarity with Biblical and theological terms is necessary. It would help if the reader understood the meaning of religion that is "against" culture or "above" culture or a "transformer" of culture. Each view the world in a slightly different way. Bibby favours a religion that is above culture. For him the word "transcend" describes the proper religious response to culture. He writes: "If religion is to interact with culture, then it has to be able to transcend culture, so that it has something to bring, and be responsive to culture, so that it knows how to bring it."

With that transcendent view in mind, his call for religion to address all facets of life rather than fragments may appear to the reader



Anniversary dancers

The Pine Valley Square Dancers celebrated their 10th anniversary Saturday night at the Acton High School. Denny and Julie Hare and Carson and Norma Rae of Stewarttown celebrated the anniversary with square dancers from across the province. The Raes have been with the club since it began. (Herald photo)

## CUPW gears up for strike call on 3 hrs. notice

Halton Hills inside postal workers are preparing for a national rotating strike against the Canada Post Corporation, in an effort to gain job security.

"This strike has nothing to do with wage demands," said local CUPW Vice President Joe Paonessa. The local division governs 33 postal workers in Acton, Bolton and Georgetown. If the group is called to strike, all three offices will be affected, Mr. Paonessa said.

The local will not know the time to strike until about three hours before the working day begins, the union member said. "The element of surprise is one of our best weapons," he added.

CUPW members are concerned about sub-contracts to outside workers. Mail that involves personal contact with the customer, such as registered mail, special delivery or Priority Post, is being sent to local stores and offices which do not employ CUPW members.

If the customer is not home when the post office first delivers the mail, it is sent to the stores for customer pick-up.

"That's our work that they've (Canada Post) taken away from us," Mr. Paonessa said. A case is currently before the Canadian Labour Congress to include Willowdale store clerks and other workers who handle the mail into the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. If the case settles in favor of the union, the union may aim to

get the rest of Canada's sub-station workers signed-up, Mr. Paonessa said.

"As far as we're concerned, they are doing themselves more harm than good," he said. "If they want to work for \$5.50 per hour, that's their business."

Canada Post spokesman Ed Roworth said the postal corporation is recruiting replacement workers in anticipation of the strike. The corporation is basing its actions on two surveys — one conducted before the Letter Carriers' strike in June and another conducted very recently — which indicated the public wants the mail service to continue during the strike.

"We've received literally thousands and thousands of applications," Ed Roworth said. "We were caught by surprise by the magnitude of the turnout." Mr. Roworth said applicants have told him they like the pay rate — Canada Post is offering the union entry rate of \$13.50 per hour — and the remote possibility the job may become permanent.

CUPW executive members and Canada Post officials have been involved in negotiations throughout the weekend. The union is in a legal strike position today.

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