

# SPECTRUM

## **M**etanoia by John Valk

### Getting to the Future First



"The future is coming at full speed." That's what the advertisement asserted. It spoke of a "Get to the Future First" business convention, to be held in Toronto later this month.

Why such a focus on the future? What great advantage might the future offer over the present? And, what advantage is there in being first?

We in the West have for quite some time now been led to believe that we are progressing; the future holds great promise. Life will get better. If we use our minds, we will solve the problems of the present. According to the corporate world, those problems are economically based. Improve our economic situation and our problems will slowly vanish. But will they?

The Judeo-Christian tradition has always been future oriented. It too claims that the future is fast approaching. The future is the reign of God. In preparation we are called to repent: "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). But what is the future?

From the opening to the closing chapters of the Scriptures, there is the promise of better things to come. While

this life may be a "vale of tears", the next life is to be one of peace, joy, and fulfillment. Those are not primarily of an external material kind, they are of an inner spiritual nature. That "next life" may begin at the end of our earthly existence. It may also begin at the moment of our metanoia, a change or conversion in this life.

How oddly different and opposing these two "futures" are: the reign of the corporate business world and the reign of God. Both promise a better future, both offer salvation. Whom shall we trust? Whom will really deliver the goods?

Our current situation presents us with some sobering facts. A national debt is curtailing programs and opportunities at every turn. Jobs are not guaranteed, neither is lifelong employment. Violence, abuse and injustice increases as standards of living increase. Education is more expensive, and job paranoia cripples real learning. Whose dreams have we been following?

Perhaps we ought to look at the situation a little differently. Perhaps we ought to ask whom or what will render us as slaves. That's even more frighten-

ing. Yet it is also a future, if not a present, possibility. Is a future of economic slavery fast approaching? Is it already upon us?

Why is this important to the university? Perhaps because the university has the mandate to prepare students for the future. And for what kind of future are the young being prepared?

The term salvation is unfortunately applied largely to religion and the church. We ought not to restrict it as such. Many things, entities, endeavours offer salvation, that is, offer to improve our lives.

We can always think of ways to improve our lives. The advertising world exists for the sole purpose of reminding us, ad nauseam, that we are far short of having contented lives, and that our wants are really needs. The corporate world informs us that increased growth, expansion and profit is improvement.

What will really deliver the goods? What route to the future will free us? What will reduce us to slavery? We might want to ask that now rather than later. For example, we might ask those who teach us why we continually experi-

ence more rather than less hardship? Why is the cost of living continually rising, marginalizing even more people? Why has the joy of partying replaced the joy of learning? Why is reflection replaced with business, or the seeking of wisdom replaced with the seeking of the quickest route to getting through and getting out?

When we focus exclusively on the future we neglect the present. It is in the present that healing must occur. It is in the present that we become conscious of the nature of our brokenness, meaninglessness, and hopelessness.

No doubt the future is fast approaching, but the future is more than just tomorrow, or the day after. The future is with God, not economic prosperity. The Western world can ill afford to pursue much longer the myth of economic prosperity.

We can, however, afford to pursue a future with God. It offers a different kind of prosperity. To get to that kind of future first we must "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8). Or, as Isaiah 1:17 puts it, we must "learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Once again, the GSA will be holding its Annual Conference on Student Research on April 19, 1995 at the Wu Conference Centre. The main goal of this conference is to provide a forum where grad students can present their research to their peers and faculty members. This means that the presenters must demonstrate the ability to communicate their work to people of varying backgrounds - Arts, Engineering, Humanities, Physics, etc. It also gives grad students a chance to see the diversity of research that is being conducted by other grads at UNB.

This year, we are hoping to attract presenters from as many departments as possible. It is our goal to have 10 students from the Arts/Humanities departments and 10 from the Science/Engineering fields, with cash prizes available for the best presentation in each category.

Should you like to participate or attend, forms can be picked up from the department reps or E-mail us at [gsa@unb.ca](mailto:gsa@unb.ca). Hope to see you there!

## GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION Presents

### The 3rd Annual GSA Conference on Student Research



**Date: April 19, 1995.**

**Place: Wu Conference Centre**

**Time: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

**March 31 is the deadline for submission of abstracts and pre-registration forms should you wish to present. For more information, contact the GSA via E-mail**

**[GSA@unb.ca](mailto:GSA@unb.ca)**

**Cash prizes for the best presentation in the categories of Arts/Humanities and Science/Engineering.**