

SPECTRUM

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METANOIA

Easter: New life, new hope

by John Valk

Jesus of Nazareth was killed on a wooden cross. Crucifixion was a typical punishment inflicted on the enemies of Rome. They had little tolerance for those who threatened, or appeared to threaten, their authority.

Death by crucifixion was neither quick nor graceful. Most victims were first brutally beaten, then with large spikes driven through their wrists (not palms) and feet, they were nailed to a cross. Death came generally by means of asphyxiation. Sagging arm and chest muscles, tiring from the shear weight of the body and no longer able to sustain it, eventually caused the chest cavity to collapse. Crucifixion was a slow, painful and undignified ending to a human life.

Jesus appeared to have posed a threat. The religious establishment of the day disliked his message, his charisma and, above all, his defiance of them. They brought a charge of sedition against him, and convinced the Roman authorities that he disturbed their social and political order. He suddenly became dispensable.

The Gospels record in great detail the dramatic events around the death of Jesus. They also affirm that a physical resurrection of this same man occurred three days later. Furthermore, they state that this resurrection represented a triumph over death itself, and a change in the way humans can relate to God.

For almost 2000 years Christians the world over think about these things on Good Friday and Easter. According to them, the death of that particular man had a unique meaning: it changed the course of human history.

For some this event so thoroughly impacts their lives that they are permanently changed. They are so gripped that they seek to model Jesus' behavior in all that they say and do, albeit admittedly imperfectly. Others get spiritually twinged only on Good Friday and Easter. They

make a customary church appearance, just as they do on Christmas, their baptism and their wedding.

An increasing number in North America simply enjoy the extra day off work. They believe the events surrounding Easter have been rendered implausible by our "advanced" scientific knowledge. What cannot be comprehended empirically therefore should not occupy our agendas.

Secularization has that habit of levelling all meaning, or reducing everything to the here and the now. That type of levelling, one must admit however, is rather limited in scope.

At some point we need to ask larger questions, one's that go beyond the here and the now: the paying of the mortgage and the car loan, the striving for promotion, or the meeting of some external expectations. These are no trite matters, but they can hardly comprise the meaning and purpose of life.

Perhaps so. But that does not make the message of Easter itself easy to accept. Apart from the scientific difficulties, death and destruction is still all around us. The human world, never mind the environment, does not seem to have improved much.

Was Jesus who he claimed to be, that is, the One who ushered

in God's kingdom? Is God's kingdom of peace and fulfillment still coming? Will our lives be changed for the better if we live according to Christ's teachings? Is there meaning for us in his life, death and resurrection? Was (is) he the One through whom we can gain life after death?

If our answer is no then perhaps we will seek elsewhere for meaning. There are many spiritualities in circulation today, some considerably more attractive than others. The New Age Movement, for one, offers us a plethora of opportunities. In fact, much of it is glamorous, and fits in rather nicely with our

present-day concentration on the self.

If our answer is yes then Easter Day represents at minimum a great deal of hope. It still leaves many questions unanswered, no doubt. But the life which Jesus led, the things he said, the God of whom he spoke, and the future he opened, give us a sense of better things to come when the going gets tough and our world crumbles around us. It also responds to the simple question we often ask at the end of a long frustrated day: is this all there is?



The Ombudsman

What is an Ombudsman?

An ombudsman is someone who has been appointed to investigate complaints by individual citizens against public authorities.

In New Brunswick, the Legislative Assembly appoints one Ombudsman to investigate citizens' complaints against decisions and acts of the Provincial Government (including its officials, departments, agencies and organizations) or of any municipality in the Province. For example, if you think a certain guideline which a government department follows is discriminatory, you should make a complaint to the Ombudsman.

How do I make a complaint?

Before making a complaint to the Ombudsman, you must first exhaust all avenues of review or appeal within the department, agency, organization or municipality involved.

If your complaint still has not been resolved, you should initiate a complaint to the Om-

budsman. Complaints must be made in written form to: The Office of the Ombudsman, 703 Brunswick Street, P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5H1, 453-2789, toll free: 1-800-561-4021.

There is no charge for making a complaint to the Ombudsman.

What can the Ombudsman do upon receiving my complaint?

The Ombudsman will probably have access to information which is inaccessible to you. He or she is able to get information by making a recommendation under the Right to Information Act. The Ombudsman may summon people to appear before him or her in order to gain more information. He or she also has access to all records that are related to your complaint.

In conducting the investigation, the Ombudsman will attempt to determine whether the actions of the government have been unjust. An attempt will also be made to determine whether a government decision has been made due to a mistake of law, a mistake of fact, or both.

The Ombudsman will charge you no fee for investigating your complaint.

It is important for you to note that the New Brunswick Ombudsman has no authority to hear citizens' complaints against the Federal Government, the Courts, private companies or individuals.

What will happen after the investigation?

If the Ombudsman's investigation of your complaint determines that there has been no unjust treatment towards you, the matter is dropped. In this event, you as the complainant have not lost anything as there was no charge for the investigation.

However, if it turns out that there is a valid complaint when the investigation has been completed, the Ombudsman may make a formal recommendation to the Government or Legislative Assembly.

Is there an ombudsman on Campus to deal with student complaints against the Administration?

Yes. One of the roles of the Dean of Students is to be an ombudsman for UNB. If you have any complaint against the Administration or Faculty, you should first approach the Dean of Students. He can advise you of your rights and he can indicate how you should proceed in lodging a complaint. The Dean of Students might also represent you at your appeal hearing. If you think you have a complaint against bodies of the UNB administration, contact the Dean of Students at 453-4527, room 8 downstairs in the Alumni Memorial Building.

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