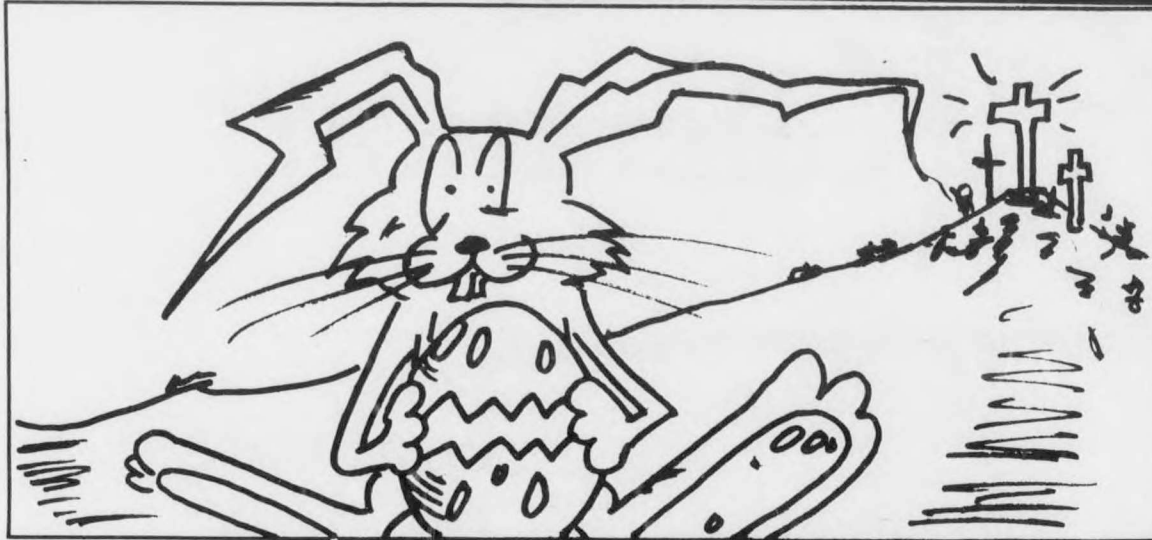


SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Valk



Easter is more than just bunnies and chocolate. Do not lose sight of the true meaning
An Unusual Event

The Easter event of some 2000 years ago is a most dramatic one for Christians. When I look around in the world in which I live and work there is still significant legacy of that event. Churches engage in Holy Week celebrations. The university closes for the long weekend. Stores engage to do bustling business.

On the Tuesday after, however, life goes on much the same as before. Churches continue their liturgical tradition. Universities get down to the serious business of exams. Stores prepare for the next commercial season.

It's not that Easter didn't happen. One just wonders if it effected any change, if it had any real impact on, or significance for anyone's daily life.

Maybe it didn't. After all, what happened on that Easter morning so long ago does not so easily fit into our modern ways of doing or looking at things. Those numerous stories from antiquity about a man rising from the dead, and thereby providing the means for the healing of our present and future lives, seems to offend modern sensibilities.

The late German theologian Rudolf Bultmann has helped modern people come to grips with this difficulty. Bultmann urged us to demythologize these stories, that is, to reinterpret them so they make sense for us today.

Hence, many like to speak of a spiritual resurrection. What survived the trauma associated with the crucifixion on Good Friday was the memory of Jesus. Initially stunned by the death of their beloved leader, his male and female disciples discerned a new and unique spirit among them — Jesus' thoughts and actions living on in them. This they passed on to others through the ages, as they fanned the far reaches of the Greco-Roman world. It is also passed on in written form.

While attractive, such explanation renders injustice to the New Testament.

Passages do speak of eyewitness accounts of a resurrected Jesus. Mary Magdalen saw and reached out to touch him. The disciples recognized him with them in the Upper Room, with (doubting) Thomas reassured after seeing the still visible signs of the crucifixion. Two friends journeyed to Emmaus with him and afterwards sat down to eat with him. Some joined him to eat fish at the seashore.

To accept the notion of a resurrected Jesus can never be easy. It entails accepting the possibility of miracles — divine intervention into human lives and human history. Many object strongly to this, and for certain reasons. First, the closed universe of modern science precludes miracles. How can a man who has been dead for three days (and physically deteriorating) come back to life? Second, the rational mind seriously doubts the testimony of those who claim to have witnessed supernatural events. It maintains that the lack of verified miracles or supernatural events in the present precludes their possibility in the past. Hence, they are explained away. Third, to speak of miracles as divine intervention entails an acceptance that humans may not be the measure of all things, that a greater Being exists and seeks communion with humanity.

Perhaps God does exist and miracles do happen today. Perhaps it depends on our perspective, the language we use, or our willingness to be open to the divine. Examples abound. Today do we not occasionally speak of medical miracles, even as we try to account for them scientifically? Do we not see miraculous changes in some peoples lives, for example, from hardened criminal to contributing citizen, explained by them solely as divine action? How many have not witnessed, and prayed for, miraculous rescues, where disastrous outcomes seemed certain?

The Gospels speak of Jesus raising people from the dead. The daughter of

Jarius, head of a Jewish synagogue and a man with great social and religious prestige, was raised back to life (Luke 8: 40-42). So was the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7: 11-17). The raising of Lazarus is perhaps the most well known (John 11: 1-44).

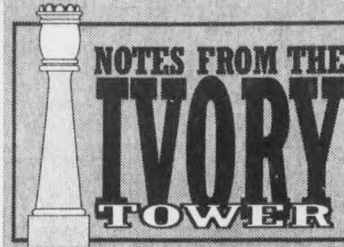
These resurrection events, however, are perhaps better understood as resuscitations. All those that Jesus raised faced death at a later date. Their reemergence was temporary, even as they pointed to future possibilities.

Such was not the case with Jesus. A resurrected Jesus was not a resuscitated Jesus, one who may not really have been dead, or who faked death. The post-crucified Jesus was also not a resurrected spiritual being, whose corpse was hidden, stolen or yet to be discovered in a grotto somewhere around Jerusalem. Neither was the resurrected Jesus one who suddenly came back to life as we know it.

The resurrection of Jesus is really the power of God over death. It is the power of God overcoming all that is finite, organic and prone to decay. It is God transforming temporal life into eternal life. It is life in a more glorious state of existence. Jesus was the first-born of new life to come. That the disciples recognized Jesus in his resurrected state gives indication that this present life is related to the afterlife.

When Jesus' followers finally grasped what God had done, which became clear only with the resurrection, their lives changed radically. They had been given a glimpse of eternity. Their universe was no longer the same, preoccupied with routine pressures of the day, with meaning limited to the here and the now. It was suddenly laden with eternal value.

What meaning will Easter weekend have for us this year? Will it only be temporal: a long weekend, an opportunity for leisure, preparation for upcoming exams, time with family? Or, will our mundane activities be charged with eternity, with that which is to come, because of a resurrected Jesus?



The Failure of Grades
by Daniel Goodwin

Those who get A's become professors. Those who get C's donate buildings.

Old Student Saying

Although that jocular comment may be comforting, it also contains at least a kernel of truth. How many of us know of rather mediocre scholars who then went on to make it big outside the rarefied atmosphere of the Ivory Tower? Last semester, one of my professors actually admitted in class that people who often do really well in school don't do that well in the real world.

As the professor saw it, this gap between success in school and success in the real world has something to do with the fact that school, by and large, teaches convergent thinking whereas what matters in the real world is divergent thinking. Convergent thinking assumes there is one right answer. In the end, the "right answer" is often synonymous with the professor's answer. Divergent thinking, on the other hand, involves many possible answers. This rather gloomy assessment did not stop the professor from giving us grades, which just goes to show the pervasive power of the system and its inability to conceive of an alternative.

When you actually stop to think about it, the academy's position on grades comes down to a lot of double-talk. The message we get from our professors is contradictory: on the one hand they often tell us not to worry about our grades. Sometimes we can even detect a sort of intellectual snobbery on their part, the attitude that we misguided students care more about trivia like our grades than the pursuit of knowledge. And yet I needed at least a 3.0 GPA to get into the Educational Faculty and when I apply for teaching jobs I will have to submit my transcripts as part of my job application.

In his book, *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior High School*, Robert Probst marvels at the exalted position of grades in the educational institutional setting: "Curiously enough, our educational system has managed to convince a good many people that something as insubstantial as a grade actually has meaning... this astounding preference for meaningless simplicity over meaningful complexity would be

unfathomable anywhere else but school."

When all is said and done, what does a grade really mean? It is definitely not some abstract measure of knowledge. While an A *might* mean that you have mastered the material, the only real thing that it means for *certain* is that one person (the professor) thinks that you have proved that you know what that one person thinks is important for you to know. As Probst argues, "The problem is not simply that the grade doesn't inform; rather, it misinforms and deceives. It imitates the precision of mathematics, though it is at best only impression and judgment."

Ironically, while grades are supposedly there to measure knowledge and learning, (and perhaps even to encourage it) they insidiously serve to undermine it. Because the academy places so much emphasis on grades (in the form of admissions, scholarships, research and teaching assistant positions for students), the implicit and deeply engrained lesson which universities end up teaching their students is not to value knowledge per se, but rather to value their knowledge of the system and their ability to play the game in order to get that A.

For those of you who hate grades, there is some hope on the horizon. Paradoxically, less of us will be around to enjoy this looming new academic order. The new academic order is a result of the changing economics of education. You don't need an A in public policy or sociology to note that Canadian universities are undergoing a process of privatization, and as a consequence are becoming more and more expensive.

In a society where universities are largely subsidized, students are more likely to humbly accept their grades. But as students have to foot more and more of the bill, the idea of grading paying consumers will lose much of its cachet. This is an upgraded (pardon the convoluted pun) version of no taxation without representation: no fee increases without grade inflation. The very fact that money is involved should tip us off to the fact, that as students we are not merely buying some pure abstract truth. Many of us, in education, law, engineering, nursing, accounting, are buying a profession. Who ever heard of customers being rated by the store?

In case you think this is just wishful thinking, it is already happening in the U.S. where students pay a proportionately greater share of the cost of their education. Bowing to student pressure, certain Ivy League universities have removed failing grades. At some institutions it's even impossible to get a D.

Something to look forward to, as less and less of us can afford to pursue knowledge and truth and those gleaming, elusive A's.



MEGSS and Things
by Anne Blaquiere-Nowlan

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) provides group assistance to departmental and other societies to encourage educational, cultural, and social activities of the graduate students it represents. The Mechanical Engineering Graduate Student Society (MEGSS) is one of those societies.

MEGSS is a fairly young group, in only its second year. Its objectives include providing the structure to organize

activities such as seminars, field trips, social and sporting events, BBQ's, etc. It also promotes mechanical engineering in the graduate community, and encourages

closer relationships among its members.

Since the MEGSS executive was elected in June 1995, we have kept busy scheduling a variety of events and trying to establish and maintain a good reputation among students and faculty.

The first item on our plate was soliciting graduate students (Mechanical and non-Mechanical) as members. For a membership drive to be successful, it must supply potential members with guaranteed services. We purchased a

microwave, a refrigerator, a coffee percolator, and a kettle. We also successfully requested the donation of a room from the Mechanical Engineering

department.

The MEGSS lounge provides secure storage space for our equipment, and is an excellent place to accommodate business and social activities.

The first major event was held on September 9, 1995. A BBQ was held at Odell Park followed by a river cruise of the Saint-John River. It was a little cold on the river, but the food was great, and the cruise relaxing. We held an open house to officially open the MEGSS Lounge and invited everyone (students and faculty) to drop by for coffee and

doughnuts.

In January, Mr. Paul Egan of the Manufacturing and Technology Centre at UNB gave a seminar on "Future Trends in ISO 9000 Quality Systems" and a tour of the Point Lepreau Power Generation Station was attended by MEGSS and the Association of Electrical Engineering Graduate Students (AEEGS) members. MEGSS and AEEGS have pooled their resources and have decided to share the hosting of a weekly cookie meeting to promote graduate socializing among and between societies. We challenged the Electricals to a volleyball match on Friday, February 23 in the Main Gym. We had a great turnout (with about 20 Mechanicals and Electricals). It was all in fun, but I do recall the Mechanicals winning 2 out of 3. On February 29, Dr. P. McDonnell from Psychology spoke on "Ethical Issues in Research Settings." Dr. McDonnell brought forward some interesting ethical scenarios which sparked much

conversation and dialogue. The engineering profession has their own Code of Ethics, much like many other professions, and it is taken very seriously. For example, all UNB Engineering undergraduates must take an ethics course. The equivalent is required if an engineer wishes to practice his/her profession in New Brunswick.

Future events include a potluck lunch, a final seminar, a year end BBQ, and maybe another Volleyball match (if the electricals are up to it, of course). So keep your eyes peeled for announcements.

At this point, I would like to thank the Mechanical Engineering Department for their continuing support and interest. Thanks also to our members who attended the events and whose enthusiasm keeps us going. I hope that MEGSS can continue to grow and that interest in its activities will encourage the entire graduate student body to participate and have fun, at least once in a while.