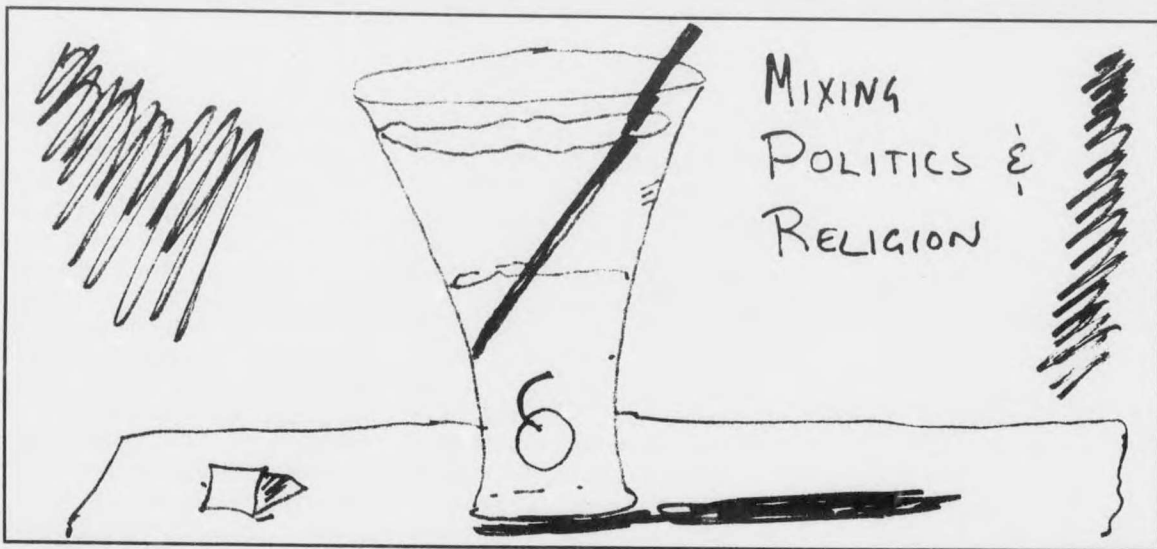


SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Valk



Religion and Politics

A recent article in the *Daily Gleaner* spoke of mixing religion and politics ("MacLeod: Religion, Politics Do Mix", 22 Feb.). That such a notion might draw considerable ire perhaps explains why it was tucked in the back pages. Separation of church and state is still a debated issue, and apparently not yet settled.

Ken MacLeod, Liberal MLA from Moncton Crescent, feels it is a mistake to assume that religion has nothing to do with politics. In a recent speech in the Legislature, MacLeod affirmed that "throughout human history, the family and the church have provided the foundations upon which democratic institutions function. They have provided the moral imperative and caused men and women to rise above egoism and serve the greater good."

According to MacLeod, "no person, province or country is stronger than its ethical and moral principles. The strength of those principles is found in the hands of the family, the church, civic groups and those democratically elected to lead. The Judeo-Christian traditions are an infinitely important part because they serve as a moral and ethical foundation for what [is] called character. Society is vulnerable when men and women lack character. Keeping the law, respecting human life, loving one's family, fighting to defend national goals, helping the poor, paying taxes — all of these depend on virtues such as courage, loyalty, charity, compassion, duty ... in the end, character."

The framers of the American Constitution argued that church and state should remain separate. History has shown repeatedly that when the state interferes with the business of the institutional church, and visa versa, major problems occur. But the separation of religion and politics is an entirely different matter.

Humans are both religious and political by nature. One may be disinterested in the institutional church, or dismayed by modern political wrangling. That may render one anti-church, or anti-government. But it hardly makes one areligious or apolitical. Religion cannot be reduced to the institutional church. Neither can politics (the struggle for justice in public

affairs) be reduced to the institution of government or state.

Mr. MacLeod points correctly, I believe, to the fact that underlying all our political actions and motivations is a deeper (religious) view of the world. That world view may be Judeo-Christian, governed by love of God and neighbour. The Hebrew prophet Micah encouraged us to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before God" (Micah 6:8). Embracing such a world view and applying it to one's political activity will no doubt lead to particular approaches to special interest groups, taxation equity, the poor, the powerless.

One's religious world view may also be based on selfish individualism, governed by a selfish ego and the autonomy of the individual. It may also be based on unbridled capitalism, governed by greed and the reduction of life to economic exchange. Each of these, when applied to political activity, also leads to particular action and

decision making, albeit different than a world view based on Judeo-Christian principles.

It is a shame that we are reluctant to speak of these deeper notions of religion. Too often we categorize religion in terms of religious fundamentalism. We also conveniently reduce religious affirmations to mere opinion, a seemingly just cause to dismiss them from the public square.

Should we be surprised or bewildered today that discussions about the public good have, for the most part, been superseded by the yelling and screaming emanating from lobby groups, political patronage, special tax privileges? Should we be surprised that self-interest dots our modern political landscape?

I applaud Mr. MacLeod for expressing his views in the public forum. Would that we all had the courage to do so, and that their discussion not be tucked in the back pages.



Debate Over Christmas Mountains Continues by Geoff Peters

The current debate about harvesting in the Christmas Mountain region of New Brunswick has received a lot of attention from the media. There have been opposing viewpoints expressed here, in the "Forest Breeze" in the past month or so. I would like to take issue with the article written last week (by Jason Northcott) which attempted to justify placing part of this area in an ecological reserve.

(Northcott) states how the World Wildlife Fund rates each province on their endangered spaces campaign, and how we received the second lowest grade in Canada behind Alberta. First

of all, I feel that the WWF is an extremely biased organization, with the interests of a few at heart, as they publish their volumes each year on paper produced from the very "spaces" they wish to preserve. They have wildlife as the most important value in the forest, and denote a number of around 20% as what they deem to be acceptable as a percentage of total land base set aside for wildlife reserves or parks. They then see fit to tell us how to run our forests, without seeing the entire picture.

Twenty percent of your total land base for parks is not a bad number if you have the area the size of Ontario or British Columbia to deal with. There are so many opportunities for protected zones, and yet so much land remaining

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The Grad ZONE

Qwerty?! What The Hell Is Qwerty?
by Rod Wilkie

Qwerty is a new literary magazine designed and edited by graduate students and graduates of UNB's Department of English. Most of us on the journal are writers, and we care very much about the

state of writing and publishing in this country. This is our contribution.

Qwerty is interdisciplinary. We publish poetry and fiction. We publish visual art and concrete poetry, and are interested in monologues and excerpts from screen plays. We want well crafted work that hasn't been made timid by taste.

Qwerty matters. Good writing matters. Good writing by New Brunswickers very much matters. While we don't confine ourselves to the local writing scene, we strongly encourage submissions from Fredericton artists, be they students or alumni or writers who have the plain good fortune to be living somewhere near us.

Qwerty is active. Literature is bigger than the paper it's printed on, and so are we. Literature is part of a living culture. So are you. So are we. We've held one very successful poetry slam already, and we're holding another slam soon. Come to the Cellar Pub on March 23 and see. See where we are, see where we're coming from, and take a hand in where we're going.

Qwerty is made possible through the generosity of both the Department of English and the GSA. If that generosity continues, the magazine will be published three times yearly, with the first issue due for release before the end of term.

Qwerty wants your brain.
Send submissions to: Qwerty, c/o Dept. of English, UNB., PO. Box 4400, Fredericton, NB E3B 1V3.

NOTES FROM THE IVORY TOWER

Only in Fredericton
by Daniel Goodwin

The other day I had one of those transcendent experiences that happen maybe once in your life, when you must gaze deep inside your soul and come to terms with who you really are and what you believe. And maybe you realize what you would be willing to die for. Well, on second thought, maybe something just happened on the way to school.

It was late in the afternoon. I was sitting on the bus. I remember it well. The sun was sinking inexorably behind the gabled mansions of University Street when I noticed the woman sitting across the aisle was holding a book in her hand. I could see the title in bright red: *The Trial*. At first I thought it was one of those books spawned by the O.J. industry, a Clarkian memoir or a Dardenesque take on the proceedings. But no. The author of this *Trial* was one Franz Kafka. Now I don't know about you, but I've never actually seen anybody read Kafka, let alone carry any of his works on the bus for everyone to see.

I had never read anything by Kafka myself, but of late had decided that I couldn't go through life pretending to be a semi-literate person without having read one of his books. Franz Kafka, after all, is the same Kafka whom at least one scholar laboring away in anonymity for the Encyclopedia Britannica terms "the most influential master of modern German prose whose work has become a symbol of 20th century anxiety and of the sense of alienation pervasive in Western society." As if we needed to be reminded, eh?

I bravely checked *The Trial* out from Harriet Irving Library (HIL) and took it back to my apartment. For a long

time, it lay in a jumble of other books, and I forgot about it as I attended to more pressing matters, like studying for tests and writing papers, experiencing first-hand some of that trademark Kafka-esque anxiety and sense of alienation.

Finally, one cold existential night I dusted the volume off and began to read. Sure, it was interesting, albeit in a rather dull way, but frankly I just couldn't bring myself to finish it. Maybe something got lost in the translation. But I digress.

The woman on the bus was interacting with her companions and I made an effort to eavesdrop on their conversation (it wasn't difficult), hoping perhaps that I might benefit from some informed literary chitchat about Franz. But no, they had smoothly switched gears and were now engaged in conversation about another great veritable colossus of literature, the one man canon himself, Will Shakespeare. Apparently, the Kafka aficionado was taking a course on Shakespeare at the same time. The man beside her suddenly exclaimed, "Shakespeare? Why do you want to study Shakespeare? Shakespeare's useless. Never once in my life have I ever needed to use Shakespeare in my work."

I never got to hear the rebuttal to this claim, if indeed a satisfactory one existed or was made, because at that instant all three personages got off the bus. But like a character in a Kafka novel, I was left somewhat bewildered, not quite sure what I had just witnessed or how it affected me. As a result of this seemingly haphazard occurrence I was obsessed with many questions, most of them ineffable. What was the use of Shakespeare? I kept asking myself until it was my turn to disembark.

When I exited the bus, two people were waiting by the bus stop. But when the bus opened its doors they both refused to get on. As I passed them on my way to class, I heard one of them speak to the bus driver. He could have been saying something else, but I could swear it sounded suspiciously like, "I'm sorry, we're waiting for Godot."

WOMYN SAY

Which has the greater sin when burned by the same lawless fever: She who is amorously deceived, Or he, the sly deceiver. Or which deserves the sterner blame, though each will be a sinner: She who becomes a whore for pay, Or he who pays to win her?

Sor Juana Ines du la Cruz (1648-1695)