

# SPECTRUM

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## A rediscovery

There is little doubt in the minds of many today that the institutional church is on the decline, and on the fringes of society. It is no longer the social, cultural and political power broker it once was. Most like it that way. In fact, some feel the church has no business at all speaking on economic, social or political issues.

There are those who feel the church ought to confine itself to its own sphere of "expertise". Theological concerns, doctrinal formulations and spiritual matters are its domain. Conducting weekly services, baptizing, marrying, burying, hosting church dinners, even bingo, and aiding the sick and shut-ins are the "services" the church can respectively provide, for those who wish to avail themselves of these. So the reasoning goes.

If that is not your image of the church then it certainly is one held by many people around you, no less in academia. Little wonder that an increasing number of people are distancing themselves from this institutional structure.

That parting of the ways has occurred since about the sixties, when the youth lost touch with the church (or visa versa). The importance of the church in the lives of people has, ever since, been diminishing. Even the one day of the week traditionally reserved for the church now is preempted by commercial and recreational interests.

Will the church soon become a relic of the past? Has our secular and "enlightened" orientation signaled its death knell? Marxist and Leninist ideologues predicted its demise once the light of communism gained the day. That, of course, did not materialize. In fact, the church in the former Soviet Union flourished, and was a catalyst in the triumph over godless communism.

While statistics continue to spell its demise here in North America, there is indication that some are again rediscovering the church. Curiously enough, this is occurring among some baby boomers, those who rejected it as irrelevant two decades ago. And, much to their surprise, they are finding a church that is refreshingly upbeat. In a recent Globe and Mail article, "A prodigal returns to the church," the writer relates that to his astonishment the church had many of the same thoughts and ideas he had about social responsibility, the environment etc.

What is causing this small, but significant, return to the church? Clearly an increasing number of people are thinking about religion today, and some are seeking it in strange places. But some are also beginning to speak about God in

more traditional ways. They are (re)exploring what it all means in terms of their lives - the children they are shaping, and the careers that are shaping them. For them, enlightened thinking means going back to, not away from, the church.

Why is all of this of significance? Some of it has to do with the fact that the church may be the only place where a group of people, on an extended basis, "think beyond themselves," and want to do something to correct not only themselves, but some of the injustices, inequalities and imbalances in the world.

The church is the place for *metanoia* - change and conversion - of the *heart*. In fact, once that occurs life slowly takes on a whole different meaning.

And what kind of meaning is that? It would be false to assume

that one gains fullness of life, at least in the way we often understand that in a 20th Century consumer oriented society. No one is promised wealth, comfort and an easy ride. Difficulties, pain and death still remain.

There is, however, fullness of a different sort. There is hope, there is promise, there is quality of life. Life's essence is no longer the size of one's bank account, the status of one's career, profile in the community, power over others, quantity or quality of one's possessions.

There is now the struggle for authenticity. But, it is not a solitary struggle. It takes place within the context of a worshipping community. And, that community struggles in turn for peace rather than discord, justice rather than injustice, equality rather than imbalance, sharing rather than hoard-

## Intimate connexions

*In the circle of her intimate connexions. (Rebecca Byles to Miss Kitty Byles, 1785 [PANS])*

The quote above is from a woman of the eighteenth century, discussing whether a woman's poetry should be published. In her view, publication was not for women - rather, she should keep her verse within the "circle of intimate connexions" formed by her social circle. Over two hundred years later, it is still difficult for many women to express themselves publicly - one of the reasons women vote, but are more reluctant to commit themselves to running for political office. Public exposure often brings criticism more often than acclaim, and women seem to be more vulnerable to self-doubt than their male counterparts, making them yet more reluctant to risk the cold light of publication on their views.

And yet, women have a lot of good things to say - both as individuals, and as an expression of "gender consciousness". Any one who has seen *War of the Roses* or *Thelma and Louise* with a member of the opposite gender persuasion knows that "they" think differently. I've had more good discussions with men after watching those two movies - they were almost worth the price of admission. It certainly beats stealing the batteries from the remote control to start a conversation.

When I first thought about the expression "in the circle of her intimate connexions" I was struck by how beautifully it expressed the idea of women's friendships. The circle has a long history as a feminine symbol - life cycles being

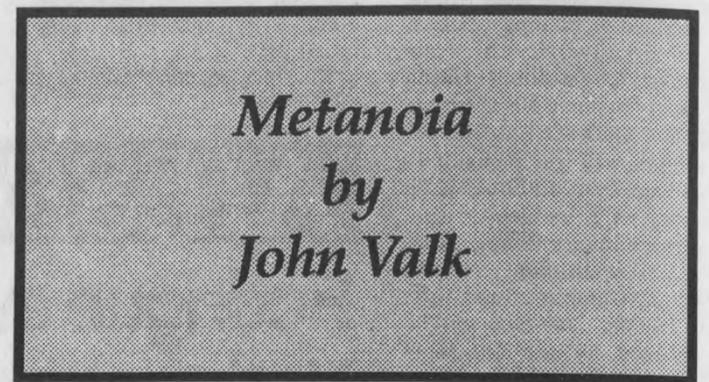
only the most obvious of associations - and the intertwined nature of our lives with mothers, sisters, children, even men seems at times much more circular than straightforward.

My closest friendships, the kind that transcend miles and years, are with women. We talk about *everything*, much to the annoyance of our mates, and gain a lot of support from each other. Any group of women that I've been a part of, whether it's a writers group or the craft circle at the church, have always enlarged my own personal support group. Somehow, we all become a part of each others' lives, without ever meaning to. I wonder whether men have these same sorts of friendships, and what they discuss with their friends. The men that I do know have friends who are part of their business lives, or are part of an activity (sports, usually) that they are involved in.

## Talkin' Garbage

It's a "COMMIE PLOT!" Anyway, if there were any commies left, it might be a commie plot. Come to think of it, with the NDP in power in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia it's the next worst thing. What we're talking about is a plot somehow contrived by some clandestine, subversive organization to trash out our lovely campus. We're talking garbage. Like paper, food, cigarette butts, beer bottles and cans. All of this is going on right under our very noses. It's hideous!

What really concerns me is that this is being carried out in a nation which has lead the world on envi-

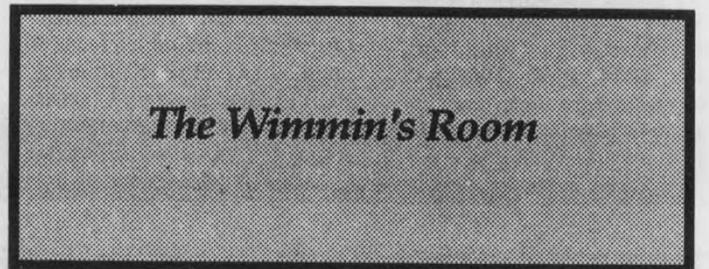


## Metanoia by John Valk

ing, morality rather than immorality, plenty rather than poverty.

There is, of course, one more thing. If all of these struggles merely become self-serving, the striving for personal accolades, the conversion is not complete. In the end, one is not only confronted with the self, and at death door there is not nothing. There is also the reality of God. The reality of God, not merely ourselves, is the central focus of a worshipping community.

Much of this thinking is out of tune with our fast paced modern lifestyle. That is not surprising. It is also not surprising that some are beginning to realize that his lifestyle itself, with all its promises of choice, freedoms, individual rights, etc., is not really delivering. Neither are our political, educational and corporate institutions. Little wonder then that those who want to think beyond themselves are again turning to the church.

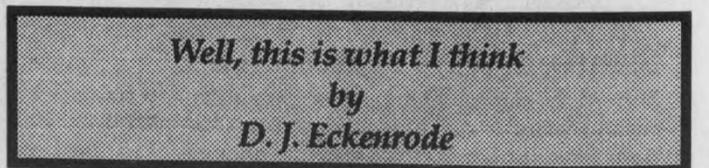


## The Wimmen's Room

When the business changes or the activity comes to an end, so do the friendships. If this is not the case, I'd like to hear from the other point of view,

We've all heard about the "old boys network", but that seems to revolve around power and obligation rather than shared crises and mutual unconditional support. I think any network formed by women would operate on very different principles. Voices of the radical left like Robin Morgan go so far as to state that a society based on matriarchy would be cooperative rather than competitive, and peaceful and humane in a way that

the current world is not. I don't know whether we can stretch the thread from neolithic tribal organization to our own world of diminishing resources, but there is a kernel of truth in the idea. Perhaps the "intimate connexions" of women can form the basis of a new network - one that will support the growing voice of women in the public sphere. In a world that is reshaping itself daily, the viewpoint and perspective of women is a crucial resource, and the social constraints - timidity and learned helplessness - that still operate to silence women *must* be shrugged off.



## Well, this is what I think by D. J. Eckenrode

ronmental issues, admonished industries in their neighbours to the south, a place where we can breathe clean air (with the possible exception of every entrance to every dam building on this campus) and drink pure water (and pure beer made from pure water). In a nation where I saw young, proud citizens scoop up trash thrown from a cruising yacht and return it to the deck of same yacht. When the owner of the boat reported the kids, he was fined \$500.00 for littering. He might have been rich, but he was

fairly stupid to give a de facto littering confession. In a land where I was told of courageous young crusaders who were not fortunate enough to have their own boat which would have enabled them to similarly give chase. They however, secured the license off the side of the boat. Went to the RCMP and found out the owner's address. Luckily, it was in Toronto and they were able to react. These bold youthful denizens knew creeps like this could only be from one of 3

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