

SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Walk

Now that I'm here...
What am I to do?

For some reason my mother had saved them — letters written home after my first days at university. This summer she returned them. I indulged in some late night, nostalgic reading.

The letters spoke of numerous concerns. Two in particular leaped out at me now, and in the form of questions: "What am I to do at university? Have I done the right thing?"

I knew I had. I wanted to be there. I would become a changed person, someone had said. Did I really want that?

My new endeavour was to be a quest for meaning: social, economic, even spiritual. That much I knew. But what would unfold before me? I imagined some possibilities.

But excitement was tempered by apprehension, reluctance, even fear. I might need to expose myself, make myself vulnerable. How much would I risk?

My education would be costly. Would I have enough money to finish? University would put me in debt, for years to come. Would I get a good job, or just a McJob, after graduation? What is a "good" job?

I remember I wanted to meet new people, make new friends. I also wanted independence: freedom to be me, whoever that was. What would my new social environment teach me? What would I see, hear, or do? Would I become a better person, as a result, or merely a changed person? Would there be regrets, terrible mistakes?

My university years would be a journey, a search. That much I anticipated. It would not, could not, be reduced to job training. The assignments, the discussions, the

interactions — would they propel me beyond the job concern, to discover meaning in life, in my own life?

Much happened in the time I spent at my alma mater, my "nourishing mother".

I studied hard, worked diligently, travelled some. I also learned something crucial. It went beyond the study, the job concern, the relationships fostered, the laughter generated. Yet it was intimately connected to all. The Hebrew prophet Micah put it very succinctly. It is to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly

before God" (Micah 6:8). Later I came to understand more fully what it might actually entail, that we have been taught how it

technological, scientific and rational orientation, has dominated. It has no interest in or meaningful dialogue with religion. Yet modernism has created a

"gaping black hole at the heart of our Western

brokenness, fear, shame.

We are a society of seekers: of technological efficiency, personal pleasure, emotional fulfilment, spiritual enrichment. Curiosity propels us to search, experiment, risk. Education would not be fulfilling if, in the process, one's spirit was not also touched, probed, challenged. And quenched?

In the realm of the spirit we encounter God. God, and only God, gives real meaning to life; to our relationships, study, leisure, work, jobs. It is not easy to uncover that meaning, but it is possible. It is a journey, begun today. When I first asked the question — "What am I to do?" — the answer came back numerous times, even if I did not understand it fully: search for God as you search for meaning.

Can this be done at the University of New Brunswick? The university never tires of telling us that a good student is one who, though not having the answers, knows at least where to look.

"It went beyond the study, the job concern, the relationships fostered, the laughter generated"

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