

# Radix

february 2006

war and peace





# From the Editors. . .

Editing a magazine on interreligious expression and dialogue is not a job that is predictable by nature. When the Editorial Board came together to discuss the theme for this issue of *Radix*, we quickly agreed that the subjects of war and peace would generate a plethora of articles. What we did not anticipate was the tone that would emerge from them.

As Justin Pulikunnel notes on page 5, religion has often been cited as the underlying source of difference and conflict. Some of the most high-profile situations of conflict in our lifetime have been divided along religious lines: Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. Perhaps because the blame has so often been placed with religion, many people of faith are now emphasizing the pacifist and restorative sides of religion over and against its divisive and destructive sides. For instance, the prophecy frequently recalled from the Hebrew Bible is that nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares" (Isaiah 2:4). No one ever recites Joel 3:10 with the same gusto ("Beat your ploughshares into swords!"). Likewise, the Catholic Church is largely responsible for the development of the just war theory, which has long provided boundaries for how war is initiated and carried out. But more recently we have heard Catholics—from popes to Dorothy Day to the *Pax Christi* movement—provide guidance on how to resolve conflict. Eastern religions have gained popularity in the west partly because it is perceived that they emphasize peace, compassion, and non-violence. On page 7 Monica Farrell shows that the Bhagavad Gita teaches that war and killing can be duties, but few people remember Gandhi for anything other than non-violent passive resistance.

For this reason we were surprised that many of the articles submitted for publication justify war in the name of religion. As troubling as this is, it gives us pause. We'd like to repeat others in saying that war, as nations engage in it, is a human institution. But so is peace. While most religions do spiritualize both peace and war, what can be accomplished within a human community never fully realizes the spiritualized versions of these ideas. This does not mean religion has nothing to say to human conflict or its resolution; rather, that it can legitimately be used to justify war in a situation of injustice or self-defence is just as true as to say that it can be a harbinger of conflict resolution.

As you read the February *Radix*, remember that religion itself is not a source of violence or peace, but it can be used to achieve both. It is up to us, who call ourselves followers of a certain path or members of a particular faith community, to have the discernment to know when our religion should inspire us to take up arms, and when to lay them down.

Aimee Patterson and Rasha Srouji  
Editors

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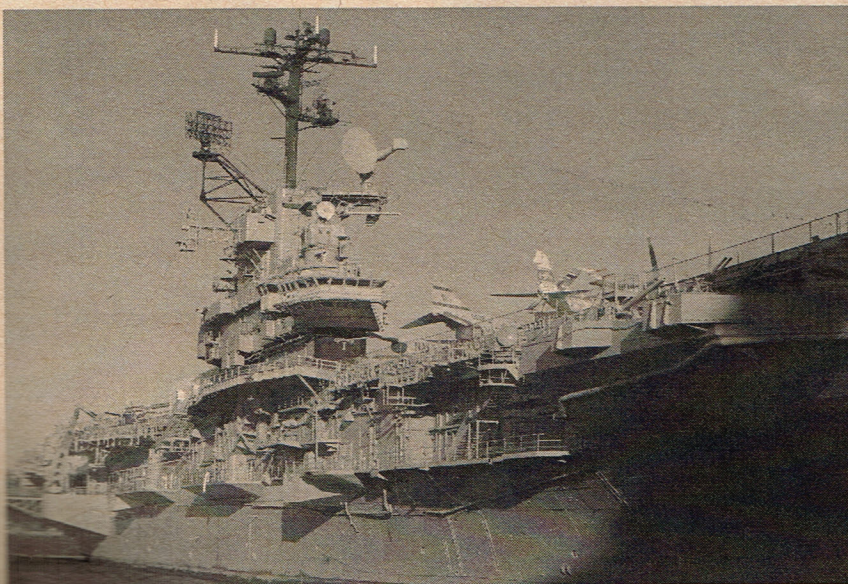
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**About the cover:** Aaron used charcoal to reproduce this famous "execution" image from Vietnam, originally photographed by Eddie Adams of the Associated Press, and added an "end of the oil age" twist. **About the artist:** Aaron is a student in the Faculty of Religious Studies.



Photography by Bob Bergner

Our next issue of *Radix* is on the theme of

## Religion & Politics

What do you think of  
nationalism, fundamentalism and  
political labels?

How does your religion shape your political  
perspective?

We want to hear all about it!

Send your submission--written or otherwise--  
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Look for it on stands in March!



# What's the Big Idea?

We're fighting a war for peace  
Until we get it, this war won't cease

Oh my God!  
This can't be true  
What have we done?  
Where are you?  
Too close  
Too near  
Don't say  
Don't fear  
Oh dear  
Dear one  
One God  
My God!

Calling me but the words aren't clear  
I could end up with the wrong idea

In response to their attack  
What would Jesus do? Strike back?

Oh my God  
Is bigger than yours  
That comes in handy  
When we fight wars  
Is this God your idea,  
Or is this idea your God?

We were getting even  
They were getting awed  
And shocked, but we were not  
It didn't seem to cost a lot

Who's killing whom in whose name?  
And who or what could be to blame?

Using ideas as my map  
I purify my mind  
I purify the world  
By methods that might seem unkind  
The right ideas allowed me to start  
On hardening my heart

By looking to the horizon  
To see the city on the hill  
Far above this world of sin  
We'll get there if we have the will

If our resolve should be tested  
We'll prove that it cannot be bested  
There's nothing that we wouldn't do  
To prove our steadfast love for you  
There's nothing that we wouldn't do  
To fight for what we value

We're fighting a war for peace  
Until we get it, this war won't cease

Paul Beaulieu  
Paul is a McGill alumnus.

## Five Failures of Pacifism

Prepare yourself for a shock. All Quakers might not really agree that eating oatmeal is "the right thing to do." Quakers are, however, (unlike most faith groups) virtually unanimous on war: they're "pacifists." The history of this position is stimulating, but you could google it for yourself. I'd like to offer a Quaker-flavoured riff on "pacifism," since it is a contested and much-abused term, and since I think pacifists (including Quakers) have often failed to make it clear.

### Failure One: The Question of "Just" vs. "Unjust" Wars

There are "rules," stretching as far back as Cicero and St. Aquinas, about justifiable or "just" wars. Quakers sometimes ignore such discussions. They shouldn't. They should memorize and publish these rules everywhere, because no war in human history has ever conformed to them!

### Failure Two: "The Hitler Question"

When asked how pacific resistance could be used against "someone like Hitler," pacifists usually fail to meet the challenge. They just point out that the Allies were shockingly racist and fascist in their beliefs. I think pacifists should point out the more significant fact that some people did use pacific resistance against Hitler, and it worked. Rosenstrasse and Denmark are classic examples. Besides, violent resistance only "worked" in the end to transfer power to former Nazi collaborators, re-installed in the nations we "liberated." (Sound familiar. . . Iraq?) War leaves power in "the right hands."

### Failure Three: The Question of "Passivity"

When governments sell a war, pacifists are always denounced as "passive." All non-military options are denounced as "doing nothing." But peace groups urged the US and the UK for years to take action against Hussein in Iraq, and against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Mostly, they just wanted them to stop funding and arming those regimes, and to stop sabotaging UN actions against them. It seems to me that the "passive" people are the leaders who refuse to break the downward spiral of violence, and the citizens of the Blank Bloc who watch it all happen on TV, effectively voting for war by never getting off their couches.

### Failure Four: The Question of War and "Human Nature"

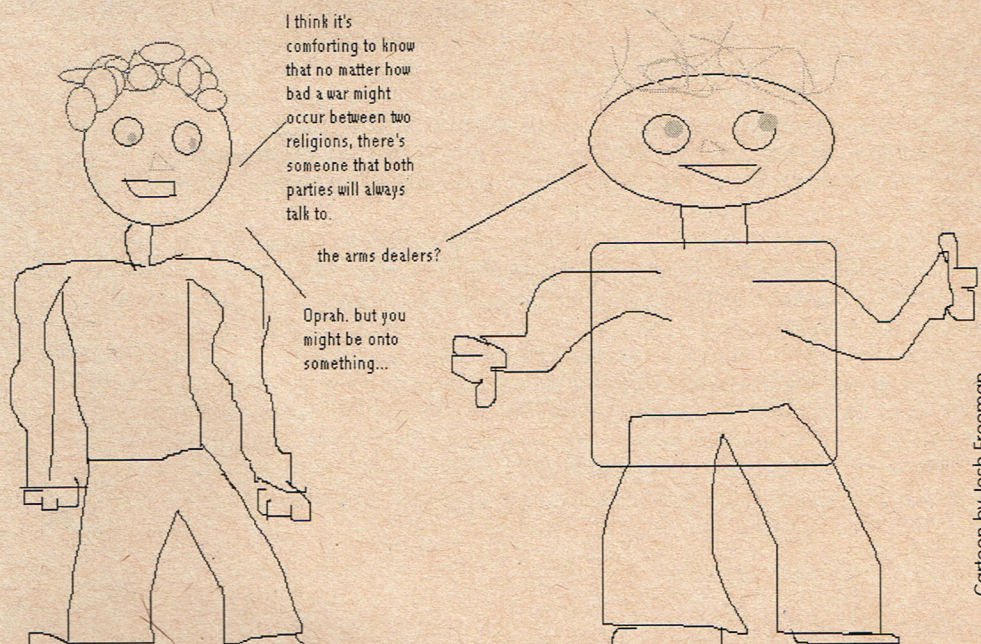
Most people will agree that war is evil, but shrug it off as "human nature." This position depends upon highly artificial definitions of "conflict" and "nature." War is a highly specific—and highly artificial—political construct. Besides, even if war were "just unavoidable human nature," shouldn't we follow our "better nature?" Isn't "live and let live" a (better) natural instinct?

### Failure Five: The Question of Imagination

Violence is giving up. Look at when and why people resort to it. "They're unreachable. They're not like us. It's too late. There is no alternative." As technical, moral, and communicative imaginations are cultivated, prevention and pacific solutions can grow. I'm told that the US spent a billion dollars a week to occupy Iraq in 2003. Imagine what a billion US dollars a week could do to change a country. I have plenty of ideas. Surely the Quakers and other pacifists could remind us all of this stuff!

Aaron Ricker Parks

Aaron is a Special Status student in the Faculty of Religious Studies. He is a closet Anabaptist and a Sunday Quaker.



Cartoon by Josh Freeman



# America, Israel and Apocalypse: Is the Evangelical Right a Threat to Peace?

There are approximately 70 million evangelical Christians in the United States, around a quarter of the population. It perhaps comes of no surprise then that this population has a major influence on US politics, particularly those who identify themselves as conservative, capital-E Evangelicals. The Evangelical Right is no longer concerning itself with domestic battles against legal abortion and gay marriage. They are taking their fight beyond US borders and into the Middle East.

For those who read scripture literally, the apocalypse is very real and, for some, very near. There are, however, conditions for Christ's return to the Earth. Among these is the return of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people and the rebuilding of the Temple on Temple Mount—a vision shared by Messianic Jews. In a recent issue of *Vanity Fair*, Craig Unger<sup>1</sup> explores Evangelical theology and its relationship to US foreign policy regarding Israel. Unger writes "It's a counterculture that sees Jews as key players in a messianic drama, a premise that has led to a remarkable alliance between Christian Evangelicals and the Israeli Right. As a result, political views drawn from an apocalyptic vision—once dismissed as extremist and delusional—have not merely swept mass culture but have shaped the political discourse all the way to Jerusalem and the White House."

This remarkable alliance may, however, come with catastrophic consequences that undermine the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. As Unger points out, a love for Israel based more on faith than information can easily be accompanied by a racist hatred for Arabs—a hatred that has only been perpetuated by 9/11 and its aftermath. The purists among the Israeli Right, who oppose a two-state solution, are not complaining, recognizing how the Evangelical Right and its influence on US policy-making can work in their favour. The Israeli Right has even formed close relationships with the most influential Evangelicals in America. Benjamin Netanyahu, then Israel's Prime Minister, met with Jerry Falwell in 1998 in an effort to mobilize a resistance among Evangelicals to the Israeli surrender of parts of the West Bank. More recently, in response to the Jewish evacuation from the Gaza Strip, the Christian Coalition, the leading Evangelical political network in the US, has posted on its website: "This tragic scene is all the more sad as thousands of Hamas supporters celebrated with the chant, 'Gaza today, Jerusalem tomorrow.' Al Qaeda is already moving into Gaza and other terrorists will surely follow. Enough is enough. Israel must not give up any more land. The Israeli people need our prayers and support."

Israelis like Netanyahu seek support from the big guns of the Evangelical Right because they carry immense political clout. Falwell admits to having close ties with the GOP and White House, saying "everyone takes our calls." And why shouldn't they? The Christian Right has raised significant amounts of money to ensure them places in office. Their loyalty has been rewarded. The Evangelical Right has played no small role in America's close relationship with Israel. While the current Bush administration is still supportive of a two-state solution as the answer for peace, the Evangelical Right will continue to watch Israel and pray for the restoration of the Holy Land as the fulfillment of their messianic vision. After all, the end is near.

<sup>1</sup> Craig Unger is an American journalist and writer. In addition to writing on the Evangelical Right, his most recent book is *House of Bush, House of Saud*. Unger has served as deputy editor of the *New York Observer* and was editor-in-chief of *Boston Magazine*.

Meghan D. Brady  
Meghan is a U3 Arts student majoring in Political Science and World Religions.

I grew up in downtown Toronto and went to a public high school that had no racial majority. With two old hippies as parents, one of them from India, I never had much of a cultural identity. We made chicken curry for Thanksgiving and Turkey for Diwali. The only spiritual/religious exposure I got was through the Unitarian church. Although I found there was no overpowering central belief that held the people of the church together, it was still a tight, supportive community. Some people believed in God, some believed in Gods, others didn't believe in any Godly idea and still others had no clue what they believed. But there was a fundamental, communal sense of acceptance that was unique to the church. I remember walking into the Youth Room and knowing that whatever I said that day wouldn't be judged or criticized, just accepted. Whether my parents had found a mickey of vodka in my room, or my cat had just died, they were there to support without jumping to conclusions.

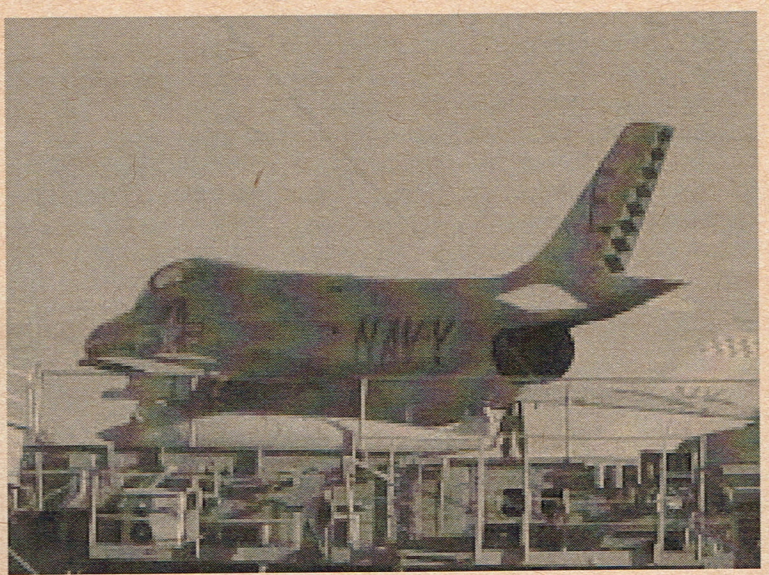
For me, violence and war had always seemed like such foreign and weird ideas. It took me a long time to realize just how much my childhood had sculpted my innocent, ignorant view of the world.

Last year when I was visiting my family in India, I met a boy on a train between Mumbai and Bangalore. He was convinced that Muslims were bad people. He didn't believe that they ate their babies like his parents had told him when he was young—thank God(s)—but he would never consider being friends with a Muslim. I tried to explain that there is nothing to be hesitant about with Muslims or anyone else, but he just wouldn't buy it. I quickly dismissed him as an immature, uneducated idiot.

I took me some time to realize that it was me who was being stupid. I am lucky to have had such a non-biased education. It is a privilege to be taught about varied perspectives and religions at such a young age. How can I expect a Hindu child not to be resentful of Muslims if he has been taught to be so his whole life, and has been presented with the long history of tension between Hindus and Muslims in India? Instead of dismissing him, I should have been more patient in explaining where I was coming from. I should not have expected him to see my point of view after a 30-minute conversation.

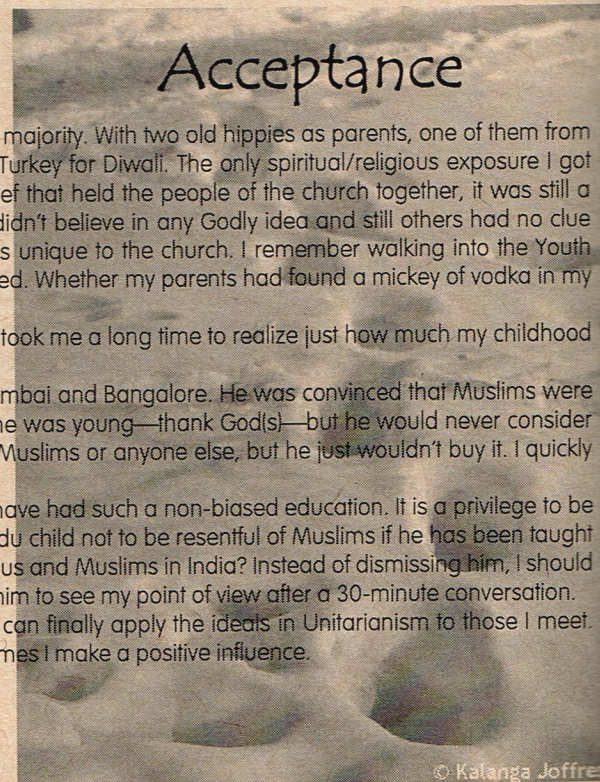
When I travel these days, I am much more accepting of other people's opinions. I can finally apply the ideals in Unitarianism to those I meet. Acceptance is the key that opens people up to discuss things more freely, and maybe sometimes I make a positive influence.

Sasha Cragg-Gore  
Sasha is a UO student Arts and Science



Photography by Bob Bergner

## Acceptance



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# But Religion is the Problem!

"Religion is the cause of all the evil and wars in the world."  
"Without religion, the killing would cease." "Vast evils in the world have been carried out by zealots who claim to know the truths disclosed by God." "Believers have produced religious wars and the Inquisition."

Today, there is almost a litany that religion is the problem. Gore Vidal argued at Harvard in 1992 that "the great-unmentionable evil at the heart of our culture is monotheism." Many said the same after September 11<sup>th</sup>. As Christopher Hitchens put it, "the real axis of evil" is not Iran, Iraq and North Korea, but Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And in his new book *The End of Faith*, Sam Harris argues that faith itself is the most dangerous element of modern life.

Believers of all stripes have undoubtedly come across these martini-spilling, broad-brush condemnation snits many times. They are—to put it bluntly—nonsense, pure sophomoric sophistry that displays ignorance or mendacity of a very low order. The stringing together of a virtual catalogue of tired clichés, dispelled myths, outdated claptrap and sappy platitudes against religion that have no basis in reality (my personal favourite being "deep down, all religions teach the same thing") reminds me of how the most characteristic trait of "The Modern Mind" is its absolute predictability. You're undoubtedly aware of how this works—first come the Crusades, then the Inquisition, then the Witch Trials, etc., etc., etc.

After many years of responding to such prattle, it still astonishes me that there doesn't seem to be much awareness of just how thoroughly wrong, or even upside down, these assertions happen to be. If humanists are going to cite religious warfare and intolerance against believers, we might reply by noting that the single year of the Reign of Terror, which was carried out by anticlerical deists and atheists, claimed far more lives than did the entire history of the Inquisition. We can add to this the unprecedented slaughter and destructiveness of the wars and revolutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century undertaken, by and large, by self-professed atheistic or religiously indifferent regimes. In the last century alone, and in just a few decades, more people were killed by secularist regimes, led by secularist intellectuals, and in the name of secularist ideologies than in all the Western religious persecutions combined. Judged on sheer evil, the worst crimes in history include fascism, Hitler's holocaust, and the killing of six million Jews—although the 20<sup>th</sup> century's dominant atheist state, the Soviet Union, and its communist regime, killed more than 100 million people alone (as Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, with first-hand knowledge, has so eloquently testified).

Monotheism, on the other hand is the most innovative and influential belief in all human history—note for example, its significance for the rise of science and human rights. Of course, there have been bad religious leaders prone to hubris and hatred, but at least they are constrained by fear of God above and by ancient tradition and wisdom. Ideological leaders have no such constraints. If God is dead, Alyosha Karamazov famously declares, "everything is permitted." Secularists should be more honest as well as more humble when they make such silly charges.

Justin Pulikunnel  
Justin is one of our Catholic reps.

## Untitled

*The scene opens in a Viennese coffee house in the seventh circle of hell. The air is smoky but not acrid. A Muslim gentleman (S), respected in his field, sits across from an irreverent French novelist (V). The former peruses the September 1989 issue of the National Review; the latter enjoys a light snack of stolen communion wafers. Suddenly, the Muslim gentleman looks up from his periodical. . .*

S: Did you know that Buddhist warrior monks in feudal Japan used to commit astounding atrocities against their political enemies?

V: *(gets done chewing)* Don't you? It's all the rage.

S: Yeah, I suppose. . .

V: *(returns to his wafers. . . When finished. . .)* But why is it all the rage?

S: Well, everyone enjoys a ripping bout of mass sadism on neighbours. . . But I hate it when barbarians are uncouth enough to justify it with religion.

V: Does leave a foul taste in one's mouth, doesn't it? And they all do it these days. Like the Christians—their reasons for killing Muslims are almost as esoteric as their reasons for killing each other. Tran-sub-stan-ti-ation, I can't even pronounce that.

S: Yeah, what a bunch of slave moralists. I bet most of them don't even know what transubstantiation means.

V: Sure is tasty though.

S: If you want the best in hell, though, there is a little Italian bakery down on 4<sup>th</sup> and 86<sup>th</sup> in the 9<sup>th</sup> level. It's run by this little old lady, everything is homemade. . . . Delicious.

V: Do they deliver? I am having a party next week.

S: Yeah, they do, area code 666-311-6969; ask for Debra, she's the best.

V: Better write that down. . . . Anyway to continue, your comment on transubstantiation brushes up against the main point of this column—ahem—discussion. Religion is abstract enough to mean something different to everybody, even among those of the same group.

S: Why can't they just admit that they like violence? They're kinky like that. . . . But that is the strength of religion in war. It is so vague as to provide the mutability necessary to turn it against anybody. The tenuous explanations just reveal the artificial nature of the use of religion to rationalize war. . . . Although you still have to die infidel. . . .

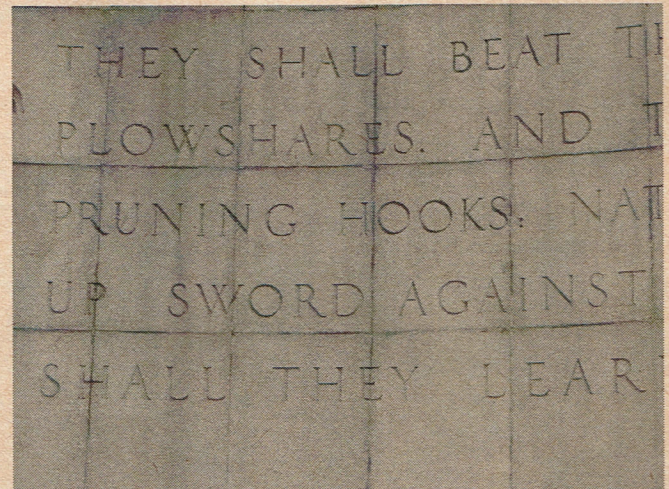
V: What a Cr\*\*py ending. [expletive euphemized]

S: Tend your garden now @#&%! [expletive euthanized]

*Saladin kills him with his own particular sense of moral justification, looks at his watch, realizing he is late for Vespers, and spreads his prayer mat over the now-stiffening body of Voltaire.*

Clayton Chin and John McDonnell.

Clayton is a U2 Religious Studies student who prides himself on being an irreverent agnostic. John is a U1 Cognitive Science student who enjoys drinking chocolate syrup straight from the bottle.



Photography by Bob Bergner



# A History Lesson In Islam

The term "Islam" derives from the Arabic word "Salaam" which translates as "peace." However, this link is more than merely linguistic, and it transcends the political. It delves into the self and the relationship one has with God and humankind. One of the principle teachings of Islam focuses on

unity, brotherhood and ethnic equity. For one of the most famous lines in the Prophet Muhammad's last sermon is as follows: "For, man is from Adam, and that there is no supremacy of an Arab over a non-Arab and no supremacy of a black man over a red man except in piety." Human relationships are based on mutual social benefit and good for all, and this leads to political peace. History states that the early years of Islam were ones where the leaders of Persia, Rome and Abyssinia worked side by side, ruling in peace. That is why Muslims are encouraged to love their fellow humans, desire the best for others, and treat others better than one would want to be treated.

Yet the unfortunate reality of our world necessitates war in certain situations. In Islam, war is permissible in cases of oppression, to protect freedoms and rights, when a treaty is dishonoured, for humanitarian interventions, or in promoting justice. It is strictly forbidden in any ignoble case. It is worth mentioning that the term "Jihad" literally means "striving," and that there are many forms of it. Striving against one's own desires is a form of Jihad, as is speaking against an unjust ruler or taking up arms in a battlefield. So when Jihad is promoted and seen as something rewarding in Islam, it should be taken in the correct context, because it usually refers to a more internal aspect of the self.

Islam is a religion of mercy and justice, and an important point often overlooked by Muslims and non-Muslims alike is that because of this, war in Islam follows rules. Only those individuals willing to fight against a Muslim army are attacked. Non-combatant immunity is an important concept in Islam, and must be firmly adhered to, so that innocent bystanders (women, children, the elderly, and those who claim peace) are not harmed. Prisoners are not to be tortured, starved or ill-treated in any way. Injured individuals are not to be killed, and the dead should never be mutilated. Significantly, history shows how the hearts of enemies have been softened, their swords lowered and their spirits humbled as they have come in contact with Muslims during war.

One of the world's greatest warriors, Sallahuiddin Al-Ayyubi (a.k.a. Saladin) exemplified the Muslim's concept of mercy and tolerance during the Crusades. When Sallahuiddin conquered Jerusalem in 1187, he released the thousands of captured Crusaders despite the latter's massacre of innocent Muslim lives and their degrading abuse of women. He gave free pardon to all citizens and allowed them to practice Christianity as they pleased, given that they paid a tax called Jiziyah. (Jiziyah is a tribute imposed on non-Muslims in exchange for protection and exemption from service in the army. Non-Muslims have equal rights and obligations towards their nation, as do Muslims.) Moreover, Sallahuiddin himself paid this tax for many of them.

Islam is a religion of peace, though in promoting and sustaining peace, war may become a necessity. In such cases, it must be conducted using principles of mercy and kindness. It is through learning about Islam from its roots and by understanding its history that one can fully appreciate its true meaning.

Aisha Khan  
Aisha is a U2 student in Occupational Therapy.

*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*

*"Where true charity and love dwell, God himself is there"*

The Bible says a lot of things. There is a lot of war and a lot of peace in the Bible. Jesus's words about not coming to bring peace, but a sword, are disturbing, to say the least. For an actively pacifist Christian such as myself, these words are a challenge. What can he possibly mean? Perhaps he refers to that personal liberation that comes with knowing and embracing truth, and being set against received wisdom, family ties, and entrenched loyalties. Perhaps he refers to the typical reactions of "rulers of the darkness of this world" to the radical anarchy and egalitarianism that he imparted to his followers. Perhaps it is what enables people like the Christian Peacemakers, still missing and presumably dead in Iraq, to leave their comfortable lives and families, risking everything to build just and peaceful relations in a time and place of unjust war. Perhaps it is what inspires young North American Evangelical Christians, and anyone from an exclusivist religious background of any kind, to strive for constructive interreligious dialogue, justice and equal rights, ecological justice and restoration, and the end of the North American apartheid still imposed on Indigenous peoples. I know this to be true in my own life.

It's time for Christians to wake up and realise that inclusiveness is our true orthodoxy and orthopraxis. As long as we continue to claim a monopoly on God, we betray her, just as Jesus was betrayed. As long as we accept unquestioningly our comfortable, affluent existence without seeking to share that affluence with everyone, we justify the judgment of the rest of the world, including suicide bombers.

I don't want to suggest that there's any excuse for terrorism. However, if we want to counter fundamentalist terrorism, we must eradicate it from our own midst: we must not tolerate those who would bomb abortion clinics; who would vilify, assault, torture or kill gay people; who would abuse and control their wives and children because they believe it to be their right; who would use twisted interpretations of already misguided theologies to justify racial supremacism; who would manipulate people of genuine faith to collaborate with world powers and their profit-generating war machines. These people are not Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, or real prophets of any kind, and we must not allow them to speak or act on our behalf. By their fruits you will recognise them.

Peace is not an abstraction for scholars to debate, although this is worthwhile. Neither is peace an unattainable state, granted from on high, although this too can exist in a person's spiritual life. Peace is a choice that you and I must make every day of our lives—something to cultivate like an organic garden, adding compost, pulling weeds, planting symbiotic crops to keep out pests and disease, making the best of the seasons and weather, and harvesting delicious and life-giving fruit.

Loren Carle  
Loren is in the second year of his Master of Music Degree in harpsichord. He is an Anglican yogi. J+ai namaste. Let it be.

*I do not give to you as the world gives.*

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.*

*Do not be afraid. --John 17:27*



# Religion and Culture

## Review: "Paradise Now" (by Hany Abu-Assad)



Paradise Now, a movie directed by Hany Abu-Assad, depicts two Palestinian friends living in Nablus, who are recruited to commit a suicide mission in Tel Aviv. The movie takes the viewer through their struggles, doubts and final decisions. Without getting into the political arguments, I feel that the movie relates a lot to our theme of "War and Peace," and especially to the role religion plays in forming our opinions on this issue. The film argues that we make every decision as individuals, regardless of the calls of religious or political leaders. This film also shows that behind the suicide bombers, recruiters and "occupiers" are real people left behind to cope with or suffer the consequences of decisions made by others, already dead.

The film makes a strong political statement in favour of the Palestinian cause, but presents two different means of resistance. One way is through violent attacks on the occupier; the other is through a passive, more political struggle. Either can be chosen, and every individual has the power to choose for oneself. However, we have to understand that our decision may affect others who haven't chosen the same way. So, the upshot of the power struggle is that in reality, the consequences of the actions of the most powerful can place limits on our own decisions. The movie also emphasizes the concept of paradise. When one of the bombers-to-be is confronted by the idea that the paradise he is promised is not real and that it is only in his head, he responds that he'd rather experience the paradise in his head than the hell he has to go through on earth. This supports my personal opinion that religion can only be a pretext for war for weak and narrow-minded people who cannot see, or refuse to see, other solutions to conflict. Faith is not meant to justify war, and the fact that those who recruit suicide bombers use it as a convincing tool proves that a different expression of resistance is necessary. Ultimately, then, the director argues that it is up to every individual to express his or her own struggle and resistance, but since we share this

world with other humans, the decisions of other individuals will probably affect all of us.

The film is very human, showing families and friends of the bombers-to-be, the bombers themselves, and the cell members who recruit them, as real people with real goals and struggles. We sometimes forget that suicide bombers are not unnatural beasts, but simply people who happen to express their opinions in a certain way. Religion plays its own role in times of war. It unites people and gives them hope for peace. But it can also, through blind extremism, drive people to commit actions that will sabotage the common cause.

Surprisingly, being a Jew who actually lived in the West Bank, I liked the film. I think it offers hope for peace. Personally knowing participants from only one side of the conflict, it is encouraging to see that people just like us also exist on the other side. We are all human and we share this planet. It's in our best interest to make decisions that will result in positive outcomes for all of humanity. If we fail, others might make decisions that will sabotage our human cause.

Natalya Demberg  
Natalya is our Religion and Culture rep.

## The Dharma of War and the Bhagavad-Gita

The theme of "War and Peace" arises within many different aspects of a religious tradition, and Hinduism is not an exception. One of the first things to come to my mind when thinking of war in Hinduism is the story of Krishna and Arjuna from the Bhagavad-Gita. Within (but not exclusive to) the Vaishnava tradition, the Bhagavad-Gita is one of the most widely known and loved devotional texts. The story is around 700 verses long, and difficult to summarize entirely, but I'll try.

Arjuna is a young man, and member of the Pandava family. Through a series of unfortunate circumstances involving gambling, Arjuna is faced with leading a battle of his family against his cousins, the Kauravas. This is no small-scale battle; each side has hundreds of men who are ready and willing to fight to the death. Arjuna prepares for battle and soon finds himself in a chariot on the battlefield, feeling deeply troubled at the thought of having to slay other men, many of whom are members of his extended family. These thoughts lead him to hesitate, asking himself questions about God, the cosmos, and especially what constitutes his duty on earth. This leads him to engage in a dialogue with the driver of his chariot (whom we later find out to be Krishna himself). The contents of this discussion make up the bulk of the Bhagavad-Gita, and cover topics such as karma (action), dharma (duty), knowledge of the absolute, and various types of yoga. When Arjuna voices his fear of engaging in battle against his family, Krishna assures him that, for many reasons, this is not only okay, but also an important thing for him to do. The reason for this is his dharma, or duty. Krishna explains that the purpose of life is to engage in the world, to perform the dharma that is specific to one's age, gender, class and vocation, whatever they may be. The aim is not to withdraw from the world and live an ascetic lifestyle, but to be in and of the world. Arjuna belongs to the ksatriya, or warrior caste, meaning that it is his duty to fight for what is just. The Hindu belief in reincarnation also plays a role in Krishna's assurances to Arjuna. As the atman, or soul, cannot be killed, those whose bodies are killed will be reborn according to the karmic cycle. Within this cycle, one who does not perform one's duties on earth will receive negative karma, which means that spiritually, Arjuna is much better off to fight than to decline.

It must be noted here that despite the circumstances of the story, its purpose is not to support war but to emphasize the importance of performing one's earthly duties for recompense in the after world. It suggests that not all seemingly unpleasant events are what they seem, and that perhaps there is a greater cause at work.

Monica Farrell

Monica has now joined the ranks of official McGill graduates; she congratulates herself.



McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy's  
**St. Martha's in the Basement**  
 Good food for Body and Soul  
 Please share our Bible study, worship  
 and a simple vegetarian supper  
 Wednesdays at 6 pm  
 basement of UTC (3521 University)  
 Call Gwenda Wells for more info:  
 398-4104

## McGill Student Parents' Network

A service of McGill Chaplaincy  
 We provide support to  
 students who are parents.  
 Regularly we offer:  
 informal childcare,  
 babysitting,  
 friendly visits to households,  
 and monthly support group  
 meetings.



This semester, make time for our free Study  
 Saturdays. We provide a quiet study space for  
 parents and musical childcare for their kids.  
 Lunch is provided. Please bring indoor shoes.  
 Study Saturdays are coming up on the following  
 dates: February 4 and March 4,  
 from 10am-2pm at the Newman Centre  
 (3484 Peel St.)

Interested families can contact Kate:

398-4104 mcgillspn@yahoo.ca

## The Yellow Door... Volunteers needed!

The Yellow Door Elderly Project is seeking  
 volunteers to work with seniors living in and  
 around the McGill Ghetto. No major time com-  
 mitment required —flexible hours, just a cou-  
 ple of hours per month! Great opportunity to  
 contribute to community spirit.



If you would like to become a  
 Yellow Door volunteer  
 call 398-6243  
 or email:  
 elderlyproject@hotmail.com

## Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is a worldwide organization  
 committed to the elimination of homelessness.  
 At the McGill Campus Chapter, we work towards  
 this goal by raising awareness around campus, raising  
 money, volunteering at soup kitchens and  
 homeless shelters, and participating in builds  
 in different parts of Canada and the US.

Weekly Meetings:

Newman Centre, 3484 Peel St.

habitat\_mcgill@yahoo.com

## Student Nights at St. John's

Students, faculty and staff are welcome at  
 monthly student nights and other activities

Call St. John's Lutheran Church: 844-6297  
 Or email

students@SaintJohnsLutheranMontreal.org

## The Muslim Students Association of McGill We offer:

weekly study circles, free Islamic educa-  
 tional materials, services during Ramadan,  
 lectures/conferences, prayer facilities, li-  
 brary (Shatner building, room 430)

3460 McTavish Street, Rm. 14

ssmu.mcgill.ca/msa

msamcgill@montrealmuslims.ca

398-3001 ext. 09849

Visitors from other faiths are always welcome

Share a **HOT VEGAN LUNCH** at the  
**RABBIT HOLE CAFÉ**

**A Collective Vegetarian Kitchen**

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## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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call 398-4831 or email

foodforthought@yellowdoor.org

## Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

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 in the heart of Montreal  
 Serving the needs  
 of Mennonites and friends

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Young Adult Discussion Group:

Sunday 10am

Young Adult Social Group:

Friday and Saturday evenings

120 Duluth E. 849-9039 www.mfmontl.ca

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## Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting

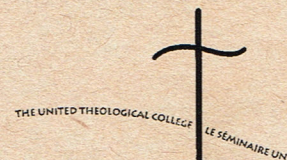


Social get-togethers  
 Neuman Centre, 3484 Peel  
 Contact Manjit Singh,  
 Sikh Chaplain  
 lo.man@sympatico.ca

3521  
 UNIVERSITY  
 STREET

849-2042

WEDNESDAY WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP  
 BEGINS AT 11:45AM



## Newman Centre

McGill's Catholic  
 Community

3484 Peel, between Dr Penfield and Sherbrooke  
 398-4106 www.newmancentre.org

Holy Mass: Saturdays 5pm & Sundays 11am ♦  
 courses, Bible studies, discussions ♦ meals and social  
 activities ♦ volunteering, social justice ♦ daily Mass,  
 confession

**Scriptura**  
 Nouvelle Série  
 Scriptura: Nouvelle Série is the graduate student journal of the Faculté de théologie et de sciences des religions de l'Université de Montréal. Published twice yearly, it is entirely managed by graduate students and committed to allowing M.A. and Ph.D. students to publish their work and set foot in the extensive world of academic journals. Primarily a biblical journal, each issue approaches a given theme through exegetical and interpretive articles. This nucleus is complemented by religious and social science articles on the theme. Due to the increasing collaboration of graduate students from various universities in Quebec and Ontario, we publish articles in both French and English, which are submitted to a bilingual reading committee.

For subscription or submission information  
 contact the McGill rep, Sara Parks Ricker, at  
 saraandaaron@yahoo.com

## Montreal Diocesan Theological College

3473 University Ave.

Daily Christian worship--all are welcome!

Morning Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 8-8:30 am

Evening Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 4:30-5 pm

Holy Eucharist, Wed.: 11:30-12:30 and

Fri. 7:30-8:30 pm

**All are welcome!**

## Buddhist Meditation

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At McGill Chaplaincy,

3600 McTavish St., Suite 4400



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