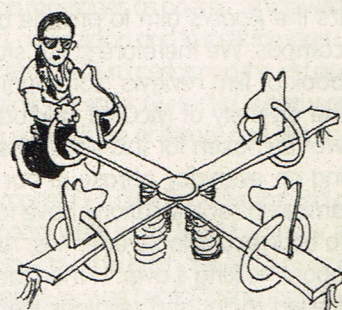
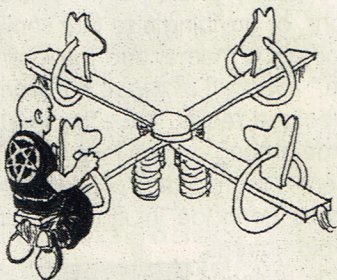
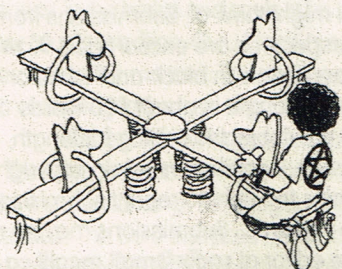
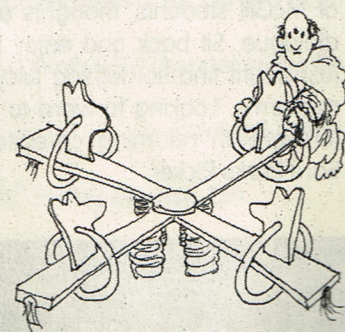
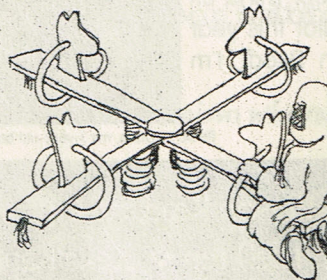
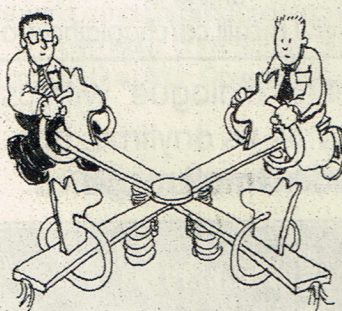


# Radix

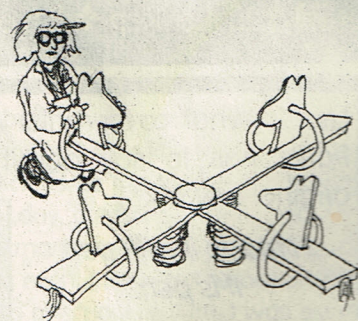
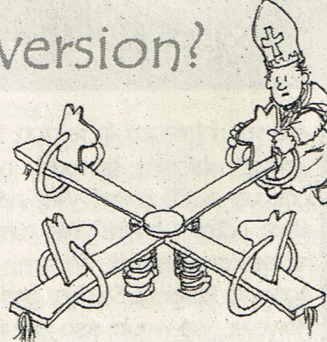
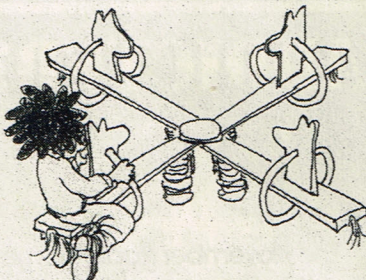
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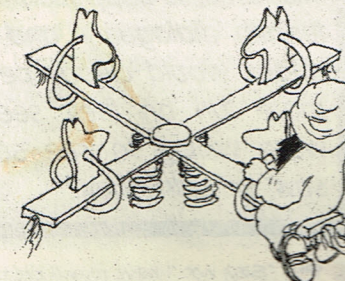
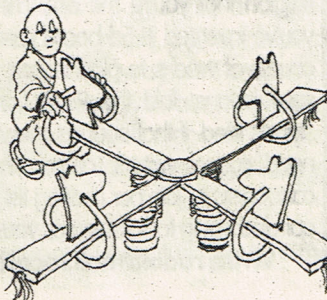
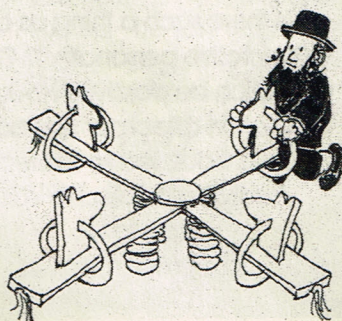
october 2006



conversation... or conversion?



...interfaith dialogue





# Letter from the editor...

Welcome (back) to another school year! If you're new at McGill this fall, this issue may be your initiation into the *Radix* world. If our fair campus is home to you by now, though, you've probably seen us around on those little wooden stands - in McLennan, Leacock, Stewart Bio, Architecture Café, Bronfman, and elsewhere - and are familiar with our (valiant?) attempts to illustrate the diversity and the spirituality present in the McGill community. Thanks to the financial support of the McGill Interfaith Chaplaincy, the *Radix*, an entirely student-run publication, is in its sixth year. What started out as a hundred or so little hand-photocopied sheets has grown to an 8-page magazine, printed in runs of 1000 (although we still fold each and every copy by hand...) Here at *Radix*, we believe that university life is composed of not only the intellectual, the social, and the physical, but also the spiritual. It's the *Radix*'s aim to provide a forum for all things religious and spirit-related on campus. We therefore solicit student submissions of poetry, photography, articles, book or film reviews, community reporting, cartoons, or anything else that shows the diversity of McGill's spiritual life. Each issue follows a theme, and the theme we've chosen for this year's first issue is "dialogue." *Interfaith dialogue* is becoming an everyday phrase in our pluralistic and globalized reality. Since the 1960s, amazing reconciliations have taken place worldwide among groups long thought to be irreconcilable enemies. At the same time, there is a great deal of scepticism about "talking it over." When faced with carpet-bombs, genocide, injustice, media-fuelled racial and religious stereotypes, and age-old hatreds, it's easy for people to ask cynically, "what good is dialogue going to do?" In this issue, our editorial board went in search of McGill students' thoughts and events that had to do with dialogue. Sit back and enjoy the results of their search. You just might find something juicy enough to take your mind off midterms. Looking forward to being *Radix* co-editor this year (along with returning co-editor Aimee Patterson Read), I'm Sara Parks Ricker.



Photo by Davis, my 3-year-old buddy

*Radix* is produced  
by McGill students  
for McGill students,  
so...

**the views  
expressed are those of  
our contributors and  
are not  
(necessarily) shared by  
McGill Chaplaincy  
Services or its chap-  
lains.**

We're proud to print on  
**recycled paper.**  
Unless you save up  
your *Radix*es for a rainy  
day,  
**please double the  
recycling by handing  
this magazine on to a  
friend.**  
(Then make sure they  
recycle, too!)

## Submission Guidelines:

We welcome student articles, art, reviews, responses, photos, comics, poetry, and anything else you might think of. Submissions from all faith perspectives are encouraged. Artwork must be accessible in black-and-white or gray-scale. Article length is about 500 words. Submissions are subject to editing for length, content, and style. Contributors retain copyright, but *Radix* retains the right to reprint submissions in our online archives. Submissions may be made to the editor at [radix@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:radix@mail.mcgill.ca).

If you use modern technology, visit *Radix* online at  
<http://www.mcgill.ca/chaplaincy/radix/>

Want to "dialogue" with us?  
Write us anytime, at  
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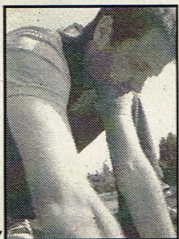
We are: Sara Parks Ricker & Aimee Patterson Read, co-editors / layout ♦ Amanda Carpenter, Atheist/ Agnostic rep ♦ Tamar Gefen, Jewish (Hillel) rep ♦ Zeke Kaplan, Orthodox Jewish rep ♦ Graeme Lamb, Catholic rep ♦ Tara McElroy, Catholic rep ♦ Aileen Morrison, Protestant Rep ♦ Aaron Ricker Parks, cover artist / Quaker Rep ♦ Raveena Seetal, Sikh rep ♦ Isra Jeelani Wani, Muslim rep ♦ Stuart Wright, Anglican rep

Here's what cover artist Aaron Ricker Parks has to say about this issue's original artwork:

*"I made it with pen.  
It is pen."*

When pressed for more info, Aaron adds:

*"...Well, Radix, especially this issue, is supposed to be about interfaith dialogue - and all those little dudes would clearly be having much more fun on their see-saws if they were willing to see someone else's saw, wouldn't they?"*



Are you interested in religion, interfaith dialogue, writing, publishing, spirituality, or making your CV look just a little better? Why not volunteer for the *Radix* editorial board? We currently have editors representing Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Atheist/ Agnostic, Religious Studies, and Sikh perspectives. However, we would also love to better represent other perspectives, such as **Buddhism, Hinduism, Aboriginal Canadian Spirituality, Wicca**, or anything else you don't see listed here ... even if it's a religion that you're the only member of because you've invented it! Ed-board members meet every couple of weeks to plan issues, solicit or compose submissions, fold the *Radix*, and help keep the stands filled. If that sounds overwhelming, we also need casual writers, artists, photographers, and cartoonists to join our mailing list just in case one of our upcoming topics inspires you.

**Write [radix@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:radix@mail.mcgill.ca) for info.**

## ADDICTED?

The November *Radix* theme is  
**addiction.**

What are we addicted to?  
Is there such a thing as an  
"addictive personality"? Can  
addiction be positive? How does  
addiction affect our spirituality?  
Are we addicted to spirituality?  
**Radix is addicted to YOU.**

Write to us:  
[radix@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:radix@mail.mcgill.ca)



# 600 Years of Dialogue: A Sikh Perspective

It is interesting that the idea of interfaith dialogue is coming to the forefront now. People are just realising what it is and acknowledging its tributes. What most people don't know is that the idea of interfaith dialogue and tolerance is an ancient concept. For Sikhs, it goes back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Guru Nanak, the first prophet of Sikhism, promoted a lifestyle of love, humility, and respect. This lifestyle evolved into an ideology that revolutionized the eastern hemisphere and captured the hearts of many. Six hundred years later, the message still rings strong and millions around the world follow the Teacher, the Guru, as Sikhs.

When I think about what interfaith dialogue is and how, as a Sikh, it applies to my faith and life, I have no other answer than to say it IS my faith. If interfaith dialogue is to be described as positive cooperation between people of different religions, working towards understanding and mutual respect, then I need look no further than the Sikh Gurus as unparalleled examples. While the mainstream versions of the major religions of the world were propagating the path of one religion and one religion only, Guru Nanak propagated a different line of thought. Employing a more humanistic approach, he attracted people because of his respect for and acceptance of other faiths. To me, the Sikh faith is a way of life premised on equality and love, not just for those of your own faith, but for those of ALL faiths.

Guru Nanak did much of his teaching through the most universal medium of all, music. He scribed most of his messages as poems, which were sung in styles designed to capture every emotion. He did all this to promote the message of equality of race, sex, creed, and religion and to instill the idea of "oneness" in the hearts and souls of his Sikhs. Guru Nanak's first disciple was a Muslim, Bhai Mardana, and when he died, the Guru performed the last rites as per Muslim tradition. Guru Nanak's successor, Guru Angad, took the principle of interfaith dialogue even further in creating a script, Gurmukhi, which was accessible to the masses. The existing script for Punjabi was Sanskrit, which, because of its complexity, allowed for a social divide of literacy and illiteracy. Gurmukhi bridged this gap and ensured people of other faiths could also read the texts.

The greatest example of all comes many years after Guru Nanak. The Hindu Pundits came to the ninth Sikh prophet, Guru Teg Bahadur, in need of aid. The Mogul emperor was forcing them to convert to Islam. As Sikhs are taught to oppose injustice, Guru Teg Bahadur went to the Mogul emperor to achieve understanding. The Mogul emperor offered the Pundits peace in exchange for the Guru's life. As he refused to convert to Islam, the 9<sup>th</sup> Guru was beheaded. The Guru sacrificed his life to protect the right of those belonging to another faith to practice their religion. Before he was publicly beheaded, the Guru stated the following words which highlight the essence and perhaps the root of modern day inter-faith religious discourse: "Hinduism may not be my faith, and I may not believe in various Hindu rituals like idol worship, caste system, pilgrimages, and other rituals, but I will fight for the right of all Hindus and all other peoples of the world to live with honour and to practise their faith according to their own beliefs." This is, in my opinion not just as a Sikh, but as a citizen of the world, a most inspiring and magnificent display of interfaith dialogue.

Even today, at the Golden Temple, (Sikh Temple in India), the four doors stand as they did hundreds of years ago when first designed by the fifth Sikh prophet, Guru Arjun. Open to all four corners of the world, to all people of the world, to all faiths of the world.

~ Raveena Seetal

*"Religion does not consist of empty words; that one is religious who regards all as equals" ~ Adi Granth 730*

## A Happy "Sukkahmadan" to You, My Friend!

Although university revolves around class and academics, the experience gained throughout student years can incorporate a much broader education on social issues and culture. As a Jewish student, I have tried to be active in the Jewish student community and participate in as many events as possible. I have found this to be quite fulfilling, in staying close with fellow Jews and showing my support for my religion. Although these events have been quite enjoyable and satisfying, the interfaith Sukkah dinner I attended last Monday night offered me an even more fulfilling experience.

The event, occurring on the third night of the Jewish holiday Sukkot, included members of both Jewish and Muslim student communities within McGill and Concordia (Hillel and the Muslim Student Association). The entire group of over fifty students sat on the floor of an outdoor *sukkah* ("booth") while enjoying a beautiful Middle Eastern dinner. As delicious as the food was, the real highlight of the night was engaging in meaningful conversation with Muslim students. In the present day, conflict between Jews and Muslims seems so intense that one might not expect the two religions to sit down together in this manner. After listening to quick speeches by both a Jewish and a Muslim student introducing the dinner, I realized what an amazing event this was. The opportunity for dialogue with Muslim students allowed me to learn about their religion, culture, and experiences at school. In turn, I was asked about my Judaism and Jewish culture, which was really nice to have with a Muslim student.

Muslims were observing the holiday of Ramadan while this dinner took place. I learned about the fasting laws for the holiday, the meanings behind it, and the personal connection these students felt towards it. I began to realize how similar Judaism and Islam can be. The way our religions are practiced, our laws for *kashrut*, and even our favourite foods resemble one another more than other religions. The conversation could not have been more polite, respectable, and educational. Although this was only a small dinner, with a few students in a Canadian city, I walked away with a sense of hope that one day our religions could come together and free ourselves of violence and conflict. While many will take this view as highly idealistic, I truly believe that the path to peace and friendship begins with this type of engagement. The dinner has given me a sense of pride toward our Jewish community in Montreal, and a desire to become involved with more inter-faith events in the near future.

~ Brandon Luft

Brandon is a U3 Arts student with a major concentration in history and a minor in humanistics.



# Community and Conversation: Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Address

I have learned two things from the Pope's Regensburg comments: that we Catholics—both religious and lay—do not know nearly enough about our Muslim brothers and sisters; and that many of us—Catholics included—do not know the new Pope very well. For anyone who has read any one of his many works or followed his actions since becoming Pope, it is clear that the Pontiff does not act maliciously and has the greatest respect for people of all faiths. It is also clear, though, that this Pope demands a more reciprocal relationship from Islamic leaders and states, and is more vocal about extremism and terrorism than was his predecessor. To fully follow the Pope in his discussion requires us to be open to a more intimate understanding of the Pontiff and of one another. Much has been said about the international reaction to the Pope's recent comments; less has been said about what it means for us as a community and as a church.

The comments and the reaction to them give us a chance to re-evaluate and reflect on our assumptions about the world and the way we interact with it. We all have our Regensburg moments. Moments when we say things, deliberately or inadvertently, that invoke a reaction or fundamentally change our relationships. It's easy to misunderstand those you do not know. Those who are unfamiliar are easy to caricature, easy to hate, and easy to ignore. We do not know their motivations, their desires, or their experiences.

Even more important than clarity in communication, is friendship with the communicator. The power of friendship lies in shared experience and the positive assumptions it entails. A friend assumes that the other is looking out for her best interest, and, as such, is willing to wait for an explanation to comments she doesn't understand; she is willing to forgive honest mistakes; she is willing to listen to hard truths about herself. When my friend is late, for example, I don't attribute his lateness to me. I say "he probably forgot" or "he probably got tied up" or "Dave is always late" because I know him so well. I don't say "Dave must really have something against me to be late like this."

What friendship doesn't require is homogeneity of belief, a shared

religion, or ideology. It requires, though, investment, interest, and care for the other. Outside of friendship, being honest can look like being preachy; being principled like being stubborn; being concerned like being nosy.

While not all friendships are equally profound or intimate, the Pope's comments revealed that we still lack a strong enough friendship, and the corollary trust that grows from it, with our Muslim brothers and sisters. Too many



Catholics lack friendship with their Pope and are willing to infer all kinds of motivations from his comments; too many Christians and Muslims do not trust one another. As long as we refuse to build these relationships, we will be satisfied with caricatures and generalities and will act accordingly.

One good that can come from the Pope's comments may be that we may begin to recognize the broken-

ness of our relationships. As mundane as this revelation may be, I believe it is foundational to building the ecumenism that we so often aspire to. Bridging the theological divisions between our religions may be too great and too divisive to undertake now, or maybe ever. Bridging the divisions between communities and neighbours is the best way of fine-tuning what we have to say, and the best way to overcome and avoid misunderstanding.

~ Caolan Moore, Law III

*photo by Giuseppe Ruggirello, Creative Commons*

## Catholic Student Speaks Out Against Papal Comment

On September 12th, at the University of Regensburg, Pope Benedict XVI made a speech which was supposed to express the importance of peace and non-violence. Few would disagree that these are core values important to anyone who believes God/Allah is loving and compassionate and, in turn, desires us to treat each other in the same manner. The issue with the speech given by this well educated and respected man arises from his comments on Islam and Muhammad, the messenger who brought the Muslim faith to this world. Pope Benedict XVI quoted the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus from the late 14th- early 15th century in saying:

'Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached'.

I was born into a Catholic Christian family. I recently became interested in better understanding world events and the reasons for the religious tension which pervades our time, as well as in understanding the people around me. To attain this understanding I began reading about the history of Islam and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as discussing the Qur'an with my Muslim, Jewish, and

*"I do not believe that any good Catholic Christian agrees with what the pope said."*

Christian friends. I find many core values of these religions to be the same; therefore, the criticism of the Prophet is clearly misplaced. The many battles fought by Islam in his time were most - if not all - to protect Muslims from invading forces whose goal was to eliminate the religion. These battles incurred very few deaths (i.e. often below 75 when hundreds, even thousands were involved) when compared to any other expansion of political or religious borders. Their expansion was to areas from which they were attacked. Further proof they were not the aggressors in these battles is that they were often ill equipped and outnumbered, sometimes by more than 3:1. During his life-time, and indeed for centuries afterwards, Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived in peace in many areas where Muslims could have eliminated them or forced conversions. Those who attempt to spread the faith by the sword are not true Muslims, they pick and choose verses, taking them out of context to use their religion as a weapon. The Qur'an clearly states that God/Allah does not approve of aggressors; "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits; For Allah loveth not transgressors." (Al-Baqarah, 2:190). Good Muslims do not believe in destroying others, but in defending themselves and their families.

The Pope is someone seen by many as credible and one of the foremost representatives for the Catholic faith. Such a person needs to be responsible and knowledgeable in the words he chooses. Pope John-Paul II seems to have realized this in his later years, when he kissed a Qur'an gifted to him by Muslim scholars and made efforts to bring people of all faiths together. Showing respect and



love for one another was an important message, an inspired message, a message clearly in line with God's/Allah's wishes for humanity.

We have social laws and a judicial system to enforce them. The judgement of a person based on his or her values, the judgement of a race, a people, a religion, is not for any person to make. Christians, Muslims, and Jews often assert that this responsibility, this right, rests with God/Allah, alone. To assume such a right is going against Christian precepts. Jesus said: "Do not judge, lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:1-2). John 8:4-7 says: "They said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery,' and having set her in the midst, 'Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women; What then do you say?' and they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus ... said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'"

The Pope is a representative of the Catholic Church, the first official church of Western Christianity. A good question to ask would be, perhaps, "From which authority did we get the right to cast the first stone?" Expansion by the sword; was this not the basis of the Crusades? This was religiously endorsed mass murder, battles resulting in hundreds and thousand of deaths with a message of love of our neighbours. Knowing this, the pope's comments are truly hypocritical. A man so educated should have known this. Now he has lost his credibility and severely hampered efforts to bring peace to our time. Any positive points he wished to bring forth in his speech were lost.

In the process of learning about Islam I have been asked questions such as "if you ever converted, where would you stand, where would your loyalties lie if something were to happen?" This question arises, perhaps, from the contention that some will stand with the Muslims, some will stand with an enemy, or in this hypothetical case the Christians, and some will sit on the fence pledging their allegiance and support to whomever wins. To them I answer: I will stand in the same place, my loyalties will not change. My place is between both sides, trying to bring peace. For me, my place, the place of any Muslim, Christian, or Jew is to stand for peace, to stand among people who would never willingly kill another. I hear so many misconceptions on every side. Some perceptions I admit I even believed for a while, but ignorance is no longer an excuse for me. It is a pity that good Christians, good Muslims, and good Jews who attempt to live by the core values of their religion often see a separation among themselves. We are all brothers and sisters loving and loved by one God/Allah. I have no desire to influence the choice of faith of another as I will stand by anyone whose life is guided by love, caring, compassion, and honesty.

All we hear in the media are terrible things done by Muslims, yet few ever mention that these are not the beliefs, the actions, the choices made by most Muslims. Our media are often based on shock value. An act of kindness, an example of compassion, will rarely ever make the news. When I see someone who is upset or in need do I ask: "what is your religion?" Do I check the colour of their skin, the accent they have? Definitely not, because, to me, this does not matter as all I see is someone in need of help and/or comfort. Those who know me know that on such occasions I do stop and give whatever time I have to comfort and to help these people. It is important to treat strangers as friends, showing care and compassion, more than just tolerance. Being a good Christian, a good Muslim, a good Jew, etc, means we do not judge others and our core values, faith, and convictions are similar. I do not believe that any good Catholic Christian agrees with what the pope said.

~ François Bourassa

Endorsed by the McGill Muslim Student Society (MSA)

## ***Youth and Religion Panels Highlight of 9/11 Congress***

This September, Montreal hosted a global congress entitled "World's Religions After September 11"; guests numbered in the thousands, and the event drew such acclaimed and diverse speakers as Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Karen Armstrong, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Revered Didiji, and Shirin Ebadi. This major event, endorsed by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, among others, performed the not-easy task of bridging the scholarly and the spiritual, bringing speakers and guests from around the world under one roof for 5 days, to discuss how religion can be "a force for good" and to launch the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions" document.

Perhaps one of the conference's events most interesting to students was the daily *Youth and Religion* panel discussions. Each day, a different topic ("Religious or Spiritual?", "The Generation Gap," "Approaches to Interfaith Outreach," and "Representations of Religion in the Media") was discussed briefly by an Interfaith panel, and then opened up to fruitful and varied discussion in the (usually-packed) audience, ranging from high-school students to the under-30 crowd.

The panels were unique - not only because they were the only 100% by-youth, for-youth branch of the congress - but also because they were the only congress initiative centred entirely on ensuring that youth voices be heard at this international event. Due in part to generous donations of conference day-passes from Dr. Gerbern Oegema and the McGill Centre for Research on Religion, The *Youth and Religion* talks drew over 200 student participants to the congress and, as news of the panels spread day-

by-day, congress delegates of all ages began attending the panels to hear what youth had to say about the issues that matter most to them.

The most important, overarching theme of the World's Religions After September 11th Congress was the development of a new vision of religion for the future: one which - contrary to the media's frequent depictions of religion as an intolerant, oppressive, and violent force - promotes religion as a rich source of cultural heritage, a potential source of peace and understanding, and a force for positive social action and change. As those who will ultimately carry religion into the future, youth are the most important players in developing this new vision. In addition to enriching the congress as a whole, the high level of youth participation at the *Youth and Religion* discussions sent a clear message: young people care about religion and what it means for the future. Throughout the congress, the youth panel participants demonstrated that, in an age rife with conflict, the voices of young people may be the most fruitful sources of innovation and inspiration for the future.

~ Lina Verchery and Sara Parks Ricker





## Dialogue and Accountability: an Imaginary Interfaith Encounter

Smiling, I approach a friend or random stranger in my imagination. Within the safe confines of my mind I am ready to engage in interfaith dialogue. I look forward to it. I have all the right words prepared and then the time comes for me to open my imaginary mouth to speak imaginary words to an imaginary version of a person who may or may not exist and reality breaks into my little haven. I freeze as the world shifts from safe to real. I realize this is rather silly of me and is even borderline shameful. After all, I claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ, who said, "Go and make disciples of all nations," and through Peter said, "Always be prepared to give a defense for the good news which you hold."

Now, I admit interfaith could increase peace and understanding in the world and lead to everybody being more enlightened, but I believe it has a more practical application if engaged properly. While this may seem selfish, I think that there is a significant potential for the people who partake in such dialogue to strengthen their own faith in the process. This idea has grown in my mind from a sense of need for honesty in communication that I have developed recently. Ironically, I think that is part of the reason I have shirked from the subject in the past, which I hope will serve as an example.

Recalling the imaginary anecdote that I mentioned when I started this article, I would like to move a little further into it a bit and consider the possibilities. What would happen if I did start talking about my faith? While I believe it is impossible to predict the randomness of individuals, my mind still attempts the feat and among the results is the following dialogue:

**Imaginary person:** So you are telling me that you believe Jesus is the only way to eternal paradise and all other ways are false and lead to eternal damnation?

**Me:** Yes.

**Imaginary person:** Do you have friends besides me who do not believe in salvation through Jesus Christ?

**Me:** Yes.

**Imaginary person:** So do you think they are going to eternal damnation.

**Me** (reluctantly, but truthfully): Yes.

**Imaginary person:** What are you doing about it?

I then stand dumbfounded as a hole in my faith big enough for the world to fall through is uncovered. I am forced to reconcile this difference. With other apparent holes, it could be that there was a miscommunication between the imaginary person and me, but in this case it is a miscommunication between my faith and deeds. Regardless, there is a miscommunication somewhere that needs to be rectified if I want my faith to hold any value.

For me, being a Christian means that all of humanity is inherently fallen, so the perfection needed to demonstrate a flawless relationship between faith and deeds is not obtainable. However, through the discussion of faith, it is possible to find areas that need work to further strengthen one's faith to become better representatives of it. While this may directly only benefit one person, the repercussions can benefit others.

~Josh Wright is a U2 Chemistry student who enjoys the rain.

## Butterflies in Chinatown

Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, marked the end of a week-long international "World's Religions after September 11<sup>th</sup>" conference, organized and chaired by Arvind Sharma of McGill's Faculty of Religious Studies, at the *Palais des Congrès* in Chinatown. Attendance was estimated at over a thousand delegates daily, who were appropriately met by a multitude of papers presented by renowned and not-so-renowned scholars and religious leaders. The eclectic sessions offered unique perspectives from different religious traditions, while the "Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions" remained at the centre of many sessions and plenary speeches. Informed inter-faith dialogue, which concretized the ideals and expectations of the Declaration, was also a priority when confronting issues like religious tolerance, ethics, and human rights, which all have the threaded theme of "the other." In discussion after discussion, participants were forced to reflect on the roots of intolerance and the unconscious seeds that cause fear of the other.

If we conceptualize our own mortality, we are often left with anxiety. This anxiety can be pacified by denial . . . but also by the generalization of death as an inevitable event that *everyone* will experience once. In the latter case, death can be internalized with a possibility of relating, through empathy, to *everyone*. However, empathy can also be limited to those who are of a similar cultural, ethnic, or religious background, making them more easily identifiable as co-mortals. Those who are not in alliance can be referred to as the "other" and placed in a sphere of diminished interest, or even a sphere of threat. This anthropological/physiological account of human behaviour in light of cultural norms and mortality is based on theories of the late social anthropologist, Ernest Becker. Becker not only rationalizes racism and prejudice towards those who are different, but also gives insight into the intimate causes of such reactions. How, then, do those who are aware of objective theories on racism act effectively to change the course?



Autumn triptych by Meredith Warren, PhD 2, Religious Studies



The Congress last month, like others of its kind, was pro-active in identifying the intolerance and the fear that one religion can have for another and in creating a sound declaration of human rights, setting a precedent of protecting the individual and the groups to which he or she belongs. Aside from the exchange of academic ideas (which, in my view, broke new ground for inter-faith education and dialogue and for religious responsibility in world politics), the clash of colour, symbolism, and multiplicity was refreshing. In action and in theory, the conference and all its attendees celebrated and recognized the cultural and religious syncretism that has shaped most individuals and religious denominations – which, I would like to think, set off a ripple effect in diminishing the sense of difference and “otherness.” Non-violent methods are an invaluable means of bringing people together, confronted with sacred texts and a history in need of interpretation and ownership.

Although there are reasonable differences between pacific resolution through interfaith dialogue and violent resolution through war, the underlying issue of the “other” is consistent whenever binary approaches meet at a cross-road. Empathy can be achieved among world religions, creating a public space that fosters understanding towards the “other.”

~ Bracha Feldman is a Religious Studies undergrad still justifying her rebellion, who hopes to dive into the world of social work next year.



Kary says “hi” to Delores, who responds with “Tansi” in Cree. Parry has a disability and is helping a new student get around campus. Farrel’s friend just told him that he was gay; they now sit discussing how his friend can tell his parents. It’s the month of Ramadan and Hassan doesn’t eat before late evening. His friends sit waiting for him to finish his prayers, then they will enjoy their evening meal. Robbie, meeting

Chen for the first time, asks her, “How different is it in Japan?”. Chen tells him she is from China. Rahul and Sebi meet to discuss assignments; Rahul helps Sebi often, because she is partially blind. Professor Claude introduces himself to his new class and requests that all his students help him to understand how he can adapt his teaching style to suit their various needs.

These are the common, simple interactions that go on around us every day, unnoticed and unobserved, yet important nonetheless. In the daily confusion of activity and schoolwork, we tend to forget that we are surrounded with wondrous realities. This is diversity at dialogue within itself. A friend of mine put it so beautifully; diversity is all about personal varieties. We at SEDE want to celebrate this varied reality. So what can we do to understand each other better, know each other a little more?

What is SEDE? SEDE is McGill’s Social Equity and Diversity Education Office, which was set up to foster dialogue. The SEDE office is committed to promoting a fair and inclusive environment where the dignity of everyone at McGill is respected. You’re here to get an education, right? We at the SEDE office have been assigned the task of raising your awareness on issues of diversity and equity. We also provide opportunities for everyone (you and your peers, professors, and staff) to sit down together and share their thoughts about it all. Throughout the year we organize events surrounding themes and days important to the understanding of issues affecting our community.

What has SEDE done to date? In addition to our student orientation campaign, SEDE has launched the “Learning Circles” project on diversity and equity education. It aims to bring together McGill community members from diverse backgrounds and experiences in order to advance our understanding of personal differences of all kinds. This innovative program consists of four 90-minute sessions which include members of the student, staff, and faculty bodies at McGill.

What are we planning in the near future? SEDE will be presenting “Cultivate Respect: McGill’s 1<sup>st</sup> Harassment Prevention Week,” from October 23 – 27, 2006. This campaign, geared toward the entire McGill community, will involve a series of activities designed to promote a greater grasp of the issue of harassment. The week will have as its highlight an interactive theatrical presentation entitled “You Decide,” to help everyone understand what harassment can connote to different people. SEDE is also working with the International Student Services and other campus organizations to help make International Education Week (November 13-17, 2006) a success – a manifestation of dialogue and interaction to investigate the true nature of McGill.

In early spring, SEDE will be heading a group of McGill and community-based groups in planning a week-long celebration of diversity. The week will consist of, among other events, an art exhibit showcasing submissions from people at McGill, reflecting different experiences people have to share with the rest of their community. SEDE will also be launching a website called “Expressions of Diversity” which will display poetic and non-fictional narrations of the McGill community’s various encounters with diversity and equity.

For details on all these happenings, please visit our website at [www.mcgill.ca/equity\\_diversity](http://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity). You can also drop by our office or write to us if you need more information or have any questions about being a part of SEDE’s activities. SEDE wants to be your forum for dialogue, interaction, and expression. Come talk to us and talk to your community; everyone’s listening.

~ Vincia Herbert, SEDE Education Office Administrative Coordinator

## Interfaith Dialogue at Home

This year, I decided to take a course offered through the Islamic Studies department though I often have friends and acquaintances who do not understand why someone would study a religion if they have already grown up in the religion. Perhaps my greatest epiphany this year has been that being socialized into a religion is extremely different from having solid theological knowledge about that religion.

All of us have grown up with certain traditions and customs, whether they are of religious origin, cultural origin, or even a mixture of both. A lot of times, many of us end up practicing things without really understanding why. Unfortunately, one of the main causes of this mechanized practicing of religion is the lack of open discussion in our families. Growing up in a practicing Muslim family, I know I was not allowed to do certain things that are common in Western culture, such as Prom, Homecoming, and even just staying out late at night with mixed gatherings. Though some of these restrictions were common for all kids, I know in my circumstances, they were directly tied to my religious beliefs but I did not always understand why, or honestly, what the big deal was. Luckily for me, my parents and I had long discussions about how growing up a practicing Muslim in the West meant that aspects of my life were going to be different from the average high school girls as I had different morals and priorities if I wanted to actively follow Islam. Thankfully, I ended up understanding certain differences in my way of life versus the common standard in the West. Many Muslim youth who come from practicing families are not lucky enough to have such an open discussion with their families about how we as youth feel stratified between our traditions and what we see and deal with every day at school and in our social circles. If the goal is to just practice superficial traditions on the part of the family, then understanding why you are or are not doing something is not important. But, if you are actually interested in living your life as a Muslim, then it only makes sense to understand why you act as you do and it is important for Muslim families to realize the need to openly discuss with their children at a deeper level than “we’re Muslim and they’re not” why we abstain for certain things and why we engage in other things. This is obviously asking the parents to be well-educated in the theology of Islam and if they are not, then perhaps they should make another venue available to their child so s/he can actually understand in a historical contextualization why his/her beliefs, if s/he chooses to practice, distinguish him/her from commonalities in Western society.

Essentially, open dialogue within Islam society is a fundamental element of keeping our society an active, engaged civil society as the tradition of Islamic civilization has existed for centuries. Even in the important process of law-deciding, Muslim jurists were in constant discussion and debate with each other and no concept of only one law existed as there were different scholarly interpretations on matters. If the skeletal structure of Islamic society was malleable enough to engage in constant discussion, then surely the foundational unit of Islamic society, the family, realizes the vitality in its engaging in open-minded and critical conversation as to why we believe what we believe as Muslims.

~ Z.A.



WANT TO CONNECT WITH  
SIKH STUDENTS?  
CONTACT THE



SIKH STUDENTS ASSOCIATION  
MCGILL\_SSA@HOTMAIL.COM

### Newman Centre

3484 Peel St, 398-4106  
newmancentre@mcgill.ca  
www.newmancentre.org

Did you know that  
**Roman Catholic Mass**  
is held conveniently on campus  
several times per week?  
Contact Newman Centre  
for details.

## McGill Student Parents' Network

(through Chaplaincy Services)

MSPN provides support to  
students who are parents.

Regularly we offer: informal childcare,  
babysitting, friendly visits to households,  
and monthly support group meetings.

Interested families should contact:  
Liz: 398-4104 mcgillspn@yahoo.ca



### New Earth Voices

NEV is a small choir that sings  
sacred music from many traditions.

Directed by a dynamic recent graduate of the  
Faculty of Music, it's fun, challenging, and  
timed to fit busy student schedules.

Tuesdays from 4:45-6:30  
at the Diocesan Theological College,  
3473 University St.  
Phone 398-4104 for details.



### St. Martha's in the Basement

McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy's St. Martha's shares a  
weekly informal worship and discussion, followed by a  
vegetarian supper. It is a welcoming place to form  
meaningful friendships, explore faith in an inclusive  
way, and bring sacredness to our  
lives. Friends of Christians very  
welcome. Wednesday evenings at  
6:00 in the basement of the United  
Theological College, 3521 Univer-  
sity St. Call Gwenda Wells at  
398-4104 for details.



3521  
UNIVERSITY  
STREET

849-2042

JOIN STUDENTS AND STAFF OF THE  
UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE  
(OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA)  
EACH WEDNESDAY FOR WORSHIP AND  
FELLOWSHIP.  
BEGINS AT 11:45 AM



THE UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE  
LE SÉMINAIRE UNI

## The Muslim Students Association of McGill

We offer:  
weekly study circles, free Islamic educa-  
tional materials, Ramadan services,  
lectures/conferences, library  
(Shatner building, room 430)

3460 McTavish Street, Rm. 14  
ssmu.mcgill.ca/msa  
msamcgill@montrealmuslims.ca  
Visitors from other faiths  
are always welcome.

Share a **HOT VEGAN LUNCH** at the

### RABBIT HOLE CAFÉ,

a Collective Vegetarian Kitchen

3625 Aylmer, downstairs

Fridays, 1-4 pm

Donations of \$1 or  
a non-perishable food item  
are appreciated.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Food depot and nutritional  
tips and support.

3625 Aylmer, 1st floor

Fridays, 1-5 pm

Email: food4thought.yd@gmail.com

## Hillel House

Attention, Jewish students and  
friends! Discussions on Jewish topics,  
Jewish feminist movement, social  
events, "ask a rabbi," "Ghetto Shul," Torah  
study, dating services, message boards, and  
much more!!!

Ask for rabbi Dov Whitman.  
3460 Stanley Street (Hillel library)  
845-9171 rabbi@hillel.ca www.hillel.ca



### The Yellow Door...Volunteers needed!

The Yellow Door Elderly Project is seeking volun-  
teers to work with seniors living in and around the  
McGill Ghetto. No major time commitment required  
—flexible hours, just a couple 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

### Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting



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

### International Students!

### Are you freezing?

Lightly used coats, clothing,  
shoes, and boots  
are available  
free of charge  
to International Students.  
Stop by Chaplaincy Services.

3600 McTavish St., Suite 4400  
Monday-Friday, 9:30-4:30  
398-4104

**Scriptura**  
Nouvelle Série is  
the graduate  
student journal of  
the Faculté de  
théologie et de  
sciences des religions de l'Université de Montréal. Pub-  
lished 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



### Free Zen Meditation

McGill Chaplaincy  
3600 McTavish, #4400  
Thursdays 3-4 pm  
(Discussion, Instruction,  
and Q&A at 2:45)

Radix publishes ads for groups and events with a  
spiritual or social-justice theme—for FREE! Email  
radix@yours.com