From the Editors. . .

After six years of courtroom drama, the Supreme Court has issued a controversial ruling in the case of one schoolboy. The ruling makes an important statement about tolerance of religious expression, allowing the kirpan to be worn in schools. The kirpan is a 3-inch sword or dagger, worn by Sikhs as symbol (not a tool or weapon) to remind the wearer to defend the defenceless.

Certainly Canada is an example of how closely religion and the state can exist without actually intruding upon each other. The rule is, religious expression is tolerated insofar as it does not affect the rights of another. The question is, how does a country go about defining what constitutes such an infringement? The French context would seem to suggest that anything visible, anything that offends the eye or has the power to influence, is an infringement. France has gone to the extent of banning the hijab, a garment prescribed for Muslim women, in schools. In this case, the claim is that religious symbols are not merely expressions of faith but religious propaganda. Alternately, efforts to ban the hijab in Germany base themselves partly on the idea that the country is Christian, and allowing this symbol would offend Christian values—though the German government remains secular. In Belgium, conversations about banning the hijab bring in the matter of gender equality—the observation imposed from the outside is that the hijab promotes sexism.

The Canadian approach, on the other hand, seems to allow any religious expression that does not cause violence or harassment. Having said that, many parents and schoolteachers disagreed with the kirpan ruling in the name of violence prevention. The kirpan is indeed a valuable symbol, though certainly from an outsider’s point of view it can be seen as a potential weapon, whether or not it’s used as such. So Canadians are not uniform in defining the infringement of rights, or indeed in our acceptance of religious expression. Even though this country has long been seen as a model of religious diversity, it still witnesses many incidents of religious intolerance. While some are local manifestations of conflicts centred elsewhere in the world, others have a distinctively Canadian expression. It was only two years ago that the anti-Semitic attack on United Talmud-Torah High School occurred.

In spite of the pride we feel at Canada’s example to the world in the area of religious freedom and tolerance, there is always room for growth in our notions of acceptance. Perhaps our “live and let live” mentality is not enough. Perhaps true harmony between religious groups and a secular state will not occur until we try to understand and appreciate the faith and culture of another from the inside out.

Rasha Srouji and Aimee Patterson Read


About the cover:
The portraits were drawn with a “semi-blind contour” technique by cover-artist Sara Parks Ricker. Each figure depicted is a person for whom the terms “politics” and “religion” are, to varying degrees, intertwined. They are: the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, current United States President George W. Bush, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa of Calcutta), current President of Israel Moshe Katsav, Thai Engaged Buddhist Sulak Sivaraksa, Somalian anti-circumcision activist and feminist film-maker Ayaan Hirsi Ali, International Solidarity Movement activist Tom Hurndall (shot to death by an Israeli sniper during a peace protest), Hindu physicist and ecologist Vandana Shiva, and half-Catholic/half-Protestant Irish humanitari-an and musician Paul Hewson (Bono Vox).

On behalf of the Editorial Board, we offer sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the 2005-6 Radix. We couldn’t have put together so many fine issues without your originality and patience. And as co-editors, we’d like to thank the Radix team for its outstanding work this year. Thanks to all our board members, who came to so many meetings, stocked so many shelves, and sought out contributions far and wide. Our gratitude also goes out to the staff at McGill Chaplaincy Service for their practical and creative contributions in the publication process. Finally, thanks to each one of you who has taken an issue off a stand. Empty stands mean we’re doing something right!

If you would like to contribute to Radix next year, please let us know. You might wish to join the Editorial Board. You might have a great idea for a topic we could cover. Or maybe you have some prose, poetry, or sketches hanging around that need to be put to good use. Email us before September—radix@mail.mcgill.ca—and let us know.
Democracy in The Middle East??

I was slightly amused when I found out that Hamas won the Palestinian elections, especially after President Bush and his associates spent years preaching that democracy in the Middle East is the first step to peace! I guess democracy is only acceptable when the U.S. has people it wants in office—like in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

What is Hamas? It stands for “Harakat al-Mugawarah al-Islamiyyah” (Islamic Resistance Movement). It is a Palestinian anti-occupation organization working in close relation with the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas works politically toward its goal of instituting an Islamic Palestinian state. Hamas has boycotted the Palestinian Authority’s presidential elections in the past. In May 2005, however, Hamas triumphed over municipal councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, gaining control from Fatah. Isn’t it ironic how the first free and fair election in the Middle East is unacceptable to the U.S.? Even though Hamas has been around since 1987, they were only recently labelled as a terrorist organization. Hamas does have a military division, but a lot of its energy goes to providing welfare, medical care, and education to the Palestinian people. Now the problem for America is what to make of the Hamas victory. Is it possible to negotiate with a Palestinian government that includes Hamas leaders? It is hard for most people to believe that the West Bank—the middle of an ongoing conflict—is where the first real Arab democratic election took place, and that Arab democracy is slowly emerging. The political rivalry was genuine; both parties struggled for power and influence. All the villages were swamped with posters, and songs and slogans were blazing from every speaker. The Palestinians were faced with a true choice.

For as long as I can remember, Arabs have never experienced a democratic society. Even in Egypt, Kuwait, Jordan, Tunisia, and Lebanon, which claim to be democratic countries, everybody is politically imprisoned in one way or another. Palestinians, on the other hand, were exposed to another type of democracy, the Israeli democracy. And believe it or not, they have learned a lot from it. I believe this is a huge accomplishment for Palestinians, especially as they are under occupation and an independent state is currently an unattainable goal. Whether they like it or not, Israelis have to accept negotiations with whomsoever the Palestinians decide to elect, because they have no say in who their opponent votes for. What is also ironic is that despite the fact that Israel did its best to stop Hamas from winning, this only added to the appeal of Hamas for the Palestinian people. The occupation had been getting worse, the Fatah government was largely corrupted, and the people were getting tired. Hamas’ victory gave them a sense of hope that maybe things could get better. The message Israel has been sending to the Palestinians is that it will use force to deal with everything; this pushed Palestinians to elect a party that is ready to deal with that.

Hamas is currently asking for the formation of a unity government with Fatah, or the resistance movement Islamic Jihad, but both have refused. Given the fact that Hamas won 74 of the 132 seats, it could technically govern alone. How will that affect the future of a Palestinian state? It is too early to predict. Israel refused to negotiate with Fatah for a long time in the past. Maybe history will repeat itself again; all we can do is wait and see.

Even though I was not too thrilled with the fact that Hamas won the elections, I think that the fact that they decided to run (based on Oslo agreements) says that the Palestinian political system is heading towards democracy. Although right now the Hamas victory seems to contradict the peace process, according to Israel and the U.S., it is just possible that this may lead to moderation of Hamas’ radical movements, because it is now representing the people.

Rasha Srouji
Rasha is co-editor of Radix

On Indefinite Value

Here we are presented with two words: religion and politics, or Religion and Politics. Write it as you will. They are words.* Beyond this statement, itself an assumed, thus, simulated assertion of their state as words, and of the state of words, the concepts abound. There they are, universal and unbounded…as words are distinguished and indivisible.

Religion and politics and sepurushun and separaheen. Either way you say it, the roots of gray matter remain, universal and unbounded. Any way you say it, the gray area of uncharted infinity matters, universal and unbounded. A sound, unsound, is still sound. A state, unstated, is still stately. A church, unchurched, is still churchly. A word, unwieldy, is still weak but still a word. A whole word, and only a word.

The unearthed territory of wordiness will never separate religion from politics or politics from religion because there is no soundness to either.

Words, the way to find a will, or the will to find a way. Suppose that so-called religion and so-called politics be the way we word a will. Or will words. Either way you say it, they are words. Any way you say it, they are words.

Wordiness: whether mapped to the concept of the “ness” of a word, or to too many words…is still just a word.**

*Are they not?
**Is it not?

Leah Garfield-Wright
Leah is a Unitarian Universalist student of linguistics and humanistic studies, seeking to reevaluate the love/hate relationship with words.
Editors' Note: We asked the Radix Editorial Board two questions, and the following conversation resulted.

What is the significance of the division between church/temple/mosque and state? Do you agree with the division as it exists in Canada?

Natalya (secular Jew): O.K., about religion and politics: I am quite comfortable with the idea that state is separate from church in Canada. In my opinion, religion, the interpretation of which is totally subjective, has no business interfering with politics—at least not in the modern democracies that some countries are hopefully trying to build today. Excluding religion from power doesn’t mean that we’re excluding some fundamental values that it represents, like equality, peace, and other happy things. It just means that a country’s laws are not based on religious fundamental laws. From personal experience, having lived in Israel, the religious Shass party isn’t really out there encouraging the peace process. I think in our modern globalized world, with populations constantly moving, the importance of religious laws in political decisions should become and, thank God, are becoming irrelevant. Take the cartoon example in Denmark. (Maybe I shouldn’t go there…) I Radical groups are burning embassies, but some Muslim political leaders are actually calling for restraint. As to my personal religious perspective, as you all know, I feel that it doesn’t influence my opinion in any way because I manage to dissociate it completely from my political views.

Sara (Universalist Christian): It’s funny that Natalya and I are both so decidedly in favour of the separation of religion and state, and yet for such different reasons. She says she “completely disassociates” the two, while I actually want them separated because of my religion! One of the concepts most important to my tradition is the “Golden Rule” that comes to us from antique Judaism by way of early Christianity. “Treat others as you would have them treat you.” I wouldn’t want my government enforcing legislation from other religious traditions on me, so why should I expect my traditions to be forced on others? Besides, it is not only a Christian concept, but present in some other religions too, that when something is enforced externally rather than offered wholeheartedly from within, it “utters no sones” to the Deity. What state-enforced religious values do create, however, is resentment, rebellion, and more perceived barriers between faiths.

Bob (Anglican): Though I appreciate the idea of separating religion and state, I’m not sure that it is a very realistic one. Though the modern “liberal democratic” state imagines itself to be a product of the European Enlightenment, I see it rather as one of the principle expressions of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The notions of the dignity of persons, of individual rights, of social and criminal justice, of social welfare, of freedom of religion—even the notion of the separation of religion and state itself—represent the gradual unfolding of the Judeo-Christian worldview in the public and political realm. This is not to say that other traditions are not also interested in these issues. No doubt, they are. But I think that the unique nuance and attention that these issues receive in Europe and North America is the direct result of a particular religious heritage.

Aaron (Quaker/Anabaptist): I agree that the church/state separation as we know it is a secularized Judeo-Christian inheritance. I disagree, though, with the idea that this split might be at unrealistic or b) inseparable from its own religious roots. a) The split can work—it is working. Aimee and Rasha won’t have to run this article by Stephen Harper before they print it. b) Plenty of nations with non-Judeo-Christian roots have had and/or now have some kind of church/state split. This fact alone testifies to the possibility of the separation of church from the separation of church and state!

Bob: Right you are, Aaron. I did not mean that it is unrealistic to conceive of the separation of church from church/state separation in principal. I meant, rather, that what we casually refer to as separation of church and state in Western liberal democracies is not really that.

Curtis (Unitarian Universalist): I’m all for the separation of church and state. However, while separating the institutions of church and state is fairly simple, separating religion and politics on an individual basis is much more complex. How, for example, can we tell our Members of Parliament to act based on what they think is best for the country, rather than their religious beliefs? Do they really have two sets of opinions, one religious and one secular? As for myself, my beliefs and sense of ethics are derived from my own thoughts and experiences, and the various sources of information and inspiration I’ve had throughout my life, religious or otherwise. I don’t think I could separate my “religious” and “political” views if I tried. That said, I think there’s a big difference between allowing your religious values to influence your political decisions, and attempting to impose your own religious dogma on society at large. So, while I don’t think it’s possible to separate religion and politics totally, it is imperative that our elected representatives remember that not everyone is obliged to follow the rules set down by their particular faith.

Justin (Roman Catholic): I echo Curtis’s concerns. Some difficult questions must be asked. Is it truly possible to believe something personally (which is often understood to mean “privately”) and then set it aside when making public decisions? I find it strange that many political and social liberals have no problem saying, “I must follow my heart” and “I have to do what I feel is right,” but often condemn those people who admit their decisions are based on religious principles and beliefs. If the so-called “private beliefs” of individuals shouldn’t affect public decisions, do any beliefs exist that can used to make such decisions? Put another way, why is it that religious beliefs are up being called “personal beliefs,” but beliefs based on say, relativism and false pluralism and radical feminism are deemed fit (even necessary) for wholesale public consumption? The idea of “personal beliefs” is itself problematic since all belief is clearly personal in a most basic way: a person accepts a belief and holds to it. Trees, cars, and airplanes don’t have personal beliefs, likewise, “personal beliefs” and “public beliefs” are artificial constructs. Everyone holds to a system of morality, even if they don’t think about it. Moreover, some people say that we can’t legislate morality and I always find this amusing. Of course we can, and do. Virtually all laws are reflections of moral principles, whether you’re talking about issues of economic justice and fairness, criminal activity and behaviour, or basic rights.
Politics and Buddhism

Like many other religions, Buddhism doesn’t take an official stance when it comes to politics. The highest practitioners actually discourage active participation in politics in the process of detaching oneself from worldly affairs. But as we build a global community, local politics begin to have more and more reach. The politics of society, as the Buddha understood, directly affects the livelihood of its members. Because the beliefs of a society make up its politics, a religion that chooses to ignore the practical dimension of religion as an architect of opinion will neglect a profound raison d’être.

The Buddha warned that the degree of happiness and prosperity that a given political system can offer its members has limits. Actual peace and cooperation come from the combined efforts of the individuals that make up that system. The role of a government should be, in essence, to provide its people with the means to understand this. A society whose members are plagued by greed, hatred, and delusion will not have the tools to overcome the difficulties that we each experience as individuals. No political system includes the ability to shield its people from the many effects of chance (karma), the cravings of the ego (materialism), and the passage of time (death and old age). In terms of the way in which a society should be arranged, the Buddha offered little explicit advice. Some of the His most important teachings regarding government are to be found in the Jatakas, an ancient body of texts attributed to the Theravada tradition. From avoiding selfishness and being free from hatred, to being kind and gentle, to practicing patience, the Dasa Raja Dharma (rules for Good Government) contains the fundamental Buddhist tenets for those who wish to champion peace and understanding.

Buddhist politics (if such a thing exists) revolves closely around the notion of non-violence, and an emphasis on the moral duty of a ruler to use public power to improve the welfare of its people. Non-violence, as the Buddha taught, was important because, “The victor breeds hatred, the defeated lives in misery. He who renounces both victory and defeat is happy and peaceful.” The Buddha is sometimes seen as a social reformer. He promoted the equality of people (including women); he openly condemned the caste system; he spoke out for the need to bridge the gap between rich and poor through a more equitable distribution of wealth and the improvement of current socio-economic conditions; he also advocated the incorporation of humanism in a government run with compassion and understanding, rather than greed.

Yet despite this, I started out by saying that Buddhism is minimally interested in political affairs. In order to be free from suffering (dukkha), Buddhists seek a deeper understanding of the human condition. Attention is paid to the origin of this suffering, the human mind. A successful political system begins with the enrichment of the mind through an intimate understanding of ourselves.

Eric Osenbrug

A Response to the Fundamentalist Denial of Fundamentalism

The objection has been made, “How can southern Evangelicals and Muslims like the Taliban both be subsumed under the same label of ‘fundamentalist’?” Insecure Christians protest that the similarities between these groups are minimal and hope to separate their southern brothers and sisters from the dreaded Islamic fundamentalist. They assert that they are only fundamentalists in that they believe that there are actual demands in religion and say they are unfairly stigmatized when they organize to effect political change. In contrast, I assert that this stigmatization is warranted and that the similarities are both deep and disturbing (for someone who shares their continent).

Firstly we should consider their rationalization of the world. They are both predisposed to explain events in the world, such as natural disasters, in religious terms. Jerry Falwell, a leading public figure of the Baptist community, displays these bigoted religious explanations. Immediately after September 11, Falwell was quoted as saying, “I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians, the ACLU, People for the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say you helped this happen.” It doesn’t take a relativistic secularist to see that these views, assuredly dangerous, are also ridiculous and fundamentalist in nature.

Secondly, their views on women should be noted, as the Taliban’s treatment of women is infamous. The Southern Baptist Convention website reads, “A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband….she has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.” Though a contradiction in thought, they maintain a rhetoric that women are equal; they just won’t allow them equal rights and responsibilities.

“Crazy left-wing nuts” become concerned with religious groups protesting because it is an attempt to impose their belief systems on others. These groups only form around religious lines to protest laws which they believe contradict their beliefs/morals (social issues); hence a group protesting a tax hike, even if made up entirely of Christians, would not necessarily identify itself as such. Yet they could live in their morals without imposing them. If they are pro-life, they are free never to have abortions; if they are against gay marriage they are free never to marry someone of their gender. If they decry sex and commercialism in the media, they are free not to watch. Religious individuals are free to exercise all their rights as citizens; yet when they campaign for the codification of their religious beliefs, they impose on the religious rights of other groups. If the Jains sought to outlaw the eating of meat in North America, if the Hindus wanted to outlaw cow farming, how would these evangelicals react?

We all have the right to act out our own beliefs, as long as we don’t impose on the rights of others. What determines whether one is a fundamentalist is whether one is content to live one’s beliefs within a community or desires to impose one’s beliefs on other groups (whether religious or not). The only way that people can live freely is for the legislators and courts within our government to be completely indifferent to the particularities of these views—meaning that when they are faced with any issue, particular religious beliefs (i.e. specific religious doctrines) should not be the determining lens for how justice is viewed in society at large (the dreaded secularization). It is not the moralistic basis of people’s decisions that is significant but the simple yea or nay that results, and whether their position is constitutionally valid. Ever-unpleasant tyrannies of the majority must be avoided. For secularly alone insures that religious minority groups can live and act out their personal beliefs without the laws of another group determining their behaviour. With regards to political discourse, for all religions, whether Christian, Zoroastrian, or Atheist, there must be a realization that the plurality of moral positions is indicative of the relative nature of morality. Thus the dogmatic rules of one absolutist moral code should never be forced on all. Surely only a fundamentalist could favour such a tyranny.

Clayton Chin

Clayton is a frustrated secularist who dreams of a world with group identities, including secularism.
Residential Schools: Church and State Collaborate

...For Better or For Worse

Church establishment in Canada ended in 1854. Clergy land reserves, created by the Constitutional Act of 1791, were abolished and most legislative and administrative ties between church and state were dissolved.

Nevertheless, church and state remained close collaborators in education well into the next century. As historian Robert Choquette writes, “Between 1850 and 1960, the vast majority of schools in Canada, whether public, separate, private, elementary, secondary, or post-secondary, were confessional schools” (Choquette, 291).

One of the manifestations of this joint educational enterprise was a system of residential and industrial training schools for Aboriginal Canadians. As European Canada expanded westward, the government sought an economical solution to the “Indian problem.” Coveting Native lands, the government hoped to assimilate Aboriginal people into European Canadian culture. European incursion into Native territory decimated Aboriginal ways of life. Indigenous tribes were no longer able to sustain themselves. According to David Laird, Indian Superintendent of the North West Territories, the government’s options were limited: “To help the Indians to farm and raise stock, or to fight them” (Miller, 100).

Meanwhile the Aboriginal peoples tried to adapt to their changing environment. For some, European education seemed like a way forward. In 1876, Cree Chief Athakakoop stated, “Surely we Indians can learn the ways of living that made the white man strong and able to vanquish all the great tribes of the southern nations” (Miller, 98). A few years later, Dakota Chief Standing Buffalo imploded the Canadian Governor General: “Please give me a church on my reserve for I want to live like the white people—I and my children—also a school where they can be taught” (Miller, 100). As a result of this shared interest in education, all of the treaties signed between the Government of Canada and Canada’s Aboriginal tribes in the late 1800s included provisions for Native schooling.

Native hopes for state-supported, European-style education may have soured when, in 1883, John A. MacDonald’s government chose to commission a series of off-reserve boarding schools. Residential education—which kept Native children away from their homes and families for months or years at a time—encouraged more aggressive enculturation.

In turn, the Canadian Government enlisted several Canadian Christian denominations to enact its newly formed policy. “Secular education is a good thing among white men,” said MacDonald, “but among Indians the first object is to make them better men and, if possible, good Christian men by applying proper moral restraint, and appealing to the instinct for worship that is found in all nations whether civilized or uncivilized” (Miller, 103).

But whatever MacDonald’s “nobler” sentiments, the bottom line was the bottom line. First, assimilation would end the government’s financial obligations to Native peoples. Second, the churches, which already operated several residential institutions in Canada and had been experimenting with this model of Native education since the Recollet Order established its first residential school in New France in 1620, could perform the work of education and enculturation more efficiently—that is, more cheaply—than the government.

Canadian churches, for their part, did not necessarily support the government’s insistence on absolute assimilation. Theirs was a missionary preoccupation—saving souls for Christ and improving the earthly lot of Native peoples. Whether or not these tasks required European enculturation was a matter of debate between denominations. The churches did, however, share the Government’s enthusiasm for the residential school model. Keeping Native children far from their tribes meant that they were more malleable, free from the uncivilized influence of their own peoples. And it improved attendance; the children simply had nowhere else to go.

The MacDonald government began its educational project with three church-run residential schools in 1883. During the closing decades of the century, church-operated residential schools—those initiated by various levels of government and those initiated by the churches—proliferated. By 1900, there were 18 industrial and 36 boarding schools across Canada. Sixty-nine years later, when the Canadian Government terminated its residential school system, as many as 80 institutions were in operation.

The government operated nearly every school in partnership with various religious organizations until April 1, 1969, when it assumed full responsibility for the school system. Most residential schools ceased to operate by the mid-1970s, with only seven remaining open through the 1980s. The last federally run residential school in Canada closed in Saskatchewan in 1996.

Since that time, the dark realities of the residential schools have become all too familiar—stories of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, and stories of cultural violence and linguistic oppression. “In retrospect, the legacy of the residential schools can be seen on every street corner in Canada,” wrote one school survivor. “There are thousands of once-proud native people who have been reduced to drunken shells by their experiences in those institutions” (Miller, 439).

Today the journey toward healing continues. Some churches and some Aboriginal peoples seek forgiveness and reconciliation. All parties—church, state, and Aboriginal peoples—attempt to negotiate a just settlement of financial restitution. The latest permutation of this settlement provides for a modest payment for all residential school survivors and an Alternative Dispute Resolution process for those survivors who wish to make further claims against church and state.

Sources:

Bob Bergner
Religion and Culture

World's Religions After 9/11: Prelude to a Conference

An interview by Natalya Demberg

Dr. Arvind Sharma of McGill’s Faculty of Religious Studies is organizing a noteworthy conference next September: “World’s Religions After 9/11.” I met with Dr. Sharma to discuss the goals of the conference, the role of religion in politics, and the media’s role in shaping public opinion about religion.

What is the goal of the conference?
Our goal is to correct the false interpretation created by 9/11 that religion is something evil. It is necessary and possible to highlight positive sides of religion. We’re trying to achieve this by releasing a *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (and Duties) by the World’s Religions.*

How is this declaration different from the current UN Declaration of Human Rights?
This declaration will show that all religions can work together, and that secular and religious groups can cooperate. The UN declaration was adapted after WWII as a result of secular extremism. Religions have to adapt such a declaration now before it is too late to stop religious extremism. The UN declaration promoted the secular hypothesis—as the world progresses religion becomes more of a private affair. After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, we observed the re-entering of religion into secular life as well as a rise of fundamentalism in all religions. Religion has to be identified as a major force in the world.

Should there be a secular state?
There are three types of secular states:
- Negative secularity: state is opposed to religion (e.g. Soviet Union in the past)
- Neutral secularity: state stays away from religion (e.g. USA)
- Positive secularity: state promotes religious harmony and takes active steps towards it (e.g. India is introducing a course on world religions in its education system)

How are you going to get these different religions to compose one document on which they can agree?
A document of this sort already exists. It was drafted by the Faculty in the 1980s. One method is to have representatives from major religions look at the document and try to modify it collectively until they all agree. Another method is to ask all world religious communities to produce such a document and then see what is common between all of them. The goal is to promote the Declaration of Human Rights and Religion as an ongoing process.

Our theme is religion and politics. Your website mentions that we should fight against and prevent religious extremism, comparing it to secular extremism like communism and fascism. What, in your opinion, should be the role of religion in world politics, especially after the events of 9/11?
The reality is that after 1979, with the Iranian revolution, religion has re-entered the secular life. The recent cartoon example demonstrates that you cannot remove things from society artificially. We have to realize that religion is going to play a major role in world politics. The declaration is important in the sense that it will focus on the vision of human flourishing and therefore define the role religion will play in politics.

What is the role of the media in shaping religious opinions?
The misinterpretation of religion in the media and in academia is a major issue. People lose their sense of religious sensitivity. Our society is based on the assumption that all of what is said is true until contradicted. Our basic human instinct is to believe what we are told. The media has great power in this sense. The media should ask for the perspective of the believers since we can’t proceed by default and prejudice. Once we become sophisticated in this sense, a lot of harm caused by negative stereotyping can be overcome.

World’s Religions After 9/11 is to be held at the Palais des Congres from September 11-15, 2006. The conference will feature:
- Gregory Baum, Canadian Christian theologian
- Harvey Cox, American Christian theologian
- Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Prize winner for peace
- Abdolkarim Soroush, Islamic leader, named as one of the 100 most influential people in the world by *Time* magazine in 2004
- Robert Thurman, renowned Buddhist scholar

Registration is open until the last minute. Papers may be submitted until the end of March. Register for the conference online at: www.worldsreligionsafter911.com.

To volunteer contact the Congress Secretariat at 499-8920.
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The Yellow Door Elderly Project is seeking volunteers 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.
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Weekly Meetings:
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steveflyk@stanrewstpaul.com
www.standrewstpaul.com

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**New Earth Voices**
Come to our concert!
April 9th, 4pm
Diocesan College, 3473 University St.
Our repertoire is sacred music in a variety of languages representing cultures from around the world.--conducted by Fredericka Petit-Homme--Freewill donations will be collected for charity.

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**Unitarian Universalists at University Unite**
An open-minded spiritual community for people of all backgrounds.
Email uucrew@yahoogroups.com

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**Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting**
Social get-togethers
Newman Centre, 3484 Peel
Contact Mansjit Singh, Sikh Chaplain
to.mani@sympatico.ca

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**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

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**Montreal Diocesan Theological College**
3473 University Ave.
Daily Christian worship—all are welcome!
Morning Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 8:30-8:30 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!

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**Buddhist Meditation**
Every Thursday, 3-4pm
Instruction for newcomers, 2:45
At McGill Chaplaincy,
3600 McTavish St., Suite 4400