

# Radix

October 2004



Roots

# From the Editor's Desk. . .

I'm glad you've decided to pick up the first *Radix* of the school year! *Radix* is now drawing on more faith perspectives than ever and our aim is to include each one that is represented in the McGill student body. So if you don't see yours present in this issue, contact us and make your own contribution!

One of my first and happy duties as editor was to attend a September conference, hosted by the Canadian Sikh Council and McGill's Faculty of Religious Studies, which concentrated on interfaith dialogue. Floating around the conference there was a maxim that expressed dissatisfaction with the idea of tolerance in interreligious dialogue—tolerance means “you're wrong and I won't kill you for it.” This symposium sought to go beyond mere tolerance and forge ahead to the acceptance that comes through greater understanding of other religions—and of your own.

But as one of our board members has commented, this kind of acceptance does not mean also adopting the idea of complete relativism. It requires that you understand your own perspective well enough to know where you agree and disagree with others. But disagreements don't have to be explosive. They can have the power of being constructive.

If there's anything I'd like to contribute to the dialogue, it's that learning about faith perspectives requires much more than knowing about a religion's doctrinal statements or moral principles. It means getting to know religious people, how they perceive their faith, and what they have to offer to those outside of it. We've focused our October issue around the theme of getting back to our religious and faith roots (*Radix* is Latin for root), and we've featured articles that portray ways in which students grow out from their roots. I hope you find it stimulating.

All in all, and at the risk of sounding sappy, it was really moving to look across the crowd gathered for the interfaith conference and see people in hijabs, turbans, yarmulkes and bowler hats (okay, there were no bowler hats) all in the same room talking amicably about *religion*! *Radix* hopes to carry on this tradition within the student body—so read it, and submit to it. Contribute to the dialogue!

Aimee Patterson Read--editor

*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 chaplains.**

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 grayscale. 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@yours.com**.

Visit *Radix* online at  
<http://www.mcgill.ca/chaplaincy/radix/>

Want to respond to something you see in *Radix*? Write your letter to the editor: **radix@yours.com**. We may print it!

The *Radix* Editorial Board: Aimee Patterson Read--Editor and Layout Designer ♦ Bob Bergner--Anglican Rep ♦ Ros Bourgault-Gervais--Pagan Rep ♦ Natalya Demberg--Religion and Culture Rep ♦ Poonam Dhir--Hindu Rep ♦ Laura Gallo--Agnostic Rep ♦ Donna Hakimian--Bahai Rep ♦ Dany Horovitz--Jewish Rep ♦ Gurjit Kaur Toor--Sikh Rep ♦ Tara McElroy--Catholic Rep ♦ Sarah Parks Ricker--Art Rep ♦ Justin Pulikunnel--Catholic Rep ♦ Shahana Safdar--Muslim Students' Association Rep ♦ Indi Samarajiva--Cover Designer ♦ Amanda Unruh--Atheist Rep

## About the Cover. . .

This image is a combination of myoglobin, an unidentified ball-and-stick molecule, and seven religious symbols. Their placement is loosely representative in that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all come from one source (Abraham), while Buddhism and Sikhism emerged out of Hinduism. Bahai should probably branch out of Abraham too, but it looks better where it is.

## About the designer. . .

Indi Samarajiva is a McGill graduate. He is a Buddhist in that he tries to meditate and be nice. He now lives in Sri Lanka where he does freelance web-design—including LIR-NEasia.net—and teaches Photoshop at the National Institute of Business Management. Visit him at [www.indi.ca](http://www.indi.ca). He lives in the hallway of his parents house, so he's not that cool.



Art by Mansa Krishnamunthy  
Mansa is a U2 student in anatomy and cell biology

The theme for the next issue of *Radix* is

## Religion and the Body

Look for it in late November! Does this topic inspire you?

Contribute!

Any submissions should be sent to **radix@yours.com** no later than October 29th.

# Who We Be:

## A Discussion between Guy and Reuben

Q: Of seven days and Sabbath rests and such,  
I do not understand why work is stopped  
Or why a holy day the seventh is.  
And do not say "because God rested then;"  
Omniscient, omnipotent He is yes  
And therefore cannot tire or need rest.  
Another reason for this day must be.  
A: There are six days to work; six nights to  
play  
Like water falling in an empty glass  
Pure and cold in the desert sun saves lives.  
But worthless water is all by itself.  
A seventh day was set aside to drink,  
Reflection found within the clear elixir,  
A time when contemplation fills the soul.  
An empty glass will never overflow;  
The need to drink in the desert is great.

Q: A butchery is made or so it's told  
When eight days old an infant child is.  
I will not speak the words, man, lest I faint,  
I know you know of what it is I speak.  
A: I do, and worry not my friend. No harm  
Is done and nothing necessary's cut;  
Our fathers fore – they bore a covenant  
With God, who made a sign of it 'tween us  
To purify and separate us from  
The rest of Man who live in ways unclean,  
For circumcision also is good health.  
But either way function just the same.  
Moreover, God decreed to Abraham:  
"Who does not cut off thus shall be cut off  
From his people and from my favour too."  
And since we're eight days old it makes no diff,  
There is no pain, but feel for poor Ishmael  
O, such a present on his bar-mitzvah!

Q: This 'kosher' word tastes funny in the mouth  
And in the ear arouses a confusion.  
Why can the Jewish people not eat pork?  
A: These rules were set to separate the Jews  
From all the other nations in the world,  
Some animals the Lord decreed were clean  
And therefore good enough for us to eat;  
But others not so fortunate, or more,  
Perhaps, for being unclean, their lives are spared.  
But practicality, too, plays a part  
Because in days of old pork was diseased  
And lead to sickness 'mong all those who ate.  
So eating from the clean prevented death,  
Indeed the modern world will tell you so:  
Cholesterol does cause untimely death,  
The heart is frail and easily is blocked  
And pork, before all other cold cuts, is  
The fattiest, filled with carcinogens.  
You see for many reasons pigs remain  
An animal unfit, unclean to eat.

Q: The title you have given to yourselves  
A "chosen people" strikes a curious thought.  
Say what it is that you were made to do.  
A: A title not by us but Adonoy.  
We chosen are to praise the name of th' Lord.  
A jealous God is He who made the world  
The blasphemer is punished three-fold,  
But to the thousandth generation goes  
A blessing and a sacred covenant  
Of those who praised the Lord in proper rite:  
He puts His faith in those who faith in Him.

A chosen people to a test is put  
And in return a land to call our own,  
The three create triangularity:  
The He; the we; the honey and the milk.  
Throughout the ages many people come  
And go, but still the sons of Israel remain,  
Despite annihilation often tried:  
The Levite priests who forced great Egypt's hand  
And led the Hebrews to the Promised Land.  
The Judahs, known as Israelites, also  
Who had a king that struck Goliath down  
And freed the nation, too remain today.  
From twelve to two it is a story sad  
But those lost tribes will never be forgot,  
For though we are oppressed per'odically  
No one will ever blot us from the earth.  
As history has shown, we be survivors.

### Things to know:

Ishmael was thirteen years old when Abraham circumcised him.

The name of God is sacred and therefore never spoken; 'Adonoy' is used instead.

The Hebrews were divided into twelve tribes, the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. After the Assyrian invasion of Israel in 750 BCE, the ten northern tribes went into exile where they were destroyed by being killed or assimilated.

by Dany Horowitz

Dany is a third year English literature student, our Jewish rep, and an all around great guy

# I, Muslim

As a noun, *Islam* signifies peace through submission and the worship of God, the creator of the universe and all it holds. The adjective, *Muslim*, refers to any being that surrenders itself to Allah (the Arabic word used by Jewish, Christian and Muslim Arabs). As a Muslim, I am required to fulfill the five pillars of Islam. These include *testifying* that there is no God but one and that Prophet Mohammad was his last (not his *only*) messenger; performing the five daily *prayers*; *fasting* during the month of Ramadan; giving at least 2.5% of my total savings in *charity* every year; and offering *pilgrimage* in Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

As a Muslim woman, I am required to wear a head scarf (*hijab*). First and foremost, I wear it out of obedience towards my Creator who has made it an obligation upon women who believe in God. Secondly, I wear it to be recognized as a Muslim since the veil is only the external manifestation and a reflection of a Muslim woman's good character. Covering oneself is a modest act that plays an important role in encouraging others to perceive me as a human being rather than a provocative object, especially now that body image has found its way into every home. The media persuades that physical perfection is the solution to every problem, when in fact it is an incurable obsession. As a student, an active member in the McGill Muslim Student Association, a community volunteer, and a sports fan, I strongly believe that the veil never was or will be an obstacle unless others intend it to be.

Moreover, as a Muslim, I am obliged to be respectful, honest and trustworthy towards others. Time and effort should be invested in safeguarding the ties of kinship and for the good treatment of the elderly, orphans and the needy. I have no choice but to strive in this temporary life for the sake of the hereafter. As well, I have no right to expose my health, given to me in trust, to addictive substances or to resort to suicide for the sake of escaping reality. Only God *may* give and take back life, even though one *can* take one's life away. One more important factor is that to Allah alone I should turn for reconciliation, patience, ultimate advice and success. I *do not* associate any person with him; he is beyond what we can predict, envision or imagine.

A trusted companion of the Prophet claimed that before adopting Islam as a religion, he had confectioned a god out of dates that he worshiped throughout his long travel. But surrendering to his hunger, he ate it. It took him years to realize that the god he had worshiped to get to the One true God *did not* benefit or harm him. Islam helps us appreciate that only God can decide all that governs the earth, skies and all that is in between.

by Reem Eid

Reem is a student of occupational therapy at McGill and a member of the MSA



# Who Needs a Label?

Have fun trying to classify this article--better just place it under miscellaneous.

Ah the liberty of not having religious beliefs. I don't have to worry about ignoramuses who prefer the simplest possible stereotypical generalizations to actually conducting research and learning about different cultures/religions. I don't have to worry about misinterpreting religious doctrine. I don't have to worry about being persecuted by people out to stir trouble because they believe their religion is the only correct one.

Don't get me wrong. I do believe that there is something that started stuff off (call it God, gods, a spontaneous self-contained combustible reaction, or whatever you want). But ask me what it was and I'll tell you that not only do I have no idea, but I really don't think it matters.

I, like most North Americans, was brought up Christian, but I suppose I turned out pretty secular (not to be confused with atheistic or agnostic). When I began looking into other religions I noticed obvious similarities and differences. I saw a few interesting ideas in quite a lot of them, so I started thinking, "If I agree/disagree with Christianity just as much as I do with some of these other religions, how can I call myself Christian?" The truth was that what I agreed with was what religions all have in common anyway: stuff about not killing people, stealing, or being an all-around prick. And what I disagreed with seemed more political than spiritual: stuff like "this dude was right for killing that dude because he wronged him in this or that way," or "treat everyone great except if they are \_\_\_\_\_".

(insert minority group here)

So, like a modern day Siddhartha, I set off on my own. I wanted to accept general philosophies without my previous label,

From South Park episode 309- "Jewbilee":

**AUTHOR'S DISCLAIMER:** This script excerpt is a comedic example of how someone might not fit into a group label; I am not adding it to defame Jews.

**Chief Elder:** I want to welcome you all! Though we each come from a different sect of Judaism, on this night of Jewbilee, we all pray to Moses as one! Henameh cureh! Narukashu! (Translation: "May all the power of Moses show us the way...") Now, let us introduce ourselves!

**Elder Karn:** Elder Karn from the Orthodox synagogue.

**Elder Harris:** Elder Harris from the Hasidic sect.

**Elder Garth:** Elder Garth from the synagogue of Anti-Semites.

**Chief Elder:** I don't believe I've heard of the Anti-Semitic sect of Judaism before!

**Elder Garth:** We're new!

but I was still pretty immature at it. I thought I had to replace my label with a new one, but no matter where I turned I kept coming back to the same spot. Then it hit me—who needs a label? I know who I am and what my views are; why do I need to find a group that matches that? What if there is no group that matches that? I definitely wouldn't start changing my views just to fit in; not only would that not be honest, but our society reinforces such behaviour as negative.

So I've dropped the whole label issue and just live my life. Has it changed me? No. I'm still the same guy and have all the same views. I just don't try to identify myself with a group anymore. . . . After all, how far must your views be from those of a group (religious or otherwise) before you can no longer say you're part of that group? [Please see dialog box.]

So if you ask me what religion I belong to, here's my reply: I don't identify myself with any particular religion. I have some ideas (about how we should treat each other) but no beliefs.

And you know what? I'm that much better off because of it.

Anonymous  
The author is a U3 arts student

Art by Sara Parks Ricker



## My Paganism

As with any story of this kind, the path isn't terribly structured. Also, I'll have to say some negative things about the faith I was raised in. Most people come to Paganism through dissatisfaction with other religions. Please remember this is only how my former religion struck me.

I was raised in the United Church, but none of it really seemed to resonate at all. On one hand, the church had a fairly humanist outlook—care for the poor, stewardship of the environment, acceptance of difference. But this usually seemed to be at odds with what the Bible had to say. The religion, at least how it was presented to me, always seemed incoherent—Christianity was my social identification rather than my actual belief system. By the time I came out I had stopped going altogether.

One day, in CEGEP, while noodling through the stacks, I came upon a copy of *The Spiral Dance* by Starhawk. Certain edges were rough, certain concepts abstruse, but as I read I began to see more and more of myself in the pages.

To Witches, it said, God is not a ruler; the Gods are the universe. The Goddess is alive; indeed all the Gods of all the pantheons of history are faces of the Goddess and the God. I always had thought it was unfair that Christianity had a God but no Goddess, and as much as my church insisted that God had no gender, he still had a beard and Jesus was still a guy. It made sense that the Earth was Goddess, that the Moon was Goddess. Again, my church portrayed God as existing in nature, but that certainly wasn't the concept that came through in hymns and the Bible. For a phenomenon as majestic as the Earth, to be divine made sense. For the Equinoxes and Solstices to be celebrated, to remind us of how She provides for us, seemed meet and right. It made sense that acts of love and pleasure are her rituals. Again, my church was tolerant of gay people, but had come to it only after great strife. In Paganism, there was nothing to reconcile, nothing to argue against, nothing to rationalize. I could be a Queer Witch, I could love men and make love to men, and have that be a sacrament.

Most importantly, though, it made sense that there was no sin. In my church the dogma of original sin wasn't harped on, but we still needed Christ to save us. Save us from what? What's wrong with this life? These were questions I'd never had answered. Wicca's answers, for me, destroyed the questions.

So I became Wiccan. My understanding continues to evolve, my own form of Paganism continues to speciate away from others' understanding of it (which is accepted). A religion I paid lip service to was intolerable to me; I'm glad I found a religion I can devote myself to.

by Matt McLaughlin

Matt is a B.A. in linguistics, a cont. ed. alumnus and a member of the McGill Pagan Association

# Christian Perspectives

## CATHOLIC

The great American philosopher and psychologist William James once said that there are two types of minds: the tough-minded and the tender-minded. Everyone wants the truth and everybody wants happiness. The tough-minded put truth first and the tender-minded put happiness first. They start with feelings. The tough-minded start with facts.

I've been asked to write why I am Catholic, and the answer that immediately comes to mind is because it's true. The Catholic Church claims to have the authority of Christ himself. Jesus said to the apostles, "Whosoever heareth you heareth Me." If the Church is wrong about that, not only is it an arrogant and blasphemous lie, a sin in the eyes of God, but furthermore, it is the responsibility of every Christian to denounce the Catholic Church. But if the Church is what it claims to be, then it is the living authentic voice of Jesus Christ, and what authority could be higher than that? And if Christ isn't who he claims to be—God incarnate—then he's the most egotistical, blasphemous fool in human history. If not Lord, says C.S. Lewis, then a liar or lunatic.

So I am Catholic because I believe that the Pope is the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, the one who takes the place of Jesus Christ in a very visible, audible, tangible way. I believe that when we hear the Pope, we hear Peter—we hear Christ himself. I am Catholic because the real mark of credibility for the Christian faith is its unity, and the Pope is the only one in the entire Christian world who can bring unity to the teachings of Christ, the unity for which he prayed the night before he died: "that they may all be one. . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me." With over 30,000 non-Catholic Christian denominations in the world, all claiming to have the correct interpretation of Scripture, all claiming that the Holy Spirit is leading them to understand the Bible, which one is correct? I am Catholic because I believe that God gave the Church the Magisterium to protect his Church from the chaos and anarchy that is in the Christian world today.

My Catholic faith is my greatest possession and I love the Church. I choose to focus on my need for a guardian of the truth.

by Liam Reilly

Liam is a McGill student who likes history and ice-fishing

## PROTESTANT

As ideas, words, and phrases concerning the perfect opening for this article ricochet in my mind, I remember Snoopy and his efforts to write the "great American novel". First he would type "I" and then think for a while. Next would come "t," which soon brought about the rest of the sentence: "was a dark a stormy and night." Granted it was not the best opener, but then again neither is the one I just typed.

Now I will get to the point of this text, which is in fact the whole point of this issue of *Radix*. The faith I follow is Christianity, and I know that it has skeletons in its closet, but that is not what I am dealing with this time around. For now, I will try to tear away all of the fat and expose the core of this truly wonderful faith. Christianity can seem like a rather strange faith in the sense that it admits that if it is wrong "[Christians] are to be pitied more than all men" (I Corinthians 15:19), and also that "the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). Here I present to you a faith that delights in selfless suffering for its saviour.

This leads to the question of why on earth anyone would want to follow such a faith and, to be honest, the answer is different for different people. However, it essentially comes down to grace. The Christian view holds that the entire human race is imperfect, and that these imperfections separate them from the eternal and just Creator, God. In order to reconcile this separation, God provided a way for salvation, since no one is capable of doing it on their own, and this way was the death and resurrection of his son, Jesus. The biblical book of Hebrews, though slightly confusing at times, expands on this concept to show the relationship of the old covenant between God and the Hebrews to the new covenant between God and humanity, and why it was necessary for Jesus' sacrifice, resurrection, and eternal life.

As for my own reason for following this faith, I believe that the world is too dark and miserable without this hope, and only this hope makes life worth living. Grace and mercy make sense as the only way, since no one is perfect. Without these, all there is left is to eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. However, with grace it is possible to say: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

by Josh Wright

The Thoughts of an Optimistic Pessimist

## ANGLICAN

My identity as an Anglican is based on the way we worship. Liturgy reminds us that our centre should always be on God. Worship services bring us together in community to listen to the Bible, pray and participate in the sacraments. What makes Anglican worship distinctive is that the prayer books of the church are some of the only definitive statements of our life and belief as a church. We have no overarching church authority, as does the Roman Catholic Church, and no distinctive confession of faith, like the confessions of the other Reformation churches. But—to add a caveat—the order of worship varies among countries, and even between neighbouring parishes. I would argue that this rich complexity is one of the strengths of the Anglican tradition.

by Jen Bourque

I have been an active member of the Anglican Church for slightly more than twenty years. I have had the privilege of being part of the Anglican community in three continents and five countries. I have experienced worship in a variety of churches without stepping out of the denominational circle. However, I still find it hard to say what it means to be an Anglican. Perhaps this is because I am trying too hard to figure out what makes the Anglican Church so great. I do think the Anglican Church is great but I think its beauty can only be truly appreciated by those who are part of its family. I cannot answer the question, "What does it mean to be an Anglican?" without answering the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian?" The two questions, in my opinion, are linked; in order to answer one I must also answer the other.

I was raised Roman Catholic, I was actively involved in my local parish, and I enjoyed being a Roman Catholic. I say this because I want to make sure that people understand that I am not a disgruntled Roman Catholic. So why did I become an Anglican? Well, I wasn't sure if I was a Christian. I was baptized as an infant and I thought it was just by chance that I was a Christian. I had many Buddhist and Muslim friends and none of them really chose their religion, so I naturally assumed that it was just fate. However, I did feel like a hypocrite going to church and professing a faith that I was not entirely convinced of myself. So I decided to read the Bible to understand my faith better, and I started with the gospels. The message of the gospels hit me really hard. It was too powerful and relevant to be domesticated by the church. The gospels brought forth many questions, and these questions eventually annoyed the local Roman Catholic priest. The questions brought me to the Anglican Church. It helped me to understand that my questions were important. I found the Anglican Church did not try to domesticate the message of the gospel, but it allowed the Holy Spirit to use the church to take the gospel to wherever it pleased. The Church helped me to understand that the gospel is alive and active in the lives of people.

When I look at the Anglican Communion I see the Christian community active and alive all over the world. I see the power of the gospel working in places that were previously closed to its message. The Anglican Church has its problems and struggles but essentially it is a church that seeks to preach the gospel of grace and transformation in every situation and circumstance. This is what it means to be an Anglican.

by Stephen Dass

Stephen and Jen are students at the Diocesan College

# Agnosticism: A Form of Modesty?

There's no dispute that religion is one of the most pervading "itches" of our human inquiries—if not *the* most. Typical to our nature, we have created literally thousands of religious followings, depending on the context of the term "religion," and they all have their own dogmas and rationalizations for our roles as an entity. Yet how about a religious philosophy that is content to say: "What of answers? We don't have the means to obtain them, and therefore 'Let it be!'" Well heeello Agnosticism!

The term "Agnostic" was coined by Thomas H. Huxley, a religious skeptic of the 1840's. His thoughts give an idea of the concepts of today's Agnosticism embodied in the following: "... if a man keep whole and undefiled, he shall not be ashamed to look the universe in the face, whatever the future may have in store for him." He pointed out the subsequent reduction in power by segmenting one's intellectual and spiritual constitutions into specific and separate beliefs and classifications.

Since then, Agnosticism has morphed into many viewpoints pivoting around the central idea that humanity is not capable of comprehending the concept of God, that the existence of a deity can neither be proved nor disproved, as we are unequipped to examine the issue. This conclusion is not left to stagnation of fear in the human heart, but rather demonstrates an admittance of the limits of our minds and egos, and a benevolent modesty that whatever is out there just "is." It begs no labels that we can contrive.

Agnostics may be a bit baffled by the general ruckus of religious assertions concerning the nature and origin of a deity, but from a personal perspective I'd say that we're just the type of people who are content to let the universe work in what ways it will, without a 'how' or a 'why.' The fact that our viewpoint qualifies as a means of grouping is, in ways, counterintuitive to this "opinion-void" stance on religion; we'd really rather just live and let live! Just because we don't understand the nature of the grand subject doesn't mean that we aren't in fact spiritual people, or that we deny the possibility of ever finding God. I would say that many agnostics have substantial respect for the cultural qualities and the dedication of religious followings. We too see the wonder in the world around us, and feel a connection with life and earth. We relish our gifts of human faculty (perhaps more because of the lack of identification with past or future planes of "being") for which we are respectful and awe-inspired. I can also confidently say that though it exists, feelings of cynicism or hopelessness do not pervade the fundamental concept of Agnosticism. We are the content; we don't care for the scramble toward classification or definitive answers that yield a fundamental peace of mind, for that peace we create by saying, "Let it be."

That's why I love Agnosticism! It's a fostering environment for an open and largely alternative spiritual slate!

by Miranda Hall

Miranda studies psychology and neuroscience; she also collects paper umbrellas and welcomes any contributions

## Who are the Sikhs?

Ever since I was young people have told me, "You are sick, that's too bad!" when I told them I was Sikh. It was frustrating because I was trying to tell them I believe in Sikhism, the *religion*. Many people don't know or understand who Sikhs are or what they believe.

If you ask any Sikh, the one thing we have trouble with is explaining our identity. So, the question arises, who are the Sikhs? Sikh means student; God is the teacher, and our textbook is the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. As a student you come to school to learn. It is the same for a Sikh; he or she is placed on earth to experience life and understand and reach God.

Sikhism began with Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469-1538) in the region of Punjab, now in Pakistan. Guru Nanak was the first of ten gurus and he taught monotheism, unity of humanity, and love. He rejected the caste system and idol worship. He had nine successors after him, and Guru Gobind Singh Ji (1666-1708), the tenth guru, established the religion, fellowship of Khalsa, and Sikh identity. He also put together the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book that was given the eternal guruship. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a compilation of teachings and writings of seven of the ten gurus as well as those of many Muslim and Hindu spiritualists, all of which are poetic. As one of the youngest world religions, Sikhism is modern in its thinking. Sikhs believe that all are equal, regardless of gender, race, religion, caste, region, etc. Sikhs are taught to respect other religions and never convert people. Sikhs would rather a person become a better person within his or her religion than convert to Sikhism.

Sikhism is a way of life. Guru Nanak taught three elements: Naam Japna, which is to pray to God, Kirat Karni, which is to make an honest living, and Vand ke Shakna, which is to share your earnings and give back to the community. It is by these guidelines that a Sikh must live his or her life. For a Sikh, the path to God can only be traveled alone and achieved alone. Therefore, every Sikh will take the path at his or her own pace; it might take many lifetimes before he or she reaches God.

Baptism is a very important decision for a Sikh. A Sikh is baptized when he or she feels ready to truly devote himself or herself to reaching God. A baptized Sikh will wear the five Ks, which are kanga (comb), kara (steel bracelet), kesh (unshorn hair), kacha (boxers), and kirpan (dagger). These five Ks each have a meaning and are not merely symbols to distinguish a Sikh.

I hope you have learned a bit about Sikhs from this article and that next time someone tells you they are Sikh, you will understand what they mean—or at least you won't tell them to go home and get better!

Gurjit Kaur Toor

Gurjit is our Sikh rep



# Religion and Culture

It's interesting that the theme of this issue is "back to the basics." It was chosen because the editorial board felt the need to explain and clarify what our religions are really about. But why? Due to constant misinterpretations and misjudgments of our religions by others, most of us who are spiritual feel the pressure to justify our faiths and explain what is true and what is just prescribed to our religion by popular culture. After all, it is the "basics" that we really believe in. Other aspects of religion (such as ritual procedures, marital laws, etc.) were set more by our cultural beliefs and values than by God. These we can either agree or disagree with, but they have nothing to do with our personal spirituality.

Culture shapes not only our religion, but also our perception of others' religions and beliefs. Getting back to our roots is a useful theme for those who only know about other religions from their cultural settings. In our hectic, fast-moving world opinions are usually set by external factors (media, family, friends), rather than by our inner understanding and judgments. We don't always have time to look into other sources, so we just rely on "what our mothers told us."

In reality, it's unfortunate that an inter-faith publication such as *Radix* would feel pressured to introduce its readers to the "basics" of different religions. This means that our cultures have completely overwhelmed us with their misconceptions.

This brings me to the theme of my column. Throughout the year, I will be attending different cultural events and analyzing them from a religious perspective. I will try to explore how culture influences our religious beliefs and our perceptions of others' religions.

In this issue, we are publishing a report by the Art of the Living club about International Peace Day. The Art of Living Foundation is a worldwide, volunteer-based NGO that is active through service projects, yoga programs, meditation and stress elimination.

by Natalie Demberg

Natalya Demberg is our Religion and Culture columnist

## Students Celebrate International Peace Day

September 21<sup>st</sup> was declared *International Peace Day* by the United Nations. On this important day the Art of Living clubs from McGill, Concordia and Polytechnique organized a celebration of peace like none other before it. "The individual peace, the peace in the society, and the collective peace in the whole world starts from where we are," said His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Art of Living's founder and the inspiration behind countless successful humanitarian programs. Taking these words to heart, this is exactly what Art of Living's event achieved. Amazingly enough, it turns out we really can "make peace a reality starting right where we are."

The evening began with a video that presented work done around the globe through the programs implemented by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. A staggering amount of people, villages, prisoners and children were helped. Hundreds of houses, schools and medical camps were built. And, most impressive, thousands of youths were trained and empowered to affect concrete change in their environment and societies.

Following this presentation, Mary Shorten, from Concordia's Art of Living Club, beautifully put things in perspective for us: "If we are peaceful inside, it radiates outside. Then our relationships and dealings with people around us will also be peaceful. There will be harmony with our friends and family and this will extend to the community, society and, eventually, to the nation and to the whole world. After all, if society is only a reflection of the individuals comprised in it... then the only way society can be peaceful is if the people in it are peaceful." With these few words of wisdom Mary led us into a unique meditation, using the ancient Sanskrit word *RAM*, which signifies the radiance within.

Keeping in tradition with all Art of Living club meetings, the evening ended with snacks and laughter. I used this time for a little introspection. Peace in the world is indeed one of the most urgent matters that we, as responsible and intelligent students and future leaders of our society, need to work on. However, it need not be a heavy load on our shoulders. Quite the contrary. By eliminating our own stresses and strains, by making our own life a celebration—albeit, a responsible and aware celebration—we are contributing to the peace and uplifting of the whole world. For peace cannot be implemented through war, and love cannot be sown with hatred. Peace and harmony in the world are the results of the peace and harmony in each of our own hearts.

And so, Art of Living clubs' International Peace Day celebration did not only reinforce our need to make peace a *reality*, but it put the ball right in our court—each of our own—and gave us the most accessible and effective means to make it happen, to affect change starting *right where we are*. Next time, do come and be a part of it.

For more information, contact Art of Living club at: [artofliv@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:artofliv@ssmu.mcgill.ca)

by Alexandra Alexandrescu

Alexandra earned her undergrad degree from Concordia and is part of Concordia's Art of Living club.



Photograph by Gracia

In our next issue Natalya will be reviewing the Tuesday Night Cafe Theatre production of the David Auburn play "PROOF," which runs October 20-23 and 27-30 at the TNC theatre located in Morris Hall.

Why not go see the play, read the review, and see if you agree with Natalya?



Share a **HOT VEGAN LUNCH** at the  
**RABBIT HOLE CAFÉ**  
 3625 Aylmer, downstairs  
 Fridays, 12:30-2:00 pm  
 Donations of \$1 or 1 non-perishable food item  
 are appreciated



### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Food bank and nutritional tips and  
 support  
 3625 Aylmer, 2nd floor  
 Fridays 1-5 pm  
 call 398-4886 or email

### McGill Student Parents' Network

and Chaplaincy Service

offer support to

students who are parents:

informal childcare, babysitting,

and friendly visits to households.

Also monthly support group meetings with

activities for kids & social events.

Interested families please contact us:

398-4104



### Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting

Social get-togethers for Sikh students

Newman Centre, 3484 Peel

Contact Manjit Singh,

Sikh Chaplain

lo.man@sympatico.ca

697-3527



### Why Not Contact the Sikh Students Association

mcgill\_ssa@hotmail.com



### Buddhist Meditation

McGill Chaplaincy

3600 McTavish, #4400

Wednesdays, 3-4 pm

2:45 pm instruction,

discussion and Q&A



### Paroisse Ca- tholique/Catholic Parish

Notre-Dame-de-La-  
Salette

3535, avenue du Parc  
844-0258

ParoisseND-  
Salette@bellnet.ca

lundi au vendredi:

### New Earth Voices

*Singing is good for the soul!*

*Our small choir rehearses Tuesdays*

*at 5:00—6:40 pm*

*Sight-reading experience helpful,*

*but not always required.*

*Our music is varied,*

*the atmosphere friendly*

*Call McGill Chaplaincy: 398-4104*



The Muslim Students Association of McGill

We offer: weekly study circles, free Islamic  
 educational materials, services during  
 Ramadan, lectures/conferences, prayer fa-  
 cilities, library (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

### 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

### Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

An urban Church in the heart of Montreal  
 Serving the needs of Mennonites and friends

Sunday Worship: 11 am

120 Duluth E.

849-9039

www.mfmontl.ca



The Muslim Students' Association (MSA) of  
 McGill would like to invite you to visit our

### Islam Awareness Days

to be held in the Shatner Ballroom

October 20-21



Curious about what Christians believe?  
 And WHY?

### Alpha

is an internationally known popular  
 introduction to Christianity.

Videos, discussion and free supper  
 (veg. option)!



Monday, supertime at the  
 Yellow Door (3625 Aylmer)  
 call 398-4104

or email

nbrotherwood@montreal.anglican.ca

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

in the basement of the United Theological  
 College (3521 University)

Call Gwenda Wells for more info:

398-4104



### Newman Centre

3484 Peel St, 398-4106

newmancentre@mcgill.ca

www.newmancentre.org

### Roman Catholic Mass:

• Tuesday through Friday 4 pm

• Saturday 5 pm

• Sunday 11 am

(Saturday mass is followed by a community  
 supper: suggested donation \$3.50)

### Student Nights at St. John's

*Students, faculty and staff are welcome at  
 monthly student nights*

*and other activities*

~

*For more information, call*

*St. John's Lutheran Church: 844-*

*6297*

*Or email*



### Sharing Silence

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:30-2 pm

Tuesday 2:30-3 pm and Thursday 12:30-1 pm

in the

Religious Studies Birks Building Chapel

For those who care to pause and share  
 in the beauty and simplicity of silence

The only requirement for participation is that one  
 arrives, is present, and leaves in silence

### Montreal Diocesan Theological College

3473 University Ave.

We have daily Christian worship:

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!



*Radix publishes ads for groups and events with a  
 spiritual theme--for FREE! Email us to submit an  
 ad of under 30 words--radix@yours.com*



This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.