

The abandonment of religion – but there is hope

'Religion is the opium of the people' as Karl Marx said. We should consider the full quote which puts a different context on things.

***“Religion is the** sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the **opium of the people**“*

but I can think of far worse forms of opium, such as consumerism, self-centredness, greed, false values, and general intellectual vacuity.

On yet another rainy and grey morning I have decided to take a break from my 5G – smart meter – extinction rebellion mindset and listen to some good old Bible preaching.

As a background to this, this morning I was listening to talk about people who feel that religious services should be abolished in schools. They may have been abandoned already so far as I know. One of the speakers suggested that instead of having religious services why don't we teach people how to be a good person. That is a good idea but where do we get our idea of goodness from or take the idea of good and evil? Surely, from the Bible, which is a brilliant summary of how to lead our lives in harmony.

My favourite religious radio station, which I often listen to, is called Trans-World Radio. It is available on most platforms, including the Internet itself, and FreeView which I normally watch. Every morning we have a talk by Colin Smith, a Scottish minister. His words are unfailingly riveting and relevant. This morning, I'm listening to his sermon "cultivating peace" which I will summarize here. [The whole sermon is worth a watch](#). It is 45 min 24 seconds in length.

But if you don't have the time here is my appreciation.

We need to be (blessed) peacemakers. How do we get peace in ourselves? Some key points (with reference to scriptures but see video)

be prepared to give up your rights.

We are all territorial creatures to a certain extent and have our pride so to hold on tenuously to a position is not the ideal starting point for any peacemaking attempt.

Move toward the trouble

Peace cannot be made by moving backwards from a problem. It will only delay it. Jesus is our savior and our example in confronting situations.

recognize where there is a problem

We may want to think there is peace when there is not. Don't put a piece of plaster over a septic wound. It is not 'anything for a peaceful life'. This is particularly a male tendency. Avoidance prepares the way for greater trouble. 'I need to get honest and real'

Deal with conflict early

To save greater collateral damage at a later stage. We need to control the situation and not let it get so big it controls us. Watch out when the strife began – perhaps a harsh word or distrust. Don't let a problem fester in your mind.

practice restraint especially with your tongue.

"be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger" James 1.19 Do we really need to 'dump' or 'unload'. I have to say what I think – really? Why not hold back. Where is the harm? If we were told all the wrong things we have done through all time we would be devastated and would never recover. The fruit

of the spirit includes self control.

Prepare for a long journey

Peacemaking is a process not an event. The problem can go back many generations to the beginning of time even – our very nature – our DNA.

Take a step towards peace

‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink’ Reach out with an act of kindness. the longest journey starts with one small step. What could we do to make a second step possible?

aim at humility, not humiliation

We make peace not by a triumph of power but a triumph of love. Do I want revenge, do I want vindication of my own views or do we want peace. The three alternatives are completely different. If you want one solution you cannot have the other. Do we give our adversary room to move.

trust the injustice you have suffered to God

We endure sorrows whilst being treated unfairly. Jesus suffered and gave us his example. When He was reviled He did not revile again. He did not threaten. He did not seek His own vindication. Our vindication is with God not with man. Jesus bore our sins.

#Pray for peace

#9 share the Gospel of peace.

As shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. Sharing the Gospel with someone could be the biggest act you can do for peace.

cherish peace wherever you find it.

Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.