

Dialogue – the right to be wrong!

Thought for the Day

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Broadcast on Radio Scotland, 20 August 2003

If good weather is evidence of divine approval, then clearly the latest initiative to promote better understanding between Scotland's many faith communities is on the right track. Last Sunday a group of religious leaders, including the Moderator, a bishop, and a Hindu priest, went down the water to the new Buddhist retreat on the Holy Isle, to share their thoughts and experiences on a range of issues that concern people of faith.

This is only one of a wide range of events and projects aimed at bringing people of all faiths and none closer together. Some use football as the focus, some use music; some are based in schools, some in the workplace. Hospitals are being required to adopt new policies to ensure that the spiritual needs of all their patients and carers are addressed. Schools are reassessing the place of formal religion in assemblies and other ceremonies.

All of these steps are important and welcome. But change has go deeper than just the programme, and affect people's attitudes. Sometimes those who promote equality and diversity do so only in their own terms – as if other religions were just slightly unorthodox forms of Christianity.

They are not! We all have to accept that there are real differences between us, and that even if we believe that others are so wrong as to risk their very souls, even so they deserve the right to be wrong!

When we reflect on the appalling news this week from Baghdad and Jerusalem, and are reminded of the Lockerbie atrocity, how grateful we must be that we live in a society which values dialogue and respects difference, in which we can work for peace and return from prayer without becoming the victim of a hatred that outreaches reason, in which we respect others, often not in spite of their differences, but even because of those very differences.