

## In the face of evil: the importance of good religion

May and June were awful months in many ways as two of our great cities London and Manchester had appalling acts of barbarism and terrorism inflicted on them. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to all who have been affected, especially those who have lost loved ones.

People have asked me 'what is the place of religion in a world seemingly characterised by evil and violence?' I think religion can provide two possible sources of help:

First, people of faith can provide the space, maybe in our buildings, where we can remember those who have suffered and died, and begin the process of making sense of the senseless.

Secondly, we can recommit ourselves to the practice of good religion. This is important because the attacks were undertaken in the name of religion gone badly wrong; toxic even. Good religion always seeks to care. Good religion looks after the vulnerable, **'protecting the widows and orphans in their distress,'** (James 1, 27). Good religion should always strive for peace and justice. Good religion's concern is equity, tolerance and inclusivity. Good religion refuses to discriminate based on human identity markers but instead seeks to always, affirm. Or at least that's my understanding of good religion.

Religion must play its part in seeking to answer the problem of evil. The answer to religion badly practised can never be no religion, but instead must include good, healthy and life enhancing religion.

The place where we begin the practice of good religion is at home in our families and communities. The word religion means to re-ligature, to bind, heal and re-build.

Good religion is an ideal worth striving for.

Andrew