

RELIGIONS

stepping-stones on a

soul's journey

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter de Ruyter was born in South Africa in 1951 of Dutch migrants. In 1964 he moved with his family to Sydney, Australia, where he did his secondary schooling before going on to study at Sydney University. In 1975 he graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree, which was used to obtain entrance to a specialized Nursing Course offered by Prince Henry Hospital. He graduated as a Registered Nurse two years later.

He worked in several major Sydney teaching hospitals, and did a second Certificate in 'Nursing Unit Management' at St. Vincent's Hospital. He then worked in Pathology, which provided a comprehensive experience in a multitude of orthodox diagnostic procedures. This background produced an excellent base from which to enter the Naturopathic arena.

It was during the latter years of his Nursing career that Peter became increasingly interested in Alternative or Complementary approaches to true healing. This desire led him to undertake courses in Reiki, Homeopathy, Iridology, Bach Flower Therapy, Tissue Salt Therapy, Diet, Massage and finally to major in Medical Herbalism, having studied this in a Diploma Course at the Southern Cross Herbal College, under the renown herbalist, Denis Stewart.

Peter started practise as a Natural Therapist in 1982, specializing in Medicinal Herbs, at the 'Village Healing & Growth Center' in Paddington. He consulted from there for two years before being invited to practise at the former 'Euroa Center' in Balmain. He ran a highly successful practise from this Center for 12 years; between 1984 – 1996. He subsequently worked from several different clinics, and presently operates from Randwick.

From the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Peter was involved in helping people deal with this health challenge, using a wide range of natural therapeutic techniques. Although no cures have been achieved, these protocols provided immense benefits to many people, frequently stabilizing them for long periods of time, as well as greatly increasing quality of life. Over the years, about 25% of Peter's practise involved dealing with HIV/AIDS clients. The remaining 75% of his clients came for a range of ill-health conditions, including cancer.

Peter has presented his work at local and national conferences, and lectured to a host of lay groups. In the early days of the AIDS epidemic, he organized and facilitated many intensive workshops, and several self-help groups in which people learned a range of techniques through which to help regain their health. In a number of radio and TV appearances, similar topics were addressed. He is author of 'Coping With Candida', which went to a second edition. His next book, titled 'Living with HIV/AIDS – a practical guide to staying well' was published by Allen & Unwin in 1996.

After 28 years of consulting with thousands of clients, Peter has recently taken a Sabbatical, during which time he finished this, his third book. Peter now offers a range of training workshops in the area of natural health, as well as some part-time consulting. Drawing on both orthodox and complementary methods, he finds himself well placed to continue being of service in a truly Wholistic manner.

Religions – stepping-stones on a soul's journey

If God didn't exist, it would be necessary to invent Him.

Voltaire.

We live on a shrinking planet in regard to resources and living space, and human nature being what it is, when scarcity hits it tends to trigger within us an aggressive and destructive response, rather than wanting to equitably share what's left. Unfortunately, far too often religious differences tend to only add an inflammatory component to that equation.

It is high time for religions to see beyond their differences; to band together, and thereby offer a basis through which to unite humanity in an ability to live together in peace and harmony, via our points of commonality rather than our differences.

This e-Booklet explores some of the dynamics of this Journey we're on, and ways in which we can achieve a more unified and peaceful way of co-existing together, where the core principles each religion espouses - of compassion, love and mutual respect - are finally truly lived out.

Religious inconsistencies

When we look at the vast range of religions on offer, and from the stance of an outsider, one is confronted by a lot of bewildering inconsistencies. When such discrepancies are explored from a rational perspective, it could be easy to dismiss all religions outright. However, that would also be throwing out a valuable baby with the bathwater.

It would appear that many humans have an innate need to be able to tap into or believe in an extra dimension to this human existence. This is particularly the case when the Journey of life becomes a bit bumpy. When rationality alone leaves us floundering for meaningful answers to life's inevitable suffering; when disasters in our lives drive us to the brink of despair, it would appear that invoking a Higher Dimension to life can help people not just cope with, but also survive what life may have thrown at them.

Such a deep, almost instinctual drive in – not all – but certainly most humans is what makes Voltaire's opening quote so pertinent. So, one could argue that a need for a belief in a Higher Power appears to be an innate aspect to the human condition. However, having said

that, it's also obvious – especially to an outsider looking in – that the various institutions of religion arising from such an innate human need have far too often also become a disconcerting source of further suffering within the human family.

So, now what? Do the pains versus the gains caused by religions ultimately make these institutions a worthwhile component to the human experience?

Well, let's explore these points in greater depth and see if some clarity can be reached on this vital topic, especially on an increasingly crowded planet with ever shrinking resources, as well as the many social inequalities found in the majority of the human population. If this planet – let alone its cargo of humans – is to survive the coming decades, the wide array of inconsistencies found within all the major religions do need to be resolved.

Within this discussion, you'll also notice an atypical usage of capital letters for certain words, indicating that the reader is being alerted to perceive a Higher Dimension to what is being discussed. In other words, such capitalized words are being utilized to signal the reader that they need to approach the concept or point under discussion from a much Higher level of Awareness or Consciousness than we normally use in everyday life.

Blinkers as part of the human condition

Before we can allow empowering changes to occur in our lives, perhaps we do need to take a searching look at certain beliefs we hold about ourselves and others, and especially at those perspectives and ideologies which are so deeply engrained in our consciousness that they may no longer be 'visible'. Such fundamental, psychological 'blinkers' appear to be an inherent aspect of our human condition here on planet Earth.

Since these sort of 'blind spots' seem to come with the territory, it is important to be able to acknowledge that this is how our reality seems to operate here. The point is not so much that we have blinkers, but rather that we need to work at discovering, exposing and becoming fully aware of them. Once aware, then can we start to make different choices, thus allowing for change to occur.

Why are we so fearful of difference?

On sociological levels, we recognize that we all like different foods, clothes, entertainment, art.... Indeed, our Western consumerist cultures would implode if we didn't foster such differences. This push to constantly differentiate product and other aspects in our lives is fundamentally accepted, and seen as a good thing.

Yet when it comes to differences in our beliefs, we humans do a very strange thing. Suddenly we insist we must all believe in the same Higher Being and Holy Book. And then,

depending on who we are talking to, naturally *their* brand of 'God', and *their* particular brand of Holy Book is touted as *The* one to accept and live one's life by. Why do we humans make this sudden illogical leap when it comes to our beliefs? We really do need to think about it!

It's not about 'religion-bashing'

One point needs to be made crystal clear here. Although certain confronting things will be said about religion in this e-Booklet, please understand that the aim is definitely not to indulge in some aimless 'religion-bashing'. For many people, religion remains a very empowering institution and construct through which to live their lives. Most religions have also achieved amazingly positive feats along the way.

They have been the source and inspiration to much of the greatest art ever produced by humanity. Most religions have cared for the homeless, the ill, the dispossessed and the troubled. Much good has indeed been done by so many religions. This is completely acknowledged and accepted.

However, existing in duality as we do, it's inevitable that religion will also have its dark side, and *that* particular aspect to most religions has unfortunately also been the source of much suffering and pain for humanity. This too needs to be acknowledged and accepted before we can move forward in as positive and empowered a manner as possible.

Witness this phenomenon in the ugly back-lash by ultra-conservative USA Christian groups against Oprah Winfrey's YouTube discussion groups, which explored a range of New Age or Spiritual topics. She's had to endure vitriolic hate-mail – even being labeled the Anti-Christ! - simply because she had chosen to air a broader view on what this human life is all about from a Spiritual perspective.

That's why it is important to try and understand what drives such negative responses to another's point of view, particularly when this comes from people who proclaim a loving God. So please, do keep these statements in mind as you read this e-Booklet.

The aim is not to destroy or replace religion. The aim is to be able to see it as clearly as possible for what it is, and thus give people the ability to make other choices – if appropriate. Or let people continue working within their present, chosen system, but to do so with new insights on how they can nevertheless still empower their human Journey in many ways, perhaps not formally condoned by most religions.

Unfortunately, the bottom-line is that despite all the good religion has done it has also been a fundamental source of so much of humanity's woes. Until we can look that fact in the

face and deal with it, there probably will be no hope for humanity to ever live in peace and harmony.

Human diversity – trying to squeeze a square peg into a round hole

But getting back to the point made earlier, the reality is.....

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