



The 60 Second Adventures in Religion

Religion as social control

David Mitchell:

Sixty second adventures in religion. Number one, religion as social control.

Karl Marx was a German philosopher, economist and the least funny of the Marxes.

In the snappily-titled 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' he famously called religion 'the opium of the people.'

... in that religion was not only used by those in power to oppress the workers, but it also made them feel better about being oppressed, when they couldn't afford real opium.

He thought that if the comfort blanket of religion was taken away, at last the workers would have to do something about their terrible condition.

In Marx's dream of a communist revolution, religion would be abolished and the workers would be so happy being equal they simply wouldn't need it anymore.

But unfortunately for Marx, the revolution in Russia came after he had died and gone to wherever it is atheists go.

And by then, Stalin and his gang had proved there were lots of other ways to oppress people, which didn't have any of the fun bits of religion... or indeed opium.