

## Prejudice

My wife's mother ran holiday accommodation in the 1950s. As she needed the income, so she had to go along with what her customers wanted. This could lead to some difficult challenges: like one child who had limited tastes in food. When served one of her meals, he said: 'I don't like it!', even before knowing what it was, or ever having seen it or tasted it before. That boy was 'Passing judgement before trial or proper enquiry'; as my dictionary defines the word 'prejudice'.

There is another word that our culture associates with prejudice. It is the word 'stereotype'. The old definition of this word comes from the days when printing was done by fixing text on a metal plate, in order to print as many unchanging copies as was wanted. So a stereotype was: 'A relief printing plate cast in a mould made from an original plate'. Although very different from the way we use the word these days, that phrase: 'cast in a mould', does fit the way we can use the word stereotype to express the idea of something fixed in advance, and in a way that cannot be changed.

Our modern culture whispers to us that 'Passing judgement before trial or proper enquiry', or being 'cast in a mould', are automatically bad. But does a better voice tell us to sometimes disagree? Would we jump off a cliff, or sample cyanide, in order to avoid passing judgement before trial or making a proper enquiry? That modern liberal cliché: 'Try anything once', sounds open minded and tolerant; but I wouldn't apply it to cliffs and cyanide. Indeed, there are many things which we quite rightly judge in advance of experience and have fixed views about. They include those decisions based on moral values that have been shared by peoples and cultures throughout history. These values are an inseparable part of our Humanity and we should ensure that they remain set in an unchangeable mould.

So when a politician recently described the potential whipping and hanging of a woman for marrying a Christian as: 'Having no place in today's world'; he was wrong. It isn't about the changing fashion of 'Today's' or any other 'World'; it is because Evil is wrong: yesterday, today and forever. That's my prejudice.

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