



# Prevent?

At the time of writing it appears that Jo Cox MP was murdered in an attack motivated by strongly held political views. The UK is sadly not a stranger to such acts: Those of us who lived through the 70s and 80s will remember the frequent news of terrorism then. There are a few things I am glad about. Firstly that the nation is united in outrage at this murder. But secondly, that this tragic event has brought to peoples' attention the fact that not all terrorist attacks are perpetrated by Muslims.

## *Religious extremism?*

The Government's 'Prevent' strategy aims to identify and re-educate people at risk of taking part in acts of terrorism due to extremist views, and this explicitly includes non-religious motives. So, for example, there are people who believe so vehemently in animal rights that they are prepared to put a bomb on a scientist's doorstep. The British value of 'tolerance' guards the right to hold opposing views, but not to the extent of attacking those who disagree.

## *Are you religious?*

I think there are some views which are held so fervently that they might as well be called 'religion'. For example,

we probably know people whose passion for football approaches a religion: it fills their thoughts, determines their routines, matters more to them than anything else. But if I were to ask you 'what is your religion', you might be surprised to hear it defined in those sort of terms. If you have a faith, do hold it so fervently? If you have a passion, is it really your religion? What is a religion? Is it something you would die for? Or kill for?

## *A religion to die for*



I hope you find the suggestion that you might murder for what you believe repulsive. But you might feel that whatever is your 'passion' is worth

dying for. I want to draw a parallel with Jesus: he obviously believed strongly enough in what he was doing to be prepared to die for it. But his death was more than that. It wasn't just a tragic end to a great passion, or an example of fortitude to the death. Jesus' death actually achieved what he set out to do: it was his goal. A suicide bomber may take out a few of their 'opponents'. But Jesus died so that his opponents might be forgiven.

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