



## Trump, the Mail & the mixed bag

Along with just about the entire British nation, I find Donald Trump for the most part pretty repulsive.

This latest needless provocation of Iran seems like the first really dangerous thing he's done, but he is pretty clearly infantile in so much of what he does; his treatment of women is appalling; I could go on, and yet...

And yet, after decades of steady deterioration in Western relations with North Korea, at last there seems to be some progress. Of course, nothing is certain, but any chance of reducing the chances of a nuclear war has to be a good thing... Clinton, Bush, Obama all got nowhere: now there seems to be movement.

I hesitate to praise him for anything, because the whole package is so appalling, but, actually, why not?

Closer to home, I find much of the Daily Mail's coverage pretty awful. Their attack on judges as 'enemies of the people' was a particular low, in my book, but you could also pick up on their coverage of immigration and much more. And yet...

... it seems to me that their campaign about reducing our use of plastics has to be applauded. They were banging on about it years before Planet Earth II hit the screens. Again, it was twenty years ago now, but they famously took the right, and risky, line about naming the killers of Stephen Lawrence.

Actively to praise Donald Trump or the Daily Mail for something can seem risky, and yet why?

It surely expresses the obvious, that pretty much all of us are mixed bags; there's goodness, for sure, but there's selfishness as well. That is the nature of the human condition, as the Bible expresses in its stories from Eden onwards. But we should acknowledge the good when we see it.

The curious feature of social media, which you would think would bring the world together, is that it has actually fostered division. People send out a Tweet, which is 'liked' by a host of their Twitter followers, in an endless round of confirming their own bias and prejudice, at the expense of due consideration of the possible merits of positions other than their own.

After a social media campaign, Oxford University students last week forced the removal of a portrait of Theresa May from the geography department; the portrait had been one in a series of notable alumnae. Their justification: May's role in the Windrush scandal, as Home Secretary and Prime Minister.

There has rightly been a backlash. Windrush is important, but May's sheer achievements in being only the second female prime minister, or—to take a liberal cause— her crucial advocacy of gay marriage... Is that not worth putting into the equation?

Seeing the positive in people from whom we instinctively shy away protects us from blinkered tribalism.

*May 2018. for the Train is a short column by the Reverend Robert Stanier, the vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train. You can also read "Thought for the Train" at [www.surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://www.surbitonchurch.org.uk).*