

Lightening the Darkness of Hatred

Thought for the Day

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Did you get lots of messages this Wednesday about the supposed spookiness of 9.09 a.m. on the 9th of the 9th '09? I once heard it suggested that one of the distinctive features of the human race is the ability to recognise patterns, though personally I prefer to think of us as *homo ludens* – the only animal with a sense of humour!

That said, we all do regard anniversaries as significant, and it would be wrong to let today pass without mentioning that it is the 11th day of the ninth month – a date that will live in infamy as 9/11. Because anniversaries matter also to those who hate us, security will be heightened today, perhaps even more than because of this week's verdict on another cell of would-be terrorists.

But we can find better role-models. There are many thousands of people across Scotland and elsewhere whose lives have been enriched by their contact with the Rev Ernest Levy, who sadly passed away recently. Ernest survived no fewer than seven concentration camps, including the most notorious, Auschwitz and Belsen, where he believed he had seen Anne Frank through the barbed wire.

Most people will remember Ernest for his first-hand account of the horrors of the Holocaust, and his warnings against the slippery slope of intolerance, accompanied by an almost superhuman refusal to bear a grudge even against his own tormentors. Amazingly, the Nazi he spoke of most in his countless talks to schools, churches, and others, was not one of those who tried to kill him, but the guard at Belsen who saved his life.

His book, *The Single Light*, tells the incredible story of finding an empty sardine-tin, and using the remaining drop of oil, for spiritual, rather than much-needed physical sustenance, lighting a single light that extinguished the total darkness. He still had that tin, and lit it again at the launch of his book in the Scottish Parliament.

It is everyone's loss that he will never light it again.

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