

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024

I was born just after the Second world War. My father had been a soldier serving in North Africa and then Palestine. We grew up watching films of the war like 'The Dam Busters' and 'Reach for the Sky', comforting ourselves that such terrible things no longer happened. That sense of security has stayed with me all my life – until now.

Of course, there have been smaller wars since (although a war is never minor to those in the firing line); but today the air is thickening with warnings about the wider escalation of conflict.

How do we make sense of history repeating itself on so many killing fields? Have we made no progress since the Second World War?

It's true that life is immeasurably better for millions more people. Yet in spite of such human progress bullets and bombs continue to lacerate bodies and landscapes all over the world. As the father of a talented young woman, killed by a bomb in Ukraine, cried out on this programme last Wednesday, "How is it possible to DO something like this in the 21st Century?"

Whether one believes in God or not perhaps there's a spiritual dimension to all of this, a power of darkness militating against the well-being of all humanity. I don't just mean the darker side of human nature. I mean an external and metaphysical force frustrating peace and goodwill on earth.

In the wilderness years before Jesus embarked upon his life's work he came face to face with the power of darkness. He had a personal encounter with someone who threw everything at him – that's the meaning of the Greek word 'diabolical'.

In the second of his three trials in the wilderness the Devil threw at Jesus the temptation that has seduced so many leaders. “Open your eyes” he said, “And I will give you ALL the inhabited earth – and with it both power and glory!”.

Regardless of how Jesus dealt with this it’s difficult to deny that the temptation for some to dominate other peoples’ lands is a repetitive strain of history, and as strong today as it was two thousand years ago.

It’s as if we are a people still sitting in a degree of darkness and waiting for a Great Light to dispel it.

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