

Too Unspeakable to Speak About

Thought for the Day

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There's really only one thing to speak about this week, but some things are just too unspeakable to speak about.

We can be stunned into silence by the very fact of what happened in Paris last Friday night, and find it difficult to find words that can console the bereaved, or comfort the injured, or reassure the frightened. But there just are no words for the evil of the perpetrators.

By contrast with the atrocity in Paris, the way I've spent the week pales into insignificance, but for me there's a connection. In what many of us are inclined to think of as this tolerant country, I never thought it would be necessary for the First Minister to issue a resounding condemnation of antisemitism, any more than that she would have to condemn the abuse directed at Muslims that has followed the abhorrent actions of a tiny number of rogue individuals.

But after one of her MSPs forwarded an antisemitic caricature, for which she has now apologised, calling it "repellent and offensive", the First Minister did feel she had to say that she "will not tolerate antisemitism or religious or racial hatred of any kind at any level in our society".

For me, the two stories are connected by a mind-set that sees the world in black and white, all or nothing, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, the friend of my enemy is my enemy, and whoever is not with me is against me. But the world isn't like that – it's all shades of grey.

It's obvious surely, that everyone is different, but we fall into stereotyping when we hold all members of a community responsible for the actions of a few.

The first group of Syrian refugees arrived in Scotland yesterday. Let's make them welcome. We've all seen too much inhumanity in this past week; let's not add to it. Let's not victimise the victims all over again.