14th October 2023

Nightmare

"But, as it is in a nightmare …
we can't utter a word or produce one sound."
Virgil, *Aeneid, book 12*

My friend, the late David Ogston, was a minister and poet. I always saw him as a confident, well-rounded and efficient person. But I was surprised to hear him say one day, when reflecting on his ministry, that his recurrent nightmare (in the days before word-processors) was to be staring at a blank sheet of paper in his typewriter, right up to the time he was due to leave for church to preach his Sunday sermon, because he had nothing to say. Today, I feel compelled to write something about the situation in Israel-Palestine, but, staring at a blank screen, I realise I feel the same.

I could say a lot! I could condemn the terrorist atrocities perpetrated by Hamas. I could rail against long-standing illegal oppression by Israel in the West Bank and in Gaza. But I can't. It's not my nightmare as I stare at a blank page. It's the nightmare of war that leaves me with no words.

So, I weep. I cry in despair with those who have lost their homes and their loved ones. I am consumed with anger because of the hopelessness I feel, and the hellishness of the effects of the destruction I see. I have no words. So, I will pray in silence, and I invite you to do so too …

A prayer for today

Lord, let words of hope and love be found
to challenge the nightmare of war and destruction,
so that our children, and their children, and their children; s children,
can live in peace.
Amen, and amen, and amen.

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