23rd February 2023

Reflection

"A soul without reflection, like a pile
Without inhabitant, to ruin runs."
Edward Young, *Night Thoughts (1742)*

The 18th century English poet, Edward Young, encourages us to reflect. And so we should. Reflecting, thinking deeply about what's happening to us and around us, rather than blundering on unthinkingly, is important in all aspects of live. Without reflection, he suggests, the "pile" that is our existence, has no real inhabitant, so it is doomed to fall into ruin. But it is another kind of "reflection" that's in my mind today.

I was encouraged by one of our church's worship leaders who took "light" as the theme of a talk. "Jesus is your Light", he told us. Fine! I've heard that before. It's enshrined in the Gospels. I know it for myself. "But," he said, catching me off-guard, "rather than just reflecting that light – as we are called to do – we have to reflect that light in an *amplified* way. We can make the light bigger." A bold claim, I thought.

A lighthouse, he explained, works because it has light. However, the lights in the lighthouse – candlepower in the old days and relatively small electric bulbs now – would have little effectiveness if they were just stuck on top of a tall tower. They have to be amplified, made bigger, by a series of powerful prisms, reflectors, that surround the light, so it can be seen for miles around. The Light is there, he reminded us, and we have to be the reflectors that respond to that light. But through our design and purpose, we can make it bigger than could ever be imagined. As I look at my battery-powered torch, I know the truth of that. A little bulb looks puny when it's by itself. But put the torch together, have a powerful reflector in front of the bulb, and what an amazing resource you have.

Whatever we do, we have not created the light and do not possess it as our own. We are to be the reflectors that surround the light, not just to pass it on unchanged, like a ball bouncing off a wall, but to make it bigger, and stronger, and more effective than it has even been.

A soul without *that* kind of reflection is equally doomed to failure. For, what's the point of the Light if we keep it for ourselves, when it can shine through us, in powerful ways, to be seen for miles around.

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to believe I can make your Light even bigger today. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon Also available at https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com