

19th May 2023

Seeing

**"The vision of the eye is limited,
but the vision of the heart transcends all barriers
of time and space."**

Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balagha*

My reference to the World Snooker Championships a while back reminded me of a story I shared with you a couple of years ago around an incident when I was a young minister. Our Youth Club's table-top snooker table was stolen from the church in broad daylight, and nobody saw a thing. A six-feet-six by three-feet-three green snooker table (which would take more than one person to carry), along with cues, rests and balls, gone! A stolen snooker-table being carried through the parish, seen by no-one.

The police tell us that eye-witness evidence is notoriously unreliable. People *think* they saw what they didn't see, or didn't see what should be seen, or tell you that they've seen something which is completely different from what someone else thinks they've seen. Seeing, physical seeing, can be very dodgy. The "vision of the eye is limited" indeed.

But what about Imam Ali's "the vision of the heart"? Might we give ourselves to the possibility of a different kind of seeing? John Turnbull, an 18th century American poet, wrote this in his poem *McFingal*:

*For any man with half an eye,
What stands before him may espy;
But optics sharp it needs I ween,
To see what is not to be seen.*

The writer of the Bible's *Book of Proverbs* couches it differently, yet says the same thing: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

In all aspects of life, we should seek to see beyond the unreliability of "optics" to the "vision of the heart", so necessary if we are to be bold, creative, relevant and excited about a new future. Too often we choose *not* to see, or only to see what is expedient. In Church and society, politics and commerce, we need people to "see what is not seen", to be the visionaries who can open *our* eyes to a vista of new possibilities, so that the very "barriers of time and space" might be seen no more.

A prayer for today

*Lord, open my eyes, to see beyond seeing, to hope beyond hoping,
to know beyond knowing, and to believe beyond my human believing. Amen*