

24th June 2023

Intermittent

“That is our great need to-day, steady Christians – men and women you can count on. Many Christians are like intermittent springs. They flow to-day – but tomorrow you cannot get a thimbleful of religious activity out of the dried channel of their lives.”

*Francis Wayland, as reported by Josiah H Gilbert in
'Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers', 1895*

Francis Wayland was an American Baptist educator and economist, president of Brown University and pastor of the First Baptist Church in America, in Providence, Rhode Island. He seems to have developed a somewhat jaundiced view of the inconsistency of the commitment of some of the people he worked with. “Like intermittent springs,” he suggests. I hope that there were others who showed the opposite characteristic, and for whom commitment was in evidence.

No one likes inconsistency. If something is intermittent, it can't really be relied on. When it works, great! When it doesn't, disaster! My first car was like that. Its ability to start was intermittent. It was because (and I'm not making this up ...) the ring-gear on the flywheel wasn't engaging properly with the Bendix on the starting-motor. Sometimes it would start first time. Occasionally there was a clunking, grating sound and no firing of the engine. The old car was just intermittent.

Today, I set off on a short adventure – two weeks of work as Member in Residence in Iona Abbey. I thought, therefore, that my “Thought for the Day” pieces would have to be intermittent, or perhaps suspended for a while: too busy; iffy Broadband; dodgy Wi-Fi; workable one day but not the next – just like my old car. But, as much as I am able, I've decided that these reflections – as in Francis Wayland's metaphor – will be flowing tomorrow as much as they do today and did yesterday. At least I'll try ...

That means they will be immediate, for I've set myself the task of “being in the moment” while I'm on Iona, to reflect on what I see, what I feel and what I learn, day by day. Hopefully, it'll be more than a thimbleful that flows. But I know for sure that it will not be a channel drying up. There's no way *any* reflections are ever going to be intermittent as far as being on Iona is concerned ... You can count on that, Francis Wayland!

A prayer for today

May God's blessings flow to me, and through me and from me today. Amen