

8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## Light

**"In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe  
and enough shadows to blind those who don't."**

Blaise Pascal, *quoted in 'Thoughts from Earth' (2004)*

As a parish minister, I had the privilege of meeting, and learning from, some remarkable people. One of these was a High School English teacher who was a member of my congregation and edited my monthly church newsletter. Unmarried, she lived with her elderly mother in an Edinburgh flat, and today I am privileged to pay this tribute to her.

She was one of the most moral people I've ever known, and we had frequent discussions about personal and public behaviour, the nature of sin, ethical dilemmas, moral absolutes, and much more besides. Whatever benefit these conversations were to her, they were enlightening and informative for me. I shall never forget this remarkable woman.

The front room of her flat was a shrine to Victoriana. Among the paraphernalia and eccentric artefacts around the place, one thing stood out – well, actually, several. For she had numerous chess-sets on view, not one, or even two or three. Indeed, once when she was out of the room for a short time, I lost count at thirty-six. Yes, at least *thirty-six* chess-sets on display! There was an ebony and ivory one, a Star Wars set, Greek and Roman gods, Isle of Lewis Chess Men, English Kings and Queens, marble, wooden, porcelain, large, small ... Goodness, I can't remember them all.

When she returned and found me admiring the display, she told me she didn't actually play chess. "So why the chess-sets?" I enquired. "Black and white," she replied, "good and evil, light and dark, right and wrong. Chess reminds me that life is a constant struggle to get things right, and the challenge of light overcoming darkness."

Here was a woman who lived by Blaise Pascal's mantra. Like her mother, she had a deep faith, not a perfect faith, but a faith that gave her enough light to live by, a light that cast plenty shadows to know that there was still more work to be done to achieve a righteous level of living.

Thank God for a woman who showed her minister she had sufficient light to go on believing, to be unafraid of the shadows, and to live a healthy, questioning life, with a good, and Godly, and fascinating faith.

### **A prayer for today**

*Enough light? It would seem so – at least for now. Thank you. Amen*