

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## Quotations

**“Like your body, your mind also gets tired,  
so refresh it by wise sayings.”**

Ali bin Abi Talib, Nahjul Balagha, *Sayings* (7<sup>th</sup> century)

As you know, my “Thought for the Day” pieces always begin with a quotation. I’ve up picked many of these quotes over the years, but I’m not as well-read as I appear. The *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* is constantly at hand – as are other helpful compilations. Robert Andrews, in the preface to the *Columbia Dictionary of Quotations* (1993) which he edited, wrote:

*Books of quotations are an elemental model of how culture is perpetuated, the wisdom of the trite passed on to posterity, to be added to, edited and modified by subsequent generations.*

Quotations clearly matter, though I’m constantly aware of the warning from W H Auden in *The Dyer’s Hand and Other Essays* that:

*In general, when reading a scholarly critic, one profits more from his quotations than his comments.*

So, going back to the words of Ali bin Abi Talib, Nahjul Balagha, above ... if *your* mind needs to be refreshed “by wise sayings”, but you never get beyond my opening quotations, that’s absolutely fine by me!

But I was truly uplifted recently when I was told that a quotation of my own had been helpful to someone over a number of years. I wasn’t told what it was, or where it came from, or why it had mattered so much. But something I had written twenty-three years ago had clearly been of importance. It had stuck. It had been well used. It had made a difference. It turned out to be a wise saying that refreshed someone’s life. I’m amazed!

I don’t write in order that my words will be quoted. And I certainly don’t have any expectations that something I’ve written – in my books or these daily thoughts – will appear in a *Dictionary of Quotations*, in Oxford, or Columbia, or anywhere else. But if something sticks, or if something turns out to be of significance to someone, somewhere, even for a moment, that will always be enough.

Aren’t we *all* capable of that wise saying that someone might need in order find refreshment for their tired body, mind or spirit? I hope so ...

### **A prayer for today**

*If your Word is “A lamp for my feet and a light for my path”,  
perhaps I should quote that more often, Lord. Amen*