

3rd December 2020

Angels

**"Twice or thrice had I loved thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
Son in a voice, so in a shapeless flame,
Angels affect us oft, and worshipped be."**

John Donne, Air and Angels

Angels figure highly in the Christmas story: an angel came to Zechariah to tell him his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son, who would be John the Baptist; an angel came to Joseph with news that his "betrothed", Mary, would bear a son, to be called Emmanuel; an angel came to Mary, to tell her she'd give birth to the Saviour of the World, with Mary responding with the most amazing hymn of praise. Yes, indeed, angels figure highly ...

John Donne said, "Angels affect us oft and worshipped be." Did he mean now? Angels? Surely not. But then ...

I was visiting an elderly lady in the depths of winter when she surprised me by saying: "I had a visit from an angel yesterday. Indeed, she comes most days, and yesterday she trudged all the way to my house, *and* through two feet of snow." I looked sceptical. "Ah!" she continued. "That's my Postie! I don't even know her name. An angel should have a fancy name, but I think "The Postie" will just have to do." *Angels affect us oft ...*

In the hospice I spoke with a Roman Catholic man who talked warmly about his priest. "He came to see me when I was sick," he said. "Now, d'you know, I've had priests in the past who've been all over me with prayers, and sacraments, and holiness. So, to be honest, I was quite scared. But he just sat with me and held my hand. He promised he'd share a dram with me when I was better. And he came back to see me again, and again, and again. The man's a bloody angel, so he is." *Angels affect us oft ...*

Who are our Christmas angels this year? Gabriel, perhaps? Or an unnamed Postie or Priest? News to bring ... hope to impart ... tenderness to share ... faith to restore ... promises to make ... lives to change ...

Angels affect us oft, and worshipped be. That's why they figure highly in the Christmas story. Let's make sure they still figure highly today.

A prayer for today

Lord, make me open to a visit from an angel.

Design me to be an angel for others when it's needed. Amen

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