

2nd October 2022

Mistaken

"I beseech you ... think it possible that you may be mistaken."

Oliver Cromwell, *Letter to the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland (1650)*

As I reflect on visiting, I'm remembering funny things that happened, especially when it's "possible that you may be mistaken."

I'd arranged a day-out for some Youth Club youngsters on a Saturday morning. The local kids were notoriously unreliable, so I called on their homes on a wet Friday evening to confirm the arrangements for the following day. I rattled the letterbox of the final house, hoping the sound would be heard above the cacophony inside of a very loud TV *and* screaming kids. After a while the door opened, and before me stood a small boy, aged about six. "What?" he asked. "Is your mum in, son," I enquired. A disembodied female voice hollered, "Who is it, Kevin?" "A man, mammy." "Whit's he want?" "He didn't say?" "Ask him, dafty." At which point the diminutive intermediary enquired, "Ma mammy wants to know what're you wantin'" Before I'd a chance to explain, the strident voice from the back of the house shouted, "Come here ya wee toe-rag. Ah'll get it sorted." The little lad obediently disappeared down, leaving me in the open doorway. I expected to see "her indoors" appear, but, within minutes, the go-between had returned. He smiled at me, stretched out his hand, deposited some crushed notes and loose change in mine and announced, "That's the milk-money. Ma mammy's asking if you can leave an extra pint of blue-top tomorrow." And with that, the door swung shut in my face.

I stood there, wet coat, clerical collar, bemused frown, *and* a handful of unwanted cash. I *could* have hot-footed it and bought a fish-supper on the way home. But I didn't. I knocked again, and what transpired thereafter, and the convoluted explanations that ensued, could fill a chapter of a book, far less a one-page "Thought for the Day".

The Youth Club trip went well. The milk-money eventually got to the milkman. And the minister? I reckoned it was a good pastoral visit. But if, later on, the local milkman found that he'd been mistaken for the parish minister, I wish I'd been there to witness *that* doorstep encounter and be party to the convoluted explanations that might have ensued ...

A prayer for today

*Lord, I'm still smiling at the memory, trusting that your Spirit is still in that home,
making sense of things that are too convoluted for me. Amen*