

Dear Friends,

In a letter to his wife, who was staying with her sister in Liverpool in 1855, George MacDonald wrote from his family home in rural Aberdeenshire, "So I say to you sweet, this is not the end of it. May the wonderful Father draw out the end as he pleases. Oh God is so true and good and strong and beautiful! We give ourselves to him to do as he pleases—the God of mountain-lands—and snowdrops, of woman's beauty, and man's strength,—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I wish you saw the sky away to the North. It is so lovely—orange on the horizon, fading up through yellow & pale green into blue. This is at 11 o'clock at night."

The context was his wife was feeling slighted by her own Father, and George had been away from her for a little time while she looked after their four young bairns. He was indicating his full support as she felt slighted, and when he said, "this is not the end of it", he was saying her days ahead would be better than those before when they would be together again.

Referring to snowdrops was not an unusual thing for MacDonald to do. In fact, he thought of them as a holy replacement for the Christmas angels, calling them "angel-snowdrops". Snowdrops of course are the first flowers after winter's snow, a promise of better things ahead. C.S. Lewis captures this beautifully in his Narnia Chronicles. Here the witch imposes an enchanted, eternal winter on Narnia, which symbolizes death and decay. Nothing grows here including snowdrops, animals hibernate, and people crouch around fires rather than enjoying the outdoors. The witch's winter destroys life and beauty in Narnia. As snow falls, so does Narnia.

How much more wondrous, then, is the spring that occurs when Aslan arrives in Narnia. Of course, Christmas occurs before spring can come, because Christmas is the birth of Christ. It is Christmas that signals hope for us all: with the birth of Christ, we are given the hope of new life. Spring follows Christmas and all of a sudden, the woods start to come alive—snowdrops begin to bloom, springs and brooks chuckle once again, birds sing their songs, and delightful smells waft past on gentler breezes.

Aslan's spring is no ordinary spring, just as the witch's winter was no ordinary winter. The spring is just as enchanted as the winter, only now Narnia is experiencing the epitome of life rather than death. Such is the power of Aslan coming into Narnia, and Christ coming into our world and into our lives.

Snowdrops for me symbolise the power of nature and the power of grace. They look so vulnerable on the ground but are so resilient, such is the power at work in them. So, I close with MacDonald's fragrant poem 'The Holy Snowdrops' which he compares to the Christmas angels:

*Of old, with goodwill from the skies,
The holy angels came;
They walked the earth with human eyes,
And passed away in flame.*

*But now the angels are withdrawn,
Because the flowers can speak;
With Christ, we see the dayspring dawn
In every snowdrop meek.*

*God sends them forth; to God they tend;
Not less with love they burn,
That to the earth they lowly bend,
And unto dust return.*

*No miracle in them hath place,
For this world is their home;
An utterance of essential grace
The angel-snowdrops come.*



May we hear the Angel voices throughout the year ahead.

Happy New Year greetings,

Rev John