

BC – AD

*This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.*

*This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.*

*This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.*

*And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect*

*Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.*

Poetry at best is just Maths using words rather than numbers.

In UA Fanthorpe's poem words and numbers meet at 0 AD,
nothing AD, when nothing happened
and paradoxically everything happened.

For true Mathematicians nothing and its flipside infinity
are the holy grail, to be whispered of at a respectful distance:
take off your shoes, bow your heads:
you are standing on hallowed ground.

Drawn from two different Gospel time frames,
Fanthorpe's farm workers and Persian astrologers,
chanced upon nothing by starlight in the stable.

They too would be counted as nothings, probably missed out
by the census when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Shepherds broke the Sabbath
watching their flocks by night and day, 24/7.

Wandering into Gentile territory to rescue lost lambs,
they'd be deemed unclean by strict Jewish law: outcasts.

The Persian astrologers were outcasts from the very start,
Gentiles crossing the treacherous Arabian sands on camels,
risky ships of the desert, seeking the ultimate asylum

who is nothing less than Christ.

The Daily Mail would have given them short shrift.

Mere nothings who came to nothing in the stable
and found everything: outcasts definitely cast in.

I read a cross review in the Christmas Church Times
fiercely denouncing child-centred education.

I know from personal experience that the current fad
for child-led feeding is a very messy experience.

Yet Christmas reminds us that the immortal, invisible
omnipotent, omniscient, God-only wise chose to
abandon all that heady status to be child-led and child-centred.

We walk haphazard by starlight here this morning,
carrying with us some pretty terrible darkness.

We are surprised by Christ's tremendous, marvellous light
beaming out across the millennia from Nothing AD
shining and cheering us nothings in the most unlikely places.