

As it's getting close to Xmas'77, and as most folks have to do with angels only at Xmas and then only in tinsel and Xmas-card form, and as artist Marjorie Michael and I are to do an angel Sunday-a.m. program or service or worship in N.Westch. Unitarian-Universalist Church, this thinksheet is rough notes on angels.

1. Heaven hung low over the ancient world, and it was a short trip for angels to earth. Then "heaven" became merely the "sky," and there were no angels to make the trip; now the "sky" has become "space," heaven reinhabited---this time with UFOs and "the Force" always with R2D2 and the occult returned as astrology and necromancy and "energy-fields" and auras--all sorts of creatures between the ultimate and the intimate, between God (and therefore less than God) and us (and therefore more than we are). Hypertrophied technology, whose fascination lured us into spiritual amnesia, has become at once ambiguous and ancillary to spirit. In short, God may not be back yet, but the angels are. For "the angelic" as the interstice between the divine and the human is a category that never, in human culture, remains unattended to for long; and that is why "angels" is one of the 101 "Great Ideas" in the 52-vol. GREAT BOOKS OF THE WESTERN WORLD (vol.1 of the set, which is therefore vol.1 of the SYNTOPICON).

2. "Angel," the Gk. word for "messenger," signals that the furniture between heaven and earth addresses our hunger for meaning-given, i.e. for "messages" from beyond, from the more-than-we-are; technically, for "revelation" from God. The message may be carried by somebody God sends, i.e. an "emissary"; or God may make a do-it-yourself job of it, and come himself [=Christmas, which conflates the two: Christmas angels + the Baby Jesus as "Immanu-El," "God with us"(slides 2,6,7,16,19,20,22,36,40)]. Now, an angel is not only an announcer, but an ambassador with responsibility for communicating the Government's message (so, a political metaphor). In SPACE WARS, we're anxious about R2D2's continued existence under threat [because the crafty SFers have seduced us into falling in love with one more bucket of bolts] but also about R2D2's salvific message: unless it's effectively delivered, the human world, and "the Force" which means us well, will lose: "the Force" [modeled on Jesus at the end of the Gospel of Mt.] will lose a battle, and humanity will lose the war and cease to exist. The message within this message is: Angels, far from being mere tinsel, are not even optional.

3. What everyday experience lies behind and within angels? (1) The experience of separation and loss because (a) presence is withdrawn from us and (b) we, by our betrayals, separate ourselves from God, from each other, and from the good earth. The Bible's first angels [Gen.3.24] have the crummy job of preventing our bad news from becoming immortal! (2) The experience of Presence, the divine Shekinah, when we ourselves become God's "angels," messengers--as the Spirit-Dove in Jesus baptism [sld.EC1, the earliest visual of Jesus, in which the Spirit-Dove (therefore, wings on angels!) looks like a meadowlark]. And (3) the experience of death, ours and others, in which the late-Jewish/early-Christian "guardian angel" as God-present-to-the-individual [cf. Tobit] greets us on the other side [slide EC7, "Angelus Bonus"; and end of Billy Graham's ANGELS, a spectacular bestseller].

4. "Angels" provide relief from magic and science, those two human activities bent upon control; for the angels don't do our thing, or even theirs [except the fallen ones, beginning with Lucifer], but God's, as did Abraham--so it's the Abraham religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), only they, that have angels. Western deviants: (1) Muslim "jinns" we can control, as Aladdin by rubbing his lamp; (2) Eros-Cupid, who does his thing with his erotic unpredictable bow; (3) cupies, Eros-Cupid infantized and seduced into gingerbread for our erotic thing; and (4) Lucifer-Mephistopheles-Satan, who plays on our lusts and greeds [as in the Temptation of Jesus, Mt.4 and L.4; and Faust]. NB: Correlation between theism (belief in one-and-only-one God) and angels. But one more deviant (5): angelism, belief in "the [good] human potential" since Renaissance and Enlightenment. Too, (6) angels can get lustful after real human beauties: Gen.6.1-4 (and Jude 6f)...And try Acts 6.15--and the reff. in COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA's "Angels."