

Within the great counter-narrative of Christ is the counter-narrative of Mary and, within both, one might say, is the great counter-narrative of us as human beings destined for God, made for God, that is, made *for God by God*, stamped with God's seal of ownership and approval. I put it this way because the prevailing narrative does everything it can to exclude any possibility that there is a God or a heaven or an afterlife, asserting that we are flesh and bones only destined to live a few years in a universe destined to live for a few years only, too – relatively speaking. There's no room for eternity in this narrative or the possibility that earth is revelatory of God, that we live 'thin' lives in 'thin' places where what goes on in heaven and what goes on on earth, are intimately connected – that we are, after all, spiritual creatures. The narrative we have, today, celebrating Mary 's assumption into heaven – body and soul – is a way of re-affirming God's intent for all of us in Christ: the person in whom the physical and spiritual realms are most intimately connected – God made flesh. The story of humankind has always been one of a struggle between two narratives characterised as that of human beings full of their own self-will against the will of God or, just as well, of those who are earthly or worldly against those who know that the spiritual world or will of God matters, too, and, indeed, is expressed through the physical, the material, the world of matter.. To these people, heaven and earth are speaking to one another all of the time and so when Mary greets Elizabeth the communication is not only between two mortals but between God and humankind and we express this as through the agency of the Holy Spirit. And in the wonderful prayer that follows Mary puts this experience into words:

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exalts in God my Saviour.*

And far from such feelings remaining merely ethereal or emotive only, they translate into very real happenings on earth:

*He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.*

And so on. Israel's destiny will be fulfilled in Christ and that destiny is not only an earthly reality that can be mapped on the ground, but a heavenly one, too, or rather, both an earthly and a heavenly assumption, where flesh and blood and spirit are one.

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour