

The rabbis have a saying, ‘as in heaven, so on earth’ (NCBC.) The idea of Mary being assumed into heaven body and soul is also making this connection clear as, of course, does the idea of incarnation and indeed the whole of our faith, ending in the idea of the second coming of Christ, having defeated his enemies both in heaven and on earth. It’s an idea more thinly expressed in the notion of today’s expected thunderstorms being caused by, or symbolic of, God moving the furniture around in heaven. We actually have no idea what heaven is but the connection is important because it tells us that what happens here on earth has a meaning which goes far beyond our own necessarily limited understanding; it has divine import; it has significance; it’s part of a larger story over which we have only partial control but it’s a story which enhances rather than diminishes what happens here on earth. And this is important. It’s what the *Magnificat* is all about. It’s the bit over which we can have partial control: our attitude and willingness towards helping the poor; to raising the lowly; to fighting injustice, to allowing something of the kingdom to be present to us on earth, for the temptation, otherwise, is to sever the link between earth and heaven and hope only for heaven, as if what we do here doesn’t matter any more – and we can then indeed live as if all the world’s resources are there to be used up – what does it matter, because Christ has already saved us and will rescue us from the mess in a glorious second coming? A connection beautifully brought out by Naomi Klein in her book on disaster capitalism, *The Shock Doctrine*, in which she goes on to say that this

may also partially explain why so many Bush supporters (the republican president at the time) are Christian end-timers. It’s not just that they need to believe that there is an escape hatch from the world they are creating. It’s that the Rapture is a parable for what they are building down here – a system that invites destruction and disaster (the Chicago School model where the rich get richer and the poor can go to hell), then swoops in with private helicopters and airlifts them and their friends to divine safety. (p.419)

So we need to be careful about our imagery and its abuse, for what we do now, matters, body and soul.

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour