

In meditating on today's Scripture, which is such a shower of strange names and foreign persons, I would like to turn my mind towards something huge and simple: which is the mind of God towards us.

As soon as I say "towards us", I am beginning to distort. My little mind is like a department-store, with a range - as big as I can make it - of departments and services. "All things to all men" (women and children) is my motto, like St Paul. I'm not a very good department store, and deserve to go out of business; but I recognise that aim; somehow, we try to stretch our little share of humanity as wide as we can, to give something to every situation we're in.

God is quite unlike that. What he will give to me is an integral part of what he gave to Michelangelo and Alexander the Great. If Shakespeare had been the slightest bit different, our world would have been different as well. God doesn't do departments and ranges, he never falls short of demand, he has One mighty design that encompasses all in simplicity. Even Genesis gets it wrong when it turns Creation into several commands and six days' work. *Let it be so!* - conveniently a single word in Hebrew, *Amen* - is enough for God to call the whole Universe into being in all its parts, all its spaces, all its ages, and its great terminus in the Kingdom of Heaven.

This has huge consequences for me and for you, just as it had for Perez, Hezron, Ram and Amminadab. The meaning of the great genealogy we heard today is that every tiny subdivision in the Creation has its consequence, its integral part in the mosaic; and this mosaic, astonishingly, contains the coming of Christ, whom nothing can contain or limit in any way.

This means that every fragment of the shattered lives we lead is an essential jewelled particle in the design, and that we ourselves are journeying towards a completeness and fulfilment that is not centred in ourselves, but finds its centre in Christ. If the sellers of perfect health or self-improvement land on you, and tell you tales about giving you spectacular health, perfect beauty, a photographic memory, and a schoolgirl complexion, you will know deep inside you that it is a pack of lies. Christ does not promise us these things. He promises us a home, a true terminus, a belonging that will be eternal. The finding of our way to Christ is our task, and the task of the Holy Spirit. As the Eucharistic Prayer puts it, God sends us his Holy Spirit so that we may live, no longer for ourselves, but for him. Notice those four women who take their place in the list of ancestors; every one of them a Gentile, not a Jew; each of them in some small sense irregular or flawed or imperfect by herself. In the plan of God, each of them is swept up into the harmony of a plan none of them could have imagined as individuals.

O come, Christ, holy Wisdom of God,  
strong and tender towards us,  
take up each of *our* lives  
into the utter truth of your Eternity.