

Embracing the Darkness:
the contemplative path and action together in the contemporary world

Firstly, thank you for inviting me to this InterFaith Forum. I was delighted last year to visit Christchurch at the invitation of ecumenical friends. It was then also a rich blessing to meet people of other religious commitment in giving the Rafea Antoun memorial lecture. I am therefore most grateful to extend, those relationships.

Secondly, in beginning, I would like to acknowledge the Indigenous people, the Maori, of this place, and their elders past and present. I give thanks for the care and stewardship they have given for this area and for the deep sense of spiritual connection they have had with the land and seas of this planet Earth. May they ever grow strong in life and wisdom and may we all continue to learn from one another in the journey towards healing of our many peoples.

What is a holy place to *you*, a place where you find renewal of faith and meaning? Perhaps, like the local Maori, for those of you who come from Christchurch, it is close at hand. For others it is further afield, perhaps in the North Island or in another country altogether. Perhaps indeed there are many places in your own personal journey, or that of your personal and/or faith ancestors. That is certainly true for me, although I am now delighted to call Woy Woy home.

There is much I could share about Woy Woy and how, especially in the case of its Aboriginal community and its friends, traditional spirituality and faith can be renewed in the modern world. However, as I reflect upon the theme of our conference (that of 'Keeping Faith in the Modern World', I want to begin with another special place in New South Wales, at Jamberoo, in the Southern Highlands, south of Sydney. The Abbey here is a beautiful spot, blessed by daily prayers and work of the Benedictine sisters as they keep the 1500 year-old Rule of St.Benedict, and offer hospitality to those who seek spiritual renewal. Again much more could be said about that. For our immediate purposes though, I would like you to picture the walk up the gently rising path from the guesthouses to the abbey itself. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine yourself walking that journey. Imagine yourself as a spiritual pilgrim, with each step letting go of the accumulated baggage of your life in this world and allowing your body, mind and spirit rest from its normal exertions that you may simply 'be'. Imagine yourself feeling the peace of that place and the healing breath of nature around you. And now imagine yourself walking that same journey at night, when the Benedictine sisters begin to gather for Vigils, the first service of the day, at 4.30 am. Imagine stepping out in the darkness as an act of your own personal faith, treading each step as a prayer or blessing for yourself or others, surrounded by the night, engulfed in the darkling shades, accompanied only by the occasional nocturnal sound of bird or animal and the rustle of leaf and tree. In that darkness, even in your sleepiness, let yourself feel your conflicting emotions (perhaps of tiredness, worry, vulnerability, even a little fear) and, with each completed step, give thanks for the trust you have renewed and see with eyes of your heart the grace and treasures you are rediscovering within. And now, as you come to the end of the path, you come to a place where a well-known symbol of your own religious tradition stands (at Jamberoo Abbey this is a leaf-covered high wooden cross but it might be many things). As you reach this point, light streams in again once more. Let us give thanks once more, and, now, let us open our physical eyes.

Thankyou. In making that short journey together, in the company of the Benedictine sisters and all those who pray with us this night, we have done the most important thing of all to keep faith together in the modern world. For I want to suggest that that type of journey is not just one which guests at Jamberoo Abbey make, or which others can make at other places in their own traditions. I want to offer that such a night-time path is a fertile metaphor for us all, as, in the many places of our lives and religions, we seek to keep faith in the modern world. It is, I believe, only in embracing the darkness within and beyond ourselves that we can grow in faith, stepping out in what the ecumenical monastic community of Taizé calls the 'pilgrimage of trust'.

Rightful attention has of course been given in our various religious traditions to light, as a path, expression and symbol of the divine or ineffable. Yet facing up to, and journeying through, darkness has always been vital, whether that be the darkness of suffering, pain, separation, fear or death. In the modern world, I would suggest, this has become both more necessary and also more difficult. For in our times, we are flooded with light. We, especially those of us who live in cities and towns, are saturated with created light, and with noise, its handmaid. Why, even when in so-called 'sleep' mode, TVs and computers and modems still twinkle with lights. Light, and often noise, streams forth from cell phones and iPods and game consoles, from microwaves and electronic gadgets in our kitchens, from streetlamps and emergency exit signs, even in the dead of night. It is almost as if the modern world is afraid of encountering, never mind embracing, the darkness of life. No wonder we have so much attention deficit disorder. Is this also the reason for our profound *spiritual* attention deficit disorder do you think?

Philosophically, the development of the modern world, with all its scientific (and electrical light) achievements, is linked to those streams of thinking which the Western world significantly called 'the Enlightenment'. Now I, as a child of the West, rejoice in many of those perspectives as well as their material accomplishments. I wonder however, whether we are now so far into a time of *hyper*-Enlightenment, that our very light risks becoming a form of spiritual darkness. Soaked in luminescent reason, and trapped in a kind of Matrix of attention-distracting bright light, we have forgotten that enlightenment is, in Buddhist terms, about 'awakening' and, so to speak, spiritual attention fulfilment.

In Sydney Hopkins' marvellous little book *Mister God, This is Anna*, with the wisdom of childlike faith, the five and half year old eponymous guru puts it like this:

'The sun is nice', said Anna, 'but it lights up things so much that you can't see very far.' I agreed that sometimes the sun was so dazzling that on occasion one was quite blinded. That wasn't what she meant.
'Your soul doesn't go far in the daylight 'cos it stops where you can see... The night time is much better. It stretches your soul right out to the stars.'¹

Anna is right, isn't she? As a former north east of England colleague of mine has commented:

¹ Fynn, *Mr.God, This is Anna*, 1979 p.152

there is a real temptation to dwell on the surface of things, 'to stop where you can see', especially if the surface appearance is beautiful. So how can we learn to see further and deeper? How can the eyes of our heart be enlightened, as St.Paul put it (Ephesians 1.18)?²

Now religious people are not of course alone in such a diagnosis of our contemporary condition. Feeling the heat of the light, artists of many descriptions also protest about the withering of soul. Back in 1996 for example, the alternative rock band The Beautiful South offered a different apocalyptic ending to the human story in their aptly named album 'Blue is the Colour'. In the song 'One God', they protested the limitations of the idols and worship of the modern world:

Like the toupee on a fading fame
 The final whistle in a losing game
 Thick lipstick on a five year old girl
 It makes you think it's a plastic world
 A plastic world and we're all plastic too
 Just a couple of different faces in a dead man's queue
 The world is turning Disney and there's nothing you can do
 You're trying to walk like giants, but you're wearing Pluto's shoes³

With all due acknowledgement of the joy brought to children of all ages by the Disney corporation, how then do we 'keep faith in the modern world'? Only, I would suggest, by embracing the darkness within and without, by walking together on the night-time path. Let me thus briefly outline three aspects of how we do this, in the three areas of our spiritual, moral and intellectual life: beginning, most importantly with the spiritual.

The overpowering of our spiritual faculties by created light is nothing new, albeit radically more profound in our contemporary context. For as Helen Waddell, scholar of the Christian Desert Fathers and Mothers, put it:

(ancient) Paganism was daylight, Augustine's 'queen light', sovereign of the sense, rich in its acceptance of daylight earth: but Christianity came first to the world as a starlit darkness, into which someone steps and comes suddenly aware of a whole universe, except that part of which is beneath their feet...
 In the world, hour by hour, the Desert Fathers (and Mothers) taught us how a human being makes himself eternal. Starved and scurvy ridden as the first voyagers across the Atlantic, these finished with bright day and chose the dark. And paradoxical as it may seem, their denial of life on earth has been the incalculable enriching of it.⁴

Melvyn Matthews, in his stimulating book 'Both Alike to Thee: The Retrieval of the Mystical Way', helpfully comments on this:

² Robert Cooper, 'Seeing beneath the surface' in David Adam, *Island of Light* (London, SPCK, 2001)

³ The Beautiful South, 'One God' in *Blue is the Colour* (Island Records, 1996)

⁴ Waddell, p.27

To say 'Christianity came first to the world as starlit darkness' is to say something which startles our contemporary consciousness. We have become used to thinking of the Christian faith in terms of the light that it provides, the illumination it gives to the mind and soul. To understand it as a step into darkness requires a different frame of mind, a change of attitude for which we are little prepared.⁵

Matthews rightly points us back to the teachings of Jesus ('whoever denies their life will save it') and to the western apophatic and mystical tradition, including the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and St.John of the Cross (with his understanding of what he called 'the dark night of the soul'). This, he suggests, is the remedy for the tedium and self-destructiveness of modernism and not only a powerful way to 'keep faith in the modern world' but also to help others find meaning and purpose within it.

Is Matthews right? Can we do more than settle for a pleasant Disney-fied world and over-exposure to the light of today's Sun gods? And is 'starlit darkness' possible in the broad daylight of reason and the neon world of today? The American writer Henry David Thoreau certainly observed more than a hundred years ago:

When our life ceases to be inward and private, conversation degenerates into mere gossip. We rarely meet anyone who can tell us any news which they have not read in a newspaper (or, we might say, on TV or the internet) or been told by a neighbour, and for the most part, the only difference between us and our fellow is that they have read the newspaper (or seen the TV, or internet), or been out to tea, and we have not. In proportion as our inward life fails, we go more constantly and desperately to the Post Office (or the TV and internet). You may depend upon it, that the poor fellow who walks away with the greatest number of letters (or emails or Facebook messages), proud of their extensive correspondence, has not heard from themselves this long while.⁶

The best of Christianity teaches, with the best of other religious traditions, that stepping into darkness is crucial to let go of illusion and empty the false self. For, although the world is not in itself evil, it can easily bring us into a state of alienation. As the great Christian mystic, and prophet of our inter-religious path, Thomas Merton expressed it:

When the world is hypostatized (and it inevitably is) it becomes another of those dangerous and destructive fictions with which we are trying to grapple. And for anyone who has seriously entered into the medieval Christian, or the Hindu, or the Buddhist conceptions of *contemptus mundi*, *Mara* and 'the emptiness of the world', it will be evident that this means not the rejection of a reality, but the unmasking of an illusion... the way to find the real 'world' is not merely to measure and observe what is outside us, but to discover our own inner ground.⁷

⁵ Melvyn Matthews, *Both Alike to Thee: The Retrieval of the Mystical Way*, London, SPCK, 200, p.2

⁶ quoted in Matthews, pp.5-6 and adapted here

⁷ Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973, p.154

The interfaith implications and possibilities of the night-time path are therefore considerable and growing. Indeed, for a Western Christian, it should perhaps be a source of thanksgiving that other religions are enabling us to revisit the contemplative way, and to step out again into 'starlit darkness'. For the Christian mystical tradition has fared poorly over the last 300 years. As the Anglican lay mystical theologian Evelyn Underhill wrote in an open letter, in about 1930, to the Archbishop of Canterbury:

I do not underrate the importance of the intellectual side of religion, but all who do personal religious work know that the real hunger among the laity is not for halting attempts to reconcile theology and physical science, but for the deep things of the Spirit...We look to the clergy to help and direct our spiritual growth. We are seldom satisfied, because with a few noble exceptions, they are so lacking in spiritual realism, so ignorant of the laws and experiences of the life of prayer. Their Christianity as a whole is humanitarian rather than theocratic. God is the interesting thing about religion, and people are hungry for God.⁸

Twenty three years ago when I was ordained priest Christianity was certainly still largely excessively humanitarian in character and I freely admit my own past over-emphasis. Today however, prompted by our interfaith engagement, there is in many places a remarkable upsurge in interest in ancient and more contemporary forms of Christian contemplation. Such a new springtime of interest in the life of prayer in the West is a great work of what Christians call the Holy Spirit. This is helped by the unprecedented opportunities to learn from the East and from other religious traditions. Stillness, silence and simplicity belong to no one religious tradition but each has something to share. In Thomas Merton's words, we look to:

The reality that is present to us and in us: call it Being, call it Atman, call it Pnuma...or Silence. And the simple fact that by being attentive, by learning to listen (or recovering the natural capacity to listen which cannot be learned any more than by breathing), we can find oneself engulfed in such happiness that it cannot be explained: the happiness of being at one with everything in that hidden ground of Love for which there can be no explanations.⁹

Merton's own final, fateful, journey to South Asia was to meet those Buddhist and Hindu contemplatives whose spiritual discipline seemed so like his own, sharing what he called 'the dialogue with those who have kept their silences.' As he wrote:

I think we have now reached a stage of (long-overdue) religious maturity at which it may be possible for someone to remain perfectly faithful to a Christian and Western monastic commitment, and yet to learn in depth from, say, a

⁸ Evelyn Underhill, 'God Is the Interesting Thing', in *Christian Century*, 31 October 1990, p.998

⁹ in William H.Shannon (ed), *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns* (New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985) p.115

Buddhist or Hindu discipline and experience. I believe that some of us need to do this in order to improve the quality of our own monastic life.¹⁰

Isn't that an exciting challenge that is now taking place? In the twentieth century there were just a few pioneers, like the Benedictine monks Bede Griffiths (who spoke about how we went to India to find 'the other half of my soul') and Henri le Saux (aka Swami Abhishiktananda). Today however there is a growing exchange between monastic communities of different traditions at local, regional and international levels.¹¹ The labels 'Christian', 'Buddhist', 'Hindu' are simply not relevant when the key things are attention and mindfulness.

Nonetheless, like other aspects of walking in the darkness, this can also be profoundly uncomfortable. The recent Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne was another sign of growing interreligious relationships and a marvellous showcase of the diversity of this encounter. Yet it revealed again to me one of the major points of tension between different participants, namely that of the possibilities or otherwise of interfaith prayer. Within our own gathering tonight this may be reflected among us. I certainly feel it personally within myself. For there is a real and legitimate tension among and within us between openness to others and the need for discernment and acceptance of genuine difference. On the one hand, there are those who affirm the need for respecting and learning about others but draw a strict line on any forms of interfaith prayer, or indeed any meaningful exposure to the prayer of others. Respect however surely falls far short of the 'love of neighbour' which Jesus, for one, preached and lived. On the other hand, there are those who would simply cut the Gordian Knot of our differences by leaping directly into interfaith worship and ministry without many qualms. This is a bold but somewhat naïve step in my view. When it comes to words, symbols and rituals there is too much religious, psychic and communal history, identity and energy bound up for us not to proceed with care. Not to use the name of Christ in worship for example is, in my view, impossible for Christians. Yet, at least for Jews, with the weight of history this must always be problematic. We may also reflect cautiously, as with Indigenous spirituality, on the need not to appropriate or utilise the spiritual practices of others outside their context lest it become a form of spiritual theft, or an exercise in spiritual promiscuity. For all that, and I express my own uncertainty here, how far do such guards on our openness prevent us actually entering deeper relationship? Is holding back for these reasons sometimes like wanting to bathe in a river without getting wet?

Crossing over from our own religious tradition to another is not therefore without its challenges and these, even for good reasons, are not easily swept away. We have learned that, sometimes painfully, in ecumenical relationships between the Christian churches. Yet such crossing over freely happens within Christianity today and I suspect we have now come to a point where this is happening ever more frequently between our great religious traditions. I think here of many people who cannot but cross over: like my friend Helen, a committed member of the Religious Society of Friends who has for many years drawn profoundly on Buddhist meditative practice and who has been enlarged in her own Christian religious shaping by the rich encounter she has shared

¹⁰ Naomi Burton, Brother Patrick Hart and James Laughlin (eds), *The Asian Journals of Thomas Merton* (New York, New Directions Books, 1973) p.313

¹¹ see further eg. <http://monasticdialog.com>

with Judaism through her marriage to a Jewish man. At the very least, can we truly keep and develop faith in our contemporary world of many faiths if we are not willing and able to sit in silence and learn together from others about embracing the way of darkness? As one Austrian Catholic who lived many years near the Ganges and who entered also into the Hindu tradition commented over twenty years ago:

I could have easily said that what I learned from Hinduism was a way of meditation but in fact this meditation leads to a transformation of life itself, of one's experience of oneself, of others, of nature, of God. Meditation is not a particular yoga technique or a Zen way of 'sitting', taken out of their context. If one allows it to unfold with all its implications, one may be surprised at the transformation which is taking place.¹²

She went on:

Are we Christians not too much concerned with labels instead of contents? A spiritual dialogue should precisely be beyond labels, enabling us to discover that perhaps the unknown pilgrim on the dusty and hot Indian road, in whose presence we feel 'our hearts burning', is in reality He, the Risen One.¹³

So much for now on embracing the inner darkness on the night-time path. What of embracing the outer darkness which we experience in our contemporary world? The moral challenge of keeping faith in the modern world is, it seems to me, the other side of the coin of the spiritual challenge. Action and contemplation are not opposites but ultimately, when in balance, expressions of one another. In this respect, it was quite deliberate that, seeking a means for training in spiritual renewal, today's leading Franciscan spiritual teacher Richard Rohr called his community in New Mexico the Center for Action and Contemplation. To journey in starlit darkness is to seek integration of contemplation and action, of the outward as well as the inner path. These are not dualities. For as the noted French spiritual and political leader Charles Peguy wrote at the turn of the 20th century, 'everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics.'¹⁴ Or, one might add, everything begins with politics and ends in mysticism. Perhaps too, just as the over-activist West is now being enriched by the contemplative disciplines of the East, so the active dynamism of Western faith and love is having a corresponding effect upon the more quietistic traditions of the East?

I will not speak for long about the moral aspect of embracing the outer darkness, partly for reasons of time but also because others have spoken well about these things. What I want to stress however is that they have a particularly important *interreligious* dimension, without which they are incapable of adequate resolution. Let me refer back to the great Indian philosopher Radhakrishnan, who, in the 1930s, spoke prophetically about the world's growing interdependence and what he called the 'ferment of restlessness' created by modernity. This, he rightly said, left a spiritual question:

¹² Bettina Baumer, "A Journey with the Unknown", in Toshi Arai and Wesley Ariarajah (eds), *Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue* (Geneva, World Council of Churches), 1989) p.38

¹³ *ibid*, p.39

¹⁴ Quoted by Martin Marty, "Mysticism and the Religious Quest for Freedom", *The Christian Century*, date unknown

The world has found itself as one body but physical unity and economic interdependence are not by themselves sufficient to create a universal human community... The causes of the present tension and disorder is the lack of adjustment between the process of life, which is one of increasing interdependence, and the 'ideology' of life, the integrating habits of mind, loyalties, and affections embodied in our laws and institutions... The supreme task of our generation is (therefore) to give a soul to the growing world consciousness.¹⁵

As the long-standing World Council of Churches poster has it, '*Oikoumene* (the word used by Christians seeking unity) (Oikoumene) is the whole inhabited earth – Not just the Christian part of it.' Can we speak up for one another, and for others, not just for our own groups? Can we speak together of *we* in this sense? This is what the other great prophets of our different religious traditions have said, in various ways, over recent decades. In 1966 the Jewish philosopher Abraham Joshua Herschel for example outlined the implications of growing religious interdependence:

The religions of the world are no more self-sufficient, no more independent, no more isolated than individuals or nations. Energies, experiences, and ideas that come to life outside the boundaries of a particular religion or all religions continue to challenge and to affect every religion...No religion is an island. We are all involved with one another. Spiritual betrayal on the part of one of us affects the faith of all of us.¹⁶

The idea of sharing in a common household, a word very closely related to *oikoumene*, has also been helpfully traced by thinkers such as Diana Eck, director of the Pluralism Project.¹⁷ She points us to Martin Luther King's use of this image when he said:

Some years ago a famous novelist died. Among his papers was found a list of suggested plots for future stories, the most prominently underscored being this one: 'A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together.' This is the great new problem for humankind. We have inherited a large house, a great 'world house' in which we have to live together – black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu – a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.¹⁸

¹⁵ S.Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1959) p.2

¹⁶ Abraham Joshua Herschel, 'No Religion Is an Island,' in Harold Kasimow & Byron L.Sherwin (eds), *No Religion is an Island: Abraham Joshua Herschel and Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, N.Y, Orbis Books, 1991) p.11

¹⁷ cf. Diana L.Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Benares* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1993), ch.8

¹⁸ Martin Luther King Jr, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1967) p.167

King's view was that living in the one 'World House' required new ways of speaking, acting and relating together, a 'revolution of values'. As he put it:

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation (and we might add every religion) must now develop an overriding loyalty to humankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.¹⁹

Let us rejoice then at the many examples of combined moral action which show our developing common loyalty: such as the work of people of different faith together in addressing poverty at home and overseas; the efforts to build peace and peacemaking together in places of great conflict; and the response of so many of varied religion to addressing the deep spiritual groanings of our planet itself. Sometimes the task of embracing such darkness can seem overwhelming. Perhaps we do well to listen though, as in many things, to that great interreligious bridge-builder Gandhi. For his favourite Christian hymn was 'Lead Kindly Light', which includes the words 'Guide Thou my feet...I do not ask to see...the distant scene...one step enough for me.' One step enough was certainly a Gandhian precept, as each step then creates the result. Let us then walk on together, uniting our contemplation in action.

Finally, let me say something briefly about the *intellectual*, as well as the social and moral, challenge of embracing the darkness in our contemporary world. For 'keeping faith in the modern world' frequently faces the obstacles of secularism and religious fundamentalism, two often colliding forces which in some respects are also like co-dependent twins. For fundamentalism is a very modern phenomenon, born out of, and shaped by, the very modernist thinking it purports to disdain. Significantly, for our reflections, it always inhabits a world of bright light, with little or no darkness. Indeed the darkness of others is always to be vigorously, and often violently, stamped out. Yet only in God, according to the Christian scriptures, is there no darkness. Religious fundamentalism it seems, confuses the fallible human expression of faith with its source, and it merges the ambiguity of our human-mediated created light with the uncreated light which is God alone.

The truth is that there are shadows in each of our traditions which we must acknowledge and address: the shadows of power and violence, of sexism and racism, of exclusion and erasure. Some of these even pervade parts of our holy texts. We do ourselves no favours if we seek to keep our faith in the modern world by refusing to face these shadows. We are not wholly bearers of light even though the divine light shines in each of us even when we are covered by the deepest shadows. Rather we do well to identify light that is not light and to support one another in the journey onward.

For, intellectually, the tide may actually have turned for faith in the modern world. This is despite the desperate and, in some places, dangerous clamour of the fundamentalists and the noisy blinkers of Richard Dawkins and his fellow militant secularists. Many scientists and philosophers today have rejected the assumptions of modernism and accept that their own work involves a journey into darkness and mystery rather than

¹⁹ Martin Luther King Jnr, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1967) p.190

into a greater light of certainty out of secure 'facts'. Karen Armstrong, for one, gives a helpful account of this in her recent book *The Case for God: What Religion Really Means*. She traces the way in which postmodern philosophy has challenged the certainty and 'queen light' of modernism, not least modernist atheism.²⁰ This does not mean that religious ideas of God can simply be re-instated in their pre-modern form. Yet it does mean that intellectually we are moving forward again into a world in which 'starlit darkness' is once again more credible. In this sense we should have confidence not only about keeping, but also about developing, faith in the modern world. For in the words of the American philosopher John D.Caputo:

Enlightenment secularism, the objectivist reduction of religion to something other than itself – say, to a distorted desire for one's mommy, or to a way of keeping the ruling authorities in power – is (simply) one more story told by people with historically limited imaginations, with contingent conceptions of reason and history, of economics and labour, of nature and human nature, of desire, sexuality, and women, and of God, religion and faith.²¹

Karen Armstrong concludes her assessment of the developing philosophy of our contemporary world with the following fertile questions which I leave with you:

If atheism was a product of modernity, now that we are entering a 'postmodern' phase...will the growing appreciation of the limitations of human knowledge – which is just as much a part of the contemporary intellectual scene as atheistic certainty – give rise to a new kind of apophatic theology? And how best can we move beyond pre-modern theism into a perception of 'God' that truly speaks to all the complex realities and needs of our time?²²

Isn't that an encouraging invitation to continue together to walk that path with which we began?

Let me therefore conclude with a beautiful passage from the poet T.S. Eliot which helps sum up what I, stumbling about in the darkness, have tried to say about 'Keeping Faith in the Modern World': a passage which speaks of the way to true 'enlightenment':

I said to my soul be still, and let the dark come upon you
which shall be the darkness of God . . .
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting . . .
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.²³

²⁰ Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God: What Religion Really Means* (London, Bodley Head, 2009) ch.12 'Death of God?'

²¹ John D.Caputo, *On Religion* (London, 2001), p.60, quoted in Armstrong op.cit p.301

²² Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God: What Religion Really Means* (London, Bodley Head, 2009) pp.302-3

²³ T.S.Eliot, 'East Coker', *The Four Quartets*