

THE SIXTH SONG

THE SONG OF THE MIRROR AND OF THE FLAME THAT LEAPS UPWARD

*"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men;
yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" - Ecclesiastes 3v11*

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come" - 12v1

The house and the contradiction

"We don't believe in your Creator," they declared in the next town. Again and again, they said it like a chorus whose refrain echoed wearily through an empty cave.

"If there is a Creator", said Tom the Teacher, "it explains a number of matters that by themselves have to be accounted for".

"Such as?" they asked him.

"Why there was a point of definite beginning, why there is something rather than nothing, why the universe is so fine--tuned, why there is a higher law beyond ourselves determining what is right from what is wrong and why there is a conscious human mind or a conscience."

"And, he added, face creased in sudden pain, "why it hurts so much."

The German philosopher Kant had said, 'two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration, and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them, the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.

"But the quest for explanation is ultimately immature" they protested. "Humanity begs to have an explanation for events and for matters that fly far beyond our understanding. Just because there is so much we do not yet grasp, we are not thereby compelled to fill in the gaps in our knowledge with a Creator".

"The Creator does not merely dwell beyond the limits of our understanding", said Tom, "but is the source of all that we can grasp as well as the mist we cannot yet penetrate. Ask how the quest for explanation ever come to arise within your heart? If this thirst cannot be met with living water, then we shall live without meaning and die without answers".

"But that is our situation now and we must just accept it" they said sadly.

Tom thought hard, looking for a different approach .

"You wander around in the woods" he said after a while, "and then you come to a house in a clearing. Seeing the door is open, you go into the house. 'I wonder whose house is this?' you think".

They looked at him puzzled.

"Tell me about the values you esteem most highly?" he asked suddenly.

"What do you mean?" they said to him.

"A bird takes to the skies and a fish to water. What atmosphere do you flourish best in?" he asked them.

Piece by piece, they built a house.

"Faithfulness", said one. "I like reliable people, those you can count on, people who will be true to each other".

"I want truth" said a second person. "The lies in my last relationship were destructive. Deception and manipulation almost broke me".

"Mercy" said a third, emphatically. "I guess we are all hungry for love, for approval. We need at least one person around us who will be warm otherwise we are condemned to life in a cold castle".

"Justice" said a fourth person, with some passion. "I hate anything unfair. I long for the injustices of the world to be put right".

"Respect" said a fifth person. "I hate to be ignored or when they do something to me, people just walking away without saying sorry or even acknowledging what they've done".

"I don't know about all that but right now, I'm looking for acknowledgement of what I've been painting" said a sixth member of the group. "I want someone out there to recognise my creativity".

"I can't stand corruption or bribery" said a businessman. "But sometimes I think there is a corruption at the centre of my life and that I need a spring clean".

"What a contradiction" said Tom. "Now we have built a house, let's hang a label on it. The house you have built is His house".

"In what way?" they asked, intrigued.

"Those values and qualities are enshrined and lodged in the Creator of the universe. You are dwelling in the house that the Book speaks of. That is why those values are your natural habitat. But if you don't believe in the Creator, what a contradiction. The very qualities you need in order to flourish are co--incidental to the universe!"

"What do you mean?" they asked him curiously.

"The Creator spoken of in the Book embodies all those qualities, truth and love, a God of faithfulness and justice. His is that purpose in the universe that imparts your value as an individuality, that recognises your creativity as a mirror of His artistry. And the Creator is a God whose will is the yardstick of right and wrong, who is opposed the world's corruption but who will cleanse us".

"But you spoke of a contradiction" they said.

"Yes" said Tom. "For if you do not believe that these qualities are rooted in the ultimate power, you are valuing what the universe does not value. You declare with certainty that there is no Creator out there. But you are compelled to live as if truth, human value, faithfulness and justice and above all love are to be prized".

"Listen to me", he pleaded. "Is the scheme of things completely blind and deaf to the things we all value? Whatever point and purpose in the universe, it must include our experience of consciousness, purpose, value, morality, beauty and bring them together in a single story that lights up our lives with meaning and colour. It's the Sixth Song."

One of his listeners was crying out. "I want to sing that song. My spirit is hungry. I can't live any more in a universe that shut a rude door in my face. If there is a personal God after all, then a relationship becomes full of gleaming possibility".

"On my journey" concluded Tom sadly "I am seeing that this generation, for all its intellectual tolerance, hides away from truth. The position we have carved out is a flight from the one reality that can give us meaning and direction. And how we need direction.

"We do not have to remain forever separated. There is a way back to a glad surprise as when wool is pulled from our eyes to behold what has been in front of us so constantly".

His words were stinging

His words were stinging. Words that tore, bit and left their mark; words that spoke of a country that had been ignored and not explored when exploring was the thing to do and not rejecting. He spoke of a knowledge that men had tried to drown but which kept coming up in spite of every attempt to suppress it.

"You have ignored, you have rejected the One who made us and have not listened to the voice of invitation. You have played games of folly and deceit, like actors taking a part in a play. 'Let's silence the Creator so that we cannot hear the voice that appeals to us. Let's dim our eyes so the glimpse we had becomes hardly even a memory rather than a sight before us' ". Live only the ground level life, under the sun.

Saying this, he handed round to the men and women in the market--place familiar pictures that played tricks with the mind. Pictures that left them wondering; was that a young lady or an old woman? Was that a vase or were those two faces looking at each other? Tom asked.

"Your seeing is distorted. Having seen one shape, one pattern of things, it's hard to see things differently. The pattern is fixed but there is another way of seeing. There is an original pattern that our minds are blinded to".

"But when have we seen?" they asked in alarm. When did we cease to be aware of the sun so it set in our lives and we lost the brightness of noonday?"

He spoke again and filled their hearts with alarm. "You have understood. But you have joined in a conspiracy. It has been acted to the full, played out beyond the expectations of the perpetrators. A conspiracy of the human race to drown the voice of invitation and draw the curtain on what is real".

"We have not engaged in conspiracy", they protested. Their protests rose and grew in clamour until it seemed a hundred voices were shouting at once.

"We are men and women of reason", they said. "We would never do such a thing. We pride ourselves on making up our own minds.

"There is no Creator" some said. "There is not one Creator but many", someone else seemed fairly sure about this as if they had tried to sail to that country and found that the shoreline had kept receding away from them and concluded that it was not real.

The voices went on. And on. Tom spoke once more.

"Wherever we acknowledge that there is order and gracious intelligence at the heart of things, they acknowledge the Creator. When we sense a source of our being without which we cannot exist, we are stumbling round in His house, without knowing whose house it is".

"I will tell you a story", he said. "There was once a tribe of people who lived between steep-sided mountains. Food was scarce on the floor of the valley and often the tribe looked longingly higher up the mountain where, amidst the clouds, there was reported to be a lush green plateau. As the months unfolded in one particularly difficult year, the Chief formed a resolution which he put to the whole tribe one evening as they sat around the camp fire. As the flames curled upwards amidst the coolness of the night, he spoke his thoughts. 'We should take our possessions, move higher up the mountain to seek out that lush green plateau amidst the clouds'.

"The tribe was pleased with the idea. 'We will do as you suggest', they said. So, led by an advance guard scouting ahead, the tribe found the one road that led up the side of the mountain. The path became progressively steeper. After several days of ascending higher and higher, they found themselves looking at the lush green plateau they had spied from below. The whole tribe acclaimed the sight that welcomed them. This was what they had been looking for. More often than not, the clouds would come down and they would live days on end surrounded by a fine mist, fine enough to be bearable. There they stayed and settled, planted crops, reared cattle and raised families. In time, the road up the mountain became blocked by an avalanche of rumbling, angry rocks. Slowly, the tribe forgot that there was a life down there where the sun shone permanently. 'Fogland is all there is' they said.

"We are without excuse" concluded Tom. "We know and yet close our ears and our eyes, seeing a sight that is dimly glimpsed. By groping beyond ourselves, we show we were made for more. But still we grope in the dark, stumbling around for the light--switch at night. We wander like those in dense fog. Here and there, the fog clears and we sense someone".

Creativity constrained

The hot pandemic days saw creativity in a fever and ferment.

As Tom searched for what was special about humanity, the whole creation looked different. Even ordinary things were touched with significance and illuminated by colour. The range of human self-expression took his breath away.

Gone for a while were the outdoor lives we used to lead with others. Some shuttered people were content to have creativity as a dish served cold direct to their small screen. They praised their maker (of Netflix) as box sets suited those who were confined to a box. For others, Spring colours and green shoots accompanied a flowering of the creative. The garden benefitted for the fortunate, and with it, a well-gardened mind.

There were many Tom met who had turned their hand to handicraft. Under the rubble, surprising artistry was discovered. Others had a novel in their bones; its skeleton story rattling as it emerged. For some, the kitchen called and new talents given to the very food of life. Balcony singing could be heard in surprising places as voices were raised in defiance against the microbial enemy.

At first, Tom missed the office. Creativity does not occur in formal ways only. It draws energy from chance encounters and for him, the camaraderie had departed along with commuting pleasures.

To keep the spirit intact, humans explored what it meant to live well. The sense of future belonging had been badly shaken. With screeching suddenness, life had become unpredictable. In the crisis, many turned to faith to weather life's storms. Faith expression too became the focus of creativity.

Made in the mirror

As he was allowed to travel, on every continent, he began to take in the clothing. Not the artificial national dress for the consumption of tourists but the everyday clothing people wore and what they would put on for special occasions. He witnessed power--dressing by smart pin--striped executives and eye--catching dresses worn by the glitterati of society. He saw Chinese officials reverting to western style shirts and ties so as to be taken seriously,

outfits by Armani, sarongs, trousers, jumpers, shoes of all kinds, coats for every occasion and shirts of all colours. The range of clothing was breathtaking, reflecting the self-expression of the wearers, the image they wished to convey, the price they could afford, the choices they wanted to make.

The transience and speed of fashion struck him. He wondered who set the pace and determined what was the in-look that year. And he marvelled at the creativity dedicated to this form of human self-expression. This upright creature who loved to adorn himself had surpassed even brightly coloured animals and birds with their plumage. The fig leaves became brightly-coloured.

"Surely we are image-bearers," he continued. "That is the source of this endless creativity, the riddle of our humanity, our flair for technology and innovation, our capacity for artistic expression, our introspective consciousness, our morality and conscience. Who shall adequately explain us to ourselves?"

Art now became for him a witness to the Second Song, the riddle at the source, the dual citizenship of humanity. He saw the great paintings, etchings, the use of colour, idealistic images, realistic images, religious scenes, impressionism, modernism. The world was full of pictures and flashing images; the human body, scenery, pop-art, advertising, portrait photography. Everything was a subject for a picture by someone who wanted to convey how they saw things. In the new world, the distinction between high and low art was breaking down. Image and reality were intertwining and who could tell the difference anyway?

"We are," thought Tom the teacher, "in the image of another. Is that not why we fill our lives with images?"

He had seen great architecture, the art you walk into everyday. He saw castles, palaces, theatres, gardens, railway stations, public buildings, urban boxes and skyscrapers like man-made mountains. The cities of man were crowded with buildings. So many had been erected for public worship. Medieval Gothic cathedrals transported the on-looker into a transcendent world to create a sensation of heaven on earth. They were still the magnificent centres of European cities.

"More than being merely shelter" he said once, "people think as they build their dwellings, consciously expressing feelings and values. Who made us like this?"

But ugly buildings also blotted the cities and the towns. He wondered if the human spirit could flourish without some attention to beauty. Our minds, he supposed, are stocked with ideas of truth and beauty. The mind seeks out geometrical proportions. We like square rooms or proportionate rhythms. We respond to symmetry and to the use of light and colour.

From that time, Tom spoke of the city that awaits, a city of destiny and of destination, a city with colour, space and a symmetry that sets people free. It was a vision of community dwelling forever amidst great beauty.

"The wall was made of jasper and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city were decorated with every kind of precious stone".

On his journey, he heard the remarkable creativity of music. To express themselves, people had created instruments of all kinds and shapes. Anything could be used to extract music. Music with lyrics, love songs and music that burned with anger; the creativity expressed in the range was never--ending. Great composers were those who explored both the joyful and the mournful. Music for pleasure, easy listening, country and western, reggae, soul music, serious music for enriching one's emotional life, dance, background musack in supermarkets, the great classics, spirituals, musicals--the inventiveness of human ability to create new arrangements and patterns was stunning. Everything had to be accompanied by music. It became the most powerful communicating force in the world to stir the soul. Amidst the music of the world, the Second Song played its notes of joy and sorrow.

Tom sensed something of the Creator's gift of feeling and thought expressed in the restless urge to write. Of the writing of books there was still no end in sight. Volume after volume, papers, magazines, and now on--line, a wider world of other minds was deposited into ours. Books for every occasion were on offer. The classical heritage, the timeless greats, romantic novels, crime--writing, adventure stories, sci-fi characters struggling in an alternative universe, stories that reflected life; tense with violence, anger, tender love, and guilty relationships. Human creativity supplied inexhaustible variations on a theme. He wondered

at the capacity of literature to deepen emotional vocabulary and offer glimpses of someone else's inner life. How was it that we could cry, ponder, wonder and rage within a single cover?

The Creator gifted others with drama. And so the world filled up with theatre, films and endless stories, enabling us to explore another life, another world and to feel we were actually there. Some were comedies, giving their hearers wings to rise above the world through laughter. Others were serious dramas, exploring the ultimate realities of the human condition--life and death, isolation, communication, the ebb and flow of relationships. In the post-millennial world that was dawning, films and soap operas were the new sources of inspiration and reflection on life and how to handle it. It was the age of the screen.

Modern dramas continued to be written and performed, making people aware of their precarious position in the universe. But there was no big picture and no underlying vision except perhaps the absurdity of celebrating life amidst a pointless cosmos. Modern drama presented one person's awareness of the music of life as it was experienced --dreams, fantasies, nightmares, the personal human situation, a sense of being, the author's inner world. He felt the relativity of it all.

"Whatever happened to the big picture?" Tom pondered.

Amidst many sombre notes, he heard the music play, the song of the being who reflected its Creator. In those days, he learnt a new respect for the creativity of his fellows, constantly turning out varied forms of endless art; reflecting, entertaining, enjoying, shocking. There would always be new angles and new perspectives. He celebrated the universal human spirit, a gift from another world to handle this one, to explore and to express, to communicate and to caress.

Poetry had always entranced people with its own mysterious magic. The impulse to create and appreciate poetry was one of the most ancient of arts, ever since human beings had discovered pleasure in language and wanted to express the heights and depths of human emotions; what was awful and what was beautiful. The source of our emotions and thoughts and the way they intertwine to produce endless creativity--that is a mystery. Only the Book can adequately explain us to ourselves".

All this Tom observed on his journey.

"So where does it come from," they asked. "This instinct to adorn ourselves, to fill our world with colour and variety, life, music, pictures and poetry?"

"We sing the song but we don't name the tune," said Tom. "What is it about us that we are born with an unceasing quest for depth, creativity, communication and curiosity? Will someone tell us our secret identity?"

The flame that leaps upward

Everywhere, Tom the Teacher was witnessing a revival of spiritual awareness inconceivable in a former time when it was widely assumed that religion was dead. But it wasn't the old time religion that was stirring. The children of the secular generation were not turning to the church to satisfy hunger but to unconventional, DIY faith. Spirituality was taking off in a world built on technology, progress and pragmatism; where gurus were management consultants and advertisers. The memory of some other world continued to haunt our imagination. Though the main pre-occupation for many was their sports and fashions, their music and their videos; God's funeral had been premature.

The idea that the physical universe is all there is had been too confining. There was a song to be sung. A spiritual dimension insisted on creeping through the concrete. The people were re-discovering that they were a spirit and not just a body, a mind, a sex instinct or a worker. Sensing a reality greater than the material sphere of rational knowledge and of this world, they were hungry to experience it. The land of the spirit lay waiting to be discovered by people were yearning to sing like a flame aspiring, reaching upwards in search of the author of fire.

Tom told them of a supermarket, a new age pot pourri where every conceivable product was on sale. A vast range of treatments of the mind as well as body were on offer- hypnosis, positive thinking, mind control, acupuncture, kundalini, ESP. All the people had to do was ask. They were the consumer, they were in charge. Self care and 'if that's what you feel' can be wrapped with authenticity and given the special ribbon of authority. Your emotions, your desires and wants must always come first dear consumers. Now geography has been abolished, you can join the world over with consumers or communities and who can tell

them apart? Design your own experiences and do not trouble yourselves if it is self-talk as well as self-taught, rising to the highest shelf but no more.

Hats off to you O Corporates! Spiritual traditions can improve your bottom line. You spotted the gap in the marketplace, a free marketplace of innovation to be spiritual entrepreneurs or whatever you want to be: the choice is for the consumer. For freedom, it is intuition not institution that must be preserved. Activities and rituals must be challenging but not that challenging! Self-expression and fulfilling personal experiences are on every shelf! Meaning, purpose, community and ritual – they are all here. Everything you do can be freighted with significance and weighted with meaning. You who pamper can now be blessed with a spiritual meaning. Here on these shelves, brands sell values and not merely products: never so base, never so mundane. Here we offer not only a supermarket; we have a very special totalising gift for you – a moral universe of well-being with each brand!

And he read from the book of the Creator's wisdom. "Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech".

"Calling all those who feel the spiritual bankruptcy of our age, wondering where to look for inspiration! Come on in and browse. Take your time. No longer will we be told what to believe or what to buy. An unparalleled range of foods is now yours, a vast choice of clothing or leisure pursuits. We stand at the centre of our own world, able to select the items, food and people we want. Need religion be any different? Our shelves are never empty. Take something away and there will be alternatives. Here in this supermarket, what is right for us is a personal choice".

But had no one noticed that amidst myriad conversations about inner depth and mystery, there was a glaring omission from the shelves? Everything was on offer, nothing was on offer. If everything was a meaningful practice if it was right for you – then religion had passed its sell-by date. It was but a product of a previous supermarket. A consumer spirituality was a spirituality suiting the consumer, rising and falling in the self, on the shelf, rising no higher. A question began to form on his lips.

"Is there anyone out there that corresponds to what's in here?"

Eyes that once were dead

Tom brought his message to a close. Before him the sea of faces was crested with a fine spray of eyes that once were dead but now were alive again.

"We yearn to find a vision we can hold on to carry us forward," he said. "But now voices can be heard. This time we want to listen to those voices and The Voice".

"Show me what kind of a God you worship and I will show you what kind of a humanity you possess. Your life here is determined by what you think is out there, the conditioned by the unconditioned, the temporal by the timeless, the imperfect by what is perfect, the changing by what is changeless. We are built to measure our thinking and acting by what is greater. Or will we be as those who derive their own measurement out of themselves. As butterflies are drawn by the light, so you are drawn to the greater against which you test your life. You are in search of it, you cannot escape from it. For there is a room which is never empty. It is the dimension of faith, of our ideals, of a realm larger than us to which we must pay homage. Deny a personal and you worship the impersonal. Or award ourselves a substitute Creator. "

"No more can we rid ourselves of what we think is ultimate than remove from our minds length, breadth or height; past, present or future. You gladly take time for music, art or make space in your room for flowers. So make space in the room of your soul for the author of music and the Creator of flowers.

Within us all, there is song waiting to be sung. It is the Sixth Song, the song of the Creator. Often, when I call to the people, there is answering response, like an echo sounding in the caves below"

What you believe matters

"What you believe lies at the heart of the universe matters", he observed. "Do your vague beliefs say that truth, faithfulness and love are central to the scheme of things?"

"You who talk about the stars and the planets", he asked them. "Who made the stars? What do you say about the ultimate power that rules the universe or how our lives are to be assessed?"

"We can't tell what power lies at the heart of things" came the reply. "But we say there is a power that directs the motions of planets and influences our lives".

"What is behind that power?" he asked them. "Who or what made it so?"

Now that made his listeners think.

"There is not a personal force out there," said someone at last.

"So the universe IS blind and deaf to the things we value most," said Tom. "Is there anything out there that corresponds to what's in here?"

Again, there was a silence. Those who had beards scratched them hard. But Tom was gripped by inward constraint, a vice-like grip that left him with no choice but to speak. The spiritual quest both intrigued and perplexed him. A generation was growing up to believe in some sort of spirit or life force, in astrology, second sight, abduction by aliens, mind-reading, dream-analysis, empathy with pets; everything or anything but the Creator.

He asked the same question of new agers on a camp site. They were, he thought, searching nostalgically and awaiting their redemption.

"Tell me" he said to the searchers, "What is at the heart of the universe?"

"We can't tell," they said. "Some kind of cosmic spirit, an energy that fills everything and enchants the world?"

"An impersonal force then?" enquired Tom.

"I believe in the Earth Mother" one person responded. "The world has grown weary with macho dominance and aggression. It's time for the power of the feminine to awake".

"But did this mother goddess make the human mind" probed Tom." What is the common cause of the cosmos out there and the universe within or do we have to look to a higher

level force to explain the stars and harmonise our lives with meaning? Again I ask you. Is there anything out there that corresponds to what's in here?"

But he got no reply and his questions went unanswered.

"On my journey, I speak of one infinite spirit who made all things, one ultimate power behind the universe who is not the universe. I speak of one distinct from the cosmos and who is therefore holy. A vast gulf lies between us now that is almost unbridgeable unless the Creator had come to us".

"The scale and dimensions of the being who inhabits eternity and sums up the universe at a glance are beyond comprehension. The Creator is a Mind beyond our imagination. The span of His understanding ranges from the smallest sub--particle within every atom to the largest dimension; another galaxy here or there, it makes no difference. Can you or I comprehend a glance that sweeps across every detail of the past and the furthest boundary of the future as if it was a small corner of the present? The Creator has a consciousness and personal being, of which ours is a tiny, tiny mirror. God's wisdom, understanding and knowledge are immeasurable. What He does, He does infinitely- love and joy and His power are like an ocean without shore, in whose depths everyone may play".

A mystery to ourselves

One day, Tom's journey took him back to the hillside from which his quest to listen to the music had begun. What had he learned in 18 months of wondering questioning and curiosity; marvelling at the source of wonder, examining the reason for his questioning, intrigued by his curiosity?

His listeners fell silent for they realised that such questions lay just behind our surface life.

"But our wondering collapses" they said after a while, "because it does not seem possible to be sure. Maybe there is an ultimate life--force but how do we pick our way through the maze? "

"Tell us about the Creator" they said, pressing their curiosity upon him.

"The Creator is infinite" said Tom. "There can be no room for more than one infinite spirit. Look above you, at the mighty universe. Then peer inside at your conscious mind. The

Creator is the common ground both of the rationality of our minds and of the whole universe. The perfect uniformity and agreement of all its forces and parts pointed to one cause behind all things. A single pattern in the universe counted against the idea of many competing gods. One set of laws, one set of building materials; one God.

What is about us, Tom pondered, that we trouble ourselves with the question of life itself. Life, not as an unquestioning, instinctive existence but a mystery to fathom, a deep well of meaning that arose in far-off hills, towards heights that he could not see. It seemed that all his life, he had lived on a flat earth, bounded by horizons. He wanted guidance. "Show me" he prayed, "what is the mystery of my humanity? The world is vast (for he had now spoken in three continents) but there is a universe within. Why am I a mystery to myself; reaching for the stars but condemned to fall back? Who is this riddler who even asks the question?"

Then he heard a wave gently breaking upon an eternal shore. And there came to him a time of revealing, a stream that flowed and glistened in the running living shining of the sun. He felt he was experiencing a kind of death in which the soul leaves the body; the soul of him separating from the confines of bodily material existence, leaping, exulting from its prison and soaring, soaring into the clear limitless sky. In the rising of spirit, sight was given to him, eagle-sight that sees over the range of things.

He understood that in pursuing intimacy so implacably, he was but living out a tender createdness. And the urge to belong also reflected the way he was made. Now he understood the mystery of his own emotions (for he had not understood this before); why he was made to think and to feel and why it was not good for man to be alone.

But the brimming sea was mysteriously alive with a character of its own; in constant dialogue with the atmosphere, sometimes quiet, sometimes swelling upwards. Rivers and water had sometimes been worshipped as a source of life and cleansing. At the dawn of the millennium, the people had been intent on arranging homes and living in harmony with wind and water spirits. But rivers, water and wind did not belong to cosmic energy. Though many sought a spiritual experience of communing with nature, "this is His place!" he shouted with a voice like the sound of many waters.

"The fall of humanity began on the very day when we spurned our lost friendship with the Creator. On the very day. There was a first moment of conscious moral choice. But we could not leave it there. Though we have turned to look the other way, we cast wistful glances over our shoulder and are nostalgic for Eden again".

"So what is the ultimate power like?" they asked him.

Tom told them of the Sixth Song people were yearning to sing, a flame aspiring, reaching upwards in search of the author of fire.

"On my journey, I speak of one infinite spirit who made all things, one ultimate power behind the universe who is not the universe. I speak of one who is distinct from the cosmos and who is therefore holy. A vast gulf lies between us; almost unbridgeable unless the Creator had come to us".

"Why, why" he concluded "should we remain permanently separated from the source of our lives, who alone can impart the meaning and direction we seek and explain us to ourselves? For I tell you, there is someone out there who corresponds to what's in here".

But there was no answer. Their voices were silent.