

up there' – and he was sort of indicating up – 'think I've got it all wrong and send me down to see the geezer down there? You know – am I done for?' And that was a real agonising. So I think what I'm saying is that for people to have – and, particularly in my case – for soldiers to have, a basic understanding, at least, of the main tenets of the Christian faith – when they want to reach out for more, they know what to reach out to. It's quite a challenge. It's quite a challenge for our chaplains – it's quite a challenge for our leaders. And it's not necessarily appropriate for someone who's signed up and said, 'I'm a Muslim soldier' or 'I'm a Sikh soldier' or 'a Buddhist soldier' or whatever – and we have some of those. But I think it's part of our Christian tradition. And I think that there is an obligation to give people some form of Christian understanding.

111 *To end this session on the darkness surrounding the cross, we welcome Colin Morris with his Reflection.*

Three details in Matthew's account of the crucifixion – darkness at noon, the curtain of the temple torn, graves giving up their dead – tend to be treated as merely the dramatic embroidery of the story. In fact, they point to the cosmic significance of Calvary. From time immemorial, the sun was believed to be the ultimate power of the universe. But at Jesus' death the sky darkened as the sun veiled its face to acknowledge that this power had been broken forever. As Paul put it, the first Adam was a living soul, dependent like the rest of creation on the sun for existence, but the second Adam is a life-giving spirit – a power source on his own account. Those alive with his life are not conditioned by the rising and setting of the sun but by grace, a new form of power driving through and beyond nature. Francis of Assisi got the point: 'Thou burning sun with golden beam, praise him.'

WHEN I SURVEY...

Session II:

CD Track 1121

INTO THE GREAT SILENCE

Jesus never wrote a book, but he spoke a great deal. He's rightly known as a great teacher. But his silences have become famous too. Especially his retreat into the desert, and his reluctance to speak after his arrest. What does silence mean for our participants? Christina Baxter, General Dannatt and John Bell, in that order.

CB: Very shortly after I came to St John's, thirty years ago, I began to go to a local religious community to pray quietly, on an occasional basis. I now go once a month for a whole day – and I was there yesterday – and that being silent before God, and listening to God, becomes increasingly important in my life.

RD: The trick is to generate opportunities to be silent. And – certainly in my life in the last three years as Chief of the General Staff – and in some other jobs prior to that – there's a real danger that from your first waking moment to your last waking moment the whole day is filled. And that's not good. You do need, particularly in a senior position, to give yourself time, to make time, to reflect. And in a Christian sense one needs to give yourself time to spend time with God, and to give him time to talk to you. And I've found – and I think many people over the years have found – that the best time of day to do that is first thing in the morning, before the day really cuts in.

JB: I was recently – when I was in a church in America – and they had organised every spare hour I had – different people to provide meals, to take me in a car to show the sights – so I just said in the church, 'I don't want to be disrespectful of people's hospitality, but