

# Finding Light in The Darkness

by Ross Heaven

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep... Genesis 1*

*In the beginning there was only darkness everywhere – darkness and water. And the darkness gathered thick in places, crowding together and then separating, crowding and separating... The Song of the World, from the Prima Indians of Arizona*

In the creation myths of the world there is always a time of darkness before the birth of the human race and, within this darkness, an undifferentiated oneness where all is God and everything is one. There are no *human* beings, only *God-beings*, or rather, aspects of God waiting to be born – if a unified consciousness can have aspects at all.

And then something happens. God becomes lonely and longs for a partner, a beloved, or becomes curious about his powers and potential as a God. In order to know himself and what he might be capable of, God must do two things: he must separate himself into at least one other form so he can look back at himself and know what it is to be God. And, so he can see what he has become, the God of darkness must create light.

*God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light... Genesis 1*

*Then he realised, I indeed, I am this creation, for I have poured it forth from myself... Upanishads*

And so it is that with God's 'illumination' comes separation and the arrival of opposites, parts in conflict with one another. The universal consciousness we all once knew becomes split into many – a chaos of fragments, a world unknown, a oneness divided.

This notion of separation and the fate of man within it is there in mythology the world over; whose stories speak of the distance and ambiguity of God (this original first consciousness) from man (what God has now become).

The Greeks, for example, regarded human beings as the playthings of the Gods, who were multiple and often at war with themselves, with mankind a tiny and insignificant concern. In Christian mythology we also have a God who is unavailable to us, and so we are given angels, archangels, and even fallen angels to keep us company instead.

"We come to God in bits, dismembered. We don't know if the bits can be made to fit in the way they used to", writes Michael Begg, an Irish philosopher. His prayer is a simple one: "We ask God to re-member us". But to do so, we must first remember



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ourselves by going back to that primal darkness and experiencing a world without forms.

## RECONNECTION

Man has been searching for reconnection with the infinite and for a meaning to life ever since his realization of separation. Most often, if it is serious, this search will take place in darkness – of a physical kind rather than the metaphysical "dark night of the soul", as Carl Jung defined it.

Recognizing the primal union that was present in that first darkness, sages and mystics have always used the dark as a vehicle for returning to a state of bliss and understanding. This return to peace and stillness enables them to break through the concerns and anxieties of their earthly lives, with all of its socially-prescribed reality and the conditioning of the world outside, so that they might, in some way, attain reconnection with an undifferentiated consciousness where all is One once again.

Within the Shinto tradition of Japan, for example, there is a discipline known as *komori* - seclusion - undertaken in the darkness of a cave, a temple, a shrine, or even a room in one's house, which is specially prepared and purified so it may bring the gift of power and illumination. Japanese texts make frequent mention of sojourns in places such as these and in windowless huts, known as the *komorido*, which can be found on various holy mountains where ascetics undertake their dark retreats.

The practice of spending extended periods within caves can also be found in the remote peninsula of Land's End in Cornwall, where Iron Age communities felt compelled to construct subterranean passages, known as *fogou*, a word which translates from the Cornish as 'underground chamber' and may derive from *ogo*, meaning cave. These typically consist of a long passage with walls built up in horizontal courses of rough granite stones, some 40-50 feet long, six feet in height and five to six feet in width, constructed in a deliberate curve, and entered through a low restrictive doorway, so the initiate must bow to the darkness on entering.

On the other side of the world, among the Dagara tribe of Burkina Faso, the darkness is also sacred. Indeed, in common with other ancient tribes, it is forbidden even to illuminate the darkness, for light is known to scare the spirits away.

When Malidoma Some – who was born a Dagara tribesman but abducted and raised at a Jesuit Mission – returned 15 years later to his tribe he discovered that no-one in the village wanted any form of light, and that the villagers were expected to function in the dark. "I was given light because I had lost the ability to deal

with darkness", he writes, but "each time people saw the timid light of the shea-oil lamp in my room, they would walk away from it as if it signaled the presence of someone playing with the elements of the cosmos. No young man ever came to sit by me at night"

Somewhere for us all, darkness holds the answers to our being and our destinies – and yet all we need do is close our eyes to reconnect with our source.

### EXPERIENCING THE SACRED DARKNESS

To get a sense of what the darkness may hold for you, you may care to try the following exercises. These are taken from my book *Darkness Visible: Awakening Spiritual Light Through Darkness Meditation*, which explores the use of darkness worldwide as a means of spiritual enrichment.

#### Close your eyes ...

The first step in darkness work is just to experience the dark, but *actively* instead of passively. We are all consumers of darkness every time we blink or lay down to sleep, after all, but most of us think of these things as interruptions to our normal life of doing things in the world - if we think of them at all.

To become a voyager into darkness, spend some time with your eyes closed, as if in meditation, and just be aware of what thoughts, images, and other information start to surface, all of which you might never have noticed before because your attention was so firmly on the world 'out there'.

Starting small is recommended – no more than 15 minutes at a time – but you can build up to longer periods of an hour or more. Then, when you are comfortable with the darkness, try moving, dancing, or eating in the dark. How do these taken-for-granted activities feel now you are using other senses to guide you?

#### Playing God ...

The religious texts of the world tell us that there was a time before separation, when we all knew the mind of God because we were *part* of that mind. With your eyes closed, allow an image or sensation to form of what this primal God-like state would have been like, when you were a part of this conscious and undifferentiated energy. Feel how it is to be at One with this soul-community. Drift with it for a while.

At some point, you decided to separate from this energy so you could be born and experience life as your self, one form divided from the whole. What was your purpose for doing so? What did you come here to explore? When you consider your life now, have you fulfilled this purpose or, if not, what is there still to do?

#### Forgiving God ...

In my healing practice clients often seek help because of some schism or great divide in their life. They feel alienated, lost, or apart from someone, who might present as a parent or a partner but underlying it is often a greater existential separation: the client feels alone.

That feeling is valid. Since we fell from grace and were thrown out of Eden we are all alone. The first person to forgive, then, is God – or, if you prefer, the essence of Life Itself - for having visited upon you in this way.

Close your eyes and let an image emerge of whatever you consider God or Life Itself to be, and your relationship to it. Talk

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to this being, expressing honestly your grief and rage and fear, as well as your joy; whatever you need to say about the situation you find yourself in and the abandonment you feel.

And then switch places. Become God or Life Itself and look back at yourself. Then, from this perspective, answer your own complaints. Let God explain to you why things are this way. Continue with this dialogue, switching places when you need to, until you reach some understanding and agreements for the future.

When you are ready to forgive, step back from this image and see yourself and God facing each other as separate beings, then allow them to walk towards and into each other so these two beings merge and become one image of a new God-Self. Breathe in the energy of this union and see it as a light that fills your heart.

**Open your eyes. How does the world look now?**



Ross Heaven also runs *Darkness Visible™* retreats in the UK and Ireland. For information on these, visit [www.thefourgates.com/darknessvisible.html](http://www.thefourgates.com/darknessvisible.html), where you will also find further information on the author and his forthcoming books and workshops.

*Darkness Visible: Awakening Spiritual Light Through Darkness Meditation* is available from bookshops or from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk).