



AS A DEER THIRSTS

**Christian resources for
the spiritual journey**

by Ian Robinson

Enquiries: idtr@westnet.com.au

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**Cover Photograph of Kata Tjuta National Park, Australia
by Ian Robinson**

'As a Deer Thirsts' is a summary of a larger book
'If Anyone Thirsts' by Ian Robinson,
so go there if you seek more information,
more references and discussion questions.

As a deer thirsts
for streams of water,
so my soul longs
for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God,
For the living God.
When can I go
and meet with God?

Psalm 42

I dedicate this book to Rev Dr Robin Pryor
who found the water hole ahead of me
and spreads the good news.

INDEX

Spirituality?5
The Desert Fathers and Mothers.....	11
The Desert in the Bible17
The Desert Disciplines Today23
Conclusion27
A short bibliography28

At some point in church we realize that it is pretty irrelevant who is in and who is out. We start looking for the point of it all again. Spirituality, knowing God, faith, going to church, religion, beliefs, making a difference, openness - how does all that work? Many of us are looking at mystery, wilderness, sustainable life and meditation – fragments that become grounded when we go to the desert.

This small book introduces a major resource of Christian scripture and history that will help us to move along on our journey.

SPIRITUALITY ?

You can talk about 'spiritual' things today, even 'spirituality', but what do we mean?

A lot of articles are naming it as a rich vein of life, as though coming out as 'spiritual' is a great relief. Some are seeking it like hungry teenagers, some chilling out to soft music while some are trying yoga to see if it can deliver the health-peace-happiness that it claims. Some are suspicious because it sounds like a course you have to pay money to go to or a recipe for making yourself feel superior to someone else. Others are afraid it might have them sitting on poles like the Stylites (pole sitters) or abandoning their rationality in pursuit of angels.

In the bigger picture this question has been framed as 'East Vs West' or, to stay within the western tradition, 'Neoplatonism Vs Aritotelianism' (that is two very big words already on the first page!). But it is not usually discussed in such terms. It is more common to hear: 'I am spiritual but not religious' or to reject automatically that centuries of doctrine is 'dogma'.

So again, what exactly is 'spirituality'? Let us go to someone who has studied exactly this question. Briefly, J.A.Wiseman (2006) differentiated four approaches to what 'spirituality' means:

a. Ultimate Meanings.

Spirituality is 'consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but ... toward the ultimate value one perceives';¹

This definition suggests that 'spirituality' is in flux where people are managing the meanings of their life - when someone is trying to manage their priorities or looking for how to integrate the threads of their life into some ultimate values, it is spirituality. The question of integration leads to the second category.

b. A Human Dimension.

Spirituality, or spirit, is a fundamental dimension of a human being, whether conceived as the whole of or as part of the person.

This definition creates a second category of 'spirituality', usually conceived as a private or inward focus that is separate from the appetites of 'the flesh' or the structures of rationality in intellectual or public life. In an experience of 'going beyond words', this view validates the experience of deep connection between creatures, between human and nature, between human and divine and between the material realm of life and the spiritual realm of life. This leads to the third category.

c. An experience of transcendence

Spirituality is the lived experience of striving for transcendence, for wholeness with others, however these terms are understood.

¹ Sandra Schneiders (1989) quoted in Wiseman, J.A. (2006) p 4

'To talk about "the spirit" is to discuss what gives life and animation to someone.'² It is the experience of searching, 'thirsting' is a common metaphor. Central to this category, therefore is the focus on sources and resources, such as 'spirituality of nature'. It is not all quest, but as Richard Woods defines, an experience of transcendence: '[Spirituality] is the self-transcending character of all human persons, and everything that pertains to it, including, most importantly, the ways in which that perhaps infinitely malleable character is realized concretely in everyday situations.'³ This definition suggests that experimentation is typical, as distinct from holding a body of beliefs, even a body of beliefs of one's own construction. Kaldor (2003) stated that transcendent experiences can just as easily arise from a person's body of beliefs as vice versa, and that this is what has long been claimed in theology.⁴ This brings us to the fourth category.

d. A body of interpretations

Spirituality is the academic discipline that studies that experience described in (c).⁵

This definition suggests that human quests for meaning can be grouped and common practices analysed. For some, intellectual coherence is something they do not find beneficial or may even find suspicious, so this definition presents a serious challenge. However, some points of view hold together consistently, some are even dependent on particular religious claims, so they need to be acknowledged, as in the grouping called 'Buddhist spirituality'.⁶ Such bodies of interpretation have grown together as an aid to identifying the helpful and unhelpful aspects of one's current practice and interpretation. They provide ways for sustaining that spirituality as experience, as meaning, as values and priorities. For many, the way they talk about spirituality is anything but academic, but nonetheless their views, as assembled, are 'a spirituality'. People may or may not seek coherence within their own views but they usually value a valid congruence between experience and idea or metaphor. This validation is important if they are to enable further exploration.

Spirituality is often confused with 'mysticism', something esoteric and unusual, say in visions, ecstasies, levitation or similar:

- 1: A religion based on mystical communion with an ultimate reality
- 2: obscure or irrational thought.⁷

Another source is similar:

A philosophy based upon spiritual intuition that is believed to transcend ordinary sensory experiences or understanding.⁸

² McGrath, A. (1999) *Christian Spirituality*, p 2

³ Woods, Richard OP (1998) *Mysticism and Prophecy - the Dominican tradition*, London, DLT quoted in McGrath, A. (1999) *Christian Spirituality* p 4

⁴ Kaldor, P. (2003) p 4. Thus McGrath A. *ibid* 'Spirituality is the outworking in real life of a person's religious faith- what a person *does* with what they believe.' (italics original) p 2

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Wiseman, J.A. (2006) is a book constructed around this definition, using qualifiers like 'biblical', 'Asian', 'Christian', 'African', 'Feminist' and others.

⁷ [Source](#): WordNet @ 2.0, © 2003 Princeton University

⁸ Source:(12 Dec 1998) Published at the Centre for Cancer Education, University of Newcastle upon Tyne - The CancerWEB Project.

Thus, to some degree, mysticism and spirituality have been synonymous in the sense of their shared focus on the inward experience of ultimate realities. When the 'mystic' refuses the validity of all thinking discernment, then they depart from the four-fold definition of spirituality as outlined above. Collectively, Mysticism is a set of disciplines for learning to remove all barriers to the fullest experience of the divine Absolute One in which thoughts, emotions, doctrines, actions and even the sense of self is lost in Union. 'The mystic speaks with God as a person with a Person, and not as a member of a group. He lives by an immediate knowledge far more than by belief; by a knowledge achieved in those hours of direct, unmediated intercourse with the Transcendent when, as he says, he [*sic*]was in "union with God".⁹ This body of practises may overlap with asceticism also.

That remarkable Evelyn Underhill (1920) compares mystics in many religious traditions and looks for their united voice, not as theologians but in their experience of the divine: '...to communion with (the soul's) source, the Absolute One. There you have the mystic's vision of the Universe...'¹⁰. She favourably compares the Upanishads of Hinduism, where Brahma is 'other than the known and above the known'; medieval Christian mystics including Richard of St Victor, Ruysbroeck and Jacopone da Todi experiencing 'the glorious and Absolute One' who is 'above reason and without reason' though not others.¹¹ She concedes that some doctrines are more help than others in reaching that point but that the art of mysticism is primarily not about doctrine.

Underhill was mostly seeking the evidence for a universal experience in order to counter the prevailing (at her time) reductionist psychological view which spoke of 'ecstatic religion' (from the work of William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*). So too does Egan (1982) who spends two chapters on 'Psychological Approaches' to mysticism. However, in Underhill's speed to bridge the gap between 'transcendentalists' like Barth and Brunner, and 'immanentists' with their pragmatic activism in charitable churches, she conflates what Egan (1982) would later keep separate. 'There seems to be an experiential - not merely interpretative - difference within Christianity between enlightenment and love mystical experiences. St Ignatius' famous vision on the banks of the Cradoner River is an example of Christian enlightenment through which he became 'another man'. St Teresa of Avila's famous 'transverberation' experience of being pierced by God's love is different from her Christian enlightenment experience of how all things are in God'.¹² Thus a 'unitive' experience, as later lauded by Bede Griffiths, can be distinguished from the transformative experience of mystical love.

In this post-modern era where more credence is given to non-rational experience, McIntosh (1998) can cite a few sources from the early 1990's who are beginning to theologise respectfully about mystical experience, which is a step away from the custom among theologians of making far too little of the mystics' relationship with God, and the custom among contemplatives to discover meaning only from their experience. This thesis assumes that both wings of the bird are needed for flight - theology and experience.¹³ In this book, a few accounts of unusual experiences may be part of mysticism but not its signal motivation

⁹ Underhill, E. (1920) p 25

¹⁰ *ibid* p 9

¹¹ Similarly, Belisle, P.D. (2000) devotes a large section to 'the Universal' vision which he interprets as theological universalism though without any theological argument. pp133-170

¹² Egan, H.D. (1982) p 130 footnote 30

¹³ It is this sense which made famous the Victorine movement of Paris. See Knowles, D (1969) and Belisle, P.D. (2003). Sheldrake, P. (1998) follows this formula in his 'practical theology of the Trinity' p 99ff, an exposition of the medieval mystic Julian of Norwich, which leads into a way of Christian living 'in place' p 165f

or form.

Because of this four-fold definition of 'spirituality', and the similar history of 'mysticism', scholars often attempt to define something even more essential. James Wiseman follows Bernard McGinn when he suggests that 'presence' is a more useful category for describing the unifying characteristic in the various forms of spirituality or mysticism: 'the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God.'¹⁴ Likewise, Alister McGrath borrows from Brother Lawrence (c.1614-91) to affirm the concept of spirituality as the aim to 'practise the presence of God.'¹⁵

In the case of those whose conception does not include God as personal being, but an ultimate life force, the sense of presence would be a sense of 'connection' with the whole universe. Kaldor (2003) quoted a wide ranging UK survey which found 'connection' to be a powerful concept in various formulations of spirituality - 'keeping in touch with, relating with, being filled with, engaging with, coming closer with, moving towards, and union with the Divine, in whatever way the Divine is envisaged, theistically or non-theistically.'¹⁶

All four areas of the above definition are important. This position respects the experimental nature of contemporary spiritual searching. A formulation of the essence of spirituality at one point in the spiritual journey may be an inhibitor at another point.

While it is popular to set the existentially rich concept of 'spirituality' over against 'religion', 'bible' or 'dogma', the comments above show that they can be mutually supportive spiritual pursuits.

One major example of this is the resourcefulness offered through the Bible of Christians and Jews. For the Bible, the desert experience of Israel was of enduring importance, and the memory of it was both definitive and reformative. However, at present, Christianity's early affiliation with the desert has been weakened, despite a very strong history. Most recently there has been a lack of biblical studies. So, this book is a major step, in my humble opinion, towards a recovery of biblical spirituality.

The goal of Christian spirituality is not to defeat the self, imprison desire or play heroics. Nor is the goal just openness or rest or emptiness or ecstasy. That is what most people mean by 'spirituality'. If we experience one of those, it is OK but I need to say that it is only the door prize. It sure beats the rat race of competition. It beats drowning in the consumer choices that breed chronic anxiety. It is better to find deep rest than the efforts involved in justifying our own existence. But we have greater needs than that and fortunately there is much more that can be passed on. This book points briefly to the amazing resources for a spiritual life in Christianity.

The difficulty is not all our fault. Three centuries of modernity has disabled organised religion from finding access to a more intuitive, sometimes called 'mystical', form of spirituality. Richard Woods wrote of the period of Modernity (18th-20th centuries) that Protestants 'had all but stifled the mystical element of religion' and that Catholics had

¹⁴ Wiseman, J.A. (2006) p 10

¹⁵ McGrath, A. (1999) *Christian Spirituality*, p 3

¹⁶ Kaldor, P. (2003) p 4

tended to reduce mysticism 'to the quaint, odd, or pathological and thereby to the irrelevant periphery of ordinary Christian life'.¹⁷ All that is changing now.

In Christianity and Buddhism, meditation and solitude are learned and practised mostly in prayer communities or in monasteries. At an introductory level, there are thousands of yoga classes, mindfulness meditation classes and Christian meditation groups in community halls. There is more to it than turning up to see a new group of friends every week. For Christians, solitude has for two thousand years been a way to learn to notice, and to train to remove, all obstacles to the love of God, so that one experienced oneness with God and the fullness of his love. It was NOT about hating your body, hating the world, hating sex, or escaping the corruption of society or church, though you will hear various people say all of these.

St Anthony is often said to be the start of it all in 270AD, at the age of twenty. He spent many years alone in the deserts of Egypt, in much fasting and prayer. Thousands upon thousands of men and women followed his example by moving into the desert, a movement known today as the *Desert Fathers and Mothers*.

But it goes further back than that. St Anthony learned it from "St Paul the Hermit" whoever he was. Before them and nearby a Jewish monastic group, called *Therapeutae*, in the first century had similar practises. We know that Jesus spent time in the desert, and taught his disciples how to undertake solitude in their normal lives. Around him, in the first century BC and AD, the Jewish *Essenes* (the Dead Sea Scroll mob) did something similar at Qumran by the Dead Sea, as did also their contemporary *John the Baptist*. He in turn had taken his cue from *Ezra* (5th century BC), *Elijah* (9th century BC) and *Moses* (13th cent BC). So much to draw upon going back in history, so how did we miss it? All these we will return to in the chapters that follow.

This vitality can be seen spreading throughout church history. The Desert Fathers and Mothers, documented by Athanasius (296-373) and John Cassian (370-433) and others, inspired waves of mission throughout Europe and Asia by leaders like St Patrick (390-461) and St Columba (521-597). They called it the 'Egyptian' way. St Benedict (480-547) also picked it up explicitly and from his "Benedictines" all the western monastic orders sprang up, including St Francis of Assisi (1182-1226). That source of renewal recurs throughout Christian history in all directions. To leap a few centuries, John Wesley (18th cent.), leader of another revival era, used to recommend to everyone to read Macarius and Ephraem (of the Desert Fathers and Mothers), because they were 'true Christians'.¹⁸

And now, for the past half century, through the leadership of Thomas Merton, Simone Weil, Charles Foucault, John Main among others, these treasures are returning into our era of plugged in, noisy, rat-racers. New prayer movements are arising, and many new kinds of missionary-monastics. Some just gather occasionally, some live in close proximity with each other. Some face on to the urban wilderness, some face up to the vast desert. Hundreds have been on desert 'Spirit Journeys'.¹⁹ A few have stayed out there, especially in the historic

¹⁷ Woods, R (1981) p 415

¹⁸ In another book, I have compiled a number of these texts: 'Sacred Sources – amazing true stories from the biblical deserts', 2013 MACSIS, Perth Australia. Contact me or Amazon.

¹⁹ 'This Thirsty Heart – a journey in the deserts of Australia' by Ian Robinson, 2010, MACSIS, Australia. Order through <http://talltrees.yolasite.com/books.php> or order through Amazon in print or ebook .

churches of Egypt. Those of us who visit with these people who dwell in the deserts do not face what they face. But we may benefit from what their spirituality can impart.

As we progress on our journey, we may find the scripture opens wider than we previously thought. Solitude or meditation is just the start to a wild adventure in Grace. Our spiritual disciplines might widen to include all the desert disciplines.

Does this sound strange to you? Like me, are you an activist who finds the idea of 'achieving more by doing less' a bit strange? If so, it is not your faith, not the Bible or the Holy Spirit that is saying that to you. It is the sound of a world rushing headlong to nowhere.

If you are on a spiritual journey, this little book will show you the resources of Christian history and then go deeper into the deserts in the Bible. I apologize if all this seems, you know, a bit 'athletic'. This is just another 'no pain no gain' situation, that is all. Some of us know that God's love is an ocean to take in - if only we can clear enough space among the clutter of neurotic and cultural defaults, of our stuffed-full hearts, of our distracted minds, if only we can thirst enough.

THE DESERT FATHERS AND MOTHERS

I mentioned the very strong history of desert spirituality in Christian history. This section reviews that great source on desert spirituality - the Desert Fathers and Mothers.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers of the third-sixth centuries exercised an influence around the Mediterranean and beyond. In Egypt, Coptic Orthodox monks still claim continuity with them. The early flourishing of these communities was to a large extent cut short after 407CE by the devastation wrought by the 'barbarian invasions' of the Mazices from the western desert.²⁰ The movement has continued to spark renewal in the church right up to today.²¹

These men and women were from all parts of the social strata and all parts of the Empire. Ward's view was that the intersection of the Christian gospel with monasticism produced a 'bright fire of devotion'.²² The movement as it developed became a beacon of Christian spirituality, incorporating a gracious self-sacrifice that was regarded as a 'white martyrdom'.²³

Their manner of life is aptly summarised by Benedicta Ward (2005):

The first Christian monks tried every kind of experiment with the way they lived and prayed ... For the most part they were simple men [*sic: there were women too*], peasants from the villages by the Nile, though a few, like Arsenius and Evagrius, were well educated. Visitors who were impressed and moved by the life of the monks imitated their way of life as far as they could, and also provided a literature that explained and analysed this way of life for those outside it.²⁴

They were not 'monks' as the church knew them later in history. In the earliest days, for instance, they wore no special robes or tonsure and did not keep a common purse.²⁵ They were not 'adopting monasticism' as a vocation, but trying out 'an intensive experiment in Christian living',²⁶ developing practices in community, in the beautiful solitude and poverty of the desert.²⁷

²⁰ Ward, B. (2003) p xix. Gruber, M. (2002) 'And while the Latin Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches progressively lost track of Egypt after schisms and Islamic occupation, the Coptic faith continued, and monasticism flourished there through the ages until the present.' (p xiii)

²¹ Dunn (2000) hints of its ongoing relevance to today as in the early medieval period: 'Just as Cluny reached then zenith of its prestige its power (*sic*) in the early eleventh century, the first signs of a different type of monasticism began to appear. More modest, contemplative and eremitic in their orientation... In response to the growth of an urbanised society and a monetary economy, they were able to turn once again - as guides and symbols of their intention to return to a different set of spiritual values - to the literature of the Egyptian desert and the early monastic life.' p208

²² Ward, B. (2003) p ix

²³ Chadwick, O. (1958) p 20 'Long before the age of persecution was past, the word martyr is applied to anyone who lives a truly self-sacrificing life. Tertullian could write of martyrdom of will 'perfect without suffering', Cyprian of the 'martyrdom of virginity'...' Goehring (1999) pp 53-72.

²⁴ Ward, B. (2005) p 2

²⁵ Chadwick, O. (1958) p 15

²⁶ Ward, B. (2003) p viii

²⁷ Even their locations were experimental. Binns describes monks in central Palestine, who moved during the autumn rains into the deeper drier deserts towards the Dead Sea. They either returned to the monasteries after the surface water sources had dried up, or if circumstances allowed, took the time necessary to establish another community. (p 99-100) 'The monk lived between Desert and City.' Binns, J. (1996) p 79-98

The influence of the desert environment is hard to overstate.²⁸ From their own literature, however, it is hard to assess the impact of that environment, since the *Sayings* speak little of it directly.

It was where they lived, and their writings were therefore more mundane than a traveller who might be finding first impressions of place.²⁹ The desert's solitude was an experience both on the edge and in immersion, as will be described more fully below.

Their remote location was not simply a place without any demands. It was a life lived at the source, and as a defining standpoint:

Instead of dealing with the manifestations of evil in daily life, they were concerned with the source of sin in the human heart. Since they were considered to be representatives of all creation, it was this aspect of their lives which caused them to be regarded as intercessors for all humanity.³⁰

Solitude was therefore an active place, not a passively peaceful place, lived at the edges of civilisation, of psychological struggle, and of physical survival.

They were at the edge of civilisation, and in constant intercession between that civilisation and God. Some monks alternated between Jerusalem and the desert. They lived 'at the limits of the use of clothing, shelter, food and drink', and 'on the boundaries between human and animal, between the cultivated lands and the wilderness, between angels and men, which made them mediators with God for all creation.'³¹

They were at the edge of their own souls, always striving for greater repentance, deeper compunction, and greater love. If they were not struggling, they were worried:

Anthony said to Poemen: 'Our great work is to lay the blame for our sins upon ourselves before God, and to expect to be tempted to our last breath.'³²

And Poemen said, 'The character of the genuine monk only appears when he is tempted.'³³

They were at the edge of survival. One of the most common forms of miracle story is that of miraculous supply of water or rain, thus ensuring the survival of the solitary or of a community or even of a city. Another is the overcoming of beasts, especially lions. 'The story is a paradigm for the harmonious co-existence of man and beast in the Palestinian desert.'³⁴

They were not only at these 'edges', but also immersed in discomfort and silence. The harsher life of the desert gave them constant immersion in discomfort³⁵ for the training of the soul that they prized:

²⁸ Chryssavgis, J. (2003) p 86

²⁹ Similarly, Aboriginal elder Jimmie Pike says: 'you call it desert – we used to live there.' Lowe, P. and Pike, J. (1990) title page.

³⁰ Ward, B. (2003) p ix

³¹ Ward, B. (2003) p xviii

³² Ward, B. (1975) p 2.4

³³ *ibid* p 142.13

³⁴ Binns, J. (1994) pp 225f. Examples of these stories in Ward, B. (1975) pp 22.2; 34.1; 171.1

³⁵ This suggests that the 'comfort' offered or allowed in spiritual direction needs re-assessment.

They said of Agatho that for three years he kept a stone in his mouth to teach himself silence. Poemen said: 'If a monk hates two things he can be free of this world.' A brother inquired, 'What are they?' He said, 'Bodily comfort and conceit.'³⁶ This attitude is very confronting in places of wealth.

They were also immersed in silence. Silent solitude was and remains a most prized gift of the desert, not as respite from care, but so that they could hear the truth about their own heart:

Anthony said: 'He who sits alone and is quiet has escaped from three wars: hearing, speaking, seeing; but there is one thing against which he must continually fight: that is, his own heart.'³⁷

The desert solitude and silence provided, not a relief from reality but a way to engage absolutely with the sources of reality – with God and their own heart. So, held in place in the desert, how did the monks view the desert?

They did not speak of appreciation of the desert in contemporary terms, nor did they speak with the awareness of travellers describing the desert for the first time. For instance, their view of pollution was not chemical:

Abba John the Eunuch said: 'My children, let us not pollute this place, since our Fathers have previously cleansed it from demons.'³⁸ They did speak from a view of nature as 'enchanted', and certainly not utilitarian.

The saying (above) from Abba John also exposed their strong sense of remaining in place. Any monk who took themselves off to another place was viewed badly:

Blessed Syncletica said: 'If you find yourself in a monastery, do not go to another place. For that will harm you a great deal. Just as the bird that abandons the eggs she was sitting on prevents them from hatching, so the monk or the nun grows cold and their faith dies when they go from one place to another.'³⁹

Place functioned like a mirror of the self that could be clearly viewed, but only if they stayed long enough to see into it deeply. Already quoted in a different light, Abba Moses said: 'Go and sit in your cell and your cell will teach you everything'.⁴⁰

The urge to stay in one place meant that pilgrimage was not encouraged among the monks. Pilgrimage was an essential part of the spread of their influence, however, as others came to sit and listen and then return home.

Lastly, the desert place demanded care from its inhabitants: A hermit said: 'If someone lives in a place but does not harvest the crops there, the place will drive that person out for not having done the work of that place.' By taking back the land from demons, and their hearts from sin, they believed that they restored the dominion of Adam:

³⁶ Ward, B. (1975) p 148.66

³⁷ *ibid* p 2.11

³⁸ *ibid* p 90.5

³⁹ *ibid* p 194.6

⁴⁰ *ibid* p 118.6

It was said by Abba Paul who took various kinds of snakes in his hands: 'Forgive me, fathers, but if someone acquires purity, then everything is in submission to that person, just as it was for Adam when he was in paradise before the transgression of the commandment.'⁴¹

This raises questions about whether care and dominion was only exercised by the work of cropping and not by care of natural vegetation, and questions about the degree of perfectionism implied. However, a systematic theology of dominion cannot be read from these narratives, since such a reading was foreign to the contemplatives' style of irony or provocation. As the Orthodox priest John Chryssavgis wrote:

Anthony 'saw the desert and loved it', but the desert was to be 'admired' but not 'adored'; one was to wonder at, but not worship, the beauty of the desert.⁴²

The desert environment was a life lived at the edge of civilisation, of survival, of their own souls. By being held firmly in the love of one physical place, the women and men of the desert became immersed and centred in silence, and were taught by that place all that they needed to know for the training of their hearts in holiness.

This desert movement grew to be many thousands of ascetics in several different forms of communities. Its influence spread north and east of the Mediterranean and into Western Europe and Britain, and it took different forms in line with the experimental nature of the original movement. This movement might again be a resource.

The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers has had great renewing force, proving to be adaptable to several cultures and many circumstances. The spread of this way of Christian life has many factors. They had holiness,⁴³ spiritual power,⁴⁴ and humility.⁴⁵ They were not self-consciously a renewal movement like the Judean Essenes had been, rather, a group who would avoid any reputation or attention. 'Their work was to live in stillness and know themselves thoroughly, so that the redemption of Christ might come upon their whole lives from beginning to end'.⁴⁶

It is these men and women who have become known as the 'desert fathers', as distinct from the early Christian theologians who were known as 'fathers of the church'. It is a term which suggests that their influence was as vital to Christian life as the theology of the 'fathers' but

⁴¹ *ibid* p 171.1

⁴² Chryssavgis, J. (2003) p 86

⁴³ The reputation for holiness among the Egyptian monks was well deserved: 'They said of Abba Pambo that his face was like that of Moses, who received the image of the glory of Adam when his face shone. Pambo's face also shone like lightning, and he was like a king sitting on a throne. It was the same with Abba Silvanus and Abba Sisoës.' Ward, B. (1975) p 166.12

⁴⁴ As well as virtuous, they were occasional miracle-workers: 'Abba Poemen said of Abba Nisterus that he was like the serpent of brass which Moses made for the healing of the people: he possessed all virtue and without speaking, he healed everyone.' Ward, B. (1975) p 130.1

⁴⁵ Their reputation was never their goal. In fact, a bad reputation was said to help one's humility and to discourage visitors: Abba Xanthias said, 'The thief was on the cross and he was justified by a single word; and Judas who was counted in the number of the apostles lost all his labour in one single night and descended from heaven to hell. Therefore, let no-one boast of his good works, for all those who trust in themselves fall.' Ward, B. (1975) p 133.1

⁴⁶ Ward, B. (2003) p xviii

that it grew out of the desert and solitude, rather than out of the debates of councils and bishops.⁴⁷

The Desert Fathers and Mothers are not Christian desert spirituality in its only or its most complete form. They were desert dwellers but many of the reforms they sparked were in mainstream life, because their disciplines were adopted and adapted widely. Their zeal for the joy of God could be expressed as missional activity, as by Martin of Tours and Patrick of Ireland. Some travel diaries from this period show that pilgrims took a journey into the desert to visit the monks, and carried their discoveries home to influence their towns and churches.⁴⁸ This adaptability was intrinsic to the movement as people sought what they had sought, and experimented in their towns as the desert Christians had experimented in their desert cells.

But what inspired them to it?

⁴⁷ *ibid* pp ix-x. It must be stated that women were also involved – the desert mothers.

⁴⁸ Lane, B. (2002) pp 3-4; Lane, B. (1998) (p vii) describes with enthusiasm the opportunities afforded by *Ghost Ranch* and *Christ in the Desert Abbey*, in the USA, and both are denominational foundations. In Australia, similar centres are *Campfire of the Heart* in Alice Springs and *Koora Retreat Centre* near Southern Cross, both of which are small private foundations. The Benedictine town of *New Norcia* is set among rolling farmlands.

DESERTS IN THE BIBLE

There is an awful lot of desert in the Bible. Bible readers may pause and consider that statement then nod their heads, but still not get it. WHY is there so much desert in the Bible? The answer to that should already be emerging in the earlier chapters.

First, what is a desert? If you have watched the TV they will have shown you a vast horizon of rolling sand dunes. Only 2% of the world's deserts are like that. Nor are they vast and lifeless places. It should be remembered by Australian readers, who can travel seven deserts each up to 1500 kilometres across, that the biblical desert areas are small. The wilderness of Judah along the borders of the Dead Sea is about 100 by 10 kilometres – a strip of rain-shadow mountains. The distance from Mt Sinai to the bottom of the Dead Sea is the same as the distance back to Goshen in Egypt, 320 km, about eight days walk. It is not a 'vast expanse'. That is why the biblical words for "desert" are mostly about a specific locality rather than a general concept or a vast horizon.

Second, what does the Bible say about these places?

Barry Leal (2002) identified in the Bible four differing kinds of attitude to wilderness. God's grace in the wilderness was recognised as a place of :

- a. **Encounter** and call, covenant-making , revelation
- b. **Testing**, rebellion, sin and punishment
- c. God's **discipline**, purification, transformation, challenge
- d. God's **refuge**, moral and spiritual haven, living creation.

The attitudes of the Bible's many writers range between extreme abhorrence and thankfulness, wonder and praise. It is therefore a complex tradition, not all bad and not all good. We cannot generalise about it in terms of abstract principles and symbolic language. Its meaning is always anchored in the particular stories of the persons who were there and their place in God's purposes for his people in history. It was a place not a space. The stories and histories that layer each place are the most important thing. You have to get into the story to really get it, but if you have the following sketch will take you further in.

Looking more closely at God' story in the desert, it has four main phases – the Exodus under Moses, The Festivals of the Desert, The Return from Exile, and Jesus own emphasis upon this Desert tradition. Let's take a really quick look at each of these phases. I won't retell all the stories but only the reference.

Exodus from slavery – Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers , Deuteronomy

Sometime around the 13th century BCE, God sent Moses and rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, by crossing the Reed Sea. Through forty years of courage and cowardice, living defenceless as nomads in the Negev desert, an entire generation died out and a new culture was forged. God revealed God's essential character and purpose in the form of a Covenant with Israel, and gave them the Ten Commandments and other laws. The punishments for disobedience matched the environment – life or death.

They were not totally isolated during this time. There were numerous interactions with peoples from the region, some cooperative, some combative. It was possible for the Israelites to walk out of the desert and meld with the surrounding cultures at any time. Conversely, surrounding cultures influenced them - the golden calf was pressed into service as an object to worship as God. But, unity was preserved militantly and their uniqueness in Covenant with Yahweh was defined. - "There is no God like Yahweh."

The story makes it clear that it was not the miracles - fire, parting of the sea, clouds, water, quail and manna, and thunder on the holy mountain - that could provoke a willing faith. For example, at the point of greatest revelation at the holy mount, they were at their most rebellious - they formed a golden calf in a vain attempt to concretize the god who had delivered them. It may be that it is the desert's privations and its stillness that force open the hearts of people. A liminal place can teach stillness with power.

The writers of these texts try to hold many threads together but all agree that the Exodus is a training track for persons and for a nation, training in utter faithfulness with a god who is Yahweh. Israel is born and bred in this desert.

Before moving into these texts, our interpretation may have one more disabling mechanism at work. We are blinkered by childish bible teaching that is focussed upon the heroes and institutions of the bible. Saints, heroes, miracles, patriarchs, temples, priesthood, nations and battles. Some of the bible is written that way, which is suitable for gaining the attention of adolescents and leaders. However, if this is your sole exposure you may miss that the focus of the bible is the heart. Out of that heart, it repeatedly says, private and public life is formed. Because our culture has largely lost that focus, our discussions of spirituality, sexuality, social systems, church growth and church secrets all take place in the doughnut hole.

Throughout scripture a focus of the spiritual heart was retained by remembering desert spirituality. For instance, the tabernacles and all the temples were dedicated at the great festivals which elevate the desert story. Exaggerated claims about the Temple by its priests and the unjust behaviour of kings and nobles were remedied through the prophet's threat of destruction and desertification. Further, as we will see in the life of Jesus, the desert place was the positive avenue to discern and recover one's proximity with God. The desert only threatened those who prefer palace and temple corridors for their life. In today's terms, one chooses temple or desert for one's spiritual vitality and the biblical record leans again and again towards the desert. Is that in the teaching curriculum of your school, church, synagogue, college, seminary or university?

The desert festivals

Apart from Elijah (9th century BCE) there is no record of the desert mountain playing any part in Israel's life from then on. He arrived at a cave on the Sinai massif and expected to be confronted by the same cataclysmic events that met Moses. It was not to be. It is stillness which captures him, like a "still small voice", and God speaks to him in that way. The stillness of the desert is loud, encompassing and inescapable, some say 'majestic.'

For most people most of the time, the desert experiences that birthed biblical faith were remembered three times a year in the big festivals. The festivals took them back there. *Passover* and *Pentecost* are well known to Christians and these were both taken from Israel's pattern of life. These two remember, in sequence, the departure from slavery in Egypt across the Red Sea and into the desert, and then the giving of the Ten Commandments on the mountain of God in that desert. That is not all. The greatest attention for centuries was given to the third festival called '*Booths*' or '*Tabernacles*' or '*Sukkot*', commemorated by a week of camping out. They were remembering the desert years. They were re-committing to the fact that we only know who we are when we stand before God with nothing. In that light, as Deuteronomy taught, our 'possessions' are merely 'on loan' not possessions, the land is a gift not a freehold, and the stranger is to be welcomed. These are big commitments that we need to learn again from the desert.

The festival of *Sukkot* continued throughout their history and into Jesus' time. Jesus Christ stood at this festival to make his greatest claims, and at *Passover* he died and rose again, and at *Pentecost* he launched the global church of the Spirit. It is hard to imagine how much more significance he could have attached to them.

Exile from the land beyond a desert

The prophets of the 8th-4th centuries, under the spiritual rot brought on through corrupt kingship, many times referred to the deserts of the Exodus. There are two competing themes. One is a repeated warning of the kind of rebellion seen in the Exodus - "do not be like your fathers who rebelled at Meribah...". The opposite is also present, even in the same writer, a call to return to the desert, where they could be re-shaped by God - "I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her" Hos 2.14

After Jeremiah's impossible predictions of destruction were fulfilled and the land of Judah suffered military punishment for their spiritual sin, the Arabian desert separated them from their land. Ezek 19.13. The exiles wrestled with the apparent failure of their God to defend them, and the cultural perception that the foreigners' gods must be stronger. Dislocated, they could not "sing the Lord's songs in a strange land." But if Jeremiah had been right about the Exile maybe he was right too about the promise of return. Through another wave of prophets, God promised another exodus back to their land. "A voice crying in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord. The rough ways made smooth." (Is 40) Some longed to see Jerusalem rebuilt.

But they could never go back to the way it was. They recalled the prophets' song that God is God of all Creation. Paradoxically, if God IS everywhere, they don't need so much to return to one place to worship Him. Still, the word went out for a second exodus, across another desert, back home to where they had always belonged.

Zerubbabel and later Ezra and Nehemiah enact that second exodus (5th century BCE), but as the prophet Zechariah alongside them showed, not everyone came home. The Jewish diaspora was born. At the Festival of Tabernacles, the desert feast described above, they re-established themselves in Jerusalem. Founded again on that desert story, the event represented the "Ingathering" of the nation of Israel now firmly in a global setting.

Summary of Old Testament Desert Spirituality

The exodus through the desert was foundational of Israel's faith. Those events taught them the ways of a face-to-face God. The Promised Land was conditional upon keeping to the way of what they had learned. The priesthood, prophets, tabernacle and temple, and supremely the three festivals were given to them to help them to remember. The exile across another desert was a catastrophe and a re-run. Upon return and restoration, they make foundational again their desert story, identity, faith and festivals. This was to become Jesus' heritage in the gospels

The gospels - Jesus and the desert

Most people are familiar with a visit by Jesus into the desert that lasted forty difficult days. Then they close the book on that aspect of his life. However, there are four layers of experience of the desert in Jesus' life.

1. The Desert of the Incarnate One
2. Jesus in the Wilderness
3. Disciples in Desert Places
4. The One who gives Water

1. The Desert of the Incarnate Son of God

The oldest song in the New Testament recalls the voluntary poverty of the one who came from above (Philippians 2.6-11). Compared to the glories of heaven, Jesus' earthly existence with its stench of death and betrayal, must have been like a desert of utter deprivation. He was deserted by every one of his closest disciples, betrayed by a friend, and sweated blood with the chaotic passions of encroaching death. Beyond this trajectory, there are three more important ways that this describes the central streams of his life.

He was always on a journey. He was always clear about where he came from and that he was a landless sojourner - 'the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'. He 'pitched his tent' among us (Jn1.14).

That was not accidental, since every person who asked to come with him as his disciple, Jesus 'disowned' all their attachments to wealth, home, possessions, heritage and family obligations.⁴⁹

On the mount of Transfiguration, the story is full of desert imagery - radiance, cloud, divine voice, commands, Moses and Elijah. This is not accidental either, since the New Testament Greek word describes Jesus' achievement explicitly as an *EXODUS* (Lk 9.13). He was leading a third exodus through a costly and terrible liberation.

2. Jesus in the Wilderness

Jesus' forty days of fasting in the Judean desert, as I said, stands out. He encounters the wild beasts of the uninhabited desert, and both the demon and the angels which are so often to be

⁴⁹ Less frequently, he made the suitor stay home and do the hard work of reconciliation.

recalled by the Desert Fathers in later centuries. His confrontation with Satan has many levels. In a distant culture focussing on heroics, it may seem pretty weird.

Coming at the commencement of his public ministry, and immediately after his baptism, it is primarily about his identity . “If you are the Son of God” the devil taunts each time. This identity and calling is tested in three ways - turn stones to bread, throw yourself down, worship Satan and be given the world. Each one tests his unique calling. Jesus answers from his knowledge of the biblical book of Deuteronomy, which is the biblical book most closely related to desert experience.

Often overlooked, John 10-11 also records two extended desert sojourns by Jesus, immediately before his last journey to Jerusalem. This kind of journey, in other words, bookended Jesus’ public life.

The forty days were a spiritual feat of titanic proportions, not least because, spiritual directors would say, forty days is a fast only undertaken after much practise at fasting. It did not come out of the blue or on a fit of passion – such passion would disappear after three days of exhaustion! Fasting is a staple of Jesus’ preparation and solitude is a staple of his continuing ministry. He passes both on to the disciples “when you fast...”. Matthew 6

3. Disciples in Desert Places

As he does for himself, he does with his disciples. We have already seen how Jesus’ landless journey is asked of his disciples also. There is more. The gospels record more than a dozen times when Jesus takes time off from the programme to go away to a quiet place of solitude. This is often translated as ‘a desert place’, though it can only mean solitude, for Galilee was not a place of low rainfall.

People often assume that this was time-out for a rest, but most often they saw a particularly testing twist of events. For instance, in the pagan resort town of Caesarea Philippi, he challenged them: “who do you say that I am” and the awful news of his impending death is delivered. Across the ‘other side’ of Lake Galilee they entered the stresses of cross-cultural communication. On another occasion, they encountered the demoniac with the “legion” of demons.

Solitude often is harder than busy-ness. The gospels describe ‘desert time’.

4. The One who gives Water

The desert is at the heart of Jesus identity in a fourth way also.

As described above, the Feast of Tabernacles (also known as *Booths* or *Sukkot*), was the main festival of 1st century Israel. It was the main pilgrimage festival each year in Jerusalem with pilgrims coming from across the known world. Special ceremonies were enacted every day for seven days at the Temple, with one day to recover afterwards before heading off on the long journey home.

At one Tabernacles Feast (John 7.37-39), at the climactic moment on the final day when a pitcher of water is ceremonially poured on the altar, at the very highest point of the feast,

Jesus stands up and shouts loudly. It is incredibly confrontational, like someone staging a protest at an Easter service in a high cathedral. "If anyone thirsts" Jesus says, "let them come to me and drink. To those who believe in me I will give rivers of water coming out of them." This claim cannot be more ultimate. Against the artificiality of a pitcher and altar, he promises water from within. Against a mere memorial of water in the wilderness of history, the thirsty can be satisfied now. John notes that any who heard would have inferred that this expression refers to people receiving the Holy Spirit as promised by the great chain of past prophets. In one statement, therefore, Jesus claims to both fulfil and dispense everything that Israel's Temple, Exodus and Exile mean. He places himself at the centre of the desert spirituality of Israel and satisfies thirst. This was not accidental either. In the days leading up to this extraordinary outburst, he made claims about himself that are unparalleled in history - 'Before Abraham was I Am', and " I am the Light of the World".

Further, He appeals to the experience of "thirst" as a metaphor for deep human desires. In this thirst, Jesus has a clearly global agenda. It is "the kingdoms of the world" which are placed at his feet in the forty days, not just Israel. It is when Greeks come to him that he says "now is the hour". The apostles are told to "go into all the world", and so on. The Jewish "Messiah" is also the Gentile "Christ" to the whole world. Jesus' offer to "anyone who thirsts" has every spirituality in mind and he thus places himself at the source for us all.

The following chapter describes how to find that source.

THE DESERT DISCIPLINES TODAY

In all the movements recounted in previous chapters – Exodus, Elijah, Ezra, Jesus, Desert Fathers and Mothers and beyond – there were two forms for desert spirituality. The ‘Mainstream’ practices arose from the ‘Marginal’ location, they mirrored each other. Each of these had two aspects:

- **‘Marginal’** desert spirituality arises from the geographic marginality of arid country. It includes the desert both as a journey of **Pilgrimage**, or as a place of **Desert-dwelling**. Pilgrims travelled in dry country, dangerous and wondrous and visited those who dwelt there. They learned from those who were doing the deep learning from the desert and finding whose Presence they could hear. They took their learnings back to the mainstream, which we now turn to.
- **‘Mainstream’** desert spirituality was applied when living in the cities or towns. The church was a community who remembered the desert and incorporated its **Memory** in their structures and calendars, and/or they practiced its **Disciplines**, as a way of forming and reforming faith.

Desert-dwelling, Pilgrimage, Memory and Disciplines, the dynamic interaction of all four aspects has been an essential part of both the biblical and historical pattern of biblical desert spirituality.

Before we go much further, let us remember that in this context ‘disciplines’ are not *punishments*. ‘Discipline’ is a word describing any form of training, formation, exercise, an habitual practice or ‘pillar.’ All professions, sports, crafts, trades and religious traditions have their own disciplines. Different levels of expertise call forth different levels of discipline. Simply, if we do not adopt the disciplines that pertain to a craft, or make a start at least, we simply do not wish to get to their goal. Disciplines are what we apply to ourselves and if we are both serious and realistic about ourselves, we will ask friends to help us not to wriggle away.

Now, the point of this chapter is to name in some summary fashion the practices that fed the desert dwellers’ love of Christ and neighbour. These are the flexible disciplines that carried a virus of reform through the church, over and over again. An experience of Transcendence does not come simply by flying out to a remote mine-site in the arid zone. Showing up on a sand plain somewhere does not guarantee an epiphany. What was the work that was so satisfying, both in forming marginal desert communities and in reforming mainstream life?

There is no final answer to these questions. With that caution in mind, we can proceed.

How shall we summarise this collection of practices? A number of scholars have studied the DFAM practices and made varying summaries.⁵⁰ By adding in the biblical material the list of desert practices widened somewhat, and I was able to organise the disciplines under three

⁵⁰ Several authors had made contemporary analyses of their practices – Rowan Williams (2000), John Chryssavgis (2003), Kenneth Leech (1985) and Benedicta Ward (1975, 2003, 2005). All came up with different schemes, except that the latter (2003) followed Owen Chadwick (1958).

major headings. Firstly, the **disciplines of solitude**, then the **disciplines of community** and lastly, **the disciplines of transformation**. While several have studied the disciplines of the desert, the frame below is closest to that which was developed by Richard Foster (1980). However, this book wants to draw closer to the biblical desert way than the classical or monastic disciplines.⁵¹ That is, we are reaching for the same thing that they were.

Here is how I hold the three parts together. The disciplines of solitude are like a musician in their rooms practicing their instrument. The disciplines of community are like the orchestra preparing for performance. The disciplines of transformation are the widening impact of that orchestra and those hours of practise upon their audience and culture. They only work together.

As a first step, some of the technical terms from the literature (capitalised) are listed under my three headings so that any reader with that interest may form a mind map:

The Disciplines of Solitude - *Monakos, liminality*

Repentance - *metanoia*, the way to make positive change, guilt and shame, forgiveness given and received, self-esteem and self-regard, Progress in Perfection, Compunction, Nothing Done for show, Humility, Silence and tears. Christianity elevates humility to a supreme virtue, and business studies are now discovering that it is a precursor to effective teams.

Fasting - *apotacticoi* (renunciation) - Self Control, Lust, Fortitude, The Treasury of the Heart, control of physical appetites, true freedom, desire, envy, indulgence. One can fast from entertainments, noise, foods, sleep, sex and possessions.

Solitude - *hesychia*- Quiet, Sober living, Patience, detachment, The desert way, The struggle against demons, The patience of the cell, silence, stillness, inner noise. 'Your cell will teach you everything. Remain in place.

Meditation - Visions, Unceasing Prayer, Miracles and signs, Encountering God, focus on scripture and sacrament, centring, mind-emptying, finding one's mantra. There are several different kinds of meditation and not just one.

The Disciplines of Community - *communitas, coenobite*

Work - this is incidental to most formal studies, though it is often discussed in the *Sayings*. Livelihood, service, stewardship of the earth, meaning in work, vocation, making beauty. Clearly, this is a ready point to translate spirituality into mainstream life, not just as 'ethics' but as heart and calling.

Obedience - The most unpopular discipline of them all. Obedience, Spiritual guidance, creating community, authority, servanthood and gifting, owning one's power.

Kindness - Charity, Non judgement, Discretion, Hospitality, friendship, neighbourliness. This one is the most popular.

⁵¹ For an earlier survey of classical Christian practices, see Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* (1980).

Simplicity – foregoing wealth, dispossession, generosity, satiety, Possessing Nothing, detachment, thirst, rest and contentment, Sabbath-keeping. This is the discipline we often call ‘lifestyle’, but all the disciplines describe and form our lifestyle.

The Disciplines of Transformation – *missio dei*

Follow The Way – Against both the historic trends towards certainty (via positiva) and towards uncertainty (via negativa), the divine mystery has been revealed in nature and history. Follow that way. Covenant, prophecy, the name Yhwh, what is sacred about scripture, courage with openness, spirit-inspired.

Choose Today – Perspectives and intellect must come to a personal response, inter-generational responsibility, must deal with the depth of human rebelliousness, must respond in the Spirit and move to action incarnate.

Keep Sukkot – The importance of this feast tells us we need to stop the business cycle, learn to celebrate together, be part of an ingathering, know when to fast and when to feast, and find some identity in a globalising faith

Evangel – recognise the pain of the world and respond effectively (bear much fruit), how are making a difference, be good news for one planet and one people, avoid syncretism, seek justice for all, give voice to what matters, heal.

Any summary of the disciplines may accidentally undermine their vitality. To understand or even admire them cannot itself impart the fierce love of Christ. We have to thirst for it and experiment athletically as did the Desert Fathers and Mothers and as Jesus trained his disciples. The potential is indescribable.

All of us probably do some part of these disciplines already without thinking. For instance, in Repentance we learn to apologize generously. In Fasting, we diet and we know the real test of it is in the mind. In Solitude, we take pleasure in a walk by ourselves. In Meditation, we stop and look at the clouds passing. In Work we enjoy having a livelihood and contributing to the needs of others. In Obedience we try to be a part of good teamwork. In Kindness, we might like to share hospitality. In Simplicity, we work at balancing our working and personal life. In the Way, we know we must be regularly reminded of the things that really matter to us. In Today, we try to practice what we preach with integrity each day. In Sukkot, we often feel relieved even healed by extended time in nature. In Evangel, we feel the need, even if we do not take it up, to speak up about we feel is right. They are all good beginnings, all acknowledge that the desert disciplines are the training routines for a greater love and a satisfying life.

The identification of the disciplines like this gives us focus to grow each one in turn. What might be your next step? Let us not be too content to be going along nicely. In consumerist terms, comfort is soporific and boring. Discomfort on the other hand motivates growth and dependence upon the Great Spirit. Thirst leads us to refreshment. We are internally hard-wired for this pattern. It is counterfeited by ‘aspirational consumerism’ that grinds the planet into objects for our distraction or that contorts the church into an organised activity.

Let's stop there. It is just a taste that I hope will send us further. Our thirst is a most precious resource within.

CONCLUSION

We have come full circle. 'Spirituality' is often understood to be about the monastic life, and only for a few. Now we see the Source that they spring from. Now, we can all be grounded and guided and grow like never before.

Even for long-standing Christians, in wealthy western societies, a lot of this is big news - the desert is actually definitive of the life of faith throughout Old and New Testaments.

Let us own that our own desert experiences - inward or geographic - may reflect some aspects of God's history.

And what is your part in that project - to place us all in the care of each other, sourced to the love of God?

In taking it all in, the desert silence will reach you, the vast horizon will bless you, the stars and skies will welcome you home. Anything that happened in the Bible could happen again - including great divine encounters and banal human stupidity.

We can help each other with the common threads but each one must still look at themselves. Thereby we learn more of who we are, and who God is. Welcome to a new beginning of thirst for both a deeper love with God and a stronger love of one's neighbour.

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<http://www.wa.uca.org.au/uwachaplain/2013/04/16/bibliography-as-a-deer-thirsts/>

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