

Wonders of
Spiritual
Unfoldment

JOHN BUTLER



SHEPHEARD-WALWYN (PUBLISHERS) LTD

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First published in 2008 by
Shephard-Walwyn (Publishers) Ltd
15 Alder Road
London SW14 8ER

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record of this book
is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-85683-260-4

Typeset by Alacrity,
Sandford, Somerset
Printed and bound through
s | s | media limited, Wallington, Surrey

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Foreword

by The Very Reverend Archpriest Daniel Joseph
of the Russian Orthodox Church

WHEN FIRST invited to write this Foreword, I was reflecting upon the death of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, just two days previously. He was made Pope four years before I was ordained, and has often been in my thoughts and prayers throughout my ministry thus far. I mention him because, more than anything, he put prayer first – and this shone through his life, his ministry, his suffering, and the manner of his death.

And yet, the prayer life certainly does not come first for most people: I do not speak judgementally, but out of concern for the human family I see around me, as I try to live the days I am given without entirely wasting them.

I cannot remember exactly when I first met John Butler – I feel as though I have always known him, but it was probably no more than 10 years ago. He handed me a card on which he described himself as a farmer, teacher, traveller, and writer. All these things are true. He was an organic farmer well before it became fashionable. He taught in Russian schools. He has travelled to many countries and learnt much on the way; and now it is high time for some of his writings to be read by a wider audience than has hitherto been possible.

He has a beautiful, vulnerable style of writing about his life's experience, which I find most absorbing – almost captivating. But the whole purpose behind his book is to share the insights he has received over the many years he has been struggling to learn at least something about true prayer.

Many books have been written on the subject of prayer. Those I find the most frustrating extol the virtues of prayer, describe

various stages quoting from a wealth of source material, and then stop. Thus the enquirer is left feeling even more inadequate and excluded than before. Other books give plenty of advice on methodology, but one can be left feeling rather suspicious as to whether the writer is communicating from experience or mere hypothesis. John's work certainly does not fall into either of these categories.

Readers may well be familiar with a book much beloved within and beyond the Orthodox Christian tradition, called "The Way of a Pilgrim". The manuscript was discovered in a monastery on Mount Athos, by the Abbot of St Michael's monastery in Kazan. He was so impressed by the writings of this simple, humble pilgrim, whose sole aim was to learn true prayer, that he copied out the entire manuscript, and it was printed in Kazan in 1884. From encounters with prayerful people and from studying the *Philokalia* – a gift from one of them – the pilgrim learnt a specific method of prayer, known as "Prayer of the Heart". It may seem unlikely that such prayer can be harmful but, with the best will in the world, inexperience can lead to unsettling results. For this reason, those intending to explore the world of inner prayer should start gradually and, if possible, seek experienced advice. I say this as a priest concerned lest people get confused, or even damaged, though I acknowledge that suitable directors may be hard to find. John was taught by The School of Meditation, in London. However, his chapter "On Spiritual Guidance" gently but firmly steers us from dependence on purely human guides. With many examples, here and throughout the book, he reminds us that God does the calling, and Himself, through the very circumstances of our lives, teaches and provides.

John also writes about his closeness to nature, his encounters with people and places which enabled his search, and the thoughts and feelings which coloured the various stages of his continuing journey. The reader will see that he has had a life richly blessed by many opportunities and meetings and events – indeed my own life has been quite different and uneventful in comparison. Yet we can learn from other people's journeys, if we go about it in the right way. By this I mean that we have to look at another person's

journey, fully appreciating that: a) we all share a common humanity, and b) each of us is a unique human subject. I cannot pursue your journey and you cannot pursue mine, but we can find points of contact, and we can help each other along by being prepared, in all loving kindness, to share what little we have with someone who wishes to learn. Thus, when we read a spiritual book written from the heart, we might feel the need to leave some of it aside, but other things will be of great benefit, chiming in as it were with our own experience, and perhaps taking us that bit further along the road.

So it is that John and I may well have different approaches, but we are both committed to discovering stillness. I used to think in terms of a trichotomy: Stillness, the Mystery of Existence, and the Peace of God beyond our understanding. Now, at 58, I am beginning to learn that the first two are in reality aspects of the third, though, at a certain point, it helped me to think in terms of three rather than one. You, dear reader, will find that Oneness is the recurring theme of John's book, and, I would say, is also the recurring theme of his life.

The windows of John's dawning realisation clearly show that he gets ever less and less before the light of One. One includes all of us, if we would follow too. We need not fear. Properly prepared, loss of what is dark in man is spiritual gain. In losing one identity and role, a greater One is found. The prayer which John describes and practices, transcends ego and images of mind, and comes to rest in the stillness of pure, undifferentiated depths of heart – not empty, but the fullness of infinity itself – the spiritual potential of all that subsequently manifests as worlds. It follows the tradition of many men of prayer, lovers of God who, from living with effect have turned to Cause. It finds itself at home in any Church – or none. Its aim and fulfilment is no longer mine, but One – Spirit, "Source of good and giver of life", the Kingdom of God and glory of creation.

John has good news to tell. In many remarkable insights, he confirms the reality of Spirit. In this he echoes St Seraphim of Sarov's oft quoted statement that the true aim of Christian life is attainment of the Holy Spirit. Aware that present day religion

frequently fails to meet our deepest needs, John leads us to consider whether this is not because we so often aim for worldly ends, to the neglect, if not forgetfulness of Spirit? Above all else, he seeks to show that Spirit may be discovered, and realised in practice as the corner stone of life, which it already and actually is.

With growing confidence, he describes his experiences of Spirit as indeed the “One thing needful” (Lk.10,42). With infectious excitement the book leads on, each page opening up to fresh glimpses and fuller realisations of the spiritual Kingdom of God. I do indeed relate this to the instruction of Our Lord that we should seek this first (Mat.6,33).

From a strong sense of responsibility for the world around him, John writes of his own gradual transition from working with body and mind to the spiritual work of prayer. He came to understand that the struggle against evil is not so much “out there”, as in ourselves. This is known in Christianity as “Unseen warfare” and is also the deepest sense of “Jihad” in Islam. He uses the phrase “To make whole, be whole”, and explains how the individual, in his fall from and return to God, is both cause and healing of the wider world disease.

In our conversations, he has told me how he himself was brought up in the Anglican Church – learnt to meditate at 27, and 24 years later “met Jesus”. He shares his life of prayer, but makes few specific recommendations for others, besides “Practice makes perfect” and “Follow your heart”. Rather, in view of the trials of human life, he offers this account of adventures into Spirit to encourage and inspire us on the way.

By the time I met him, John had explored his roots through learning Russian and going to Russia. His mother was Russian, but her background did not figure as much as one might have expected in his upbringing. Having lived through the terrifying upheavals of revolution and civil war (1917-1923), including the apparent near destruction of religion, she sought rather to shield her children from the ravages of her own youth. John’s arrival in Russia coincided with the revival of traditional Russian Orthodox Christianity, which he was then able to study and experience for himself. It should be borne in mind that he loves the Church, as

I do, but he has to be free to write with integrity about his own spiritual journey, as it has happened and continues to happen. Otherwise, the book would quite simply be unreal and, accordingly, not worth reading. I hope you will find, as I have, that the reverse is the case.

June 2007, Derby

WHEN GRASS GROWS in spring and it's time to let cattle out of winter quarters, the gate is opened, chains are loosed but – will they, won't they go? Incredulous they stand, sniffing the fresh air, blinking in sunshine before returning to familiar shadows and their daily straw. Until one, bolder than the rest, will take a timid step. First one, then two – a nervous leap. She's free! The others watch unable, unwilling to believe. A second follows, and a third ... and then ... stampede. Oh, how they feast on sweet, green grass and kick their heels for joy!

~1~

How it all Began

I REMEMBER how I was first drawn to search within. After a few unwilling years in business, I'd gone out to South America in 1963 at the age of 26 to "Make the world a better place." It wasn't so easy. One morning, after several disappointments, I was sitting alone on a mountainside when, from somewhere inside me, a voice seemed to say "To make whole, be whole." I realised that, before being able to help others, I first had to work on myself. When I returned to England, I looked for a teacher, and found the School of Meditation, in London.

I worked as a farmer. I loved nature, loved the land and animals, but when they'd asked me at the School what I really wanted in life, I answered, "God." I never doubted that. I'd been schooled in the Christian faith but I was not now, at this time, attracted to the Church. Thinking I should, I'd tried to find God with philosophy, but got fed up with it. In South America I'd learnt that "good works" didn't work either, so I came back to myself. My longing for the infinite beyond was pure and simple; my heart reached naturally for the stars.

Meditation was always a love process for me. Some people meditate for knowledge or for some sort of practical result, but I wanted love, infinite love - to love and be loved. I didn't really want to be tied. My favourite picture at school had been of a cowboy riding up to the crest of a hill, over the caption, "Don't fence me in." And I remember saying that what I wanted most from girls was the inspiration to write poetry. I felt no problems

with God. As I saw it, my problems were people and civilisation. Meditation was a wonderful answer to that – in meditation, love took wings and soared. But, as I was to discover, one doesn't so easily shake off human bondage.

This is emphatically not a guide book. No doubt there are as many valid ways to God as paths up a mountain but, as far as I understand, the principle in all of them is to find oneself – the One “I am”, the Christ or Universal Self – which may also be described as Union, or pure Spirit, Consciousness, or Being. In the many and varied notes I have kept, which form the basis of this book, I use all these words, and do not worry too much about any difference between them. I have some experience of, and feel open to, different ways and am grateful for what they've taught me but, since the time when Jesus appeared to me as personal Saviour, I continually learn to trust in Him.

Let me offer a very brief explanation of meditation as I practice it, which is also sometimes called “inner, contemplative prayer” or “prayer of the heart”. We cannot comprehend Spirit with the mind. Spirit is immortal, but mind, as we commonly understand it, occupied with the “changes and chances of this fleeting world” – the domain of “me” – is mortal (Ps.146,4). Only like can understand like. However, beyond our active, discursive mind, lies another faculty – quiet and reflective; and beyond that again, an indefinable but recognisable heart, or soul. This is the innermost essence of what we really are, and can be compared to a drop from the ocean of Spirit. A quiet mind can reflect aspects of eternity – it may for example become aware of stillness amidst movement, but for fuller access to Spirit it is necessary to discover and work with the heart.

Prayer usually starts with words, which may be accompanied by more or less heart – heartfelt prayer. It is an ever deepening process which, with practice, may pass beyond surface expressions of the active mind, through deepening levels of quietness and surrender, to the heart. By then it has usually lost most of its words, and may be completely silent, though possibly still retaining some dual sense of God and “me”. There it may rest and wait (Ps.62,1). Finally, imperceptibly, the heart melts. The drop becomes one with the ocean.

We cannot know Spirit mentally – we can only “be” it. Hence it is also known as pure Being. Pure or impure means the addition or not of something extra which, as far as prayer is concerned, are usually ideas associated with “me”. In order to purify oneself, these need to be let go, left behind – which is called “repentance”. This is the most important process in the liberation of the individual from the bonds of his separate and mortal existence – “me”, which deny him access to eternal life and unity in the “Kingdom of Heaven”. All intermediate experience in prayer should be taken as “intermediate” – if encouraging, as encouraging; if not, then to be ignored and passed by. Final union is beyond description. It can only be known by its subsequent effects. It is simple to explain, but the actual process may take many years of practice. Fortunately, God helps those who help themselves. Much depends on our motivation – how contented or discontented we are in this world, and how determined to be free.

* * *

Please don’t imagine I know more than I do. Who can know or understand the Infinite? I fully accept the suppositions that, in general, the less you know – the more you speak, or write about it; and, the more you know – the less you know. I have long hesitated to expose my ignorance by offering these notes for publication. I’m acutely aware that, however great and wonderful the realisation, it is but one glimpse of an infinite beyond.

Let us suppose I’d made a few brief visits to a remote continent. How could I possibly describe her size, her resources, her infinite soul with a few photographs or words? A thousand other travellers would experience her in a thousand different ways. Incomparably vaster are the heavenly realms – immeasurable, and indescribable by human means (2Cor.12,4). With our own thought we cannot accurately even imagine what lies so obviously beyond us. However, I have more confidence in realisations, which appear from that mysterious realm beyond my control, as a complete surprise and do indeed seem like gifts of Grace. I cannot explain much more than this, and feel safer not to try, but would rather let these windows speak simply for themselves.

Realisation is not a personal attainment; on the contrary, it usually comes at times of deep prayer or quietness when the mind is clear of personal “me”. Then, being more able to receive what’s given, we may suddenly realise a completely new level of awareness. It’s a bit like when, on ascending a hill, unexpected views appear – they are not thought, or remembered, or believed – but seen. This may happen outwardly in the visible, worldly sense, or inwardly in mind and heart. What is this hill? It is oneself, and what changes is one’s point of view, or level of consciousness. Realisation is both of the view seen, but also of the viewer, the witness, the one who sees – realising who and what that is. How does it happen? By our own efforts, we can only present ourselves as cleanly and attentively as possible – wait upon the Lord, and watch, and pray (Mat.26,41). Realisation comes, not at our bidding but, as it were, from the other side, like sunshine breaking through the cloud, or screen, of our ordinary, impure and dim perception (1Cor.13,12).

This spiritual sunshine is Grace. All poets know how poems appear unexpectedly in the mind – a gift, we say, of our muse. Poetry, vision, realisation – all forms of inspiration – are grades of the same process, which is Providence itself, appearing not only in words and insight but as abundance of “Every good and perfect gift” (Ja.1,17).

In general, these descriptions have arisen spontaneously but following deep prayer. They appear without thought or preparation, as attention surfaces, when mind begins to function again and when memory of the experience is still clear. They are not apparently related to anything I’ve learnt elsewhere, and require only to be written down. As such, they seem to have an authenticity of their own. I claim no credit for these windows – I feel they are a gift to me, and I offer them, not as any sort of teaching, but only so that others also may be encouraged in the work of prayer, their hope of salvation, and of being in heavenly places in our Lord (Eph.2,6).

* * *

Now, approaching old age, I look back over a full, adventurous and interesting life. What has been most significant in producing

these windows? I have no simple answer, but I have had several teachers:

1. Nature – where I’ve been blessed to spend most of my active years, quiet and alone under open skies. There, with the presence, the providence of God before me, I cared ever less for the words and works of man. There I learnt to read nature as the book of God, and worship in the church not made by hands. Why then did I need anything else? Because I’m also a messed-up and complex personality, with huge guilts that I ought to be better and other than I am. Social conditioning – it’s called, and I’ve spent much of my life trying to overcome it.
2. Love – a long story, with many chapters ... through which I’ve learnt that no human love is ever really big enough, and nowhere else but God is ever really home.
3. Freedom – with love, a sure guide – the greater, the better.
4. Over 40 years of practicing meditation/prayer. The absolute corner-stone of my spiritual life. “Lift up your hearts”, we say – if you don’t climb the mountain, you do not see the view.
5. The Church, and human teachers. Through 10 years of daily services and scripture lessons at school, I was well grounded in the language of religion. But, as I began to search more intently for the meaning of life, the Church, as I then knew it, did not rise to the spiritual direction my young mind required – I had to search elsewhere. At the School of Meditation it was my great, good fortune to come under the guidance of Shantanand Saraswati, Shankaracharya of Northern India. He neither represented nor taught religion (he advised us to stay with our own), but was described as a realised man.* At the time, I had no idea what such realisation really meant, but there was no doubting the pure, simple and practical wisdom of Shankaracharya’s words. Before them, the clouds of philosophic/religious confusion in my mind

* The great teacher Shankara was born in India, about 682 A.D., at a time of conflicting beliefs and religious confusion. Having attained the unity of perfect Self-realisation, he established a tradition, which endures to this day. Shankaracharya means “One who preserves the teaching of Shankara”.

melted away. Classic books of Christian spirituality, which I had studied, such as *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Br. Lawrence, *The Imitation of Christ* and, of course, The Bible, appeared in fresh clarity and depths of meaning. Above all, Spirit began to be a *practical* reality – no longer something just to be believed in or talked about, but possible to experience. I recall here the well-known saying of St Seraphim of Sarov that the true aim of our Christian endeavour is attainment (realisation) of the Holy Spirit. I remember so well the excitement of those days as the rather dry obligations associated with my Christian schooling sprang into new life.

Of course I wanted to share this discovery with the Church, as indeed with everyone, but I had to learn that my new enthusiasm for universal, invisible and spiritual unity, transcending the differences of religion, was not shared by all. I spent several months in a monastery; I would have become a priest – wanting nothing more than total dedication to this new life, and was deeply hurt when a certain bishop described me as “not sufficiently Christian”. A sense of rejection – of somehow being “wrong” with the Church dogged me for many years, though it also had a positive effect – I was freed to explore ever wider realms of Spirit. I understand now that bodies, focused primarily on outer ministry i.e. visible or verbal expression, characteristic of “normal” religion are less drawn to the ultimate stillness of the inner world. But a balance is natural, and sooner or later, it seems, in the lives of certain individuals, an impulse arises for Spirit itself. Then, lesser objectives fall away. Outer and visible indicators are seen for what they are, and doors open to go beyond.

What do I really mean by this – to “go beyond”? It seems easy to me now, for, through long practice, it has become natural. It’s connected with meditation and “letting go”. Gradually, deeper levels of rest are discovered within oneself, which correspond with deeper levels of awareness without. Subtler, inner perception becomes aware of silence beyond words and sound, stillness beyond movement, invisible presence beyond appearance. Indeed, everything existent in time and space may be experienced within the rest of eternal being. With what result? The contrast between

changing and unchanging, i.e. eternal and transitory life, is seen and realised, and then the consequent facts that one is limited, the other free; one whole, the other partial; one corrupt, the other pure. Although, obviously, our lower natures continue, consciousness comes to dwell more and more in that invisible, or spiritual realm, and draws ever more of its necessary substance from it. Correspondingly, identity with and reliance on the transitory world diminishes (1Cor.13,10).

Miraculous, marvellous though the outer world may be, it is but a shadow of its divine origin. That's where the action really starts; that's why masters of prayer direct us to turn within; and that's why, once the taste of heaven is acquired, the soul – if not the mind – is only too willing to return there. When inner light is shining, it needs no other. Unseen, unspoken and usually unacknowledged by the world, it unites, illuminates and heals.

Nevertheless, for a long time, the see-saw there and back continues ... the sense of belonging and yet not belonging. How can I not love my farm, my wife and Mother Church? I struggle with myself to find the right words ... "Should ... must ... duty ..." I hear my father, my school, ideas and attitudes picked up throughout my life, compelling me to be and do that from which another part pulls me to be free. Eventually I have to follow the freedom ... the other gets ever more restrictive. Without knowing why, I find myself unhappy, irritable, unable to be at peace. And nowhere does this apply more than with religion and the Spirit. One keeps growing, and at each stage, past lives are left behind. What served its purpose yesterday is no more use today. Yet, like most people, I hold on. Identities seem so real, we fear to abandon them. "Support the structure, don't be selfish," whispers the voice of doubt. There is much about man, including religion, which holds us in spiritual childhood (1Cor.13,11). At times, we have to throw ourselves from the precipice, go out into the wilderness and be alone. Matter may cradle, but it cannot mature us, and we do not find Spirit while listening to the voices of the world.

I lie on the warm grass under a sunny, autumn sky and smell the earth. Dear earth. No questions here – no labels or demands,

no foolish words. The agitated world of mind finds rest. The two conditions, are not actually separate unless we think them so. They interpenetrate; one serves the other. It is well described as “Being in the world but not of it”.

A while later on, I look up, and there before me, hanging on the walls of my room, I see the icons of many saints, and several more of our Holy Mother and the Lord. The saints are those with whom I’ve had some contact – visited where they lived, honoured their relics, read about their lives. Shankaracharya’s portrait also stands before me. Long since passed on, he too is considered a saint by those who knew him. Who are my teachers now? The answer seems self-evident. There’s no more need for words, no need for names; in Heaven, all is one ... the Communion of Saints ... and silence reigns.

If I sometimes feel distant from the Church on earth – especially when she’s assertive of being right, I have no such difficulty with this spiritual family. The icons remind me of individual lives, but their presence is not divided. It merges into here and now, into what I’ve always felt by sea, and sky, and quietness of the fields – that ever present and all fulfilling oneness of Spirit, who “teaches us all things” (Jn.14,26). Amen.

However, in its approach to Spirit, mind is often so volatile, so devious, so full of innumerable distractions that it is almost impossible to maintain a consistent direction without outside help. In our modern world, there’s a bewildering variety of spiritual guidance on offer, and who can be sure of its integrity? I feel safe with Jesus – our never changing rock. The Church does help to keep us straight, and mindful of the Saviour. I value her place in society, try to support her and never cease to learn, but, as she has chosen a primarily outer role for herself, so she remains for me. It was more in the inward spirit of Shankaracharya’s teaching, preparing me over 20 years in the School of Meditation that, at 51, I was granted a living encounter with Lord Jesus. And it is, of course, to the Lord’s Grace, received through him, as through all my other teachers, that I owe such realisation as I enjoy today.

At this point I also include a few notes about my parents and the connection with Nature, which may be helpful in explaining why things developed as they did.

Father was an artist, and thoroughly English. From him I learnt to observe and pay attention to what I was doing, as a good craftsman. He taught me to see the harmonies of nature – to work for what was right and true rather than for gain, to follow my vision and shun the artificial. His insistence on duty towards others caused me much sense of failure until it found fulfilment in the work of prayer. As a practical man, he looked for results and was suspicious of what he called my mysticism. He liked the saying “Moderation in all things”. Hard-working, honest, generous and kind – a gentleman, respected and admired – he lived to a high standard.

Mother’s influence came out more strongly later in my life, so I write about her then. Being Russian, we, as children, knew she was different but, apart from telling us her father had been a colonel in the Siberian Cadet College at Omsk, and a few homely details of their lives, she kept it to herself. When we innocently teased her, asking whom she loved most, she said she’d cut herself in three pieces – one for Father, one for my sister and one for me. Little did I realize then that this extreme devotion, so typically Russian, would become such driving power in me. When I was older, it took me back to Russia to find my roots and see with my own eyes, but meanwhile, brought up English with a Russian heart, I inevitably found I didn’t fit. Often mocked when young for over-reaction or “wearing my heart on my sleeve”, it wasn’t until I went there and found this behaviour widespread and perfectly normal, that I became confident in and grateful for the strength of my own feelings.

Nature has been with me since my first breath, for I was born at home on a May morning to a world of blossom and bird song. Now as I write, again it’s spring. Instinctively I turn towards the first sweet, swelling buds, tinting winter trees. They used to call me “Nature boy”. I felt more part of her than she of me. I still love to gaze at wide horizons – feel close to earth, see animals and

something green each day. I've watched two great movements throughout my life – the growth of ecological awareness, conservation, organic farming etc. – and the decline of religion. For me, one almost substitutes the other – national parks are the cathedrals of our time. I live in one myself, and watch people come from nearby towns to stroll by the river, feed the ducks, enjoy themselves and rest. Some walk the hills, some simply sit and look. They go home raised in spirits and refreshed – they have a lovely day. No one speaks to them of God, or needs to, for does not Mother Nature heal the soul? It seems to me that peace, eternity, the Oneness of all things – many if not all the attributes of Spirit, convey themselves quite naturally through her. With quiet, reflective mind, all sorts of mysteries come closer to being understood – our troubles are comforted, and love is found for all.

* * *

For sure, every event and meeting, every smile and tear is recorded in the book of life and mysteriously re-emerges as what happens to us, for better or for worse. The spiritual way is not smooth and, like all who travel it, I've had my ups and downs. I see more clearly now that these are due to inherent tendencies of our lower, human nature which rise up and protest as we proceed. To begin with, they may seem formidable, but patient practice overcomes. Every person's life is unique, as is their search. Some find their way through religion and some do not but, as irresistibly as the spring sun draws earth's latent seeds to life, so are we each drawn to seek ever greater fulfilment of our hearts' desire. I do believe in the principle "Seek and ye shall find" and, albeit blind and foolish, and often lost in pride, somehow or other I've tried to search for God in the ways He most readily appealed to me – in love and freedom.

* * *

Some people might look at this book, and see it as a collection of my "thoughts", but I stress that it is not. If it were, I would certainly not value them enough to publish. They would be but self-manufactured extensions of "me" – the very thing that

spiritual work seeks to overcome. There is a very important distinction between thought and realisation. One is “pseudo-creation”, an imagination of our own separate minds; the other experiences creation as it actually is. In effect, our personal thought acts like a cloud, or superimposition, obscuring the real world, but this is where we often find ourselves – literally, within our own minds, in a world of our own making. A distinctive feature of thought is preoccupation with past and future. Realisation, on the other hand, is always of the present moment, here and now. In comparison to thought, it’s like waking up from a dream. It happens naturally as when, for example, a singing bird breaks through into our thought, and we wake up, realise the presence of another world – clear, complete and wonderful.

I have, however, had to use some thought to introduce and connect up these windows of realisation. Although, at times, the distinction may seem obscure, and one may overlap the other, I emphasise again that the most significant passages are not my thought. It should be self-evident to the reader, which parts are realised, and which are not.

In order to lead in to the main windows and make them more easily comprehensible, I am going back some 40 years and briefly reviewing the most spiritually significant events of my life since then. Fortunately, I’ve preserved various pieces of writing which illustrate what was happening, and how my understanding has developed.

These start with my early years as a farmer, searching for connections between meditation, soil fertility and health. They lead on to a life-changing period when I first saw the Divine in human eyes. I then spent time in Africa and America, struggled much with depression, and eventually found myself in Russia. Throughout, understanding and practice of meditation/prayer develops, and gradually the sequence of personal story gives way to revelation, realisation – windows of beyond.