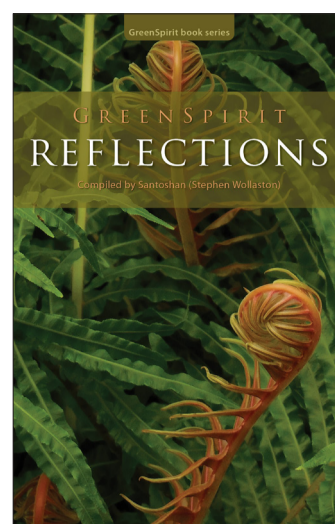


INTRODUCTION

GreenSpirit Reflections is the tenth title in the GreenSpirit Book Series, which is a low-cost series on Earth-centred spirituality, sold at production price only. This book brings together a collection of key passages from various GreenSpirit titles. Apart from quotations by Thomas Berry, which are from another GreenSpirit anthology (*Meditations with Thomas Berry*), all other passages are by contributors and editors of numerous articles and authors of titles published by GreenSpirit in a total of eleven books. Some writers' names appear more than others because they have written a complete book for GreenSpirit or are the contributors and editors of several titles, which meant there was more material by them to draw upon and include in the following pages. The References section at the back lists page numbers and titles from where each quotation was taken.



Having worked on the design of two previous meditations books, and editing one of them, I guess I can lay claim to possessing a knack for putting books of this kind together. Like many titles, the initial idea of compiling it, organically grew from what had been done before. Yet the idea of a collection of quotations for reflection and meditation purposes, turned into something greater than first expected. On completion, a fellow GreenSpirit colleague commented how it clearly flowed easily from one section to another like a short-course on green spirituality. With this in mind, the advice usually given to readers for anthologies of quotations about *starting at any place*, needs to be accompanied by an extra recommendation of also reflecting and meditating on the passages by *starting with the first one and gradually reading through to the last*. Passages can of course be used in various ways, such as reading them aloud for ceremonial and ritual purposes.

Suggestions for How to Use this Book

If you require some guidance about how to use this book, you may find the following suggestions helpful.

First, find a peaceful place on your own or with a small group of friends in your home or garden, or in the countryside or a tranquil special place of worship. Take time to be still and quieten your mind. Sit in an upright position, with the spine erect. Feel the weight of your body on the chair, cushion or ground you are sitting on. Be aware of your interconnectedness with Gaia, with Mother Earth, with how the plants and trees feed you with life-giving oxygen and in return your breath feeds them. Consciously release any tension in your mind and body by taking a gentle deep breath and feeling it gently flowing into your lungs, noticing your upper-chest and abdomen rising naturally, and when you breathe out, slowly and gently exhale and release any tension with the out-breath. Set the intension of seeking to be one with the natural world and in harmony with all that is within and around you. Notice any sounds of Nature such as bird song, rustling leaves or noises made by animal friends as they go about their daily lives.

Now allow your breathing to find its own natural rhythm. Select one of the passages you feel drawn to in this book, or open it randomly on a page or start at the beginning. Read the passage slowly. If you are with friends, select one amongst you to read the passage aloud. Reflect upon what the words mean to you. Be with your reflective thoughts and feelings for a while and see what arises with a sense of open-hearted receptiveness. Take your time doing this. You may feel the need to read the passage again and to repeat some of the above steps. You may also wish to reflect upon other passages in the book during this time.

If you are doing this with friends, you will probably want to share any reflective thoughts or feelings that come to you. If on your own, you may wish to write them down in a spiritual journal and come back to what you write for further reflection another time. Your reflections may reveal an action you feel deeply impelled to act upon. By writing down your thoughts and feelings, what might be a fleeting moment of insight and inspiration, will not be forgotten, and may even lead you to new ways of being and relating to Earth-life and its abundant beauty.

All of the above can be done as an exercise in itself, as a preliminary step for another type of practice or part of a day of various contemplative exercises and rituals. Traditionally, in contemplative Christian spirituality, a short passage of scripture is often reflected upon for the purpose of awakening to mystical union with the divine, which is popularly known as *Lectio Divina*, divine reading, in the Christian tradition. But the practice of reflecting upon a text to achieve new levels of insight is found in many traditions, including nonreligious ones.

I trust that the following pages will supply you with some nourishment on your spiritual journey, and will awaken you to embracing the profound unity we all share with the more-than-human queendoms and kingdoms of the natural world.

~ Santoshan (Stephen Wollaston)