

## COMMENT: HYMN - THE WILDERNESS

At his Baptism in the River Jordan, Our Lord experienced the reality of his Father, and the descent of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22). This resulted in his being thrown out\* into the Wilderness by the Holy Spirit – to return, later, Spirit-empowered (Luke 4:1 and 4:14).

[\* The usual translation *lead* does not reflect the Greek which uses the same word as that for the chucking-out of demons!]

Very often Christian experience follows much the same pattern. (This is rarely taught. For further information see the article on this website '**The Wilderness Experience**'.)

This hymn expresses some of the themes of the 'Wilderness' experience, and the singing of it should help to bring an awareness and understanding of it from out of the shadows of Christian life, teaching and worship. A great many Christians are driven into the 'Wilderness Experience', but become depressed and defeated because their experience appears to them to be so far removed from all the 'good strong Christians' around them! (Little do they know!!)

Only if the Wilderness Experience is taught and affirmed can it be viewed positively in terms of spiritual growth, and increase faith rather than destroy it. It is among the aims of this hymn to begin to do that.

### OPTIONAL VERSE

The third verse is optional mainly because of the hymn's length. It should be retained whenever possible, since it describes the most difficult aspect of the Wilderness Experience, when God removes our awareness of his Presence – much as a parent lets go the hand of a growing child.

One term used for this is the *Dark Night of the Soul*. Verse 3 refers to it.

## **HYMN - THE WILDERNESS**

TUNE 87 87 87

The most familiar tunes will be Mannheim (*Lead us heavenly Father...*)  
and Regent Square.

1.  
**Father God we know your 'desert' –  
less as land, than pain within:  
when you take away our comforts  
to release us. You begin  
by this training, so to teach us  
how to live more free of sin.**

2.  
**In this 'desert' you command us  
when to act and when to rest.  
You break down our suppositions,  
which assume that we know best.  
For our holiness and wholeness  
you give us this 'desert' test.**

3. (optional)  
**Lord, we like to know your presence;  
feel you close – as if by right.  
But to deepen faith not feelings  
you may give our souls 'dark night'.  
When your hand is not apparent -  
keep us safe, and hold us tight.**

4.  
**This experience of learning  
is, for many, years, not days.  
It takes time to break, remake us  
in your image and your ways.  
Feed us, therefore, guide us, heal us,  
so through all - it ends in praise.**