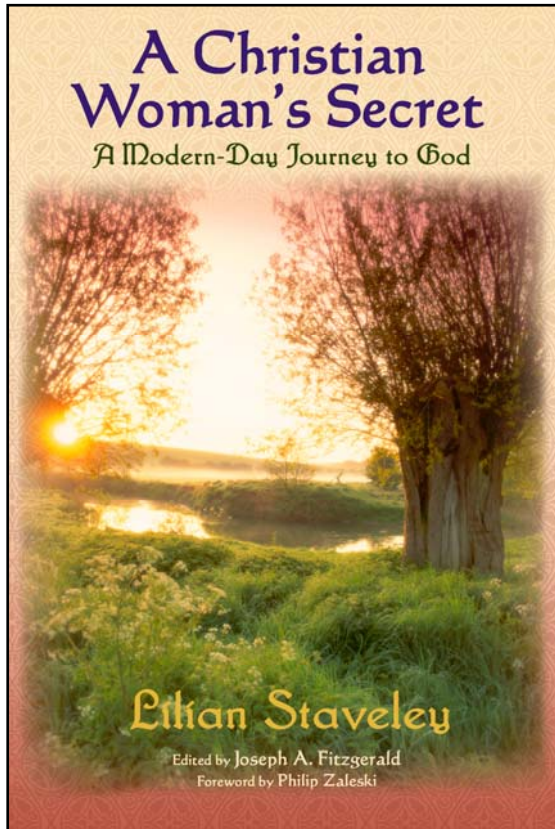


A Christian Woman's Secret: A Modern-Day Journey to God

by Lilian Staveley

Edited by Joseph Fitzgerald, Foreword by Philip Zaleski



Most of us, seeing a respectable lady shopping in London's Bond Street, searching, let us say, for a sensible pair of new shoes, are hardly likely to suspect that we are looking at a God-intoxicated woman, comparable in her inner nature to a St. Francis of Assisi. So it was with the little-known Protestant Lilian Staveley (c. 1878-1928), one of the most remarkable Christian saints of recent times. The present volume is an edited compilation of Staveley's three published books: *The Prodigal Returns*, *The Romance of the Soul*, and *The Golden Fountain*. Lilian speaks to men and women in the world, teaching us to combine an inner and hidden dialogue with Jesus Christ, along with an outward life of everyday duties and correspondence with fellow-beings. She speaks directly from her heart and her wisdom is the wisdom of love.



“Before she could find God, she first had to move farther away from Him. She became an atheist. An ardent, new-found belief in the truth and power of scientific ‘fact’ replaced her belief in God Most High. It was a painful two year struggle for her to regain her lost faith, a struggle between her mind, which claimed that the God she had worshiped was a childish dream, and her heart, which nevertheless longed for His consoling presence.”

—from the Preface

What is included in this volume?

- ❖ An edited compilation of Staveley's three published books:
 - *The Prodigal Returns*
 - *The Romance of the Soul*
 - *The Golden Fountain*
- ❖ A Preface by the editor, Joseph Fitzgerald
- ❖ A Foreword by Philip Zaleski
- ❖ An Index.

World Wisdom



Excerpts

“Happiness was that which the whole world was looking for; but I could not fail to notice more and more the ridiculous picture presented by Society in its pretences of being the means of finding this happiness. None of its ardent devotees were ‘happy’ people; they were excited, egotistical, intensely vain and selfish, often bitter and disappointed, filled with a demon of competition, jealous, and full of empty, insincere smiles. I perceived the chagrins from which they secretly suffered—the tears behind the laughter. I was not in the least deceived or impressed by any of them, but wondered how they managed to hang together and deceive each other.”

—from Chapter 1, “From Childhood to Visitation on the Hill”

“We often think. Where am I at fault? I am unable to *see* myself as a sinner, though publicly I confess myself to be one. For I keep the commandments; I am friendly to my neighbors; I am just to my fellowmen; I can think of no particular harm that I do. Why, then, am I a sinner? And our very modesty and reverence may forbid us to compare ourselves with God. Yet here lies our mistake; for if we would enter the Garden of Happiness and Peace, which is the Kingdom of God, this is the commencement of our advance—that we should compare ourselves in all things with God, in whose likeness we are made, and, making such full observation as we are able of the terrible gulfs between ourselves and Him, should with tears and humility and constant endeavor be at great pains and stress to make good to Him our deficiencies.”

—from Chapter 6, “The Golden Fountain”

About the Author

Lilian Staveley was unknown to the public when, at the end of the First World War, she brought to John M. Watkins of London a manuscript to offer for publication. For the sake of her own privacy, she insisted upon remaining anonymous, since her beloved but non-mystical husband—Brigadier General William Cathcart Staveley of the British army—was still living, and she was surrounded by the social world she later described in her autobiography, *The Prodigal Returns*. It was only after her death that General Staveley learned that his fond wife and companion of nearly thirty years had for long led a hidden spiritual life which from charity she had opened to the reading public in three works constituting a deeply original and grace-filled personal record of a soul’s journey to God. In *The Golden Fountain* the author shares with us many secrets of a life of integral devotion, providing a marvelous example of how true mysticism leaves nothing outside the pale, but in an eminently practical manner knits up all the elements of our everyday existence into the seamless robe of contemplation.

Little is known of the author’s historical person beyond the few facts she herself has told us in *The Prodigal Returns*. Born around 1878 into a distinguished and intellectual English family named Bowdoin, descended on both sides from Huguenots of the old French nobility, she was reared in an international setting, during an era when modern science seemed to promise an answer to every problem of the universe. Her discovery of a direct and living relationship with God has been chronicled in her autobiography mentioned above. It is characteristic of her spiritual way, however, that she continued to attend Anglican church services, husk though the outward form may have become for her in the light of her inward experience. She died in 1928 and her body lies buried in a Dorsetshire village.

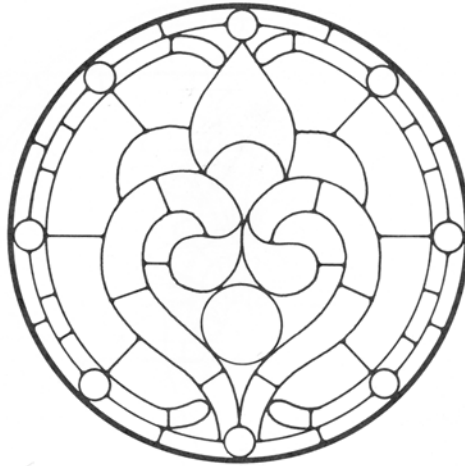
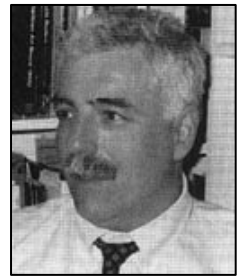
About the Editor



Joseph A. Fitzgerald studied Comparative Religion at Indiana University, where he also earned a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree. He is a senior editor at World Wisdom and a professional writer. He has edited several books, including *Honen the Buddhist Saint* (2006) and *The Essential Sri Anandamayi Ma* (2007). He lives with his wife in Bloomington, Indiana.

About the Author of the Foreword, Philip Zaleski

Philip Zaleski is a senior editor of the journal *Parabola* and lecturer in Religious Studies at Smith College, Northampton. He is the editor of *The Best Spiritual Writings* series and the author of numerous works including *An Endless Trace: The Passionate Pursuit of Wisdom in the West* with Christopher Bamford; and *The Book of Heaven: An Anthology of writings from Ancient to Modern Times* with Carol Zaleski.



Details

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