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**The Golden Fountain or, The
Soul's Love for God. Being some
Thoughts and Confessions of One
of His Lovers**

Lilian Staveley

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THE GOLDEN FOUNTAIN

or,

The Soul's Love for God

Being some Thoughts and Confessions of One of
His Lovers

By

Lilian Staveley

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John M. Watkins

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How many of us inwardly feel a secret longing to find God; and this usually accompanied by the perception that we are confronted by an impenetrable barrier—we cannot find Him—we can neither go through this barrier nor climb over it! We have faith. We are able to admit that He exists, for we cannot help but perceive a Will dominating the laws of the Universe; but something deep within us that we cannot put a name to, something subtle, secret, and strange, cries aloud, "But I need more than this, it is not enough; I need to personally find and know Him. Why does He not permit me to do so?"

We might easily answer ourselves by remembering that if, in everyday life, we greatly desire to see a friend, our best way of doing so is by going in the direction in which he is to be found: we should consider this as obvious. Then let us apply this, which we say is so obvious, to God. We waste too much time looking for Him in impossible directions and by impossible means. He is not to be found by merely studying lengthy arguments, brilliant explanations of theological statements, or controversies upon the meanings of obscure dogmas. He is not even to be found through organising charity concerts and social reforms however useful. We shall find Him through a self stripped bare of all other interests and pretensions—stripped bare of everything but a humble and passionately seeking heart.

He says to the soul, "Long for Me, and I will show Myself. Desire Me with a great desire, and I will be found."

* * *

Scattered all through history are innumerable persons, both great and insignificant, who looked for the Pearl of Great Price: and not too many would seem to have found it. Some sought by study, by intelligence; some by strict and pious attention to outward ceremonial service; some by a "religious" life; some even by penance and fasting. Those who found sought with the heart. Those who sought with careful piety, or with intelligence, found perhaps faith and submission, but no joy. The Pearl is that which cannot be described in words. It is the *touch of God Himself upon the soul*, the Joy of Love.

* * *

The entrance to the land of happiness and peace is through union of the will to Christ, by love. How can this sense of love be reached? By centring the wheel of the mind, with its daily spinning thoughts, upon the Man Jesus, and learning to inwardly see and hold on to the perfect simplicity and love of Jesus Christ. We can form the habit of taking Jesus as our heart and mind companion. We are all aware of the unceasing necessity of the mind to fill itself: we cannot have *no* thoughts until we have advanced in the spiritual life to a long distance. We may well see, in this, one of the provisions made by God for His own habitation in the mind of man—a habitation too often hideously usurped by every kind of unworthy substitute. Petty social interests and occupations, personal animosities, ambitions, worries, a revolving endless chaos of futilities, known and praised by too many of us as "a busy life"—the mind being given opportunity only at long intervals, and usually at stated and set times, to dwell upon the thought of God, and the marvellous future of the human spirit. We are like travellers who, about to start out upon a great journey, pack their portmanteaus with everything that will be *perfectly useless to them!*

Now, it is possible to put out and obliterate this chaotic and useless state of mind, which would appear to be the "natural mind," and to open ourselves to receive the might and force and the joys and delights of Christ's Mind. These joys are the Heart of Christ speaking to the heart of His lover. They are incomparable: beyond all imagination until we know them; and we receive them and perceive them and enjoy them as we have largeness and capacity to contain them. For there is no end. He has ever more to give if we will be but large enough to receive.

We are too absorbed in the puerile interests and occupations of daily life. We make of these endless occupations a virtue. They are no virtue, but a deadly hindrance, for they keep us too busy to look for the one thing needful—the Kingdom of God. What is this world? It is a schoolhouse for lovers, and we are lovers in the making.

Is baptism of itself sufficient to get us into this Kingdom? No. Is the leading of an orderly social life sufficient to find it? No. Is the hope, even the earnest expectation, that we shall, by some means or other (we do not know by what!), be brought to it, sufficient to find

it? No; not without the *personal laying hold* can we ever achieve it. Shall we find it in much outward study? No; and our aim is, not to be the student but the possessor; and the key to this possession is not in books, but, for us, in Jesus. He it is who must be invited and admitted into the heart with great tenderness—with all those virtues for which He stands—and made the centre point of thought. Out of constant thought grows tenderness; out of tenderness, affection; out of affection, love. Love once firmly fixed in the heart for Jesus, we get a perception (by contrast) of our own faults—very painful, and known as repentance. This should be succeeded at once by change of mind, *i.e.* we try to push out the old way of thinking and acting and take on a new way. We try, in fact, strenuously to please the Beloved, to be in harmony with Him; and now we have established a personal relationship between ourselves and Christ.

With the perception of our own failings comes the necessary humility and the drastic elimination of all prides. We remember, too, that although Jesus is so near to us, and our own Beloved, He is also the mighty Son of God.

He is also the mystical Christ, who, when we are ready, leads us to the Father: which is to say, that we are suddenly stricken with the consciousness of and the love for God; and here we enter that most wonderful of all earthly experiences—the Soul's great Garden of Happiness.

To be a student of theories, dogmas, laws, and writings of men is to be involved in endless controversy; and we may study books till we are sick, and embrace nothing but vapour for all our pains. To be a pupil and possessor we must first establish the personal relationship between ourselves and Jesus. To do this we must realise more fully than we now do that He *still lives*. The mind is inclined to dwell on Him mostly as *having lived*. When we have taught ourselves to realise that Jesus is as intensely alive to everything that we do as He was when He visibly walked with men—that Jesus is as easily aware of our inmost thoughts and endeavours now as He was of the secret thoughts of His disciples,—then we shall have brought Him much closer into our own life.

As the possessor of life is not the student of schools, but is the pupil of Christ, let us prepare ourselves to be pupils; and this again

we do solely by the help of the Man-Jesus, who is in Christ, and Christ in Jesus. For the Christ-God is at first too strong a meat for us: we cannot with fullness understand that He is God, but He Himself will teach us this when we are ready to know it. To know this truth in its fullness is already to possess eternal life.

As no man is able to give us eternal life, so no man is able to give us the knowledge that Christ is God, as He willed to reveal Himself to man. If we have doubts which hurt, let us drop them out, changing the thought quickly to the sweetness, simplicity, and gentleness of the Man-Jesus. If we have questionings, let us cease to question, and say with the man of old, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

We do well to avoid these questionings, prying, and curiosities, for when we indulge in such things we are like that common servant who does not disdain to peep through the keyhole of his master's chamber! Let us put such spiritual vulgarities upon one side, and, opening our heart to lovely Love, take Him as our only guide. Love draws us very rapidly to His own abiding-place, for we are made of love, and because of love, and for love, and to Love we must return, for He awaits us with longing.

* * *

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 neighbours; I am just to my fellow-men; 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—for 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 endeavour be at great pains and stress to make good to Him our deficiencies.

"Be ye perfect as I am perfect."

"Be ye holy as I am holy."

If this were not attainable, He would not have set so high a goal. In this, then, we are sinners—that we are not pure and lovely as God Himself! This is a prodigious, an almost unthinkable height; yet He wills us to attempt it, and all the powers of Heaven are with us as we climb.

* * *

Fear curiosity. Fear it more than sin. Curiosity is the root, and sin the flower. This is one of the reasons why we should never seek God merely with the intelligence: to do so is to seek Him, in part at least, with curiosity. God will not be peeped upon by a curious humanity. The indulgence in curiosity would of itself explain the whole downfall, so called, of man.

The Soul is the Prodigal. Curiosity *to know* led her away from the high heavens. Love is her only way of return.

Curiosity is the mother of all infidelity, whether of the spirit or of the body.

* * *

Though on reading the Gospels carefully we may be unable to come to any other conclusion than that Jesus Christ neither prayed for nor died for all mankind, but only for the elect, yet we see equally clearly that all mankind is *invited to be the elect*. We are, then, not individually sure of heaven because Jesus died upon a cross for men; but sure of heaven for ourselves, only if we individually will to live and think and act in such a manner that *we become of the elect*.

"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," says the Voice of the Beloved.

* * *

In our early stages, how we shrink from the mere word, or idea, of perfection; and later, what we would give to be able to achieve it! Yet though we shrink so from the thought of it, we know instinctively that we must try to approach it; if we would stay near Him, we must be wholly pleasing to Him. We think of saints—we know nothing of saints, but think of them as most unusual persons midway between men and angels, and know ourselves not fashioned

for any such position: and how change ourselves, how alter our character, as grown men and women?

It is Christ who can show us the way.

The Water of Life is the Mind of Christ, and the true object of life is to learn how to receive this Mind of Christ: for by it and with it we enter the Kingdom of God. And how shall we receive the Mind of Christ? Here is our difficulty. Firstly, we may do it through sympathy with, and a drawing near to, the Man-Jesus, accompanied by such drastic changes of mind as we are able to accomplish *to show our goodwill*. We may learn to become more unselfish, more patient, more sympathetic to others, and to curb the tongue, so that words which are untrue or unkind shall not slip off it. We can learn to govern the animal that is in us, instead of being governed by it. No one could have a better guide in how to improve the condition of his mind than Aaron Crane's book, *Right and Wrong Thinking*.

And next, having become well knitted to the Man-Jesus, the Christ will draw us forward step by step through all the next inward stages, we giving to Him our attention; and He will bring us finally to that marvellous condition of God-consciousness by which He is able to perpetually refresh and renew us. There is one great first rule to hold to, which is *to think lovingly of Jesus*: in this way we eventually and automatically *come into a state of love*. In which state He will teach us to put out our own little light, that we may learn to live by the lovely light of God. And we have entered the Kingdom!

For myself, I experienced three conversions: the first two of terrible suffering, and the third of great and marvellous joy, in which it is no exaggeration to say that for a few moments I seemed to receive God and all the freedom of the Heavens into my soul. I am not able to say exactly how long this experience lasted, for I was dead to time and place, but I should judge it to have been from fifteen to twenty minutes.

The first conversion came upon me one afternoon in my room, as I came in from walking. I had been thinking of Jesus while I walked, as I was often in the habit of doing. Without any intention or pre-meditation on my part, I was now suddenly overwhelmed by a most horrible, unbearable, inexplicable pain of remorse for my vile-ness: for I seemed suddenly to be aware of Him standing there in

His marvellous purity and looking at me—not with any reproach, but with the sweetness of a wonderful Invitation upon His face. And immediately I saw myself utterly unworthy to come near Him: and I writhed in the agony of this fearful perception of my unworthiness till I could bear no more. I was sick and ill with remorse and regret, I was utterly broken up by it. I did not know then that this awful pain is what is known as repentance, and wondered secretly what could have come to me. After this I found myself far more constantly thinking of Jesus—exchanging, as it were, sweet confidences with Him, telling Him what I thought, and endeavouring in every possible way to follow His manner of thought. I am ashamed to say I was very remiss and lazy in prayers; upon my knees I prayed very little indeed. But I was very faithful and warm and tender to Him in my heart, and this had an effect upon my mind and actions, and continued for two years.

I would be assailed by many questionings during this time. For instance, how could my sweet Jesus, whom I was always so near to, be the mighty Christ and God? But I dropped these out as they came, feeling myself altogether too small to understand these things, and very much frightened by such greatesses.

When I was alone with Jesus, all was so simple and so lovely; so I put away all other thoughts and held closely to Jesus.

This having continued almost exactly the two years, upon Easter morning, at the close of the service, the horrible anguish came on me again as I knelt in the church. I was not able to move or to show my face for more than an hour; and to this day I am not able to dwell upon the memory of that awful pain, for I think I should go mad if I had to enter again into so great a torture of the spirit. I endured to the utmost limit of my capacity for suffering—for this I will say of myself, I did not draw back, but went on to the bitter end. And the suffering was caused by the sight of that most terrible of all sights: the vision of myself as over against the vision of Jesus Christ, and I died a death for every fault. Whoever has felt the true wailing of the soul, such an one knows the heights of all spiritual pain. The heart and mind, or creature, suffers in depths; but the soul in heights, and this at one and the same time, so that the pain of repentance is everywhere. And the depth of the suffering of the

creature is coequal with the height of the suffering of the soul, and the joint suffering of both would seem to be of coequal promise and merit for their after joy and glory; so that it would seem that the more horrible our pain, the quicker is our deliverance and the greater our later joys.

After this, Jesus, without my knowing how it came about, passed out from the Perfect Man into the Christ of God. I walked and talked with Him no longer just as sweet Jesus, but as the Marvellous and Mighty Risen Lord! And now I became far more changed. The world and all earthly loves began to fade; they no longer satisfied or filled me in the least. How could I contemplate His exquisite perfections, the ineffable beauties of His mind and heart, and, turning from these to the sight of the world and of the men and women that I knew, not feel the difference? Where among my friends could I find perfect love? Amongst husbands and wives? No. Amongst mothers and children? No. For everywhere I saw discord, secret selfishness, separate and divided desires, and many deceits. I found no love anywhere like His for us. I was always an epicure in the matter of love, and knew the best when I found it. I continued with my social and home life exactly as before: the change was an inward change.

Almost immediately after this the war came, and, with it, torments of anxiety over my earthly loves.

The fearful anxieties I was in drove me to prayer. I began to pray more regularly; but though I prayed, I remained as miserable as before. A painful illness came, and lasted four months. I had no home because of the war, and nowhere to be ill in peace: and I drank and ate wretchedness as my daily bread and wine, and wondered why I ever was born.

I cannot recall I was ever rebellious. No, I never was. I walked in a maze of trouble, and endured like a poor dumb thing, *and did not throw out my heart to God enough* in prayer. If I had done this I think I should have been through my pains in half the time.

Two years went by, and, being in greater anxiety than ever because of a great battle that was going on and my love at the front of it, I went up on the hill where I often went, and standing there I contended with God, crying out, "It is too much—the pain of this

war is too great and too long; I cannot bear it. I am at an end of everything. Help me! Help me!" And in my anguish I seemed at last to be melted and running like water before Him, and I came before Him as it were immediately before a mighty and living Presence, though I saw nothing.

But though I was so near Him and appealed to Him with the whole of my strength, there was no answer, no reply, but the great silence of heaven.

At last, my agony over, I walked for a little, very quiet and very sad, and all at once a marvellous thing happened to me. I will not here describe how it was done to me, but He filled me with love for Himself, an amazing, all-absorbing, and tremendous love—from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet I was filled with love. And this was His answer—and all my sorrows fled away in a great joy.

This third conversion produced a fundamental alteration of my whole outlook and grasp on life. It brought me into direct contact with God, and was the commencement of a total change of heart and mind and consciousness; the centre of my consciousness, without any effort of my own, suddenly moving bodily from a concentration upon the visible or earthly to a loving and absorbed concentration upon, and a fixed attention to, the Invisible God—a most amazing, undreamed-of change, which remained permanent, though fluctuating through innumerable degrees of intensity before coming to a state of equilibrium. And now Christ went away from me, so that I adored Him in God. After this for some weeks I went through extraordinary spiritual experiences, the like of which had never previously so much as entered into my heart to imagine; again I will say nothing here of these. I came to all these experiences with great innocence and ignorance, never having read any religious or psychological book, and I think now that it is perhaps easier to have it so.

Knowing that nothing is done without a purpose, I would question myself what I could possibly be intended to learn out of these things; and though I have never yet found a reason for any one given experience, yet I see this: the whole (which lasted for some weeks and was gone through at night and always in a state of semi-wakefulness, though not in a normal wakefulness, for the body

would be stiff and set like a board)—the whole was the most convincing proof that He could have given me (without destroying my flesh) of the reality of the life unseen. For how otherwise could we be made to know of the reality of spiritual things if we were never *taken into* them? And having been taken into them, and they being a thousand times more poignant than any earthly experience, how could we forget them? Whenever doubts upon anything presented themselves, I had nothing more to do than to Remember! Nothing He could have devised to do for me could have been of greater or more direct assistance to me. These experiences were to my creature what the centre-board is to the racing yacht. With these memories I could keep an even keel, and without them I must have capsized many a time.

By these spiritual experiences He gives us an immense courage, and personal knowledge of a mysterious and hitherto unknown life of joys so great and so intense that all sufferings endured by us here appear to us in their true light as being a melting and cleansing agency infinitely worth while, that we may gain in permanence such exquisite felicity.

Our means of reaching a personal experience, whilst still in the body, of such a life of joys is to harmonise the spirit of our human creature to the degree of purity required by the soul to enable her in unfettered freedom to perform her divine functions.

We confuse in our minds the two separate essences—that of the soul and that of the human spirit (heart, intelligence, and will), which are widely different; the soul acting for us as the wings of the creature. And above and superior to the soul, and yet within it, is the divine and incorruptible Spirit or Sparkle of God, which in its turn acts as the wings of the soul. So we have the worm (or creature-spirit), the soul; and the Celestial Spark, or Divine Intelligence of the soul, which is the organ of God, and with which we are able to come in *sensible contact* with the divine world and God Himself. What are our enemies? Selfishness, impatience, covetousness, pride, ill-temper, bodily indulgences, and, above all, indifference to God of the will of the creature.

After this third, and last, conversion upon the hill, which so altered my whole life, I was for a period of some months in such a

state of exaltation and enhancement of all my faculties that I did not know myself at all. I was, without any intention or endeavour on my own part, suddenly become like a veritable House of Arts! The most beautiful music flowed through my mind, in which I noticed certain peculiarities—there was no sadness in it, and it swayed me so that I seemed to go into a state of white-heat with emotion over it. It was extraordinarily much smoother than any earth-music I ever heard, and extremely consecutive, like a fluid. Now with earth-music I find that even Wagner is not able to achieve any consecutive perfection: he reaches to a height—only to fall back and disappoint. But this other music, which is not heard with the senses but is invariably felt by the soul, remains at extreme and fluid perfection, and casts such spells over the listener that he is beside himself with enjoyment. Colour and form, imagery of all kinds, would pass through me till I felt like an artist, and cried out with regret, "Oh, if I had only studied this or that art and knew the grounding of it, what heights of proficiency I could reach now!" An object of quite ordinary charm seemed, because of that something which now filled me, to expand into prodigious beauty! The very pavements and houses, mean and hideous as they are, overflowed with some inexplicable glamour. The world was turned into a veritable paradise! When I thought of it all I was filled with amazement, and still am, for how can we explain such changes in manner of living and seeing? At this time my only trouble or difficulty was to conceal my condition from others.

But this wonderful state of things gradually passed away, and I went into a most difficult condition. At one time of the day I would be in an ecstasy of delight, and an hour later in some altogether unreasonable depth of wretchedness. I went to and fro from one extreme to the other, and my time was, I think, mostly spent in trying to regain some kind of balance. My love for God was as great as ever, but it had become a love all made of tears. Indeed, my whole being seemed made of tears. I thought often of these words, the peace of God; most certainly I had not found it. On the contrary, my life had become an indescribable turmoil. I found no help from my fellow-beings; I seemed to have lost the power of talking pleasantly with them, and my point of view had become different from theirs. Men could no longer please me, and I could not please God! I was

entirely alone spiritually, and I said to myself it would be better if I could be alone physically as well; and I ached and longed and dreamed of solitude till it was like a sickness. But the only solitude I could have was in my own room.

Now, believing myself to be a sensible and practical person, I would say to myself that my condition, being so unreasonable, must be got out of, and I must make every effort to do it. I prayed for two things—that I might love God with a cheerful countenance and not with tears, and that He would teach me quickly what to pray for; and He gave me the impulse to pray for more and greater love.

Next, I banished my own feelings as much as I could (since love must not think of itself), paying as little attention to them as possible by perpetually dropping them out as they came and returning to the thought of Jesus, concerning myself at all times of the day to loving inward conversation with Him; and in this manner I fastened myself closer than ever to Him, continually praying for greater love to give Him and passionately offering Him all that I already had, whilst with all my will and strength I tried to climb out of my miserable state. Soon I succeeded—I was out of it in a matter of weeks.

* * *

How humanity is extolled by its own kind! How men are admired, even glorified! I am amazed, for where is the glory of any man? But rather, how wonderful and glorious is God! that He should cause to spring from one handful of dust such possibilities! Wonderful God! And blessed man, that he should have so wonderful a God!

* * *

Some men say that man has invented for himself the thought of God, because of the great need he feels within himself for such a Being.

Yet look where we will in Nature, do we find a warrant for such a thought? Are babes inspired with the desire for milk, and is that milk withheld from the nature of all mothers? No; to the babe is given the desire because the mother has wherewith to satisfy. So with grown men: for to us is given a deep and secret desire for the

milk of God's love, and to Himself He has reserved the joy of leading us to it and bestowing it upon us.

* * *

Sometimes for a short while the soul will suffer from a sickness (I speak now for persons already very well advanced); she is parched and without sweetness. Her love has no joy in it. This is not a condition to be accepted or acquiesced in, but must be overcome at once by a remedy of prayer: prayer addressed to the Father, *in the name of Jesus Christ*, a prayer of praise and adoration—"I praise and bless and love and thank Thee, I praise and bless and love and worship Thee, I praise and bless and love and glorify Thee"—till the heart is fired and we return to the intimacy of love. Or the Lord's Prayer, very slow, and with an intention both outgoing and *intaking*. So far I have never known these remedies to fail, and joy floods the soul and sends her swinging up, up, on to the topmost heights again. It is magnificent.

How is it that we can pass so, up from the visible into the Invisible, and become so oned with it, and feel it so powerfully, that the Invisible becomes a thousand times more real to us than the visible! It is like a different manner of living altogether. And when anyone so living finds himself even for a short time unfastened from this way of living and back again to what is known to the average as normal life, this normal life seems no better to him than some horrible chaotic and uneven turmoil, and his brain ready to be turned if he had to remain in it for long. When so unfastened, the whole savour of life is completely gone, and a smallness of mind and outlook is fallen back into from which the soul recoils in horror and struggles quickly to free herself.

Is this the remnant of the unruly creature rising up and grappling with the soul again? Is this some deliberate trial of us by the Master? or some natural spiritual sickness? Whilst in this condition we must disappoint the Beloved. On the other hand, we find ourselves kept to the knowledge of our own impotence and nothingness and dependence, and the spirit is strengthened by the efforts made quickly to recover the lost beautiful estate.

Also we become more able to feel true patience and compassion for such others as do not know the way of escape. So we gain, maybe, more than we lose.

* * *

We may wonder how it is that the Mighty Maker of the Universe should choose to condescend to the mere individual piece of clay. It is incomprehensible. It is so incomprehensible that there is but one way of looking at it. This is no favouritism to the individual, but the evidence of a Mind with a vast plan pursuing a way and using a likely individual. These individuals or willing souls He takes and, setting them apart, fashions them to His own ends and liking. Of one He will make a worker, and of another He fashions to Himself a lover. It would seem to be His will to use the human implement to help the human. As water, for usefulness to the many, must be collected and put through channels, so it would seem must the beneficence of God be collected into human vessels and channels that it may be distributed for the use of the many and the more feeble.

* * *

The more any man will consider humanity, the more he will see that the education of the heart and will is of more importance than the education of the brain. For in the perfectly trained and educated heart and will we find the evidence of highest wisdom.

* * *

Why mortify the body with harsh austerities? When we over-mortify the body with fastings, pains, and penances we are *remembering the flesh*. Let us aim at the forgetting and not the despising of the flesh. A sick body can be a great hindrance to the soul. By keeping the body in a state of perfect wholesomeness we can more easily pass away from the recollection of it. Chastise the mind rather than the body. Christ taught, not the contempt or wilful neglect of the body, but the humble submission of the body to all *circumstances*, the obedience of the will to God, and the glorious and immeasurable possibilities of the human spirit.

* * *