

to be passive rather than to be active, may be fulfilling a quota but it is not teaching. REIMAGINING EDUCATION explores why the interaction among creativity, questioning, imagining, and learning is vital. Without these elements, the classroom becomes a barren and infertile landscape. As we teachers strive to instill competence and to meet our own standards of accountability, we must never forget that some of the great inventions of history, the inventions that have transformed the quality of our lives, were created by the dreamers, the ones who saw the world they lived in but who imagined something greater. REIMAGINING EDUCATION deserves to be on every educator's bookshelf because it engages the teacher to reflect not just on the particulars of a lesson but on the mission of education. For to teach without a mission is to leave a child behind.

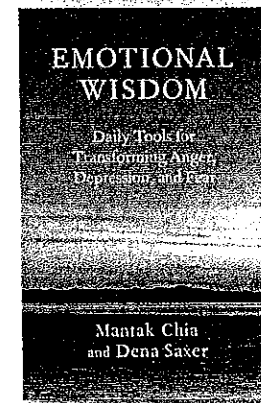
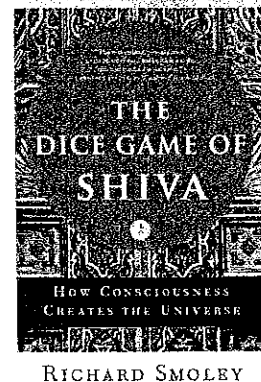
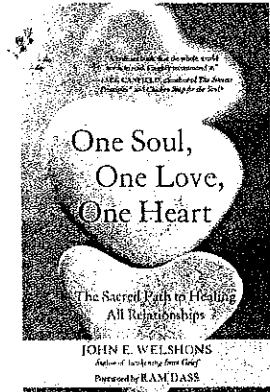
Elizabeth Napp has been teaching Social Studies in a public high school for twenty years and is the creator of "Parabola in the Classroom."

A CHRISTIAN WOMAN'S SECRET: A Modern-Day Journey to God

BY LILIAN STAVELEY, FOREWORD BY PHILIP ZALESKI, EDITED BY JOSEPH A. FITZGERALD. WORLD WISDOM (WWW.WORLDWISDOM.COM), 2009. PP. 168. \$17.95 PAPER
REVIEWED BY SAMUEL BENDECK SOTILLOS

"In and out of every day persistently, desperately, endlessly we seek. And because we seek amongst the near-to-hand, the visible, the small, we seek in vain: we discover there is nothing in this world which can wholly and permanently satisfy either of these desires.

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1917–2009

*Author, Colleague,
Friend*

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God Himself is Happiness.”

LILIAN STAVELEY

Amidst the bombarding selection of book titles that clad the myriad bookstore shelves pertaining to mysticism, spirituality, or religion, the contemporary seeker will find that this unique work—*A CHRISTIAN WOMAN'S SECRET*—is not another book amongst other books, but a remarkable source of modern-day illumination. Another significant facet of this work is that it was written by a woman, allowing the narrative and substance within to embody the feminine spirit while simultaneously capturing the essence of what it means to be fused or in proximity to the Beloved or the Absolute. “Clothed in the body of either man or woman, the soul is predominantly feminine—the Feminine Principle beloved of, and returning to, the Eternal Masculine of God.”

Given that this work is written by a woman, it discloses many aspects of spiritual life that are all-too-often taken for granted by the dominant male representation within the traditions. “Men had souls, I was sure of that; and they asserted the possession of them very positively—but women?” Staveley continues to reflect on how women are underrepresented in the sacred traditions, perhaps underscoring how many women have felt and continue to feel to this day:

In Revelation I found no mention whatever of Woman in the life of the Resurrection. All this hurt me. What profound injustice—to suffer so much and to receive no recognition whatever whilst men walked off with all the joys after leading very questionable lives!

Readers will be interested to know that the author, Lilian Staveley (1878–1928), was a rather unknown Protestant lady of

the aristocracy who has been hailed by some to be an extraordinary Christian saint of recent times. The present work is an edited compilation of three previously published works of Staveley that were originally published anonymously by the legendary esoteric bookshop John M. Watkins of London: *THE GOLDEN FOUNTAIN* (1919), *THE ROMANCE OF THE SOUL* (1920), and *THE PRODIGAL RETURNS* (1921).

Although this book is contextualized within the Christian tradition, it portrays the unanimous tradition that is neither of the East or West, as her inner life was said to be comparable to that of the pre-eminent Indian sage Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886),¹ St. Francis of Assisi (1181/1182–1226), and St. Thérèse de Lisieux (1873–1897). Staveley informs the reader that she did not come from a religious family per se, yet she explains that her “father’s daily life and acts were full of Christianity.” That Staveley lived in the day-to-day world and yet remained in a state of perpetual remembrance adhering to apostle Paul’s dictum “pray without ceasing” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:17) in the very matrix of worldly life challenges many of the present-day assumptions about what is considered essential to spiritual life—“this world is the very place in which we can most easily and

quickly get into communication with God.” This essential prayer is known in different forms throughout the world’s religions and even the shamanic traditions: “Prayer is the golden wedding ring between ourselves and God.” Staveley kept her inner life intimately to herself, hidden from friends and family, even her husband.

Her wisdom exposes trappings pertaining to the spiritual path that many contemporary seekers face. “Our attitude to God is not one of love, but of an expectancy of favors.” Staveley explains that the consciousness known to the human individual limited to the five senses is only a fraction of what is beyond the psycho-physical domain.

If the natural [animal] man were asked, “What is life? What is it to live?” he would reply, “It is to eat, drink, laugh, love, and have pleasure or pain: to hear, see, touch, taste and smell, and to be conscious that I do all these things.” Yet this consciousness is but a tiny speck of consciousness, and some mysterious voice within the deeply-thinking man tells him that this is so. But how uncover a further consciousness? This is the secret of the soul.

In the identification with the five senses the human individual mistakenly defines what he or she is in the relative domain.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

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This analogously illustrates the perennial psychology known to both East and West: "As a man's desire is so is he." What is beyond the human senses, also known as the Intellect (Latin: *intellectus*, Arabic: *al-'aql*, Sanskrit: *buddhi*) or the "eye of the heart," provides the human individual with a transcendent faculty that allows him or her to see what is blind to the terrestrial eye: "I had no need for eyes to see outwardly, because of the immense magnetism of this inward Awareness." Staveley insists on the distinction between the soul and the Spirit: "We confuse in our minds the two separate essences—that of the soul and that of the human spirit," which is often the case with modern psychology.

Very few in the postmodern era can visualize, for example, an individual shopping in London's Bond Street while abiding in a state of God-intoxication, let alone a representative of the Victorian and Edwardian British upper class accessing such transcendent states. Staveley unequivocally demonstrates the perennial wisdom that weds both transcendence and immanence within the human microcosm: "to identify ourselves with the spiritual while still in the flesh." And what spiritual pointers can she offer human individuals in the modern and postmodern era where time appears to ever quicken? "But life is so busy I have no time,' you say. What of those hours spent in the train, those moments spent waiting for an appointment, that half-hour taken for a rest, but which is not a rest because of the rushing inharmonious turmoil of your thoughts?"

Staveley directs the reader to not only acknowledge the axiom "The kingdom of God is within you" theoretically but in fact, explaining that the soul is content only when transcendence becomes

immanence itself:

[A]lthough He is present in His Two Persons, the soul is not filled: she is unspeakably blest and happy, but not wholly satisfied till He is present to her in His First Person also. She knows immediately when He so comes, and then the Three become One, and when They become One to her, in that moment the soul enters Bliss. It is love alone which enables her to possess Him, and this love that she knows how to shed to Him is His own gift to her.

This volume speaks directly to the heart of those yearning not only to bridge but to integrate the inner dimension of spiritual life with that of day-to-day outer existence. The affirmation that human individuals can access the grace of the Absolute and make contact here and now with the transcendent is a paramount facet of Staveley's message to the contemporary world, which faces an unprecedented disintegration of spiritual life: "Stand still! Just where we are is the place where we can meet Him. Just where we stand today can be as sacred, as blessed, as the Holy Land." What is most captivating about this book is that it is written in everyday terminology. That the sacred can be found here and now in this very moment is affirmed through this personal and yet paradoxically transpersonal account of a twentieth-century saint who lived in the midst of the modern world.

1 Francis Younghusband, *MODERN MYSTICS*
(London: John Murray, 1935)

Samuel Bendeck Sotillos has received graduate degrees in Education and in Psychology. He has travelled throughout the world to visit sacred sites, and had contact with noted spiritual authorities. He currently works as a mental health clinician in northern California.