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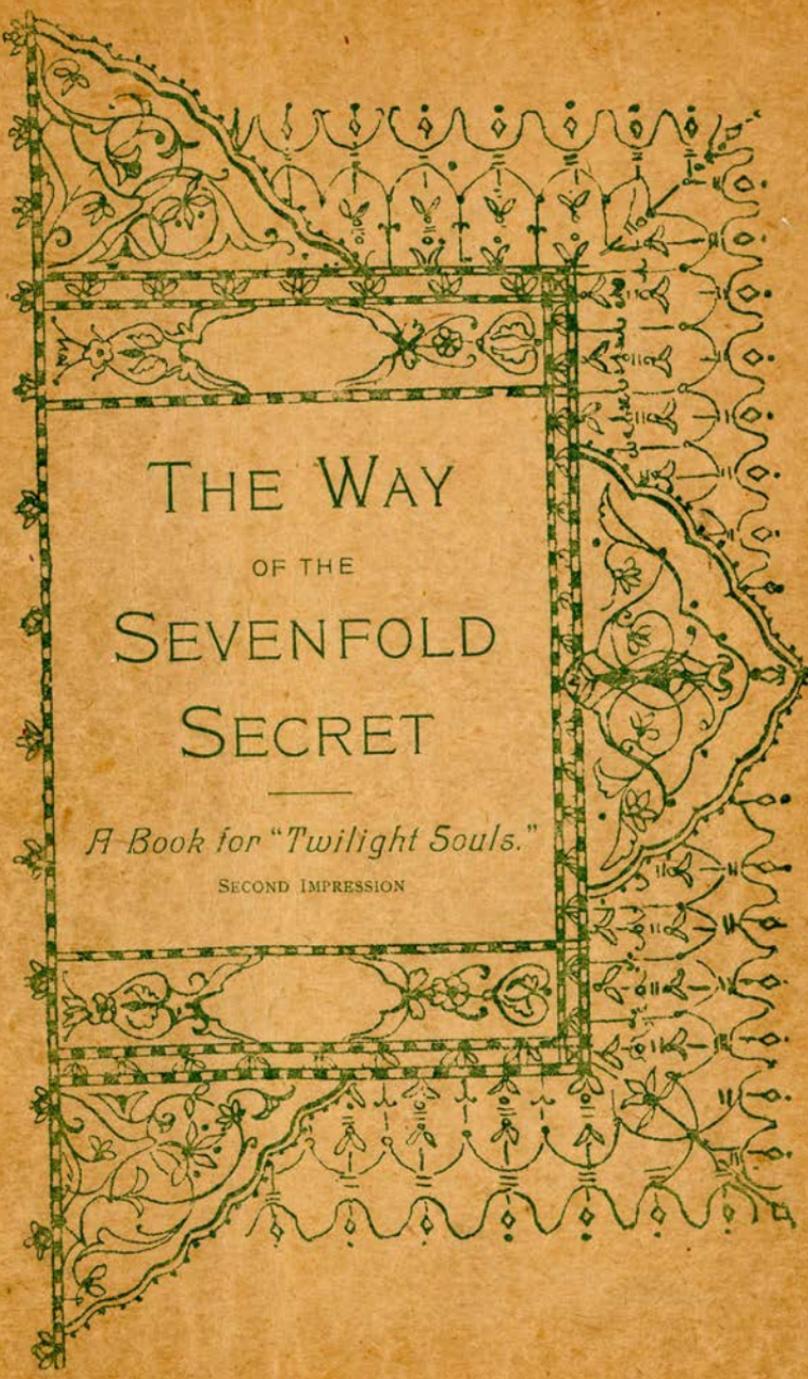


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THE WAY
OF THE
SEVENFOLD
SECRET

A Book for "Twilight Souls."

SECOND IMPRESSION

The Way of the Sevenfold Secret.

نور الافكار
في
كشف
السبع الاسرار

“God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit,
for the Spirit searcheth all things yea
the deep things of God”.

WITH INTRODUCTORY FOREWORD
by the Right Rev.
The Bishop of JERUSALEM.

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FOREWORD.

*S. S. "China",
October 15th, 1926.*

TO THOSE who have lived many years in the Near East Miss Liliastrotter has long been known as one who, to a most unusual degree, has been gifted with the power to express in simple, clear and moving words the truths of God as revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Since the great Conference on the Mount of Olives in 1924—during which Miss Trotter added greatly to her already rich stores of experience—though confined to bed for more than two years and heavily handicapped by bodily weakness, her ready pen has continued to carry on the work to which most evidently the Spirit of God has called her.

The "Sevenfold Secret" has already been published in Arabic and is now being sold to many Moslems. To the Sufis, the Mystics of Islam, it cannot fail to come as verily a revelation of the loving purposes of God for the salvation of men's souls from the powers of darkness, of ignorance and of sin. To many Christians also this same book, now published in English, will come as indeed a revelation—vouchsafed through this well-tried saint of God—a revelation both of the love and of the beauty of our Blessed Saviour Jesus.

It is to me a real privilege to be associated, in however humble a way, with the work of faith, the labour of love and the patience of hope to which the author has been called. Most earnestly do I commend this little book to the careful study and the prayers of all those into whose hands it may come.

RENNIE MACINNES,
Bishop of Jerusalem.

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John I. 1-4.

THE WONDERFUL REVEALING.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life and the life was the Light of men. That was the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

.

For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life.

.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.

1 John 1:2,3.

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

PREFACE.

TO the praise of the grace of God who hath prepared for them that love Him such good things as pass man's understanding, and hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, to Him be honour and glory for ever. AMEN.

There is between us and you, O our brothers the Sufis, much agreement. The Sufi is a man who has the purpose of discovering secrets, and they are the secrets of Divine truth and Divine power. He leaves to other men the lifeless husk, that is to say the things that are seen, and he desires with all his heart to break through to the kernel, that is, to the things that are unseen, and that have in them the essence of eternal life.

And we the Christians are with you in this. One of the Apostles of old spoke these words, which are written in the Holy Book. *"We look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."* *

We do not despise the husk which consists of "the things that are seen," that is to say the ordinary materials of life as houses and food and raiment, and the joys of

* 2 Cor. 4:18

family and friendship, and the profit of learning, for God created all our visible surroundings in this world to enfold the true kernel that He would bestow on us, and this kernel of all things is the knowledge of Himself. And like you, O people of the Road, we want to reach the best that is possible to us in our life in this world, that is, union with God, and we desire this kernel notwithstanding all that it may cost to break through the husk of the things that are seen: that is, all of surrender and of sacrifice that may lie before us in His will.

But, O our brothers, though our aim and yours is the same, there is a great divergence between us and you in the method of the search. You hold, by the experience of the saints that have gone before you, that you must pass by a long and hard wrestling, through stage after stage, and you hold that it may please God, or it may not please Him, to bestow on you the states that will bring you at last to knowledge and union. And also you are aware of the snares that beset you all along the road, so that even in "audition" there is the fear that the world and the flesh and the devil may conquer you, and that they may drag you back into sin, from what you deemed the gate of heaven.

But we can tell you of a road wherein we have found joy and peace from the first step. And this road does not depend on a man's good works, such as much fasting and rising by night and retirement and meditation—and

it does not involve the abandonment of yourself to the counsels of a director be he ever so celebrated, and it does not consist in the dispositions acceptable to God that you seek for in your heart; but this new and wonderful road is in the revelation of Jesus Christ to your spirit, for He is the One who has come into the world to bring us to God by means of His redemption, whereby He destroyed all the veils that separated us from Him.

And we wish in this book to place before you seven of the sayings of Christ concerning Himself while He was in the world, and they reveal to us the mission that He had received from God. These sayings were spoken by Him during the last three years of His life, and they were written down for us in the Gospel by the disciple who best understood his Master, and are wonderful words to us and to you. For the symbols of these seven sayings are so simple that a child can understand them, according to his intelligence, but so deep that all the wise men in the world cannot reach to their depths.

And our prayer for you is "*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.*"

I

THE SECRET OF SATISFACTION.

They said unto Jesus: Our Fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Then Jesus said unto them, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven.

I Am The Bread of Life.

He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.

I am the living Bread that came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever, and the Bread that I will give is my Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

John 6. 31-35, 51.

I.

THE SECRET OF SATISFACTION.

YOU will remember, O our brothers, the history in the Tourât that is mentioned on the preceding page: that is to say the story of the manna that came down from heaven to the children of Israel in the wilderness, when they were in fear of dying from hunger. And as you know, they lived by this heavenly food that God bestowed upon them: every day, during 40 years, each man of that great host was satisfied, he and the people of his household.

Till the manna was given them from heaven, that wilderness was in truth a barren place, and empty of any hope of life. No corn could be raised in the sand, and moreover they were always travelling on. If pasturage could be found for their flocks and herds, it was as much as could be hoped.

But as it says in the Psalm,—“*Man did eat angels' food*”,* and again “*He satisfied them with the bread of heaven.*” † It had nothing to do with earth or with the toil of man: it was the gift of God. By the path of miracle it lay, morning by morning on the barren soil, white and sweet and wonderful, enough for every man and woman and boy and girl in that company. All the name that they could give it was “manna”, meaning “what is this?” For it was full of mystery. They knew but one thing, it stood between them and starvation: it was to them the Bread of Life indeed.

Now the words from the Gospel of St. John on the first page of this chapter, tell us that the story of this mystery was but the figure of a deeper mystery; that is

* Ps. 78.25

† Ps. 105. 40.

mystery, to earth. But in the end of His life He called Himself "a corn of wheat".* And this means that only by the path of suffering could He become to us the True Bread. For the corn of wheat bears the cutting of the sickle and the trampling of the oxen and the crushing of the mill and the heat of the furnace and the breaking by the hands of man, that it may fulfil its ministry. Even thus did our Lord the Christ go through stage after stage of surrender and suffering, even unto death, that through the laying down of His own life, He might impart life to us.

And how can this life that He has brought us become ours? (The only condition on our part is that we receive Him by faith.) The results are from His mighty working, we know not how. We only know that as the bread imparts bodily life to the body, so Christ imparts the life of God to the soul. As the bread becomes part of our body, in a way past our comprehension, so, in the path of Divine mystery, Christ becomes one with our spiritual being, in a spiritual union that results in our growing to desire what He desires, and to hate what He hates, that is, all sin, inward as well as outward.

Again, as the bread satisfies the hunger of the body, so this indwelling of Christ in us satisfies the hunger of the soul, until it becomes rested through and through. And we believe that this hunger of the soul has been granted to you, O our brothers of the Road, by the Grace of God, to prepare you for the satisfying that is to be found in our Lord the Christ according to these His words: "*He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst*".

And here again, O our brothers, the secret of the دغی Riḍā† that we have in Christ our Lord, differs from

* John 12. 24. † satisfaction

the رضى that you seek in the ecstasy that is produced through the dhikr. For even those who have attained to it cannot testify that it is an abiding experience: more often it seems like a beautiful dream, from which the sleeper is roughly awakened by returning to the daily life around.

And in attestation of the truth that Christ is to His people the Bread of Life, He has ordained that in all ages and lands, His disciples should meet and break bread together and drink the juice of the grape, in memory of His Body that was broken for them and His Blood that was shed. And in this we affirm that our spirit's hunger is satisfied in Him, and that in Him the thirst of our hearts is quenched. And in this memorial He often draws near to us unseen, and visits our souls with the revelation of His love.

But of all this you will know later, if you become saved by Him. The first step, and the present step for thee, O my brother that hungerest, is that as thy lips open to receive the earthly bread day by day, thus must thou open thy heart, and receive the Lord Christ.

And in this act thou wilt prove that the satisfying that thou thinkest to be far away, is close at hand. God the Most High has not set it at the end of our mystical journey, but at the beginning, even as in daily life, if your children had a long day's travel before them, you would give them bread to eat in the morning to strengthen them, and not wait till night falls.

This is the first of the seven secrets, that in Christ the satisfying can be thine in this hour, for, like the manna of old that fell in the wilderness, He has come where thou art. Thou dost need to go no weary search

to find Him, according as it is written,*—“*Say not in thine heart, ‘Who shall ascend into heaven’ (that is to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who shall descend into the deep’ (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? ‘The Word is nigh thee’*”.

And think not, O my brother, “this thing is for the Christians, it is not for me”. Christ says that this wonderful Bread, sent down by God, is “for the life of the world”: therefore, so long as thou art in the world, it is for thee. In daily life we all need bread. It is needed by the greyhaired and the children, by the rich man in his castle and by the poor man in his tent, in all lands and in all ages. So Christ came to satisfy the spiritual needs of every race and of every period of time. He is called in prophecy “*The Desire of all nations*”† and though thou dost not yet understand it, He Himself is thy desire, O my brother, for thou seekest after thine allotted portion in the fulness of God, and “*in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*”.‡ All the longings of thy heart after light and love and life can be met by opening thine heart and letting Him in.

Let that hour be now. Tell Him that thou dost understand but little, but that thou findest in thy spirit a hunger for God, and that thou believest that He comes to thee, sent by God for salvation. As though openest, He will enter, and “*He that hath the Son, hath life*”.**

* Rom. 10. 6-8.

† Haggai. 2. 7.

‡ Col. 2. 9.

** I John 5. 12.

II.

THE SECRET OF ILLUMINATION.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness.

Then spake Jesus unto them saying,

I am The Light of the World.

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the Light of Life.

Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.

John 1, 9; 12. 46; 8. 12; 12. 35.

II.

THE SECRET OF ILLUMINATION.

We have seen the first of these secrets of the overflow of the mercy of God to us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is to say, we have seen that "*In Him was life*".† Now we go on to another of these secrets, for the completion of this word tells us "*The life was the light of men.*" Thus it is written in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, and in several other passages of that Gospel the same truth is declared, that He is the Light of the world.

Now life comes before light, but if light does not follow life, life will die, as you may see in every buried seed, that seeks for light as soon as life has begun its work, and reaches forth till it finds the sun. Thus it is with the soul of man. Life needs light whereby to live. Christ came to be not only the Life of the world, but the Light of the world. We will seek the meaning of this saying.

We know that in our outward existence there are many lights, by which, in default of the sun, the individual tries to lighten his darkness. When the night falls, each room in the town has its little lamp or candle. But when the sun rises there is one light for all, for the sun, in the order of nature, is the light of the world, and when he arises, all other lights may go.

Even so, among the nations that are in ignorance, man tries to lighten the gloom by the lamp of his own

† In Him was life and the life was the Light of men. John 1. 4.

intellect, or the poor candle of a worship that he has devised. But we all know, the house of Islam and the Christians alike, that there is but One alone Who is as the one sun that shines on the evil and the good, even as David said in his Psalm, "*The Lord God is a Sun*",* and till the light shines on man, he is in darkness.

But the matter that we now want to put before you, O our brothers, is the question: how does the light and warmth of the sun reach us in the world? for the sun is far off in the heavens. If we could take the boundless journey needful to reach it, we should be blinded and scorched and shrivelled by its power.

The sun must come to us, that is clear, for we cannot go to him. He sends forth his rays, we know not how.† They are of one nature with the sun and come down to earth, and bring the sun as it were to our doors, but with his light and warmth softened till we can bear the radiance and rejoice in it. They are one with the sun that is far away in the heavens, and yet they touch the earth. As one of your own poets has said,—

"Tis the sun's self that lets the sun be seen." Even so the knowledge that man had of God before Christ came was like the light of dawn. When He came to earth, He came to reveal God, as the rays that are of one nature with the sun come to make it manifest in a way that we can bear to behold. Christ is "the brightness of

* Psalm 84. 11.

† Philip saith unto Him, Lord show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father (John I 14. 8, 9).

His glory and the express image of His Person," "the image of the invisible God", "God manifest in the flesh."* This is the glorious revelation of God to man.

Thus it is that He is "the Light of the world". Just before His birth it was said of Him that "*Through the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.*" †

And as it was with the world in its entirety, so it is with the little world of every human heart. It is as vain for a man to set forth to reach God by his own effort as it would be to try to journey up to the sun, even as it is said in the book of Job,—“Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection.”**

There was an old fable among the Greeks of one Icarus, who made himself wings to fly upward to the sun, and fastened them to his shoulders with wax. And as he mounted, the wax melted and the wings dropped off, and he fell back to earth. Even so, as you know well, O our brothers, our resolutions melt and vanish and let us down to earth again with our hopes broken and crushed, and the true knowledge of God as far off as ever. ‡

* Heb. 1. 3. Col. 1. 15. I Tim. 3. 16.

† Luke 1. 78, 79. ** Job 11. 7.

‡ “No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” (John 1. 18).

So our meeting place with God, and our beholding His glory, lies not in our going up to Him. But in His coming down to us in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. *“God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”* * the divine radiance for our souls.

This is the true inward vision, the faith of seeing, as distinct from the faith of deductive proof. And it is an illumination that abides from the beginning, not merely flashes of light that visit you from time to time when you have reached a certain stage. For this light is not to be sought within the recesses of your being, but outside yourself and away in another, even in Him whom God has sent to be the Light of the world. Once for all, here and now, this light will break on you if you lift up your eyes and behold Jesus Christ with the spiritual intention of the soul. Even as a dreamer opens his eyes, and is at once in a new world, with new powers of action, so is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Again we tell you, we know this to be true, for we have proved it.

And because we have proved it, we long for you, O our brothers, that you also should see the glory and the beauty that are in Him, and that draw our hearts to Him as the One infinitely to be desired, and the manifestation of God in His grace and love and power to our souls. And not only this, for there is a second meaning in which He is the Light of the world. Throughout His days on earth, Christ shewed God's perfect light on what a

* 2 Cor. 4, 6.

perfect man should be. "*The Life was the Light of men.*" Look at Him as He is shewn to us in the Gospel till that glory dawns upon you and grows like the morning light of the natural sun, that mounts and reigns in the sky, conquering the shadows and bringing life and fruitfulness on its wings. For, as in the verse we considered at the head of this chapter, life and light go together.

Therefore, O my brother, who seekest light, open thine eyes and see it. For the Light is seeking thee, and as in the world of nature, the sun's rays enter by every crevice that they can find, so it is with grace. But there is one veil in nature by which man can shut out all the light and glory and beauty that the sun has sent down, and it is the thin and tiny veil of his own eyelids. If he closes his eyes to the light, all the revelation that the sun's rays came to bring to him, avails him nothing. And Christ our Lord warned with a solemn warning those about Him who said "We see" while they closed towards Him the eyes of the heart by choice. * But to those who were conscious of their darkness, and said "We see not", to those His mercy came.

Be warned therefore my brother, lest by shutting thine eyes to the true Light, darkness come also upon thee: let not pride nor fear nor the love of sin close thy heart's vision: be not among those who, when the sun has arisen and drawn near to them, keep their eyelids closed and love darkness rather than light, for they do it at their peril. Because there is a terrible danger

* This is the condemnation, that Light is come into the World and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3.19).

that God may let us have that which we choose: and if we love darkness rather than light, this is the most fearful thing that can befall us.

And if thou dost open the eyes of the spirit, and beholdest the revelation of Jesus Christ as the light of the world, there is another warning that is given thee in the Holy Gospel: it is this. If the light is to continue in thy soul in its warmth and radiance, it must be followed. And the meaning of the following is great and manifold, but one thing is plain from the first, and this is that if the new light has come to thee it shows the difference between the evil and the good as never before, so that thou dost begin to see sin in much that seemed harmless in thy heart and life, according as it is written, — “*All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*”* In this third way is Christ the Light of the world: He is even as the natural sun, that shews us the motes of dust that float in the air, though the air seemed pure till that beam shone.

To follow the light means that thou must abandon at once and for ever those words or thoughts or desires or deeds or habits or friendships that thou now seest to be wrong, otherwise thou wilt find that the light in thy spirit grows dim, as when a cloud gathers over the sun, and a chill falls.

But if thou dost follow swiftly and with thy whole heart each new ray of light that comes to thee through Christ, the light will remain bright and grow in brightness “*unto the perfect day.*”† And these new rays will reach thee after many fashions, as through the

* Eph. 5. 13.

† Prov. 4. 18.

Holy Book,* or by means of a human teacher, or by the checking and urging of His spirit in thy heart. And if thou art in doubt concerning thy path, yield thyself in fresh trust and obedience to Christ the Light, and He shall cause thee to know the way wherein thou shouldest walk, if thou dost lift up thy soul unto Him.

And thus we understand the meaning of those words of the title page of this chapter, — “*He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*”. Is it not this? If we were able to follow the course of the sun of nature, as swiftly as he rises in the sky, we should never see him sink to the west, and we should never know night. Darkness comes because we stay behind while the sun goes on his way, and finally the shoulder of the earth, so to speak, comes between us and him. If we could follow fast enough to keep him in sight all the time, we should have endless day.

Now we know that of course this cannot be in the natural world, but it can be in the spiritual world. If we yield ourselves to follow in swift obedience where this new light from God in Christ shall lead, no darkness will ever settle again upon our spirits: and for this swift obedience He can enable us by His grace, according as the prophet David said in the Psalms “*My soul followeth hard after Thee, Thy right Hand upholdeth me.*” †

But if, O my brother, thou hast read these pages and art still closing the eyes of thy heart to Christ,

* I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me should not abide in darkness. (John 12. 46).

† Ps. 63. 8. .

haste thee to open them while the light lasts, for thou knowest not how long it may remain within thy reach. * *"While ye have the light believe in the light,"* that He may not depart and hide himself from thee, as He did from those who rejected Him of old. Hear the words of God, — *"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."* †

* "Then said Jesus unto them. Yet a little while is the Light with you, walk while ye have the Light, lest darkness come upon you. While ye have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of Light". (John 12. 35, 36).

† Eph. 5. 14.

III.

THE SECRET OF ACCESS.

Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Then said Jesus unto them again,—
Verily, verily I say unto you,— I am
the Door of the sheep.

I am The Door.

By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.

John 9. 41 and 10. 1, 7-9.

III.

THE SECRET OF ACCESS.

We have considered in the last chapter the words of our Lord the Christ,—*"I am the Light of the world."* And now if you will follow on, there comes through Him the revelation by that light of another wonderful secret: the secret of access to God. And this access is the next step to that union with Him which is eternal blessedness. Even as in human friendship those sharing it must be brought near together before there can be the linking of their hearts, so it must be also in the Divine Friendship.

And in the words of Christ on this new page, we have the step of drawing near to God shewn us by the symbol of a door—the door into a sheepfold.

Now a sheepfold is a place of safety in the midst of danger: the wilderness may be all around, and the voice of the wild beast may be heard only a stone's throw off, but the sheep in the fold are as safe as if no enemies were there. They have entered in and they are saved.

Even so, in this new secret, God makes known to us that there is a place where, even now in the wilderness of this world, with evil prowling all around, we may rest in safety as sheep within the fold. There is a place of nearness to God where the devil dares not venture that he may snatch the soul away: there is a salvation that is here and now.

We know, O our brothers, that this is to you a new thought. Your belief is that no one can tell with cer-

tainty that he is saved until the day of account. You feel yourselves like sheep that may at any moment become a prey. Listen, for Christ speaks of a sheepfold even here in the wilderness, and of a door whereby we may enter in.

Now the symbol of a door of access to God is also to you a new thought. You think of man as separated from Him by the 70,000 veils, and you hold that of these, 10,000 are abolished at each stage of the road: so that the state of access will only be bestowed by God's grace when you have accomplished the long journey.

But the symbol of a door is another matter: it means an entrance that needs but a single step, as we all know in our daily life. No one thinks of a gradual progression in entering by a door: one moment he is without—the next he is within.

And there is another great difference in the two symbols. Your thought in the veils is that it is the ignorance and imperfection of man that separates him from God. But the thought of a door implies a wall, and we find in the teaching of the Holy Book, that man is separated from God, not so much by his ignorance and infirmity, as by his sin: as it is spoken by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his Face from you, that He will not hear*". *

And this wall has arisen, not as a veil under which we were born, but by our own building. It is true that the foundation of the wall between man and God rests on the sin of our father Adam, but it has been raised by

* Is. 59. 2.

the million sins of his race. The foundation of our sinfulness lies buried so to speak, in the sinful nature that is our heritage, but since our childhood the wall has been built up by stone after stone of personal sins, great and small, that are uncounted by us, but counted by God. For He says. "*I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins*",* And time in its lapse, instead of crumbling the wall, is but as the cement that binds and hardens it.

If indeed any ray of light has come to thee, my brother, from Him who is the Light of the world, then thou wilt see this wall of thy sins to be great and high. What then is to be done to find the way of access? Man may go round and round the wall that he has built, seeking entrance, but he finds none. He may seek, so to speak, to loosen the stones, that is to say, he may think that he throws down a stone from the wall of his sin when he performs a good action, but in truth he only replaces one stone by another, for even our good deeds are full of sin before God, and our very repentance needs to be repented of.† He says in the Holy Book. "*In all your doings your sins do appear.*"‡

Man's repentance cannot undo his sin, and even the intercession of the saints and prophets is unavailing in this, for they shared our sinful estate. Neither our own repentance nor the intercession of others will move the wall, and the sin that has built it must be taken away if we are to find entrance.

You cannot get to God till you have found someone who can take away those sins, just as you cannot get through a wall except by finding some means of taking away that with which it was built,

* Amos 5. 12. † A saying of the woman Sufi, Rabia. ‡ Ezek. 21 24:

This brings us back again to the symbol of a door, not a door left in an unbuilt wall as is the custom with builders, but a door broken through in a wall that stands strong and high. If the wall is of brick, you must take away the bricks; if the wall is of stone, you must take away the stones. If the wall is of sin, a means must be found in which sin can be taken away.

Now Islam, O my brother, shews no way by which these stones of sin can be removed: there is no revelation set forth in it shewing a ransom whereby sin can be put away.

And this is the next of these seven secrets. God has found a way in Jesus Christ for the taking away of sin: It is said of Him,—“*Now once, in the end of the world, hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*”* He could do this, for he was of another nature from us, one with God, pure and sinless. “*Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*”.† “*He was manifested to take away our sin, and in Him is no sin*”.‡

And the way in which this was accomplished was foretold in prophecy by the prophet Isaiah, when he said,—“*All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon Him (that is on the Christ) the iniquity of us all.*§” And this word was fulfilled, and Christ gathered the sin of the world on himself, though its touch must have

* Heb. 9. 26.

† 1 Pet. 3. 18.

‡ 1 John 3. 5.

§ Is. 53. 6.

been agony to Him, and "*His own self bare our sins in His own Body on the tree*".* He bore them six hours till their burden and their darkness shut away from Him the Presence of God, and at last His Heart broke, and death came, and He could say "*It is finished*". †

In those hours God identified Him with our sin in His sight, as it is written,—"*He hath made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin*". ‡ And so when He went out of the world by death, with His Heart broken, the sin of the world was borne away from before God, and the door was left. § Christ Himself by gathering our sin on Himself and taking it away, has become the Door. Praise be to His Name.

Now see the words that follow. "*I am the Door, by me if any man enter in He shall be saved.*" This does not mean only that he shall enter heaven after death. You, our brother, do not need that it should be explained to you that a man can pass from stage to stage and state to state here on earth. And these words mean that the man who takes Christ as his Door can pass here and now from the state of danger, shut out from God and a prey to Satan, into a state of shelter and rest as of sheep within the fold.

This is the rest and the nearness for which thou longest, O my brother. Thou hast wearied thyself to find the door by many efforts, by prayers and meditations and fastings and the use of the dhikr. But

* 1 Pet. 2. 24. † John 19. 30. ‡ 2 Cor. 5. 21.

§ "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world". (John 1. 29).

this new secret is that nearness may be thine to-day. If thou hast come to see that thy iniquities have separated between thee and thy God, and that thou dost need a Mediator who is not of this earth, then thou standest on the threshold. Take one step more and trust thyself to Christ in faith that His death for thee has broken down every barrier, and that He brings thee into reconciliation with God, here and now.

Fear not, for the word "*if any man enter in*" must mean thyself, for no exception is made of race, or creed, or state: thou canst not be outside that number. It is not overboldness when we enter in, just as we are, through this wonderful door. The overboldness is if we seek for some other way than the way that God has appointed.

There is no other way: the sheepfold has only one door. You may go round about it, and you will find but the one opening. Christ says not "I am a Door", but, "*I am the Door.*" God has but one door to the fold and that door is Christ.

Haste thee to enter, O my brother, for whilst thou art yet outside, even on the threshold, thou art still within reach of Satan, who "*as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*".* Dare to "*enter in.*"

And with one more word from that same verse, we end this chapter. The verse ends thus,—"*He shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.*"

For when we have come to this state of salvation, we can, if we are under the guidance of the Good Shep-

* I Pet. 5. 8.

herd, go back with Him, so to speak, into the world, to help those who are still outside the fold, and to find in this our joy. He does not mean our lives to be spent in idleness when we are saved, or even in reading and meditation, but in seeking that we may follow His steps "*Who went about doing good*". *

But of this we shall see more in the next chapter.

* Acts. 10. 38.

IV.

THE SECRET OF LEADERSHIP.

Jesus saith unto them, He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. And the sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out.

And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.

I am The Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

I am The Good Shepherd

and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My Hand.

John 9. 41 and 10. 2-5, 11, 14, 27-28.

IV.

THE SECRET OF LEADERSHIP.

If we go back to the end of the last chapter we shall see that there is a link between that one and this one. * We have seen there, that the first stage is to be led forth by the Shepherd. We need more than safety, we need a Saviour. In Christ the Door, man is safe: with Christ the Shepherd, we can return to the world, to follow, and to save others: within the fold, man has life: following the Shepherd to the pasture, he has life more abundantly.

And in this new chapter we see a new step, for in the similitudes of the Bread and the Light and the Door, Christ the Lord invites those who are unsaved to be partakers of His salvation, but in these words on the Shepherd and His sheep He speaks to those who have crossed, so to speak, the threshold of salvation, and have entered His kingdom.

In this as in other things, O brothers of the Road, we recognise that God has been preparing you through many centuries, that you should have your share in the secrets of God that He has revealed in these names of Jesus Christ.

For you are men who feel that you need leadership. When you have found a leader who is after your own heart, you yield yourselves to follow him. You yield this obedience, first to the founder (*uuly*) of your order, and under him to the sheikh who represents him, who can interpret his teachings into your daily life. Each one in setting out on the inward journey, puts himself

* "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly". (John 10. 10)

under the leadership of his director, and yields him an obedience that is complete. Nothing is accounted too hard that his wisdom and his will appoint to the disciple. You feel that your sheikh knows you through and through, and into his hands you deliver yourself as you express it, as a corpse into the hands of the washer, that he may rid you of all impurity. And for this you desire a leader who is wholly trustworthy, for it is a great trust that you put in him, even the wellbeing of your soul during the time of its probation here on earth.

And God the Most High, who created us and you, knows that it is in our hearts to seek a Leader. He knows that this Leader must be a man like ourselves, who has trodden the path by which He would lead us: but it is also in the counsels of God, that this Leader, to lead us aright, must be more than man, even as the sheep, who have like ourselves, the inclination to follow, are not safe when they are following other sheep, but only when they are following the Shepherd.

And therefore God chose Christ our Lord, before He was born on the earth, because in Him the Divine Leadership and the human leadership meet in one, for He is "*declared to be the Son of God with power*"* in the Spirit, while in the flesh He is "*the Son of Man*".† And God spake of Him in the prophecy of Isaiah and said,—"*Behold I have given Him for a Leader and Commander to the people.*"‡ He is by the authority of God the true subduer by constraint, but the constraint is the constraint of love, and whenever in His days upon earth He called to one or another "Follow Me," it is told us that they arose and left all, and followed Him.

* Rom. 1. 4. † John 5. 27. ‡ Is 55. 4.

And therefore we, who know Him for our Leader, want you to see in the subjection of thought and will, that you have learnt to place in a man like yourselves, a picture of the true position of the disciple of Christ, and to see that He meets your longing for a human Leader who can understand you perfectly,* and interpret to you perfectly the Will of God the Most High concerning you, for He alone of all mankind knows God perfectly, for He came from Him. And therefore He said to His followers "*One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.*"†

And it is likewise true that our Lord the Christ knows us as no other knows us, for He is the Word of God by whom all things were made, as it is written "*By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, ‡ and He is before all things and by Him all things consist.*"** Therefore He alone of all who have walked on earth can know us through and through, and can deserve our utmost trust. Take this similitude, O our brothers; which of you who has a watch that is broken, would take it to a blacksmith that he might repair it? Would you not take it to the watchmaker who had made hundreds such and leave it in his hands? Bring thy soul O my brother, to Him who was with God when He created it.

Now the first thing that we are told about the leadership of the Shepherd in the passage before us, is that He is not afraid for His sheep. He knows the dangers around them, but He calls them out. He goes to the fold

* "Then cried Jesus saying: I know Him, for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me." (John 7. 29)

† Matt. 23. 8.

‡ Col. 1, 16, 17.

** "Jesus knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man for He knew what was in man." (John 2. 24, 25).

in the early morning, where they lie sheltered and secure, and he goes out at the head of them, over the way of the wilderness.

And if you read, O our brothers, the story of the Gospels and the book of the Acts of the Apostles, you will see that this was fulfilled from the earliest time. * Christ never promised His disciples an easy life. The road He trod for us was a rough road: how then can it be a smooth one to those who follow Him? He makes appeal, not to our love of ease, and of the good things of the world, but on the contrary, He makes appeal to our courage, and to our faithfulness unto death.

And in the tenth chapter of Romans we see the explanation of the words "*He leadeth them out.*" For it is said there by the Apostle Paul, † — "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.*" And again it is said by our Lord Christ Himself, ‡ — "*Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of my words, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*" Now we know that this act of confessing Christ means for you the way of loneliness and privation and scorning, even as it meant for Him, but remember the words "*He goeth before them.*" and "*it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the*

* "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the World." (John 16: 33).

† Rom. 10. 9.

‡ Mark 8. 38.

servant as his Lord."* He will be to you a stay in the lonely path that you walk with Him, and His promise says, *Whosoever shall confess Me before men him will I confess before My Father in heaven and before His angels.*"† And when that day comes, all our sorrow will be that we have suffered so little with Him in this short life on earth which is our only time for this fellowship.

Therefore, O my brother, for this first step of the way in which He calls thee to walk with Him, put thy hands by faith into His hands, and, though thou canst not see Him, let Him look into thine eyes and read thy heart, and transfer to Him the true surrender that thou hast learnt in the path of the brotherhood, and that without a fear or a misgiving, for He can make no mistake. And a new and wonderful longing will arise in thy heart to know and do His will. And not only will thy own faith and love be established by going forth with Him, but it is by witnessing to Him that thou wilt be able to draw others to seek His salvation.

And now this tenth chapter of St. John tells us of the different temptations that meet the soul when it has set out in this path of obedience: they are described under the images of the dangers that beset the sheep.

First comes the similitude of a stranger who gives a countercall—that is to say one, who, under guise of friendship, would lure you from following Christ. It may well be that these whom God counts as strangers, may be the nearest in earthly relationship, for it is often these who try to draw the soul away, as it is

* Matt. 10. 25.

† Luke 12. 8. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." (John 15. 18.)

written,—*A man's foes shall be they of his own household.*"
Whoever he be, this stranger, "*flee from him.*" *

Next, this chapter speaks of another danger to the sheep under the figure of a thief. † Satan is like the thief, for he comes silently and secretly, without warning, to rob us of God's grace and joy and strength, and to seek to destroy His life in our souls.

Then we see another danger under the figure of the hireling. The hireling is a picture of the world, that is only a friend while all is prosperous, ‡ and leaves us carelessly to be a prey when distress comes. Foolish is the sheep that trusts this hireling.

Lastly there is the danger of the wolf.** The wolf stands for outward trouble that comes with violence, as persecution that is set on by the powers of hell to scatter Christ's followers. If it finds them close to the Good Shepherd they have nothing to fear in this, not even death itself, for as David said in the 23rd. Psalm, "*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*§ *Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.*" But if they are trusting to the hireling, that is the world, to protect them, they are in an evil case.

And now we turn from all these enemies, that is to say the stranger and the thief and the hireling and the

* Matt. 10. 36.

† "The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy. (John 10. 10.)

‡ "The hireling leaveth the sheep and fleeth". (John 10. 12).

** "The wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep"

(John 10. 12)

§ Ps. 23. 1, 4.

wolf, who endanger those who follow afar off,* and look at the Good Shepherd and the sheep who stay in His care. They are "His own", not by force but because He has paid the price of His life for them, and none shall pluck them out of His Hand.

And instead of listening to the call of the stranger who tempts them, or the cry of the wolf who terrifies them, His sheep hear His voice.

This means that you must look up with the vision of the heart to the Person of Christ, and listen for the impress of His will on your will through His words,† that is, through the Book of the Gospel that was written to be the means of communication with the souls of His people. And as you become familiar with them He will by His Spirit bring them to your memory as you need them, to be your defence in the dangers of the way, even as David said in the Psalms: "*Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.*"‡ You may grow so to follow His voice that even your thoughts will be brought "*into captivity to the obedience of Christ*".** This bondage is perfect freedom, for we desire, He and we, only one and the same thing, and the true heartlove makes it all joy to follow, even if the path is narrow and rough.

And the last words at the head of this chapter tell us "*I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish*", and these are further explained in the secret that is disclosed to us in the next of these seven sayings of Christ.

* "I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep and am known of mine." (John 10. 14.)

† "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life". (John 6. 63)

‡ Ps. 119. 11

** 2. Cor. 10. 5.

V.

THE SECRET OF LIFE OUT OF DEATH.

Then said Martha unto Jesus,—Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.

Jesus saith unto her, thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him,—I know that he shall rise again in the Resurrection at the last day.

Jesus saith unto her

I am The Resurrection and The Life

He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.

John II. 20-28.

V.

THE SECRET OF LIFE OUT OF DEATH.

To understand the first meaning of these words, we must remember the place of their utterance. A man named Lazarus, whom Jesus loved, lay in the grave, having died four days before the Master arrived, though He had been told of his illness.

His sisters, Martha and Mary, who were among the followers of Christ, were full of grief and doubt because He had allowed their brother to die, for they did not understand that He had in His heart a greater miracle than that for which they hoped, that is to say, not healing for their brother, but resurrection from the tomb. And though Christ wept with them in their grief, He knew that God would answer His prayer and raise the dead.

And when they came to the tomb, while nothing lay before Him there but death and corruption, Christ thanked the Father that He had heard Him, and called with a loud voice, "*Lazarus, come forth.*" And Death gave up his prey, and Lazarus came forth alive, and remained with them in the body. Did he grieve that his path had led down to death, when he stepped out of the tomb into the sunshine of that day of spring, and saw the face of Christ?

But in this statement that He is the Resurrection and the Life there is a second and a deeper meaning, and it is a meaning that you, O our brothers the Sufis, will understand; for the mysteries of the spiritual passing

away leading to the fulness of eternal life are things for which you long, and you desire that in this spiritual sense you may “die before you die” and thus share the Life of God.

Your reason for seeking this “passing” is that you see that the natural life that we have from our father Adam cannot attain to the life of Eternity, as it is written, “*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,* neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*” And we see that throughout the story of the Tourat, as in the days of Noah and Abraham and Moses and Solomon, it was true that every fresh stage of man’s probation ended afresh in failure, till human nature, no matter in what circumstances, was proved to be beyond hope of renewal. We, who have studied our own hearts, know how the natural self leans towards sinning.

Therefore you long to find some way in which this evil nature, with its aims and desires, can be brought to death in you and loose its hold, so that you may pass out, by a new birth, into a life that shall be life indeed, as the seed that is buried and perishes that the flower may arise and blossom.

And it may be you have tried to reach this stage of passing away by many methods of watching your own spirit, and resisting the passions of the natural self by fasting and solitude, yet you must own to yourself that the goal has not been reached, that the desires of self and worldly aims are still awake in you, and if circumstances compel you to live the ordinary life among men, they kindle afresh continually.

* 1 Cor. 15. 50.

But God, who sees your struggles, brings you once more a wonderful secret. For He tells us in the Gospel, that He has chosen Christ to be the means of the true passing away, and the setting free of the Eternal Life.

For God has appointed Him to be a new Head for the race of man, not for their bodily life, as Adam, but for their spiritual life; as it is written "*The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*"* He took down into the grave all the sins and failures of the race of the first Adam, bringing about their passing away from before God. And when He broke the bands of death, and arose living from the grave on the third day, God gave Him to bring into life with Him a new race, detached from the life of the first Adam in God's sight, as it is written, "*He is the Head of the body, the Church*"† (that is, His people) *Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.*"

Those who receive Him, and range themselves by faith with Him, are dealt with by God, not merely as individuals, but as members of the spiritual Body of Christ the last Adam, Who is the Lord from Heaven, and they share His eternal life. So we can pass, by an act of faith in Him, from our place before God in the family of the first Adam, into the family of the second Adam, who came to abolish all the evil that the first Adam wrought, and to restore all that he lost, so can we stand before God "*accepted in the beloved.*" ‡ This is the first "passing" worked by the cross and the empty tomb of Christ, into eternal life with Him.

* I Cor. 15. 45. † Col. 1. 18. ‡ Eph. 1. 6.

But the deliverance that is brought to us by Christ “the Resurrection and the Life” goes deeper than the change in our position before God. It is the true opening of the mystery of the inward passing of our spirits from the old life of self into the new life of righteousness. You have sought this passing, O our brothers, apart from Him, and you have been as those who follow a mirage, and see it sink into the hot sand as they draw near. But in Christ you can find the reality here and now, for to be joined with Him in His death, by faith, means a blow of severance with the past, as it is written “*In that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God: * likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

For this means that by faith we must deliver, of set purpose, to death with Christ, all the carnal nature that we have inherited from the first Adam, with its earthly aims and desires, leaving it with full intention of heart in His grave, as a thing annulled, and forsaken, and this is not wrought in a state of ecstasy, but in calm abandonment to God. If we do this on our side, God will work on His side a miracle of deliverance, so that the life of the carnal self and the tempting things of earth lose their attraction for us, and the things that had power over us lose their grasp, and our desires and aims spring forward to the things that belong to the heavenly nature as it is written, — “*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.*”† This is the true passing away and the true life eternal. This is the Christian loss of all things and the burial rite of all that is outside God.

* Rom. 6. 10, 11.

† 2 Cor. 5. 17.

That this may stand out among the main teachings of the Gospel, and be made a matter of attestation to all who receive its truth, Christ has ordained that the confession of faith for those who would shew openly that they belong to Him should be manifested in the rite of baptism. In the full carrying out of this rite, the disciple steps down into the water of a stream or a cistern, and is plunged beneath it by the teacher, to represent burial, and when he rises it is with the intention that all things belonging to the flesh should die in him, and all things belonging to the spirit should live.

This does not mean that sin becomes impossible to us, but that victory becomes possible, even where sin had held strongest dominion, as it is written,*—“*Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*”. And as the disciple holds this attitude by faith and will, God brings His mighty power, that the passing away of the old and the strengthening of the new may become facts in our daily lives, that is to say in our thoughts and words and deeds. As with the seed that is buried once for all, but then destroyed through a gradual process that sets free the new life, even so does God deal with our carnal nature by delivering it to death and burial with Christ once for all, and then bringing about its “mortifying” in detail through the circumstances of life, until all the power of self has lost its hold.

Now we come to the last words of this passage in the eleventh chapter of John, and they speak of yet one more unfolding of the secret of Christ’s victory over death; these are they,—“*He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.*”

* I. Cor. 15. 57.

In these words we have the promise of the final passing that still lies before His people and will be to them the passing of passing. Then, at last, through the redemption of the body, that is the completion of the redemption of the spirit and the soul, we shall be "*delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*".*

These words of Christ tell the two ways in which the last passing from the earthly to the heavenly will take place when He comes again.

Among the great host of believers in Him, it is the first part of the promise that will be fulfilled in the day of His coming, that is to say "*He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*" For, those of all past ages who are asleep in Jesus will be the first to receive their new bodies when He calls His own in the day of "*the first resurrection*",† and these bodies that were "*sown a natural body*" will be "*raised a spiritual body.*"‡

But on that same day will be fulfilled the second part of this promise of the title page, in which our Lord says, "*He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die*". For then will come to pass that which was foretold by Paul the Apostle.** "*The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*"§ "*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Then shall be*

* Rom. 8.21. † Rev. 20. 5 & 6. ‡ I Cor. 15. 44.

** I Thess. 4. 16, 17.

§ I Cor. 15. 51, 52.

brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory'." Such is the transfiguration by grace for which Christ's disciples look, and which is at the heart of their hopes day by day.

But it is only those who have passed with Him from death to life in their spirits here, who will share in that glorious passing that is still to come. "*Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.*" *

* Mat. 24. 44.

VI.

THE SECRET OF PROGRESS

Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you.

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?

Jesus saith unto him,—

I am The Way, The Truth and The Life.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me.

John 14. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6.

VI.

THE SECRET OF PROGRESS.

These unfoldings of the Revelation of Jesus Christ have followed the chief points of His life and His work. First we saw Him in His Incarnation, as the Bread that came down from heaven. And in the Light of the World we saw Him as revealing the knowledge of God brought down to our understanding. In the image of the Door we saw how "*He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,*" * and in the similitude of the Good Shepherd we learn how those who enter by the Door become His sheep: and in that of the Resurrection and the Life, He tells us how by His rising from the dead He has brought us inward deliverance. But now the words that head this chapter stand among those that He spoke when He was explaining to the disciples that He was going to return to His Throne in Heaven. (This took place, as you may have read, forty days after His resurrection, when they were gathered together outside Jerusalem, and "*He lifted up His Hands and blessed them, and it came to pass while He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*") †

It was this word, spoken beforehand about leaving them, that raised the question "*We know not whither Thou goest, how can we know the way?*" And the answer brings us to the sixth of these seven secrets,—"*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.*"

Again we see in these words a special message to you, O our brothers the Sufis.

* Heb. 9. 26.

† Luke 24. 50, 51.

For three of the great aims of the Sufis are, to follow the Way, and to know the Truth, and to live the life of God; and the question before them is how to progress from step to step in reaching these aims. This thought of progress is bound up in the heart of the Brotherhoods.

And in all these things we find that God who understands the love of progress that He has created in man, has met man's desire in Christ, and has given Him the power to draw us upward to the place where He has gone, according to His prayer on the night that He was betrayed.

See how these three titles are linked like the links of a chain.

“I am the Way” means a path prepared.

“I am the Truth” means to reveal the path.

“I am the Life” means strength to tread the path.

“The Way” means progress, because always in a road we leave behind us one thing after another and gain new points.

“The Truth” means progress because, as in earthly learning, we are always laying hold of new facts and linking them with those that we understand already.

“The Life” means progress because all life means fresh power continually set free till maturity is reached.

Yet when we look more deeply into these words, we see that they do not speak of a progress that is rigid, such as man fixes when he says that this stage must follow that in unchanging order. Look, in similitude, at the difference between the way in which man makes a

ladder and the way in which God makes a tree. Such is the difference between the methods of man, wherein one step follows another in a stiff and regular formality, and God's methods, wherein one step of progress grows out of another in life and freedom, and never two souls are led in just the same fashion. And this is because God's method of progress for us is in our learning to know Jesus Christ: and this does not mean learning things about Him, but learning to know Himself, and to find that our emptiness makes way in all things for His fullness. It is when we feel that without Him our souls are lost and dark and dead, that we are ready for His new secret. "*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.*"

See this secret in the first words. "I am the Way." This does not mean a series of difficult rules to be obeyed but "*a new and living way*"—a way of living love. It is as when an elder brother lifts the little one over the torrent, or bears him up the steep path home when he finds him lost in the forest. The small helpless boy needs not to trouble himself over the next step. He clings to the shoulders of his brother and finds that he is going on safely. He no longer treads on cold, hard stones, but his feet are held in the warm strong grasp of his brother. His brother does not teach him the way: he *is* the way.

So this saying "I am the Way" does not mean that there are wonderful stages to be examined and watched in our hearts. It only tells us that we have a wonderful Saviour. Rest thyself in His arms in a full abandonment of trust. He is the Way.

And it is the same with the second part of this revelation of the secret of progress. "I am the Truth".

Truth is one, unchangeable, eternal, and to your minds, O our brothers, the search for it is long, and few can say that they have reached it. But we who have found Christ can tell you that we have found the Truth even as we have found the Way. We can rest in Him in the content of revealed certainty.

Let us give you a similitude from your own science of Algebra, that you, the Arabs,* discovered many centuries ago. By this science you chase the truth of numbers, so to speak, through many questions, but when you have found it, you know that you have found it and you are at rest. And you also discover that the answer sets at rest, in one moment, all the questions that you raised on the way. When you have found the one great answer, you ask no more. That one answer proves all the rest. You know that in this matter of numbers, you have found the truth.

In like manner, when the soul finds Jesus, all the questions that troubled it sink away. He is to us God's unspeakable Gift of heavenly certainty : and he says to thee, my brother, who dost weary thyself with much seeking, "*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"† Come as desert travellers to the well, as the boat into the harbour. He is the Truth.

But Truth is not only an eternal fact in the spiritual world, it is the bearing of that fact on the facts that concern us down here, and in this lies for us progress in learning it. It is even as the sun that is one in the heavens but that multiplies himself into a thousand little suns in the ripples of the water below, if the day is cloudless.

* This will apply to the Arabs for whom the book was written.

† Mat. 11. 28.

So when we come to consider the two titles, Christ the Way and Christ the Truth, we see that they are bound together. For the light on a way is threefold; it shows us the things that are left behind, and the present step, and the things that lie before. Christ the Truth deals truly with us about the things that must be left behind us if we would hasten on in the way. There are thoughts and habits that seemed harmless, that grow to look doubtful, and then revealed by Him to be wrong, and among the things to be left behind. This is because the Truth has shined on the Way. And that same Truth will show us light on the next step that lies before us, and then the next. All will depend on how fast we are willing to see fresh stretches of the road open in front of us, while the old paths close and disappear behind us.

Now we come to the third of the three titles of this chapter's secret. We have said that the Sufi desires to find the way of God, and to know the truth of God, but he also desires to partake the life of God, and he is right. For we need a power that is not our own to keep us cleaving to the way, as it unfolds, and ready to see the Truth as its Light increases. In Christ's words "I am the Life" we have His provision for a constant renewal of strength in pressing on in our high calling to the Holy Place where He has gone before.

The Life of Christ, in the eternity that lies behind us, caused, by its overflow, the creation of all things around us, as it is written* "*By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.*" †

‡ John 1. 10.

† Col. 1. 16, 17.

And when He emptied Himself of His glory for the 33 years that He spent on earth, still that overflowing life was visible in power. He drove out disease that would destroy the life of the body, and the possession of demons that would destroy the life of the mind. And from the land of heaven where He has gone, He has sent the great overflow of the Spirit of Life to drive out the sin that would destroy the life of our spirits. And this overflow into our spirits can be so mighty that the Apostle Paul could say "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"* "*To me to live is Christ.*"† "*Christ who is our Life.*"‡

Then look at the closing words, "*No man cometh unto the Father but by Me*". They mean first, that He was going to His Throne at God's right Hand and that through His Name and His alone, would be the right to come to the Father. His is the Name that gives access.** In Him "*we have an Advocate with the Father*". "*Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" §

And at last will come the true arriving, for then will the ultimate goal be reached, when the glory of the sight of Jesus will burn away all our dross and melt us into His image, and "*we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.*"* And then will His Church be perfected, and presented "*faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*" †

Now we come to the secret of the overflow of His life to us from the place where He has gone, that will prepare us for that day that is our hope.

* Gal. 2. 20. † Phil. 1. 21. ‡ Col. 3. 4.

** 1 John 2. 1. § Acts 4. 12.

* 1 John 3. 2. † Jude 24.

VII.

THE GREATEST SECRET.

I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.

I am The Vine.

Ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing.

If ye abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. So shall ye be my disciples.

John 15. 2, 4, 5, 7, 8.

VII. THE SECRET OF ABIDING.

We have seen one central fact in all these secrets that are unveiled in the seven sayings of Christ that we have considered. It is the fact that He has brought back to us the life of God that was lost to us by Adam.

We saw Him first as the Bread of Life to satisfy mens' hearts, and then as the Light of Life to illuminate their minds, and then as the Resurrection and the Life to bring their spirits forth into a new creation. And at the end of the last chapter we saw how He would impart Himself to His people, in His true and essential being, through the outpouring of His Spirit, Whom by His return to heaven, He would send down to earth.

The outpouring of the Spirit took place thus. After the Lord was taken from them, there met together day after day a band of one hundred and twenty of His disciples, both brothers and sisters, and they continued in prayer, for He had said to them, "*Tarry ye in the city of Jernsalem until ye be endued with power from on high.*"* And on the tenth day, in the morning while they were gathered together, He sent down His Spirit in a mighty flood, and they were all filled with courage and wisdom and love, and went out to the people, and while the brothers preached Christ, three thousand were added to them that same day.

Thenceforth the Holy Spirit has dwelt with His people, and they have received His infilling according to the measure in which they have been ready to trust Him wholly and to submit themselves to His mastery. The command "*Be filled with the Spirit*" † is to every disciple of Christ.

* Luke 24. 49.

† Eph. 5. 18.

Here in the last of the Parable secrets that we are studying, this lesson is taught us in a wonderful picture. It is the likeness of the vine whose current of sap flows through every branch that is knit into its stem, according as it is written that "*He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.*"* Here again we see a revealing that meets the longing of every Sufi who is athirst inwardly—the longing that he should be brought into the union with God. That is man's highest aim. In this similitude of the Vine and the branches, we have the interpretation of the way in which this union can take place even here on earth. For as the sap fills all the little channels of the branch, making it alive with the life of the stem to its furthest tendrils, so is God's purpose for our partaking of the Divine nature by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And this uniting comes, not through endeavouring to produce an ecstasy in our beings, but in receiving the promise of the Spirit by faith. What is quieter than the channel that holds its heart open to the sap?

Look again at this word "joined". How does this joining take place with regard to those who desire to be of "one spirit" with Christ? It may be that the similitude bears a meaning that will explain it. How does a branch that is not a branch become a branch? It is by grafting. It must be severed from the plant where it grew, and the severed surface is brought to a wounded place in the vine's stem, and bound there, heart to heart, and from that wounded place in the stem the sap flows out, and seals the branch into union, and then it finds its way into the channels of the graft, and soon it needs no outward bonds to bind it there: it has become one with the vine, and the power and sweetness of the vine flow into the

* I Cor. 6 17.

branch that has lost its own life to find it in the new life which flows on till leaves and flowers and fruit appear.

My brother, read the secret once more. Thou must accept the severance from the past, as complete as that of the branch that is cut off to be grafted in: that is to say a turning with true repentance from the old life of Adam with all its sins and evil desires and vain purposes, and a confession to God that all has been sin and worthlessness in the past; for confession to Him is as a knife that severs. Thus wilt thou find thy refuge and thy dwelling-place in the Heart of Jesus that was wounded for thee, and in the Precious Blood that He shed. And thou must abide in that shelter till it becomes indeed thy home and all the fibres of thy heart become locked in together with it, as the grafted branches abide in the Vine, drawing from it the new life.

Once more you see that the uniting of the spirit of man to Christ is not necessarily a long and gradual process, but rather is it one swift and definite act, maintaining its hold till it becomes a condition. For our God is the God of miracles, and His miracles are swift in the inner and spiritual world as in the world of nature. It is only when we are left to our own efforts, that we go wearily.

And you see in the similitude of the new life flowing from the vine to the branch, the difference between the life eternal as you have sought it hitherto, and the life eternal that is revealed in the Gospel; for the life eternal according to you is sought as the ultimate goal of the Road, and the gift of life eternal according to the Gospel is bestowed at its beginning. All the rest of our time down here, if we are faithful to our calling, is the unfolding of the Divine life that began in union with God.

But here comes in the main teaching of Christ in this parable. Again and again in the passage, occurs the word "Abide."

For, as you know, it is not all grafts that truly unite with the stem. Have you not often found one that seemed at first firmly bound to the vine, but time proved that it was only an outward binding. It had failed in the true laying hold, and when the bands were disturbed, it fell off, and was only fit to be gathered up for firewood. It had missed its chance. In like manner there are souls who become outwardly members of Christ's Church, but have never been inwardly "*joined unto the Lord*" and "*for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away.*"* Therefore it is that the Apostle Paul says in his epistle to Timothy, "*Lay hold on eternal life,*" † and the Apostle Barnabas exhorted the people "*that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*" ‡

It is not in the things that are without that the chief danger lies, for it is written "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*" §

But there are two dangers from within that are set forth in this similitude of the branch in the Vine. One danger is that we may let go our hold: that is why Christ says "Abide in Me." The other danger is that we may close the channels of our hearts from His full possession—that is why He says "And I in you." For "Abide

* Luke 8. 13. † 1 Tim. 6. 12. ‡ Acts II. 23.

§ Rom 8. 35, 37.

in Me” means that we must keep our hold on Christ: “And I in you” means that we must let Him lay hold and keep hold of us. “He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” For among the disciples of Christ, as among the Sufis, there are those who fall back, those who stand still, and those who attain.

Once more we tell you, this state of abiding in Christ and He in us is not a condition to be reached in some rare moment of ecstasy, it is a flowing forth of the life of Jesus in our daily life. “*For he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.*”* Look at three verses—John 14. 21: 15. 9, 11, taken from this same discourse of the night on which He was betrayed. He promises in them that His peace and His love and His joy shall flow into us. The peace of Jesus was unbroken in poverty and persecution. His joy lasted through deepest loneliness, and His love through all the hatred from men, till even while they were nailing Him to the cross, He prayed for them and said, “*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*”† And these marks of His indwelling life are foremost among the fruits that He would work in us, for it is written: “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.*” and then follow “*long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*”‡ Truly these are as a cluster of beautiful grapes, and they are fruit that ripens in the busy life of the world, not in the cell of the hermit, just as in the vineyard, fruit needs the free air wherein to grow, with its sunshine and storms, not a closed up room.

* 1 John 2. 6.

† Luke 23. 34.

‡ Gal. 5. 22, 23.

And you yourselves, O our brothers, understand that the highest life and the highest service is not a life of solitude, spent in visions and dreams, but a life such as Jesus lived, for He came out from God's presence to shed God's light and love and power as from a deep sweet fountain on all around. And He sends His Spirit into His people and through them, in order that the life He lived on earth might be prolonged in them, till He comes again.

Lastly, in this similitude of the Vine, we see that not only is each branch knit to the stem, but each to the others. The furthest off and the weakest are knit through the stem to every other branch, great and small.

Once more we shew to you, O our brothers, that you will find in Christ the understanding of all the needs that aroused in you a desire for the Road, for you who belong to it seek, with a strong seeking, a life in which heart shall be linked with heart, and all, in one Body, with God.

This, as all other good gifts for which you long, may be yours in Christ. If we are but a little band in any one place, we are one family with all His people of every country, and of all the ages past. By the life current of the One Spirit Who flows through us all, we are united with Him and with each other. And at the last He means to perfect us all together, in a unity of which all earthly symbols are but a shadow.

Truly we shall all need each other for the perfecting of the whole Body of Christ in the day that is coming: but the greater thing than this, O my brother, is that

Christ Himself needs thee, and He needs thee now. It is He Who has followed thee for long, as the shepherd follows his wandering sheep, and has awaked, by His calling, a cry in thy heart for God : and that cry He has come from God to meet. Thou canst find through Him the true goal of man in being God-satisfied, God-satisfying.

Wilt thou have Him ? Shall He have thee ?

Al-Khatma (Conclusion).

Here, O our brothers, we come back to the matter with which we began.

We have seen that the kernel of the best that can be had on earth lies in the secret of knowing Christ "*Who is the image of the invisible God.*"* He who finds Christ, and finds God through Him, is the true knower, for the rest of life, as he follows on, is but the discovery of all he has found in the finding.

And we call on you, O our brothers, to let this seven-fold revelation, that is given us in these His seven declarations, come to you in its fulness of power. For you have now within your sight and your grasp, the things that were longed for and sought after by those who have gone before you on the Road: even as Christ says "*Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*"† Therefore, as it says in another Scripture "*See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.*"‡

We know and understand that much of your earthly life may have to be shattered in the finding of Christ, even as the husk is broken that the kernel may be reached. It may cost you the loss of honour and position and family and friends: and beyond that it will cost you the breaking up of old creeds and practices dear to your soul.

* Col. 1. 15.

† Matt. 13. 16, 17

‡ Heb. 12. 25.

But look once more on the other side, as given in the words of the Apostle Paul, who went, it may be, the furthest of the holy men of old, in the discovery of God through Christ.

“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

To this high calling yield thyself now. O my brother.

Amen,

* Phil. 3, 7-14.

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