

PSYPIONEER

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Highlights of this issue

New Light on Arthur Conan Doyle	66
Knowing Arthur Ford	68
Was Queen Victoria amused by the paranormal?	74
The first “ Two Worlds “	74
The City Temple Pastorate	76
Bela Marsh, Slavery and Spiritualism	77
A lost leader	77
Australia’s most influential psychical researcher?	79
Manoah’s wife and the angel	80

NEW LIGHT ON ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE by Roger Straughan

Recent books about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (ACD) have tended to regurgitate familiar material, adding little to our understanding of this remarkable man who surely deserves to be considered a ‘psychic pioneer’. It is refreshing, then, to come across a newly published, well- researched study, using fresh sources and offering an original and controversial perspective.

The book, “Out of the Shadows” is written by the widow of ACD’s nephew John, Georgina Doyle, who has had the benefit of access to private family papers, supplemented by direct recollections from family members. In brief, Mrs. Doyle’s main aim is to bring ACD’s first wife and family ‘out of the shadows’, to which she believes they have been consigned by earlier biographers who were encouraged by ACD’s youngest son, Adrian, to portray the second wife and family in too idealised a light.

This is fascinating stuff for Doylean scholars and raises deep questions about biographical ‘truth’, but is there anything in this lengthy book to offer those particularly interested in ACD’s Spiritualist activities? That aspect of his life receives comparatively little attention, though Mrs. Doyle drops a number of intriguing hints that she herself is not unacquainted with psychic matters. Two sections, however, stand out as especially noteworthy in this respect.

The first concerns ACD’s second wife, Jean, who devotedly supported him throughout his spiritualist campaigns and who claimed to have developed mediumistic powers. Georgina Doyle is clearly no admirer of Jean and is sceptical of her psychic abilities, particularly as displayed in the ‘messages’ received from her Chaldean guide, Pheneas, at sittings within the family home circle. These were published in

Pheneas Speaks (1927), which Mrs.Doyle criticises as ‘a thoroughly unfortunate publication that does nothing to further the cause of spiritualism’ (p.240). These are deep waters (as Sherlock Holmes would have said!) which have no doubt been further muddied by family tensions, but the issue does highlight the tricky question of what criteria we should use in trying to assess the validity of this kind of non-evidential communication.

The second area of Spiritualistic interest involves ACD’s daughter, Mary, (from his first marriage), who has been virtually ignored by previous biographers. Mary is the most prominent character in this book, and the extensive quotations from her letters and other writings portray her as a most engaging and attractive personality with a very lively mind. She helped to run ACD’s Psychic Bookshop in Victoria Street, and her letters show her changing attitude towards spiritualism and her revealing differences of opinion with her father on the subject. Mary seems to have placed more importance upon religion and ‘faith’ (which her father mistrusted), finding ‘personal demonstrations of survival acutely embarrassing and painful’ (p.225), and her father’s ‘insistence on constant propaganda very boring’ (p.227). Evidence from Spiritualism she agreed was necessary to get people ‘over the bridge’ away from materialism, but she asked, ‘What are we to do with them when they are over the bridge?’ Her father replied, ‘They’ll find their way all right by that time. Our job is to get the others over’ (p.227). Plenty of food for thought there!

This book, then, alerts us to some fundamental questions about the role and scope of Spiritualism, and is well worth reading on that score alone. Indeed it is worth reading just for ACD’s wonderful explanation to Mary of what a Yogi is: ‘A Yogi? It’s like this: you bury an old man for six weeks, then dig him up, and unfortunately he’s *still alive* ... that’s a Yogi!’ (p.237)

(G. Doyle, Out of the Shadows: the untold story of Arthur Conan Doyle’s first family, Calabash Press, Ashcroft, British Columbia, 2004, 428pp. £15 paperback, £25 hardback – obtainable from publisher, www.ash-tree.bc.ca/calabash.html, address ashtree@ash-tree.bc.ca.)

Dr Roger Straughan is a philosopher with a long-standing interest in Conan Doyle and psychical research.

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Birth Day of Rev. Arthur Ford

Despite his visits to London, British readers may not remember the leading public American medium of the last century, Arthur Ford, who impressed Conan Doyle. There is uncertainty about his date of birth. Canon Rauscher, who knew him well, prefers on balance 1897, with January 8 as the date. The death certificate gives 1896, but those who completed it may not have been fully informed.

Ford was an ordained minister of the Disciples of Christ, a mainstream American denomination (Lyndon Baines Johnson was also affiliated), and had been briefly and successfully in parish ministry, before becoming a professional medium.

In 1930, Ford was injured in a road accident in which his sister died, and (it could be argued) never fully recovered. The rest of his life should be understood compassionately in that context.

The biography “The man who talked with the dead” (see below) is essential reading for all students of mediumship. It should be supplemented by William V. Rauscher “The Houdini Code Mystery- a Spirit Secret Solved” (Mike Cavaney’s Magic Words, Pasadena, CA, USA. 2000) which shows the limitations of Houdini. L.P.

KNOWING ARTHUR FORD by W.V. Rauscher

The friend is the man who knows all about you, and still likes you.

Elbert Hubbard

The Notebook, 1972 edition

Arthur Ford's strange enigmatic and controversial career existed long before and beyond Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship. His prominence was noted early on and had opened many doors for him all over the world. If anyone in S.F.F. had done extensive private research on Ford prior to his involvement, I was not aware of it.

Ford's travels, lectures, and "readings" had been going on for years. But not until 1958, when Ford was encouraged to write his autobiography, called *Nothing So Strange*, in collaboration with Marguerette Harmon Bro, was the general public aware of the full extent of his unusual life. Through that book people learned of Ford's involvement with scientists, churchmen, royalty, and ordinary people. Marguerette was a most astute and academic woman who did her best to check her facts.

I met Ford in 1954 while I was in seminary and knew him until his death in 1971. I always found him elusive, preoccupied, and a contrast in highs and lows. I felt I perceived him well, but was never able to fully grasp the deeper aspects of his troubled self. I always felt a bit uncomfortable with him but never revealed that to anyone. With him, I was always on guard, fighting a feeling that his negative aspects were very powerful when and if they emerged. So I was able to juggle my friendship with Ford and observe him somewhat objectively without appearing distant.

My memories and observations extend beyond the facts contained in the Ford biography entitled *The Man Who Talked With the Dead* (1973). I believe this book by author Allen Spraggett (with me) stands as an important biography of a famous medium. The various interpretations of Ford's so-called "control" named Fletcher, what it was or could have been, from an entity to conscious or unconscious fraud, have been adequately covered in that book. But now, even after many years have passed, I'd like to share other thoughts, insights, and experiences about this man with the haunted mind.

If Arthur Ford was not the single founder of the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship in 1956, he may be thought of as the single most powerful force in holding the group together and providing the impetus for its future growth. During those years, he reached thousands through his psychic work, but, at the very least, it is doubtful whether anyone really understood him. So many who met him were awed and saw what they wished to see. The qualities that made him inscrutable to those who knew him in life continue to bewilder and surprise, for he was a man who lived by paradox. He was in so many respects a mystery man.

I have always felt, and always will, that much of Arthur Ford's story is a mystery story. The mystery is Arthur Ford, and much of the mystery went, unsolved, to the crematory with him. I once wrote that the riddle of his strange, charismatic, contradictory personality would never be fully unravelled. I still believe that. He was a remarkable man who could rise to the heights and sink to the depths. He was difficult to dislike and in many ways, a futuristic person. I felt privileged to know

him and to this day often weigh many of the unusual events I witnessed, trying to contrast them to his day-to-day personality. Indeed, he was a study in contrasts. He was both convincing and confusing. Of all the psychics, mediums, seers, healers, and sensitives I have known, he stands alone as a perplexing human example of an ancient subject with so many alternative explanations, positive and negative attitudes, but always interesting and debatable.

Memories of Arthur Ford often return to me. One must consider the psychic and also the man. I especially remember a childlike quality about him. Once in a Chinese restaurant, after finishing his meal, he looked at the waitress and said in a boyish, almost abject, manner: "Aren't you going to give me a fortune cookie?" At other times, Arthur Ford, the man, and Arthur Ford, the psychic, maintained an uneasy, even abrasive, relationship with one another. Once I telephoned him to ask how he was going to get to a lecture date; he replied, self-derisively, that he would have no difficulty since his new broom had just arrived. But just as often, depending on his mood, he would defend his psychic self; he was fond of telling people that when he died he would be a poltergeist for the first few years, so he could get even with those who didn't believe in psychic phenomena.

There were, inevitably, those people who did not agree with Ford, who accused him, myself included, through the years of every sort of chicanery and charlatanism. The fact that the history of psychics has been flawed by human weakness did not disturb him in the least. During some forty years of psychic practice, Ford developed many defences against an uncomprehending age: the gruffness by which he met and turned away the world, the wild unpredictability by which he escaped its traps, the wry humour by which he made it bearable, and underneath it all, the stoical resignation which enabled him to accept it.

Many other insights into this complex man come to mind from past observation of his library and his private notes. He had the habit of underlining what he read and making annotations in the margin. Any book Arthur Ford ever borrowed from my library always came back "marked up," even new ones. I always thought that he read these books with some idea of himself in the story. I remember he once loaned me a copy of *The Shoes of the Fisherman* by Morris L. West. On thumbing through the pages of the West story, I noticed several places that Ford had made notes. One underlined sentence on page 177 particularly struck me, summing up, as much as it does, Ford's own attitude: "*I have seen the worst that can happen to me, and I am still here. The rest, whatever it is, I can endure.*" I am sure Ford saw himself in those words. On another page (144) he underlined: *The act of faith is an act of acceptance - not an explanation.*" Toward the end of the book (page 195) he marked up a paragraph which I heard him say in different words from the speaker's platform:

"I do not ask you to agree with me. I do not put any of my present conclusions beyond reconsideration or new development, but of this I am totally convinced: the first creative act of God was directed toward fulfillment, and not destruction. If the universe is not centered on man, if man as the center of the universe is not centered on the Creator, then the cosmos is a meaningless blasphemy. The day is not far distant when men will understand that even in biological terms they have only one choice: Suicide or an act of worship."

Arthur Ford's friends had different opinions about him. He was so complex that his associates settled for agreeing to disagree about him, or as one book put it, accepting him as the "enigma of our generation." He was an almost incredible mixture of heaven and earth, a man who lived in two worlds but was at home in neither. He was an important person who left an incredible impression. He was in many respects a "psychic philosopher" who believed that there is a real life after death just so far as we bring our life into harmony with the eternal verities of the universe.

Ford said that science, once so materialistic and eager to clip the wings of faith, is through the work of some of its foremost exponents now willing to explore supra-sensible realms. However, it was obvious to Ford that the trend was not toward belief. For most, belief means merely the intellectual acceptance of a certain statement or definition of truth. He knew that it is only when truth is perceived as the reality of our own minds, does it become belief. As we were walking down the street one day, I remember him saying, "It is one thing to believe in God; it is quite a different thing to realise God as the self of ourselves, the soul of our souls, the life of our lives."

Ford was a very good storyteller. He liked to say that he was the life of the party but went home alone. Actually this was true. There was a certain hesitance in those who knew him. They were comfortable with him in a group, but not necessarily at ease in a one-on-one situation. Arthur was a man who felt sorry for himself and exhibited a mood of loneliness.

He had many friends and would send them cards with religious humour themes such as: "A perfect saint is what you ain't, but that's okay by me -cause mister just the way you are, you suit me to a T" Or with post cards he would choose, "I've never felt I was the greatest person in the world - but then, what's my opinion against millions." On serious occasions he would send serious cards many times when people never expected to hear from him.

Ford liked casual dress and was conservative in appearance when giving a lecture. He always wore jacket and tie and used two or three pair of glasses - close-up, distance, and sunglasses. There was always the problem of putting on the wrong pair and fumbling for another. He was beset by health problems and never quite felt up to any project. When Marguerite Harmon Bro wrote *Nothing So Strange*, she told me she went crazy pinning him down to events, dates and sources. She was a stickler for detail, and in the end, the book was a landmark in its field.

Ford was a man who was raring to go one day and worn out the next. He had a tendency, not unusual, to over-accept commitments. He had zeal, but moods or the use of alcohol often prevented a task undertaken.

Someone once said that he looked like the local grocer. He had a spry walk and would often forget to look when he crossed the street. If you walked with him you had to be prepared to say, "Arthur, Look out!" One thing he liked was to receive mail, but then he complained about it. He never wanted many material things. He frequently gave away personal household items with the phrase, "I've got to cut down on things -I don't need much, just a few items, enough to be comfortable - my books and a few

chairs. What the hell do I need all this stuff for?" One chair he kept was his pushback in which he did his "trance" sessions. Once he handed me a heavy lead icon of St. Nicholas. It was given to him by a relative of Henry Clay of Kentucky as a gift for a sitting. "Here - take this, I don't want it." On another occasion he said, "This hand-painted glass belonged to my mother. Take it with you."

Arthur Ford was a brooding man but one who could also laugh at himself. When it came to organising, he had great ideas but could not put the plan into effect. He was many times stern and unbending but then would soften easily. Like many well-known people he liked meeting others but disliked being fawned upon. He had the talent to imitate incidents and was a likeable storyteller. Ford did not want to be alone, but he also needed to be.

It was always evident that he had a conflict of need. On the surface he exuded a public contentment, but in private he was a driven, anxious and troubled man. He would receive phone calls all hours of the night from all over America –yet when asked if he ever turned off the bell he would reply, "Why? I can't sleep anyway."

How he actually made a living doing "sittings" was another mystery. People gave him money, and there was always a quiet response as if there was a bit of guilt about taking it. He used to say that he really did not care about receiving anything for his sittings, but would then complain that all he received from people was "deep gratitude."

Driving or riding in a car with Arthur Ford was a frightening experience. One might find oneself riding down the white line on a main highway as other cars blew horns and Ford went on talking about some experience. You might try to interrupt him by say, "Arthur, watch it! Watch that man on the right, Arthur." He would reply by saying, "What?" or a slight indistinguishable response. I was once in a car with Ford when another driver yelled as he passed, "Where the hell did you get your license!" Ford, with cigar in mouth, merely said of those in the car, "That guy better keep his mind on his driving. What did he yell?"

Arthur liked magic. In his youth when he lectured for Chautauqua assemblies, there was also a magician on the program. His name was S. S. Henry. Ford especially liked the illusion of the "Spirit Paintings" where faces appeared on a blank canvas.

Did he have a temper? Yes. When he was mad it was a raging madness and a telephone encounter with an angry Ford required all of one's reserve. He could also be calm, coldly calculating while taking his opponent down piece by piece. Although he travelled widely he never liked to fly. Travel became a necessary effort. He said, "Bill, if you were going to California, I bet you would be all excited, but when you have done it many times it really doesn't matter."

He liked to go to fancy restaurants, but was just as content in any average place. He once said, "Really great people should never mind eating in the kitchen." In many ways he was a conservative, not only with money but also in any social life or personal living. The last meal I had with him was in a Papa John's Pancake House. He once wrote me, "I can deal with the public ...but lonely hotel rooms ... dull and uncomprehending persons who have no interest except what they can get out of one

...that is the deadly problem.” Ford told me that hotel rooms were places where negative “influences” were the strongest because so many unseemly things have happened in them by SO many people. He never felt ultimately comfortable in a “psychic” way in hotels or motels.

Arthur had love/hate relationships with clergy and the church. He thought that all the clergy should be actively interested in both the spiritual and psychic nature of man. If they weren't informed on these matters he considered them openly stupid. He was fond of saying that the church members sometimes knew more than the clergy. Zany antics of clergy provoked disgust in Ford for the church, but in another instant he would speak of a great new horizon for the church. He needed the church at a distance, and was interested only in how effective it was in teaching the principles of an invisible world at work shaping lives and directing the affairs of those who had a responsibility to lead. The actual organisation bored him, and he had little business sense for the material side of church management.

His use of the Silk from London under the label of “Liberty” to tie about his head covering his eyes was an unspoken need. Once he said with a smile, “I can't give a sitting anymore unless I use a Liberty Silk.” It was a kind of silent trademark. If he had visitors for a sitting he would be frustrated afterward because they stayed too long or talked too much. He did not want to talk all the time but liked to listen. He might sit with his eyes closed and hands interlaced, which was a characteristic position. He might tell a guest to just sit and read and later tell the guest that they were antisocial.

Ford liked the idea of eating high protein cereal. If you did not know him you might believe he was a health expert, but he really wasn't because nothing with Arthur Ford was consistent. In front of you he might take fifteen assorted vitamin pills at a meal with one gulp of water. The guests looked in disbelief but said nothing until Ford said, “My doctor prescribes these, and I have never felt better.” He really had no fixed favourite foods. He ate what was available. During brief periods he shied away from meats, but was not a vegetarian and greatly enjoyed rice. He might compulsively eat, while deep in thought, a whole pound box of candy or a box of cookies.

Arthur liked movies, but to draw him to one required something different or highly humorous. He hated musicals. “One minute you are deep in the plot, and then someone starts bellowing!” Newspapers were important to him. He was an avid reader of three or four papers a day. He clipped articles, and as eventually discovered, he also clipped obituaries! Whether he used them for every sitting, or only sometimes, we will never know. The amount of material, cross-references to names and places while in his trances, plus spiritual insights or philosophy is still part of the mystery of this intriguing man. One thing is certain: he was sensitive to people's problems and did exhibit compassion, especially when he did those private readings –readings that afterward he never asked about nor referred to again.

Having dealt with the alcohol problem for so many years, he knew that the only answer was A.A. If he saw a derelict along the street it touched his emotions. “The line between that man and you, Bill, is very thin,” he would say. “Did you ever think that he was a boy once, had parents ...remember him, Bill.”

If a person annoyed him he would give them an odd answer to a question which they would then accept but later puzzle over. A woman seriously told me once that “part of the brilliance of Arthur Ford was in the fact that he spent hours on the john reading.” She said, “Arthur told me that himself.”

We have come along way since the “Psychic Revolution” and the “New Age Movement,” and whatever else awaits us. Sometimes there were hints of these things in the “sittings” I observed. In my files there is one for December 6, 1961. “Fletcher,” the “spirit personality,” the alleged control of Ford, who can be studied and interpreted in the analysis of consciousness on so many levels, made this vague but interesting statement:

“ Another two or three months and the Piscean influence is completely gone and many of the prophecies of the old prophets, many of the prophecies about the end of the world, which means the end of the age, the end of a kind of world, not the end of the physical world, they will be fulfilled and February will be a month of excitement ...!”

He went on with further material which was subtle but impressive. In the light of all that has happened since that day in world advance, revolution, and the speeded-up changes in society, he may have been prophetic in a mystical way.

Arthur Ford was one of a kind, a great original, and we shall not see the like again.

Canon W. V. Rauscher is a former president of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship (SFF) which began as an American equivalent of CFPS.

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Notes by the Way: APPROACHING INFANCY

As this Newsletter develops, a group of colleagues is also taking shape. Tony Hern scans material. Paul Gaunt and Garth Willey check each issue before publication; Andreas Sommer in Germany makes the PDF for those who receive it in that format, and Peter Hui of Woodlands Sanctuary in Australia loads it on the web. Beginning with this issue, Paul Gaunt will take over distribution to direct subscribers, a few of whom incidentally prefer Word format. However, we may no longer be the Spiritualist newspaper with the world’s smallest circulation, having been undertaken by the brave and thought-provoking “ Psychic Times.” which sent a free copy to every National Spiritualist church in the country, and was underwhelmed by the response. It is feared that no further issues of PT will appear.

Psypioneer content is also changing as new authors come on stream. Many thanks to everyone involved, including the psychic institutions at home and abroad who back this educational project.

Sometimes the factual building blocks we assemble are small, but it is by such means that an authentic picture of the pioneers is developed. Even the leading names are now forgotten by all but a few. But without an awareness of history, how can we avoid repeating it, claiming novelty for approaches already familiar a century ago, or myth making ? L.P.

WAS QUEEN VICTORIA AMUSED BY THE PARANORMAL?

Queen Victoria (1837-1901) lived through the golden age of Modern Spiritualism, and there were frequent attempts to show she supported it. Some of these were misguided.

The College of Psychic Studies once possessed a watch supposedly given by Queen Victoria to Georgiana Eagle for meritorious clairvoyance in 1846. The Roman Catholic historian, Elizabeth Longford, reviewing the evidence for Victoria's psychic involvement (in " Victoria R.I." 1964) "doubted Georgiana's existence.

Until recently, no trace of her had been found among the names of early mediums. But BBC journalist Stephen Butt solved the mystery by looking in a different direction- among the stage magicians and conjurers who travelled the country giving demonstrations of stage magic. Here he found not just Georgiana but also her father George Bernard Eagle (" The Wizard of the South, Artist and Professor of Clairvoyance."). Georgiana would have been about 11 when she first appeared on stage with her father. Actually both father and daughter professed by their skills to destroy claims of paranormal power, as stage magicians often did.

Butt published his findings in NewsStead, a journal of history of literature " edited by Grace Eckley in their Spring 2003 issue, entitled " The Identity of Miss Georgiana Eagle and Stead's presentation of a royal plaque" (p.9-17). For Stead, see also the web site www.newsstead.itgo.com. W.T. Stead certainly had family connection to the Eagle case. (It is sad to report that NewsStead was discontinued in 2004.)

Butt also presented his findings at the International Conference on Theosophical History in London in July 2003. It is one of the most remarkable historical discoveries in the history of the pioneers. But far from showing the Queen witnessed mediumship, it shows her patronising an anti-psychic mentalist.

Another claim is that the services of the medium R. J. Lees were used by Queen Victoria. We turn further to the researches of Stephen Butt, whose paper " A Madman and a Fool" The Dedicated Life of Robert James Lees " appeared in NewsStead Spring 2002. Again, Longford was sceptical of this story, and when the details of the versions are scrutinised, they are difficult to substantiate. Eva Lees, daughter of the medium, was definitely wrong in some claims about royal favour. (See now the web site for some Lees documentation www.rjlees.co.uk.)

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The first *Two Worlds* by James Gregory

'...a new era in British journalism, where the reader, instead of being presented with a broadsheet of horrible murders, shocking accidents, and trifling occurrences, is referred to the shining gate that leads to the hope of the philosopher and the goal of the patient investigator.'

'Humble Reader', *Two Worlds*, 11 November 1858

Before there was *Two Worlds* (established 1887), there was William Horsell's *Two Worlds*, a family newspaper devoted to 'the free ventilation of all matters relating to the well-being of

man'. With its masthead featuring an angel hovering over the globe trumpeting 'Excelsior', it lasted for twenty seven numbers between 1 October 1858 and 28 May 1859.

William Horsell (1807-1863) intended the paper to discuss the 'Physical, Scientific, Mental, Moral and Religious questions of the age, irrespective of creeds'. Articles and reviews were to be published on the range of 'unorthodox' medical practices, such as hydropathy, homoeopathy, medical botany and mesmerism. Horsell was a teetotaler and the first secretary of the Vegetarian Society (which had been founded at his Ramsgate hydropathic establishment in 1847) and wanted to use the newspaper to promote these causes too.

Although Horsell believed the 'Health reform is the most radical of all social movements and improvements', he declared: '*We would be failing in our mission to enquire into everything relating to human life if we did not, in addition to mesmerism and clairvoyance, ventilate the question of Spiritualism, which will naturally find a place in the Two Worlds*'. (*Two Worlds*, no.1, p.1)

It naturally found a place in the paper because Horsell saw spiritualism as an aid to religious faith:

We are one of those who believe,- and the arguments of our secularist friends have never yet been able to shake the belief,- that man cannot be happy, no matter what improvement he may be able to make in his circumstances, until he recognises his divine origin and the inner purpose of his creation. (*Two Worlds*, no.1, p.1.)

Horsell was already publishing spiritualist literature. He was the London publisher of several early spiritualist works, such as William Carpenter's *Communion with Ministering Spirits. Discourse delivered April 25, 1858*, John Ashburner's *A Series of Essays. On the Connection between mesmerism and spiritualism, with considerations on their relations to natural and revealed religion and the welfare of mankind* (1859) and Thomas Shorter's *Confessions of a Truth Seeker* (1859). He co-published Carpenter's *Spiritual Messenger*, which was advertised in the paper, along with another spiritualist journal, the second volume of Benjamin Morrell's *Spiritual Telegraph*. Horsell was also publishing Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie's *Biological Review*.

He welcomed debate, and *Two Worlds* was to be open to sensible, 'gentlemanly' criticisms from opponents. There were ongoing letters on vegetarianism and other subjects, but the 'letter box' received more letters about the question 'what is spiritualism?' Articles and paragraphs published included a note on 'the Black Art in Somerset' (7 October 1858), an account of a seance (at the home of H. Whitaker, of 31, Newman Street), with Mrs Marshall and her niece (14 October 1858), Jacob Dixon on clairvoyant perception (14 October 1858), William Carpenter on mesmeric experiences (14 October 1858) and spiritualism (22 January 1859), a ghost story and note on the Hoxton Spiritualist Society (29 Jan 1859).

The paper also carried notes on the week's news, a serialised novel and notes on a tour of Normandy, letters and replies to correspondents, serialisation of Horsell's popular *Hydropathy for the People* and Jacob Dixon's papers on homoeopathy. Unfortunately, like several of Horsell's journals, *Two Worlds* proved too progressive or too unorthodox for mass appeal, never rising to a circulation of a thousand. After reducing its size, and then a short existence as a monthly paper, it ceased.

Two Worlds, published by William Horsell at 13 Paternoster Row, printed by John Evans of 16 Yardly Street, Exmouth Street, Clerkenwell. 1s. Complete run at the British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale. Reprinted from former www.psympioneer.com. James Gregory is now a research fellow at the University of Southampton, England.

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(In 2003 was celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (originally the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical Study). Previous attempts to form such bodies floundered, and it is an important historical question why the others failed, and this one succeeded. To help answer it, we are presenting a regular series of reports on the prehistory of the Fellowship.) This month we feature an influential non-Anglican. This editorial appeared in LIGHT July 9 1936, under the editorship of George H. Lethem, and the heading "As We See It"

THE CITY TEMPLE PASTORATE

AN announcement of considerable interest to Spiritualists, and to all concerned with psychic study in its widest aspects, is that the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, of Leeds, has been invited to succeed the Rev. Dr. F. W. Norwood in the pastorate of the City Temple, London - a famous Congregationalist Church which Mr. Weatherhead himself has described as containing "the most important Free Church pulpit in the world" and which has often been termed the Cathedral of English Nonconformity.

Mr. Weatherhead is a Methodist minister who went through the war as a combatant officer. He has for some ten years been stationed at the principal Methodist Church in Leeds, where he is so popular as a preacher --and especially with young people-- that there is always difficulty in accommodating the crowds who flock to hear him. He has already preached occasionally in the City Temple, and quite recently he had the unusual distinction --for a Nonconformist-- of delivering a broadcast address from the pulpit of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Should he accept the City Temple pastorate - as seems likely- his acceptance would involve his severance from the ministry of the Methodist Church, but there are precedents for a Methodist preacher becoming a Congregationalist.

The point of special interest to Spiritualists is that Mr. Weatherhead is himself a "healer" who understands and uses the powers of suggestion; also that he is well-informed regarding many aspects of psychic phenomena and ready to admit that they have a clear and important bearing on the problems of human Survival. He would not, we imagine, care to be described as a Spiritualist; but his published books contain descriptions of psychic incidents and experiences similar in kind and detail to those generally regarded as Spiritualistic; and he has, on more than one occasion, advised his fellow-Methodists to try to understand Spiritualism rather than to condemn it.

It will, of course, be nothing new for a pastor of the City Temple to have a good understanding of the nature and value of psychic evidence. Most of the distinguished men who have held that position have had some knowledge of the subject; and Dr. R. J. Campbell (now a Canon of the Anglican Church), who preceded Dr. Norwood, has made it clear in his writings --and particularly in his autobiography-- that he regards many of the New Testament incidents, including the story of the Resurrection, as records which can only be properly understood if interpreted in the light of modern psychic knowledge.

Leslie Weatherhead did go to City Temple, where he remained until retirement in 1960. He became a patron of CFPSS, and among his many later publications was his magnum opus "Psychology, Religion and Healing." He was president of the Methodist Conference in 1955-6.

Bela Marsh, Slavery and Spiritualism

The fight against slavery in the United States was a noble struggle, in which publishers and distributors played a vital part. Today some college students read “Narrative of Henry Watson, a fugitive slave” (Boston, published by Bela Marsh, 1848) or “Narrative of Henry Box Brown, who escaped from Slavery enclosed in a box” (published by Brown & Stearns, for sale by Bela Marsh, 25 Cornhill, Boston, 1849). However, Marsh typifies the link between Abolitionism and Spiritualism. For we read on the back of an 1853 booklet (in the library of Paul Gaunt) that Marsh...

“ Has for sale a complete assortment of Books and Periodicals devoted to the facts, philosophy and advocacy of SPIRITUALISM , which he will supply in any quantity, on the most favourable terms: a part of which are included in the following list, with the price annexed, together with the rates of postage.”

Over thirty titles follow, including authors such as Davis, Reichenbach and Spear. Marsh was also an agent for “The Shekinah”, “The Spiritual Telegraph” and “The New Era.”. Since Spiritualism was widely thought to be of the devil, does this mean that Abolitionism was too?

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A LOST LEADER

Students of Emma Hardinge Britten will recall her opposition to “Free Love”, an expression whose association with American Spiritualism did it much harm. Behind the term were links, from even before Hydesville, between those who practised spirit communion, and those who were conscious of the many injustices in such matters as the rights of women and of black slaves. They often campaigned for emancipation, divorce law reform and the vote for all citizens.

Some went further and attempted to create new lifestyles or communities. Andrew Jackson Davis was a typical example - though the reader who ends " The Magic Staff" confident of his rectitude may be surprised to learn that he subsequently abandoned his second wife in her final years, claimed their marriage had never been legally valid, and acquired a third.

Ann Braude’s book "Radical Spirits" (Beacon Press, 1989) told the story of the feminist power of early Spiritualism . There was however one woman medium who in her own person proclaimed and lived out free love, who was a candidate for the American presidency in 1872, who had her own newspaper - and whose name could not later be mentioned in polite society - Victoria Woodhull. Her story was told with unprecedented candour in Barbara Goldsmith’s biography " Other Powers" (London, Granta, 1998). The book paints an appalling picture of the corruption of American church, state and society in the Civil War era.

Victoria was born into a depraved family background in Ohio in 1838 and her sister Tennessee in 1846. They inherited psychic gifts through their mother. Their violent father used them as child mediums to make money. While Tennessee was more of a fortune teller, Vickie experienced deep trances. She escaped through marriage in 1853 to a drunkard, and became an actress to further escape

poverty. (At that era the stage was closely linked with vice.) Tennessee meanwhile was still exploited by their father through bogus medicines and messages. Victoria developed real healing abilities, and after some time with her father (who was running a lethal fake cancer cure racket) she briefly established her own healing centre in Chicago, and later St Louis where she formed a relationship with a Col. Blood, who left his wife and children for her. She became a travelling healer and medium, with Blood as manager.

In 1868 they came to New York. Here the sisters acquired as a client Commodore Vanderbilt, the financier, and they received a share of the profits from their advice to him. They became very wealthy through the collapse of the gold market in 1869, and even started their own stockbrokerage. In 1870 they moved to near Fifth Avenue, with other family members. Victoria was encouraged to announce herself as a presidential candidate. The sisters launched their own newspaper, and Victoria wrote political articles for it in trance. She took the fight for the vote to Washington.

In 1871 however everything began to fall apart in family feuds. Her mother made a foolish attempt to extort money from the Commodore, and he dropped them. Her mother further accused Blood in court of corrupting her daughters. This led the press to enquire into the history of the family. Victoria hit back through her own newspaper. Numerous scandals touching on the women's movement were ventilated, splitting it with great bitterness.

In 1872, the family lost their town house, and soon after the paper had to be suspended. At the convention of the National Association of Spiritualists, Victoria became entranced and gave a graphic account of misconduct in high places, naming names. Finally she raised enough money to bring out a special issue of her paper which described how Henry Beecher, the leading preacher and author of "The Life of Jesus the Christ" had become involved with a parishioner.

Another article, describing a French Ball in New York , used a biblical term and was to lead to an obscenity prosecution, this being a pretext to silence her. The sisters spent some time in prison, before the case was dismissed. In 1873 Victoria continued her lectures, but by 1876 she had abandoned her support for free love. Beecher also continued his ministry after his church exonerated him. While a dispute about the Vanderbilt Will was in the American court in 1877, the sisters removed to London, from where they did not need to give evidence. In 1883, Victoria married John Biddulph Martin a London banker. Her sister married too and became Lady Cook. Martin died in 1897, leaving Victoria a millionaire. She retired to the English country and became a benevolent lady of the manor until her death in 1927.

Victoria Woodhull was a trance medium of great power, and was called the Joan of Arc of the Women's Movement. Just what guides like Demosthenes, Bonaparte and Josephine thought of the various rackets of the family may indeed be wondered. She never fully escaped from her corrupt family and the positive causes she supported became fatally entwined with serious crime including manslaughter and blackmail.

But it is not possible to write a truthful history of Spiritualism without reference to her, For months if not years, she was the Spiritualist most in the

American public eye. Other pioneers like Hudson Tuttle and Mrs Britten had to cope with the complications she brought. As Ann Braude observed, using a slightly different name for the Association.

" Victoria Woodhull's election marked the demise of the American Association of Spiritualists. By the time she resigned the presidency in 1875, no one thought of trying to keep the association alive. State and local organizations persisted, but as a nationwide movement Spiritualism reverted to the loose networks more consistent with its religious beliefs." (p.173)

It was in this situation that the Theosophical Society was created in New York in 1875 which eventually became a world wide body. It is possible that Col.Olcott its first president knew Victoria. He may even have been present at the French Ball. He was by his own later admission a man of mistresses. His 1874 divorce papers obtained by Jean Overton Fuller for her biography " Blavatsky and her Teachers" (1988) placed him in a house of ill fame, though that may have been a legal device to facilitate the divorce. However Blavatsky and Olcott from the time their association began provided a non-sexual non-financial nucleus to the T.S. which could not help contrast with the Woodhull - Blood partnership, and which will have helped in the world wide growth of the Society in the 1880s.

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AUSTRALIA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL PSYCHICAL RESEARCHER?

Yorkshire-born physicist Raynor Carey Johnson (1901-1987) exercised a pre-eminent distant influence over British psychic studies a generation ago. Johnson emigrated to Australia in 1934 to become Master's of Queen's College, Melbourne, a Methodist foundation. In 1953, his classic survey of psychical research in a wider perspective " The Imprisoned Splendour" established his reputation, and he was a natural choice to write the brief " Teach Yourself" volume on the subject.

His attention was then directed to Imaginism, a presentation of the ancient wisdom expounded by Douglas Fawcett (once a researcher for H.P. Blavatsky). Johnson assessed this philosophy in " Nurslings of Immortality" (1957) and used it to interpret mysticism in " Watcher on the Hills." (1959). He summarised his beliefs in " A Religious Outlook for Modern Man" (1963) and published the inside story of his scripts from the medium Geraldine Cummins in " The Light and the Gate"(1964). By this time he was the favourite reading of CFPS, and in 1967 was the subject of a teach-in at CPS. Paul Beard, CPS president, through the Pelegrin Trust later made possible the reprint of his older books,

However in 1962, Johnson, made vulnerable by his search for a spiritual teacher, was targeted by an Australian –based cult, The Family. Other books followed, but his influence began to slowly decline. It seems unlikely he knew what was being done to the children, although he was used to recruit for and defend the cult.

While he lectured in Britain and the USA on spiritual subjects, terrible events were unfolding in Australia, as described in " Unseen, unheard, unknown " (Penguin Australia, 1995) by Sarah Hamilton- Byrne.

Manoah's wife and the angel.

Everyone has heard of the ancient Israelite strong man Samson, who fought the Philistines, succumbed to Delilah, and eventually, though blinded, pulled down their temple in Gaza. Samson is one of the select group of men whose conception was foretold by an angel. In the biblical book of Judges, chapter 13, the angel brought this news to the childless wife of Manoah and later returned to her, so that she could call her husband to confirm the message. Manoah then carried out a sacrifice, and the angel disappeared in the flame.

In her treatise “ Ancient Lights, the Bible, the Church and Psychic Science” (1923) Mrs St Clair Stobart explained that “ *in psychic language, the spirit dematerialized behind the screen of smoke.*” (p136.). Her friend Maurice Elliott in his collected articles “ Spiritualism in the Old Testament” (1938) calls this “ *an account of a remarkable materialization*” The angel was “*a spirit guide.*”

The story of the angel, which is worth rereading in the 1611 “King James” translation, has actually triggered much dispute among Christians, almost all of it disregarding any psychic dimension. The Christian debate is part of the wider issue- who is meant in the Bible by the “Angel of the Lord”? Is it always Gabriel , who later came to Mary, mother of Jesus . Is it Jehovah ? (or Yahweh as modern scholars call Him) Is it Jesus, or at least the second person of the Christian Trinity who was to be made flesh later. Methodist founder John Wesley, for example, answered “ The Son of God, yet distinguished from the Lord, because he appeared here in the form of a servant, as a messenger sent from God.”

The wife of Manoah said first “ A man of Elohim came unto me and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of Elohim., very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told me his name.” In praying to Yahweh for a second visit , Manoah called him “ the man of Elohim which thou didst send “. and when he comes again, his wife says of him once more “ Behold the man hath appeared” . Manoah enquires “ Art thou the man..?” The man declines food, and urges sacrifice only to God. He won't reveal his name which is secret. It was after the angel had ascended in the flame of the altar that Manoah concluded “ We shall surely die , because we have seen Elohim.”

Though plural in form, Elohim is usually translated “ God”, but sometimes “a god “ “gods” or” a spirit”. Philip Johnston, in his recent compendium “ Shades of Sheol; death and the afterlife in the Old Testament” (Apollos 2002) notes (p.144.)

“ Given this widespread use of terms for ‘god’ to cover the dead and other supernatural beings, it would be more helpful to translate the Hebrew word elohim with the equally flexible English word ‘spirit’. However , since the translation ‘god’ is so well known, it is better to redefine ‘god’ to include other super-human beings. In the Old Testament there are three clear instances and several suggested texts where elohim means ‘spirits of the dead.’.”

But in calling the angel a materialization, we are a long way from the typical séance situation - darkness or at least subdued light, a group of sitters and a recognised medium. That is not to rule out the possibility that Manoah's wife, a woman of spiritual insight once praised in a sermon by Spurgeon, and the main focus of the angel's message, may have possessed some psychic faculty, perhaps later inherited by

Samson. This is one of those biblical angelic appearances where we are not given a clear picture of how the phenomena happened. Indeed the first appearance- to the wife at an unspecified place - may have been an apparition.

According to the contemporary cult founded by Claude Vorilhon (Rael), Yahweh was actually an alien, and the Elohim were beings from the sky with a planet of their own who created man by genetic engineering. Some ufologists had of course been suggesting similar explanations already. In this story however, there is no sign of any space ship, and the angel's instruction to the woman- that she should during pregnancy follow the code of the Nazarites and avoid unclean food and wine etc- is entirely understandable within Israelite religion, where male and female Nazarites had a recognised place.

In the 1611 King James translation, the names of God, such as “ Lord” are generally translated according to definite rules. But in order to respond adequately to groups like the Raelites, translators must now go into more detail on how the terms developed. The newer “alien” interpretation of these messengers is also a challenge to those who quickly reduce biblical incidents to the paranormal. More detailed examination is needed if we are not to be arbitrary according to our prejudices.

Despite keeping Nazarite requirements like no hair cutting, Samson in adult life at times led a wild life, and may have been a disappointment to his mother, and indeed to Yahweh. His name could derive from “ sun god” and there has been speculation that he was really a solar myth, his hair representing sun beams, who waged war against the powers of darkness and lost his strength in winter! However his story does form a unity, and may even have been written close to the events.. To some Christians he has been seen as a type of Christ, defeating his enemies through death.

Dr Michael Perry, editor of “The Christian Parapsychologist” and a board member of the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research” reviews this and other angelic phenomena of the Jewish Bible in his new book “ Psychical and Spiritual” (CFPSS, 2003).

“ Gradually as the immensity of God dawned on the people of Israel, they began to think that it could not possibly have been God himself whom they saw: no human could see him and live. It must have been some supernatural being whose nature lay between divinity and humanity – an angel. But the traces of the older belief were never entirely expunged from the stories as they were told and re-told and eventually committed to writing.” (p.82).

One of the issues was whether the entities ate food. It came to be felt that angels would not. “ *That is why*” adds Dr Perry “ *St Luke is adamant to point out that the risen Jesus ate and drank with his followers, to prove that he is no ghost or spirit.*” (Luke 24.36-43.) But this brings us to the unpalatable question of materialised entities ingesting food. LP.

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