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MYERS IS BACK

A new biography by Trevor Hamilton has restored to centre stage F.W. H. Myers (1843-1901), the leading mind of the Society for Psychical Research.

The biography has been warmly welcomed by leading survival research blog Metgat (22 June 2009)¹ which concludes:

Hamilton offers a very interesting, intriguing, informative, in-depth, and even inspirational look at one of history's most overlooked and unappreciated contributors. One wonders if or when modern psychology will ever escape from the muck and mire of scientific fundamentalism and catch up with Myers.

However, the biography does raise again the question of whether Myers, who when young suffered from acute snobbery, failed to fully appreciate the phenomena of the (mainly lower class and less educated) Spiritualist movement. The extent of any such bias is carefully assessed by Hamilton (p.263-7).

One critical phase, before the 1882 foundation of the SPR, was the investigation of the Newcastle physical mediums by the Sidgwick group, who seem to have concluded they were mercenary frauds. Yet Madame D'Esperance was the author of an important analysis of her own mediumship ("Shadowland" 1897) while Paul Gaunt has argued in "Noah's Ark Review"² that Miss Wood when young was remarkable.

Another such phase arose in the mid-1880s when some Spiritualists lead by Stainton Moses withdrew from active involvement in the SPR because of a felt bias against phenomena. Mrs Sidgwick welcomed this departure, though the subsequent cold war lasted a century.

The new biography makes a conspicuous attempt to tell the story of the Blavatsky enquiry in detail without bias. It even adds another bit of phenomenal evidence - that Eveleen Myers heard what could have been the bell sound (it has been known for some years that Myers and Gurney had heard this bell, but their experience was deleted from the original published reports)

Another innovation is that the post-mortem activity attributed to Myers is also considered. Trevor Hamilton told a lecture audience at the National Portrait Gallery on 18 June that he hopes to make a more detailed examination of the Cross-Correspondences in the future. What perhaps is not generally known is that Eveleen Myers accepted the

¹ <http://metgat.gaia.com/blog>

² Issue 130 May / June 2003 pages 5 – 18.

Frederic Myers communications through Geraldine Cummins, and bought 27 copies of “The Road to Immortality” to give to friends (Hamilton, p.300).

Among the images displayed by Hamilton was one of Eusapia in an academic gown.³

The intellectual framework partly created by Myers, in which psychic phenomena are placed in a continuum leading to survival and mystical experience, has been hugely influential in psychic studies , and popularised for example in Tyrrell’s “ The Personality of Man”. It is also one of the foundations of Paul Beard’s modern statement of Spiritualist philosophy.

So serious students need to know about Myers, especially those doing educational courses in the paranormal. Trevor Hamilton’s biography, with its extensive bibliography and up to date discussion, will meet that need admirably.

LP.

On page 88 of, *Immortal Longings*, Hamilton refers to Frederic Myers, sitting with the physical medium Charles Williams on 20th November 1873. In an interview with his widow Eveleen Myers, published in *Light* June 1, 1934 on page 332 she gives some details of this extraordinary séance: -

MRS. F. W. H. MYERS’ RECOLLECTIONS

THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF F. W. H. MYERS WITH “JOHN KING”

WILL posterity ever discharge its debt of gratitude towards the pioneers of Psychical Research? Of the many memories which we hold dear, none has been less dimmed by the passage of the years than that of F. W. H. Myers. He passed over almost a generation ago; but, in his monumental work, *Human Personality*, his giant intellect is ever within our reach.

There is also a living link between his legacy and his spirit. Mrs. F. W. H. Myers is still with us; but, although fully appreciative of the importance of her husband’s work and of the legitimacy of the public interest in his personality, she has hitherto been very reluctant to serve as a vehicle for publicity of any sort. Our special thanks are therefore

³ <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait.php?LinkID=mp07354&page=4&rNo=36&role=art>

due to her for letting this article stand as an exception to the principle that she has observed all her life.

No one has been more impressed than she with the evidence of Mr. Myers' survival that has accumulated since his death; but these scientific evidences do no more than fortify beliefs, which, ultimately, derive their strength from the religious intuitions that underline them. In other words, her experiences in psychical research have given her a welcome confirmation of convictions that have always placed personality at the very centre of things. "I feel certain of my husband's survival," she said, "because I believe in Jesus Christ. And I consider it my husband's greatest achievement that by collecting and interpreting the evidence for survival he has brought faith to so many who have needed this support."

"In this matter," she went on, "I don't think I am taking up an attitude different from my husband's. Look at what he says here (*Human Personality*, Vol. II, Page 305) 'Our duty is not the founding of a new sect, nor even the establishment of a new science, but is rather the expansion of Science herself until she can satisfy those questions which the human heart will rightly ask, but to which Religion alone has thus far attempted an answer.' The answer given by Psychical Research is indicated in these words: 'Has any world-scheme yet been suggested so profoundly corroborative of the very core of the Christian revelation? 'Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to life.' By his appearance after bodily death He proved the deathlessness of the spirit.' And, again, my husband says: 'Had the results of Psychical Research been purely negative, would not Christian evidence-I do not say Christian emotion, but Christian evidence-have received an overwhelming blow? "

Asked if she had been present at seances during Mr Myers' lifetime, "Yes," she replied, "I have vivid recollections of some of the great mediums of the early days of Psychical Research. Mrs. Piper, Eusapia Paladino, Mrs. Thompson and others were our guests for considerable periods, and I came to realise the psychological complexities of mediumship. Much has been written on Eusapia Paladino's Cambridge seances in 1895.

She was detected in fraud, but the fact that she resorted to trickery at times is no proof that she was without true mediumistic powers. I remember how excited and anxious she was before nearly every sitting. I can hear her saying "Oh, Madame, s'il n'y aura rien, que ferai-je? Ce sera terrible!" I have seen her produce physical phenomena in daylight which were so remarkable that to doubt their genuineness was impossible.

"An experience which my husband could never forget came to him through Charles Williams at a private sitting in Buckingham Palace Road. 'John King' was manifesting. A big, hairy hand came down from the ceiling. My husband got hold of it with both hands. 'John King' asked him to let go. He would not, whereupon he was dragged up from his chair to the top of the table. Still he would not loosen his grip. Then the hand gradually began to diminish. It became smaller and smaller, as tiny as a newborn baby's hand, and finally melted away altogether. I remember his account of this incident

perfectly well, as it was one that especially impressed him, and he often talked about it.”

Referring to hypnotism, Mrs. Myers said: “Once in very early days, my husband made the experiment of trying to hypnotise me. After some passes he suggested that I couldn’t open my eyes. I attempted to do so and failed. Rather frightened, I stood up before a mirror in a vain effort to see myself, and tried with all my might, and with the help of my hands, to open my eyes. But still I found it impossible. From that day on I had no difficulty in believing in the reality of mesmerism or hypnotism.

“I believe that as a sitter I am naturally a good subject; I mean that through me a connection seems to be easily established with the unseen world. But, on the other hand, I am very much on my guard against giving mediums information unawares; and my standard of what constitutes good evidence is very high; I am not quick to be impressed by results which some others might consider remarkable.

“People sometimes say that Psychological Research has after all not resulted in anything very startling. This seems to me a superficial view. When the Society was founded not even telepathy was established as a fact. And telepathy is a very wonderful discovery. Then, too, the evidence for apparitions at the time of death is overwhelming, and the occurrence of many other kinds of supernormal phenomena is practically proved. Moreover, new paths of investigation are being discovered, the most interesting, perhaps, being that which Dr. Osty is exploring with such amazing results. As I look back over the past fifty years, it seems to me that Psychological Research has opened out a mine of immense wealth, and that treasures will come to light as long as men continue patiently- to search for them.” -N.F.

Leslie Price commented to Trevor Hamilton: “*But surely Myers was not a Christian at death, though Eileen seems to be.*” Trevor Hamilton responded:

“I well remember this article. It is quite significant for a variety of reasons. This was the first time that Eileen let her guard down in public on these matters. Interestingly, not long before her death and after she had read Cummins' 'Myers-inspired' work. She was prepared to do so in private but hated the spiritual door-steppers who kept coming up with the latest messages from FWHM beyond the grave.

Secondly, she is quite unambiguous about Palladino, reinforcing the view that the first private seances with the Myers' family at Cambridge were impressive.

Thirdly, as you rightly point out, it raises the question of Myers' attitude to Christianity. There is no doubt that Myers retained in his

letters and with his family some of the traditional and conventional Christian phraseology. It was politic to do so, as it was also politic not mention that he sat with mediums on Sunday (as he did). However, he shared Sidgwick's view about the myths and legends that accumulated around the Christian story, and believed that Christ was a spiritually developed being but not the Christ of Christian theology - that is the unique saviour. The idea of the atonement or everlasting punishment was anathema to him.

He had a first-class but essentially applied intellect. He believed that his researches (he probably sat with almost a thousand mediums in total) entitled him to talk with greater authority on the spiritual world than some smug ecclesiastical member of the House of Lords. The Synthetic Society (discussion group of the great and the good at the end of the nineteenth century), of which he Lodge and Balfour were members, was nearly fractured at one time by the aggressive way in which he expressed these views. Look up Wilfrid Ward's letter to Myers in the index of my book to get a sense of the unease over Myers on this matter.

Myers' final views on the Cosmos was much closer to those of Plotinus and the Neo Platonists and, for all I know, those who have worked in various traditions since: namely, one of unending growth, development and purification, even for the God Head or ultimate source itself.”

Introductory Note by Psypioneer: -

The following paper is the first of two parts 'F.W.H. Myers online'; the second paper will be published in the next issue: - writings by Myers by Dr. Carlos S. Alvarado (See web page).⁴

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FREDERIC W.H. MYERS ONLINE:

I. General Materials and Reviews of *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*

By

Carlos S. Alvarado

This essay about freely available online resources written about and by Frederic W. H. Myers (1843-1901) is part of the recent trend recognizing the importance of this nineteenth-century thinker (Alvarado, 2004; Hamilton, 2009; Kelly et al., 2007; Taylor, 2007). Myers is one of the most interesting and important of the early psychical researchers. In addition to his writings about phenomena such as mediumship, telepathy and apparitions, he built bridges between psychical research and psychology through his discussions of automatisms, secondary personalities, and the subliminal mind.

In this two-part essay I will be concerned with Myers' psychical research and psychology, as opposed to his poetry and other writings. An overview of Myers' life and work has been presented recently by Hamilton (2009).

In order to facilitate further studies, in the first part of this bibliographical essay I present online material about Myers (the second part will consist of Myers' writings). This is divided into general materials (a general bibliography, biographies, and comments and overviews on various aspects of his work), and in reviews of *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*.

⁴ Carlos's Bio: - <http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/personalitystudies/Carlosbio.cfm>

⁵An interview with Dr. Carlos S. Alvarado by Michael Tymn: - http://metgat.gaia.com/blog/2008/12/an_interview_with_dr_carlos_s_alvarado

About Myers

General

The 1911 entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, as well as the 1901 essays by Lodge, Richet, and Sidgwick, present general information about Myers. So does the essay by Arthur C. Benson in his book *The Leaves of the Tree* (1911). Myers' own autobiographical comments in *Fragments of Prose & Poetry* (1904) are also available.

William James' classic paper, "Frederic Myers's Service to Psychology" (1901), is also included. Here James stated that Myers "took a lot of scattered phenomena, some of them recognised as reputable, others outlawed from science, or treated as isolated curiosities; he made series of them, filled in the transitions by delicate hypotheses or analogies, and bound them together in a system by his bold inclusive conception of the Subliminal Self, so that no one can now touch one part of the fabric without finding the rest entangled with it" (p. 16).

Also interesting, and important, were Théodore Flournoy's 1903 and 1911 writings, which were similar in content. In the 1903 paper, published in *Archives de psychologie*, Flournoy stated he was of the impression that Myers was the "soul, the center, the supreme engine and the supreme quintessence" (p. 270) of the scientific attempts at the margin of science that were part of the London-based Society for Psychical Research (SPR).

The section has other interesting materials, such as Mangin's 1902 paper about Myers' ideas of suggestion in the *Revue de l'hypnotisme et de la psychologie physiologique*, and an 1896 article in *Borderland* by X (probably Ada Goodrich-Freer, who wrote for this magazine), entitled "Mr. Myers on the Subliminal Self with a Map of the Borderland." There is also a fragment of Emily Kelly's "F.W.H. Myers and the Empirical Study of the Mind-Body Problem" (2007).

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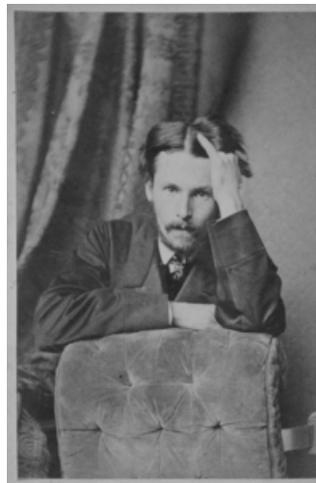
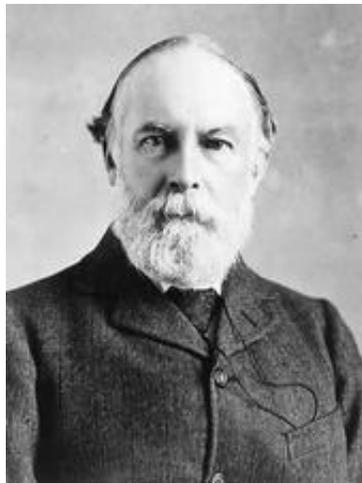
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Frederic W. H. Myers (1843-1901)

Reviews and Discussions of *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*

There have been many reviews of Myers' *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903). These materials are invaluable for the assessment of the reception of Myers' ideas, that is, how different individuals accepted, rejected, or remained neutral about his concepts. Some of the ones available online include well-known reviews, such as those published in 1903 by Flournoy, James, Lodge, and McDougall.

But there are many more reviews of the book that have been generally neglected. In English these include those published in 1903 by Carus, Lang, and Riley, among others. Robinson concluded his review in this way:

Whatever be the verdict of thought on the particular conclusions of the author, the book is great. It is the work of a man who has tried to scale the most commanding peaks with their untrodden snows. He has himself passed within the veil of mist that wraps round those peaks. His work is so obviously sincere, so interwoven with the best life of his own soul, that one feels half-ashamed to carp and criticise, lest the spirit of the dead author should still be responsive to the—perhaps ignorant—voices of this world. Of him we may surely say, what he wrote a generation back of Wordsworth: “A man who was so in accord with Nature, so at one with the very soul of things, that there can be no Mansion of the Universe which shall not be to him a home, no Governor who will not accept him among his servants, and satisfy him with love and peace” (p. 201).

There are also several reviews in French that have been rarely cited in English. Those of Jankelevitch and De Wyzewa, published in the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* and in the *Revue des deux mondes*, respectively, were done using the original English language edition. Several others were written in reference to the abridged French edition *La personnalité humaine, sa survivance, ses manifestations supranormales* (Myers, 1905). Among these were the ones authored by Ferrari, Maxwell, and Pieron.

The one written by French philosopher and psychologist Henri Delacroix appeared in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. In his view the “vast effort of Myers to constitute an experimental metaphysics has failed” (p. 282). He believed this was an illusory idea because the concept of the spirit was not one that could be explored through facts.

One hopes that future studies of Myers will use these materials to expand the incomplete picture we currently have of the reception of *Human Personality*.

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“The Creed of the Spirits, and the Influence of Spiritualism”



This 1871 lecture at Cleveland Hall, London – Sunday 30th April,⁶ could be considered one of the most important Emma Hardinge Britten lectures ever given in respect to the founding structure of the “Spiritualists’ National Union” (S.N.U.).

Within this lecture, the basis of the Seven Principles was given. These were later to become the foundation of the religious philosophy and *conditional* acceptance of membership⁷ to the S.N.U.

⁶ Taken from the *Medium and Daybreak*, No.57 – Vol. II 5th May 1871, this weekly journal at this time cost one penny.

⁷ <http://www.snu.org.uk/Spiritualism/membership.htm>

While taking an S.N.U., advanced education course some years ago, I noted that accounts of the origins of the Seven Principles and how they came into being, were not as the S.N.U., claimed in relatively recent years e.g: -

*The concepts and original wording of the Seven Principles came through Emma's mediumship as she was inspired in 1871, by the communicating spirit of Robert Owen, to summarise the philosophy of Spiritualism in principles that all Spiritualists would agree. These have since become known as the Seven Principles of Spiritualism.*⁸

I earned the *J.B. McIndoe* (SNU award) prize for my course work, but my finding that Robert Owen was not the inspiration of all if any of the Seven Principles as asserted by the S.N.U., have not been accepted by them.

In May 2006 I wrote: - *The S.N.U.'s Seven Principles of Spiritualism – The Error that Changed History.*⁹ Although now in need of some updating the historic facts remain.

This 1871 lecture at Cleveland Hall, London is published below in full¹⁰: -

“The Creed of the Spirits, and the Influence of Spiritualism”

This page of our gospel should not be turned until many another has been read; for as we look back over the faint and imperfect footsteps that we have made, treading on the sands of time towards the grand culmination of wisdom and knowledge, a perfect understanding of the gospel of the divine humanity, we see how few and faltering have been those footsteps. But time closes around us; the darkness of the temporary hour of separation is upon us; and in haste, like the Passover of the ancients, we must gird up the loins of our spirits and take the last look at that bright and glorious gospel whose pages are to be read alike in the shining stars and the many-coloured flowers. There is not a leaf that now glitters in the parting rays of the setting sun, or bends beneath the weight of the falling dew, but what is a chapter in that divine gospel. Each of these tiny flowers, each tendril that supports the leaves that are tossing in the agitating breath of the strong tempest, is a minister of God's benevolence—an evidence of God's wisdom and power. But we know that when the flood-gates of Divine wisdom are opened, no hand can close them; onward must pour the mighty flood, no matter what channels it makes—no matter through what imperfect avenues of mortality that flood is poured. We obey thy voice O

⁸ <http://www.snu.org.uk/Spiritualism/emma.htm>

⁹ Volume 2.5 page 93: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.5%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

¹⁰ Preceding the speech, I have removed the Invocation by EHB.

Master of life—O Spirit of inspiration to all who, consciously and unconsciously, breathe thy breath! Let us now contemplate this beautiful gospel, and take a brief review of its source. A word so familiar to us now, so strange in the ears of humanity only a score of years ago. Twenty-three years ago the views of nearly all of us that are here present received a shock more tremendous, more powerful and radical than any that for many past centuries agitated the mind of man. Let us recall, if we can, how vague, how imperfect, how desolating were the best and most faithful views of spiritual existence which any amongst us cherished. Who could determine that the form laid away in the grave was but the casket of the brighter and more glorious man within who could not perish? Who could determine, even if he believed that “if a man die he shall live again,” to what unknown and distant realms that spirit was bound? Who could resolve that the great agony of bereavement would ever again be gladdened by the great joy of reunion? Who could resolve for himself that the efforts that he had poured out upon mankind, sometimes so fruitlessly, so hopelessly, with so little of worldly success, should ever meet or greet him on a further shore? What spirit was—how spirit lived, if at all—under what conditions life was continued, if at all—(I pronounce to you with the experience of one who earnestly and faithfully tried to discover the road)—was nothing more than a credence in the credence of our fathers, and nothing more than a faint traditionary belief—nothing more than a hope, or, at least an intellectual form of belief inherited by the son from the father.

The revelations which were brought to us from the time when, twenty years ago, spirits openly and by a series of material phenomena, demonstrated their presence amongst men proved the identity of the workers with spirits of men that had once lived on earth—in a great variety of circumstance flooded the world with testimony against its will—unsought, uncourted, uninvoked. Without any of the ordinary precedents under which humanity moves towards a great reform, Spiritualism poured itself in a mass of irresistible power, in tides of unquenchable light, upon the unyielding yet unresisting world. We were unyielding because we had no evidence whatsoever that there was a power to whom we ought to yield; we were unresisting, too, for that power took us captive, left no means of resistance. And so it becomes us from time to time, in numbering up the footprints we have made, to recall the source, to consider the authority that the spirits present to us, that we may better move forward either to resistance or to obedience to this mighty and masterful control.

We first, then, recall the facts that the spirits have revealed to us. They have taught us that the spirit of man is untouched by the action of death. They show thus that the forms we look upon and commonly call those of humanity are nothing more than a mould in which the inner man is forming and growing. They have taught us that there is no break whatsoever effected in the action we call death—that the spiritual existence is an unbroken continuity of the present. They have taught us that, in place of mere atmosphere, ether, electricity, or other imponderable elements, this mortal world is full of a spiritual second world, invisible to us, and only manifest through phenomenal ministrations, or the inspiration which from time to time we receive as presentiments, monitions, influences that we cannot repel, nor hitherto could we account for. They have taught us that not a single act or deed, not a thought or word of our mortal existence is

lost. They have taught us that the true meaning of this mighty battle of life that we are all fighting, the great warfare in which some of us are pressed down beneath the waters of adversity until they overwhelm us—they have shown us that it is the strife of the birth of the spirit. They have brought us face to face with the ordinary acts that we perform, and left us no excuse for evading the responsibility that is set upon every one of us.

They have brought to our view the dawns of a new science, the foregleams of a grander and nobler field of knowledge than we have ever ploughed before—a field in which stars, and world, and suns, and systems are the soldiers, and the generals, and the mighty army of light that are moving on charged with life and spiritual existence for ever. They have indeed enlarged the borders of our vision, independently of all the personal blessings of reunion with our beloved, of hope and consolation for ourselves. These are but a few of the revealments of Spiritualism; and yet there are some shadows in the picture of the great movement which it becomes us this night candidly to reveal. Even in this land, no less than in the far-distant homes of the mighty West, many of us who first entered upon this glorious field, so full of promise, beheld around us the strong and the learned, those endowed with the world's gifts and the world's means of strength. Shoulder to shoulder they stood, and formed a powerful phalanx; to them, as to us, this Spiritualism seemed to come like the Comforter, so full of joy for the present and of promise for the future—such a leveller of those unkind distinctions which drew hard lines of demarcation between man and man, covering the broad plain of humanity with such a beautiful mantle of brotherhood and charity, uniting us all in a common destiny, opening up the nature of psychology, and offering a wonderful solution of the mystery of sin and crime, displaying the grand fields of progress before us with such unerring certainty that it seemed impossible that a gospel so bright, so holy, so comforting, and so reasonable, could be resisted by any.

You and I to-day stand deserted by many a one in whose hands the white standard of Spiritualism was placed along with our own. You and I have seen the great ranks of this army thinning. You and I could number up even in this city scores of those to whom the mission has been entrusted who have fallen away from our side; and whilst but one rostrum remains where the glad tidings of Spiritualism, and the keen, strict, yet daring analysis of all that its light reveals, are permitted, we find that this rostrum is deserted by most of those whose hands were the strongest, and to whom was entrusted the mightiest responsibility in the conduct of this noble work. This excites in us some questions, and the very answers that we are prepared to give most clearly elucidate the progress of the movement. When we come keenly to analyse why we are thus deserted, we find a clue to the character of Spiritualism throughout. Let us observe two points which account for the defalcation of those to whom we have alluded.

Spiritualism endorses no sect; Spiritualism closes down upon all the avenues it is possible to open of mere sectarian belief, and rebukes them all. And why? Because the very fact of the spirit's continued existence, its state and condition, is a denial of every sectarian dogma. There is not one but provides a vicarious atonement for its believers. There is not a spirit from the far East, to the mighty West, from the burning South, to the frozen North, that has ever yet communicated to man and been able to prove that it was happy or

miserable on account of its belief—not one who dared to deny that its happiness or misery is determined by its acts and deeds alone. How do we prove this? You enter any court of justice to take human evidence, to assemble a certain number of witnesses, three of whom shall be acknowledged as wholly unreliable—wholly untruthful; you examine these separately, and, despite their unreliableness, they shall each separately confirm the statements of the others; and this is evidence that no court of civilisation can reject—evidence which for hundreds of years has been accepted in all courts of judicature.

Now, reverse the position: let your three witnesses be truthful; the fact that they shall confirm each other is no additional weight—none at all. It is deemed by the keenest analyst of human nature impossible that three persons separate from each other shall represent the same circumstances exactly, unless those circumstances have a common origin in truth, no matter whether the witnesses be reliable or not. But double the number of witnesses—treble it—multiply it by hundreds, by thousands, by millions—remove your witnesses to every part of the world, separate them by oceans and continents and spaces of time that it is impossible to bridge over; and when, instead of three millions, you have three times told three millions of persons, each testifying to the same general points of faith. That is authority which we think we are justified in presenting to you and it is upon such authority that we make this general statement concerning the condition of the soul hereafter.

Now to apply this statement. The spirits, then, no matter what they preach, all confirm each other on the practical conditions of the life hereafter. The spirits of every country, closely questioned, will always state that they are in judgement, and that judgement is the result of their own life, acts, and deeds. When men demand of the spirits to endorse their peculiar views of faith—when they cannot trust their religion, cannot air it in the sunlight, and measure it with the revelations of science which are every day confounding and destroying it or else enlarging its borders—we find that the spirits insist upon proclaiming this stupendous but unwelcome truth, that every spirit is in the judgement of its own acts. We can quite understand that Spiritualism is not popular or acceptable to the bigot. True it is that there is another solution to be given to this question, and one that requires most careful investigation. You and I are spirits as much now as we ever shall be. Though encased in a casket of clay, our spirits possess in germ all the attributes that we shall ever enlarge in the grander vistas of eternity; and so, whatever influences or powers the disembodied spirit exerts we exert also. If psychological influence is one of the attributes of the invisible spirit, it is one of the attributes of the visible; and the strong and determined psychology which we exercise upon the communications of the circle constantly bends, deforms and refracts the truth that we receive.

You may say that this at once nullifies the evidence. No. When Spiritualism came to us we had no preconceived opinions to sustain upon it; we were in the attitude of response; we were waiting for the truth; and the voice of the spirit was then unanimous, and the tone of spirit-communications was far more universally felt and recognised to be unanimous than it is now. When first the spirits came among us they did proclaim this solemn truth of which I am now speaking, and they proclaim it still, at the very time when the sectarian, with determined psychological influence, bends, deforms and refracts

the communications to suit his own views. He does not know it; but one of the revelations of this great spiritual unfoldment is to show us the power of psychology, and the mass of self-delusion by which we are perpetually endorsing our own views at the spirit-circle, instead of placing ourselves humbly and reverently in the attitude of learners, recipients of the truth, not dictators of what that truth shall be. I speak knowingly of that what I utter, for my own ears have heard men make the assertion, at multitudes of circles of this land, that if the highest spirit of the highest spheres were to return and deny the peculiar points of their faith, they would reject and repudiate them, and would have no more fellowship with them.

And there is yet another cause. Spiritualism is wholly unselfish. It proclaimed from the first the fatherhood of God—that you all admit; and with it the brotherhood of man—that you don't all admit. And this brotherhood was no mere myth; for the spirits of the circle presented themselves, some from the lowest depths of poverty, and some of the highest rounds of earthly splendour, and those had changed places. The law of caste was annihilated and the lines of demarcation were broken down. The communications of the spirits represented a new aristocracy. For ever throughout the ranks of humanity the beautiful harmony of the epic of creation is to be found in inequality. Equality is a mere myth; there is no such thing. Every human creature represents a different step on the ladder of social, moral, intellectual, and spiritual progression; but the ladder is the ladder for all—the ladder of which the feet of brothers are treading to reach the antechamber of the common Father. And so the very first charge of the spirits was self-sacrifice. They demanded some self-sacrifice in those who should bear this unpopular standard for the sake of truth. Above all they demanded the sacrifice of those darling vices for which so many of us have hitherto had a theological sponge, but which now stamp us with an awful and stupendous responsibility that we cannot escape from.

Hence a great many brethren realising at first the glory, and the brightness, and the beauty, the reunion with spiritual hosts, the marvel of spiritual communion, the great outpouring of that which they called the world of supernaturalism, the revealments of clairvoyance, the astonishment of the inner sight, the discovery of new and occult forces in man and in nature, beholding only the glittering gems, but gradually finding that the stern ethics of the spirits were beginning to descend from glittering generalities to specialities, to personal tests and personal analysis—they have fallen away. Spiritualism is neither a convenient religion nor an easy burden to bear before the world. No wonder, then, that it has proved a mighty test of character; no wonder that there are but few who now stand shoulder to shoulder where the spirits first found them; no wonder that those who have fallen away have retreated from the “infidel spirits” because they would not endorse their special creeds, or from the “low and vulgar spirits” because they were levellers and did not endorse their aristocratic pretensions.

And so it is that we now begin more clearly and definitely to measure the value of Spiritualism and its influence upon ourselves. And this hour is ours, Spiritualists. It neither appeals to the scoffer, nor the scorner, nor the critic. We are now about to investigate our positions, to number up our jewels, to analyse the influence that has been exercised upon those who have dared thus far the fight, thus far borne the heat and

burden of the day, and who, despite the stern laws of compensation and retribution that stare us in the face, are still Spiritualists, still dare to call ourselves friends and allies of this mighty host that is proclaiming (I dare to assert it) a new religion. For if Spiritualism were only the enjoyment of the hour, beautiful as it is, gladdening to the heart and cheering to the mourner as it has proved, it were nothing but some personal attribute which we have no right to herald forth to the world.

But Spiritualism teaches of that God who is a spirit, of that immortality which constitutes the very gist of human existence, of that life-practice for which religious systems have been established as a guide. What more do we require to constitute the elements of a religion? If it be not a religion, it is nothing. What influence has it brought to you and me? Perhaps it may seem to be but little because it has not taken the stand which any reform that has preceded it upon earth has taken before. The scientific man looks upon it most commonly with scorn, for reasons that we shall presently show you. He stands in his laboratory with the instruments of his craft around him; he invites the spirits to come and move his furniture, to practice with his instruments, to work with his particular forms of science, and then he says he will believe. But the spirits are not there. The Press man stands at the street corner, and echoing the voice of public opinion, repeats, with the ribald jest, and mocking tone, the enunciations of the Spiritualists as the entire exposition of Spiritualism. He interprets the words (every sentence being subject to interpretation from the ludicrous or the sublime side of its meaning, whichever you please) after the fashion that will most surely please the patrons who pay him to do their thinking, and thus presenting Spiritualism to the world from the ribald and ludicrous aspect with which his own nature invests it, he asks why the spirits do not come to him—why they do not perform marvels with his pen and ink—why they do not reveal buried treasures to him.

But the spirits are not there. And the cold empty world re-echoes the demand of its old teachers, and asks why the spirits do not come and do its work—why if they can move one object, they cannot do everything—why, if they can discover one mystery, they do not discover all—why, in a word, the spirits do not live their lives. But the spirits are not there. Go to the heart which has become cold from the quenched fire of some most precious love gone out; go to the lonely chamber, and look upon the empty cradle or the empty chair; go to the home of suffering or sorrow—to the heart whose pride has been disciplined, whose spirit is broken, whose worldly consolations have failed—to those who have tried and proved the hollowness of all human institutions, and who, with streaming eyes and breaking hearts, have uplifted their hands to the viewless *I am*—to the Unknown—to the Great Spirit; and lo! At the door of the heart opened by aspirations the angel enters, and by inspiration in a thousand methods the response comes—sometimes in the low tap of immortals knocking tangibly at the door of the empty home—sometimes by the low footfall, or the shadow on the wall—sometimes by the grasp of the dear hand, and sometimes by the glittering light of the angelic form as it flashes before the eyes of the seer—sometimes by the mystery of influx and inspiration—in ten thousand forms it comes to the receptive, but always in the home—always to the individual—always some special adaptation to single and individual needs.

It does not preach *en masse*; it does not stand at the street corners, nor enter places of public resort, nor appeal to leaders of public opinion; it does not subject itself to the petty ignorance of those who in their material wisdom are wholly ignorant of psychological laws. That is why Spiritualism comes, and that is why Spiritualism with silent tread is taking men captive, is marching from home to home, from hearth to hearth, from land to land—and none can arrest it, none can track its way, and none can tell how the spirits have come. When you question again and yet again, the answer is, “The spirits are here, but with no invocatory power of our own, by no means that we are aware of; the spirits are here, and yet we scarcely know from whence or how they come”; and that is why Spiritualism is an influence to individual natures, dwelling with fragments and atoms of humanity, and not with masses.

Again its influence has been to cast us upon our special responsibility. It never does come, never appeals to us, through the thought or influence of another. Question yourselves, Spiritualists. Have you believed through the report of your neighbour? Is there not a something in this mysterious power of the invisible world which compels you to accept no less authority than the facts of spiritual existence? You have not credited your neighbour at all. The very report that has been spread of this mighty spiritual movement has only excited in you the ribald joke or the scornful repudiation, until the facts have come home to yourselves. What is the meaning of this? Hitherto we have lived beneath the influence of other men’s minds; we have paid our priests and teachers; and statesmen, and leaders to do our thinking for us; we have stultified our own individuality; we have willingly subjected our natures to the lead of others, and we have determined that others should pay the penalty of our offences. It is to recall us to the stupendous sense of our own individuality that this spiritual movement comes appealing to our individual natures.

The world cannot understand this. The world, accustomed to see movements transpiring only with the masses on that large scale of reform which moves humanity as a mighty army beneath the leadership of one masterful mind, cannot understand either the extent, or the influence, or the genius of Spiritualism. But the less we are indebted to human influence, the more surely are we compelled to look to the true source of influence, and the more inevitably do we find ourselves compelled to acknowledge that the source is powerful, intelligent, benevolent, wise, irresistible. Why should we not attribute it, then, to the beings who themselves claim to be its authors—the friends who were in our midst but yesterday, the nearest and dearest to us by ties of kindred and sympathy?

Thus far, then, we trace up its influence and its progress upon ourselves; but we cannot pause here. I have said that if we were to stand alone upon the evidence of these phenomenal proofs, beautiful as they are, holy and lovely in all respects as many of them are, they would only appeal to our individual natures—they would be nothing more than a temporary joy or a temporary amusement. I have endeavoured, in the address I have been privileged to offer you, to show you that whilst the spirits never exert authority on the mind or demand of you belief, they bring you such conclusive evidences of that which they tell, that you are compelled to acknowledge the truth whose acknowledgement they do not demand from you. They do more—they hold up the torch

to the dark places of nature, and, without insisting upon their opinions concerning the laws, principles, and origin of being, they invite to investigate for yourselves. They are the torch-bearers without whose light those places would remain dark.

The astrologer, the geologist, the chemist, the physician, all who have undertaken to teach us of the ways of God as manifest in his works, have never carried us beyond the surface, never deduced us from all their sublime revelations any teachings concerning our spiritual origin or our spiritual destiny. It is for the spirits to complement the defects of science. The consequence is, that Spiritualism and science are at odds. Scientific men have occupied the most humiliating position of any class towards Spiritualism, and for this reason: with all the wealth or learning they have brought us—with all the incalculable stores of knowledge that they have poured upon the world—with all their industry, their learning, their devotion to the art in which they are engaged, they have never yet attempted to transcend the mere physical existence of matter; upon the surface of things they have groped—to the forces that move that surface alone have they appealed, and there they have left us.

In their investigations of Spiritualism they have brought the formula of their science with them—insisted upon subjecting the phenomena of Spiritualism to their own physical tests; and there is no alliance between them. Spiritualism is not a physical science. Acting through physical means, it involves a wholly new set of laws. Psychological, spiritual, mental laws have never yet been subject to the formula of material laws. This is a new and untrodden field and until scientific men are prepared to sit humbly and reverently on the first step of this science they will utterly fail to procure even the very tests that they seek. Within the last few months only, one of the most celebrated and revered leaders of science proceeded to a spiritual circle to investigate Spiritualism with a purpose incompatible with the conditions—he went there and made the manifestations and simulated the phenomena which the trusting people around him believed in. He rejoiced in making them dupes, and felicitated himself upon his deception for the sake of exposing them. I cite this to do him no dishonour, but to show you that the very determination, the psychological strength of will by which he approached that circle, destroyed the manifestations; and the determination to simulate, impose upon and hold up to ridicule the simple people whose faith had already been confirmed in Spiritualism because they had proved it, whose faith in him was misplaced because they believed him to be a gentleman—I say, that the very strength of purpose that made him mislead for the sake of proving others deluders destroyed and neutralised the power that might have made him a gentleman and taught him that he had an immortal soul.

I have said thus much, simply to illustrate the position in which Spiritualists stand. They are deserted by the leaders of religion and science, with a few noble exceptions—a few of those who dare to cast the priceless treasure of their soul and conscience in one scale, and their worldly popularity in the other, and the conscience weighs so heavy that with popularity goes up out of sight altogether. With the exception of these, the Spiritualists are deserted by those who should be their leaders and teachers both in science and religion—and what remains? To trust to your own fidelity, to your own sense of right, to the God who protects you under all circumstances and never leads you into temptation

without offering you an open way for escape, to the Great Spirit who is your Father. To the power that proves itself by its fruits; but I tell you now as we are closing we cannot pause there.

The spirit lives—our own destiny is unfolded to us; our own hereafter is made clear and plain; the way is marshalled by those we love best and those we can trust. And now we would ask how far these beings, not as authoritative teachers, but as guides in the direction where we are to search out a higher responsibility even than we have hitherto assumed, the responsibility of forming our religious belief—how far can we trust them? I shall here speak briefly of the creed which is evolved from Spiritualism. I may not now pause on the methods of evolution. You have heard some of them in past discourses; you may apply those to the results which I now offer.

I believe in God, for I know that spirit, matter, and motion are external existences, co-equal, co-eternal, co-existent ever. As I believe in matter, then so do I believe in spirit; and the totality of that spirit, that master-mind that was even before form—that moved upon the chaos and void, and evolved therefrom order, harmony, and form—is God. Finite as I am, I can never comprehend his infinity; temporal pilgrim as I am now, passing on and ever passing on in temporality, I cannot master his eternity. It is enough for me to know that He is all wise, for the majesty, order, and beauty of creation prove it; He is all-good, for the beneficence disclosed in that creation proves it; He is all-powerful, for its stupendous strength, its glorious and majestic permanence proves it.

I believe in the immortality of the human soul, for I have been taught to analyse and search until I discover that that which is must have existed for ever; and though on this earth I am only possessed of such memory as carries me back to the beginning of my own temporal existence, and such prophesy as proves to me that I shall live beyond the grave, I still recognise that lives infinite one way cannot be finite another, and that if there is infinity around me I am a part of it—I am infinite also. And since I question and since I doubt, even the chemist that scoffs at me proves my position, and shows me that nothing can be annihilated. My soul is something, the functions of my soul are something, my self-consciousness is something, my sense of individuality is something that can not be annihilated. The strong psychology of another mind mightier than mine would impose upon me the dark fatal belief of annihilation of my soul, and eternal existence of everything else. My spirit-friend comes to my side, grasps my hand, and whispers in my ear, in the voice of the loved and those I have deemed as the lost—“I live for ever, and thou shalt live for ever.”

I believe in right and wrong, for I do find the penalties of the wrong and the compensation of the right impressed on all things, on all forms of life. When I doubt this, the sophist would come and preach to me of circumstances, of surroundings, of impulses and forces; and when he would

try in the tones of sophistry to mask me from the light which the penalty is perpetually bringing me, my spirit-friend appeals to me, and with the glory of the immortal spheres on his glittering brow, or the darkness of the dweller on the threshold hanging around him, gives me to understand that the second stage of existence is absolute judgement for the deeds done in the body.

I believe in the communion of spirits as ministering angels. I not only realise this from the truths that are demonstrated around me, but from the reason that assures me that the love which animated the form that I loved so well as it still subsists must find an exercise; that to live, to love, and yet to be unable to manifest that love to the objects that need it, must be a condition of existence far worse than that in which we daily live, and love, and minister to each other.

These are some of the points of my creed, and all of them I have proved. But I do not pause here. I am living in a work-a-day world, and I am told that if my rule of life, as it is called, is taken from me, that if my scriptures and my gospel, my creeds and my faith are removed from me, I shall be a ship at sea without an anchor. I recall a portion of these teachings, and I find them enunciated in the form of Ten Commandments. I recite them, and see how far they become to me the rule of life.

The first tells me that I shall have none other God but "Me". That word "Me" is echoed in ten thousand clamouring voices, each one pretending to explain that "Me," and all differing the one from the other. I am told that I should honour my father and mother, that my days may be long in the land which the Lord my God giveth me; when I see the disobedient prolong their days, and the fair, the obedient, and kindly withdrawn. I am told that I shall not kill, and that I shall commit no murder; and I see beneath the standard of Christ, in the name of Christ, the merciful Prince of Peace and Love, of Him who prayed for pity on his murderers, I see thousands and thousands arraying themselves against one another in the name of Christianity, and destroying each other wholesale. I am told I shall not steal; though I may be a wandering beggar, fluttering in rags and dying for want of bread; but put a crown upon my head and a sceptre in my hand, and I may steal my neighbour's wages, and pass Acts to make my thefts legal. When my lands are not broad enough—when my restless ambition is not content with the baubles I wear, I may steal my neighbour's crown and kill men to my heart's content until I obtain what I require.

I may not covet my neighbour's goods. Alas! Alas! Who shall tell the hungry labourer by the wayside not to covet? Who shall bid the poor, the oppressed, the hewers of wood and drawers of water, not to covet? Not those, we trust, who covet their neighbour's lands; not those we trust who covet power—that lust for it with such mighty and resistless ambition that they become tyrants, and autocrats, and oppressors; not those who cause workmen by the hundred to sell their blood, their life, their time, their labour, because that labour converts their power to work into the wealth of the capitalist. Oh friends, we do not speak in the tone of that foolish spirit of demagoguism that would

level all distinctions, that would annihilate the laws which have made all men different, place them on different steps of the ladder of creation to perform different functions. But when we are looking to see a rule of life that will work in an order of society made up of immense differences, let us apply that rule.

If it fail, can it be God's law?—can it be the law of Him who in the glorious harmony of the planetary system has not made two stars alike; and yet all move on by countless millions in their different order, glory, size, and degree, neither jostling nor harming each other, but all completing the grand, magnificent circuit of the skies. Can it be the law of Him who is all-wise, and all-good, and all-powerful? We think not. And with all honour and respect for the ancient seers and prophets, with all the deepest reverence for the inspiration which came to them in the hour of their need, and in the time when they required rules of life appropriate to the condition in which they lived—we ask, Are we never to move forward to more practical issues? Are we never to have such revelations as, without disturbing old landmarks, will explain them, add to them, and bring us to a more practical and every-day form of religious teaching? This is what we ask.

The spirits do sometimes answer us. Within the last few hours they have given to us, not as authority, not as displacing those old landmarks or touching them in any respect, but in all loving kindness, to practical, working, every-day minds, such commandments as we may all read and analyse, and apply if we choose; and the results of that application you may judge for yourselves when you question of the spirits that have gone before. It is our purpose to close by reading in brief the Ten Commandments of work-a-day spirits—of those who have counted up the sands of life, and found that every grain is to be recognised as a part of the spiritual body that constitutes the man of eternity.

Paul Gaunt adds:

In another section of the same edition of *The Medium and Daybreak*, we find “Mrs Hardinge’s concluding oration” on page 144 published below is part of this: -

..... *As a supplement to the oration, Mrs Emma Hardinge¹¹ electrified the audience by reading Ten “Spiritual Commandments,” which she had written in a very rapid manner on the previous morning under the influence of Robert Owen, whose centenary takes place next week. They are wonderfully characteristic of that revered philanthropist, and present perhaps the most comprehensive view of religious ethics which the world has ever seen. On Monday morning Mrs Hardinge presented the manuscript and copyright to Mr Burns, with the request that he would print them for his own benefit and that*

¹¹ Although Emma is referred to as Mrs Emma Hardinge, she was in fact now Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten marrying Dr. William Britten on 11th October 1870.

of the cause, and have them circulated as opportunity offered. This kind proposal was gladly accepted, and that precious manuscript will no doubt be long cherished as a present of the greatest value in the estimation of its possessor. We understand these commandments will be issued in the form of a cheap tract in a few days, and circulated far and wide.

James Burns founder and editor of *Medium and Daybreak* duly accepted and published the Ten “Spiritual Commandments.”¹² It was published in J. Burns Seed Corn series¹³ No.5 and was entitled “THE CREED OF THE SPIRITS.”

To summarise: -

There are only two known references that I know of where Robert Owen is named as the spirit author of the Ten “Spiritual Commandments”. Firstly, in EHB’s autobiography,¹⁴ but this account is not dated - other than that it was during the American Civil War, 1861-1865 (probably in the earlier stages, circa 1861). An account of the séance is only referenced that it was “.....subsequently reported in the *New York papers* by one of the parties present, and therefore there can be no impropriety in re quoting the account...” The second known reference is made in the above short notation from *Medium and Daybreak*.

It is most interesting to note that the Ten Spiritual Commandments and the Ten Laws of Right were later widely printed in the various journals and the Lyceum¹⁵ Golden Chain readings (No’s 109 and 110), but always stated as being: *given by the spirits* or similar. Burns in the first known printing (1871c) of the, Ten Spiritual Commandments published after the above lecture, puts the spirit author as: “GIVEN BY THE SPIRITS THROUGH EMMA HARDINGE”.

Since my May 2006 article¹⁶ I have found this important statement, as published below and written by EHB as to the make up and *authorship* of the “Ten Spiritual Commandments” and “Ten Laws of Right,” as in all post 1871 references to this, there is *no* mention of the name Robert Owen: -

¹² Contents published at www.woodlandway.org by Garth Willey see page 10: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Decalogues%20and%20Principles.pdf>

¹³ This Seed Corn series were propaganda handout leaflets costing one shilling per hundred copies, societies would have their name inserted. This also included Ten Laws of Right

¹⁴ See page 9: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Decalogues%20and%20Principles.pdf> . Chapter X page 106 – 108 of the, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, John Heywood, London 1900

¹⁵ The Lyceum Manual for use in Progressive Lyceums first published in 1887, compiled by Emma Hardinge Britten, Alfred Kitson and H.A. Kersey.

¹⁶ Volume 2.5 page 93 *The error that changed history*: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.5%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

While in Australia EHB published *On the Road; or The Spiritual Investigator: A complete Compendium of the Science, Religion, Ethics, and Various Methods of Investigating Spiritualism*. Melbourne: G. Robertson 1878.

Britten later serialised this in her *Two Worlds* as she details below: -

THE PATH FROM MATTER TO SPIRIT

Being a clear concise guide to all that is at present of spiritual science, and the facts, phenomena, philosophy, literature, and beliefs commonly called

MODERN SPIRITUALISM BY EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN

(All rights reserved.)

[NOTE.-It is now ten years since the author of the following papers was earnestly entreated to write them for the use and guidance of the many who attended her lectures in Australia, and yet failed to apprehend how best they could inform themselves concerning the modes of studying out the all-important subject of Modern Spiritualism, and its various correlations.

To meet the universal demand for such a manual, the author was persuaded to write and publish a small work bearing the unassuming title of "On the Road." Several editions were rapidly called for, and as rapidly exhausted. Out of many thousands distributed through Australasia, two copies alone remain in the author's possession. The demand for some such plain, unadorned, but comprehensive, manual is again renewed, and that demand is far more widely felt than the "I know it all" *Spiritualist*, on the one hand, or, the "I denounce it all" opponent, on the other, realizes.

The author's purpose had been to republish the manual in question. Why her intentions are altered, it is un-necessary to state in this place. Suffice it that she gives her work as a serial to *The Two Worlds*, and now offers the first number to the acceptance of all whom it may concern.-Ed. *T.W.*]

Below is taken from the final installment (Part VII *T.W.* August 17th 1888 page 20) the original book contains 62 pages: -

"As a sample of the morality taught by those spirits who have so long and faithfully guided the author's storm-tossed life barque, we subjoin a reprint of the "Ten Spiritual Commandments" and "Ten Laws of Right," aphorisms communicated by spirits, through the author's mediumship, at a lecture given by her in London some years since. As the lecture in question was phonographically reported, it was subsequently printed,

distributed in various countries, republished and translated into many languages, and is now offered as a specimen of the ethics and morality enunciated from the spirit spheres.”

It would be fairly safe here to suggest that EHB is referring to the Cleveland Hall, London lecture, as she did not return to England again until 1881.¹⁷ She clearly does not attribute the whole contents of the “Ten Spiritual Commandments” to one singular communicator i.e., Robert Owen!

We could ask: - Why did Robert Dale Owen, who attended the first séance where his father allegedly gave the “Ten Spiritual Commandments” and “Ten Laws of Right,” not record this in his book. He recorded in detail other numerous séances at the same Underhill residence of this period,¹⁸ why did the first printing of TSC (Burns 1871c) not credit Owen as its author, why did Britten in 1878, and the Lyceum manual in 1887, etc also not credit Robert Owen?

Emma Hardinge Britten has always been very clear that they were her creeds / principles as movable statements open to the adaptability of change and growth; changes she apparently adopted throughout the years. This is apparent in the above 1871 lecture when she produces the original four creeds/principles and stated: *You have heard some of them in past discourses; you may apply those to the results which I now offer.* For example in 1883 EHB’s principles numbered five, the fourth principle of this set was “*Personal Responsibility Here and Hereafter*”; she had used this at a New York lecture on 12th July 1857, she mentions ‘my own personal responsibility both here and hereafter, for all the good or evil I have ever done on earth.’¹⁹ It is interesting to note that in 1857 Robert Owen was still alive!

Despite these only tentative links with Robert Owen, the Spiritualists’ National Union are insistent, as stated above, that: -

The concepts and original wording of the Seven Principles came through Emma's mediumship as she was inspired in 1871, by the communicating spirit of Robert Owen, to summarise the philosophy of Spiritualism in principles that all Spiritualists would agree. These have since become known as the Seven Principles of Spiritualism.

¹⁷ See *Emma to the Rescue* 1881 Vol. 4.6 page 135: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.6June08..pdf> .

¹⁸ *The Debatable Land Between this World and the Next.* G.W. Carleton & Co., Publishers New York 1872.

¹⁹ See page 52 of her autobiography.

MIKE COLEMAN REMEMBERED



A service of celebration for the life of Dr Michael Coleman, who died on 12 May 2009, took place in Bedford on 2 June, led by Major Ian Loxley of the Salvation Army. After tributes by members of the family, a soprano sang Faure's "In Paradisum". The SPR was represented by David Ellis and John Randall, and the SJRC by Leslie Price.

Denise Iredell, Chairman of the SJRCT, writes:

Dr. Mike Coleman was associated with the Survival Joint Research Committee Trust for thirty-five years and, in his characteristically modest way, contributed enormously to our deliberations. During his period as Chairman until he officially retired as a Trustee over ten years ago, his sang-froid prevailed, especially when, on occasion, there was a likelihood that some excitable members might become over-heated! His measured, if personally non-committal, summing-up left everyone happy.

With his vast knowledge of psychical research gleaned from what must be one of the most extensive private libraries on the subject, Mike was invariably patient and generous in sharing information to anyone seeking his help. For the Trust he prepared a suggested Reading List for Enquirers, and, although no longer an active Trustee, he was working on updating this at the time of his death.

Everyone at the SJRCT has been saddened by the loss of a remarkably sound investigator and, not least, a thoroughly good friend.

Mike Coleman (born 1927) was a research chemist at Unilever who was active in both experimental and historical psychical research for over fifty years. In "Paranormal Review" October 2002 (available on line to SPR members) he gave a personal account of his investigations. Gradually his wide familiarity with the older literature made him something of a specialist; though sceptical of paranormal claims he would be analytically helpful in assessing all viewpoints.

A typical problem was that of wax moulds, where he wrote the standard survey in 1994 "Wax-moulds of 'spirit' limbs." *JSPR* 59(834), 340-346, and which is still debated today (there is believed to be a collection of such moulds at the SPR office!). He also had a thorough grasp of the testimony problem in relation to physical mediums, and at his death was working on a review of the new biography by Brock of Crookes.

Mike Coleman was of immense help to Psypioneer from its inception. Sometimes he provided copies of rare material which we published. He drew attention to further puzzles about the supposed Hydesville peddler(s) and helped clarify the publication history of

Mrs Britten's Anglo-American editions. Still to come is an old Scottish case in which a medium unwisely identified an alleged murderer and triggered legal action. Mike made available a photocopy of the offending pamphlet, one of many rarities in his library. Sadly, when the SPR received a large donation of Victorian Spiritualist journals in 2008, he was among the many scholars not alerted in time; in the event, only two SPR members are thought to have seen them. .

Mike was not on line, and received his copy of Psypioneer through the post. Quite often a phone call would follow, drawing attention to further information, and occasionally expressing gentle doubt about the validity of a claim. A hand written letter might then bring more references and a photocopy from an obscure source.

We shall greatly miss our resident sceptic.

LESLIE PRICE

How Old Splitfoot Infiltrated Spiritualism

By Garth Willey



Sourced from the dust jacket of *The Devil Within*, 1979, by Marc Cramer
Original source unknown

In most modern day accounts of the events giving rise to Modern Spiritualism – in upstate New York in the hamlet of Hydesville, in the home of the Fox family, on 31st March, 1848 – one of the Fox sisters is attributed as having said to the source of poltergeist type rapping noises “Do as I do, Mr Splitfoot.” Which Fox sister was it?

If you think Maggie, then you are partially right, but significantly wrong;
If you think Katie, then you are wrong, but justifiably so; and
If you think Leah, then you are partially right, but technically wrong because she wrote it rather than said it, crediting Katie with the words but incorrectly so!

What, then, are the facts?

Mrs Margaret Fox’s signed statement dated 11th April, 1848 for The Lewis Report²⁰ contains the words:

²⁰ A REPORT OF THE MYSTERIOUS NOISES, HEARD IN THE HOUSE OF MR. JOHN D. FOX, IN HYDESVILLE, ARCADIA, WAYNE COUNTY, AUTHENTICATED BY THE CERTIFICATES, AND CONFIRMED BY THE STATEMENTS OF THE CITIZENS OF THAT PLACE AND VICINITY.

http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP12.pdf

“...The youngest girl²¹ is about 12 years old; -she is the one who made her hand go. As fast as she made the noise with her hands or fingers, the sound was followed up in the room. It did not sound any different at that time, only it made the same number of noises that the girl did. When she stopped, the sound itself stopped for a short time.

The other girl²², who is in her 15th year, then spoke in sport and said, "Now do this just as I do. Count one, two, three, four;" &c., striking one hand in the other at the same time. The blows which she made were repeated as before. It appeared to answer her by repeating every blow that she made. She only did so once. She then began to be startled; and then I spoke and said to the noise, "Count ten," and it made ten strokes or noises. Then I asked..."

Question: So, just who is Mr Splitfoot?

Answer: ‘Splitfoot,’ ‘Old Splitfoot’ or sometimes with facetious respect, ‘Mr Splitfoot’ was a nineteenth century New England reference to the Devil. Depicted with cloven hooves, ‘Old Splitfoot’ probably went back to Pagan days: certainly the reference belongs to folklore. And it is indeed a folksy name!

Question: And just how, and when, did Mr Splitfoot get into the act?

Answer: None of the literature of the time records reference to ‘Splitfoot’ until Robert Dale Owen gave his presentation of events in *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* in 1860²³. Therein on p207, Owen wrote:

“Kate, the youngest girl, happened to remark that as often as her father shook the window-sash the noises seemed to reply. Being a lively child, and in a measure accustomed to what was going on, she turned to where the noise was, snapped her fingers, and called out, ‘Here, old Splitfoot, do as I do !’ *The knocking instantly responded.*”

In his research for *Footfalls*, Owen had visited Hydesville and interviewed the Fox family in August 1859. In the absence of the reference to Splitfoot appearing anywhere during the previous 11 years, it is reasonable to assume that in the course of Owen’s interview and discussions with the Fox family, the proposition that the communicator might have been the Devil arose. And surely, the staunch Methodist family may well have been wondering back in March, 1848 whether or not the Devil was behind the mysterious noises.

Owen, being a highly educated man, a Spiritualist, and well aware of the significance that any reference to the Devil might have repercussions for Modern Spiritualism (as it was

²¹ Katie

²² Maggie

²³ (p207, first English edition, 1861)

by then being called) then gave the interpretation of the events in his own words. He used the New England folklore reference and went on to further soften the possibility of the Devil being behind Kate's action towards the unknown communicator as being "half in childish jest".

Then, in 1885, along came Ann Leah Fox Underhill's *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*²⁴.

In it (pp5-10) Leah attributes her mother, Mrs Margaret Fox, as having said in her statement of 11th April, 1848 in the Lewis Report:

"... my youngest child said: 'Mr Splitfoot, do as I do,' clapping her hands."

Now this book, *The Missing Link*, is well known for its inaccuracies and unreliability as an historical record. Barbara Weisberg, in her biography *Talking to the Dead*²⁵, (p235) describes it as "a mixed bundle of distortions and truth". And states: "The tone... tends to veer between nostalgia and bombast, but in places Leah's account evidences a distinct wry and even subversive wit."

And so the fable grew. Over time, the meaning of the name 'Splitfoot' became lost to Spiritualists – if, indeed, it meant anything at all to non New Englanders even in the 1800's. It was just a folksy name in the story of the beginnings of Modern Spiritualism.

And so, as they say: "The rest is history!"

²⁴ *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*, published Knox & Co, New York, 1885

²⁵ *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism*, published by HarperCollins, San Francisco, 2004

ERNEST WALTER OATEN

1875-1952

Oaten's contribution to Spiritualism was long and notable

In April's issue²⁶ we advertised a new CD by Spiritualist author Gerald O'Hara, "*Mrs Miller's Gift*" (Available through Pyspioneer see: - Books for sale) which contains Ernest Oaten's historic 1934 B.B.C., speech "*What I believe*" The verbatim report was published in Pyspioneer March 2006.²⁷

This is the background to this Historic Broadcast as published in *Psychic News* 31st March 1934: -

THE B.B.C. GIVES IN AT LAST

ERNEST OATEN TO BROADCAST

UNANIMOUS CHOICE OF CENTRAL COUNCIL

By HANNEN SWAFFER

THE B.B.C. has at last allowed a broadcast to be made by a Spiritualist!

It will take place on Friday, April 13th-orthodox folk may consider that an unlucky day-and the speaker chosen is Ernest Oaten, who, more than any individual, represents the movement in this country.

He has earned by long years of service what he must regard as a great distinction.

The choice of a speaker was made by the B.B.C. after consultation with the Spiritualist Central Council, which represents all the leading Spiritualist societies of London and the Spiritualists' National Union, the biggest organisation of its kind in the world.

Yes, at last the B.B.C. has consented to give our case a half-hour's talk! It will consist of a twenty minutes' speech by Ernest Oaten, and then ten minutes of questioning by an announcer and Oaten's replies. It will be broadcast from one of the provincial stations.²⁸

²⁶ Volume 4.4 page 106: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09..pdf>

²⁷ Volume 2.3 *What I Believe*: By Ernest W. Oaten page 59: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.3%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

²⁸ In the end the broadcast was made from London, but according to BBC Archives, was not carried in all regions.

True, Spiritualism is dumped in with Unitarianism, Theosophy and Rationalism-with what the B.B.C. calls “religions which are not accessible for broadcasting on Sundays.”

A week ago, Frank Hawken, as secretary of the Spiritualist Central Council, was approached by the B.B.C. which, after consultation with Sir Oliver Lodge and Dame Edith Lyttelton, both of whom had taken part in the “Inquiry into the Unknown” series, had chosen as a list of possible speakers Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, Miss Lind-af-Hageby, Ernest Oaten, Shaw Desmond, Ernest Hunt and myself. The B.B.C. insisted on making the decision itself but welcomed a “suggestion.”

As the Council was meeting the next day, the matter was referred to them, and they unanimously “suggested” Ernest Oaten.

After all, Oaten is president of the International Spiritualist Federation. He is the Spiritualist editor with the longest experience, and he has for many years been known as one of our chief speakers.

More than that, his practical experience of Spiritualism probably exceeds that of any other person in the world.

The Council meeting was interrupted while Hawken called up the B.B.C., informing them of the decision; and they, accepting it, immediately communicated with Oaten.

Ernest Oaten, who was at one time a compositor, obtained largely his great knowledge of Spiritualism because of the trance addresses he used to give years ago. He asked his guide if he could be allowed to remember the utterances which passed through his lips. This was granted.

He possesses, in consequence, such a knowledge of our case that he could argue it with any scientist in the world, yes, or the College of Cardinals. He has spoken in Anglican churches on the subject and at gatherings all over the country.

When, just before Conan Doyle’s passing, a deputation of Spiritualists went to the Home Office to ask J. R. Clynes, then Home Secretary, to remove the disabilities on mediumship, Oaten was the spokesman.

He succeeded J. J. Morse as editor of the “Two Worlds,” which was founded by Emma Hardinge Brittain. After her passing, she told him he was going to occupy the editorial chair of the “Two Worlds.” and, because of the spirit promise, Ernest Oaten moved to Manchester, knowing that he would be chosen although the directors had not then made their choice.

To this day, many of his admirable leading articles are inspired by Emma Hardinge Brittain, the closeness of whose presence is constantly known to him.

During the inquiry into Spiritualism made by the “Daily Mail,” he was chosen by that national newspaper to put the Spiritualist case. He was also chosen by the movement to preside over the farewell luncheon given to Conan Doyle before his last journey to South Africa.

Ernest Oaten’s conviction about Spiritualism was largely based on his long sittings with George Spriggs, the famous materialising medium who lived at Cardiff. When a young man, Oaten sat with him for years, and during that time saw physical phenomena of a quality which has not been equalled since, at least in this country.

I sincerely congratulate him upon his having been chosen. We could have no better spokesman.

Still, I must insist that even the granting to us of this one short “talk” seems to me a miserly action on the part of the B.B.C. which, week after week, year after year, grants to our religious opponents complete freedom.

They are allowed to speak over the air all sorts of things which we regard as childish, stupid and prejudiced nonsense. Chapman Cohen, editor of the “Freethinker” will no doubt be more annoyed than we are because Spiritualism and his Rationalism are dumped in together in the same group.

“I’m a Christadelphian,” said an Army recruit when asked his religion.

“A what?” they said. “Put him down ‘Church of England.’ No fancy religions here!”

Rationalism and Spiritualism are, in the eyes of the B.B.C., “fancy religions.”

According to the B.B.C.’s official announcement, the Rationalist, Unitarian, Theosophist and Spiritualist “will be questioned by an inquiring layman, who will sum up the series in conversation with a member of the Church of England. This will, it is hoped, increase both the interest and unity of the series.”

The “inquiring layman” is Dr. Moberly. But who is the member of the Church of England to be? Is he to be one of the bishops who praise us, or one of the bishops who damn us?

Ernest Oaten's involvement in the Spiritualist movement spanned for almost 60 years. Published below²⁹ is an account from the earlier part of his life: -

THE PERSONAL SIDE

MR. ERNEST W. OATEN

Ernest Walter Oaten was born in Bristol, in 1875, of Nonconformist parents. He inherited a natural ability as a public speaker from his father, who was a lay preacher and a political orator of no mean order. His earlier education was somewhat meagre, as he was sent to work at a printer's at the age of eleven. Leaving Bristol he soon migrated to South Wales, becoming interested in temperance work amongst the young, and at seventeen years of age became assistant secretary to a large Band of Hope.

Contact with psychic phenomena was made at the early age of eighteen, and young Oaten rapidly developed a gift of trance speaking, which he exercised throughout the country for some sixteen years.

In 1900 he moved to Portsmouth doing valuable work in re-organising the local psychical society and also founding the Portsmouth Spiritual Temple-still following his trade of printer. He assisted in establishing Spiritualist organisations at Southampton and elsewhere.

Returning to Bristol, in 1905, Mr. Oaten became interested in political work, and for many years acted as assistant registration agent there. The Spiritualist societies in the Sheffield district appointed him resident organiser in 1909, and in 1911 he was voted a seat on the Council of the Spiritualists' National Union, five years later becoming president³⁰ of that body.

In 1919 he was appointed editor of the *Two Worlds*,³¹ which journal he continues to conduct with conspicuous ability. He is also secretary of the, *Two Worlds* Company, in which office he has shewn that he possesses keen business talents.

²⁹ Taken from Light, August 10th 1929

³⁰ S.N.U., president 1915 – 1920, and 1922 – 1923

³¹ Oaten was editor of the *Two Worlds* 1919-1945. I noted this in *Psychic News* 31st March 1934: - He succeeded J. J. Morse as editor of the "Two Worlds," which was founded by Emma Hardinge Britten. After her passing, she told him he was going to occupy the editorial chair of the "Two Worlds." and, because of the spirit promise, Ernest Oaten moved to Manchester, knowing that he would be chosen although the directors had not then made their choice.

To this day, many of his admirable leading articles are inspired by Emma Hardinge Brittain, the closeness of whose presence is constantly known to him.

In 1909 he married Miss A. Johnson, of Cardiff, a well-known and capable clairvoyante, whose loving comradeship has been of the greatest value in his business and his psychic work.

Not only has Mr. Oaten been successful as an inspirational speaker, clairvoyant, healer, diagnostician and public orator, but he has also gained the love and respect many thousands who recognise in him a man of unswerving honesty, deep sincerity and profound common sense. He claims, with justification, that the deficiencies of his early education have been more than compensated by the training that he has received in contact with the spirit world. As a speaker, in the cause of psychic truth, he is in the forefront of the movement and has addressed large meetings all over the country. He has conducted numerous experiments in telepathy, and experienced travel in the spirit world, in fact, there are few Psychic experiences that have not come his way. He maintains that the bulwark of his psychic life is the home circle.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to recall that at the International Congress of Spiritualists, in London, last year, Mr. Oaten was unanimously elected president of the International Federation of Spiritualists which important office he still holds.

In 1938 Oaten published "*That Reminds Me.*"³² an insightful little book documenting some of his many experiences. A suggestion by friends to record some of his experiences started in a series of weekly articles in *The Two Worlds*. These proved so successful he published them in one volume. Oaten states in the Foreword: - *Some of them are outstanding memories, which have influenced my life and conduct. Many of them have been written up from notes made at the time, and during their publication I had scores of letters from old friends who were present when they occurred, and who have been able to confirm my statements.*

I have just noted that the S.N.U. Lyceum has re-printed this rare book.³³ From the book and printed below, is one of Oaten's experiences with his old friend Sir Arthur: -

MEMORIES OF DOYLE

OF the many memories associated with my forty five years of Spiritualistic work, some of the happiest are those that surrounded my close association with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He was probably the *biggest man* I have met on this earth. In stature he was no pigmy, but in breadth of heart and mentality, in depth of sympathy and understanding of men, I have not

³² Two Worlds Publishing Company Limited, 18 Corporation Street, Manchester

³³ <http://www.snu.org.uk/forsale/lyceumshop.htm>

met his equal. When, after twenty years' investigation, he decided to tell the world his cherished convictions, I was privileged to be called upon by him to arrange his tours through the Provinces.

One week-end I had him at Leeds, where we had a tremendous fight. The Leeds Corporation refused to let the Town Hall for a Spiritualistic meeting. I visited Leeds, got together a few of the local friends who were ratepayers, interviewed the chairman of the Watch Committee and two or three other of the Corporation members and officials. I told them that the Town Hall was the property of the ratepayers, and all ratepayers should have equal right to its use. After a tremendous fight, which lasted a fortnight, they gave way, and the meeting held on the Sunday night was a tremendous success. But few people knew the heavy heart with which Sir Arthur ascended the platform. A few hours before the meeting he had received a wire that his son Kingsley was nearing the end of his physical life, and the call came to return to London immediately. He showed me the wire, and said, "What am I to do?" I said, "Well, I will offer the meeting an apology, and take it myself and explain to them the circumstances." He said, "No; I must not break faith with the public. It is my duty to fulfil my obligation to them. I will take the meeting."

The following day we journeyed to Nottingham for a meeting in the Mechanics' Hall. In the late afternoon, an hour before the meeting, came the wire that Kingsley had passed through the little white gate which leads into a larger life. There was a big bond between Kingsley and his father, and I could see that he was hit very hard, but as we went across to the hall he said, "Not a word about what has happened. I must carry this burden alone. Don't tell the people." Hundreds were turned away from the hall that night. There was a good deal of confusion at our inability to find seats for everybody.

For an hour he addressed the audience, winning all hearts by his plain, straightforward matter-of-fact testimony to the truth of survival and communication, the biggest and surest conviction in his life. In closing the meeting, I took the liberty of telling the audience the strain under which Sir Arthur had been working. They rose and cheered, but two big tears rolled down his cheek. He journeyed to London immediately after the meeting.

To Sir Arthur the public were a sacred tribunal, and personal desires and considerations had always to be subordinate to that. I often admired his joyous boyish nature when things were going well, but to see him in a crisis such as I have described was to realise the great-heartedness of a great man.

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