

# PSYPIONEER

Founded by Leslie Price

Editor Paul Gaunt

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## THE S.N.U.'S SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUALISM THE ERROR THAT CHANGED HISTORY

*“Only by first destroying error can you clear the foundations on which to build the edifice of truth.” Arthur Findlay.*

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Extract from Lecture H. 20: The History of Modern Spiritualism – The Scientific Foundations of Modern Spiritualism, by Ernest Thompson, page 62. 1948. Published by The Two Worlds Publishing Company Ltd. Manchester:

### ***The Need for Education***

*The first churches were formed around the work of local mediums who, in the majority of cases, had not had the benefit of an education which would have made them suitable instruments for the interpretation of the philosophy which their spirit guides wished to give to the people. The need for educating them, and others who were willing to prepare their speeches and deliver normal addresses, was eventually realised. Classes and Discussion Groups were encouraged and later a scheme for the certification of recognised speakers and mediums was initiated. Examinations were held and diplomas issued. Subsequently, in conjunction with the British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union, a more elaborate educational scheme was organised by Mr. A. T. Connor, and the National Spiritualist College came into existence. It lasted only a few years however. A further scheme was later formulated and put into operation by Mr. Percy Wilson. On September 6th, 1946, Mr. Ernest Thompson, Education*

*Secretary, published in The Two Worlds proposals for a new "Education Scheme" which provided education for all types of workers, and also included the ordinary membership of the Union. This is the scheme at present in operation.*

In October 1946 Ernest Thompson (c.1905-1968) instigated a National Education scheme for the Spiritualists' National Union. By July 1949 Thompson had written and completed 150 Lectorettes (approx 200,000 words) and had also prepared the comprehensive syllabus which provided the framework of the S.N.U. education courses.

Initially, there were eight basic text books that were approved by the National Council, as the foundation for the national education scheme. The authors of these books were Andrew Jackson Davis, Hudson Tuttle, Stainton Moses, Arthur Findlay, W. H. Evans, and the Lyceum manual. (You will note that these are not all National Spiritualists). By November 1950, there were twenty two text books carefully chosen and approved by the S.N.U., offering a wide range of courses from beginner to officer, with a complete syllabus, drafted and printed which was to be circulated amongst members and churches.

Education was the main theme for the S.N.U. conference on July 2nd 1949, in Edinburgh, under the presidency of Mr. W Lorraine Haig. The focus was on larger, but fewer, churches as it was perceived that the churches were splitting into small bits creating a greater demand on speakers and demonstrators, hence lowering the standards. The S.N.U. could not cope with these extra demands, thus the need for emphasising the bonuses of an all round education scheme.

The president emphasised *A Spiritualist's College: If we wish to achieve fully our plans in the future, we must have a training centre 'a place of our own' so to speak, where every phase of our work will be taught by qualified teachers. A place where men and women – for the outlay of an amount of money within their reach or of the Society who may sponsor them – can attend for special courses.*

*In this – for lack of a special name – "College for the Advancement of Psychic Science," there will be courses for speakers, development classes for mediums, classes for Spiritualists who want to specialise in any suitable subject. Short Summer courses for those who require further tuition, i.e., Presidents and Executives alike. Indeed, all the subjects coming under the heading of "Psychic Science" will be part of the curriculum. Great is the need for such a college. Haig continued I am certain that within the next twenty-five years a "College for Psychic Science" will be established in this country, and with that faith I am trying today to prepare the mind of the membership to be ready, when the time comes, to grasp the great opportunity with both hands. Yes! grasp it with both hands, so that we may make this "Place of our Own' a model for all the countries in the world to imitate, and at the same time, make it a living memorial to the souls whose work and goodwill will be responsible for bringing it about. (1)*

This boost of comprehensive studies in all areas of the Spiritualist Movement was a worthy move by the Union, creating a more informed knowledge of their religion and an understanding of its phenomena and history. The churches were encouraged, (there were around 500 S.N.U. churches in Britain in 1950) to arrange discussion groups

using the Thompson lecturettes, and hopefully to persuade enquirers to join their local SNU church.

All members were expected, however, to accept "*The Seven Principles of Spiritualism*" It was deemed fair that the new member should be persuaded to take a course of at least eight lectures, so the new member would understand the religious principles they were accepting and acquire a rudimentary knowledge of Spiritualism. The recommended lecturettes consisted of the Phenomena and Mediumship, the Seven Principles and the Spirit World. These, I believe formed the "Beginner's Course".

Ernest Thompson had succeeded Ernest Oaten in 1945 as editor of "The Two Worlds" then based at Manchester, Thompson also published his lecturettes in this weekly paper and created a firm public awareness that "*Education Is the Greatest Need of Our Movement*". He marked November 18<sup>th</sup> as *Education Day* in 1950. (2)

**But with all the good work that Thompson did by his National Education Scheme he made a serious error, that has, to this day, changed the factual history of the "*The Seven Principles*" He wrongly referred to 'The 1871 Cleveland Hall', lecture in London on April 30<sup>th</sup> "*The Creed of the Spirits, and the Influence of the Religion of Spiritualism.*" which had been delivered by Emma Hardinge Britten.**

On April 15<sup>th</sup> 1950, under his editorship, Thompson printed a large article in "The Two Worlds" claiming a psychic relationship between Robert Owen and Emma Hardinge Britten. This was either a serious error, or a misleading account of what had actually been recorded on the day and published by James Burns in "The Medium and Daybreak." (3)

Thompson stated that: "*The Seven Principles of the Spiritualists' National Union were given in 1871 by Robert Owen through the mediumship of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten.*" **In fact there had originally been no previous suggestion of Emma Hardinge Britten being under any influence while giving the basis of her creed/principles.**

This serious error was now embedded in the '*New Education Scheme*' under Lecturette R. 19. But it is quite evident in the 1871 Cleveland Hall speech what Britten says as to her four Principles that she gives:

*You have heard some of them in past discourses; you may apply those to the results which I now offer.*

- 1) *I believe in God*
- 2) *I believe in the immortality of the human soul*
- 3) *I believe in right and wrong*
- 4) *I believe in the communion of spirits as ministering angels.*

The philosophy behind these four principles (which was given with each principle) for some reason, has not been carried forward or used by the S.N.U.

EHB makes the statement directly after this submission: *These are some of the points of my creed, and all of them I have proved.*

It is interesting to note that earlier in this lecture she refers to the now first two principles of the S.N.U.

*Spiritualism is wholly unselfish. It proclaimed from the first the fatherhood of God - that you all admit; and with it the brotherhood of man - and that you don't admit.*

Note that her fourth principle was “*I believe in the communion of spirits as ministering angels*”, Thompson again made a slip by substituting *spirits* for *saints* in “*Two Worlds*”. Moreover, according to Thompson, Owen via Britten’s mediumship gave a summary of six principles, to which a seventh was added later “*The communion of spirits and the ministry of angels*” (as it reads now). In fact she gave the basis of this in 1871.

So, not to cover the same ground, may I refer the reader to my original article some years ago on the formation of the Seven Principles available at [www.woodlandway.org](http://www.woodlandway.org) under - Journal Archive.

Ernest Thompson was an inspiration to Modern Spiritualism as an editor, writer and through his great contribution to the S.N.U. education scheme. He was the second worker to have earned the highest and most prestigious award by the Union in the form of a Fellowship, (F.S.N.U.), received in 1949. (Interestingly, Mr. A.T. Connor was the first to achieve this award in 1948, for his thesis on the Seven Principles; he had been the founder of the education scheme in the 1920’s.)

Thompson founded the Newcastle Psychical Research Institute in 1945; at this time he was president of the Heaton National Spiritualist Church, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In 1946 he was a founder and first president of the Manchester Spiritualist Church.

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## **Philosophy and Ethics Committee complete their investigation into “Origins of the seven principles of spiritualism”**

At the 2004 AGM of the Spiritualists’ National Union, a report on the “Origins of the Seven Principles of Spiritualism” was made available. The Philosophy and Ethics Committee (formerly the Spiritual and Ethics Committee) investigation was concentrated on the two main players, the medium and the communicator.

The paper correctly stated at the onset that in Emma Hardinge Britten’s Autobiography (1900) there are various references to the principles. The report surmised these statements could indicate Owen was influencing Emma prior to the 1871 principle speech. This may well have been the case, however, Robert Owen (1771-1858) in some of the examples given, was very much alive. As Emma

Hardinge Britten clearly mentions in her 1871 lecture when referring to her principles: *You have heard some of them in past discourses; you may apply those to the results which I now offer.*

Mentioned also in their report is a séance (given between 1861-1865, the period of the American Civil War) with Emma Hardinge (who married William Britten in 1870), at the home of Daniel and Anne Leah Underhill (the eldest Fox sister) in which there is recorded a communication with the spirit of Robert Owen. Through the mediumship of Hardinge, Robert Owen gave Ten Spiritual Commandments, followed by Ten Laws of Right. However these are not printed in E.H.B.'s autobiography, and suprisingly Robert Dale Owen, son of Robert Owen who was in attendance at the séance, makes no mention of his father's communication in his book, 'The Debatable Land' 1872, although he gives a narrative on other séances at Daniel and Anne Leah Underhill's home.

In the Committee's report, they print the Ten Spiritual Commandments, and the Ten Laws of Right. These statements are taken from the 1887 Lyceum manual, but this is not as clear cut as they suggest. There is no indication in the Manual that these were given by Robert Owen only that they were given by the spirits through Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten. (Note the addition of Britten to Hardinge; this could suggest they were given after 1870.) I do not have access to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the manual, but in the editions I have consulted, the Ten Spiritual Commandments and Ten Laws of Right are under the Golden Chain Recitations sections 109, 110. *These consist of questions and answers, or short sentences on some spiritual, moral, or instructive subject, read alternately by the conductor and the whole Lyceum.* (1921 and 1992 editions)

I suggest that any confusion with Commandments and Laws of Right may well lie in the texts of Emma Hardinge Britten's autobiography. Information could have been wrongly imputed by her sister, Mrs. Margaret Wilkinson, who acted as editor and publisher to the printing in 1900, following E.H.B.'s death in 1899. The autobiography states: *"The medium then commenced speaking slowly, but emphatically, and with two corrections only from the controlling spirit, who spelt out by raps the words he wished to substitute, there were given ten Spiritual Commandments, and ten laws of right."*

I believe that this should perhaps only read Ten Laws of Right. I suggest that E.H.B. did not receive these Ten Spiritual Commandments until 1871 when she publicly read the Ten Spiritual Commandments for the first time on the evening of April 30<sup>th</sup> 1871. These Commandments were reported as a supplement to the lecture entitled 'The Creed of the Spirits and the Influence of the Religion of Spiritualism', printed in Medium and Daybreak on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1871 as given to E.H.B. on April 29<sup>th</sup> 1871 which she reportedly wrote in a very rapid manner under the influence of Robert Owen and orated as a supplement to the lecture, April 30<sup>th</sup> 1871.

It is important to note the insertion of the Ten Spiritual Commandments was a supplement to her 1871 lecture and is reported in the same edition as her principle lecture. It is only at this point that the names of Britten and Owen coincide with each other and one can see how it could be wrongly recorded or changed. Moreover, the lecture contains reference to the Biblical Ten Commandments which should not be

confused with the supplemental post-lecture oration of Robert Owen's Ten Spiritual Commandments.

On Monday morning (1<sup>st</sup> May), E.H.B., gave James Burns the manuscript and copyright to publish the Ten Spiritual Commandments. Together with her four principles as given in her lecture, these were printed in James Burns Seed Corn series (no.5.) and used as handouts to promote Spiritualism (and, no doubt, Burns 'Spiritual Institution' in London) at a cost of one shilling per 100. 'The ten Laws of Right' were also printed in Burns' Seed Corn series, but is unclear under which number these were printed.

James Burns was a pioneer of the early British Lyceum movement. This may give some clue as to how the Ten Spiritual Commandments and the Ten Laws of Right became part of the original manual in 1887.

The 2004 Committee report continues that in *1871 Six Principles communicated from spirit by Robert Owen through the mediumship of Mrs Emma Hardinge Britten, which she termed a SUMMARY of HER FAITH*. This is a strong indication that the original documentation had not been consulted by the Philosophy and Ethics Committee; if so the report would clearly show that there were only four, not six, as in the original lecture of 1871; also Emma did not refer to the *Summary of her Faith*, this terminology came much later in the 1880s.

Throughout the report it appears that no fresh research has been done by the Committee since the occurrence of the errors by Thompson, and the historic facts of what actually was said and when have not been fully investigated. Interestingly in the Committee's conclusion it states: "*It is difficult to find precise documented evidence of the time and date when the Principles were communicated to Emma Hardinge Britten although it is generally accepted as being circa 1871*". "*Whether there were 5 or 6 originally is open to speculation. There is no doubt that the way books and periodicals of the day laid out what they say was communicated came down to a comma or a capital letter being in the right place*"

In 2001-2 I sent, on two occasions, all the original 1871 documentation to two consecutive Chairs of the S.N.U. Education Committee. I offered also to forward the same to the Spiritual and Ethics Committee (as it was then called). On all occasions I received no acknowledgment or request for more information. (However, the same information was forwarded to the S.N.U. President who kindly obliged me with a reply.)

With this report on the origins of the Seven Principles by the Philosophy and Ethics Committee, one would have expected an in depth inquiry. To suggest that precise documentation is difficult to find is a somewhat futile excuse for leaving their history uncorrected.

Yet in their report conclusion it is also stated: *What is indisputable and the evidence is there for all to read if they desire to research the archives is that the Principles were communicated to Emma Hardinge Britten and the communicator was Robert Owen.....*

The report only really goes as far back to 1887 into the origins of the Seven Principles, giving no detail on 1871. (In 1888, or earlier, E.H.B. made available her principles for possible use to various organisations like the Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society. Her principles were eventually taken up in 1890 at the *National Conference of British Spiritualists*; which later became the S.N.U. - See *Psypioneer* Vol.1. No. 18: *Emma Hardinge Britten and the National Federation of Spiritualists*.)

In *The Medium and Daybreak* April 20<sup>th</sup> 1883 E.H.B. publicly replied to an attack on Spiritualism by a Reverend Skewes. She ends the debate with her principles:

- 1) *I believe in the Fatherhood of God;*
- 2) *The Brotherhood of Man;*
- 3) *The Immortality of the Soul;*
- 4) *Personal Responsibility Here and Hereafter;*
- 5) *And, Eternal Progress.*

It will be noted that at this point in 1883, there are still only five principles. Britten clearly uses her creeds as movable statements open to the adaptability of change and growth; changes she apparently adopted throughout the years. This was apparent even from her 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.*

This is verified in her autobiography; for example in a New York lecture on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1857, she mentions 'my own personal responsibility both here and hereafter, for all the good or evil I have ever done on earth' (Page 52). However this was not in the form of a statement - it was more from her perspective. Although the Committee's report suggests at this early stage of 1857 Robert Owen's influence on her, I fail to see any link. Also Owen was still alive until 1858.

**The simple truth is that Robert Owen did not give the basis of the Seven Principles of the Spiritualists' National Union. An error by Ernest Thompson – and a negative investigation from the S.N.U. - has resulted in serious errors still remaining within the S.N.U.'s education system. As the S.N.U.'s Religion and Religious Philosophy are based upon the Seven Principles, its history needs to be placed on a firm FACTUAL foundation.**

I have recently found a letter in response to Maurice Barbanell by Percy Wilson, who was the chairman of the Exponents and Education Committee in 1941, taking the directorship of *Psychic News* in 1945 and in 1950 becoming president (1950 – 1953) of the S.N.U. This is reprinted below.

## *The Seven Principles*

*"I am grateful for your attempt to help me elucidate the origin of the Seven Principles by your reference to Emma Hardinge Britten's address at Cleveland Hall on April 30, 1871.*

*I have long been aware of this address (I have a copy of a report of it before me as I write this letter) and your reference to it makes me wonder whether you have ever read it. For it contains no mention of Seven (or Six) Principles, no reference to Robert Owen, and no implication that at the time she delivered it she was under special inspiration from the spirit world.*

*Its title, it is true, was "The Creed of the Spirits, and the Influence of the Religion of Spiritualism," but it deals more with the second part than with the rest.*

*As regards the Creed, this is what it says: "I believe in God. I believe in the immortality of the human soul. I believe in right and wrong. I believe in the communion of spirits as ministering angels."*

*It then goes on to say "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 workaday 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..."*

*This is clearly Emma the propagandist, for she goes on in her inimitable iconoclastic fashion to describe how self-styling Christians carry out these commandments.*

*My references above have been taken from the issue of "Medium and Daybreak" for May 5, 1871. The report ends with these words "It is our purpose to close by reading in brief the Ten Commandments of a work-a-day spirits..." but the Editor evidently did not consider them sufficient importance to report.*

*I myself have searched through periodicals from 1871 onwards, but until the opening of the Oldham Spiritual Temple in 1887 there does not appear to be anything which can reasonably be construed as the basis of the Seven Principles; and nowhere have I seen the name of Robert Owen mentioned in any account of these early days as the inspirer of these principle,*

*Percy Wilson, 3 Sheridan Road, London, S.W. 19."*

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*This letter was printed in 'The Two Worlds', December, 26<sup>th</sup> 1953 page 8. This letter was in response to a comment by Maurice Barbanell in his 'All Worlds Are One' in 'The Two Worlds' December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1953 page 4.*

## ***Help For Percy***

*"ALTHOUGH undoubtedly Emma Hardinge Britten claimed to have received them (the seven Principles) by inspiration from the spirit world, I can find no evidence that Robert Owen was the inspirer. The first time I ever saw that suggestion was in a comparatively recent article in Two Worlds, and no authority was given."*

*These words were written in "Psychic News" last week by Percy Wilson, its managing director. A similar statement was printed on October 29, 1932, in "Psychic News," 21*



years ago. More recently it was stated in *Two Worlds* on April 22 1950: "The Seven Principles were originally given through the mediumship of Mrs. Britten by the spirit of Robert Owen in the Cleveland Hall, London, on April 30, 1871".

I have obtained a copy of *Psychic News* of the above date and again in Barbanell's 'All Worlds Are One' column he mentions while talking about Emma Hardinge Britten, *It was she who obtained from Robert Owen, who had passed on, the Seven Principles of Spiritualism, then six, but afterwards divided into seven parts.* However three weeks earlier in *Psychic News* October 8<sup>th</sup> 1932 there is a double page entitled 'The Seven Principles and What They Mean' by Harry Boddington, this is part of a series, 'The University of Spiritualism' which was later published in book form some years later in 1947 under the same title. Boddington makes the same psychic link between Owen and Britten but does not give any details of any research.

Ernest Thompson was not the first to make the error, that Owen through Britten, gave six principles. Whether or not Thompson based his finding on Boddington's 'The University of Spiritualism' we shall not know; but we do know by the evidence and original documentation that Robert Owen did not give the Principles through Emma Hardinge Britten as is asserted by The Spiritualists' National Union.

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(1) The S.N.U. Conference in Edinburgh (Forty Seventh A.G.M., of the S.N.U.) Haigs address was printed verbatim over a number of issues of *The Two Worlds*. This portion was taken from page 229 July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1949.

(2) *The Two Worlds* 11<sup>th</sup> November 1950 page 1022/3.

(3) *The Medium and Daybreak* Vol. II. No. 57 May 5<sup>th</sup> 1871.

(4) Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten 1900 Published and Edited by Mrs. Margaret Wilkinson. This has been re-published by SNU Publications (facsimile) in 1996. This section can be viewed at [www.woodlandway.org](http://www.woodlandway.org) under Journal Archive.

Paul J. Gaunt.

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Taken from 'THE TWO WORLDS' March 11<sup>th</sup> 1949. Page. 74.

## Meet the S.N.U. National Council

### W. LORRAINE HAIG (President)

We have great pleasure in presenting, as the first instalment of a series of biographical sketches of members of the S.N.U. National Council, a brief life story of Mr. W. Lorraine Haig, President of the Spiritualists' National Union.

Born in January, 1891, he commenced his business career with a legal firm in Glasgow, which involved a special training in secretarial work in London in 1909. When the 1914-18 war I broke out he enlisted for the forces, and served in a well

known Highland Regiment. Returning to civil life, he was offered an appointment with an office machine and equipment company, which ultimately led him to establish a business of his own in 1923 and which has prospered ever since.

### **Public Service**

The foregoing of course is merely his normal vocational background. Mr. Haig is known to us, not in his business capacity, but as an ardent and sincere worker for his fellow men. Altruistic motives dominate his life, for he maintained a constant interest in social causes of various kinds until Spiritualism emerged, at an early date, as the principal objective of his desire to serve others. From the age of 21 he became well known as a lecturer, and as his work for the people became well known, his fellow citizens elected him as their representative on the Glasgow Corporation.

His enthusiasm soon involved him in an avalanche of work, and at one time he had committed himself to serve on no less than 32 committees. A special interest developed in health services and he became the organiser of the first Glasgow Housing Scheme, and a member of the Council of the Hutchinson Hospital. Education was also a special interest at this time and he did valuable work for the Glasgow and West of Scotland Commercial College. Meanwhile his qualities were being recognised in the world of business, and he is now President-elect of the Typewriter (and Allied) Trades Federation of Great Britain and Ireland.

### **Work for Spiritualism**

Mr. Haig's interest in Spiritualism commenced 26 years ago, when he joined the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists. Soon he became a member of the committee, leader of a circle, and later Vice-President. When the Glasgow Central Association came into existence, he helped Mr. McIndoe to organise its activities and became Vice-President. In the interval he had been elected to the Scottish District Council and served as its Secretary for a number of years. Then came the promotion to Area Representative on the National Council, together with election as President of the S.G.S. Last year he became President of the S.N.U. at the Harrogate A.G.M. Mr. Haig prefers chairmanship to public speaking and his outstanding ability in, this direction has often been highly praised by his colleagues on the National Council.

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## **THE PROBLEM OF SWEDENBORG**

Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) is an unsolved problem for Spiritualists. Superficially he can be hailed as a distinguished Swedish scientist who after some remarkable spontaneous ESP experiences, developed an unparalleled mediumistic capacity to receive material from the spiritual world. His concept of that other life was to influence the birth of Modern Spiritualism greatly, documented recently in Bret Carroll's analysis "Spiritualism in Antebellum America" (Indiana University Press, 1997).

The psychic interpretation of Swedenborg is supported by experiences like this, reported in his "Spiritual Diary" (para 4752):

*"Polhem died on Monday. He spoke with me on Thursday; and when I was invited to the funeral we saw his coffin, and those who were there, and the whole procession, and also when he was laid in the grave; and, in the meantime, he spoke with me, asking why they buried him when he was still alive; and he heard also when the priest said that he would be resuscitated at the Last Judgement, and yet he had been resuscitated for some time; and he marvelled that such a belief should exist when he was still alive; and that the body should rise again when he himself was sensible of being in a body; besides many other things."*

However closer study of Swedenborg, reveals a man of profound religious feelings who in middle life underwent a spiritual crisis, and whose central preoccupations were God, Christ, the Bible and other aspects of devotional life. It is no disrespect to a great medium like Mrs Leonard, say, or Mrs Garrett, to say this is not their world, though there are affinities with Stainton Moses and his religious arguments with communicators.

Some Spiritualist thinkers have recognised the problem Thus Ernest Thompson wrote:

*Swedenborg has given to man a great revelation and teaching of the nature of life in the spiritual world and of the universality of Divine Providence. He does not however propound these teachings as his own, but constantly affirms that he wrote under the direction and guidance of the Lord, describing himself humbly as the "Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."*

*I think that this claim that Jesus was his Spirit Guide can be accepted in the light of modern Spiritualist knowledge and teachings, and provides a spiritual link with the ancient order of psychic prophets known as the Order of Melchisedek in the following order- Melchisedek, Abraham, Moses, Elijah , Jesus and Swedenborg. Each one became the spiritual guide of the succeeding one.*

(Spiritualism in the Evolution of Philosophy and Religion. 1950. The Two Worlds Publishing Co. Ltd. p.47.)

Arthur Findlay observed:

*The revelation which he thus believed he received from the Lord brought a new religion into being Swedenborgianism - a mixture of Christianity and Spiritualism, because he could not get away from his early orthodox training and, like the early Jesuians, believed in divine spirits, angels and devils. The expressions he uses in his writings resemble those of Saint Paul when writing about his own psychic experiences. Fortunately for Swedenborg, the burning of wizards and witches was in his day coming to an end, and he ranks as the first outstanding medium to be allowed to live during the Christian era.*

(The Curse of Ignorance p.440 Vol.2 1947. Psychic Press)

Are these reasonable assessments of Swedenborg? Some study of his writings, beyond the most popular one “Heaven and Hell” seems desirable, and also a careful reading of his life story. Fortunately, an outstanding new biography was published in 2005 by the Swedenborg Society ([www.swedenborg.org.uk](http://www.swedenborg.org.uk)). Entitled “Swedenborg’s Secret” (£16.99) and written by retired Swedish diplomat Lars Bergquist, it is a 500 page elegantly written survey of the main points of his life and work.

It becomes clear that Swedenborg, who was one of the leading scientists of his time, became increasingly concerned with religious matters in the 1740s. This is apparent in his journal of dreams and visions, especially (in Bergquist’s view) the great Easter vision of 1744. “In a little while, I continued my prayer saying. “Thou hast promised to receive in grace all sinners: though canst not otherwise than keep thy words! In the same moment, I was sitting in his bosom and beheld him face to face, a countenance of a holy mien. All was such that I cannot describe..”(p.167)

Like many people who have had profound religious experience, Swedenborg attempted to put the disclosure into words. First came “The Worship and Love of God” an unfinished account of Creation, based on both the latest science and the first two chapters of Genesis. By 1745, he was convinced that God had appointed him to explain the spiritual content of the Scriptures for humanity. His starting point was the Book of Revelation which had been written by an earlier visionary, John of Patmos. (p.226). He came to believe that judgement took place in the spiritual world in 1757. The Second Coming would be a deepened understanding of the Christian message.

Findlay’s comparison with St. Paul is therefore a pertinent one, for both men were recipients of transcendent revelation, and their paranormal experiences were incidental to this. Ironically, Swedenborg was not an admirer of Paul’s letters. He wrote his main work “Heavenly Secrets” about the inner meaning of the biblical books, Genesis and Exodus. Bergquist notes that Swedenborg records meetings with Paul in his “Spiritual Diary.” and was rather unimpressed by him, (p.312)

Swedenborg then was not a Spiritualist in the modern sense, and “The Lord” who spoke to him was not experienced as a spirit guide, but as God in human form. But Swedenborg was a scientist, and serious students of both mysticism and survival, like David Lorimer and Michael Whiteman have reminded us that he is worthy of our study. This new biography offers us an excellent beginning.

Leslie Price

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## KEIGHLEY.

(Note by PP. In *Psypioneer* July 2004, we reprinted one of the accounts (from 1874 *Medium and Daybreak*) collected by York historian Gerald O'Hara which disputed the suggestion that Keighley was the first Spiritualist church in Britain. (It was not a church.) Here is another account, from *LIGHT* July 15 1882. An edited version of this account can also be found in Britten "Nineteenth Century Miracles" p. 198

An event, unique in character, has recently transpired in this cosy little Yorkshire town, which will long be remembered with pleasure by all concerned, marking as it did the thirtieth anniversary of the introduction of Spiritualism into this country.

The celebration, for such in character was the event alluded to, was conceived and executed by the committee and friends of the Keighley "Spiritual Brotherhood," Mr. John Pickles, the chairman, working energetically to that end, and being ably assisted by Mr. J. Smith, the hon. Secretary. Indeed, so earnestly did all work that a most successful issue was achieved. The proceedings consisted of a public tea and meeting on Saturday, July 8th, and a series of two services on the day following, of which the subjoined account presents the salient particulars.

The objects the Committee of Management had in view were the presentation of the portraits of the three pioneer workers in the movement--viz., Messrs. John Wright, Abraham Shackleton, and David Weatherhead; the two first-named persons, and the family of the last-named gentleman, who has passed hence, being the recipients of the gifts.

In 1853 Mr. David Richmond, then from the Shakers, of America, brought the particulars of Spirit phenomena with him to this country, and, paying a visit to Keighley, called upon Mr. David Weatherhead to present the matter to the attention of that gentleman. As a result of the interview, a public meeting was held, at which table manifestations were obtained, through mediums discovered in the body of the audience, by Mr. Richmond, who delivered an explanatory address.

Mr. Weatherhead became convinced of the truth of Spirit intercourse, and at once entered heartily into the matter, sparing neither time, pains, nor purse in his zeal. He established the first printing press in the movement, printed the first English Spiritual periodical, the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, and caused the circulation of innumerable tracts, pamphlets, &c., throughout the kingdom, and subsequently erected, at his own expense, the comfortable and commodious building used by the Society at the present time. He contentedly bore all the expenses involved, and during his residence in the flesh was a true pillar of the cause.

Messrs. Wright and Shackleton were the two trance mediums developed in the early days; they have literally grown grey in the work. Their labours have been free of price, and as speakers, healers, and clairvoyants they have rendered valuable service to the cause.

To do honour to these workers and to express the high esteem in which they were held, the recent presentation was arranged. On Saturday the proceedings were opened by a tea, at which a very large company sat clown. At seven o'clock the public meeting was opened by the chairman, Mr. J. Clapham, who said:

*“Ladies and gentlemen, we are met here to-night to show our gratitude to the late Mr. Weatherhead, and also to Mr. Shackleton and Mr. Wright, for their past services. Keighley was the place where Spiritualism was first promulgated in this country, being introduced to us by Mr. David Richmond, of Darlington, who, with the assistance of Mr. Weatherhead, was enabled to deliver three lectures upon the subject in the Working Men's Hall, in June, 1853. The issues were, that Mr. Weatherhead took steps which resulted in the formation of the Society which exists at the present time, and soon afterwards the mediums named were developed, and they are still serving us to-day.*

*These gentlemen, with Mr. Weatherhead, were the main stays of the cause, and Mr. Weatherhead, during his life here, spared neither time nor means in spreading abroad this grand truth. It was he who established the first printing press, and distributed tracts, pamphlets, and other literature broadcast, the materials for which were largely obtained through mediumship. He it was who bore the entire expense of the erection of the Lyceum buildings, and in many other ways testified his earnestness and devotion to the cause. The outcome of his labours has been that to-day we have here a society in a flourishing condition, having one hundred and fifty members on the roll, some five or six active mediums constantly ministering to us, and a Sunday-school, composed of upwards of a hundred members.*

*As, therefore, a slight mark of esteem and appreciation to these our pioneer workers, we are to-night to present to them the portraits before us, and all will join with me in saying they are most heartily deserved.”*

The portraits, in oils, which are excellent specimens of the painter's art, were then presented. That to Mr. Wright was presented by Mr. John Scott, of Belfast; that to Mr. Shackleton by Mr. D. Richmond, of Darlington, and that of Mr. Weatherhead to his family, by Mr. J. J. Morse, of London, and suitable acknowledgments were made in each case. The proceedings were varied by some excellent singing and reciting by a glee party and several friends, and altogether the event was marked by a hearty enthusiasm which evidenced the full sympathy of all present in the event of the day.

On Sunday, the 9th inst., Mr. J. J. Morse delivered two trance addresses before very large audiences, the subjects being respectively, “Concerning Devils,” and “Spiritualism: a Message of Peace and a Gospel of Hope,” which were admitted to be among the best Mr. Morse has delivered in this town.

The series of meetings were held in the large Auction Hall of Mr. William Weatherhead, who very kindly placed it at the disposal of the Society free of cost. The above events will be long remembered by all present, and constitute an occasion that will be historical in its relations to the progress of Spiritualism in Great Britain

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Taken from 'Pioneers of the Spiritual Reform' by Mrs. Howitt Watts 1883, Ann Mary Howitt Watts was the daughter of William Howitt. William Howitt was born at Heanor, in Derbyshire England, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1792 and died in Rome on March 3rd 1879. Howitt was an early contributor to the spiritualist movement, he wrote many articles for the British monthly Journal '*The Spiritual Magazine*' (1860-77). He authored a number of books including '*The History of the Supernatural*' in two volumes 1863. ED

## **WILLIAM HOWITT'S CLAIRVOYANT DREAM ON HIS VOYAGE TO AUSTRALIA IN 1852.**

"Some weeks ago, while yet at sea, I had a dream of being at my brother's at Melbourne, and found his house on a hill at the further end of the town, next to the open forest. The garden sloped a little way down the hill to some brick buildings below; and there were greenhouses on the right hand by the wall as you looked down the hill from the house. As I looked out from the windows in my dream, I saw a wood of dusky-foliaged trees, having a somewhat segregated appearance in their heads; that is, their heads did not make that dense mass like our woods.\* `There" I said, addressing someone in my dream, `I see your native forest of Eucalyptus!' This dream I related to my sons, and to two of our fellow passengers, at the time; and on landing, as we walked over the meadows, long before we reached the town, I saw this very wood. `There!' I exclaimed, `is the very wood of my dream. We shall see my brother's house there!' And so we did. It stands exactly as I saw it, only looking newer; over the wall of the garden, is the wood, precisely as I saw it, and now see it, as I sit at the dining-room window writing. When I look on this scene I seem to look into my dream."

In the *Spiritual Magazine*, October, 1871, William Howitt speaking of this dream gives further curious details; he says-

"In a vision at sea, some thousands of miles from Melbourne I not only saw clearly my brother's house and the landscape around it, but also saw things in direct opposition to the news received before leaving England. It was said that all the men were gone off to the gold-fields, and that even the Governor and Chief Justice had no men-servants left. But I now saw abundance of men in the streets of Melbourne, and many sitting on door-steps asking employment. . . . . When in the street before my brother's house, we saw swarms of men, and some actually sitting on steps, seeking work. All was so exactly as I had described it, that great was the astonishment of my companions."

## IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH, FIRST MEETS WITH "TABLE-TURNING" AND THE SO- CALLED "WILLING GAME" OF TO-DAY.

"Whilst we were in Australia," says William Howitt, "came to us rumours of the outbreak of Spiritualism in America. In our letters from home we heard of it having assumed first the shape of table-turning and hat-turning. We heard that this phenomenon had excited great sensation, that it was become an amusement in all ranks of society; hats and tables were being spun everywhere. The philosophers were ready to account for the strange spectacle, as they are generally ready to account for anything. . . .The relation of these things as they came to us in the Bush appeared absurd enough. I have successively laughed at Homoeopathy and Mesmerism; and now I laughed at this new phenomenon. I jocosely asked in my letters home, whether 'the spirits' could not tell us where the great nuggets lay? We were, however, much sooner to be convinced of the moving of hats and tables than we expected. At Wangaratta, on the Broken River, far up in the Australian Bush, a Dr.-, seeing Mr. B. (one of our party), sketching near the bridge, fell into conversation with him, and learned that he belonged to our party. Dr.-, indeed, hunted us out at our tent, and pressed us cordially to spend the evening with him, which we did. A social evening, in our journeyings through the forest, was a rare pleasure. The Doctor had two daughters. After tea he asked us if we had seen any hat-turning. We replied in the negative. A hat was placed on the table, one or two of us put our hands on it, and certainly it began to spin round, without any action on our part. It struck us as very curious. The same experiment was made with a small table, and the result was the same.

Whatever was the cause, the effect was real and curious. Thus my first acquaintance with modern Spiritual-manifestations was made in the Australian Bush. After these demonstrations, the Doctor threw his eldest daughter into the mesmeric sleep, and showed us some remarkable experiments. The Doctor then took a little pile of half-pence, set them on the table, and, taking me aside, told me *that he had willed* that when his daughter awoke she should immediately take up these pence, and put them away in a cupboard. This exactly occurred. On her being demesmerised, she looked round for a while, like a person just awoke, and then, without a word, took up the pence, and carried them to a cupboard! Her father asked her why she did that, and she replied that she could not tell, but that she felt a strong impulse to do so.

"Soon after, on our journey, stopping at Mr. Turnbull's Station, Charlton and one of the young Turnbells tried the experiment with a hat, and then with a table, when, to their great astonishment, the table went whirling about the room in a very wild way!"

In connection with William Howitt's visit to Australia is his publication, in 1857, of a description of life in Australia, in which he has allowed the romantic character of his mind to have full play. To this novel are added various short tales, the scene of which is laid in Australia. Originally these shorter sketches appeared in *Household Words* -sketches which received warm encomium from Dickens, to whose pen, in Australia, they had, much to my father's amusement, been attributed!



This novel, "Tallengetta, or the Squatter's Home," contains many incidents entirely of a Spiritualistic and "supernatural" character, the result of my father's first personal knowledge of "modern spirit manifestations," and its preface contains a frank confession of his faith in them, and the following extract from it may be said to contain the germ of his future "History of the Supernatural." He says: "In all ages Spiritualism has been exhibiting itself in one form or another; and there is a very old adage that where there is smoke there is pretty certainly fire. In the long ages of the sacred history, in the remarkable centuries which succeeded the first spread of Christianity, in the mythic structures and creeds of ancient nations, in India, China-familiar with rapping and table-turning these thousand years - Egypt, Greece, and Rome; under all the distortions and concealments of magic, witchcraft, and the occult sciences of the middle ages, spiritual agency has been working according to the firmest convictions of the greatest minds of those countries and times. As Socrates has his 'familiar spirit,' Numa his Egeria, as the Arabs had their genii, Friar Bacon his brazen head, and Paracelsus his inward illumination, his 'Einhauchende Geister,' so Jacob Bohme and George Fox, in recent, and Zschoke, in our own times, astonished their contemporaries by their revelations. Certainly in all ages there has been a very great smoke in that quarter." My father goes onto say: "The smoke of Spiritualism is now visible enough," and that where he has found it, he has made use of it in his novel-namely, in the Australian Bush-"and this, not in the person of a humbug or a charlatan, but in men educated, scientific, serious, acute in all their relations, profoundly religious, and admittedly honest."

Between December, 1884, when William Howitt returned to England, and June, 1887, when *Tallengetta* was published, much of psychological interest had occurred. Our author had left "the gold-fields of the external world, not greatly enriched with "nuggets;" enriched in far better ways, however, with a new lease of health and strength, with much new and varied knowledge, and with a seed of truth sown in his mind -the perception of some unrecognised "force" behind the phenomenon of "hat and table-turning" and the "willing game," destined to bring forth, within the next twenty years, a great harvest. He was returned fully prepared henceforth to dig for spiritual and celestial gold in the "gold-fields" of spirit-knowledge.

*\* It may be interesting here to note a clairvoyant dream of William Howitt's brother Richard, referring also to Australian scenery. "Let me add one fact he once related to me in conversation-namely, that when a youth in Derbyshire, he dreamed a strange sight-the sunlight descending on a slope amongst trees, the like of which he had theretofore never seen, and that dream was realised exactly some thirty years afterwards in Australia."- (Chapter xxiv., Richard Howitt, "Sketches of Remarkable People, by Spencer T. Hall," The Sherwood Forester. London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co. 1873.)*

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## DION FORTUNE BIOGRAPHY TO BE REVISED

Readers of the now defunct Psypioneer web site may recall the new item below

### *LEADING OCCULTIST WAS ACTIVE AS A MEDIUM*

*A new biography of Dion Fortune (1890- 1946) provides additional evidence that the founder of the Fraternity of the Inner Light guided her group and obtained much of her teaching, through mediumship.*

*Gareth Knight “ Dion Fortune & the Inner Light” (Thoth Publications 2000), the latest of several biographies of the former Violet M. Firth, uses the archives of the Society of the Inner Light which (like the Theosophical Society) has been the parent of numerous occult groups.*

*It is clear that a number of entities (Spiritualists would call them guides) manifested through DF, including David Carstairs, Lord Thomas Erskine and Socrates. The material received ranged from the practical details of community life to metaphysics comparable to “The Secret Doctrine”.*

*Knight comments (p. 191):*

*“ Dion Fortune was quite categorical in her belief that mediumship provided the power for invigorating her fraternity, although there has always been a certain ambivalence, verging at times upon duplicity, as to how far occult teaching relied upon techniques shared with spiritualism. “*

*DF functioned as a trance medium since 1921, when she provided some Glastonbury material for Bligh Bond. Her last trance address was at the Autumnal Equinox, 1945. In 1941-2, she was involved in negotiations with C.R. Cammell the editor of “Light” about a possible closer relationship between Spiritualism and Occultism.*

*Dion Fortune and her Fraternity professed to operate on Western and Christian lines, and after her death it continued as a society of Christian Qabalists. Gareth Knight has recently returned to it.*

*Mediumship was important in the Society for a generation after the death of DF, with the founder as a principal communicator, and Margaret Lumley Brown succeeding her as Pythoness.*

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*An earlier pioneering biography of Dion Fortune was Alan Richardson’s “Priestess” (1987), later reprinted and translated into German. Alan is now revising this and would welcome information about her work, c/o Psypioneer.*

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## THE DIVINE ANNA

As secretary of the Olcott Centre, I arranged for the late David Redstone manager of Watkins Bookshop in London, to speak at 50 Gloucester Place London, the Adyar national T. S. headquarters, about Anna Kingsford. To my surprise on 4 November 1983 I found 47 people gathered peacefully in a classroom for 20, and they were from many groups. It was evident that this was a woman who was venerated as a pioneer by vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists, feminists, Theosophists, and several varieties of esoteric Christians. Anna and her colleague Edward Maitland had also sat with a number of mediums in 1880s London.

It is excellent news that a new web site devoted to her has been established. [www.anna-kingsford.com](http://www.anna-kingsford.com) and is available in both English and Portuguese. Maitland's two volume biography of her is an important independent account of dramatic events in the early days of the British Theosophical Society. As with Emma Hardinge Britten, Madame Blavatsky did not see eye to eye with Anna and quoted a description of her as "The Divine Anna" unsympathetically. (See "Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A .P. Sinnett, Pasadena, TUP, p.44)

But it is also true that when Anna Kingsford died Madame Blavatsky wrote in her magazine *Lucifer*: "She was ..... a leader of spiritual and philosophical thought, gifted with the most exceptional psychic attributes. .... She was one, the aspirations of whose whole life were ever turned toward the eternal and the true. A mystic by nature – the most ardent one to those who knew her well. .... The whole of her adult life was passed in working unselfishly for others, for the elevation of the spiritual side of humanity." (Lucifer II/7 March 1988 p.78-9)

We may hope that the renewed interest in Anna will lead to the rediscovery of the mass of documentation used by Maitland in his biography, especially his diaries. The late lecture by Maitland's own follower, Samuel Hopgood Hart "In Memoriam Anna Kingsford" delivered to the Leeds Vegetarian Society in 1946 to mark the centenary of her death, is already on the site.

The site webmaster Arnaldo Sisson spoke on "The Vegetarian Christianity of Dr Anna Kingsford at the last Vegetarian World Congress in 2004 at Florianopolis, Brazil. LP.

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## TRANSITION ON DR. FORBES WINSLOW

**In our issue of November 2005, we drew attention to the partial electronic resurrection of Dr Forbes Winslow – his early views, but not his late ones. We reprint the following from LIGHT June 14 1913 p.288.**

The newspapers report that Dr. Forbes Winslow died suddenly in London on Sunday last from a heart attack. He was in his seventieth year. Dr. Winslow, upwards of thirty years ago, made a statement to the effect that Spiritualism was driving people insane in America and filling the asylums of that country with its victims. This assertion was fully controverted at the time by the late Dr. Eugene Crowell, but it still does duty as a stock objection to Spiritualism in the pamphlets which are published by our opponents.

During recent years Dr. Winslow became convinced of the reality and value of hypnotism, and lectured for the Spiritualist societies at Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff. In reply to a question at Merthyr he publicly stated that while at the time that he made his assertion he honestly believed it to be true, he had since learned that he was mistaken and would not make any such statement now. He was a Vice-President of the Psycho-Therapeutic Society, and gave a lecture to its members two years ago last February, in which he said that vice and bad habits could be eradicated by the use of suggestion if the victim wished to be cured. The funeral took place yesterday, the 13th inst., at Barnes.

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### How to obtain this Newsletter

The Psypioneer newsletter is at present available, complete with all back issues on the web site <http://www.woodlandway.org> and we are greatly indebted to our Australian friends for hosting and posting this Newsletter. You can obtain it free and direct by sending an e-mail entitled “Subscribe” to [psypioneersub@aol.com](mailto:psypioneersub@aol.com) or “Unsubscribe” to discontinue.

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