

## **MORE POETRY FROM SPIRIT**

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Golden Gate Spiritualist Church

*Third in a series of articles about the poetry given through the hundreds of trance mediums through which Spirit worked in the "massive" spontaneous movement that Spiritualism rapidly became in the United States following the first public demonstration of communication with the Spirit world by rapping given through Margareta Fox and Ann Leah Fox Fish during mid-November, 1849.<sup>1</sup> The first two articles in this series are in The National Spiritualist Summit editions of January and February 2007.*

The previous articles in this series discussed Spiritualism, those who communicated with humanity from the Higher Life through Spiritualist mediums, and the beautiful poetry they brought to humanity. Proof of continuous life and comfort for the mourner was established for all time to come through the tens of thousands of demonstrations of contact with the Spirit world given through the mediums of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> We say *the fact* of continuous life has been established for all time to come because the record of this communication can be found in the vast literature, the books and periodicals, generated by Spiritualism during this time and continuing into the twentieth century. The extensive literature created by Spiritualism recorded much of the communication with Spirit, the content of this communication, and the testimony of many thousands who witnessed it.<sup>3</sup>

Spirit came to humanity in mid-nineteenth century America to do even more than establish the truth of continuous life and comfort the mourner. They came to help free humanity from the brutal tyranny and oppression of the institution of slavery, of the oppression of *all* women, and the mistreatment and suppression of the Native American peoples and their cultures. We know this job is not complete. Spirit came to bring Truth from those more advanced on the Spirit side and the truth of the necessity for moral living.

As “the investigation of the manifestations (of Spirit) swept the nation, Spiritualism became a major – if not *the* major – vehicle for the spread of woman’s rights ideas in mid (nineteenth) century America” and continued to be the principal champion of these rights all through the latter half of that century.<sup>4</sup> The emancipation of *all* women was the core of many reforms advocated by Spirit and Spiritualism. “Mediums often lectured on woman’s rights while in trance.”<sup>5</sup> Few today know of the historical importance of Spiritualism, and its broad scope encompassing millions that carried forward the important reforms initiated in the nineteenth century because Spiritualism was excluded from the historical record up through most of the twentieth century, including exclusion from the history of woman’s rights.<sup>6</sup>

We should all be aware of the plight of those in slavery; men, women, and children, that continued into the nineteenth century. We may not be fully aware of the conditions to which other women in the United States were subjected during this time.

As the eighteenth century was coming to a close, women were considered as little more than servants. Near the beginning of the nineteenth century, a period of spiritual revival, called by historians the *Second Great Awakening*, spread throughout the South

and lower Midwest that featured large revival camp meetings. This period of religious revival spread into New England and Western New York in the 1820's, then into the rest of the northern states in 1830 –31. The most “dramatic and successful” of these large revivals took place in Rochester, New York.<sup>7</sup>

As the revivals “swept the northern states” in 1830 – 1831, they generated a “great movement for social reform.” This much history records. What history does not record is that the zenith of this Second Great Awakening occurred with the advent of Modern Spiritualism in 1848 and the spontaneous “awakening” of thousands of mediums, particularly from 1850 – 1853 and on through the nineteenth century. These mediums served as channels for contact with the Spirit world. Through these instruments or mediums, Spirit brought forth high spiritual, ethical, and moral teachings in prose and poetry, identified themselves, and produced widespread and varied phenomena, all of which proved we survive the change called death.<sup>8</sup>

During the period of Protestant spiritual revival historians chose to recognize and call the Second Great Awakening, the higher spiritual qualities of women were recognized. Women became more accepted by men as human beings like themselves and less like servants but only within a very restricted sphere, the home. In many cases, these now recognized higher spiritual qualities caused women to be placed on pedestals as spiritual leaders of the household. Still, women legally had only that say in decisions about the household, or anything else, allowed by their husbands.<sup>9</sup>

Many women in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century (and before) had little or no say about whom they married. This decision was made by fathers. Suitors would come to the father with an offer of financial gain in return for his

daughter's hand in marriage. The bride was often age 14, 15, or 16 and possibly younger. It was not unusual for the bridegroom to be two, three, or four times the age of the bride. I recall as a child my grandmother, born in 1884, telling me that when she was young, if a woman was not married by the time she was 20, she was considered an "old maid" and no one would marry her. Ann Leah Fox was married in 1828 when she was 14. Her husband deserted her not many years later. Cora Scott (later Richmond), referred to in the first two articles of this series, was married at 16, unfortunately to a man three times her age who abused and exploited her.<sup>10</sup>

Women through the 1850s had little to say about whom they married. If they happened to own any property before marriage, the property became the husband's on marriage. If they divorced, the property remained with the husband. The husband retained custody of children in any divorce. For a woman, divorce meant losing all property and custody of her children. If she separated from her husband, few legal ways to support herself were open. Almost all legal ways of earning a living were closed to women.<sup>11</sup>

Women had few economic alternatives outside marriage. Women could not participate in the political process by voting or running for elected office. Women could not refuse sexual access to themselves by their husbands. This was mandated by state law and by church. The confining clothing women were required to wear covered them from chin to shoe top. The many petticoats and tightly laced corsets severely restricted physical movement, impairing health by limiting physical exercise. The tightly laced corsets that gave women the figure men wanted to see, besides restricting movement, could and did damage internal organs.<sup>12</sup>

Women were, for the most part, forbidden to speak out loud in regular church services even though they were probably the ones conducting the Sunday school services. Public speaking of any kind was not in the “woman’s sphere,” and was generally denied, particularly when the audience was a “promiscuous assembly,” one of both men and women. Married women legally could not enter into contracts or conduct any kind of business without their husbands’ approval.<sup>13</sup>

Self-sovereignty and self-ownership for *all* people, regardless of color, gender, or any other characteristic, were the main planks in the Spiritualist platform of reform issues. Spiritualists believed and demonstrated that each person was responsible for her or himself, that God required for each person “absolute individual autonomy” regardless of gender, skin color, or ancestry. The test of truth was to be found in the God within, not necessarily in the Bible or male clergy.<sup>14</sup>

We now know that equality for women was called for from the Spirit world through the trance mediums of the nineteenth century and was a principal emphasis of Spiritualism’s reform platform.<sup>15</sup> Through medium Lois Waisbrooker came, “Woman’s freedom is the world’s redemption.”<sup>16</sup> Poetry, particularly spontaneous poetry, was one of the demonstrations given through trance mediums, as the previous articles described.

A book of lovely poetry and a few powerful essays, all devoted to the woman’s condition, was published in 1881 entitled *Astrea, or Goddess of Justice*, by Mrs. E. P. Thorndyke, a San Francisco area Spiritualist and probably a medium. Her book contains poems given through various mediums. She tells us all the book’s material was from the “Spiritual realm.” She came to San Francisco in 1851, and visited her native New England in 1868-1869. Some poems, including one of her own, were given there.<sup>17</sup>

A poem *The Grey Dawn of the Morn* from Mrs. Thorndyke's book again illustrates the lovely quality of the poetry received from Spirit. Since all the poetry and essays in this book are about the woman's condition during the middle of the nineteenth century, *The Grey Dawn of the Morn* is about that subject. Consider this stanza.

*Thou did'st say that peace would never*

*Woeful human nature greet,*

*Till beside her holiest alters,*

*Man and woman equal meet.*

Again, from Spirit, we have confirmation of the point raised in the second article of this series, that the primary cause of the wars and unrest in human society was (and continues to be) the *unequal* treatment of women.

*The Grey Dawn of the Morn* was received from a Spirit claiming to be Milton, through the mediumship of Miss Houghton in Boston in 1868, during Mrs. Thorndyke's visit to New England.<sup>18</sup> This poem, like all poetry from Spirit, may require several readings to gain its full meaning.

*The Grey Dawn of the Morn*

*Sorrowing over the woes of others,*

*Struggling bravely 'gainst thine own,*

*Like the very heart's pulsation,*

*Seem thy far resounding tone.*

*Rolling on, forever onward,  
Glory wakes its after chime,  
Till the stately numbers mingle  
With the thunder tones of time.*

*When for this, for loving others,  
Come the world's neglect and scorn,  
Then thy soul's prophetic vision,  
Met the Grey Dawn of the Morn.*

*Then thy thoughts with dreams of beauty,  
Paced the dark aisles of the years,  
Through the dim halls of the future,  
Till they peopled other spheres.*

*Still from erst the darksome shadow,  
Rolls the river of thy song,  
Fretting still the giant buttments,  
Of the granite bridge of wrong.*

*And with eloquence more potent,  
Having won from grief a voice,  
Swells the lofty peans upward,*

*Bidding the oppressed rejoice.*

*Thou did'st ask of man, they brother,*

*How can ye be true and brave,*

*When to your caprice and passion,*

*Woman lives, and dies a slave!*

*Thou did'st say that peace would never,*

*Woeful human nature greet,*

*Till beside her holiest alters,*

*Man and woman equal meet.*

*Words of truth and deepest meaning,*

*Chiming into pleasant song,*

*By the strength that man can bring thee,*

*Woman yet shall right her wrong.*

*Let the burning words resound,*

*Till with strong pulsation start,*

*All the peopled world around,*

*Struggling to creation's heart.*

*Till thy hope hath found its goal,*



*In the universal soul  
Written there in fiery scroll.  
Courage, all whose hearts have fears,  
Freedom dries her children's tears,  
Tremble not for fear nor scorn,  
Tis the Grey Dawn of the Morn!*

*Upward from the dusky zenith,  
Mounts the bright auroral ray,  
Downward, o'er the western shadows,  
Soon shall shine the new-born day.*

*Lo! Man's ancient faith is waning,  
With his iron rule of might;  
Woman, from her slumber rising,  
Upward struggles to the light.*

*By a truer aim ennobled,  
See! She flings away her toys,  
And by higher hopes encircled,  
Seeking more than gilded joys.*

*In the golden fields of labor,*

*She shall prove she hath a soul,  
Worthy yet to be man's equal,  
Traveling to the self same goal.*

*Woman, waken! Crush your fears,  
Freedom is not won by tears –  
Years of toil for heart and brain,  
Toil alone will break the chain.*

*Waken! See the auroral ray,  
Now portends the coming day.  
Fly! Ye fiends of hate and scorn,  
Tis the Gray Dawn of the Morn!*

The theme of woman's emancipation is found in the following excerpt from the epic, 275 page poem *Hesperia* given through the trance mediumship of Cora L. V. Richmond by her Shenandoah Indian woman guide Ouina. Woman's emancipation was a common theme for the guides of Cora Richmond all through her ministry.<sup>19</sup>

*“Well I know  
To whom more than all others she will a blessing be  
A blessing and a guiding star of love.  
Woman – who, held as any chattel slave  
By other slaves, the monarchs of the world,*

*Whose simple duty is to please their sense,  
Or while away an idle hour at best;  
Or who, in Europe, sits upon a throne  
Of social power and plays the mocking-bird  
For some fool's pleasure, lending her rare powers  
To idle mimicry and glittering show.  
Woman – who sits with motionless white lips,  
But dares not sing the song that rises there,  
Through genius kindled and eloquent,  
She crowds it back to break upon her heart.  
Woman, who, loveless and unloved, becomes  
The sneer and jest of every idler's tongue,  
Because, perchance, she dares to walk alone  
The narrow paths of life, rather than bear  
The loathsome bonds of an unholy tie  
Which her soul cannot sanction; for a dream  
Has ever burned within her heart – a pure  
A lofty bright ideal – and its flame  
Makes there a vestal alter unto God.  
Woman, who, at the worst goes madly forth  
From some harsh parent's roof – like a blind moth  
Allured by the false glare of pleasure's flame,  
Or falser promise of a dark soul;*

*But who within her heart loathes things impure,  
And only seeks for love and sympathy;  
Woman, who, at the best must watch and pray,  
Keeping the vestal fires bright,  
In battlemented tower and guarded wall,  
Lest some rude breath of calumny and scorn  
Shall mar the altar's spotless purity –  
But who – if some bright being sudden came,  
Endowed with heaven inspired eloquence,  
To break the chains and gyves that bind her thus,  
Open the gates of cruel circumstance  
To the bright angel opportunity,  
Would uplift heart and hands in purest joy  
And thankfulness, and trusting, follow her  
To pure heights only attained by those  
Who choose the martyr's glorious fiery doom,  
Rather than bear the galling, gilded chains  
Which unrequited love and labor forge  
To bind in fetters the fair queens of earth.*

In a different vein is poetry through the late twentieth century medium John Houldsworth of the Golden Gate Spiritualist Church in San Francisco. (See *The Trance Mediumship of John Houldsworth* in the September 2005, #961, issue of *The National Spiritualist*

*Summit.*) Moonface, a Mohave Indian, Black Crow, a Lakota, and their teacher in Spirit, Rabbi Benjamin, spoke to us directly from Spirit at church services and privately through Mr. Houldsworth's entranced body. This poem was given in the Houldsworth Circle by Benjamin, most likely in 1995 or 1996.

*There may be times when the clouds of sorrow surround you.*

*There may be times when you think*

*The energies you have given forth have gone in vain.*

*But I can tell you here and now,*

*That any energy spent by your physical body,*

*When coupled with Love and Goodness from within,*

*Never goes in vain.*

*There may be times when you wonder,*

*"Why does this happen to me?"*

*But I would like you to understand here and now,*

*That obstacles, Yea, though they may seem big*

*To the physical eye and physical heart,*

*Are nothing but a step, a piece of education,*

*To help build the Spiritual Self.*

*Many a time I have watched the tear of sorrow,*

*As it left the physical eye, lo and behold!*

*Before it had reached the height of the chest,  
Had turned to a tear of Gratitude.  
So each and every thing that is thrown in your pathway,  
Pick it up with both hands and convert it to energy and love,  
As you gradually dispose of it.*

*Tear from the outside of it  
The Knowledge, and education, the lesson learned,  
And so free the meaning of it to the wayside.  
Even though it stings,  
It flies on the pathway of life, out of the sensitive Id,  
From a volume of Knowledge preserved,  
And may you never forget it!*

Should you wish to dig through the vast literature of Spiritualism, particularly the over 200 periodicals of the nineteenth century, you should find a rich treasure of tens of thousands of beautiful poems, many given as spontaneous demonstrations of the Power of Spirit on topics presented at the moment. We conclude this series of articles with another spontaneous poem given by the little girl who worked through medium Mary T. Longley, M. D. This poem was probably given around the turn of the twentieth century when Mary Longley was in Washington, D. C. serving as Secretary of the National Spiritualist Association. The theme “Eternity” is similar to the theme of the poem

“Immortality” from the first article of this series, but the poems are different. “Eternity” was probably given several years after “Immortality.”<sup>20</sup>

*Eternity*

*Far beyond all mortal telling,*

*Grand beyond all earthly speck,*

*Greater than all music swelling,*

*Higher than a tongue can teach,*

*Is Eternity, the theme*

*That is given to me tonight,*

*Fairer than a poet’s dream,*

*Grander than all living light.*

*For Eternity we know,*

*Stretches on from shore to shore*

*Of the Universe, aglow*

*With its radiance evermore;*

*And it breathes a sweeter song*

*That the souls of men can hear,*

*While it shows through every wrong,*

*“Love that casteth out all fear.”*

*It shall pass from out the mortal,  
Into worlds divine and free,  
Through Heaven's glorious golden portal,  
Into blest Eternity.  
There 'twill grow in sweeter splendor,  
Fairer than all pictured dreams,  
Into Life divine and tender,  
Where supremest glory beams.*

*So we tell thee, friend, this even',  
That Eternity is sure,  
All may rise to yonder heaven  
As the soul grows bright and pure.  
Ever onward, ever higher,  
To the land of bliss divine,  
Where the souls of love inspire  
Other souls below, entwine –*

*Yea, their hearts with holy mission,  
Give them peace to press along,  
Show to them a blessed vision  
How to triumph over wrong,  
While above the Heavens smile,*



*With Eternity in view,  
Each soul mounting without guile  
Toward the rare, ethereal blue.*

*Thus we say that each shall find it,  
Sweet Eternity at length,  
Leaving dross and woe behind it,  
Shall the soul gain greater strength,  
While Eternity is glowing,  
Day by day and onward, too,  
For the soul that in its sowing  
Works for fruitage grand and true.*

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1989, 19, 21, 31, 90, 92, 128, Second Edition, xix.

Edmonds and Dexter, *Spiritualism*, Charles Partridge, New York, Tenth Edition, 1866, 434.

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Hardinge, Emma, *Modern American Spiritualism*, republished by University Books, New York, 1970, from the 1870 edition. (The work was first published in 1869.) 55, 61-62, 65, 68, 71, 101, 104.

<sup>2</sup> See references in Note 1 above.

Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, 239-255. These pages list the 300 or more references used by Dr. Braude to compile *Radical Spirits*. These books, articles, newspapers, other periodicals, collections of

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letters, proceedings of conventions and organizations, and the 214 Spiritualist periodicals listed in *News from the Spirit World* (See Note 4 following) tell us much of this momentous movement that arose spontaneously after the demonstrations in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, New York, in November 1849. Some references are critical of Spirit contact, mediumship, and Spiritualism. Much criticism came from the same people who criticized the movement for woman's rights with equal vehemence.

<sup>3</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, 26-27. (See also Note 27 in the first article of this series.)

Braude, Ann, *News from the Spirit World: A Checklist of American Spiritualist Periodicals, 1847 – 1900*, Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, Volume 99, Part Two, 1989, 399 – 462.

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<sup>4</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, 56-57, 76-81.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 80-81, Second Edition, xvi-xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> Divine, Breen, Fredickson, and Williams, *America Past and Present*, Fifth Edition, 321-327.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 321-322. See also Notes 1 and 3 above.

<sup>9</sup> Divine, Breen, Fredickson, and Williams, *American Past and Present*, Fifth Edition, 327-328.

<sup>10</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, 131, 135-136.

Underhill, A. Leah, *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*, New York, Thomas A. Knox & Co., 1885, 30-32.

<sup>11</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, 119, 120-121, 125, 131, 132.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 79, 119, 120-121 124, 125-126, 142-143, 151-153.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 90-92, 96-98, 108, 111, 201.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 61, 62-63, 76-81, 82, 118, 142, 155, 190, 197.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 56-57, 76-81.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 57.

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<sup>17</sup> Thorndyke, Mrs. E. P., *Astrea, or Goddess of Justice*, Amanda M. Slocum, Book & Job Printer, San Francisco, 1881, Introduction, 11, 13-15, 41, 52, 64, 87, 93-97.

<sup>18</sup> Thorndyke, Mrs. E. P., 13-15.

<sup>19</sup> Barrett, Harrison D., *Life Work of Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond*, Hack & Anderson Printers, Chicago, 1896, 536-537.

<sup>20</sup> Braude, Ann, *News from the Spirit World: A checklist of American Spiritualist Periodical 1847 – 1900*, 399-462.

Longley, Mary T., *The Spirit World*, The Progressive Thinker Publishing House, Chicago, 1917, 42-43.