

## POETRY FROM SPIRIT

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Golden Gate Spiritualist Church

*Poetry from the Spirit World*, which appeared in the previous issue of *The National Spiritualist Summit*, talked about the spontaneous poetry given through trance mediums, mostly girls and young women, by workers from the Spirit side.<sup>1</sup> The historical record shows that, within a few months of the first public meetings held by Margaretta Fox and Anne Leah Fox Fish in late 1849, trance mediums began coming forth who soon were giving nearly all the public demonstrations of Spirit communication, a practice that continued at least through the first few decades of Modern Spiritualism.<sup>2</sup>

Spirit manifested in a variety of ways to convince audiences, observers, and investigators that what was being given through the trance mediums had to come from some source outside the mediums and with capability far beyond that of any of the mediums. Audiences for public demonstrations picked the topic on which the trance mediums were asked to speak. The medium may have come onto the platform already in trance, as Cora Scott Richmond did, or would go into trace *immediately* after the topic was given. Either way, *immediately*, a long and learned discourse was given through the medium by Spirit on the topic presented.<sup>3</sup> The eloquence of the speakers and the knowledge the speakers displayed were far beyond anything the typically uneducated young female mediums could know and beyond that of any member of the audience.<sup>4</sup> The discourse on the selected topic was sometimes given *in verse* to give further proof of

the higher source responsible. One or more foreign languages could be used in the demonstration, languages impossible for the mediums involved to have known.<sup>5</sup>

Upon completing the discourse, the entrancing Spirit would often take questions from those assembled. Then another topic may have been requested. *Immediately*, the same or a different Spirit would give a long and often exceptionally beautiful poem on the topic. (See the poem *Immortality* in the previous issue of *The Summit*) The Shenandoah Indian woman Ouina worked this way from the Spirit side through “dead” trance medium Cora Scott Richmond.<sup>6</sup>

In the *NSAC Yearbook* each year, there is a lovely poem on the inside, front cover, a poem I am almost certain was given from Spirit, possibly as part of a longer work. The simplicity and beauty of these three stanzas are typical of poetry given from higher Spirit realms..

*Today the journey has ended.*

*I have worked out the mandates of fate.*

*Naked, alone, undefended,*

*I knock at the uttermost gate.*

*Lo! The gate swings wide at my knocking.*

*Across endless reaches I see,*

*Lost friends with laughter come flocking,*

*To give a glad greeting to me.*

*Farewell! The maze has been threaded.*

*This is the ending of strife.  
Say not that death should be dreaded,  
Tis but the beginning of Life.*<sup>7</sup>

Poetry given by Spirit through the trance mediums could also comment on the issues of the time. The historical record shows that Spiritualism was deeply involved in the many social reforms of the nineteenth century. Reforms such as the abolition of slavery, women's equal rights, and many others would be advocated from the public platform *by Spirit* through their entranced medium. Spiritualist trance mediums normally shared the platform with other speakers at the large reform meetings and conventions of the day.<sup>8</sup>

Spiritualists and Spiritualism were a strong force in the movement to abolish slavery. William Lloyd Garrison, the editor of the leading Abolitionist periodical the *Liberator* and a leader of the movement to abolish slavery, came to Spiritualism early. He frequently attended séances held at Anne Leah Fox Underhill's home<sup>9</sup>. Equal rights for *all* women shared the reform agenda of the Spiritualists and the Garrisonian Abolitionists. Spiritualism was one of the reforms advocated by reformers of the era. The elimination of all forms of tyranny and oppression, temperance, the treatment of children and child labor, the appropriation of Indian lands, and women's dress and health were among the reform issues of the time.<sup>10</sup>

“Spiritualism became a major – if not *the* major – vehicle for the spread of woman's rights ideas in mid – century America.”<sup>11</sup> The table on which Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote the agenda for the first Woman's Rights Convention at

Seneca Falls, New York, in the summer of 1848, was “rocked” by raps. Raps were heard in Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s home.<sup>12</sup>

To Spiritualists of mid-nineteenth century America “woman’s freedom is the world’s redemption.”<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note the same point made by Lao Russell a century later that God’s Universe is balanced, that God’s Law insists on balance, and that the “prime cause “ of the failures of human society is the *unbalance* created by the unequal treatment of women. The imbalance created in human society opens the door to social unrest, war, and the chaos associated with war.<sup>14</sup>

Later in the twentieth century, the Mohave Indian Moonface, speaking through trance medium John Houldsworth at a service of the Golden Gate Spiritualist Church, San Francisco, confirmed that the inequality of women with men and the mistreatment of women by men were *first* among the causes of all the unrest, war, and chaos in human society, past and present. Moonface further observed that while “Man walks ahead physically, squaw walk ahead spiritually.” Moonface is telling us that, while men generally have greater physical strength, women are normally more spiritually advanced and of greater spiritual strength than men.<sup>15</sup>

The higher Spirits, from almost the beginning of Modern Spiritualism, were involved with the elimination of oppression and slavery. They advocated reform directly to people through trance mediums at the large reform conventions and at other public meetings and demonstrations.<sup>16</sup> Medium Nettie Colburn was a frequent visitor in the Lincoln Whitehouse where séances were held for President Lincoln and others. At these séances, President Lincoln received the guidance of Spirit in the conduct of the Civil War

and encouragement to emancipate the slaves. Lincoln sometimes visited Nettie Colburn “in her rooms” for guidance from Spirit, as well.<sup>17</sup>

Trance medium Cora Scott Richmond visited Washington D. C. often in the 1860’s and took up permanent residence there in 1865, where she remained for a number of years. During the war years, President Lincoln participated in some of her séances. The Joint Committee of the Senate and House on Reconstruction visited Cora Scott Richmond frequently after the Civil War for guidance from Spirit, sometimes as often as twice a week. Abraham Lincoln was one of those from the Spirit side that spoke through Cora Richmond’s trance mediumship, not too many months after his assassination. He frequently addressed the Joint Committee on Reconstruction through Cora Richmond’s entranced body. Many of President Lincoln’s friends witnessed these communications and testified that there was no doubt it was he. Unfortunately, the Joint Committee did not recommend to their respective Houses of Congress all that Spirit advocated. They were unable to have some other matters, recommended by Spirit, passed by Congress because of the politics of the time. Hence, as we know, Reconstruction was not successful.<sup>18</sup>

Spirit was involved with the government of our country in the twentieth century, as well. Reverend Florence Becker, founder of the Golden Gate Spiritualist Church in San Francisco, held a séance for 39 senators and members of the House of Representatives in the 1920’s. She met Franklin Roosevelt and talked with him when he was Governor of New York. Later, during World War II, President Roosevelt was to send a plane to San Francisco 8 times to transport Florence Becker to Washington so that Spirit could provide him and his advisors with guidance through her trance mediumship.

Many who were members of the Golden Gate Spiritualist Church during World War II and before told me of these trips to Washington. These long time members, including Reverend Becker, were still very active in the church when I began attending regularly in 1967 or '68.

At a Thanksgiving, 1865 trance address in Washington, D. C., Theodore Parker (1810-1860) gave the trance address through Cora Scott Richmond. In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment outlawing slavery was passed in January, the war ended in April, President Lincoln was assassinated that same month, and the debate on Reconstruction was joined.

Reverend Parker was a prominent Unitarian minister, and one who probably embraced Spiritualism as did many Unitarians, as a series of his sermons were published by the *Banner of Light*, the most prominent Spiritualist periodical of the more than 214 Spiritualist periodicals that began publication in the nineteenth century. Following Theodore Parker's "characteristic and masterly Thanksgiving discourse," this poem was given through Cora Scott Richmond's entranced body, illustrating the poetic involvement of Spirit with the affairs of State.<sup>19</sup>

*A PROPHETIC VISION*<sup>20</sup>

*In a parlor, music haunted,  
Kindly faces beaming near,  
Kind hearts breathing words of cheer;  
By the moonlights waves enchanted –  
Bathed and folded in the moonlight,  
In the music and the moonlight,*

*Sat we there.*

*Conversation and sweet stillness,  
Circling all our hearts around,  
Blending with the waves of sound –  
Such a perfect rapt'rous fullness,  
Such a strange and perfect silence;  
Moonlight, music, and sweet silence  
Floating there.*

*Suddenly the parlor vanished,  
Moonlight, music – all were gone;  
And upon my spirit shone  
Scenes and sights I thought were vanished,  
Of a strange prophetic vision –  
A thrilling and prophetic vision,  
Dawning there.*

*I*

*I stood within the Nation's Capitol:  
The Senate Chamber was the scene  
Of deepest interest; – there to extol  
The virtues of the Nation, were convened*

*The people's giant minds,  
And every gallery was filled,  
And every isle was thronged,  
And every heart was thrilled  
By some deep theme debated there –  
The theme of justice to a people wronged!  
When, lo! An angel clad in white,  
With dazzling face of wondrous light,  
With plumes of majesty and might,  
Holding a sheathed sword with olive twined,  
Bearing a manuscript, swept like the wind  
Close to the Speaker's stand –  
Even the highest seat the power could reach: –  
Placing thereon the paper, did command  
By silence more palpable than speech,  
That officer to read. With voice subdued  
And tremulous (the multitude meanwhile  
Thrilled with a strange expectancy) –  
And thoughts whose strange foreboding did beguile  
Him from his task – yet thus he read:  
“A voice from South Carolina –  
A true memorial from man to man –  
From a people long oppressed,*

*From a people long distressed,  
Long dishonored and betrayed,  
Asking if the promise made,  
Hailed by them with deepest ecstasy,  
Of justice in accordance with God's plan  
Shall be theirs?"*

*No voice was heard, save that of one whose form uprose  
As if to grant the boon, when, lo! The Angel sped  
And every senator bowed low his head,  
In shame and fear.*

## *II*

*Again within the hall I stood,  
And multitudes were gathered there;  
The young and gay and fair –  
And foolish, wise and good,  
And solemn faces there were seen,  
And each one with a thoughtful mien  
Listened attentively.  
The Nation's voice spoke,  
And in Solemn debate  
Questioned they of the state  
Of those who had just broke*

*Their fetters and were free –  
When, lo! The Angel clad in white,  
With wondrous power and great might,  
Again appeared, bearing the sword,  
Sheathed and entwined as before,  
Bearing again the written word –  
Came to the Speaker's desk once more,  
An bade him read, while, o'er and o'er  
That vast assemblage gathered there  
A thrill was visible, as if the air  
Was filled with unseen wings.*

*“Voice from man to man,  
Asking if heaven's plan,  
Shall be fulfilled on earth: -  
If honor and true worth  
Shall be their just reward?”*

*Alas! Alas! It was so very hard  
To see that angel bow its shining head –  
To see the slow and measured tread  
With which it stalked away –  
While one uprose with swift regret,  
As if to speak. The angel soft did say,  
Smiling on him so sweetly, “No, not yet”*

### III

*Once more within the Nation's Capitol  
I stood; this time in that high Hall  
Of Representatives from all the States;  
Which august body evermore debates  
The people's liberties, and rights, and powers;  
More thronged and crowded than before,  
Filled from its ceiling to the floor,  
With anxious, earnest faces, longing eyes,  
Watching the Nation's destinies.*

*An armed guard was there.*

*Stationed throughout the crowd,*

*And near the outer door,*

*Talking in voices loud,*

*Were those who seek for power*

*At the expense of right –*

*Who in the darkest hour*

*Of the Rebellion's night,*

*Sought to o'erthrow the government*

*With treason's serpent might;*

*When suddenly, more swift than before,*

*The crowned angel there appeared,*

*Rushing through the open door;*

*While the vast multitude, who feared,*

*Yet welcomed the strange visitant,*

*Sat awed, silent and expectant:*

*“Another and a last appeal,*

*To know if ye will still conceal*

*The truth – and barter souls for power,*

*While rank corruption doth devour*

*Your manhood – From the South,*

*Speaking through paper’s white-lipped mouth,*

*We ask again, if man to man,*

*Will grant the right of Heaven’s plan?”*

*The Speaker ceased to read; a silent “No” was heard,*

*When, at the sound, as though a magic word*

*Were breathed, the Angel drew the sword,*

*Like Michael, the Archangel of the Lord;*

*Swept like the lightning, when afar*

*It cleaves the cloud and strikes the giant tree, -*

*So struck that lightening sword for Liberty!*

*Or, as the ocean by the tempest driven.*

*Wave after wave are upon the rocks riven;*

*So swayed and broke that tide of human forms.*

*Touched by the breath of the Avenger’s storms.*

IV

*The scene was changed anew,  
And slowly to my view,  
Appeared the shining, blooming land,  
Blessed by perennial Summer's hand,  
Two armies, rank and file, were thus arrayed  
For battle. A wronged and outraged race,  
Who so long had waited and watched and prayed,  
Were now about to trace  
Their record on the page  
Of human liberty.  
Their faces colored were, but in their eyes  
Gleamed the true fires of Freedom's prophecies.  
The angel led them on,  
And myriads of those  
Who long with tongue and pen,  
Have pled the rights of men,  
In rank and file did close,  
Sustaining them in deed –  
Now in their hour off need,  
Fighting for Liberty.  
Arrayed against them were the hosts*

*Of lawful power – Of tyrants and of fools,  
Who make the hearts of men but simple tools  
To serve ambition; - and the horrid ghosts  
Of treason and theology were there.  
The Nation's government had sold its soul  
Unto the Fiend of Power, whose mocking prayer  
In waves of solemn blasphemy forever roll  
Through temples built by man!  
And now those hosts, born of great wrongs,  
With Church and State to make the strong,  
Came forth to crush humanity,  
And trail the flag of Liberty  
In dust and human gore.  
Over the whole bright land,  
O'er mountain, city, town,  
Their ravages were spread;  
And still the strong, true band  
Of freedmen swept them down –  
Until their leaders dead,  
Their cause unjust and false,  
Their hearts corrupt and sore –  
They ceased to battle more.  
And those who fought for Liberty and Truth,*

*And by the angel of Eternal Youth,  
Beheld a newer government arise  
Like that which governs all the skies,  
And valleys teeming with rich grain,  
And man, pure, free and glorified –  
His truth and wisdom then applied,  
While unto him was given;  
  
Peace that was born of pain;  
Liberty, child of Joy;  
Love, with naught of alloy,  
And Justice, born of heaven.*

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<sup>1</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1989, pages 20, 23, 85-87, 115.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pages 21, 85-86, 87, 90, 92, 93.

<sup>3</sup> Barrett, Harrison D., *The Life Work of Cora L. V. Richmond*, Hack & Anderson, Chicago, 1895, pages 104-120.

Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, pages 85-86, 88, 95, 97.

<sup>4</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, page 85, 86, 88, 95.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page 20, 85, 86, 115.

Hardinge, Emma, *Modern American Spiritualism*, University Books, New York, 1970 (reprinted from the original published in New York, 1869), page 52, 57, 84, 86, 98, 101, 102.

<sup>6</sup> Barrett, Harrison D., pages 101-120.

Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, page 88.

<sup>7</sup> National Spiritualist Association of Churches, *NSAC 2006 Yearbook*, Lily Dale, New York, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, pages 3, 6, 7, 56, 57, 62-64, 69-70, 72-73, 117, 197-199.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pages 3, 11, 17, 27, 29-30, 57, 60-61, 72, 74-81.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pages 3, 56-81.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, page 57.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, page 58.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, page 57.

<sup>14</sup> Russell, Lao, *God Will Work with You but Not for You*, University of Science and Philosophy, Waynesboro, Virginia, 1955, pages 135-150.

<sup>15</sup> Moonface gave addresses through trance medium John Houldsworth from 1969-1997. Nearly all these talks were recorded, many by the author. The author has heard the recorded talk from which this information was taken on a number of occasions.

<sup>16</sup> Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, pages 66-73.

<sup>17</sup> Barrett, Harrison D., page 240.

Divine, Breen, Fredrickson, and Williams, *America Past and Present, Fifth Edition*, Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., New York, 1999, page 341.

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<sup>18</sup> Barrett, Harrison D., pages 224-229, 242-246.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, page 230.

Braude, Ann, *News from the Spirit World: A Checklist of American Spiritualist Periodicals, 1847-1900*, Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, Volume 99, Part 2, 1989, pages 411-443.

Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits*, pages 75-76.

Hardinge, Emma, page 511.

<sup>20</sup> Barrett, Harrison D., pages 230-235.