Introduction

The only existing film footage of Alfred Deakin survives in a short pictorial record of the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia at Sydney’s Centennial Park on 1 January 1901, the first day of the new century. Attired in tophat and tails, Deakin descends the octagonal pavilion where he had just been sworn in as Attorney-General in Edmund Barton’s government. In this brief glimpse of the living man, self-consciously doffing his hat to the crowd as he descends alone after taking the oath of office, we note first the slight stoop and lean physical stature, a certain fatigue described on his face, and a truly enigmatic smile. It is the smile of a public man accustomed to ceremonial, but there is something besides. At the bottom of the stairs Deakin sees the camera and gazes into it for a moment, then in the remaining seconds as he passes by, the hat somehow comes between his face and the lens of posterity. In another, this gesture might easily be passed over or be put down to natural shyness; but in this unusual man, it is a gesture that might well have carried a meaning, even if half-conscious and impromptu. With a profound sense of history and destiny, a penchant for ‘signs’ and significant dates, and with an abiding Faith in the All-Seeing Providence, perhaps to Deakin this action signified humility at this triumphant moment they had been working toward for over a decade. At any rate that smile and fixed gaze, however fleeting, are not easily forgotten.

Alfred Deakin had been ‘whirled into’ politics early, and became a legend during his own lifetime. One historian has aptly described him as ‘the great phenomenon of Australian political history, even of Australian experience’, not only for that long and illustrious career, but because Deakin was unusual among Australian intellectuals in his association with the ‘Occult’, in a lifelong quest for ‘spiritual enlightenment and discipleship’.2 On the public stage Deakin was an adept at
parliamentary tactics, yet widely respected for his brilliant capacities and trusted even by political opponents. He was admired as a masterful orator whose 'burning, bristling and commanding' eloquence could on occasion subdue an unruly Parliament. Deakin's political significance rests in his status as key member of that small educated elite which Pember-Reeves called the 'barrister politicians' of the prosperous generation after the gold rushes. Rising to power first in the colonial legislatures, they exercised considerable influence on the political processes of Australia in framing the Constitution and establishing the political and judicial institutions of the Commonwealth.

This book is not intended as a full biography of a master politician. Deakin's enormous contribution to these political labours of nation-building has been documented and sagely analysed in Professor J. A. La Nauze's biography, and to a lesser extent by Walter Murdoch, author in 1923 of the first sketch of Deakin's life. Rather, it is intended as a corrective, for although each author illuminated aspects of this complex man and his political milieu, neither in my view succeeded in integrating Deakin's public exertions to what was unquestionably their motive power: a profound, almost pietistic, private religious faith.

Deakin always took pains to obscure the creative and spiritual dimensions of his being from the gaze of others, yet he did leave an enormous volume of private writings, spanning a range of genres. It is principally through this body of writings that occupied his diminishing leisure over some forty years, that the substance of his personal faith and its relation to the well known public life and persona are disclosed, however opaque. That fecund inner life can be glimpsed also, I shall argue, in his public life and even in his public writings.

At this triumphant moment of the inauguration of the Commonwealth fleetingly captured by the camera, Deakin could look back in thankfulness at the workings of Providence as he believed it had touched his career: a meteoric rise in the Victorian Parliament, when he became the voice of the Australian-born, radical reformer of factories legislation and 'father' of irrigation; and before the age of thirty Liberal leader and co-leader of a coalition government. That Providence had now brought them to nationhood, against what seemed at times insurmountable obstacles. But had Deakin been gifted with true prevision of the events to follow the brief elation of a federated Australia, he would have been less sanguine. He would remain the dominating figure, in or out of office, during the first decade of the Commonwealth, and the three ministries he led would put into place foundational legislation like the Judiciary Act establishing the High Court, and advanced social legislation such as pensions and an arbitration system that would earn Australia a reputation in this era as the 'social laboratory' of the world. But that final decade of his public service would entail great compromises in his political ideas, particularly in the 'Fusion' in 1909 with his former Conservative opponents, exacting an enormous personal cost in diminished faculties and broken health, which by the end of the decade would finish Deakin's effectiveness as a political leader.

This book endeavours to look behind the 'affable' exterior to another Alfred Deakin given intimate expression through his private writings: the 'silent student', the seeker for Providential 'signs', the fervent believer in prophecy and inspiration, the would-be poet, preacher and mystic, whose insights and experiences gradually convinced him that his political labours were mandated by the Divine will, and that the fate of his beloved nation was somehow linked to his own capacity for spiritual gnosis and moral improvement.
Notes

1 Two versions exist of the inauguration of the Commonwealth. I have seen both, but have been able to document only this one, NA 1009, which is reproduced in a 1966 A.B.C. documentary 'Mr Prime Minister', NC 211; National Film and Sound Archives, Canberra.


3 W. H. Watt, Obituary Testimonial, 23/74, 22 October 1919.

CHAPTER 1

A Sense of Mystery

In the seventies I was bearing in my breast,
Penned tight,
Certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light
On the worktimes and the soundless hours of rest
In the seventies, aye, I bore them in my breast
Penned tight

Thomas Hardy,
'Moments of Vision'

Extraordinary powers of imagination, a love of mystery and a preoccupation with heroism and death, along with a precocious philosophical seriousness, were apparent early in the character of Alfred Deakin. His parents were English migrants, nominally Church of England members and tolerant in their attitudes, devoted to Alfred and his older sister Catherine, who practised considerable self-denial to give their talented children a good education.1 William Deakin came from Northamptonshire where he had been a commercial traveller, and Sarah Bill was the daughter of a Shropshire farmer. In 1849 they married and emigrated to Australia where, with help from relatives, William first became a partner in a mail run from Serpentine to Swan Hill; then, moving to Melbourne, he was accountant to Cobb & Co. for the rest of his working life.2

In a handwritten note self-effacingly entitled 'Parents of Alfred Deakin', Catherine describes the characters and the middle-class values of these 'refined, simple people with a strong thrall of duty'. They were 'broadminded and unconventional', yet also 'great believers in good manners and the customs of well-bred English folk'. They were 'lovers of home and children'. William was impressionable, enthusiastic and talkative, with great powers of description and a fondness for literature, especially for the English classics which he would read aloud to the family. He was very regular in his habits and 'most particular as to dress'. Sarah was modest and, though less talkative, 'when she spoke it was to the point'. She is described as full of shrewd common sense, often witty and humorous, and her influence is characterised as 'all pervading in the home life but never dominating'. In this environment Alfred and Catherine, although allowed absolute freedom, '[n]ever undertook anything without the influence of their unspoken principles of life guiding the decision.'3
In his youth Alfred was enjoined to attend services, probably by Catherine, which he found boring. Half a century later he recalled how during the sermon he had preferred to read the Old Testament, describing himself at age eight as 'a curious compound... highly nervous, slender, overgrown, sensitive, sympathetic, variable, emotional, apprehensive & dreamy.' Though normal in every respect, in these early years he suffered from frail health, a stigma of girlishness and awkward physical development.

Suddenly at age thirteen, probably from 'an impulse of reading' as he remembered, Alfred took up Sunday school where he taught during 1869-70. However, when confirmation was made compulsory for all teachers he refused, since as he understood it, 'Christianity... was wider than any & all of the Churches, & therefore acceptance of any formal limitations impossible', and also because of his father's 'feeling against conformity'. When Alfred turned to spiritistic investigations in late adolescence, his parents displayed neither great interest nor antagonism.

The lessons at the Melbourne Church of England Grammar School were a drudgery 'lived through without interest or aim.' His delight was to hurry home to storybooks, whose magic unlocked a treasure of gallant dreams and faraway places. *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Arabian Nights* became his real friends, along with books by Dumas, Fenimore Cooper, Dickens and other classics. Fed by a habit of constant reading acquired from his father, these dreams increased in intensity, so that escape to literature became for a time the dominating feature of Deakin's adolescent life. Many years later he wondered whether he had not 'lived more, & more intensely, in & through books'; for the moment literature became a fertile mental playground. He would spin romances in his mind where he was 'the culmination of all heroes, & in turn every kind of noble being', engaged in 'winning a long line of peerless beauties under the most desperate & amazing circumstances'.

In order to collect 'fresh knowledge & inspiration' for these reveries, from around 1865 when he was nine Alfred began to visit public libraries most Saturdays and holidays, reading on occasion from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a short interval for pocket lunch. His schoolmasters thought him unpromising, but this was due to a lack of interest and application, which he reserved for his copious private reading and daydreaming. A new world opened in which he regularly worked out each career, involving 'a geography of an extensive character, peoples of different complexions, cities & seaports, navies & armies, courts & industries'. Thus he undertook in turn 'the labour of Hercules, campaigns a la Napoleon, seafights a la Nelson, & statesmanship a la Louis XIV':

Often in school I continued to dream at my desk—walked home rapt in its development—remained for hours in its varied responsibilities—always those of the explorer & conqueror who devoted himself to the elevation of his people & the enrichment of his country. These grew longer as I became possessed of more material & might last for a week or two. At this time... I lived in these creations more than in that in which I moved, an often silent, absent & contented visionary—and of all this, neither friend, or companion, or relative ever heard a single word.

What seems unusual, as Deakin's first biographer Walter Murdoch noted, is not the fact of adolescent fantasy but the intensity and sophistication of his imagination, a detachment of his inner world and private thoughts from the gaze
of others, and the ‘steady and glowing persistence with which he went his own way’, a singular trait of character becoming more marked with maturity.\(^\text{10}\)

The year 1872 marks an important watershed in Deakin’s intellectual development, as his thoughts were gradually turning to ponder deeper questions concerning the human condition. In this year his reading tastes began to mature, and he commenced writing. Shortly after entering the senior school, encouraged by J. H. Thompson who alone among his teachers had earned his almost worshipful admiration, he embarked upon more serious reading. Always a rapid reader, the sixteen-year-old Alfred raced through Macaulay’s *History*, Buckle’s *History of Civilisation*, Bacon’s *Essays* and other worthy tomes, increasing all the while his acquaintance with the English literary classics—Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and Coleridge among them. It was also in 1872 that Deakin was introduced to the two dominating influences in his early adult life, through two older friends then employed at the Post Office. By Edward Mickle he was introduced to the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, who would remain ‘an authority on practical affairs’ until after Deakin had entered the Victorian Parliament. In 1873, together with Arthur Patchett Martin, later editor of that self-confident testament to ‘Marvellous Melbourne’ *Victoria & Her Metropolis* and a biographer of Robert Lowe, they formed a ‘home circle’ in his parents’ home to investigate the phenomena of Spiritualism.\(^\text{11}\) For a time these two seemed encyclopaedic and omniscient, but as the sincere enthusiast embarked upon six months of ‘hard & happy work’, his reading eventually ‘raced up to & even ahead of them’. Of this exhilarating period Deakin wrote many years later, and without a trace of irony, that he was then seeking ‘a system of philosophy, an interpretation of the universe, & a key to all the mysteries of life & being’.\(^\text{12}\) This search for system and for a ‘key’ to the perennial mysteries of life was an enterprise that, in diverse ways, would continue to occupy him throughout his life.

By the early 1870s Melbourne was no longer the frontier town on the banks of the sluggish Yarra surrounded by a ‘tent city’ of canvas and calico, that had served as port and entrepôt to the thousands of miners eager to reach the goldfields in the interior. The wealth torn out of the ancient earth had tangibly transformed Melbourne within two generations into a budding metropolis of two hundred thousand population. A secular university, a public library which was ‘a monument to received good taste’, largely Redmond Barry’s, and a museum had all been established in the 1850s.\(^\text{13}\) An English gentleman writing in 1869 could recommend to his countrymen its ‘fine and fashionable suburbs; its noble public institutions … [and] ample mathematically-appointed streets, resplendent with the gaiety of amply-furnished shops’.\(^\text{14}\) The city had also acquired an active cultural life of its own though, with a large migrant population, still derivative of English mores. In colonial Melbourne as in London, the platform and the pulpit, along with pamphlets and newspapers, were the principal means of communicating ideas. Through the many societies that sprang up, serious public debate was thriving not only on political questions like land reform, ‘free, compulsory, and secular’ education and the all-important protective tariff, but also on wider social issues and on the perennial questions of religion and the nature of human existence.

The first major forum for the colonial intelligentsia on religious and social topics was the Eclectic Association, founded in 1867 by the atheist and rationalist H. K. Rusden. Its membership included E. W. Cole the bookseller, B. S. Naylor the Spiritist and Socialist, and the journalist Charles Bright, as well as the ubiquitous James Smith, also a journalist for the *Argus*, trustee of the Public Gallery, and general
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social gadfly, best remembered as severe critic of the ‘9 X 5’ exhibition of the Heidelberg school in 1889.15 At the Sunday Free Discussion Society, also founded by the energetic Rusden in 1870, political and secular subjects predominated. The meetings in the ‘Turn Verein’ Hall on La Trobe Street, leased from the Spiritualists, were to remain a feature of Sunday night life in Melbourne until the early years of the new century. Like the Democratic Association, which took its name and much of its co-operative programme from later Chartism, a general atmosphere of Reform, a ‘scientific’ enthusiasm and a definite anti-Christian feeling prevailed. Following English trends, especially the 1869 London Dialectical Society debates, ‘spiritualistic’ (or spiritistic) phenomena became topics of controversy in Melbourne’s public forums. In the same year, a celebrated Eclectic Association debate between W. H. Terry and H. G. Turner, the Unitarian banker and future historian of Victoria, generated a good deal of publicity and several pamphlets for and against, leading to the establishment of the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists (V.A.P.S.) the following year.16

Spiritualism was a largely working-class religious movement, originating in 1848 in the ‘burnt over’ districts of upper New York State, when two adolescent girls were reported to have established contact with the spirit of a departed individual.17 Their experiences were publicised widely, and soon seances (literally: sittings) purporting to contact the dead via ‘mediums’ were being conducted in drawing rooms all over the eastern seaboard of the United States. Throughout the 1850s decade the movement spread rapidly via England to Europe, and then to the settler societies, including the Australian colonies. It attracted public men like Horace Greeley, Judge W. Edmonds of the United States Supreme Court and Robert Owen to its beliefs, and even eminent persons like Napoleon III and the Russian Czar, but also many powerful detractors, especially among positivist scientists like Michael Faraday.18 While never reaching the proportions of hysteria it had in the United States, the Spiritualist movement, carried along with other progressive ideas by many among the gold-rush generation, attracted a strong following in Victoria.

In Spiritualism the prevailing atmosphere of religious doubt, exacerbated by the popularised Darwinian thought, found expression in a peculiar amalgam of Swedenborgianism, mesmerism and popular freethought, especially in its ideas about ‘science’ and ‘progress’. In essence, this produced a religion which sought to prove the continued existence of the human personality beyond the grave, and claimed to receive deeper teachings from more exalted spiritual ‘guides’.

Many persons, while not completely losing their religious faith, were rejecting doctrinal Christianity. Marcus Clarke writing in the Victorian Review reflected upon the dilemma of many of the educated among his generation who could no longer accept ‘the dogmas of the priesthood … they would fain believe, but for their reason; they are compelled to reason, despite their belief’.19 During these years, many strands of Freethought flourished, and there were calls for many kinds of Reform. The theist Judge Williams denied that Jesus was God, but a great man, and he denounced much of the Old Testament as ‘unsuitable and filthy’. Charles Bradlaugh’s secularism was to arrive in the colony first with Thomas Walker, a spiritist medium converted to Secularism, later a prominent Western Australian politician, even before the vulgar Joseph Synes came in 1884 to found the Liberator and to bait and insult the established religions.20 When the Harbinger of Light, the organ of the Spiritualists, in September 1872 advertised ‘Agricola’, a co-operative to be formed under the Free Selection Act, the editor W. H. Terry wished them God-speed, for ‘we look upon the organisation of labour as the remedy for all the
sufferings of humanity’. Even a stalwart of the establishment like Dr Bromby, the liberal Anglican theologian who had been Deakin’s headmaster at Melbourne Grammar, outraged listeners to an 1870 sermon by denying the reality of a theological Hell. In the 1880s he would be instrumental in having women admitted to the university, and during the celebrated ‘trial’ of Dr Charles Strong, he would again inflame conservative opinion by trading pulpits with that ‘heretic’.21

The disaffected in Victoria generally turned either to the Unitarian church, to the Secularists, those ‘brave witnesses to unbelief’, or to the largest heterodox religious organisation in the colonies, the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists (V.A.P.S.), whose optimistic, if ponderously declared, aims were:

to extend the domain of science to the realms of the invisible, the impalpable, and the imponderable, and to supersede the supernatural by proving that the occult mysteries of human nature heretofore deemed beyond the reach of human intellect, are destined to be revealed to the truth-seeker, to the unspeakable advantage of humanity.22

This stentorian declaration fairly reflects Deakin’s own early views: an Enlightenment faith in Reason and in the possibility of its extension to higher spheres, and ‘scientific’ objectives in an optimistic quest for religious Truth. Public opinion on these ‘strange things’ ranged from indifference to scorn. Some ascribed the phenomena to the devil, or like the Anglican Bishop Perry, denounced Spiritualism as ‘a recrudescence of the ancient divination of Egypt and Chaldea’.23 In January 1871, a debate extending over three weeks was conducted through the pages of the Argus. James Smith, publicly declaring his faith in ‘Spiritualism Defended’, was responded to by eminent sceptics such as H. G. Turner, Marcus Clarke and David Blair.24 When it was asked why, if spirit phenomena were the work of the devil, Melbourne Spiritualists were men of such high moral stature, the Anglican Dean of Melbourne, H. B. Macartney, responded that ‘the Devil was too shrewd to use inferior agents.’25 Deakin’s early interest was sparked by such controversies, and grew with his reading. Huxley, then other detractors of Christianity such as the Spiritualists, were using the new scholarship of the higher Biblical criticism, which challenged the authority of the Bible as ‘verbal inspiration’, and the triumphs of science, especially geological evidence for the earth’s antiquity and the evolution theory of Darwin and Wallace, as potent weapons against the sacred domain of organised religion. In this atmosphere Deakin like many others of his generation, imbied the spirit of Reform.26

The lively discussions with Mickle and Martin, usually after Sunday dinner at the Deakin home in Adam Street, South Yarra, centred on ‘moral evolution’ and other Spencerian doctrines, and on the phenomena. Articles published in 1872 by two eminent scientists were important not only to the young Alfred, but to the movement as a whole, in lending it some measure of scientific respectability.27 Upon reading Sir William Crookes’ startling accounts of ‘materialisations’ occurring in his own home under ‘test’ conditions in the Quarterly Journal of Science, of which he was then editor, and the Fortnightly article by Alfred Russell Wallace, co-originator of the theory of the evolution of species by natural selection, on the evolutionary implications of a continued existence after death, Deakin ‘at once took up the theme’ of investigating these matters personally.28

Deakin had seen juvenile attempts at mesmerism (hypnotism), and years before he had witnessed planchette writing; it was all very odd and mysterious.29 At
one improvised drawing-room performance then in vogue, Alfred was staging a feat of mesmerism for the mixed company, where his ‘keen interest was intended to be ridiculed’. Instead, to everyone’s amazement the young subject found herself ‘speechless & helpless, falling into a kind of a swoon’. While on holidays with his family in Dromana at the end of the same year, Alfred took his damp boots to the hotel kitchen to be dried. There he found a young man delighting a group of maidservants at the expense of a lanky stableboy whom he had under a mesmeric trance, inducing him thereby to perform various ridiculous feats with eyes closed. After watching these antics for a few minutes, Alfred obtained permission to apply a test. Taking a watch from his pocket, he placed it at the back of the subject’s head with the watchface towards himself, and ensuring there was no clock in the room, he asked for the time. Without hesitation he received an answer that was entirely wrong. But as he was returning the watch to his pocket, Alfred observed that he had been holding it upside down, and that the time given was correct if the dial were held upright. He reversed the watch and repeated his question without explanation, whereupon the youth gave the correct time.

The ‘plunge into Spiritism’ was chiefly consequent upon the Dromana test, and the articles by Wallace and Crookes. Deakin remembered also that Newman’s Phases of Faith was another cause for his gradual departure from Spencer. With Mickle and Martin he visited two ‘medical clairvoyants’, William H. Terry and George Stow, who enjoyed a considerable clientele in Melbourne. They were founding members of both Dr Motherwell’s famous home circle in 1869, then the best-known assembly of the kind in the colonies, and of the V.A.P.S. the following year. Terry, a draper by trade, was a gold-rush migrant, listed in the Cyclopaedia of Victoria as a ‘chemist and medical botanist’. Avuncular in manner and unswerving in his dedication to the movement, he was for forty years perennial secretary of the V.A.S. (‘Progressive’ was now dropped from the title) and the Sunday Lyceum, founding editor of the Harbinger of Light, as well as being a healing medium and bookshop proprietor. In this, the first instance of ‘mediumship’ Deakin had witnessed, Terry readily submitted to questions relating to the cure of physical complaints, and permitted Deakin to ‘test the results obtained under his guidance’. Terry would remain conscious while he diagnosed visitors’ ailments, for whom he prescribed herbal remedies stocked in his herbal emporium and bookshop in Russell Street, Melbourne. Stow performed the same diagnostic task, though in a condition of complete unconsciousness or ‘deep trance’, when a ‘control’ calling himself ‘Martin’ would diagnose and prescribe. Deakin was greatly impressed by these healing mediums; thirty-five years later he could still judge their diagnoses ‘remarkable for the general success attending them, even in difficult cases’; and of these two, he insisted, ‘I never heard of a single mistake in their prescription.’

Around August 1873, together with Mickle, Martin and three young women (to provide an equal polarity of ‘magnetism’) Deakin formed a ‘circle’ to meet twice weekly in his parents’ home. It included his sister Catherine and Martin’s sister Letty, who was to become the ‘medium’. The parents took no part, and Mr Stow attended the first few meetings to launch the venture. Young, enthusiastic, and anxious to be convinced as they were, their ardour abated considerably after
three fruitless months of sitting in the dark round a table with fingers touching. Then at one session the table began to oscillate, and after a time to move with a vigour wholly inexplicable, since the members were ‘resolute not to lend any conscious assistance’. It commenced rapping out ‘messages’ purporting to come from various deceased persons, none of them very ‘evidential’, nor very important. In full light the table would lift and perform other curious feats, at times with a force that was capricious and utterly wilful. After a further six months, when the group’s initial excitement waned as it became clear that the intelligence(s) controlling these manifestations—whatever they were—had ‘nothing to say & said it very badly’, the circle closed. The net results of their enquiries were ‘a little aimless purposeless & inconsistent chatter, & some inexplicable motions’. Nevertheless the mature Deakin remained mystified by these exhibitions, when he had personally witnessed the table dancing, swaying, or moving around the room with no discernible assistance.

There was another and more important reason why Deakin disbanded that circle: ‘It was May 21, 1874, when I learned that I had been chosen as a member of Dr Motherwell’s circle.’ For over twenty years from 1869 this seance circle met in the doctor’s consulting room in Collins Street, Melbourne. Dr James Bridgnorth Motherwell, educated at Glasgow, was a respected physician and early pioneer who had come to Victoria via Port Arthur, where he had been medical officer. He was honorary physician at the Melbourne Hospital, one of the ‘progressives’ on the University Council, and a member of the influential Medical School Committee which determined the medical curriculum. Deakin remembered him as ‘the most kindly amiable & considerate of men’, that ‘his faith in the message received was absolute’ and that ‘he died without renouncing it’. This circle had a religious character, and included stalwarts like Terry and Stow, and Dr W.L. Richardson, father of the novelist and first president of the V.A.P.S., among its membership. They also met twice weekly, once to listen to ‘trance speaking’ and once to obtain ‘inspirational writing’. At the speaking sessions, following a prayer and invocation, the doctor would make a few mesmeric passes over the medium George Stow who would fall into an unconscious trance, and ‘Martin’ or other deceased and sometimes distinguished persons would speak.

The writing sessions were conducted around a large table by five persons with pencils poised for the forthcoming inspiration. In this virtual factory of inspirational writing the methods varied. Deakin recalled two elderly women conversing with almost bored indifference and looking around while ‘communications’ were procured, as each rested one hand lightly upon a planchette attached to a roll of paper on which ‘spirits’ laboriously inscribed their messages, which came in different orthography and with no spaces between the words. These were separated, and obscure passages were referred back to the spirits, who would obligingly write them out again. He remembered how the older woman would occasionally indulge in ‘40 winks’, and still the planchette continued writing. One ‘elderly gentleman’ (William Terry) wrote as if normally but, as he always declared, without his will or consciousness obtruding. Deakin judged the writing thus obtained as good, but not noticeably superior to what this ‘thoughtful & well informed man was himself qualified to produce’. With their personal messages, little sermonettes and pious exhortations, the spiritual communicators taught ‘a gospel respectful of Christianity as the first of revealed religions, & sympathetic with the best in all faiths’; its tone was not dictatorial but ‘grave, kindly, sympathetic & relatively simple’, disclosing no new revelation but illustrating, explaining, and elaborating the main...