Agnes Sanford was a healer who devoted most of her life to healing, and a great part of her writing career to propagating a new understanding of it. Her biography is truly enlightening in that it illustrates links between many of the phenomena we have been studying.

Sanford was born in 1898 in Hsuchoufu, China, to a couple of Presbyterian missionaries. Her father was a priest; her mother, a teacher. Young Agnes was raised in an austere, natural environment, away from radio and television. Every day she was taught to memorize Bible verses, and her mother handled her education. Some of her earlier memories, described in her biography, came from gazing with awe at a tiny white flower of a speedwell herb, and at the flowers of a blossoming pear tree.

The spiritual world is important to the Chinese people, and Agnes grew up hearing about spirits from a very early age. The child’s dream life was very active and nourished her in a variety of ways. Art also awakened much of her interest; she began to paint as a child and soon discovered literature, reading Dickens, Scott, and other resources available to her. In her early teens, her love of nature formed a gateway to her first spiritual experiences. Twice during two summers, she recalls in her biography, while immersed in the beauty of the landscape, she felt transported to an experience of oneness with nature. In this state, she lost all notion of time and acquired the first inkling of the sentient life of all beings, even inanimate objects.

Prayer entered Agnes’ life, as part of her education and upbringing. Already in her childhood she had experienced proof of the results of prayer, even before her mind was able to acknowledge it. While she was still living in Hsuchoufu, she had been overwhelmed by a very real fear of death. At a loss to deal with this emotion and being taught to keep her feelings to herself, she decided to turn to prayer, to ask God to remove that fear. The solution came through a dream, in her words, “the most real and vivid dream that I ever had.” She was filled with the “radiation of God’s power” and with overwhelming joy. Her fear of death left her immediately.

In her adolescence, another experience confirmed the power of prayer. On Christmas day, she was visited by her school roommate Rachel and her brother, who had seizure disorder. His appearance must have made a deep personal impression on Agnes, who decided to pray for him for seven years. Unknown to Agnes, the young man healed long before the end of her period of resolve.

At age fourteen, she was sent to the Shanghai American School. There, she was first captivated by the beauty of the stage when seeing Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. Love for writing and drama was something that she would carry throughout her life. After that first year she moved to a small Presbyterian school for young ladies in Raleigh, North Carolina. On the way to the US by boat, she had another experience of oneness with nature, this time while lying on the back of a lifeboat at night and watching the stars. She felt at one with the universe and lost all notion of time.

In America, she felt like a foreigner and longed for the familiarity of China. Her return to her former culture did not immediately yield the anticipated results. Feeling like an outsider, she fell into a depression. It was finally through the deeply rewarding experience of teaching that she gradually emerged from this identity crisis. Her second
assignment was teaching English literature, composition, and grammar at an Anglican school for boys. Here she fell in love with her future husband, Ted, an Episcopalian. She married him in 1923 and formally became an Episcopalian, initially at least to satisfy custom as well as her husband’s wishes.

Married life meant letting go of her profession as soon as her first child arrived. The creative young woman abandoned her own dreams in order to fit the role of dutiful wife that was expected of her. The joy of motherhood was contrasted by a growing depression, and Sanford became suicidal. Her love for family expressed itself only in worry about everybody’s safety, but the depression completely engulfed her. There were many more subtle changes that intervened in Sanford’s life. Not only did she forget her childhood devotion and the gifts that she had received through prayer, but nature, which had nurtured her with magical power, lost all its charm. She had to go through her own personal abyss.

It was a serious ear infection of her third son, Jack, that opened the way to an inner transformation. An Episcopal minister, Hollis Colwell, came to visit her and casually inquired about her children. Upon hearing of Jack’s illness, he resolved to see the boy and say a prayer for his health. What surprised Sanford was the complete confidence with which the young prelate turned to God, and the child was healed the next day upon waking. The same minister prayed on different occasions for the healing of Sanford’s mental depression. From the first time he did so, she experienced “great waves of joy” during the act of receiving a prayer.

Sanford started experimenting with prayer at the explicit suggestion of Colwell. The results were not immediate. One day, nevertheless, she prayed to be healed from a bout with the flu because she felt she could not take time from work. To her amazement, the results followed immediately. It was a small sign, but the beginning of a lifelong exploration of the wonders of prayer and of spiritual healing. She realized at that time that it was not enough to ask of God; it was equally important to believe fully that the prayer was answered.

Sanford’s first true healing was performed on a child in critical condition whose heart, bloodstream, and kidneys were infected. Sanford felt moved by compassion and the strong feeling that something needed to be done given this desperate diagnosis. After the prayer, the healing began in stages over the two next days, and the recovery was prompt. It was an encouraging result.

After this turning point Sanford’s activity branched off in many directions. Starting with a Bible study group, she gathered a group of mothers who met for nearly two decades. Through the depth of personal connection, the group became a prayer group, and thus also the instrument of spiritual healings. During World War II, the mothers were concerned about their enlisted sons. They attempted to help through prayer. To that purpose they first had to realize that they could not pray for victory, but for peace for all parties. They prayed that their sons be spared as much as possible from having to kill. This was accompanied by withdrawing any support for the war, even purchasing war savings stamps. While it constitutes no positive proof, it is at least indicative that none of the sons died in combat.

In 1947 Sanford wrote *The Healing Light*, a book that has become a classic in the realm of spiritual healing. The manuscript struggled to find a publisher until a friend, Dr. Glenn Clark, decided to undertake publication himself. The book started selling slowly.
Sanford’s “career” as a spiritual healer began when she volunteered as a Gray Lady in the Red Cross in Tilton Army Hospital, where she initially had no intention to offer healing of the body. Her first recovering “patient” was a man whose infected bone would not heal. After her first positive result, she continued to heal hundreds of returning soldiers and teach them to pray for their own healing. This work of healing did not come without its burdens. Working at Tilton Hospital, Agnes started to feel pain around her heart. She expressed that she was carrying the fears and burdens of all of those whose health had become her concern.

Sanford’s life of prayer needed outer support as well as attention to her own personal healing. This was done through confession, helping her to clear herself of the tendency toward spiritual pride that becomes very tangible for someone engaged in spiritual healing. This evolution was basically reached in two stages. The first was what she called an experience of the Holy Spirit, made possible in working together with her Tucson friend, Marion Lovekin, and prayer partner, Mildred. This first step, realized through prayer and inner guidance, was accompanied by the experience of deep joy and the ability to understand reality in a different way. Many unsolved problems were now coming to the surface of her consciousness with the knowledge of what needed to be done for them. She felt she had received the gift of peace and the ability to work much more effectively than previously without feeling weary. To those who knew her, it seemed she had shed many years.

Sanford’s “illumination by the Holy Spirit” was only a step, as she realized at the death of her husband. Soon after, she felt deeply attracted to a widower, but when his response did not meet her expectations, she found herself in the throes of a new depression and questioned her desire to live. It was a young priest by the name of John Sandford who best intuited her deeper needs. He relentlessly offered his help, even when she grew weary of prayers, both his and those of others.

Finally she had a Christ experience that she described thus: “Light shone all around me, and Jesus stood before me in such a real way that I could see Him with my mind though not with my eyes! I laughed, I cried, I was utterly beside myself with joy and the feeling of being loved.” This turning point was a culmination as well as the catalyst of further spiritual experiences, to which we will return later.

After this experience she had truly acquired a perception of the energetic level beyond the physical. In the morning, as she turned to meditation, she would “take walks in heavenly places.” This perception later came to her in full day consciousness. She writes: “Yesterday morning for the first time, as I looked out to the misty hills ... I could see the light around the trees. I do not know what this light is. But I cannot imagine it or dream it into reality. When it comes, it comes of itself, as though emanating from the very trees and not from me.”

Given her familiarity with the realm of the etheric, it is not surprising to see that other kinds of spiritual experiences accompanied Sanford’s life. Even before reaching adolescence, she had a recurring experience. She prefaces it with the feeling of being abandoned by God, and defines it as a soul sickness that the doctor could not diagnose. Something akin to a memory awakened while studying ancient Greek history. She was experiencing or re-experiencing a scene of human sacrifice, one to which her historical education could hardly have referred. “It was as if I had slipped back through time and seen this particular episode…. And it was more real and more completely devastating
than anything I had ever seen in China. I could feel it coming before it came. My throat would constrict and my stomach would turn sick and I would think, ‘Oh no! Oh no!’ But then it would come and I could not stop it.”

Throughout the years, the image with its associated horror occasionally resurfaced in her memory. This dream is mentioned specifically again in the biography after the central Christ experience that Sanford had toward the end of her life. It was, therefore, not surprising that the Christ experience was preceded by a very deep depression. Now she started reliving the episode of the human sacrifice in ancient Sparta that she had experienced earlier in her teens. It was an exceedingly dreadful memory. She describes the place that formed the prelude to her memory as “not heaven, nor earth.” The memory was preceded by an encounter with Christ saying that he would send her to Earth. Then she relived the scene of the human sacrifice that had occurred before. She could see only people’s backs, while being aware of an angelic presence. A boy was sacrificed upon an altar that had the form of a sundial, but his spirit had already left. The scene changed and Sanford found herself back at the original landscape that preceded the scene. Here, somehow she seemed to experience anew her pre-birth intentions of relieving suffering and remembered being willing to do so.

The remembrance of this whole set of events opened the door for Sanford’s quiet acceptance of all challenges that followed. She explains that she was not angry with God anymore. She goes to great lengths to disclaim that everything she says lends credence to the idea of reincarnation, which she qualifies as “this dreary theory.” Nevertheless not only does the scene look like a previous life memory, but also the subsequent resolve is reminiscent of the soul’s desire for atonement for a deed committed in a previous life! Nor is it surprising that in the sequence of events, the healing of this memory closely follows her meeting with Christ and the acquisition of vision on the etheric/energetic level of reality. There is an inherent lawfulness to the fact that only Christ could heal this kind of memory.

It will come as no surprise that the new Christ event acquired a deep significance for her. Obviously she could not state it openly, and she may have only vaguely intuited it. The following quote is nevertheless very revealing of Sanford’s deeper beliefs: “For the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is coming again in His glory, and there is no holding Him back. A new day is dawning. A new age is upon us: the day of the Lord; the kingdom of heaven. The Son of righteousness is rising and nothing can stop His Coming, just as nothing can stay the sunrise from creeping over the mountaintops.”

It will not be surprising at this point to see the themes of conscious knowledge of one’s own previous incarnations with the meeting with Christ, and the faculty of spiritual healing. The work of the Cypriot healer Spiros Sathi has been documented in three books by author Kiriacos C. Markides. Sathi has undergone similar experiences to those of Agnes Sanford. He experienced meeting with Christ four times in his life—a meeting he associates with a feeling so intense that it was very painful to come back to daily life. More than Sanford, he carries the memory of his previous lives clearly imprinted in his consciousness. He, too, in the process of helping to heal a patient, can spiritually perceive the deficiencies of vitality, even before they manifest physically with illness.

While Agnes Sanford and Spiros Sathi are two of the many genuine spiritual healers of this century, other healers have operated under similar conditions to theirs both within Christian and other religious or spiritual traditions.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1) Information about Agnes Sanford mostly comes from *Sealed Orders*, Agnes Sanford, 1972, Bridge Publishing, South Plainfield, N. J. and occasionally from *The Healing Light*, opus quoted.

2) *Sealed Orders*, opus quoted, p. 280.

3) Ibid., p. 313.


5) Ibid., p. 227.