

**SPIRITUALISM: ITS
HISTORY, PHENOMENA
AND DOCTRINE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649710713

Spiritualism: Its History, Phenomena and Doctrine by J. Arthur Hill & Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

J. ARTHUR HILL & SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

**SPIRITUALISM: ITS
HISTORY, PHENOMENA
AND DOCTRINE**

SPIRITUALISM

SPIRITUALISM

ITS HISTORY, PHENOMENA
AND DOCTRINE

BY

J. ARTHUR HILL

AUTHOR OF "MAN IS A SPIRIT," "PSYCHICAL INVESTIGATIONS,"
"NEW EVIDENCES IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH,"
ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA



NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



EDUC.
PSYCH.
LIBRARY

COPYRIGHT, 1919,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

TO THE
LIBRARY OF THE
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

THIS book has been written in response to a suggestion that I should prepare a volume giving a comprehensive answer to the question: "What is Spiritualism?" A large literature of the subject exists, the library of the London Spiritualist Alliance containing about 3,000 volumes; but the aspects are many, the ramifications extensive, and there is no single work that presents a review of the whole, except Mr. Podmore's "Modern Spiritualism" (2 vols., 1902), which, besides being too bulky for any but a determined student, is now regarded by most investigators as being too negative. The progress of psychical research in the last sixteen years has raised into new credibility many narratives which, in those earlier days, a cautious mind could not even provisionally accept.

Here it is necessary or desirable that I should indicate my own position, in order that the reader may know how to discount my opinions. In debatable matters, we naturally want to know exactly where a writer stands, before we can decide how far to rely on what he says; for, though he may be perfectly honest, he may involuntarily be very unfair if he happens to have strong preferences.

I was never a materialist, for I happened to read Berkeley at an unusually early age; but I was unable to believe in an angry God who would punish for ever

—not for wicked acts towards one's fellow-creatures, but for holding incorrect theological opinions during our short span of a few years—and consequently our saintly old minister did the opposite of what he intended; instead of making me a Christian according to his definition, he made me a Huxleyan.

A rather close reading of evolutionary literature, plus some years of laboratory work which taught me scientific method, plus a fair amount of philosophy-browsing and a careful reading of Carlyle, Emerson, Tennyson, etc.—I had not then grown up to Browning—landed me safely in the “reverent agnosticism” which was to be expected; and there I stayed, with perhaps a slight tendency away from the fighting temper of Huxley towards the milder mood of Emerson, until I was over thirty. Then I became acquainted with a certain medium whose queer powers puzzled me. Previously I had, of course, scoffed at the whole thing, even when intimate friends of mine described their own inexplicable experiences. But I was soon compelled to admit that there was “something in it”. I began to read spiritualistic literature, but it did not impress me. The writers were mostly unknown, their experiments were not described with sufficient fulness or exactness, and they often seemed ready to believe anything. Then I joined the Society for Psychical Research, and found what I wanted. Here was real evidence, set out in detail by men like Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Sidgwick, and others, whose work I knew and could rely on in other departments. I read all the S.P.R. publications, and was greatly impressed; in fact, convinced so far as the logic

of the thing went—i.e. I felt that the evidence was sufficient to justify belief in the happenings and even in a spiritistic explanation of some of them. But personal experience is necessary before real conviction of new truth can be attained, when one has remained in ignorance until over thirty; so I set myself to investigation. I sat with many mediums, professional and private, and the result was that I was gradually driven to admit that phenomena certainly happen which orthodox science does not explain or even recognise, that some of them may be due to not understood subliminal activities of living people, or to still more unknown causes, but that some others point to the agency of incarnate human beings.

I described some of these experiences in my book, "Psychical Investigations," and in earlier volumes; but the printed records are incomplete, much evidential private matter having had to be excluded because it involved other living people who would object to publicity. If we investigators could publish everything, our case would be much stronger.

In short, then, I believe that the survival of human beings past death, and the possibility of occasional communication, is a legitimate inference from the facts. I do not believe that communication is as free or as frequent as most spiritualists seem to think. I am not convinced that the regular trance-controls are spirits at all; they may be parts of the medium's subliminal, acting as channels for communications from beyond. And there are some phases of mediumship—*apports*, for instance—which I have never witnessed, the phenomena being rare. As to such unwitnessed things, my attitude is one

of suspense of judgment. I neither believe nor disbelieve. Those who have had convincing experiences in these departments may think that I dismiss them too lightly. I can only ask their indulgence. I must see and hear for myself, before I can really believe. I have tried to obtain as much personal experience as possible, but opportunities in some directions have been lacking.

The foregoing necessarily egoistic account may enable the reader to discount my statements in such way as he may think fit. Perhaps I had better add that on the emotional side I have little or no desire for personal survival, having been accustomed for many years (in consequence of early hell-teaching) to hope that it was not a fact; for, though not accepting that terrible doctrine, my mind was inevitably influenced more or less by exposure to such insistent dogmatism in my defenceless childhood, and obviously annihilation was preferable to hell. Later, perceiving that the material universe seems essentially indestructible, I inclined to a similar conservation of spirit though not a continuance of present personalities. The body ceases to exist though its elements continue but are redistributed, and the soul may similarly disintegrate into lower compounds or psychic elements. But the evidence told against that theory and in favour of greater integration and advance.

So far, then, as introspection goes, I seem to myself to be an impartial witness. Mr. G. B. Shaw, however, says that in debatable questions it is best not to listen to the fool who imagines himself impartial, but to have the case argued out with reckless bias on both sides.