

An Introduction to Spiritualism

*All you need to know to begin your
journey as a Spiritualist*



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Introduction

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Welcome to your first steps on the journey to know more about the religion of Spiritualism. This short introductory booklet will help you understand who we are and what we believe is the truth about life and death. We are a religion without creed or dogma, with the objective of promoting the religion and religious philosophy of Spiritualism as based upon the Seven Principles. We try to help each person to understand the implications of that philosophy in their daily lives.

This guide will take you through a short history of the movement, an outline of our beliefs and way of life, and the Seven Principles, which we endeavour to live by. There will be a description of how we set about giving evidence of life after physical death and the methods we use to provide that evidence to you.

We will outline the threefold aspect of Spiritualism and explain how it works and how it manifests itself in the form of a religion, philosophy and science. You will find an easy-to-understand description of the structure of our Union, allowing you to see how practical, effective and relevant an organisation we are within the changing global society of the 21st century.

Finally, we shall present the wide range of educational opportunities the Spiritualists' National Union offers those who are interested in Spiritualism or who become members of our churches or Pioneer Centres or Individual Members of the SNU. We hope you enjoy this learning experience and find it helpful in enabling you to understand what it means to be a Spiritualist.

The information is divided into seven sections. Part One is a little about the history of Spiritualism, followed by a section on the Seven Principles of Spiritualism; next come the threefold aspects of Spiritualism. Part Five is information on the structure of the Spiritualists' National Union and then a section on the educational opportunities provided by the SNU. Finally, Part Seven is about the makeup and function of the 14 Districts of the SNU and its Branches, churches and Pioneer Centres.

When you have completed reading the booklet, there is a simple 'self-test' to make sure you have digested the contents of it, giving you the confidence to know that you will be familiar with the background of the religion of SNU Spiritualism. In addition, should you decide to become a full Individual Member of the SNU, you will have completed the necessary requirement of knowing the basics of our religion. We also hope that it has stirred a desire in you to find out more about this fascinating subject and our religion, our spiritual pioneers and our current thinking on the science, philosophy and religion of the Spiritualists' National Union.

Enjoy your journey of discovery!



The Birth of Modern Spiritualism

Instances of psychic phenomena have been recorded throughout history. Many world religions were based originally, on some form of psychic occurrence.



Spiritualists regard 31st March 1848 and the phenomena called the Hydesville Rappings as the beginning of Modern Spiritualism.

Although there are many recorded instances of spirit entities making contact with people still living a physical life, notably those mentioned in the Bible and the events surrounding Joan of Arc, for example, we Spiritualists regard 31st March 1848 and the phenomena called the Hydesville Rappings as the beginning of Modern Spiritualism.

The Hydesville Rappings established that:

1. It was possible to establish two-way communications with the spirits of the so-called dead.
2. Communications could be established more easily as codes were developed.
3. The spirit world was a world of intelligence.

Mr and Mrs John Fox and their two youngest daughters moved into temporary accommodation in Hydesville, a small hamlet in the town of Arcadia, New York State, USA. For around two weeks noises were

heard every night. On Friday, March 31st, 1848 it was heard as usual; up until this time it had never been heard in the daytime. The youngest girl, Kate, "made the noise with her hands or fingers" and the raps responded with the same number of noises. The older girl, Margaretta, "then spoke in sport and said, "Now do this just as

I spoke and said to the noise, "Count ten," and it made ten strokes or noises. Then I asked the ages of my different children successively, and it gave a number of raps, corresponding to the ages of my children.

I do. Count one, two, three," striking one hand in the other at the same time. The blows which she made were repeated as before."

Mrs Fox continued: "I spoke and said to the noise, "Count ten," and it made ten strokes or noises. Then I asked the ages of my different children successively, and it gave a number of raps, corresponding to the ages of

my children." Neighbours were called to witness the rappings and further questioning by Mrs Fox and others gained information about the communicator, who claimed to be the spirit of a peddler who had been viciously murdered for his money and possessions in the house by a former tenant and buried in its cellar around five years previously.

The Hydesville rappings aroused great interest among people in the local area and, as the news spread further afield, the phenomenon was recorded by Mr E. E. Lewis, who in April 1848 gained twenty-two signed statements from those who witnessed and those who were involved in

the events and published the statements; the SNU has now republished the original valuable report.

Opposite page: left to right: The Fox Sisters - Margaretta, Catherine

This page: The house in Hydesville

The Early Pioneers in Great Britain

Mrs Maria Hayden came from America in 1852 and was the first Spiritualist medium to work in this country. The press and the clergy were very antagonistic towards her; she, however, knew she was demonstrating the truth that could rid people of the fear of death.

David Richmond worked in a local mill but was interested in social reform, which led him to relocate to London. Whilst in London he met Robert Owen, the social reformer. He then went to America and joined a religious group who were called Shakers. On his return home Richmond had become an ardent Spiritualist.

In 1853 Richmond brought Spiritualism to the attention of the people of Keighley in West Yorkshire, where Spiritualism was first promulgated in this country. With the assistance of David Weatherhead, Richmond delivered three lectures on the subject at the Working Men's Hall in June 1853. Weatherhead took steps, resulting in the formation of a society called 'The Spiritual Brotherhood', later becoming 'Heber Street Spiritualist Society', as it remains today.

Richmond's gravestone at Darlington West Cemetery reads: "In Loving memory of David Richmond, Native of Darlington, Social Reformer and First Missionary Spiritualist Medium

in Great Britain, who introduced the subject Modern Spiritualism, or the Phenomenal Labour of the Divine Spirit to Public Notice in Darlington and Keighley Yorkshire in 1853. Died 15th February 1891, aged 75 Years."

Emma Hardinge Britten was born in 1823 at Bethnal Green, London. She showed considerable musical talent at the age of eleven and later she worked as a pianist and composer; for her musical compositions she used the pseudonym Ernest Reinhold.

In 1855 Emma travelled with her mother to act at the Broadway Theatre in New York. A year later she began her development as a medium, holding public séances and giving music lessons in the rooms of the 'Society for the Diffusion of Spiritual Knowledge'. Her trance platform work followed and she gave her debut lecture at Troy, New York on July 5th, 1857.

Emma developed into an excellent speaker and prolific writer, producing valuable histories of the early Spiritualist movement. She was one

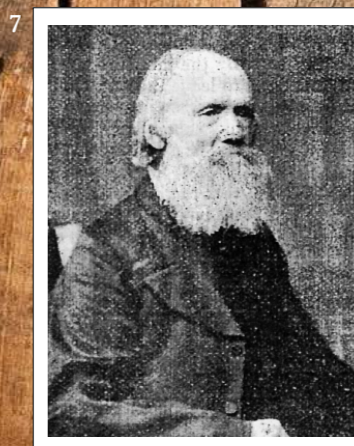
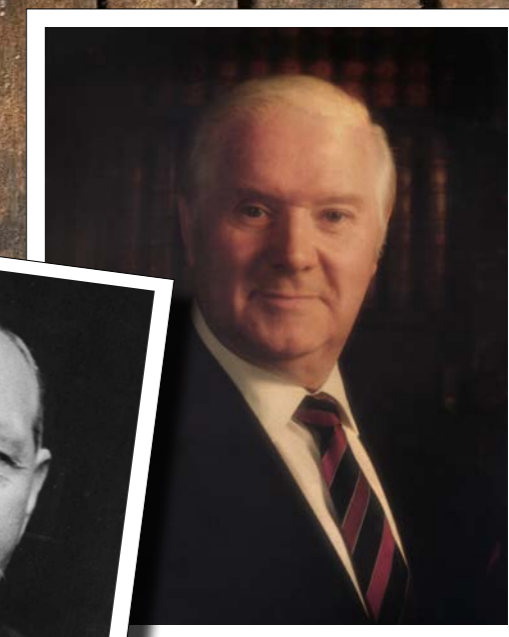
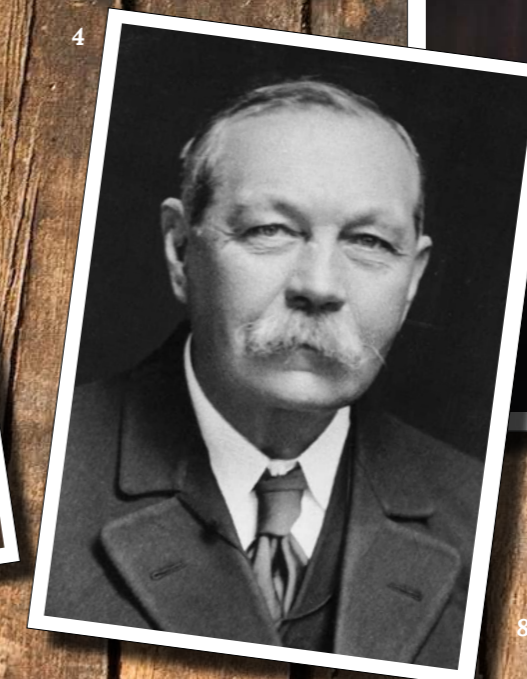
of the greatest propagandists in the history of Spiritualism and on October 11th, 1870 she married William Britten.

At some point in 1871 Emma delivered a lecture to a packed audience titled 'The Creed of the Spirits and the Influence of the Religion of Spiritualism'. Significantly, during this lecture Emma delivered four Principles that she described as "the creed she lived by". Later they were modified to seven when they became an integral part of the constitution of the Spiritualists' National Union.

Emma passed into spirit at home on the night of October 2nd, 1899.

Opposite page left to right:

1. Emma Hardinge Britten.
2. Estelle Roberts.
3. Ernest W. Oaten.
4. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
5. Gordon Higginson.
6. J. Arthur Findlay.
7. David Richmond.
8. Alfred Kitson.



The Seven Principles

1. The Fatherhood of God

2. The Brotherhood of Man

3. The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels

4. The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul

5. Personal Responsibility

6. Compensation and Retribution Hereafter for all the Good and Evil Deeds done on Earth

7. Eternal Progress Open to every Human Soul

These Principles were adapted and adopted by the Spiritualists' National Union and incorporated into its Memorandum of Association when it became registered as a company in 1901. Spiritualists are not tied to any creed or dogma.

Within the Spiritualists' National Union the members accept the Seven Principles as their guidelines for a way of life. These Principles are the accepted and recognised definition of the religious philosophy of SNU Spiritualism.

The Fatherhood of God

By a study of nature, that is, by trying to understand the laws of cause and effect, which govern all that is happening around us, we recognise that there is a creative force in the universe. This force, or energy, not only created the whole universe but life itself in its many forms and is continuing to create today, creating, not from nothing, but of itself, and the

effects of this eternal creation can be seen around us today, even in the farthest reaches of outer space, as has been shown in its astounding grandeur by the remarkable photographs taken through the medium of the Hubble telescope. This leads us to acknowledge that God, the Creative Force, manifests directly or indirectly in all things. We know this power as God and, as we are a part of the life created by God, we acknowledge God as our Father.

The Brotherhood of Man

Because we all come from the same universal Life source we are, in effect, one large family. This means that all mankind is part of a brotherhood. A brotherhood is a community for mutual support and comfort; we are all members of the same divine family. We have to understand the needs of other individuals in order to assist them as part of our service to each other. As we learn to give, so must we also learn to receive, thereby achieving the necessary balance for our lives.

The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels

Many Spiritualists consider this as the key Principle. All religions believe in life after death but only Spiritualism shows it is true by demonstrating that communication with departed spirits can, and does, take place. Spiritualist churches and centres provide many of the venues where communication, through mediumship, is possible and many loved relatives and friends take advantage of this opportunity to continue to show an interest in our welfare and us. There are spirit people who are dedicated to the welfare and service of mankind, like Silver Birch, channelled through the mediumship of Maurice Barbanell, who brought inspiration and teachings, whilst others work in the healing ministry.

The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul

Matter and energy cannot be created or destroyed. This is an old scientific axiom which research continues to confirm. If we accept this, and there

is no reason why we should not, we need to know what happens when the present form of energy reaches the end of its viability. The answer is, simply, that it changes its manifestation. Spirit is energy and is therefore indestructible. On the death of the physical body the spirit continues as an integral part of a world which interpenetrates our world in different dimensions: this other world is referred to as the spirit world. In spirit life we have a spirit body that is a replica of our earthly body but it is a much finer form. We are the same individuals in every way, with the same personalities and characteristics, and we change only by progression, or otherwise, as a result of our own efforts.

Personal Responsibility

This Principle is the one which places responsibility for wrongful thoughts and deeds where it belongs, with the individual. It is the acceptance of responsibility for every aspect of our lives, and the use to which we put our lives depends entirely upon our-

selves. It is not possible for any other person or outside influence to interfere with our spiritual development, unless we are willing to allow this. As we are given freedom of choice (freewill), so also are we given the ability to recognise what is right and wrong for our own spirituality. We are personally responsible for all our words, deeds and thoughts.

Compensation and Retribution Hereafter for all the Good and Evil Deeds done on earth

As with all other Principles, natural laws apply; this one echoes the Law of Cause and Effect ('what goes around, comes around'). One cannot be cruel and vindictive towards others and expect love and popularity in return. It should be understood that the compensatory or retributive effects of this law operate now, on earth: they do not wait until we begin to live our lives in the spirit world. With this understanding we can try to put right wrongs that we know we have done before we pass from this life.

Eternal Progress Open to every Human Soul

In most humans there exists the desire for progress and to every human soul belongs the power to advance in wisdom and love. All who desire to tread the path that leads to spiritual wisdom and understanding are able to do so. The rate of progress is directly proportional to the desire for mental and spiritual understanding. It is the realisation that our soul is a part of eternity and the road to progress is open any time we choose to walk it that can help us come to terms with the challenges of this world.

Spiritualism, through an intelligent and thorough investigation of its Seven Principles, can reveal the deepest significance of service to others and transform lives from selfishness to unselfishness, from individualism to social co-operation.