

# YOGA RESEARCH

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## Kardec's Spiritism

excerpted from *Spiritual Alliances*

by Emma Bragdon, Ph.D.

In the middle of the 19th century, Allan Kardec codified the philosophy which became the core of Brazilian Kardecist Spiritist centers.

A Spiritist believes in the existence of spirits, beings of the invisible world, and the notion that they interact in meaningful ways with the visible world. Spiritists deliberately choose to work with spirits who are highly evolved, exhibiting compassion and wisdom.

A Spiritist believes that there is a principle of conscious individuality in each person, a *spirit*, or *soul*, which survives the body. This spirit alternates between a lifetime of learning and a between-lives existence, progressively evolving, until *perfection* is reached. The end goal, the so-called perfection, is a spirit, with or without a body, who is wise, compassionate and happy, and willingly contributes to the transformation of others in their spiritual evolution.

Kardec perceived Spiritism as the scientific, philosophical and moral basis of all religions, but not a religion in itself. Kardecist Spiritists are benevolent people using principles closely associated to parapsychology, or psychic studies, for healing and spiritual evolution. In addition to attending spiritist centers for consultation and healing work, their spiritual practices include prayer, meditation, charity and the reading of Kardec's books.

Spiritists believe that miraculous healing can be attributed to natural psychic phenomena; that angels and demons are only more or less highly evolved spirits; that heaven and hell are within us. Our response-patterns to life create heaven



or hell – we make ourselves happy or unhappy. Thus, heaven and hell are psychological constructs, not physical places as the Bible suggests.

The Kardecist Spiritist centers I visited in San Paulo do not have a charismatic leader, like João (John of God), who performs surgery and prescribes herbs. Instead, the healing work is done through energetic “passes,” where the energy of the Holy Spirit is channeled by trained mediums working in teams of two to five people. Similar to “laying on of hands,” the body of the patient is not touched.

The healers do not give consultations, diagnoses or prognoses. These same mediums may, at various events during the week, offer automatic writing, perform healing at a distance, or channeling of elevating words to inspire a greater understanding of spiritual evolution, but the healing sessions are

*In order to insure our future happiness, is it sufficient not to have done evil? No; it is necessary for each to have done good also, to the utmost limits of his ability; for each of you will have to answer, not only for all the evil he has done, but also for all the good which he has failed to do...Man acts rightly when he takes the good of all as his aim and rule of action.*

~from Kardec's, “The Spirits’ Book”

simply dedicated to transmitting the energy of the Holy Spirit.

One of the most amazing resources of Spiritist centers in Brazil, little known in North America, is “Medium Training.” This is training in managing and developing one’s psychic abilities (modes of acquiring knowledge without being cued by external senses) for the purpose of healing work. The training takes at least four years to complete. It includes cognitive understanding as well as practical skill building. Books used in this training include books by Kardec (as well as others).

The way in which Kardec’s books came to be written is, in itself, a mark of the extraordinary. The name, Allan Kardec, was assigned as a “nom de plume” by the spirits who oversaw the writing of the book. The real man, Leon Denizarth Rivail, was born to a family of lawyers in 1804.

From a young age Rivail had a passion for teaching. By the time he was 24, he



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was head of a boy's school, giving well-attended public lectures on themes related to theoretical mathematics, linguistics and the improvement of public education. He was also involved with the Phrenological Society of Paris and active with the Society of Magnetism where he researched clairvoyance, among other things. Around 1850, he was introduced to two mediums who, in Rivail's company, began to channel spirits of a high order who were there to "enable him to fulfill an important religious mission."

Rivail, not a medium himself, relied on the talents of the two mediums for his communication with the spirits. Rivail asked questions and recorded the answers. The resulting *Spirits' Book* was then published and became highly popular in Western Europe.

Over the next few years Rivail and others formed associations all over the world for the purpose of obtaining from the spirits further clarification about truth and the purpose of life. Rivail, in his role as president of "The Parisian Society of Psychologic Studies," received the most remarkable of these spirit-communications, sent to him from other groups who wanted to contribute to the work. He collated and organized these communications – revising *The Spirits' Book* (1857), and compiling four other works: *The Medium's Book* (1861), *The Gospel as Explained by Spirits* (1864), *Heaven and Hell* (1865), and *Genesis* (1867). Rivail died in 1869.

*Emma Bragdon, Ph.D. is the author of 2 books and producer of 2 films about Spiritism. She is a featured Presenter at the 35th Annual YRS Conference, "YOGA and the Heart of Healing," October 31-November 1, 2009*



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