

Kardec, Allan (1804-1869)

The father of Spiritism, the French variation of Spiritualism, distinguished primarily by its acceptance of reincarnation. Kardec's birth name was Hypolyte Léon Denizard Rivail. The pseudonym originated in mediumistic communications. Both Allan and Kardec were said to have been his names in previous incarnations. He was born on October 3, 1804, at Lyon and studied at Yverdon, Switzerland, eventually becoming a doctor of medicine.

The story of his first investigations into spirit manifestations is somewhat obscure. *Le Livre des Esprits* (The Spirits' Book), which expounds a new theory of human life and destiny, was published in 1856. According to an article by Alexander Aksakof in *The Spiritualist* in 1875, the book was based on trance communications received through Celina Bequet, a professional somnambulist. For family reasons she took the name Celina Japhet and, controlled by the spirits of her grandfather, M. Hahnemann, and Franz Mesmer, gave out medical advice under this name. In her automatic scripts the spirits communicated the doctrine of reincarnation.

In 1857 *Le Livre des Esprits* was issued in a revised form and later was published in more than 20 editions. It became the recognized textbook of Spiritistic philosophy in France. It has been translated into many different languages and has had an enormous influence in Brazil, where Kardec has been commemorated on postage stamps, and has an estimated 3,000 temples.

Spiritism differs from Spiritualism in that it is built on the main tenet that spiritual progress is effected by a series of compulsory reincarnations. Kardec became so dogmatic on this point that he always disparaged physical mediumship in which the objective phenomena did not bear out his doctrine. He encouraged automatic writing, where there was less danger of contradiction stemming from the psychological influence of preconceived ideas. As a consequence, experimental psychical research was retarded for many years in France.

Several French physical mediums were never mentioned in *La Revue Spirite*, the monthly magazine Kardec founded in 1858. Nor did the Society of Psychologic Studies, of which he was president, devote attention to them. C. Brédif, a heralded physical medium, acquired celebrity only in St. Petersburg. Kardec even ignored the important mediumship of D. D. Home after the medium declared himself to be against reincarnation. Kardec died March 31, 1869, in Paris.

In England, Anna Blackwell was the most prominent exponent of Kardec's philosophy. She translated his books into English and helped get them published. In 1881 a three-volume work, *The Four Gospels*, about the esoteric aspect of the Gospels, was published in London.