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Salomão Jacob Benchaya

**THE FREETHINKING
COLLECTION:
SPIRITISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
1st SERIES**

Spiritism from a lay and freethinking perspective



Milton Rubens Medran Moreira
Salomão Jacob Benchaya

***Spiritism from a lay and
freethinking perspective***

THE FREETHINKING COLLECTION:
SPIRITISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



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PRESENTATION

“(...) freethinking elevates the dignity of man; through it he becomes an active, intelligent being, rather than a machine of beliefs.”

Allan Kardec (Spiritist Magazine, February 1867)

The CEPA - International Spiritist Association* and the Centre for Spiritist Research and Documentation (CPDoc) have the honor of presenting to both spiritist and non spiritist readers *The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st century*.

The first series of *The Freethinking Collection* aims to present, in a summarized way, but without prejudice to conceptual precision, the theoretical positions of the

* CEPA is the acronym, both in Spanish and Portuguese, for the previous name of the International Spiritist Association. CEPA used to stand for Confederación Espírita Panamericana. Its initials also created a word that reminded us of the symbolism suggested by the Spirits and used in the Prolegomena within *The Spirit's Book*.

so-called secular and freethinking spiritism, which has been developing in several countries in the Americas and in Europe, during recent years.

Edited in four languages - Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French - it aims to disseminate lay and free thinking spiritism as comprehensively as possible.

This perspective has been characterized by being an alternative look at spiritism, which was founded by Allan Kardec in 1857, as published in his masterful work *The Spirit's Book*, and its institutionalization and popularization in various regions of the planet.

As it spread, spiritism was subjected to processes of absorption and syncretism with the set of religious beliefs and practices specific to the historical and cultural context of each country and of each era.

In some countries, such as Brazil for example, the historical and cultural process of a catholic nature faced by spiritism resulted in the formation of another Christian religion, to the detriment of the principles of rationality and freethinking proposed by Allan Kardec for spiritism.

This phenomenon of syncretism has occurred with spiritism in several countries making it a minor religion, shifting it from its natural epistemological positioning, and causing it to lose its potential

to open perspectives in the fields of knowledge, especially in the areas of science and philosophy.

Hence the need for spiritists gathered around the CEPA and CPDoc, for a rereading of spiritist thought in an attempt to rescue the generous proposal of Allan Kardec, who sought to build a spiritualist, lay, freethinking, humanistic and progressive philosophy. These are fundamental characteristics so that spiritism could walk along the progress of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality in the contemporary world.

The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st century intends to present to the reader some fundamental topics of spiritism from the perspective of this rereading, with the aim, therefore, of clarifying spiritist readers in general and those who are interested in these subjects.

The collection presents and elaborates, in this 1st series, a set of fundamental themes, which will allow a comprehensive and full-fledged understanding vis-à-vis the hegemonic thought prevailing in the spiritist movements of Brazil and the world. This gaze is proposed within the greatest spirit of otherness possible.

All topics were elaborated with a method that seeks clarity, conciseness, and precision with the aim

of providing fundamental introductory information on spiritism and the spiritist movement, from a lay and freethinking perspective.

The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st Century also aims to offer scholars and communicators of spiritism, as well as those engaged in the organization of courses, conferences and coordination of study groups, references, and support material to be used in didactic activities carried out by spiritist associations in general.

We believe that this initiative will contribute to a healthy debate on important issues of spiritism, as reflected in the transcendental spiritualist philosophy founded by Allan Kardec.

The authors of this 1st Series - Fundamental Themes - from *The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st Century* are intellectuals originally from the spiritualist movements of Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela who developed the following topics:

- **Spiritism in the lay and free thinker perspective**
Milton Rubens Medran Moreira (Brazil) and Salomão Jacob Benchaya (Brazil)
- **The immortality of the soul**
David Santamaría (Spain)

- **Mediumship: exchange between two worlds**
Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis (Brazil) and Yolanda Clavijo (Venezuela)
- **Reflections on the idea of God**
Ricardo de Moraes Nunes (Brazil) and Dante López (Argentina)
- **Reincarnation: a revolutionary existential paradigm**
Mauro de Mesquita Spínola (Brazil)
- **The evolution of spirits, matter, and worlds**
Gustavo Molfino (Argentina) and Reinaldo Di Lucia (Brazil)
- **Spiritism, ethics, and morals**
Jacira Jacinto da Silva (Brazil) and Milton Rubens Medran Moreira (Brazil)
- **Allan Kardec: the founder of spiritism**
Matheus Laureano (Brazil) and Wilson Garcia (Brazil)

Spiritism, in the words of the important Brazilian writer and spiritist philosopher José Herculano Pires, remains as the “great unknown”. The shadows of misunderstanding fall upon it, preventing its original

brilliance from being appreciated as a philosophical proposal which reveals the horizons of the Spirit over modern thought, emphasizing the importance of reason and facts.

The Freethinking Collection: Spiritism for the 21st century aims, therefore, to shed some light on the spiritist philosophical proposal, with the purpose of illuminating its understanding by spiritists and non-spiritists as well as rescuing its revolutionary potential contribution to a new vision of the human being and the world.

This is a bold but necessary task.

Ademar Arthur Chioro de Reis

Mauro de Mesquita Spínola

Ricardo de Moraes Nunes

Organizers

CEPA - INTERNATIONAL SPIRIT ASSOCIATION

In *The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st century*, CEPA unfolds, in the various volumes that make up the 1st Series, the fundamental themes of spiritism. In the series that will follow, current issues of equal importance for societal living will be addressed.

CEPA - International Spiritist Association, was founded in Argentina in 1946. It was strongly influenced by the freethinking tradition that arose in the Spanish spiritist movement, shortly after the mid-19th century advent of the Spiritist Philosophy in France, under the direction of Allan Kardec.

Argentine spiritists, whose main characteristic was the defense of the progressive, secular, and freethinking character of spiritism, played a leading

role in the basis of thought that always guided CEPA members.

Since its founding, CEPA, initially called the Pan American Spiritist Confederation, has been working for the construction and consolidation of the philosophical and scientific nature of spiritism, as proclaimed by its founder Allan Kardec.

As an interpreter of spiritism in its original form, CEPA defines it as **“a science dealing with the nature, origin and destiny of spirits, as well as their relationships with the bodily world”** and as **“a spiritualist philosophy of moral consequences”**.

Its nature today is that of an International Spiritist Association, comprised by individuals and spiritist institutions from different continents. It is characterized by being an alliance of people and institutions sharing the same freethinking ideal, not compatible with vertical and authoritarian organizations within the spiritist movement.

Its main objectives are:

- (a) promote and disseminate the knowledge provided by spiritism, based on the thinking of Allan Kardec, under a lay, freethinking, humanist, progressive and pluralistic vision.
- (b) promote and support efforts for the permanent updating of spiritism.

- (c) promote integration between spiritists and spiritist institutions of all continents, sharing these same objectives.

Valuable scholars and thinkers gathered around CEPA have been expanding the scope of the Spiritist Philosophy, adding their efforts to restore its original progressive sense, unfortunately minimized when it is mistakenly read as a religious doctrine.

Spiritism free of adjectives is a universalist philosophy with liberating potential, and thus the reason for CEPA's commitment to its earliest postulates, upholding the historical context in force at the time of its birth.

The association of people around the study of spiritism, in its purest expression, has served for the aggrandizement of the spiritist philosophy, which can serve everyone, regardless of their beliefs and visions of the world.

In honor of the work and dedication of the authors, I leave an affectionate invitation for the reader to study and critically analyze their contributions, as a true freethinker.

Jacira Jacinto da Silva,
President of CEPA

CPDOC - SPIRITIST RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER

CPDoc is one of the oldest working spiritist research centers in Brazil. Its main objective is the development and dissemination of studies and research of spiritist themes, using the appropriate methodology for each topic as well as the contributions of the various areas of knowledge. It seeks to contribute to the improvement of knowledge, as a whole and of spiritism specifically.

CPDoc was born in Santos (Sao Paulo, Brazil) in 1988, the result of the dream of young people interested in reinforcing their spiritist studies. It has participants from several Brazilian states and other countries. The works are published through its website, in books, in the press, and they are discussed in various events, especially at the Brazilian

Symposium of Spiritist Thought as well as at the Congresses and Conferences of CEPA, which it joined in 1995.

To date, CPDoc has in its collection the following books published or to be published:

- **Magnetismo e vitalismo e o pensamento de Kardec**, by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis
- **Um Blues no meio do caminho**, by Paulo Cesar fernandes
- **Centro espírita: uma revisão estrutural**, by Mauro de Mesquita Spinola
- **Teleco**, by Geraldo Pires de Oliveira
- **Igualdade de direitos e diferença de funções entre o homem e a mulher**, by Marissol Castello Branco
- **Mecanismos da mediunidade: Processo de comunicação mediúnica**, by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis
- **Criminalidade: educar ou punir?**, by Jacira Jacinto da Silva
- **Ensaio sobre o Humanismo Espírita**, by Eugênio Lara
- **Os espíritos falam: Você ouve?**, by Wilson Garcia

- **Doca e o menino – O laço e o silêncio**, by Wilson Garcia
- **Perspectivas contemporâneas da reencarnação (several authors), organized** by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis and Ricardo de Moraes Nunes
- **Os livros dos espíritos**, by Luís Jorge Lira Neto
- **Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st century** (several authors), organized by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis, Ricardo de Moraes Nunes and Mauro de Mesquita Spinola

The CPDoc also offers online courses presenting spiritism within a secular and freethinking vision, using modern distance learning techniques.

All those interested in research can participate in the CPDoc if they know the fundamentals of spiritism and are hosted by a member of the group.

Information, published articles, CPDoc-promoted events, and online courses are available on the group's website:

<http://www.cpdocespirita.com.br>.

Wilson Garcia
President of CPDoc

PREFACE

For a real appraisal of the book that you are about to read, allow me, dear reader, to make certain considerations for you to put its authors and contents into context.

Interestingly, I first met Salomão and Milton through their articles, ahead of our meeting in person.

Back in 1984, the International Association of Spiritism (CEPA) was hosting in the city of Foz de Iguazú a regional meeting chaired by our fellow citizen Hermas Culzoni. There, David Pereira Franco, First Chairman of CEPA at that time, was the key speaker.

The attendance of Francisco Thiesen and Altivo Ferreira, Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Brazilian Federation of Spiritism (FEB), respectively, made

room for fraternal rapprochement between the religious Spiritism, represented by FEB, and the lay Spiritism of CEPA. These organizations had remained aloof one from another since 1953, when Brazilian representatives left the Confederation, alarmed by its apparent lay vocation.

Against that backdrop, a magazine landed in my hands, which, incidentally, I preserve as a relic: "Reincarnation," the headline read. And on the same cover, "*SPIRITISM - SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY... TO WHAT EXTENT IS IT A RELIGION?*"

We, the young militants by then, were extremely happy to find such a copy. We bought it and devoured, enticed by the contents of the articles penned by some Maurice Herbert Jones, a second one called Salomão Benchaya and a third one signing as Milton Medran Moreira.

They, as the top leaders of the Spirit Federation of Rio Grande do Sul (FERGS), dared to question the unquestionable for religious Spiritism. Thus, following the election in 1987, they took their own way, according to their convictions about the lay nature of Spiritism. We learned about it long time later, in 1996, when we welcomed Milton Medran Moreira in Buenos Aires, who would take part in a congress hosted by us at the Constanca Association

of Spiritism, apropos the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of CEPA.

There they were, Milton in company with 60 Brazilians from religious Spiritism and attracted by a “Letter to Brazilian Spiritism,” signed by Jon Aizpúrua, the Chairman of CEPA, some years earlier.

Why is it important to tell this story? Because you must know, dear reader, that the authors of this book are not improvising concepts learned from the wide Spiritist literature. Instead, these persons boast a large track record inside Spiritism and have experienced from inside the difference between religion and laicism.

Precisely, their sound concepts reflected in this book are driven by such experience, based on a long and fruitful intellectual life devoted to the study and research into a comparison of religions, philosophy and history, but also of the Spiritist, institutional and individual theory and practice.

As a boy, Milton attended a Catholic seminary to become a priest, dropping out at the end of the day. And Salomão comes from a Jewish family. In a nutshell, both of them are cognizant of what they write.

Hence, as the reader goes deeper into the text,

they will find a true exegesis of the Spiritist doctrine, a thorough analysis of the specifics which are the core of insightful, thoughtful and methodical interpretation, appropriate for an observation science and philosophical doctrine, as Spiritism was defined by its founder.

The reader will go back in time to the 19th century, when Spiritism was born. As the authors point out, Spiritism needs to be comprehended first and foremost in that context, where the influence of the Jewish-Christian culture of guilt and punishment were common knowledge, and when speaking up in dissent was sometimes punished even with death.

Getting to know such reality would take the Spiritist initiative to reckless levels at that time, a fierce fight indeed. Notwithstanding, that was the good timing in human evolution with a glimpse of hope in freedom of conscience for humankind. And Denizard Rivail was there to offer it.

The followers of Spiritism spent a good while of the 20th century finding out whether Spiritism was a trilogy defined as “science, philosophy and religion,” in order to secure the continuity of the dogmatic and authoritarian concepts of religions, or whether Spiritism was “science, philosophy and moral,” to

take distance from religious dogmatisms and start boosting the fact that individuals should take care of their own evolution.

At the end of last century and at the beginning of the present century, such a dichotomy made no more sense. We stopped discussing about names, for there is no need. While we were discussing, science moved closer to spirituality, psychology became transpersonal, and physicians accepted the existence of God.

Spiritism was born to break ground; it is a liberator of conscience; it breaks with the human-divine duality, and, as the authors say, naturalizes the supernatural.

We are heading for a world where science and spirituality will walk holding hands, where labels or hierarchies will never mind; the important thing will be what each of us can make for our evolution both as individuals and as a group.

Such spirituality without religion, as proposed by Spiritism, gives the possibility to overcome the great evils that afflict humankind: fanaticism, sectarianism, extremism and fundamentalism. Such is the proposal made by Milton and Salomão in this brief, condensed, intense and brilliant text.

Again, I first met with them as writers of a religious Spiritist magazine. Now, as I am familiar with them, their articles have acquired a much greater dimension, for I know that they are consistent with their knowledge and lives. Their affection, honesty and loyalty to their principles are faultless.

Thank you, Milton and Salomão, for finally bringing Spiritism in the 21st century!

Dante López

True Spiritism Society (Argentina)

Former Chairman of CEPA (2008/2016)

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SUMMARY

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1 WHAT ABOUT LAY SPIRITISM?

Milton Rubens Medran Moreira

At first sight, such adjective as lay Spiritism looks like superfluous. Be that as it may, there is only one Spiritism. Within his extensive literature, did not Allan Kardec, the founder of Spiritism, make his position clear about the nature of Spiritism, by defining it as appropriate?



Under the pen name of Allan Kardec, Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail (1804/1869), a French teacher, laid the foundations of Spiritism in Paris with *The Spirits' Book* (1857).

Let us see,

In a book released in Paris, in 1859, entitled *What is Spiritism?* Kardec took good care of making a definition, including this brief comment:

*Spiritism is, at the same time, an observational science and a philosophical doctrine. As a practical science it consists in the relations which are established between us and the Spirits; as a philosophy, it understands all the moral consequences that are derived from these same relations.*¹ (p. 44).

In this way, the two fields where the founder of Spiritism intended to situate it had been delimited: **science** and **philosophy**. In the field of science, he suggested a methodical and serious approach of an event always present in human culture, albeit cornered to mystery, the supernatural, bringing about myths, beliefs and superstitions, the so-called communication with the dead. And he also located Spiritism in the field of philosophy, because of the theoretical study of ethics. Without a shadow of doubt, the proven existence of spirits and their relationship with the material world provides an overview of humankind and the world, with an impact on human behaviour and the perception that individuals have about life, about themselves, but

also about others. In fact, certain principles such as the spirits' immortality, their communication ability and their evolution – the theoretical foundations of the Spiritist proposal – rather than mere beliefs, are examined as a reality inherent in life, with ethical and moral consequences.

Having located the field to insert Spiritism, Kardec could then conceptualize it. And he did it in *What is Spiritism* by completing the excerpt cited above.

*Spiritism is a science that deals with the nature, origin and destiny of the Spirits, as well as their relations with the corporeal world.*¹ (p.44).

Throughout his work, Kardec insisted on keeping Spiritism exactly within the sphere of science, that is, of **knowledge**. The term science from Latin *sciencia*, implies precisely such etymology: knowledge (the Latin verb *scire* means to *know*). In the same brochure where he proposed such definition, Allan Kardec didactically reproduced a hypothetical and large dialogue with a priest.

The cleric remarked that the contents of the Spiritist proposal were, at bottom, same as those of religions: the existence of God, the



survival of spirits and their destiny after death. The founder of Spiritism agreed, but he maintained that, in his proposal, each one of those questions had been inferred from scientific experiments and provoked reflections based on reason, as all of them were *in Nature*. In this way, scholars could move it from supernatural phenomena and beliefs to rational knowledge. Spiritism, Kardec underscored, relies *on principles independent from dogmatic matters. Therefore, its true character is that of science, instead of a religion.*¹ (p. 103).

Kardec, went further to end up saying, during a speech delivered at the Paris Society of Spiritist Studies² (the first society in its kind ever organized and chaired by him), on November 1, 1868, that Spiritism has *none of the characteristics of a religion.*

DID YOU KNOW?

In the *Revue Spirite* of December 1868, Allan Kardec, the founder of Spiritism, said: *Since Spiritism has none of the characteristics of a religion, in the usual meaning of this term, it could not and should not dress up with such a title, the value of which, unavoidably, would have been mistaken. Hence, it is simply termed as a philosophical and moral doctrine.*² (p. 357).

Moreover, in the event of *dressing up* with such title, *it will unavoidably be mistaken*.

Going a little bit further on this reflection, it is easy to conclude that Spiritism, as conceived by its founder, falls into the area of laicism.

But what is exactly laicism?

Herivelto Carvalho (2019) referred to the term *laic* as follows:

This adjective comes from the Greek term laikós, which means "of the people" or, sometimes, "mundane." In Christian documents, from the 3rd century on, it was mostly used to classify the faithful who lacked the sacred knowledge of clerics. In some other contexts, the term laikós was used as an antonym of hagios (sacred), by specifying everything that looked like profane. In Europe in the 19th century, the term laic acquired the current meaning, by labelling a human activity not directly involved in religious matters or dogmatic questions of any beliefs.³

For this Spiritist thinker, for more than one century after the beginning of Spiritism, the term *laic* was seldom associated with the Spiritist doctrine.

The first records of such association date back to the 1860's, when Charles Fauvety, a French Spiritist,

used the term "laic religion" in reference to Spiritism as an advocate of the existence of a secular spirituality.³

He even said that:

Some doctrine publications in that period also recorded such term. For instance, when Jules-Jacques-Toussaint Lessard, the editor of journal L'Antimatérialiste, of Nantes, reported in the edition of February 1883 of the Revue Spirite on his speech on the "moral, laic superiority of Spiritism over the morals of Catholicism." Or even in a message of spiritual authorship, psychographed by a medium identified just as N.M., released in the edition of August 1888 of the Review of Psychological Studies, of Madrid, which reads as follows: "The collective teaching of Spiritism is laic, because it teaches, same as Jesus, that he, who wants to be the first one will be the last one and the servant of all, a unique fact that confers moral superiority.³

According to Carvalho, following the release of *Laic Spiritism*, by David Grossvater, in 1996, the term laic Spiritist became widespread.⁴ In the meantime, the link of Spiritism with laicism comes from the outset.

As wisely pointed out by Jon Aizpúrua in his article *CEPA and Laicism*, included in the book *Spiritism – The current thinking of CEPA, the First International*

A Polish Jewish, he lived for some years in Brazil (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul), where he got to know Spiritism. Later, he moved to Venezuela,



David Grossvater
(1911-1974)

where he founded in Maracay the review *El Espiritista* and the Centre of Meta-Psychic and Related Research (CIMA), renamed in 1980 as Spirit Culture Movement, CIMA. He released in 1966 the work *Laic Spiritism*, thus spreading such term. A Spiritist thinker and leader, Grossvater is among the most respected persons in CEPA.

*Congress of Spiritism, held in 1888, recommended "the dissemination of laicism in all the spheres of life."*⁵

This book is available at: <https://vdocuments.com.br/cepa-espiritismo-o-pensamento-atual-da-cepa.html>

In his book *From the Spiritist Religion to Laicism – The Track Record of the Spiritist Cultural Centre of Porto Alegre*, Salomão Jacob Benchaya clarifies that laicism as a philosophical doctrine proclaims that the autonomy of human activities with regard to religion.⁶ (p. 133).



This principle, burgeoning in the second half of the 19th century, the age of the emergence of Spiritism, aimed at ending once and for all with the meddling of the Catholic Church in State affairs. Rather than anti-religious, it was areligious preaching. Benchaya, speaking with authority, recalled the definition of the term laic in the Aurélio dictionary: living in, or characteristic of, the world, the century, secular (as opposed to "ecclesiastic"). The related noun, "laicism," has been defined there as

*"a doctrine that proclaims laicism of socio-political institutions and of culture, or at least claims for these, the autonomy before religion."*⁷

Precisely such autonomy in regard of the matters formerly plastered in religious dogmas, mystery, the supernatural, has been replevined by Spiritism since its origin. Topics inherent in the very human nature and the philosophical insight into it, such as the existence of the soul or spirits, their immortality, their communication ability and the evolution process, needed to be addressed, according to Kardec, in a rational manner. It ought to be that way, even though religions continued taking care of them as articles of faith, and even though many people preferred to keep them in the field of beliefs, including all the wrappings created by religions, such as worship,

priest and institutional hierarchies and liturgic acts, among others. For these, Spiritism would be an aide, making their beliefs reasonable.

Far from purporting to become a new religion, Spiritism was intent in acting *as a science-religion partnership*, as suggested by Allan Kardec in *The Gospel According to Spiritism*.⁸ Thanks to the experimental science and rationality applied to the fundamental matters of spiritualism, religious faith could turn into **reasoned faith**.

Clearly, Spiritism was born as a **laic** proposal, stripped from any religious connotation. As emphasized by its founder, while dealing with some issues historically within the realm of religions, the new science would address them from a different perspective as natural events, by taking the way leading to knowledge. The moral effects of these principles would not be the result of the impositions of faith, or by dint of religious or supernatural standards, but out of personal, free and autonomous conviction of the individual able to assimilate such knowledge and arriving at conclusions driven by ethics consistent with them.

“Unshakable faith is only that which can face reason in all human epochs.”⁸

Allan Kardec – *The Gospel According to Spiritism*

Therefore, true Spiritist should not be placed in the category of believers, but of *free thinkers*. Same as he strived to situate Spiritism as a proposal understood nowadays as *lay*, Kardec took great care of designating it as an freethinking doctrine.

In an article released in the Revue Spirite of January 1867, in line with the trends of the new times that endorsed the autonomy of thinking, Allan Kardec hailed the advent of a new designation for those who are not subject to nobody's opinion in terms of religion and spirituality, who do not regard themselves as tied either to the worship where their birth put them without their consent or to the observance of any religious practices.⁹ (p. 6).

This new class of men and women, according to him, were the free thinkers. There, he put the true Spiritist: *Everyone who do not let go themselves by blind faith are, for this same reason, free thinkers. Hence, Spiritist are also free thinker.*

Undoubtedly, with these brief yet crystal-clear definitions, Kardec conceived the Doctrine systematized by him from his ample communication with spirits, as follows:

- a) A lay, not religious, initiative.
- b) An freethinking initiative, that is, the result of

the experience and the reason, not imposed by anyone.

Nonetheless, one thing was the theoretical proposal by Allan Kardec, a well-respected, open-minded teacher, immersed in the enlightening and revolutionary ideas of thinking, coming from the 18th century and matured in the 19th century. Another, different thing, would be the way of assimilating such ideas by the Christian Western society. Just because those questions, across the *Christian civilization*, had been within the almost exclusive domain of religion, it was difficult for ordinary people to move them from there to the field of secularism and laicism. Even, by force of the religious preaching by the clergy, worried about the advancement of rationalism, an freethinking approach and laicism, such moves had been purposely muddled up with atheism and anti-religion. Ultimately, religion was not, and it is not for that matter, interested in losing the exclusive domain of spiritualism, kept up to that time.

In a nutshell, a rationale concerning the existence of God and spirits, as well as, and especially, for a potential communication between spirits and the material world, and spiritual evolution by means of reincarnation, was warmly and extensively welcome in Europe and the Americas. Notwithstanding,

detaching them from religion would not be that easy. As a matter of fact, it was a cultural phenomenon, deeply rooted in the minds of most people.

Thus, for some people, the *Spiritist religion* needed to be formatted. Indeed, that was far away from the founder's cogitation. In any case, it was the manner of advancing Spiritism, clearing the way for it among the believers, making it respectful against the backdrop of the sacred, where, contrary to the profane, all religions were located.

Hence, a new route had been laid for the Spiritist movement. Undoubtedly, the new look, the religious one, in addition to the other two features conceived by Allan Kardec – scientific and philosophic-moral – would bring about consequences for its development and identity in the countries where it was made known. Brazil, with its strong Catholic origin, inherited from the Portuguese frontiersmen, had certain influence on the formatting of the *Spiritist religion*. Subsequently, it would be embraced by some Spiritist segments in Spanish-speaking countries, even though, in the decades after Kardec's disincarnation, Spain had been a stronghold against the mystic and religious trends from within the movement. In line with the way of thinking of the Pan-American Spiritist Confederation (CEPA) founded in Argentina in 1946

(nowadays, International Spiritist Association), and at odds with ample sectors inside Spiritism, we feel that such turning point, in the sense of making it accessible to the crowds, was different from Kardec's proposal. Additionally, it somewhat harmed the gradual assimilation in terms of modernity, of the project envisaged by him. Kardec was in the forefront of his time and he was cognizant of the increasing loss of prestige of religions, in the most cult segments of society, of the lay nature of the western culture, and of the search of a new spirituality not subordinated to religious hierarchies.

In analysing this event, Brazilian Spiritist philosopher José Herculano Pires, although identifying a religious aspect in Spiritism, acknowledged:

What impeded the expansion of Spiritism in Europe last century (19th century), so that the old concept of the world still prevailing at that time could be renewed, was just its religious aspect. Same as primitive Christianity, Spiritism was anxiously welcome by the poor classes of the population who turned it in a new Christian sect.¹⁰ (p. 79)



José Herculano Pires

(1914/1979)

Brazilian Spiritist philosopher and writer.

With this brief analysis, we could start right away, to answer, or at least try explanatory assumptions for the initial question.

Finally, what is *lay Spiritism*? Does it mean then that there are multiple kinds of Spiritism? Or Spiritism is, actually and only, that outlined and identified in the works of its founder? Is it right to consider it a religion?

Even though the next pages in this little book, expounding and contextualizing historical and cultural issues in this journey, cannot give final answers to this question, present from the very beginning of the Spiritist movement, at least we intend to justify our position. In any case, rather than disregarding the *Spiritist religion*, we just want to show respect for Allan Kardec and loyalty to the great project launched by him in the middle of the 19th century.

2 THE EMERGENCE OF THE LAY, FREETHINKING SEGMENT

Salomão Jacob Benchaya

Even though Spiritism was born as a spiritualist, non-religious doctrine – Kardec asserted always that it was not a religion – it did not take long to mistaken it with a sect. The first charges against Spiritism as a new religion came from the Catholic Church, particularly from Abad François Chesnel, with whom Kardec took issue through the newspaper *L'Univers*.¹¹

The release of the works that followed *The Spirits' Book*¹² and *The Mediums' Book*¹³ – namely, *The Gospel According to Spiritism*,⁸ *Heaven and Hell*,¹⁴ and *The Genesis, Miracles and Predictions According to Spiritism*,¹⁵ all of them emphasizing a

strong relationship between the Spiritist revelation and Christianity – somewhat contributed to form a movement of a religious character, notably in Brazil, where the new doctrine found a fertile land to flourish.

Still, it is worth mentioning that in some nations, particularly Spanish-speaking countries, a lay and freethinking Spiritist vision evolved, as explained by researcher Herivelto Carvalho in his work *From Spain to the Americas – The journey of the freethinking Spiritist tradition*. Excerpts:

We can tell that the freethinking Spiritist tradition emerged in late 19th century, when Allan Kardec's works spread all over Spain. Its early spokespersons included Alverico Perón, Fernández Colavida, Torres-Solanot and Amalia Domingo Soler. Such a tradition acquired its own characteristics. It is not that it broke with the Kardecist thinking, but because of the adopted development method and the performance in its social environment, different from the way of practice and dissemination of Spiritism taken by the French Spiritist. (...) Such a movement became very united and proved to have a high clout on the Spanish society, the philosophical proposal of which seemed to overcome positive religions. This modern spiritualism refused the elements of dogmatism existing in the religions of the past and purported to develop a new, rational

spirituality, able to establish a relationship with philosophy and science. Based on its characteristic features, it created a school of thinking dealing mainly with the interpretation of Spiritism as an open, progressive, non-dogmatic system of ideas and linked to free thinking; therefore, philosophically speaking, it turned into a tradition. (...) No matter the practice of the ideas of laicism, free thinking and continued update by Latin American and Spanish Spiritist, since late 19th century, in the course of time, within the Pan-American Spiritist movement, this knowledge went missing, to such an extent that many members of this movement think that these ideas cemented after the foundation of the Pan-American Spiritist Confederation in 1946.¹⁶

In fact, CEPA eventually rescued such an approach of Spiritism, as we will see afterwards.

In Latin America, the lay segment is noteworthy in Argentina and Venezuela, in addition to Brazil.

DID YOU KNOW?

The International Spiritist Association or CEPA (formerly, Pan-American Spiritist Confederation) was founded in October 5, 1946 in Argentina. This organization advocates and disseminates Spiritism from a lay, freethinking, progressive, humanist and pluralist perspective.

For Jon Aizpúrua,¹⁷ the term "lay Spiritism" entails *multiple nuances among its followers, disseminators or representatives, according to the times and the countries. Nonetheless, some general guidelines could be considered. For instance, in Venezuela, two pivotal points in time could be mentioned: in 1958, the foundation of CIMA as the Centre of Meta-Psychic and Related Research, renamed Spiritist Culture Movement CIMA, in 1974. The founder was David Grossvater, the author of "Within the jurisdiction of Spiritim" (1954), "Spiritist Insights" (1961), "Research into Spirits' Psychology" (1961), "Spiritist Gnoseology" (1961) and "Lay Spiritism," among others.*

The latter book was released in 1966. Certainly, from that moment on, the term lay spiritism was widespread.

The second basic point in time was *the foundation in the city of Maracaibo in 1960 of the Venezuelan Spiritist Federation (FEV), laid on clearly Kardecist and lay foundations and gathering near 20 Spiritist associations of Venezuela, even though not all of those centres were ideologically identified with an freethinking vision. The inspirer and major leader of FEV was Pedro Barboza de la Torre, a lawyer, university professor and the author of multiple Spiritist works, namely "Experimental*



Jon Aizpúrua

Psychologist and university professor, writer and international speaker, David Grossvater's successor, chairman of the Spiritist Cultural Movement CIMA of Venezuela, former chairman of CEPA and current Advisor on International Affairs.

Repertoire for Mediumship" and "From the shadows of dogma to the light of reason." FEV was dissolved in 2002, after Barboza's disincarnation.¹⁷

Furthermore, according to Aizpúrua:

In Argentina there is a long tradition of laicism in the Spiritist environment, despite some nuances. Historical leaders, such as Cosme Mariño and Felipe Senillosa, and some other persons of the Constancia Spiritist Association, could be identified within this line. However, only with Manuel Porteiro there will be a clear ideological stance in that country, following his performance in the Argentinean Spiritist Confederation (CEA), as recorded in the editorials and articles of the La Idea magazine. CEA advanced the creation of CEPA in 1946. Subsequently, in the 1980's, CEA veered round, pulled out of CEPA and joined the International Spiritist Council (CEI), of FEB.

Following the departure of CEA, more progressive Spiritist, mostly members of the Sociedad Espiritismo Verdadero, of Rafaela city, founded the Council of Spiritist Affairs of Argentina (CREA) and gathered several Argentinean Spiritist associations that remained in line with CEPA.

In Cuba, there was a long tradition of lay, freethinking Spiritism, where the great thinker and disseminator Salvador Molina stood out. The Spiritist Confederation of Cuba (CEC), for several decades in the 20th century, carried out an intensive activity and, in its resolutions, it was upfront about its lay, humanist and progressive stance. CEC took an active part in CEPA, and in 1953, it hosted in Havana the Third Pan-American Spiritist Congress.¹⁷

In Aizpúrua's words:

Sadly, the Marxist regime that took over Cuba in 1959 persecuted all the institutions that did not share its materialistic and atheist ideology, their headquarters were closed, and their activities were chased. CEC was dissolved in 1962, when many of its leaders had discarnate already or forced to go into exile.¹⁷

According to the ex-chairman of CEPA,

In Puerto Rico there was also a long track record of lay Spiritism. The former Spiritist Confederation of Puerto Rico, that eventually gathered hundreds

of Spiritist associations, displayed a tough stance against Christian or mystic trends, as clearly noted in its prestigious monthly review "Cosmos." In Puerto Rico, and in New York City, Willy Colón, one of the most important Spiritist thinkers in Latin America, played a key role. The author of multiple works and a speaker, his lay Spiritist view sometimes adopted hardcore features of anti-religiosity and anti-clericalist, and for this reason, he was harshly criticized.¹⁷

It should be noted that the Kardecist model had no expansion in Anglo-Saxon nations, where *the new spiritualism* predominates, of a stressed phenomenological and ecclesiastic nature, including the religious professionalism.

In Brazil, many of the early Spiritist leaders came from the ranks of Catholicism. However, followers of the dissenting work *The Four Gospels* by Jean Baptiste Roustaing, ended up shaping a *Brazilian-style Spiritism*.¹⁸ In Bahia, where the first Spiritist site and the first Spiritist journal in Brazil were set up – *O Eco de Além-Túmulo* – their founder, Luiz Olímpio Teles de Menezes, a fervent Catholic, a friend of Roustaing, and converted Spiritist, wrote during an altercation with Father Juliano José de Miranda, from the Archbishopship of Salvador,

*Spiritism and Catholicism are the same Church of our Lord Jesus Christ – only the times and words have changed. Spiritism is the faithful translator, through the emissaries of God, of the doctrines of the Gospel.*¹⁹ (p. 89).

Medium Francisco Cândido Xavier and his spirit guide Emmanuel also gave a significant input to the development of the Spiritist religion.

All the psychographic work of Francisco Cândido Xavier glaringly shows the evangelic preaching of communicating spirits, in line with the extremely religious stance of the medium. Even his spirit guide, Emmanuel, a priest in his prior incarnation, is the author of the book *The Spirits' Religion*.²⁰

The first attempt at rescuing the non-religious character of Spiritism in Brazil came with Afonso Angeli Torteroli. A lawyer, journalist and professor, he founded the Centre of Spiritist Union of Brazil on September 6, 1881, the first institution set to unify the national Spiritist movement. It did not linger long in the middle of an ideological discussion between *mystic and scientists*. Torteroli took part in the foundation of the Brazilian Spiritist Federation (FEB) on January 1, 1884. In August 1897, under his leadership, the scientists of the Centre of Spiritist Union of Propaganda in Brazil launched the triad

*SCIENCE-PHILOSOPHY-MORALS in the Revista Espírita do Brasil.*²¹

With Bezerra de Menezes, a member of the mystic group, as chairman of FEB on two occasions (1889 and 1895), the perception of Spiritism as a religion was eventually accepted by the Spiritist movement.

According to Quintella (2020), in 1929, Carlos Imbassahy said: We need to face *Spiritism from a threefold view: science, philosophy or religion.*²¹ In this way, the trilogy science-philosophy-religion was coined and reaffirmed afterwards in the book *The Comforter* (1940) by the spirit Emmanuel, published by FEB. In the first chapter, Emmanuel affirms:

*We can take Spiritism, symbolized in this way, as a triangle of spiritual forces. Science and philosophy link to the Earth this symbolic figure; therefore, religion is the divine angle that ties it to heaven.*²² (p.19).

Carlos Imbassahy fastens the religious aspect of Spiritism in his book *Religion* (1942), also published by FEB.

From 1961 through 1973, the lay nature of Spiritism was discussed again by the members of the Spiritist University Movement (MUE) of São Paulo. In the late sixties, MEU, spread nationwide, acquired a

DID YOU KNOW?

The book *Religion* by Carlos Imbassahy emerged to answer to the arguments used by the then Director of Education in São Paulo, Dr. Almeida Jr., in his Opinion to deny the authorization to the Spiritism lessons for the children of Itobi elementary school. The Director said that Spiritism was not a religion. Imbassahy argued in defence of Spiritism that the move curtailed the religious freedom afforded by the Constitution to different worships.

rather social and political status under the influence of the philosophical thinking of Argentinean Humberto Mariotti (1905 - 1982) and his *Parapsychology and Historical Materialism*,²⁴ and Manuel Mariotte S. Porteiro (1881 - 1936) and his *Dialectic Spiritism*,²⁵ in addition to some other Marxist influences, as David Grossvater and his *Lay Spiritism*,⁴ Eusínio Lavigne and Souza do Prado with their book *Spiritist and social issues*,²⁶ and Jacob Holzmann Netto (1934-1994) and his *Spiritism and Marxism*.²⁷ All these works were the inspiration of a critical, lay and politized discourse of the Spiritist university students at that time.²⁸

Nevertheless, in Brazil, as late as in 1978, the advocacy for the lay nature of Spiritism regained a momentum with the Santos' Group, particularly

under *Espiritismo e Unificação*, the official journal of the Spiritist Municipal Union of Santos (UMES) and the LICESPE-Editora. This group, led by journalist and psychologist Jaci Régis, was also composed of José Rodrigues, Egydio Régis, Henrique Diegues and others. Some of them, members of UMES, played a key role in the Union of Spiritist Societies of São Paulo (USE-SP) and launched a campaign of spiritization of the movement, fighting the ecclesiastic influence and promoting the Spiritist culture.

In 1986 some members of this group ran for the board of the Union of Spiritist Societies (USE) of São Paulo under the formula of Unification. They were beaten by the conservative party.

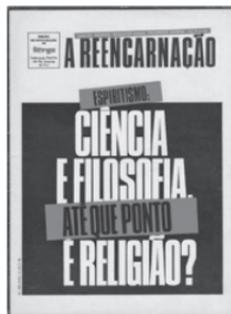


Jaci Régis
(1932-2010)

Journalist, economist and psychologist born in Santa Catarina, he led the Allan Kardec Spiritist Center and the Veneranda Home Spiritist Assistance Community. He founded the publishing house Divulgação Cultural Espírita (DICESP) and the journal *Espiritismo e Unificação*. After breaking with the religious movement, he founded the *Abertura* journal, the Jaci Régis Spiritist Cultural Library (LICESPE) and the Kardecist Cultural Institute of Santos.

That same year, the Spiritist Federation of Rio Grande do Sul (FERGS) introduced the *Project Kardequizar*, in line with the campaign for the *spiritization* pioneered by Jaci Régis and his group.⁶ Since 1978, the FERGS had been led by a group from the Luz e Caridade Spiritist Society (SELC), nowadays, Porto Alegre Spiritist Cultural Centre (CCEPA), including, among others, Maurice Herbert Jones, Salomão Jacob Benchaya and Milton Rubens Medran Moreira.⁶

In October 1986, upon the release by the FERGS of the edition N° 402 of the *A Reencarnação* review, whose cover read *Spiritism – Science and Philosophy*. To what extent is it a religion? a strong conservative reaction occurred. Then, in the next election, the incoming board upheld the religious status of the Spiritist doctrine.



In the consolidation of the lay and freethinking segment in Brazil, the promotion of the Brazilian Symposium of Spiritist Thought (SBPE) is worth mentioning. Envisioned by Jaci Régis, the event was hosted every two years from 1989 through 2017, by the Kardecian Cultural Institute of Santos (ICKS).

The activity contributed to the return to Brazil of the Pan-American Spiritist Confederation (CEPA), since 1949, after its Second Pan-American Congress in Rio de Janeiro, under the aegis of the Brazilian Spiritist League. Then, the Brazilian Spiritist Federation (FEB), gathering some leaders from state federal agencies who attended the Pan-American event, executed the *Golden Compact*, mirrored in an act that guides the federated Spiritist movement in Brazil.

CEPA always kept distance from the religiousness prevailing in the Brazilian Spiritism.

For its part, FEB never admitted any membership in an international Spiritist organization, yet took part in the Third Congress of CEPA, held in Cuba in 1953. In that congress, CEPA voiced its lay, not religious stance, which prompted the departure of FEB from that event and from all the events hosted by CEPA from then on.

During the Third Brazilian Symposium of Spiritist Thought in 1993, Salomão Benchaya and Milton Medran Moreira, the leaders of the Spiritist Cultural Center of Porto Alegre (CCEPA), present there, were invited by Jon Aizpúrua, the chairman-elect of CEPA, to join the confederation.⁶

In 1994, CEPA forwarded its Note N° 004 to the Brazilian Spiritist Movement, expressing its willingness



to tighten ties with all Spiritist societies and federations in the Western Hemisphere and urging all institutions to membership. The note caused a strenuous reaction by FEB, which posted on *Reformador* in 1994, the op-ed *The seed and the weed*.

Here is the final paragraph of the statement:

(...) Recently, the Brazilian Spiritist Movement experienced an unjustifiable attack from an institution that purports to lead the Spiritist movement of the Americas but acts in an anti-ethical and authoritarian manner in advocacy of a restrictive interpretation of the Doctrine.

Candid Spiritist, Christian Spiritist, cannot flee the reality of the existence of the pretentious sowers of the "I" inside the movement. It is just another obstacle to be surmounted.

*Surveillance is a must, particularly before those imprudent fellows, who enormously harm the Doctrine and its movement. We need to learn to live with them, like the weed that grows together with the seed, without mixing up.*²⁹ (p .6).

Upon the membership of CCEPA in CEPA in 1995, the hub of São Paulo – Rio Grande do Sul was set up, making provision for the return of CEPA to Brazil. The move took shape in 2000 during the XVIII Pan-American Spiritist Congress in Porto Alegre, when the headquarters of CEPA were transferred to Brazil, after the election as chairman of journalist and lawyer Milton Rubens Medran Moreira, of the Spiritist Cultural Centre of Porto Alegre.

In 2003, the Brazilian Association of Delegates and Friends of CEPA, formerly CEPAmigos, nowadays CEPABrasil, was established. Its performance marked the consolidation of the lay, freethinking Spiritist segment in Brazil.

For its part, CEPA, during the XX Pan-American Spiritist Congress in Rosario, Argentina, in response to the insistent claims, mainly from the Spiritist community of Europe, amended its bylaws and became the International



Spiritist Association (CEPA). The original acronym remained unchanged, but the organization turned basically into a movement of ideas.

<https://cepainternacional.org/>

Finally, today, the existence and growth of a lay, freethinking segment in the Spiritist movement is a reality.

3

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPIRITIST RELIGION AND LAY SPIRITISM

Salomão Jacob Benchaya

The term *lay Spiritism* arises from the need to identify a segment that does not regard Spiritism as a religion, but disseminates it from a humanist, freethinking, progressive and pluralist standpoint. The ideal would be not to put adjectives to Spiritism: neither lay nor Christian. Nevertheless, ignoring the various interpretations is virtually impossible, particularly those related to the religious question, as we will see in this chapter.

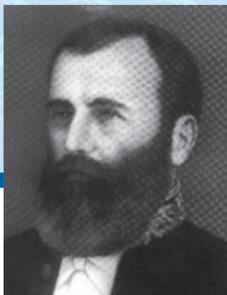
Lay Spiritism is opposed, without any hegemonic intention, to the prevailing model of *religious*,

Christian Spiritism. As a matter of fact, in Brazil, from the outset, the Spiritist movement was split between the *mystic* and the *scientists*. With Bezerra de Menezes as the chairman of FEB, particularly from 1985, the format of Spiritist religion was predominant. On the one hand, the religious Spiritism preaches the science-philosophy-religion triad. On the other hand, laypersons view Spiritism as a science-philosophy-morals. Note, however, that Kardec never made such Division.

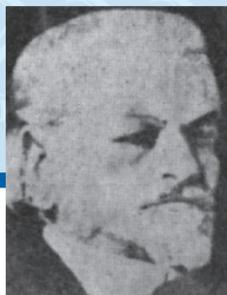
For an inattentive observer, considering or not Spiritism a religion is likely to make no difference for

DID YOU KNOW?

Back to late 19th century, the Spiritist movement in Brazil had been divided into the mystic and the scientists. The former was led by Bezerra de Menezes and the latter, by Afonso Angeli Torteroli.



Bezerra de Menezes



Afonso Angeli Torteroli

that matter. Nonetheless, depending on the context (either lay or religious), significant differences may be found, such as the characteristic positions of both sides concerning the interpretation of the Doctrine, the performance of the followers and the practice in Spiritist centres. Notably, although Allan Kardec said time after time that Spiritism is a philosophical science of moral consequences, instead of a religion, it seems that he gave leeway for Spiritism to be regarded as such by linking it to the Jewish-Christian tradition and labelling it as the *third divine revelation and promised comforter*. In addition, three of his works were dedicated to the study and interpretation of the New Testament, namely *The Gospel According to Spiritism*,⁸ *Heaven and Hell*,¹⁴ and *The Genesis - Miracles and Premonition According to Spiritism*.¹⁵ Perhaps, this fact derives from the strong influence of the Christian Eurocentrism on the Western culture and the patent effort by Kardec to show that Spiritism was not anti-religious.

Sure enough, in Kardec's era, labelling Spiritism as a science and philosophy, or a moral and philosophical science, was legitimate, as reported by researcher Paulo Henrique de Figueiredo (2019) in his work *Autonomy – The history never told of Spiritism*.³⁰ In fact, science was spiritualist under the aegis of the

rational spiritualism prevailing in European universities. It was said, in this context, that *man was an incarnate soul*. Nowadays, it is hard to frame Spiritism in the branch of sciences in view of the materialist paradigm that drives the scientific knowledge.

Now, therefore, what does make Spiritism (a philosophical science of moral consequences) inconsistent with a religious concept? While Kardec proposed a science-religion partnership, Spiritism could not play the role of religion, but of linkage of the two areas of knowledge, filling their gaps with certain data supplied by it.

Science and religion, considered as such, reflect conflicting views. Religion is the carrier of immutable and indisputable truths, pretentiously considered of a divine origin. In turn, science doubts, investigates, questions, offers elements of conviction, presupposes that there are not final truths. Religion imposes a blind faith, has certainties and abominates doubts, which results in its dogmas. The presumed divine origin confers religion a status of superiority and exclusiveness, giving rise to an implicit refusal of dialogue and inclusion. Consequently, it runs counter to the progressive, questioning and dynamic nature inherent in Spiritism. The religious mindset carries a series of harmful features, namely the dogmatic

immobility and rigidity, the salvationist claim and sectarianism. These characteristics, sometimes imperceptible, are overcome from the lay perspective, which gives Spiritism the status of permanence and survival. As a religion and, therefore, as a subject of belief, Spiritism has no place in the discussions of the scholars, or science, or philosophy.

Nevertheless, for many people, Spiritism is not eligible as science or philosophy. As reported by the Spiritist writer and researcher Paulo Henrique de Figueiredo (2018),

At the time of Kardec, the science regarded as positive was that intended to discover the causes and the laws of phenomena and facts, studying them through the methods of observation, experimentation and induction, from which its laws could be deduced. (...) Allan Kardec, in classifying Spiritism among philosophical and psychological sciences and working on a scientific method of its own to study Spiritist events, inserted it properly in the positive sciences that were accepted in his time.³¹ (p. 48)

The argument about Kardec saying some months before his disincarnation that, in the philosophical sense, Spiritism was a religion,² is not used properly, given that the founder of Spiritism did not mean the commonplace concept of religion (i.e., the union

of mankind to God), arising from the Church and referred to the theology of the downfall of angels and involution. Rather, he signified the idea that he elaborated on in his speech of November 2, 1868, about the tie and the communion of thoughts among people, i.e., a social, horizontal tie, *a gregarious spirit, the union of kinsmen*.³²

Tip: In 1985 *The tie and the worship – Is Spiritism a religion?* by Spiritist thinker Krishnamurti de Carvalho Dias was released. The book unleashed intensive discussions on the religious character of Spiritism.

The speech delivered by Allan Kardec, where he clearly indicates that Spiritism is not a religion, can be read in full in the *Revue Spirite* of December 1868 or accessed at:

<https://kardecpedia.com/roteiro-de-estudos/902/revistaespirita-jornal-de-estudos-psicologicos-1868/6330/dezembro/sessao-anual-comemorativa-dos-mortos>.



Having said that, we will review now, far from taking any stance of superiority, but with due respect for our fellows who militate in other currents of Spiritism, some features and substances that distinguish *the Spiritist religion from lay, freethinking Spiritism*.

Thus, we will find in Allan Kardec's work some statements as "*Spiritism is the revival of Christianity*," "*the third divine revelation*," or "*the comforter promised by Jesus*," boasted in the religious segment and generally avoided in the lay segment, due to its sectarian and exclusive nature. Such concepts, advocated by religious Spiritist and comprehensible in Kardec's cultural context, were overcome from the standpoint of laicism. These attributes, applicable in a religious context, are totally inconsistent with the status of philosophical science intended by the Spiritist doctrine.

There is a trend among religious Spiritist of attributing to Spiritism a condition of wholeness and exclusive mastery of the truth, putting it above science. From the lay perspective, Spiritism is an area of knowledge that evolves and needs to learn a lot from, as well as contributing to, other disciplines. It is not a revelation in the theological sense; nor is it above any human knowledge.

From the religious perspective, the Spiritist doctrine was dictated by the *higher spirits*, with Kardec acting as a mere clerk who organized and published the supplied information. From a non-religious viewpoint, Spiritism is the result of the partnership of human beings (incarnate

and discarnate). Professor Rival stands out as the founder of the Spiritist doctrine, given the originality, significance and complexity of his work and the methodology adopted in its systematization, as a clear reflection of his condition of pedagogue and rational humanist. Kardec was not just a clerk of the spirits, but the organizer, author, coder and founder of Spiritism. Demeaning his role and extolling the role of the spiritual mentors is just a move to exclude any chance of failure. By labelling him as a petty assistant, there is the possibility of divinizing and sacralising the Spiritist revelation, turning it faultless.

At this point, Kardec emphatically rebutted the immobility of the Spiritist doctrine. As he affirmed in a text of the *Posthumous Works*, entitled *Elaboration of the Doctrine – About Schisms*:

*Spiritism must not close the door to any progress, assimilating all the fair ideas, whatever order they might be, physical or metaphysical ones, it shall never be surpassed, and this is one of the main guarantees of its perpetuity.*³³ (p. 349)

Lay Spiritism and the Spiritist religion are profoundly at odds with the need to update the Doctrine. Hence, the religious segment seems to disregard Kardec's recommendations, contained in *The Genesis*¹⁵ and *Posthumous Works*³³ in respect of the alignment

of Spiritism with progress. They prefer to wait for the *higher spirits* to update the Doctrine, if appropriate. They do not vest in humankind any authority for that matter. Such is not the attitude of lay, freethinking Spiritist, who do not confer any prerogative of exclusivity or institutional label to their studies and proposals. Instead, they give their feedback to advance and even revise the founder's work, and in relation to misleading statements introduced by allegedly Spiritist spirits, mediums or institutions.

Of note, CEPA, in its XVIII Congress held on October 11-15, 2000 in Porto Alegre, dealt with the issue of the update of the Doctrine under the theme *Should Spiritism be updated?*

To learn more:

Access the main papers presented at the XVIII CEPA Congress, available at:

<https://pt.scribd.com/document/13797500/CEPA-A-Cepa-e-a-Atualizacao-do-Espiritismo>

In the Spiritist centres of a religious trend the moral-evangelistic preach is business as usual, where *The Gospel According to Spiritism*⁸ is used as the basic work, and even a worship of The Gospel at home is dedicated. Meanwhile, lay, freethinking Spiritist prefer the insightful study of *The Spirits' Book*¹² and

The Mediums' Book,¹³ but never disregarding the rest of works, including the collection of the Revue Spirite. Informal meetings are just for the purposes of studying Spiritism, with no rituals, regardless of any communication or not from spirits.

In the lay, freethinking segment, the concept of autonomous morals predominates, *i.e.*, the behaviour guided by reason and free will. In the religious segment, the concept of heteronomous morals, *i.e.*, submission, obedience to standards and rules imposed from outside, predominates. In the heteronomous morals, the logic of guilt and punishment prevails as a twisted reasoning of the law of cause and effect.

Usually, in many Spiritist centres of a religious style, visitors are treated as the *assisted*, characteristic of the therapeutic role of such institutions. Since most of the people who visit those centres seek "treatment," they are received as such. In the few lay institutions, even though consolation and aid are provided to whoever in need, the environment rather favours the involvement of those interested in learning about Spiritism. There, priority is given to exploratory meetings and debates, whereas less emphasis is made on rescue and therapeutic activities. This is the case of passes through the laying

of hands, prayers, reflections and disobsession. Surely, such activities are useful inasmuch as they do not create dependence. Any specific activities, targeted at children and teenagers involve training groups, far from the *evangelization of the new generations*, which is the mission of Catholics and Protestants. In form of religion, the main task of Spiritism and the Spiritist is to *evangelize* the humankind, different from Kardec's attempt at demonstrating the reality of spirits and ponder on moral consequences arising from that. For lay Spiritism the moral transformation of mankind will result from their conscious and free efforts. Hence, the knowledge of Spiritism could be very helpful.

In this regard, another expression very common in the religious segment – the *Kardecian Pentateuch* – is avoided in the lay context. Such term is inaccurate, to the extent of referring etymologically to the first five volumes of the Bible, attributed to Moses and also for restricting the work of the founder of Spiritism to five books only, out of more than two dozen of volumes, including *What is Spiritism*¹ and the twelve volumes of the *Revue Spirite*.

Of note, on the one hand, the *Spiritist religion* assembles many of its institutions in the so-called federative or unification movement, the orientation of which is replicated in the medium work of literary

fiction *Brazil - The heart of the world*, homeland of the Gospel, published by FEB.³⁴ On the other hand, in the lay segment predominates a diversified and plural movement of ideas, relying on core doctrinarian principles, respect for free examination and fraternal cohabitation.

The *unification* movement of a religious style tries to preserve the *doctrinarian purity* by observing guidelines and a sole and exclusive wording within a complex and heavy organizational structure. In the lay segment, congresses, conferences and symposiums are mainly a forum for discussion, debate and exchange of experiences. CEPA, for instance, ensures all its individual and institutional members the unalienable right of freedom of thought, speech, discussion and criticism. No CEPA member is required to abide by its rules. The relationship stems from a fraternal, democratic identity (communion) of views, of cooperation. CEPA abstains from offering programs, guidelines or procedure handbooks to its members, leaving them much leeway.

From the secular, lay standpoint, Spiritist centres are called by no means temples, sanctuaries, synagogues, prayer houses or alike.

In the field of mediumship, in the religious segment, rescue and therapeutic activities are the

rule. Almost all Spiritist centres have as a predominant activity the administration of passes, thus ensuring a wider audience. Spiritist centres holding sessions of spiritual treatment or disobsession are not rare, and some of them have become a real process of initiation of followers. The medium sessions deal basically with the indoctrination of spirits – formerly, *charity sessions*. Some Spiritist centres hold sessions exclusively for prayers for those in need – the sessions of *prayers and irradiations*. Eager to give aid to the large afflicted masses that, given the scarcity and precariousness of public services, notably in Brazil, visit the Spiritist centres, some of them have turned into mega-institutions with thousands of workers and people assisted in their halls and corridors. The lay praxis would rather recover the role of mediumship for research and substantiation of the soul's immortality, under rational criteria, preferably in small groups, as Kardec recommended, not only as a rescue tool for afflicted spirits or healing of psychosomatic ailments.

In relation to the teaching of Spiritism, in the lay Spiritist centres –again, there are few of them in Brazil – the sessions emphasize the search and dissemination of the Spiritist knowledge. There is a predominance of study meetings, courses, seminars, mediumship activities for research instead of rescue

and treatment. In public meetings, no prayers are said at the beginning or at the end of the works. For this reason, the number of visitors is somewhat modest. Such is the model of the Porto Alegre Spiritist Cultural Center (CCEPA), formerly chaired by the authors of this book. There, the meetings are only for the purposes of study and debates. There are no sessions of passes or spiritual treatment. The participants in its study groups come from Spiritism courses open to the community. In no meetings there are prayers of an evangelistic or moral nature. All of them are reflective, open to questioning and even to criticism of the texts of the Doctrine. Additionally, the use of spiritual therapies, such as passes and disobsession, in these lay institutions is circumstantial and by no means a priority among its activities.

Consistently with its religious stance, the hegemonic Spiritist movement assumes many a time a saviour, boasting and sectarian style. *"As the third divine revelation, Spiritism and Spiritist have the mission of transforming humankind," "One fine day, science will grasp what has been affirmed by Spiritism," "Spiritism is not just a religious aspect, it is the religion!"* Such statements show the attitude of superiority and contempt felt by the Spiritist religion for those who think otherwise. Even in

some sectors, CEPA and its members were, and are still, regarded as non-Spiritist. Instead, in the lay segment, at least at CEPA, Spiritism interacts with all the areas of knowledge, contributes with them and takes knowledge from them, as any science. Loyal to Kardec's thinking, CEPA lobbies for and takes on a humanist, progressive and pluralist stance, seeking an open and fraternal dialogue among Spiritist and with other schools of thought.

Some other concepts of Spiritism are taken from different points of view in the religious and lay segments. Let us see:

Frequently, in the religious segment, under the influence of the Jewish-Christian culture, reincarnation is perceived as a tool to repay past debts and for human suffering resulting from previous faults. Therefore, the divine punishment is an ingredient for spiritual evolution. Under this concept, collective deaths resulting from natural disasters are absurdly attributed to the payment of collective debts taken out in previous lives. From a non-religious perspective, early deaths, collective or not, are an accident, as Maurice Herbert Jones has affirmed time after time in CCEPA study meetings. They are just a test in the learning process of spirits and not necessarily the payment for previous faults. Sure

enough, some events when the present suffering comes from past faults cannot be excluded. However, rather than punishable, their function is pedagogic, educational. Lay Spiritism does not ascribe God any monitoring or punishing role and has an optimistic view of humankind and their evolution potential. In addition, lay Spiritism shares the idea of natural evolution of humankind and does not endorse the concepts of guilt, sin and punishment that permeate the Christian Spiritism.

In relation to mediumship, worship of mediums or spirits is frequent, especially when they excel in their social work or any medium production, which is not generally passed through the sieve of reason and common sense advised by Kardec. To the contrary,



**Maurice
Herbert Jones**

Chair of the Porto Alegre Spiritist Cultural Center (CCEPA) in multiple mandates, former chair of FERGS, a brilliant Spiritist thinker of CEPA and one of the creators of the systematized learning of the Spiritist doctrine (ESDE). Maurice H. Jones usually affirms in the study meetings that *"accidents happen. Not always the grief is the result of past faults. Possibly, early deaths, individual or collective, were not planned."*

in the lay segment, no special authority or infallibility is afforded to the information supplied through the mediums. Mediumship is not a gift of God, or grace, or miracle, turning its messengers into privileged persons. Instead, all of us own such ability to a lesser or greater extent. The literature of Spiritist incarnate authors is appreciated, with some reservations about the exceedingly plentiful medium production of self-help style, to the detriment of philosophical and scientific works. Lay Spiritist take issue with guidelines and conducts artificially established through renowned mediums and spirits chosen as divine spokespersons of the *higher spirituality*, whose revelations become immune to questioning, articulated in defence of purely moralist ideas.

Also, the lay segment brings into question the concept of inner reform, that is, the commitment by followers to make an inner change as a vital goal. Such a behaviour has been disseminated at large in the religious segment. This mistakenly presupposes the idea of redress, fixing-up of something old or spoiled, the recovery of something lost or missing, which implies an evolutionary step back, a *return to the parental home*. Inconsistent with the concept of evolution proclaimed by Spiritism. For the lay segment, spiritual development forms

part of a process of conscious evolution driven by autonomous morals, marked by reason and free will. Naturally, the evolutionary journey of spirits implies making mistakes and attempts at success in the inexorable search of perfection, where the souls face the conflicts of cohabitation, and prepare to learn about respect, tolerance and love, according to Maurice Jones.

Finally, a reflection needs to be made in respect of Jesus. The stance of the religious segment is true worship. As an exacerbation of the response given by spirits to question 625, in *The Spirits' Book*,¹² *Look at Jesus* (instead of just Jesus, as in some translations), the figure of Jesus literally overlaps the figure of Kardec in Spiritist centres and in the advertising materials of Spiritist events. Again, there are more preachers of the Gospel than coaches of the Spiritist doctrine.

Unlike the widespread opinion in the religious segment about the presumed refusal by the lay segment of the figure of Jesus, the importance of Jesus of Nazareth has been reaffirmed, not as the mythological Christ of the Church. As a matter of fact, Kardec dealt with Jesus' moral teaching in *The Gospel According to Spiritism*, highlighting and elaborating on it in the third part of *The Spirits' Book*.

Christian Spiritism is not propagated in the lay segment for multiple reasons, particularly because, understandably, Kardec, when using such term, rather than making reference to the Christ of the Church, signified the doctrine, the teaching, the thought, the universal morals of Jesus of Nazareth.

In the lay segment, the concepts of reincarnation, immortality, and responsibility for individual and social progress inspire a commitment to democracy; freedom; social justice; the quest for economic, political and social systems fairly compatible with human dignity, and conservation of the environment, among others.



4 PROGRESS AND ON-GOING UPDATE OF SPIRITISM

Milton Rubens Medran Moreira

Conceiving Spiritism from a lay standpoint is recognizing it as a human work. This could be hard for most of us, who have assimilated a culture that puts the events of life in two virtually incommunicable fields and governed by different laws – sacred and profane.

Considered from this point of view, the values guiding our lives, all our convictions, everything that forms part of our material, moral and intellectual heritage, is to be accommodated in two different areas – humane and divine.

The divine area comprises the field of the sacred. It covers the religious beliefs that, necessarily, do not need to be consistent with human reason. Some even preached that the religious faith is legitimated precisely for being at odds with human reason. *Credo quia absurdum* (I believe because it is absurd), St. Augustine said, endorsing the humanly unreasonable nature of the religious revelation.

Based on a merely human convention, the matters related to life after death, the existence of God and everything concerning the soul, or the spirit were relegated to the field of the sacred. Metaphysics itself, formerly regarded as a science, after the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) moved to the domain of religion and its inscrutable mysteries. These questions are conventionally inserted in the religious domain, even though throughout the history of human thinking they have been subject to profound philosophical inquiries. The issue of the spirit, as an immaterial entity inherent in the human being, especially in the last couple of centuries, has been the subject matter of studies and scientific experiments that strongly suggest its real existence and point to a wealthy field of research and experiences in the field of science. Nonetheless, cloaked in a shroud of mystery by religions for a span

of thousand years, they continue being construed as inherent in religious faith and, therefore, in the field of the sacred, where reason is not worth much, if any.

Hence, the dictates of reason apply only to what is considered human. The divine remains in the field of supernatural, mysterious, unreasonable.

The Spiritist philosophy broke with such a dichotomy of the sacred and the profane. The important thing for the spirits interviewed by Allan Kardec during the preparation of *The Spirits' Book* is the *natural law*. For them, "*Natural law is the law of God. It is the only law that is truly necessary for human beings to be happy. It shows them what they should or should not do, and they only suffer misfortune when they depart from it.*"¹² (Question 614). They see in Nature and in its laws the presence of the divinity that presides over everything as "*the supreme intelligence and first cause of all things,*" as provided for in the question 1 of *The Spirits' Book*.¹² From this point of view, the natural law encompasses all the events of the Universe and, therefore, the relationships among human beings and with the divinity, removing its supernatural nuance.

In this way, what, for the theology, belonged to the sacred, supernatural revelation and not necessarily consistent with reason, for the spirits

interviewed by Kardec, it was potentially attainable by the human reason. This is because the natural law is written in the conscience of the intelligent being. (Question 621).¹²

The naturalist perspective of the divine law enabled Kardec to bring in *Genesis* (1868) a new concept of *revelation*, very different from the *religious revelation*. According to the founder of Spiritism:

*In this case, revelation is always given to qualified individuals designated as prophets or messiahs; that is, messengers or missionaries on a mission to transmit revelation to humankind. Considered from this point of view, revelation implies complete passivity; it is accepted without question, without examination, without argument.*¹⁵ (Chapter I, item 7, p. 45).

Of note, even today, both in the most traditional and historical religions and in the religions made popular by powerful organizations, their leaders proclaim themselves *missionaries, prophets, priests, ministers* (responsible for leading the herd), etc. Such titles vest in them an authority coming directly from God, entitling them to interpret for their followers the *word of God*. Such titles are incompatible with Spiritism, precisely because it does not impose on anybody the acceptance of the articles of faith. Even its mediums, no matter their rank or respectability,

are mere tools used by the spirits to convey their feelings and personal opinions. They can or cannot be accepted by the incarnate and, as recommended by Spiritism, will always be subject to the criteria of rationality and consistency with some other communications, for the purposes of validation through a reasonable, comparative and truly scientific examination of their interpreters.

The Spiritist revelation, according to *Genesis*,¹⁵ in item 13, also incorporates the divine order. Again, the divine concept is same as the natural concept. As opposed to the religious revelation, it is inserted in the scientific field, that is, of knowledge built by humankind, insofar as its initiative belongs to the spirits (e.g., human beings free from their fleshly envelope) and that its development is the result of the work of (incarnate) *men and women*.

Therefore, for Kardec, and for all of us, who regard Spiritism as a lay proposal, i.e., non-religious, the Spiritist revelation is embedded in the natural order of things. It is an essentially human work. It should be subject to study and research by human beings, as the discarnate, whose exchange with the incarnate produced the fundamental principles. Having departed *earthly humanity, spirits are one of its facets, nevertheless*.¹⁵ (Chapter I, item 60, p.74).

DID YOU KNOW?

Kardec regarded Spiritism as scientific evidence, instead of a religious revelation.

Note, however, that when the founder of Spiritism said that *its development is the result of the work of men and women*, he referred specifically to incarnate persons, indicating that it was an on-going work. By inserting the Spirit *revelation* in the field of science, that is, of knowledge, a set of fundamental principles, *the spirits teach only what is needed to place humans on the path of truth, but they abstain from revealing what humans can discover by themselves*, which is not the case with religions. According to Kardec, such fundamental principles revealed by spirits are just the *framework that shows them the objectives*. Thus, humans are entrusted with the task of studying it and deducing its applications. For this reason, throughout his work, Allan Kardec classified Spiritism as an *experimental science*.¹⁵

Now, therefore, progressiveness is one of the characteristic features of human sciences. Knowledge is progressive. The principle of evolution, embraced by the Spiritist proposal, is the *law of progress*. Expounded in *The Spirits' Book*, it backs up this kind of

knowledge, as well as the customs and development of the political and conduct standards applicable to society and protected by the State (The law of society, third part, Chapter VII).¹² Hence, Spiritism shows respect for physical or human sciences. Human progress occurs precisely to the extent that scientific, intellectual and moral achievements come closer to natural laws.

Having said that, the enormous respect accorded by Spiritism since its birth in France in the 19th century to human knowledge, reason and the human ability to advance in the path of progress is plainly evident. Such a characteristic has been well summarized in this enlightening remark by Kardec in Chapter I, *Nature of the Spiritist revelation*, item 55, in *Genesis*:

Pressing forward with progress, Spiritism will never be surpassed, because if new discoveries were to show it to be in error on one point, it would modify itself on that point. If a new truth is revealed, it accepts it.”¹⁵ (p. 71).

Thus, Spiritism is a doctrine open to ground-breaking knowledge, maintaining at the same time clearly defined structural principles as part of the *revelation* from spirits.

With such statement, Allan Kardec showed the need for on-going update of Spiritism, even as an

indispensable requirement for its survival in a world in continuous transformation. In his Posthumous Works, in the text *Elaboration of the Doctrine, Rationale, About Schisms*, he said that Spiritism *must not close the door to any progress, assimilating all the fair ideas, whatever order they might be, physical or metaphysical ones, it shall never be surpassed, and this is one of the main guarantees of its perpetuity.*³³ (p. 349).

In Kardec's opinion, *one of the main guarantees of the perpetuity of Spiritism was precisely the assimilation of all the fair ideas whatever order they might be, physical or metaphysical ones.* He said that in a thorough study released in the *Revue Spirite*, in July 1868, few months before his death in March 31, 1869, under the title of *Provisional establishment of Spiritism.*³⁵ In that project, he recommended to hold congresses on a regular basis, where the scientific strides of renowned validity should be incorporated in the Spiritist doctrine.

In the meantime, Spiritism around the world would be infatuated by the adoption of a religious model, where supposedly everything had been said about the origin, nature and destiny of humankind and the world. As a result, the recommendations of the founder of Spiritism were eventually forgotten. *The third divine revelation* had said the last and

final word about all the major questions that have tormented humans in the course of history. For long time, the congresses that, as recommended by Kardec, should be the tool for the continuous update of the Doctrine, ended up condemned by the religious hegemony.

Although side-lined by the hegemonic action of the *Christian and evangelistic movement*, the lay, freethinking segment never stopped acting, always inspired by Kardec's guidelines. There is no room in this brief paper to write the history that evolved over the past 150 years, on the fringes of the mechanisms of power created by the *Spiritist religion*, particularly in Latin American countries. Nevertheless, as part of such response, a special worthwhile mention goes to the establishment in 1949 in Argentina of the Pan-American Spiritist Confederation, nowadays International Spiritist Association (CEPA). This entity, of a vocation and structure relying on Kardec's recommendations, always prioritized Spiritist congresses and reserved to them the sovereign decisions that have made and continue making its history.

The issue of the update always marked the themes of all the congresses hosted by CEPA. One of them, held in 2000 in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, chose as the central theme a tricky

question addressed to the conservative segment of the movement: *Should Spiritism be updated?*

The book entitled CEPA and update of Spiritism 36 contains the main works presented in the Congress of Porto Alegre in 2000. Available at:

<https://pt.scribd.com/document/13797500/CEPA-A-Cepa-e-a-Atualizacao-do-Espiritismo>.



Obviously, in CEPA, the answer was “yes.” In any case, that congress earmarked the beginning of a concrete effort by means of a *modus operandi*, a roadmap for the major topics to be updated. On that occasion, the work of Spiritist thinker Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis set the agenda.

Any update to be undertaken may not get along without an analysis of the contents, the preparation of a Spiritist agenda set to identify concepts, themes, affirmations and information lagging behind new knowledge that has not been covered in the elementary works or that had been addressed on a conditional manner by Kardec and by the spirits who, along with him, worked on the corpus of the Doctrine.³⁷ (p. 13)

In his enthusiastic proposal, Chiuro suggested *from a semiotic adaptation and redefinition and update of the wording to an epistemological redefinition, intended to clarify any confusion about the nature and character of Spiritism, particularly about how was (and, therefore, how will be) the construction of the Spiritist thought.*³⁷ (p. 31).

To be effective, this task calls upon the involvement of the Spiritist of all over the world, always bearing in mind that update does not mean to alter the fundamental principles of the Spiritist doctrine, namely the existence of God as the *supreme intelligence and first cause of all things*, survival, immortality and communication ability of spirits; plurality of inhabited worlds and reincarnation as the tool for the evolution of human spirits.

Jaci Régis emphasized:

*Update is a process, is an open flow, but with a strong basis on the fundamental structure of Allan Kardec's thought. It is a constant opening of sequential, continued and balanced inquiry, the result of study, insight and observation. It will be motivated by new knowledge, scientific, philosophical, political discoveries. To cut a long story short, the Doctrine said the first word and was prepared by Allan Kardec with freedom to progress and be updated concomitantly with the advance of society.*³⁸(p. 67).

Allan Kardec warned that Spiritism needed to be updated continuously; otherwise, it would decree its suicide.

To sum up, the eminently progressive nature of Spiritism and its constant update just prove something, *i.e.*, Spiritism is not a religion and the subject of its study departs from the sacred to the natural, to laicism.

In this connection, there is no room for ready and completed truths. Infallibility is characteristic of religions and their prophets, priests and missionaries. The starting point of Spiritism is the SPIRIT as the *intelligent principle of Universe* (question 23, *The Spirits' Book*). Everything stemming from this fundamental principle, of a philosophical nature, is verifiable, modifiable, updatable, according to the advance of human knowledge. It is, truly, a universe to be thrashed by the generations of all times.



5 PROSPECTS FOR LAY, FREETHINKING SPIRITISM

Milton Rubens Medran Moreira

In systematizing the Spiritist doctrine, Allan Kardec was keenly aware of the fact that he was dealing with taboos difficult to be removed. Bringing in the rational field what religions had restricted to the sacred area would not be that easy.

For this reason, in some of his works, Kardec anticipated the stages of Spiritism until the final acceptance of the proposed principles able to make a difference in the world. In an article entitled *Period of fight*, posted on the *Revue Spirite* in 1863,³⁹ delving into the evolution of the Spiritist thought and its influence on Earth, Kardec labelled the ultimate

stage of Spiritism as *social regeneration*. Before that, the Spiritist initiative would pass through the stages of curiosity, philosophical reflection, fights staged against reactionary dogmatism, the adoption of religious facets and internal transitions. All that journey would become the dialectic path to the final stage of regeneration. Then, the world would be characterized by a generation immersed in new ideas, fit to pave the way to the *final triumph of union, peace and brotherhood*.

Surely, even though in the journey envisaged by Kardec, Spiritism would necessarily pass through a religious stage, it is also true that it should be surpassed, left behind, in search of a human society devoted to the ideas of union, pacifism and solidarity. It was a philosophical and social approach that would materialize the dreams, such as that of John Lennon in his famous musical poem *Imagine*. As a matter of fact, to reach globalization forums, the Spiritist initiative should conceive the world and itself as *no religion*, as the renowned *Beatle* expressed in his hit one century later.

It is not belittlement of religions or their historical role, but in a planetary, jointly shared, peaceful and fraternal community there is no room for religion, opening up to wider, endless horizons for spirituality.

DID YOU KNOW?

Allan Kardec anticipated for Spiritism a religious stage that had to be surmounted.

Further information is available at:

<https://kardecpedia.com/roteiro-de-estudos/897/revista-espirita-jornal-de-estudos-psicologicos-1863/5521/dezembro/periodo-de-luta>.

In taking such stance, Kardec proved to be a man ahead of his time.

Spirituality with no religion is apparently the prospect of the modern world. This world gradually recognizes the lay values, born and cultivated from the Enlightenment, the route to overtake political, ideological and creed fundamentalism.

Laicism gathered considerable strength in the 19th century, where Spiritism emerged. Allan Kardec could see in Spiritist ideas a transition, suggesting a science-religion partnership, as laid down in *The Gospel According to Spiritism*⁸ Nonetheless, he knew that the quantum leap required time. The world had been impregnated with the sacred-profane dichotomy imposed by religion to ensure its power. This Manichean model needed to be replaced with the idea of Nature, whose laws govern the divine and

the human, the matter and the spirit, and the entire Universe. Therefore, any dogmas and rites, deprived of rationality and objectivity, were expendable.

Rather than a ready and complete reality, Spiritism was an *archetype filled with future*, in the words of Herculano Pires one century later.⁴⁰ In this connection, Allan Kardec knew for a fact that Spiritism would pass through a *religious stage* that had to be surmounted in order to accomplish its worldly mission. Some twisted truths imprinted by religious dogmas needed to be redefined to overcome the transition period. An optimist in his own right. Kardec surmised that the final stage would come in the 20th century, when the Spiritist ideas would peak, starting the cycle of regeneration of humankind.

We lagged behind in this process, not because of an error of spirits or Kardec. Human sectors that arrogated to themselves the authority of giving Spiritism an institutional shape, spread it as another one of the many religions flooding in the world. "*Spiritism will be what Spiritist will do with it*,"⁴¹ Léon Denis said. Consequently, it has been practiced and perceived in this way by both the Spiritist and outsiders.

In the meantime, the number of sectors reluctant to confine the ideas of Spiritism in the closed circle of a religion is growing at fast pace in the first decades



Léon Denis
(1846-1927)

French thinker and writer, a major disseminator of Allan Kardec's works in the years following the disincarnation of the founder of Spiritism.

of the 21st century. Accordingly, they regard Spiritism as a generous, ample field of libertarian proposals, able to unmask the scourges of this century: fanaticism or sectarianism, extremism or fundamentalism.

The spirits, the concrete and sensitive foundations of the Spiritist approach, practice no religion. They abide by the rules of Nature pointing to perfection by means of the gradual development of knowledge and ethics, from a standpoint of union and brotherhood.

Even formal religions are aware of it. As time passes by, they bid farewell to formulas, restate their dogmas and relativize their hierarchies to afford increasing value to the plural and joint construction of values. Such values are no more imposed by dogmas. This time, they are taken as the result of human experience, cohabitation on an equal footing

and human heritage, where, according to question 621 of *The Spirits' Book*, the law of Nature is written.

This is particularly glaring in the wording of the Catholic Church, the top religious leader in the West, from ancient times to date. At every moment – not without raising the alarm in the most conservative wings and one or another Christian fundamentalist sector – the Catholic Church has assumed the ethical values dictated by laicism, involving certain issues as sexuality, social and human relations, tolerance and pluralism. The humanist stance of Argentinean Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the current Pope of the Roman Church, is noteworthy. Since his takeover in 2013, Pope Francis has put up a good fight for the adoption of a progressist policy, based on lay values.

The ethics of Nature supersedes the religious morals. It was originated at a time when, in order to be effective, punishment, although hypothetical, by some god was required. Anyhow, the moral law, the result of reason and human experiences, preserves its intrinsic divine flame, stemming from the *first cause of all things*, according to the definition of God in the opening question of *The Spirits' Book*.¹²

If so – and such is the understanding of the lay segment of Spiritism advocated by CEPA – the journey undertaken by Allan Kardec when releasing

in 1857 *The Spirits' Book* leads to the strengthening, although slower than expected by its founder, of lay, freethinking Spiritism.

It could be argued that, by ceasing to be regarded as a religion, Spiritism could lose some momentum as an institutionalized movement in some countries. In the case of Brazil, multiple censuses put Spiritism as the third religion with the largest number of followers, only behind Catholicism and Evangelistic sects. Nonetheless, insofar as the Spiritist proposals, such as immortality of spirits, their communication ability and successive lives, among others, are naturally propagated, the real Spiritist would not mind so much about the insertion of Spiritism as another religion in the world. Nowadays, for instance, if queried about reincarnation, a principle disseminated by Spiritism, an overwhelming majority of Catholics will welcome it. Anyhow, they will not stop being Catholics just because of it, out of tradition, of a deep-rooted historical culture.

Spiritism does not compete with religions. Its sphere of influence is a different one. It is situated in the field of philosophy as the expression of rationality that gives convincing answers about Nature, the origin and destination of the intelligent being. Spiritism can initiate a dialogue with sciences, as it

offers a methodology capable of providing factual and experiential backup of philosophical matters. Spiritism contributes to ethics, due to its vision of humankind and of the world with necessarily supportive, equalitarian and fraternal behavioural consequences, affording happiness.

As to the question about the prospects of the still minority segment of lay, freethinking Spiritism, it must be responded that they have to do with the expectation of he, who conceived and designed its natural trajectory. Diverting Spiritism, holding it prisoner of religious, dogmatic, immobilized and anti-progressist sectarianism is running counter to its own identity, inciting it to suicide, as Allan Kardec himself warned many a time.

To the contrary, from the lay, freethinking standpoint, instead of being regarded as a religion, the substance of Spiritism will linger long. It is likely that Spiritism as a philosophical current ceases to exist in the future. That is theoretically plausible. Notwithstanding, Spiritism will survive as a humanitarian, spiritualist and freethinking approach. Then, it will be remembered as a historical benchmark, the pioneer of a new time spearheaded by the SPIRIT, as the *intelligent principle of Universe* (question 23, *The Spirits' Book*).

Then, once its principles have been taken by everybody as the expression of the law of Nature, instead of the creed of a few ones, Spiritism will have accomplished its mission. Therefore, it will not survive as a discrete segment, either religious, philosophical or scientific. Rather, Spiritism will have its own designation, for its principles will be in full force and effect.

Inasmuch as Spiritism is regarded – inside and outside – as a religion, it will not be totally free from the sectarianism combatted by it. Since Spiritism brings forward the adoption of a new paradigm governing knowledge and ethics, only in an entirely lay, freethinking culture it will find the favourable environment for its full-fledged deployment.

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