



Great Figures of Spiritism

Leon Denis

The Apostle of Spiritism



Early Years

Leon Denis was born in the village of Foug, outside of Tours, France, on January 1, 1846. Very early in life, he had to start working to help his mother, Anne-Lucie Liouville, and father, Joseph Denis, and their humble family.

From his first steps into this world, he sensed that invisible friends assisted him. Instead of spending his youth in playtime, he tried to school himself as much as possible. He strove to develop his intellect by reading and became a competently self-taught person.



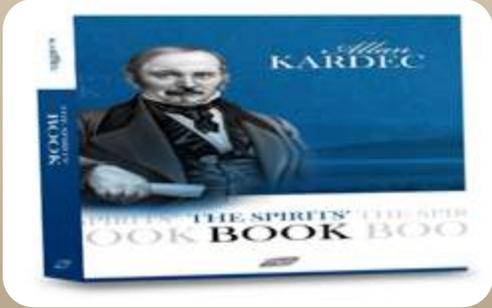
Léon Denis and his mother Anne-Lucie Liouville



At the age of 18, he started work as a sales representative, traveling frequently. Because he loved music, he would go to concerts and operas whenever he could; he also played well-known pieces at the piano and some compositions of his own.



Leon often visited bookstores, searching for new things to read.



On one of these visits, when he was 18, his eyes glanced at a work with an unusual title: The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec. It changed his life.



“I found, in this book, the clear solution, complete and logical, to a universal problem. My conviction became strong and sound. The Spiritist Theory dissipated my indifference and my doubts.”

Allan Kardec



An Important Event

While Leon was pursuing his Spiritist research in 1867, Allan Kardec came to spend a few days in the area and spiritualists from Tours were invited to meet him.

They founded the Spiritist group at Rue de Cygne and Denis became its secretary. He met with Kardec again, in his house on Sainte Anne Street in Paris, and then later, in Bonneval, near the Italian border.

“I learned from Kardec how dangerous it is to engage in spiritualist experimentation without preparation, and without effective protection.”

The group at Rue de Cygne was reinforced with a new participant, Captain Harmant, and the sessions resumed with renewed vigor at the house of Dr. Aguzoly. Leon, who was already a writing medium, became a seeing medium as well.

Sorella was the good genius, Durand, the "Spirit Control". These beautiful sessions at Rue de Cygne continued every week, until 1877 when the group moved their meetings to a house on Rue du Rempart.

On July 31, 1873, he had a revelation that Sorella was an incarnation of Jeanne D'Arc; in previous lives, he had learned this secret that would illuminate his destiny and to which he devoted a major part of his life and work.

On August 20 of the same year, Denis and his friends, Captain Harmant and Aguzoly, learned that their souls first met after a naval battle under Louis XIV.



Gaston Luce

The Apostle of Spiritism



1882 marked the beginning of Leon's real apostolate, when he had to confront the obstacles of materialism and positivism that viewed Spiritism with disdain.

He also had to face believers from other faiths who aligned themselves with the atheists in order to ridicule and weaken his devotion to Spiritist ideals.

LÉON
DENIS

O APÓSTOLO DO ESPIRITISMO,
SUA VIDA, SUA OBRA





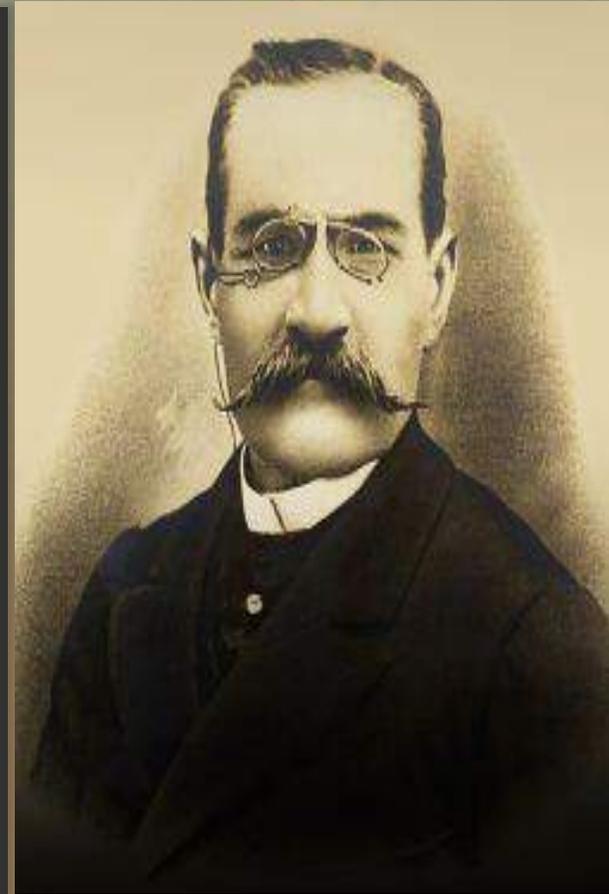
On All Soul's Day, 1882, in a suburb of Le Mans, his spiritual father, Jerome of Prague, who would be Leon's spirit guide for half a century, communicated with him for the first time and assured him of his assistance for the rest of Leon's life.

He said

"Go, my son, on the path opened before you, I will walk behind to support you"

Not even his family understood Leon but, as his eyesight and general health weakened, his faithful guide brought him moral support:

“We do not reach the fullness of faith but through slow and painful initiation.”



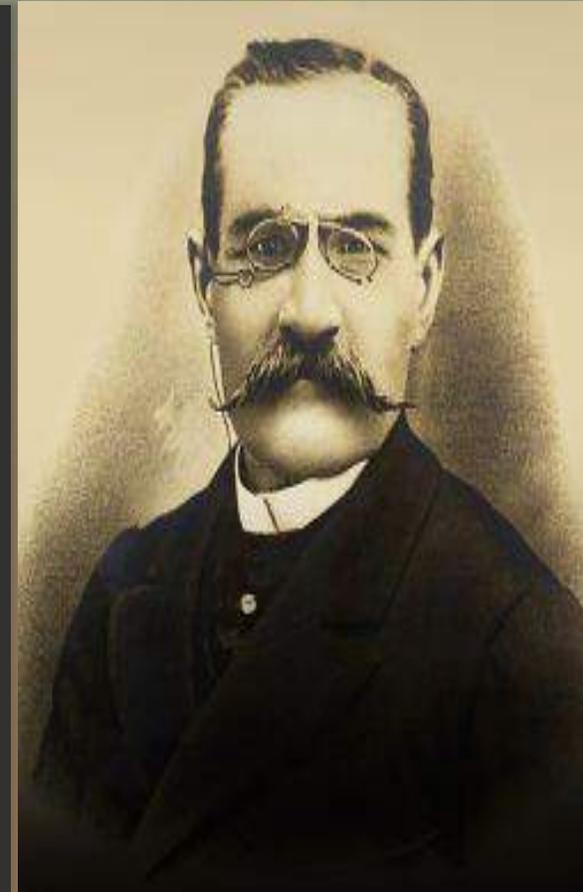


The spirit Joan of Arc also, reminded him:

“Courage, friend, we will always be with you to sustain and inspire you. You will never be alone. In time, the means will be provided to you, so that you can fulfill your task.”

In his book *The Reason of Life* (LE POURQUOI DE LA VIE), published in 1885, Leon Denis wrote:

“It is to you, my brothers and sisters in humanity, to all of you who are bent by the burdens of life, whom bitter struggles, worries, and trials have overwhelmed, that I dedicate these pages.”



International Spiritualist Congresses – 1889 and 1900

In 1889, the International Spiritualist Congress gathered representatives from the major schools: the Kardecists, the Swedenborgians, the Theosophists, the Cabalists, and the Rosicrucians.

At the Congress of September 16, 1900, in Paris, Leon Denis was appointed President with the assistance of Mr. H. Durville (Magnetism), Mr. Gillard (Theosophy), and Dr. Gérard Encausse (Papus) as Secretary.

Victorien Sardou, Russel Wallace and Alexander Aksakof participated as well as honorary presidents.

In the opening session, Leon expressed his confidence in the destiny of modern spiritualism and addressed the questions:

“What is the particular character of Spiritism?” and “What is the action of Spiritism in the domain of thought?”



*Quelques intervenants au convent-congrès de Paris, en juin 1908.
On remarque au premier plan : Theodor Reuss (Peregrinus),
Gérard Encausse (Papus), Charles Détré (Téder),
et au second plan, à gauche, le jeune René Guénon. Photo découverte
par Robert Amadou dans Le Monde illustré
(coll. particulière C.P.).*

International Spiritualist Congress - 1900

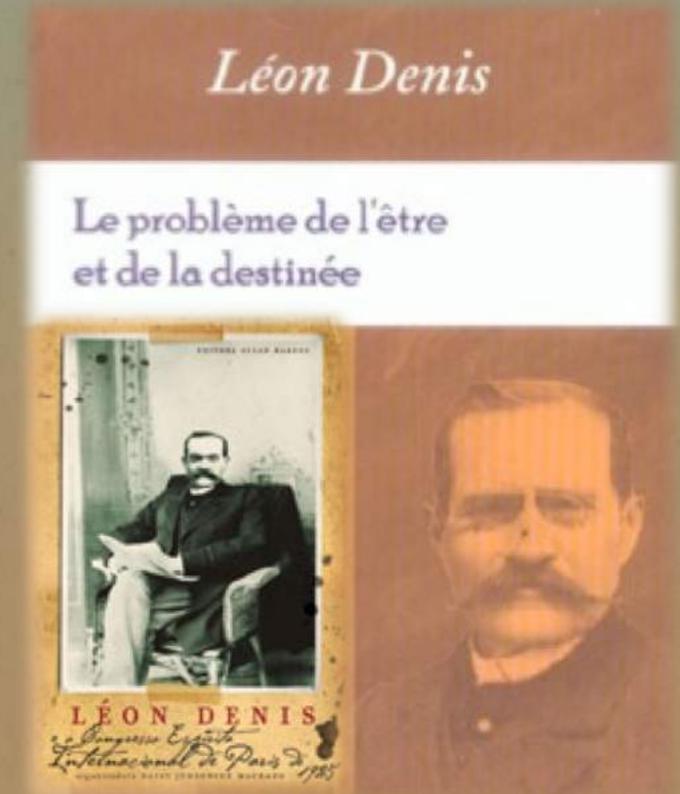
“You cannot separate the human being from God; you cannot separate the effect from the cause. And I say that, apart from God and the affirmation of God, there is no humanity.

“Doesn't the notion of humanity exist due to the fact that we are connected to each other by a strong bond, connected by a kind of identity-of-origin and end? And all of this is God; all things are from God.

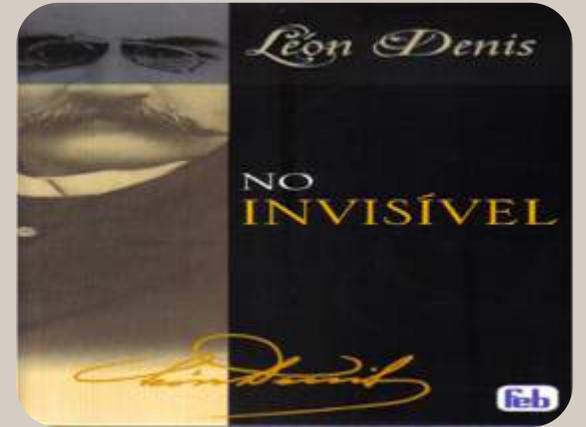
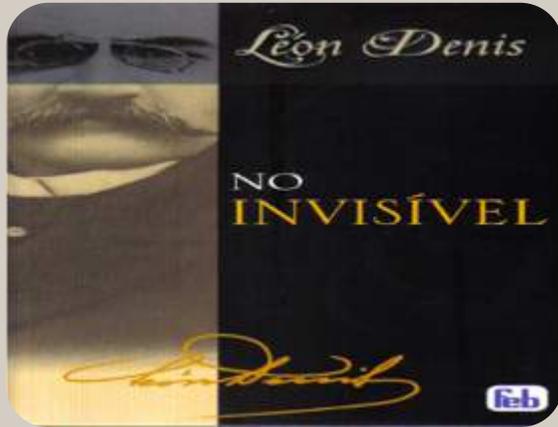
“God is the father of humanity: we are all children of God and that is why we are united to each other forever. Human beings cannot be understood without studying God; we do not exist in ourselves, but in our relationship with Him, and not only do we want to comprehend God, we also want to serve God.”

Other great problems were addressed during the Congress, including the essential question: “Is there any place to affirm the existence of God?”

Leon Denis could not stay out of these debates but, rather, threw himself into them with all the ardor of his faith and apostolic soul.



In the Invisible



Since the publication of Allan Kardec's *The Mediums' Book*, no one had published any books describing the results of mediumship research. So, in 1903, Leon Denis published *In the Invisible*.

The first part explains the laws of experimental Spiritism and includes some views on female psychology, which was a modern notion at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The second part is devoted to general mediumship, its practice, its risks, as well as the assumptions and objections it raises.

The last paragraph "Glorious Mediumship" is admirable, as it was written in a burst of warmth and lofty inspiration.



Mlle. CHALLES-LEBAUX - Le Collège

In 1909, the meetings at Rue du Rempart ended. They continued, however, at the house of Madame Forget. The Blue Spirit (Joan of Arc) and Jerome of Prague communicated regularly.

By 1910, however, Leon's vision was weakening daily. The surgery to which he had submitted, two years prior, had not resulted in any improvement but he accepted his condition stoically and with resignation.



Mlle. Baumard, de pé, ao lado de sua irmã Mlle. Gabrielle.

BIBLIOTHEQUE DE PHILOSOPHIE SPIRITUALISTE MODERNE
ET DES SCIENCES PSYCHQUES

CLAIRE BAUMARD

LEON DENIS

INTIME

Préface de
Sir Arthur CONAN DOYLE



Le mot de cette édition est celui
d'Alfred, un desir de son cœur
transmis par le Sésame
en 1910
Le Collège de la Vie, 1910

NOUVELLE EDITION

UNION SPIRITE FRANÇAISE ET
FRANCOPHONE

Physical illness was a minor interference compared to the anguish he felt over being unable to write. Although various secretaries helped him, his greatest challenge consisted in reviewing and correcting the new editions of his books and writings.

Thanks to his incomparable memory and orderly spirit, he overcame these setbacks.



Léon Denis

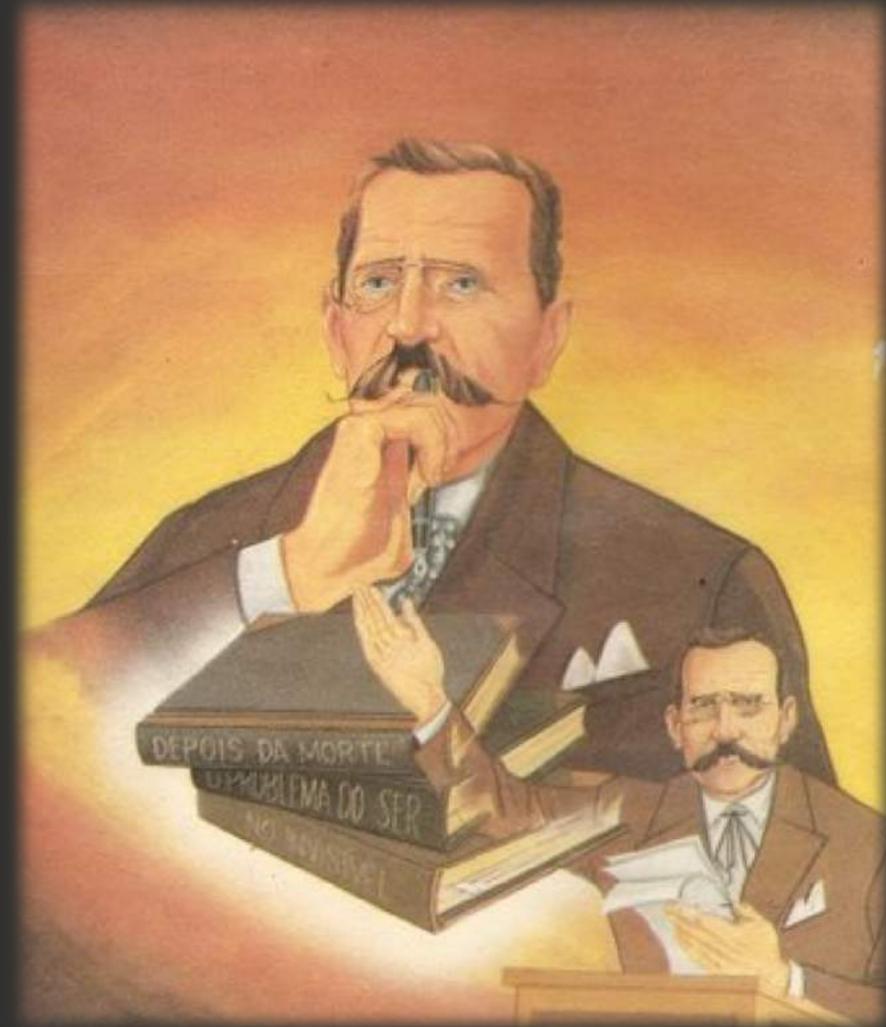
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International Spiritualist Congress – 1913



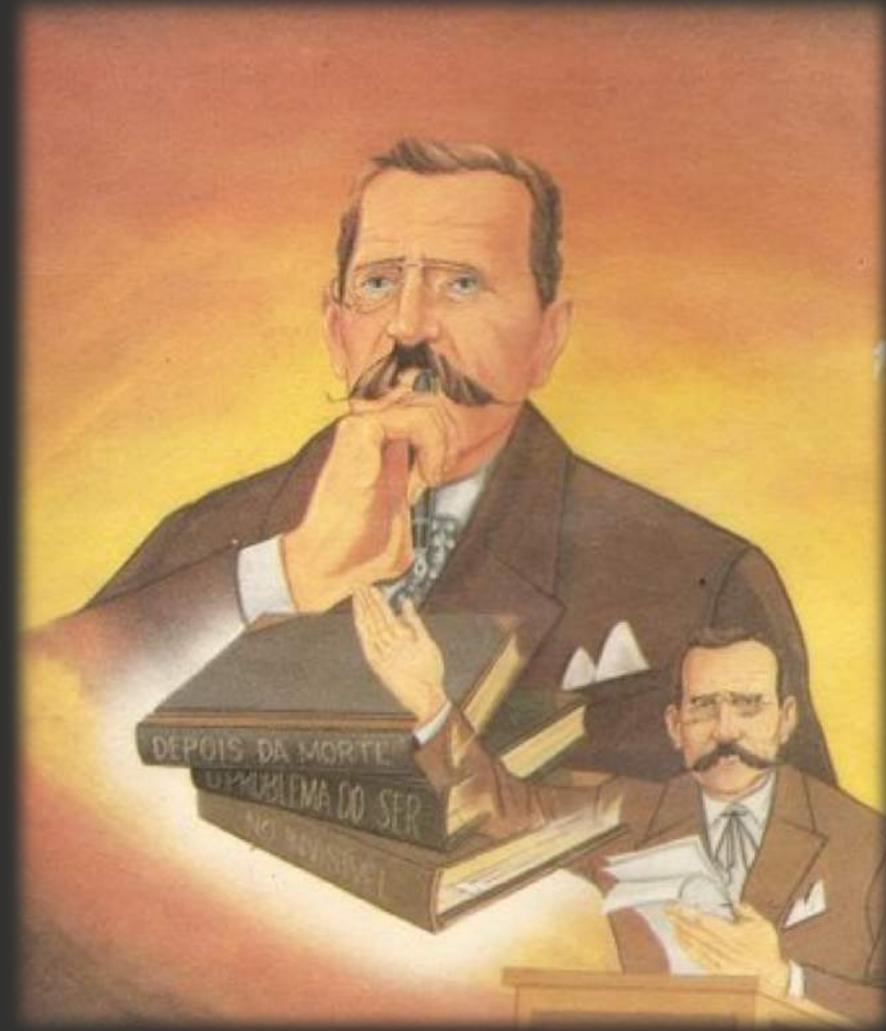
In 1913, the Society of Psychic Research hosted the second universal congress in Geneva. It opened on May 10 under the Presidency of Mr. C. Piguet, Leon Denis and Gabriel Delanne.

When the first World War was declared in 1914, Leon felt an intense pain at the commencement of national hostilities. He went to Challes-les-Eaux, France, with Madame Forget.

Because of wartime hardships, their living conditions were very modest. Leon moved, with his old friend, to larger premises at No. 19 in the Place de les Arts. It was here that Claire Baumard offered unexpected support as his secretary and remained faithfully by his side, with exemplary dedication, until his death.

By the time the war ended, Leon was practically blind so he learned Braille, which allowed him to put on paper the key elements of chapters and articles that came into his mind.

International Spiritualist Congress –1925



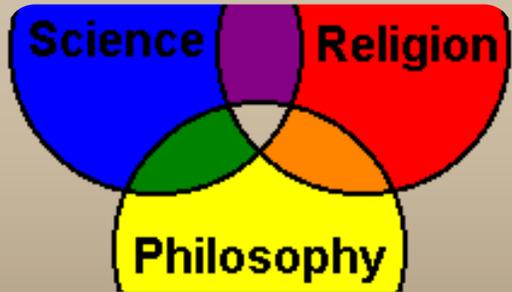
The third international conference of spiritualistic studies was held in Paris from September 6 to 13, 1925 and brought together representatives of 24 nations. Jean Meyer asked Leon Denis to preside over it but his advanced age and infirmities kept him from doing so.

The spirits of Jerome of Prague and Allan Kardec nevertheless urged him to attend, so he laboriously assumed his responsibilities.

International Spiritualist Congress - 1925



Leon was impressed that men and women of all races filled the galleries. They had all come to testify, in different languages, to the same faith in the existence, endurance and constant evolution of a supreme cause whose radiant thought animates the universe.



The conference aimed to highlight the scientific character of experimental Spiritism, as well as the moral and social aspect of the Spiritist doctrine in the development of human brotherhood.



Eminent men of science and letters, including Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Attorney General Maxwell, added their formal alliance to the testimonies of many vibrant speakers and the conference generated over sixty newspaper reports.



Delegates to the Congress in Paris prepared and promulgated a statement of the philosophy of Spiritualism and agreed on its four fundamental principles:

(1) The existence of God as the intelligent and supreme cause of all things.

(2) The affirmation that man is a spirit related to a perishable body by an intermediate body (the ethereal or "perispirit") that is indestructible in nature.

(3) The immortality of the spirit and its continual evolution toward perfection through progressive stages of life.

(4) Personal and universal responsibility, both individual and collective, between all beings.

Spiritualist congress in Paris, 1925. On left, close to the table : John Lewis, director of "International The Psychic Gazette".

MAISON DES SPIRITES

(Fondation Jean MEYER)

8 rue Copernic PARIS (xvi^e)

Téléph. : PASSY 22-61



SIÈGE de

LA FÉDÉRATION SPIRITE INTERNATIONALE
INTERNATIONAL SPIRITUALISTS FEDERATION
HEAD QUARTERS

These principles were affirmed by later congresses which were developed by the International Spiritualists Federation, founded in 1923, with headquarters at Maison des Spirits, 8 Rue Copernic, Paris.

Its first presidents were Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Ernest W. Oaten (editor of the journal Two Worlds).



Jean Meyer, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Conan Doyle

Maison des Spirites, headquarters founded by Jean Meyer, functioned for two decades.



Final Years

In April, 1924, Conan Doyle, author of the famous Sherlock Holmes mysteries, presented his translation of *The Mystery of Joan of Arc, Medium and the two authors engaged in a cordial correspondence. Sir Arthur introduced Leon Denis to the public in these terms:*

“I love and admire his book so much that I wanted to translate it as closely as possible. The presentation of the subject is so complete that I have nothing more to add except that I am quite convinced that, immediately after Christ, Jeanne D'Arc is the highest spiritual being whom we know of, to have set foot on earth.”



By March of 1927, Denis was suffering from pneumonia and breathing with great difficulty.

On Tuesday, 12 March, at about 1pm, he spoke his last words to his secretary, Claire Baumard, with extraordinary calm. “It is necessary to finish, to summarize and to conclude.”

He was referring to the foreword of the new biographical edition of Kardec but, at 9pm, his spirit flew away while his countenance remained as if it were in a state of ecstasy.

The funeral service, at his request, was very simple and without pronouncement or participation by any member of the Church. He was buried in La Salle’s cemetery, in the city of Tours, on April 16, 1927.

The Apostle of Spiritism

Among the great apostles of Spiritism, Denis deserves a very distinctive place, particularly in view of his having been the logical follower of Kardec's work.

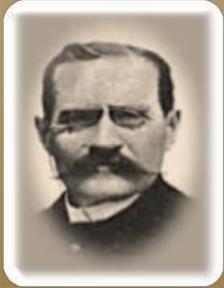


He received his schooling in obscurity and material poverty yet he developed his abilities in the practical school of life.



When he finally appeared on the scene as a lecturer, writer and intellectual, he became an exponential representative of the dissemination of Spiritism doctrine.





Leon Denis was the consolidator of Spiritism. He was not just the substitute for and continuation of Allan Kardec, as is generally supposed.

Denis had a mission practically as significant as the one of the Codifier.

He developed studies to deepen the moral aspect of the Spiritist Doctrine

to proceed with the mediumistic research,

to propel the movement throughout France and the rest of the world

and to consolidate it in the first decades of the 20th Century.



Denis was devoted to the profound study of Spiritism in its triple aspects, incorporating science, philosophy and religion, and dedicated himself to its philosophical aspect in particular.

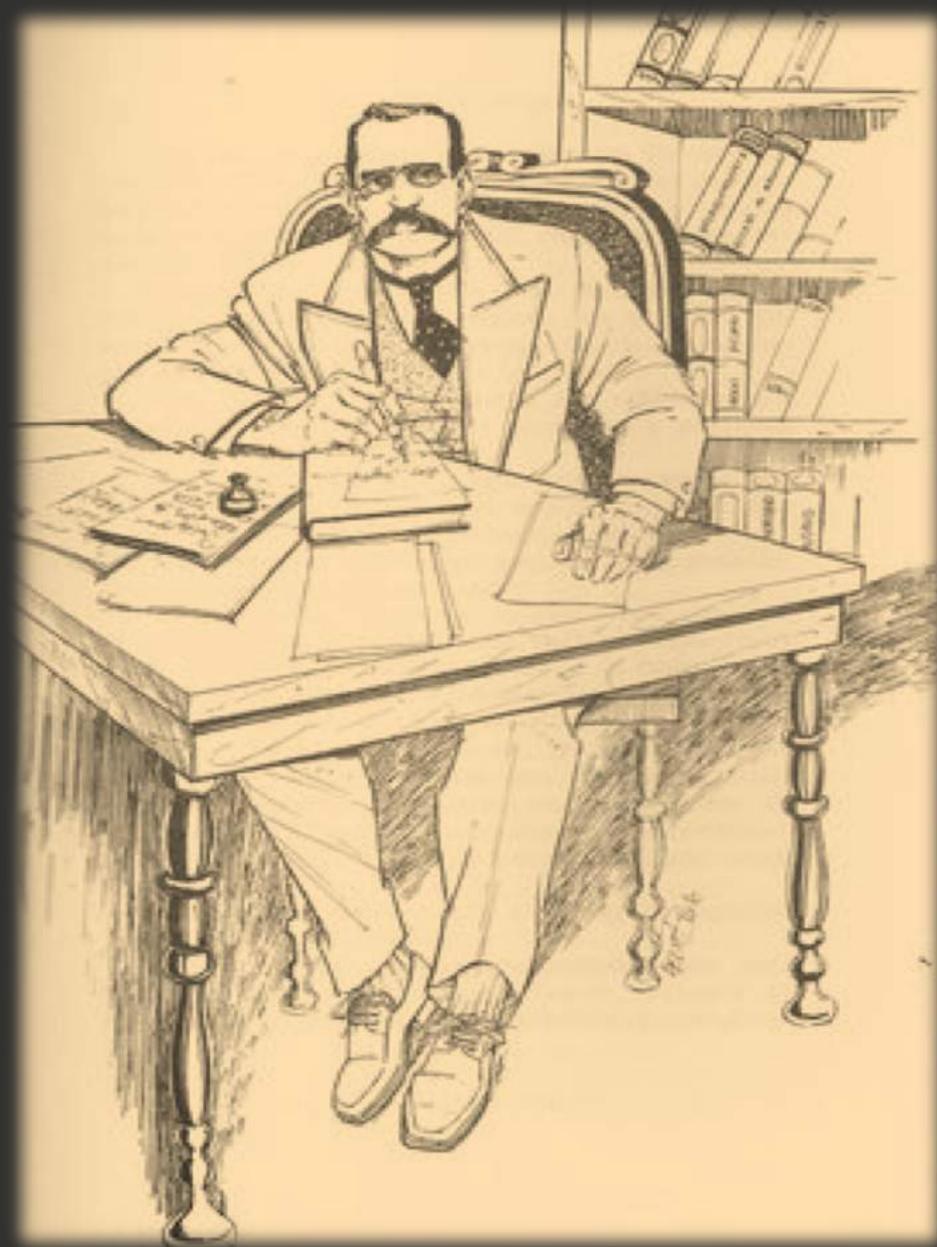
Among his many titles, he was honorary President of the Spiritist French Union,

honorary member of the International Spiritist Federation

and President of the International Spiritist Congress in Paris, in 1925.

He also directed an experimental group on Spiritism for many years, in Tours.

Léon Denis em 1925, como Presidente do Congresso Espírita de Paris.



With the resources of his uncommon intelligence, Leon could have been spared his poverty but he preferred to live within it. He believed it would be difficult to accumulate selfishly that which had been given to him to be distributed among his fellow beings.

He spent long days, with the help of his secretary, answering his voluminous correspondence and replying to the requests of countless societies he had founded or of which he had been named honorary President.



LÉON DENIS

A contemporary, Gabriel Gobron, wrote of him: “He met true victories; those who had the rare happiness of hearing him speak to a group of two or three thousand people, know perfectly well how charming and convincing his speeches were.”



▪ **Main works of Léon Denis:**

- Christianity and Spiritism
- Here and Hereafter
- Spirits and Mediums
- Joan of Arc
- In the Invisible
- Life and Destiny
- The Beyond and the Survival of the Being
- Spiritism and the Catholic Clergy
- Spiritism in the Art
- The Celtic Genius and the Invisible World
- The Great Enigma
- The Invisible World and the War
- The Reason of Life
- Progress
- Experimental tests of the Survival
- Socialism and Spiritism

1880 : Tunis et l'Île de Sardaigne (brochure)

1880 : Le Médecin de Catane (nouvelle)

1880 : Giovanna (nouvelle)

1885 : Le Pourquoi de la Vie

1889 : Après la Mort (dernière édition revue et corrigée : 1920)

1898 : Christianisme et Spiritisme (dernière édition revue et corrigée : 1920)

1901 : L'Au-delà et la Survivance de l'Être (brochure)

1903 : Dans l'Invisible (dernière édition revue et corrigée : 1924)

1905 : Le Problème de l'Être et de la Destinée (dernière édition revue et corrigée : 1922)

1910 : Jeanne d'Arc Médium (dernière édition revue et corrigée : 1926)

1911 : La Grande Énigme (dernière édition revue et corrigée : 1921)

1919 : Le Monde Invisible et la Guerre

1921 : Esprits et Médiuns (brochure)

1921 : Synthèse doctrinale et pratique du Spiritualisme

1921 : Le Spiritualisme et le Clergé Catholique

1924 : « Socialisme et Spiritisme » (article de La Revue spirite)

1924 : Jaurès Spiritualiste

1924 : La Question Celtique et le Spiritisme

1927 : Le Génie Celtique et le Monde Invisible

Memorable Quotes:

"Spiritism does not impose anything, it teaches."



"There is no ascension possible and no moral training to the soul if, from time to time, it doesn't turn to its Creator, its Father, to recognize its weaknesses, uncertainties and miseries and to ask for the necessary assistance for its spiritual advancement."



"Spiritism is not only perceived through the facts demonstrating the survival of the soul but it also provides the method by which inspiration from the superior world descends upon Humanity."

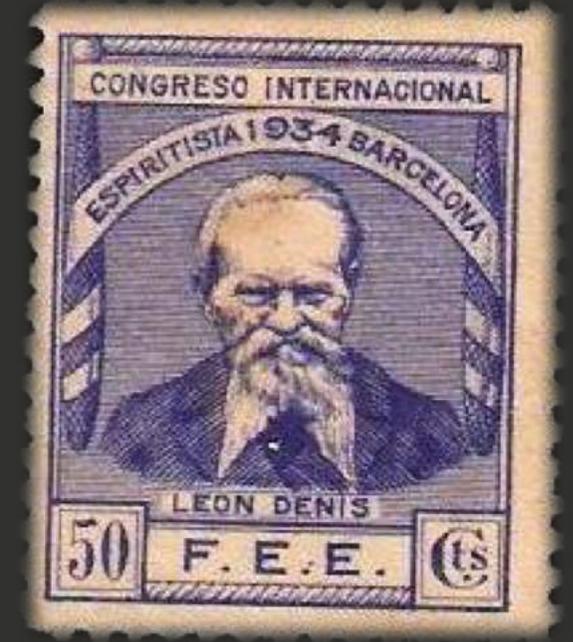


The Apostle of Spiritism

Leon Denis was called the
Apostle of Spiritism,
due to his magnificent work, and
the words written and spoken on
behalf of the new Doctrine. He can
also be denominated the
Consolidator of Spiritism.



**“I have consecrated this
existence to the service of
a great cause, Spiritism
(or Modern Spiritualism)
that will certainly come
to be the universal faith
and the religion of the
future.”**



"Spiritism does not impose anything, it teaches."