

## C. W. Leadbeater – the ‘Received Tradition’<sup>1</sup>

Pedro Oliveira

One of the most sacred principles in the American criminal justice system – holding that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty. In other words, the prosecution must prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, each essential element of the crime charged.

Definition from *Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary*

The French include in their French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens of 1789 stating that ‘every man is presumed innocent until declared guilty’. ... Roman law, canon law, the *jus commune*: from these sources spring that great Anglo- Saxon principle: A person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

(‘Innocent Until Proven Guilty: The Origins of a Legal Maxim’,  
Kenneth Pennington, The Catholic University of America,  
Columbus School of Law, 2003)

The foundational legal principle quoted above, although universally recognized and formally adopted, did not apply to Charles Webster Leadbeater (CWL) in his lifetime. At different times in his life serious accusations were made against him, mostly involving allegedly immoral (and reportedly criminal) behaviour towards boys. His accusers were so thoroughly convinced that he was guilty that they communicated this conviction to many others within the Theosophical Society and to the press. And yet, in spite of almost a lifelong campaign of denunciation and defamation he was never charged or prosecuted. But he was ‘proven’ guilty by his accusers and such ‘proof’ became an integral part of almost every biographical rendering of his life.

In one of her letters about him to Laura Mead, wife of G. R. S. Mead, Helen I. Dennis, who led the charges against him in her letter to Annie Besant of January 1906, declared that she became aware in 1905 that charges of immoral behaviour against CWL were repeatedly made against him ‘for at least fifteen years’ in India and Europe. However, she did not mention the evidences of such charges. The period of time indicated by Mrs Dennis goes as far back as 1890 when Madame Blavatsky was still alive. Judging by the latter’s communications to him at that time, which were friendly and encouraging, for a period of almost seven years, she had not detected any deviant behaviour in the young clergyman she brought to Adyar in 1884.

One of the central pieces of evidence against CWL, which was not sent to Annie Besant in January 1906, but which was circulated widely later on, was the so-called ‘Cipher Letter’ which was sent to one of the boys with whom he was associated. The letter includes elements of a psychic experience described by a clairvoyant vision, advice on the regular practice of masturbation, plus an expression at the end that was construed to be both obscene and indicative of an immoral connection between CWL and the boy. In this book the reader will

---

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as the Introduction to *CWL Speaks*, Olive Tree Publishing, Australia, 2018.

find ample commentary by CWL on the ‘Cipher Letter’, which he denies having written, plus statements by Mrs Besant who had seen the original document which was later destroyed by Mrs Elizabeth Chidester, one of the co-signatories of the charges Mrs Dennis sent to Annie Besant in early 1906. A copy of the ‘Cipher Letter’ was given to lawyers for G. Narianiah, J. Krishnamurti’s father, during his custody case against Annie Besant in 1913 in Madras. It is reported that G. Narianiah’s lawyers opted not to produce it in court. However, a number of books, articles, websites, Internet discussion lists, blogs, and essays currently available maintain that the ‘Cipher Letter’ was written by C.W. Leadbeater. According to these sources, this so-called study in evidence, guided by the ‘received tradition’ about CWL, has been transformed into oracular validity.

The ‘received tradition’ about Charles Webster Leadbeater (CWL), which begins in 1906 in the United States, portrays him as a ‘tantric’, ‘black magician’, who made it of his business to sexually abuse boys in his care. Later on, this view was expanded to supposedly connect him with the Ordo Templi Orientis, under Aleister Crowley, with allegations that he had learned sexual magic from Crowley’s organization. These allegations were never proven nor substantiated. None of his many books or more than a thousand articles, written over several decades, advocates any such theories or practices. The ‘received tradition’ about CWL was supported by many of those who were and are sympathetic to the leadership of William Q. Judge within the Theosophical Movement, both in the USA and England as well as other countries. Adherents to this tradition still portray CWL as one of the main corruptors of Theosophy as taught by H. P. Blavatsky. In spite of this portrayal, his books are among the most popular in Theosophical literature and have led tens of thousands, in many countries around the world during the past one hundred years, into an introductory study of Theosophy.

CWL was certainly one of the most visible Theosophists of his age, with the exception of Annie Besant, and as such he could have been charged and prosecuted had the charges been based on solid evidence. He was part of a court case in India which, among other things, dealt with an allegation, by the boy’s father, that CWL had sodomized the young J. Krishnamurti. At the court hearing, and after the evidence was presented and cross-examination conducted, the allegation was dismissed by Justice Bakewell. CWL was also the subject of two thorough and professional police investigations in Australia in 1917 and 1922, the first of which was instigated by a loyal follower of Katherine Tingley, who ran a vicious and ubiquitous publicity campaign against him and Annie Besant in the United States and in other countries. The first one did not find any evidence against him and the second concluded that there was not sufficient evidence to ‘obtain conviction on any charge’. The allegation (of indecent assault) in the second investigation came from the son of the man who had waged a bitter, defamatory and relentless national and international campaign against CWL, Thomas H. Martyn.

As we shall see in this book, the ‘received tradition’ is at variance with the real man as well as with many testimonies about his life and his work.

### *Who was Charles Webster Leadbeater?*

Charles Webster Leadbeater was born in Stockport, Cheshire, England, on 16 February 1854, to Charles and Emma Leadbeater. This date of birth was given in the English census of

1861, 1871 and 1881. After his mother died, in May 1882, his date of birth was given as 17 February 1847, which appeared in the 1891 census. This was also the date he used in his passport. His reason for using a different date of birth is not known, although research about it continues. He passed away on 1 March 1934 in Perth, Western Australia.

Leadbeater was ordained a priest in the Church of England on 21 December 1879 and took up residence in the village of Liphook, Hampshire, with his mother. At Church he organised several activities for young people. He was also interested in psychic phenomena and conducted his own investigations in the Scottish Highlands. He joined the Theosophical Society in 1883 in London, and travelled with H. P. Blavatsky to India in 1884 after having received the following letter from one of her Adept-Teachers, Mahatma K.H.:

Last spring – March the 3rd – you wrote a letter to me and entrusted it to “Ernest”. Tho’ the paper itself never reached me – nor was it ever likely to, considering the nature of the messenger – its contents have. I did not answer it at the time, but sent you a warning through Upasika. In that message of yours it was said that, since reading Esot. Bud: and Isis your “one great wish has been to place your- self under me as a chela, that you may learn more of the truth.” “I understand from Mr. S.” you went on “that it would be almost impossible to become a chela without going out to India”. You hoped to be able to do that in a few years, tho’ for the present ties of gratitude bind you to remain in this country. Etc.

I now answer the above and your other questions.

[1] It is not necessary that one should be in India during the seven years of probation. A chela can pass them anywhere.

[2] To accept any man as a chela does not depend on my personal will. It can only be the result of one’s personal merit and exertions in that direction. Force any one of the “Masters” you may happen to choose; do good works in his name and for the love of mankind; be pure and resolute in the path of righteousness [as laid out in our rules]; be honest and unselfish; forget your Self but to remember the good of other people – and you will have forced that “Master” to accept you.

So much for candidates during the periods of the undisturbed progress of your Society. There is something more to be done, however, when theosophy, the Cause of Truth, is, as at the present moment on its stand for life or death before the tribunal of public opinion – that most flippantly cruel, prejudiced and unjust of all tribunals. There is also the collective karma of the caste you belong to – to be considered. It is undeniable that the cause you have at heart is now suffering owing to the dark intrigues, the base conspiracy of the Christian clergy and missionaries against the Society. They will stop before nothing to ruin the reputation of the Founders. Are you willing to atone for their sins? Then go to Adyar for a few months. “The ties of gratitude” will not be severed, nor even become weakened for an absence of a few months if the step be explained plausibly to your relative. He who would shorten the years of probation has to make sacrifices for theosophy. Pushed by malevolent hands to the very edge of a precipice, the Society needs every man and woman strong in the cause of truth. It is by doing noble actions and not by only determining that they shall be done that the fruits of the meritorious actions are reaped. Like the “true man” of Carlyle who is not to be seduced by ease – “difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the allurements that act” during the hours of trial on the heart of a true chela.

You ask me – “what rules I must observe during this time of probation, and how soon I might venture

to hope that it could begin". I answer: you have the making of your own future, in your own hands as shown above, and every day you may be weaving its woof. If I were to demand that you should do one thing or the other, instead of simply advising, I would be responsible for every effect that might flow from the step and you acquire but a secondary merit. Think, and you will see that this is true. So cast the lot yourself into the lap of Justice, never fearing but that its response will be absolutely true. Chelaship is an educational as well as probationary stage and the chela alone can determine whether it shall end in adeptship or failure. Chelas from a mistaken idea of our system too often watch and wait for orders, wasting precious time which should be taken up with personal effort. Our cause needs missionaries, devotees, agents, even martyrs perhaps. But it cannot demand of any man to make himself either. So now choose and grasp your own destiny, and may our Lord's the Tathagata's memory aid you to decide for the best.

K.H.

(Source: *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, Edited by C. Jinarajadasa, letter #7)

After his arrival in India he helped Col. Henry S. Olcott in his work for Buddhist education in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. He helped Col. Olcott to found many Buddhist schools in that country and wrote a Buddhist Catechism. While at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, in India, CWL was taught some meditation exercises by one of Madame Blavatsky's spiritual Teachers, who had accepted him as a Chela (disciple), in 1884. The exercises helped him to develop the faculty of clairvoyance. He returned to England in 1889.

While he was in Ceylon, Madame Blavatsky wrote him a letter from Elberfeld, Germany, dated 23rd June 1886, in which she makes two references to CWL as a chela (disciple) of Master K.H. When he opened the envelope containing HPB's letter he saw the following message, written in blue pencil across the writing of the last page:

Take courage. I am pleased with you. Keep your own counsel,  
and believe in your better intuitions. The little man has failed and will reap his  
reward.  
Silence meanwhile.

K.H.

The letter can be seen here: <http://www.cwlworld.info/HPB - CWL.pdf>

Madame Blavatsky settled in London in 1887, where she concluded the writing of her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*, published in 1888. Archibald Keightley and Bertram Keightley were pivotal in the editorial preparations for that epoch-making book.

G.R.S. Mead was personal secretary to HPB and a scholar in his own right. His writings focused on Platonism, Neo-Platonism, the Ancient Mysteries and, above all, Gnosticism. Both Bertram Keightley and G.R.S. Mead were closely associated to HPB.

Bertram Keightley reviewed C.W. Leadbeater's book *The Astral Plane* and G.R.S. Mead reviewed CWL's *The Devachanic Plane*. Both were published in *Lucifer*, the journal founded by HPB in London in 1887: Bertram Keightley's review of *The Astral Plane* was published

in the May 1895 issue and G.R.S. Mead's re- view of *The Devachanic Plane* appeared in the November 1896 issue of the same journal. They can be seen at [www.cwlworld.info](http://www.cwlworld.info).

The value of these two reviews lies in the fact that each writer assessed CWL's books on their own merits, free from the bias of the 'received tradition' about him, and of the so-called 'Neo-Theosophy' ideology, a term created by F.T. Brooks and later on appropriated by 'Blavatskyan' fundamentalists in the early part of the twentieth-century, who insisted – and still insist – that books by Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater are not Theosophy.

Both reviewers sincerely welcomed CWL's contribution to the investigation of subtler planes of existence and commended his efforts that enriched the wide horizon of Theosophical research, which cannot be limited by any book, by any author or by any formulation of its core principles. As HPB wisely said, 'Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable.'

In 1891, the year in which she died, Madame Blavatsky presented CWL with a copy of her book *The Key to Theosophy*, in which she wrote the following dedication:

'To my old and well-beloved friend Charles Leadbeater  
From his fraternally

H. P. Blavatsky.  
London 1891.'

He went on to write a number of books, some of which became classics in their fields like *The Chakras*, *Thought-Forms* (with Annie Besant), *Man Visible and Invisible* and *The Masters and the Path*, among many others.

From 1900 to 1905 he was a popular international lecturer for the TS, concentrating his visits on the United States. While in that country he was approached by some mothers with their concerns about sexual difficulties faced by their sons. One of them was Helen I. Dennis. On the other hand, some American families wanted their sons to accompany him on his travels, to be trained in Theosophical work by him. In 1906 he was charged by the leadership of the American Section of the TS with teaching self-abuse (masturbation) to some boys under his care. Following an inquiry in London, on 16 May 1906, presided over Col. Olcott, he voluntarily resigned his membership of the Society. A crisis would then ensue lasting for more than two years, centred mostly in the United States and England.

For many, the episodes of 1906 sealed his image as an immoral man, although he was never charged or prosecuted in any country. Many TS members, in different countries, vigorously defended him. CWL, however, never defended himself from the accusations. After one hundred and ten years, all his relevant correspondence regarding that crisis is gathered together in this book. For the first time, his full thoughts and views about those events are presented to the public. Here, CWL speaks.

Included in this book are three appendices, one with a description of his work as a Curate at the parish of Bramshott, Hampshire, another with a timeline of the relationship between CWL and J. Krishnamurti, and the last one with a comprehensive bibliography of C.W.

Leadbeater's works, including the translations of his works into many languages other than English. Also included are personal letters from Helen Dennis and her associates in which different aspects of the crisis are discussed. We include additionally several statements associated with the succession of Col. Henry Steel Olcott as President of the Theosophical Society as they are intrinsically linked with the Leadbeater case.

### *Masturbation – a Historical Overview*

Central to the crisis involving C.W. Leadbeater in 1906 is the practice of masturbation. We therefore present below comments from various sources which provide a brief historical overview of the subject, including one held within the Buddhist tradition.

Eighteen-century doctors also had almost no interest in the Christian taxonomy of sexual sin. They certainly understood masturbation as “unnatural” but only in the sense that a physiological process had more dire effects if carried out under unnatural rather than natural circumstances: “Too great a quantity of semen being lost in the natural course produces direful effects; but they are still more dreadful when the same quantity has been dissipated in an unnatural way.” (p. 191)

One of the great doctors of the Enlightenment believed that masturbation was “much the more to be dreaded” than smallpox. And he ought to know: Tissot, who made the comparison, was an expert on both. Something was so terrifyingly unnatural about sex alone that in the early twentieth-century, long after the foundations of eighteenth century medicine had crumbled, otherwise reasonable people still regarded masturbation as “the most inevitable and most fatal peril of all.” (p. 210)

*(Solitary Sex – A Cultural History of Masturbation* by Thomas W. Laqueur, Zone Books, New York, 2003)

Masturbation, “the besetting trials of our boys”, was a singularly appealing subject of study for American medicine because, once shown to be pathogenic, it laid open the possibility that all sexual behavior differing from orthodox morality was also disease-causing and strongly suggested that all deviations from acceptable sexual practice were psychic perversions of the natural sexual function.

Sexual norms have become scientific truths, and deviations from propriety diseases. Nowhere is this translation from vice to disease more palpable than in the observed effects of masturbation on the two sexes. The consequences of masturbation had for males and females were, clinicians found, significantly different; but what they had in common was the socially unacceptable – hence “diseased” – nature of the resultant behavior.

Since masturbation was conceived of as seriously harmful to the body and mind and as the exciting cause of a series of far more severe psychological disorders, it is understandable that psychological and medical practitioners were prepared to employ radical methods of treatment if they were found necessary to avoid such dire consequences. The history of the treatment of masturbation is testament to the atrocities which men, otherwise of good will, are prepared to perpetrate in the name of saving damned souls.

Although belief in the notion that masturbation would eventuate in severe psychological disorder was still espoused by a few medical authorities on into the 1930s and after, it had, for all practical

purposes, been abandoned by most of the medical profession. True, it lingered in the cautionary literature published for the laity by religionists and moral purifiers, but among the psychiatric profession the theory that masturbation was psychologically harmful continued on only in the much adulterated form that its excessive practice contributed to or was symptomatic of certain sexual neuroses. Yet, as the historian Ronald Walters points out, old myths die hard; a survey taken in 1959 of future doctors graduating from medical schools in the Philadelphia area revealed that almost half of those questioned still held that masturbation was a common cause of insanity.

*(Medicine and the Crimination of Sin: "Self-Abuse" in 19th Century America, Ronald Hamowy, Department of History, University of Alberta, Journal of Libertarian Studies, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 229-270, Pergamon Press, 1977.)*

Masturbation corresponds essentially to infantile sexual activity and to its subsequent retention at a more mature age. We derive the neuroses from a conflict between a person's sexual urges and his other (ego) trends. ... Masturbation is not anything ultimate – whether somatically or psychologically – it is not a real 'agent', but merely the name of certain activities. ... And do not forget that masturbation is not to be equated with sexual activity in general: it is sexual activity subjected to certain limiting conditions.

*(Sigmund Freud, 'Contributions to a Discussion on Masturbation' (1912), Sigmund Freud Collected Works)*

Masturbation is an aspect of childhood sexuality that parents find hard to respond to comfortably and appropriately. Part of the difficulty may be the need to acknowledge that children are sexual beings. The misunderstandings and secrecy about masturbation add to parent and child discomfort.

By definition, masturbation is self-stimulation of the genitals. It is done by both boys and girls and is normal behavior. Just how common is masturbation during the various stages of childhood? Up to the age of five or six years, masturbation is quite common. Young children are very curious about their bodies and find masturbation pleasurable and comforting. Youngsters also are curious about the differences between girls and boys, and thus in the preschool and kindergarten years they may occasionally explore each other's body, including their genitals.

From age six on, the incidence of masturbation in public tends to subside, largely because children's social awareness increases and social mores assume greater importance. Masturbation in private will continue to some extent and remains normal. When pubertal development begins—accompanied by an increase of sexual hormones, thoughts, and curiosity—body awareness and sexual tensions rise. Masturbation is a regular part of normal adolescence. Most young teenagers discover that masturbation is sexually pleasing and recognize that self-stimulation is an expression of their own developing sexuality.

Although the myths surrounding masturbation have been scientifically dispelled, they still persist. A child who masturbates is not oversexed, promiscuous, or sexually deviant. Nor will he go blind or insane, grow pimples or warts, or become sterile. Nevertheless, many cultures still actively discourage masturbation, partly because of the general moral constraints often placed on sexual behavior.

(Source: [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org), American Academy of Pediatrics, accessed 24 August 2017)

The *Vinaya* is the regulatory framework for the *sangha* or monastic community of Buddhism based on the canonical texts called the *Pitaka*. (Wikipedia)

According to a story, the monk Seyyasaka was depressed, a state inconsistent with the Middle Way. Udāyin, perceiving that he was ‘disenchanted’, recommended that the former may eat, sleep and bathe as he wished and if passion (*rāga*) assailed him he can ‘emit impure material employing his hand’. Seyyasaka’s condition improved. His colleagues rejected Udāyin’s advice. Did Seyyasaka use the same hand as received the offerings of the faithful? The Buddha pronounced the rule: ‘intentional emission of semen is a matter entailing a formal meeting of the *samgha*.’ So we find in the *Pātimokkha samghādisesa* no.1. The words ‘emission’ and ‘intention’ are keys to the offence. If an offender is caught, or confesses, the offence requires a meeting of the *samgha*, possibly a gruesome experience. Fellow monks will interrogate him. The *samgha* may sentence him to probation, to return to post-ordination status, and to other penances. Udāyin underwent the same another time.

(J. Duncan M. Derrett, ‘Buddhist Casuistry: The Ultimate in Purity – A Study in the *Vinaya*’, *Brahmavidya* – The Adyar Library Bulletin, 2003)

### *Acknowledgments*

It was Mrs. Radha Burnier, International President of the Theosophical Society (1980-2013), who encouraged me in 2004 to pursue research for a future biography of CWL. While I was still working most of the time and attending Theosophical meetings, as well as touring, both within Australia as well as overseas, the biography project had to be postponed but not abandoned.

The idea of starting a modest website to put on record aspects of the life and work of Charles Webster Leadbeater was suggested to me in 2006. After participating in discussions in online lists on Theosophy and the history of the Theosophical Society for a couple of years, I became aware that anyone presenting a positive view of CWL’s contribution would eventually attract both ridicule and trolling in some form or another.

The domain name cwlworld.info was acquired in 2006 and the contents of the website were then researched and written. New material is still being added to it from time to time. The site went live on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2007, coinciding with the Tibetan New Year at that time. I am grateful to Dr John Algeo, Professor Emeritus of the University of Georgia, USA, and former International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society and former National President of the American Section of the Society, for his encouragement and suggestions for the incipient website. From very small beginnings it ended up catching the attention of an ever wider number of users and today it has attracted the attention of search engines for ‘Charles Webster Leadbeater’.

Eventually I realized that a full biography would demand an amount of time and effort which were not available to me at that time. I therefore decided to gather together material which I had collected over the years and work on a text about CWL’s correspondence concerning the 1906 crisis in the TS. That crisis generated accusatory patterns that would follow him at different times of his life.



I am sincerely grateful to the following institutions and individuals: the TS Archives at Adyar, Chennai, India, with which I have been associated since 1989, and from which I obtained copies of the correspondence between CWL and Mrs Besant, and others, concerning the crisis. Thanks are also due to the Adyar Library and Research Centre in Chennai, India, from where the comprehensive bibliography of CWL was obtained; to the Theosophical Society in America's Archives in Wheaton, Illinois, USA, for kindly making available the letters from CWL to Fritz Kunz and others relating to the period under consideration; to the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives in Sydney, for its unique collection of Theosophical periodicals of different persuasions; to the staff at the University of Chicago Library for supplying a number of documents from the Helen I. Dennis Collection; to the Archives of the Krishnamurti Foundation in Ojai, California; to Mr L. Panditharathna, Personal Assistant to the Principal, Ananda College in 2007, Colombo, Sri Lanka, for providing a relevant account of the role played by Mr. Leadbeater in the promotion of Buddhist education in Sri Lanka and especially through Ananda College, of which he was the first Principal.

As time permits, copies of relevant documents which are included in this book will be uploaded onto the CWL World website – [www.cwlworld.info](http://www.cwlworld.info).

I am grateful for conversations with the following individuals: Mrs. Radha Burnier, who conveyed to me her understanding that although CWL did not understand the changes that took place in J. Krishnamurti's outlook after 1925, the latter maintained his view of CWL's integrity until the end of his life; the late Miss R. Padmini, from the Adyar Library and Research Centre in Chennai, India, who shared her recollections of CWL, who encouraged her as a young girl with her studies; the late Rev. Matt van Thiel, from Auckland, New Zealand, who as a young man was CWL's driver at The Manor in Mosman, Sydney, during several years in the 1920s and who shared with me some of his memories of that fascinating time of his life; the late Herre and Marie van der Veen, from Taormina, Ojai, California, who showed me their photo albums of their time at The Manor, reminiscing about Bishop Leadbeater officiating at their marriage and how the young people at The Manor loved him. I am also grateful for the unique privilege of briefly corresponding with Mrs Paula Mango, née Hamerster, who lived at The Manor in Mosman, Sydney at a young age and who was involved in ceremonial activities there under the guidance of Bishop Leadbeater.

Mr John Brian Parry, who was a resident at The Manor in the 1950s, shared with me his conversations with two contemporaries of CWL in Sydney: the Revd. Henry Aldag, who came as a young boy, from Mexico, with his mother Consuelo Aldag to reside at The Manor in the second half of the 1920s, and Mr Frederick Houstone, who was for many years the Treasurer of the Australian Section of the TS. Both Revd. Aldag and Mr Houstone gave to Mr Parry their testimony about CWL's integrity.

I am thankful to Dr Robert Ellwood for going through the manuscript and for writing the Foreword, and for Dr Pablo Sender for reviewing the manuscript. I place on record my appreciation to The Rt. Rev. Ian Hooker who contributed to the understanding of Bishop Leadbeater's work through his M.A. thesis at the University of Sydney on 'The Foundations of the Liberal Catholic Church'. I am also grateful to The Rt. Rev. Ricardo Lindemann for

sharing his discovery of the ship manifest at the Public Archives at Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, reporting the 1858 arrival in Bahia of Charles Leadbeater, his wife and son.

Last but not least, I am genuinely thankful to Neeta Agrawal for her thoughtful artwork for the cover design and in the blurb, and also for her patience.

From 1974 onwards, when I became interested in Theosophical literature while living in Brazil, I became aware of the far-reaching influence of books by Besant and Leadbeater. I had seen them even in small bookshops within bus terminals in remote areas of the country. It was in 1978 – the year I joined the Theosophical Society – when the Portuguese edition of Mary Lutyens' *Krishnamurti – The Years of Awakening*<sup>2</sup> was published, that I became aware of the accusations against him. And it was in 1989, while attending the School of the Wisdom at Adyar, Madras, India, that I had the opportunity of reading the book by Dr Gregory Tillett, *The Elder Brother – A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater*<sup>3</sup>, which is regarded by many as the definitive biography of C. W. Leadbeater. Challenging as it was, the reading of that book caused me to study and research further about his life and work. The result is this book.

It was once inferred that I could not write such a book due to my association with the Theosophical Society and The Liberal Catholic Church. The verdict for such inference lies, as always, with the reader.

*Compiler*

---

<sup>2</sup> John Murray, London, 1975

<sup>3</sup> Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1982, recently reprinted.