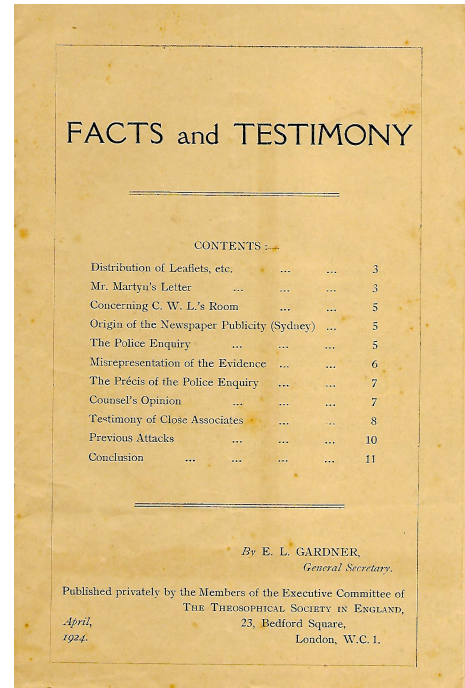


Facts and Testimony
Concerning
Bishop C. W. Leadbeater

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On Sunday, April 6th, 1924, at the Special Convention requested by seven Lodges of the Theosophical Society in England, nearly a thousand members attending, the chairman was asked (following appeals for information) to read a statement he had prepared concerning the charges made against Bishop Leadbeater in Australia. A vote was taken as to whether this statement should be read and permission was almost unanimously granted.

Turning to Lieut. Colonel C. L. Peacocke, the representative of the seven Lodges, the chairman asked, "You have no objection, Colonel?" The reply at once was, "No, all we want is truth." It was in the spirit of that straight reply that these contents (which comprise the statement referred to above, with some slight modifications) were submitted to the Convention.

Leaflets have recently been circulated among members of this National Society detailing certain charges of a grave nature made in Sydney, Australia, against Bishop Leadbeater. The evidence has been submitted to the Australian Law Officers and has been rejected as unsupported. Nothing, therefore, has been proven and there is even no case that can stand made out against him.

One of these leaflets is of a particularly abominable character. It is entitled “Précis of the Leadbeater Police Enquiry,” and was prepared by a member of the Sydney Lodge (Australia). The leaflet circulated in this country carries no signature nor printer’s name, and a number of statements are made in it that have never been supported by any valid evidence and many that have been refuted. Most of our members have little or no opportunity of obtaining and sifting the material available, and, in consequence of the recent publicity referred to, it is time that some facts be given that any who wish may have them to consider. Hence they are set out below in as straightforward and simple a manner as possible.

MR. MARTYN’S LETTER

Mr. Martyn’s “Private and Confidential” letter of 1921 to the President has been widely circulated. It is introduced with the words:

“This letter has never been answered by Mrs. Besant.”

As the code of honour observed by Mr. Martyn and his friends permits private and confidential correspondence to be printed and widely published, it is fairly obvious why a reply was not sent directly. That part which concerned herself and the Society was, however, answered by Mrs. Besant in her Circular of 1922: “To all members of the T.S.” The following are brief extracts from this circular letter:

“Mr. Martyn—whose splendid service to the T.S. in Australia and New Zealand I have always recognised and still recognise, despite his complete *volte face*—makes a number of statements which are untrue, as to things I am supposed to have said to him. His strange confusion and inaccuracy of thought are shown in his ‘private and confidential’ letter, shamelessly printed, by his speaking in one paragraph about my colleague having said, quite truly, that I had cut off *physical brain* intercourse with the Masters’ for a special reason—‘permanently’ I am sure he did not say – and stating this in a following paragraph as identical with my having ‘broken the *superphysical* line of communication’ (the italics are mine). The physical brain is not a superphysical line. My ‘superphysical line of communication’ with the Masters has never been broken. I have said in E.S. meetings that in consequence of my very heavy physical plane work connected with Indian politics, I had not for some years impressed on the physical brain memories of work in other worlds in which it had no share; but I constantly added to this, to avoid misunderstanding, that I could obtain, whenever necessary, the approval or disapproval of my Master on any point on which I was in doubt.

...

“The published letter of Mr. Martyn contains a number of infamous accusations, none of which I believe, against a number of persons whom I know to be incapable of the conduct charged. I do not discuss them; no decent person would mention them except in a court of justice, or in preparation for legal action, or possibly if in need of help, and if the circulators of this filth have any justification for making such accusations, they should at once place their information in the hands of the police. Till they do, they should be treated with disdain by all honourable persons. . . . To circulate broadcast through the post accusations of the vilest crimes, so that they may fall into the hands of boys and girls in decently-living families, as certain men are circulating them today, is to familiarise the ignorant with crimes which decent people do not talk about outside criminal courts, is to raise most undesirable curiosity among the young and the ignorant and to debauch public morality. If they believe the crimes were committed, they should quietly place their evidence in the hands of the police.”

A. B.

The evidence was at last, though not “quietly,” placed in the hands of the police in Sydney, with the result stated in the first paragraph above.

CONCERNING C.W.L.’S ROOM.

Apropos of some of the apparently damaging statements in this letter of Mr. Martyn’s, I have gathered some entirely reliable particulars respecting the room and the verandah or balcony used by Mr. Leadbeater and the boys with him for some years.

Three boys were accustomed to sleep on a large verandah outside C.W.L.’s room, using the room itself for dressing. In the morning they practised Muller’s athletic exercises (recommended without clothes) under the supervision of C.W.L. and often of Mr. Martyn himself. Before going down for breakfast the boys frequently played in C.W.L.’s room and romped on his bed. Seated on the bed they were often talked to by C.W.L. and Mr. Martyn.

Mr. Martyn’s own room and another bedroom also opened on to this balcony. From C.W.L.’s room on to the balcony there were two windows and a door. These were always open and the blinds of the windows were never used. There were thus entrances to the room from the verandah and the house, beside the open windows, and these were seldom, if ever, shut and never locked.

(See also Dr. M. Rocke’s letter on page 8. Without being aware of the above facts, the natural reflection that probably occurred to all ordinary people like myself, on first reading the line in Mr. Martyn’s letter referring to naked boys being seen in this room, was that wrong-doers do not usually court the advertisement of open doors through which they can be seen, and that perhaps a certain royal motto might have been usefully remembered!)

THE ORIGIN OF THE PUBLICITY AND THE POLICE ENQUIRY.

Mr. Sproule, then Solicitor-General of New South Wales, has explained the origin of the newspaper publicity. He met a reporter in the street one day who, stopping him and making a statement of hearsay, asked him, "Do you not think there should be an inquiry into this matter of Bishop Leadbeater?" Mr. Sproule replied, "If what you say is true, I think there should be an inquiry." The following morning Mr. Sproule was surprised to find in the newspaper in large headlines: "Solicitor-General Demands Public Enquiry," etc.

The newspaper statements led to a police enquiry, and the police telephoned one day saying there were some people making trouble about C.W.L., and asked for "two or three to come and give some friendly evidence," entire frankness being encouraged under the volunteered promise of "No publicity." The questions and answers were taken down by two stenographers. When, however, this police report was examined afterwards, many serious errors and mis-statements [sic] were found. Several of the questions had been altered as well as the answers. These were rectified as far as possible. Mr. Jinarajadasa and others had the same sort of experience later with careless "notes." Permission was refused at first for *anyone* else to see these statements as had been promised—but as a matter of fact others were permitted to see them, in spite of the promise given that nothing would be disclosed. Later some extracts that misrepresented them considerably were made public.

Opinions that have been published as expressed by the detectives are of little or no value. They are by casual police officers who had seen some of the evidence, and who were approached and biased [sic] by those who made the charges. C.W.L. was at no time consulted by any of the Police, which is itself a sufficient comment on the views of the *responsible* officers concerned.

MISREPRESENTATION OF THE EVIDENCE.

A further comment regarding the taking of evidence by the police is afforded by the following:

From the published notes of the police enquiry:

"The brothers K. and N. nearly got to loggerheads over the exact manner in which they could correct their statement." And this explanation:

"We have read that in giving evidence before the police in Sydney regarding the accusations against Bishop Leadbeater we came to loggerheads and could not agree in our statements. This misrepresents the facts so greatly that we wish to make a short explanation.

"The shorthand reporters who took down our evidence made so many mistakes that one of us wished to correct not only the grave errors such as that of leaving out negatives, which often happened, but also the small and fairly unimportant mistakes. So we frequently discussed between ourselves as to whether a point was sufficiently important to correct. Certain people have tried to make out that this discussion arose out of a serious disagreement as to facts. We can only say that we never disagreed as to facts. The only point of difference between us was whether certain errors made by the reporters were worth troubling about.

“J. Krishnamurti.

“J. Nityananda.”

THE PRÉCIS.

The accusers of C.W.L. issued a Précis of the case entitled “Précis of the Leadbeater Police Enquiry.”

Mr. Martyn’s circular of March, 1923, refers to this same Précis as “attested to on oath as being accurate and truthful,” and it has been published in “Dawn” and lately has been circulated in this country. Its fairness or otherwise, as a summary of the evidence, may be estimated from the following:

Dr. Bean, the General Secretary of the T.S. in Australia, took a legal opinion on:

1. The accuracy or adequacy of the Précis of the Leadbeater enquiry (as prepared by the accusers of C.W.L. from the report presented to the Minister of Justice).

2. An opinion of the whole Australian case.

Counsel, Hon. R. Sproule, M.L.C., L.L.B., Ex-Solicitor General for New South Wales, submitted the following:

Counsel’s opinion:

1. “*The Précis is inadequate and, in parts, misleading. I do not consider the Précis either fair or impartial.*”

2. “*On a consideration of the whole evidence, I am of opinion that, if there were a trial, no jury could do other than acquit Bishop Leadbeater.*”

“R. Sproule.”

Dr. Bean adds:

“The above is in the coldly judicial parlance of the legal profession. It is, from an ordinary human standpoint, far too lenient. As a matter of fact, by picking out certain bits of the ‘Evidence’ and by omitting others which tremendously qualify or entirely nullify them, and by clever word manipulation the ‘Précis’ has been made scandalously and cruelly false in spirit, and in parts, too, definitely and basely false as to the letter.” (*Theosophy in. Australia*, August, 1923.)

CONSIDERED LEGAL OPINION OF THE EVIDENCE.

With the whole of the evidence that could by every possible means be brought before them, the considered opinions of the Law Officers (Sydney, Australia) were delivered as follows:

The Crown Solicitor states (October, 1922):

“*I am of opinion that there is not enough evidence here to obtain a conviction on any charge.*”

The Assistant Law Officer states:

“*In my opinion the evidence submitted does not justify the institution of criminal proceedings.*”

NOTE. A gentleman, who has practised as a barrister in Sydney, describes these opinions as equivalent to those of a Grand Jury in England.

TESTIMONY OF CLOSE ASSOCIATES.

Among the large number of those who have known Bishop Leadbeater well are many who have written concerning their intimate knowledge of his life and work. The following brief extracts are taken from letters and articles, all written during the last two years, with the exception of Colonel (then Major) Peacocke's

1922. i. *Irving S. Cooper* (4 1/2 years, assisting C.W.L. as private secretary).

"I have never in my life met a cleaner-minded, nobler man than Bishop Leadbeater."

1922. ii. *B. W. Lindberg, M.D.*

"I have never known during 32 years of professional life a nobler or purer man in thought, word and deed than Bishop Leadbeater."

1923. iii. *Ernest Wood, M.A.*

"The beautiful spirit that breathes through his books is not foreign to his character or his life. I spent, as I have mentioned, ten thousand waking hours in his company, and I retain the impression of a man whose life was pure and refined to an unusual degree, and a source of inspiration to the many friends I have known who have closely enjoyed the privileges of his society."

1923. iv. *Dr. Mary Rocke.*

"For the last 12 years I have known Bishop Leadbeater intimately . . . Not only, then, from the reverence and high honour in which I hold him, but from actual knowledge of the daily life he leads, do I assert, as a woman of honour, and as a medical woman of mature years, that his life and conduct are beyond reproach and unassailable in their uttermost purity . . . There are few, if any, who live a more open life than the Bishop—no one is ever allowed to knock when entering his room, be it servant or friend—they walk straight in, and as noiselessly as possible. If uncertain whether he is sleeping they peep through the dining-room window, which overlooks his bed. Windows and doors stand open day and night; blinds and curtains are not permitted, as shutting out light and air. For these reason, amongst others, anyone in contact with Bishop Leadbeater knows how absurd are the inuendoes of these who attack him.

Quite recently a remarkable report has come into my hands from Prof. A. F. Barker, a member of a large Lodge in the North. Mr. Barker made the voyage to Australia and back last year. On board, also bound for Sydney, was Mr. H. R. Gillespie. On becoming acquainted, Mr. Barker learnt for the first time of the numerous charges made against both Bishop Leadbeater and Dr. Besant. Two foolscap pages of type were filled, on request, in detailing them. Mr. Barker, unprejudiced one way or the other, proceeded to do some personal investigation on reaching Sydney, and later was kind enough to furnish me with a copy of his open letter to Mr. Gillespie. Anyone interested and wishing to see the full letter should apply to me, and I have permission to lend it for perusal. I append some short extracts:

1923. v. "I find that from my own definite experience from without and from within the T.S. certain of your charges are not merely 'Not proven,' but are actually negated."

"I have come across several who have been closely associated with Bishop Leadbeater as friends or as pupils (now grown up), and their unanimous testimony to his inspiring influence, etc."

"In my humble judgment, those who write such articles as have recently appeared in 'Dawn' write their own condemnation, and proclaim themselves utterly unfitted to arrive at a sound, well-reasoned judgment in such a case as this."

"Religions animosity in Sydney runs deep, and my enquiries as to the fundamental causes of the particular trouble in question led me at once to the ritualistic practices of Bishop Leadbeater and to the aggressive antipathies of certain of his accusers."

"Feeling more strongly day by day that the whole spirit of your attitude towards Mrs. Besant and Bishop Leadbeater is so wrong, I cannot close this letter without making an appeal to your better feelings, etc."

This letter, it should be noted, is written by one who heard of these charges for the first time on his way to Sydney. The course followed was the reasonable and fair one of proceeding to enquire and investigate before passing any judgment.

vi. *Major Peacocke* in 1912 wrote a long and delightfully frank letter, from which the following is taken:

"What I wish to establish (from actual facts) is this: That Mr. Leadbeater's daily life among his friends and associates is throughout consistent with his beliefs, with his professed abnormal powers, and with his teachings and that he stands for the highest morality, both in practice and by precept."

He has not met C. W. L. since.

PREVIOUS ATTACKS.

With regard to the earlier charges of 1906-8, it happens that I joined the Society in the midst of this disturbance. I obtained all the papers circulated at the time on the subject, and still have them by me, with many others. (There is never any difficulty in getting the "Prosecution" views in extenso.) I weighed the whole carefully. After doing so I well remember thinking that none of those accusing could have had even the little acquaintance with British law practice that is gained by serving on a jury! Everything of any serious moment denied; nothing whatever proved; advice given, with which one legitimately may or may not agree, had been misrepresented as deliberate *teaching*; no attempt even to substantiate the one or two apparently incriminating documents (e.g., the cypher letter); the whole "case," in short, poor, as a case, to the last degree! Ordinary law practice assumes innocence until guilt is proved, but in all this the opposite ruled. Moreover, it is to be remembered that the sort of accusation made was one that damages even in the making, though unsupported, and is, therefore, the one under which nearly all pioneers in every field have suffered—H.P.B. herself previously, perhaps more than

most. In C.W.L.'s case enough mud was thrown by responsible people to cloud the whole issue, and even Colonel Olcott was driven to suggest and accept Mr. Leadbeater's resignation. Dr. Besant herself was temporarily misled by evidence which should have been trustworthy, but which was later found to be unreliable. In her letter already referred to Dr. Besant states:

“The lie that he (C.W.L.) had admitted personal wrongdoing—the cruel lie that had led me to condemn his actions, for those who fathered it knew that I would have accepted against him only his own word—was exposed.”

Mr. Leadbeater returned to membership in the Society in 1908, on a vote of the General Council sitting at Adyar, which declared that “there is no reason why Mr. C. W. Leadbeater should not return, if he wishes, to his place in the Society which he has, in the past, served so well.” The whole situation was covered in Dr. Besant's letter “To the Members of the T.S.,” of November, 1908, in which, *inter alia*, the so-called “incriminating letters” were dealt with, the method of their composition indicated, and their fraudulent nature exposed.

So far as I know, Bishop Leadbeater has never lifted a finger in his own defence, either at that time or recently. His actions have been consistently those of a clean-motived and innocent man, and he appears to have treated the charges of his accusers with consistent and courageous indifference.

That no appeal has been made for the protection of the law is a matter of surprise to many who do not know C.W.L. No good member of the Society of Friends similarly will invoke the law's assistance on any grounds. The principle at heart that underlies this is the same, and is one at least to be respected, though we may not all be strong enough to follow it.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

I believe I have examined every paper available on this matter, and exhaustively—and am, at least, in as favourable a position to arrive at a correct judgment as any member in this National Society, who does not personally know C.W.L. I am convinced a hideous wrong and a grave injustice have been done Bishop Leadbeater. Entirely innocent relations have been foully misconstrued. The motive and reason for this are not my province. Trivial resentments and jealousies may, if roused and nursed, veil the reason utterly and lead to distorted judgments. That perhaps is the most charitable view to take of the causes that lie behind the amazing attacks made.

E. L. Gardner.

April, 1924.

We heartily commend the issue of this pamphlet.

JEAN R. BRINDLEY,
General Secretary Theosophical Society in Scotland.
T. KENNEDY,
General Secretary Theosophical Society in Ireland.
PETER FREEMAN,
General Secretary Theosophical Society in Wales.