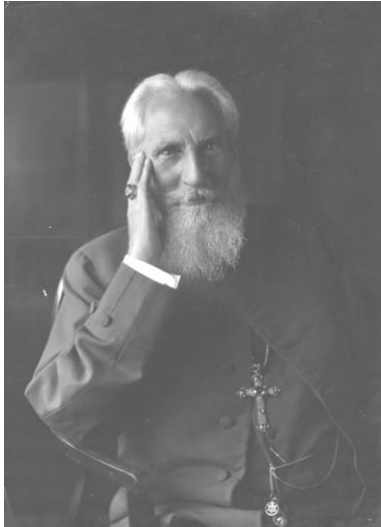


An Attack on Bishop Leadbeater

A. G. Vreede¹



Bishop Leadbeater, circa 1927, Sydney

In a pamphlet entitled *There is no religion higher than truth*, the well-known motto of the Theosophical Society, one of its eldest and most respected members Mr. E. L. Gardner has published his conclusion that Bishop Leadbeater in his announcement of the Coming of the World Teacher was the victim of self-delusion, called by Mr. Gardner unconscious kryashakti (sic).

“About forty-five years ago”, the pamphlet begins, “an announcement of the Coming of the World Teacher was made by Mrs. Annie Besant and Bishop C. W. Leadbeater. Most of the Sections and Lodges of the Theosophical Society accepted this proclamation with confidence and diverted much of their energy to the Star Campaign—in preparation for his Coming.

Obviously there has been no Coming. Bishop Pigott, writing some years ago, expressed the truth of the matter in the words ‘Leadbeater was wrong.’ ”

May I, as the successor of Bishop Pigott as Presiding Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church, make an apposite statement by publishing my opinion in the matter: Bishop Leadbeater was *right* in announcing the intention of the Lord Christ to come and give a message to the civilisation of the present time.

“That C.W.L. was wrong,” Mr. Gardner continued, “had been the suspicion of many but there was little evidence and no proof of the actual cause of that catastrophic error. It has, however, now become known that the source of the proclamation was Bishop Leadbeater himself. In letters he wrote to Mrs. Besant during the years 1916-20 that have recently been examined he (C.W.L.) tells repeatedly of the intention of the ‘Lord Maitreya’ to come again—as he did ‘twenty centuries ago.’ ”

I repeat here my conviction that Bishop Leadbeater was right in these communications. These letters have not “recently been examined” as Mr. Gardner writes, but were published in 1952 by Mr. Jinarajadasa in the booklet “On the Liberal Catholic Church”. I cannot here go into all the details of the general great disappointment when in the late 1920’s it was clear that the Coming was not taking place nor shall I mention those who in my opinion, were the cause. I will, however, mention some of the facts.

The main fact is that in 1912 Mrs. Besant definitely shut off herself from her higher consciousness and that in her greatness of heart she believed not only

¹ Presiding Bishop of The Liberal Catholic Church. This article was his Editorial for the February, 1964 issue of *The Liberal Catholic*, the Church’s official journal at that time. For different views of E. L. Gardner’s book please see https://www.cwlworld.info/EL_Gardner_s_article_-_revised_copy.pdf.

C.W.L. but also others in her entourage and blindly accepted their announcements, dreams and revelations. These began their phantasies by the proclamation of twelve apostles, designating them by name and contending that they had all received high initiations, those of the fourth degree, that of the Arhat initiation, and later, that six of them—Mrs. Besant, C.W.L., Krishnamurti, Jinarajadasa, Wedgwood and Arundale—had even become Masters of the Wisdom by receiving the fifth initiation! Mrs. Besant believed all this. Revelations of the most exorbitant nature followed (in August 1925); among them the order to go to the castle of the Hungarian Master in which visit Mrs. Besant took part and which proved a fantastic failure.

Krishnamurti had his doubts and cabled to Lady Emily Lutyens inquiring whether C.W.L. had confirmed all the announcements. On receiving the reply that Mrs. Besant herself was announcing the things which had been brought through, Krishna wrote back that he was much upset about it all. C.W.L. at that time was in Java and when I told him about the explosion of enthusiasm at the 1925 Ommen Camp, he said to me: “Vreede, this explosion has done more to hinder the coming of the Lord than anything else.” On another occasion he said to me: “The origin of the trouble is that Mrs. Besant has cut off her occult faculties.”

Revelations followed one after the other; one can find them all described in Lady Emily Lutyens’ book *Candles in the Sun*, a book perhaps breaking the intimacy of her experiences but, in my opinion, absolutely true as to the facts related therein.

So the teachings of Krishnamurti and of the deluded theosophists clashed and a breach developed between Krishnamurti and the leaders of the Theosophical Society, Mrs. Besant, George Arundale, J. I. Wedgwood and Jinarajadasa. In 1925 Jinarajadasa stayed with Krishnamurti at St. Moritz and afterwards sent a letter to Mrs. Besant and C.W.L. advising them that Krishna felt he was not supported in his teaching by the leaders of the T.S., and that he maintained that the Liberal Catholic Church, Co-freemasonry and so on were a waste of time. Next year Krishna dissolved the Order of the Star; Mrs. Besant could not bring herself to the renunciation of Theosophy and particularly not of her Master. C.W.L. declared privately when in Adyar in 1927 that “The Coming had gone wrong”. He did not recognize the announced initiations of the “apostles”; he did not believe messages that were read as coming from the Lord. He was, if I may say, the only person who kept his head cool and never lost occult reality from view. He was the only one who was free from delusion!

It is not for me to decide who occasioned the “going wrong” of the Coming but I can point out that C.W.L. was outside all this and therefore the cause was not his “unconscious kryashakti” but other men’s “spiritual inflation”, a term created by the great psychologist Dr. C. G. Jung.

All this happened more than thirty years ago and is now old history, and I think it a pity that Mr. Gardner has called these old spectres from their graves. The Theosophical Society has survived it, the Liberal Catholic Church has survived it and so has Co-freemasonry. Of all these professed steps and initiations little or nothing has remained.

“My last interview with Mrs. Besant”, Mr. Gardner writes in his pamphlet, “was in 1930 on her return from a short continental tour with Bishop Leadbeater and J. I. Wedgwood. Certain incidents on that tour had opened her eyes and she saw clearly much that had been obscure. It was plain that she knew the truth and it was devastating. The dreadful burden was that she

herself might have prevented the illusion and its results, if she had retained her occult faculties and checked statements instead of blindly accepting them.”

Indeed, I say, but these were not the statements of Bishop Leadbeater, who proved sound and right in every respect, but of her friends at Huizen and Ommen, who were producing the most fantastic—and untrue revelations, all of which she blindly endorsed.

I write this only because the Liberal Catholic Church has been referred to in these affairs and with what little authority I have (I knew Bishop Leadbeater from 1895 till a short time before his death in 1933; he stayed in my home at Batavia; I stayed for three years in Sydney, where C.W.L. ordained me, I organized his journey with a party to the Burubudur and saw him for the last time when in 1929 I was leaving for an inspection in Sumatra, when he said to me: “Vreede, keep the flag flying”) I want to assure that C.W.L. was precision itself—his handwriting shows it—that he *knew* what he was saying, that therefore the *Science of the Sacraments*, as well as his other books, are reliable and trustworthy down to the smallest details.

Of course, everybody is free to believe this or not to believe it. In the Theosophical Society as well as in the Liberal Catholic Church there is full liberty of opinion, but an overannuated attack on the reliability of Bishop Leadbeater like the pamphlet of Mr. Gardner must, in my feeling, be contradicted. Not that it would endanger the Church of which C.W.L. with Bishop Wedgwood is the founder and for which he constructed our most wonderful Liturgy; its clergy and members had their own experience of the life that is flowing through it. But the reputation of trustworthiness of the greatest seer of this and the previous century should be upheld by those who like me, have followed all these events, if not close at hand yet at no great distance. The conclusions I made about them are fully confirmed in Lady Emily Lutyens’ book *Candles in the Sun*.