Chapter 8: Annie Besant and Occult Work

Reflecting on the forces of destiny which brought them together, Leadbeater recalled that he had first seen Mrs Besant about 1876 or 1877 when he attended a lecture by her at the Hall of Science in City Road, London. It is interesting to speculate on the direction both of them would have taken had their friendship originated at this date and this less esoteric setting. [1]

It is impossible to summarize adequately even that portion of the life of Annie Besant prior to her conversion to Theosophy in less than a whole book, and her biographers - friendly, hostile or impartial - have taken whole books to do just that. [2] She was born in 1847, the year Leadbeater claimed for his birth, no doubt to emphasize his links with her, and as a devout young Anglican lady of twenty married the Reverend Frank Besant (1840-1917), Vicar of Sibsey, Lincolnshire, and brother of the author, Walter Besant. At twenty-seven, she left her husband and her home, leaving a son behind and taking her daughter with her, for a career in the then-fashionable Freethought movement. [3]

She became closely associated with Charles Bradlaugh (1834-1891), wrote pamphlets attacking the Church and the Establishment, propagated birth-control (then
equated with atheism and immorality), founded the Freethought Publishing Company, and joined the Fabian Society. [4] In 1889 she was given a copy of HPB's *The Secret Doctrine* by W.T. Stead to review for his *Pall Mall Gazette*. [5] Mrs Besant had read Sinnett's *Occult World*, and, like Leadbeater, had been experimenting with spiritualism: "At forty-two, veteran of Secularist, Socialist and Mathu-ian battles, Annie Besant admitted she was ready for Theosophy." [6] She was converted by HPB's book, *The Secret Doctrine*, and joined the TS, to the horror of her friend and colleague in social reform, George Bernard Shaw, who thought she'd gone mad, and threw herself into Theosophical work with the enthusiasm which had marked all the other phases of her varied career.

Mrs Besant was accepted as a pupil by HPB, and quickly became the leading ... in the TS in London. In July, 1890, she established ... London headquarters of the Society at her own residence at 19, Avenue Road, London, which she deeded to the Society. It became a home for both HPB and other leading Theosophists. From that time onwards, Mrs Besant dealt with HPB's correspondence, and helped to edit *Lucifer*, the magazine HPB had established in London to rival *The Theosophist* at Adyar.

The household at Avenue Road became something of
a Theosophical commune. It consisted of HPB, Mrs Besant, Archibald and Bertram Keightley, the Countess Wachmeister, George Mead (HPB's secretary), Claude Wright, Walter Gorn Old (the well-known astrologer, "Sehirial"), Emily Kingsbury, Isabel Cooper-Oakley and James Pryse. [7] Their routine was a fixed, almost monastic one: breakfast at 8.00 a.m., then work until lunch at 1.00 p.m., further work until dinner at 7.00 p.m., and then a meeting in HPB's room.

Foreseeing her approaching death, HPB intensified the training of her own pupils. Her health was failing. She suffered from Bright's disease, rheumatism, and a bad heart, all aggravated by her peculiar life-style, eccentric habits and heavy smoking. In the spring of 1891 she caught influenza, and on May 8th she died. Mrs Besant was on her way to the USA, and Olcott was in Australia. HPB was cremated at Woking Cemetery, the funeral service being conducted by George Mead. [8] Leadbeater, accompanied by Jinanajadasa, attended. HPB's ashes were divided between America, Europe and India, being carried by Olcott from London, across the American continent, thence to Japan and to Ceylon, and then to India where, despite the objections of orthodox Hindus who believed that their presence would defile the Adyar estate, they were deposited in an urn.

Mrs Besant quickly assumed the mantle of Elijah,
and succeeded HPB as the effective leader of the TS. Olcott, although nominally head as President, had never been able to compete with the charisma of HPB and could not now compete with her successor. Mrs Besant had been the leading figure in the Esoteric Section of the TS which HPB had established and to which Olcott had expressed his opposition. The ES (as it was known) had been founded on October 9th, 1888, as a group of the personal pupils of HPB. Sinnett had already established an "Inner Group" of the London Lodge (of which Leadbeater was a leading member, and of which Mrs Besant had been a member for a time) and HPB had previously set up a small group of her own followers. Olcott allowed the establishment of the ES under protest, and its constitution and sole direction was vested in HPB.

Sinnett declined to participate, although some of his own students did join the ES. Leadbeater was never associated with HPB's ES, and continued working with Sinnett. Mrs Besant was appointed Chief Secretary of the Inner Group, and Recorder of the Teachings on April 1, 1891, and W.Q.Judge was appointed to establish the ES in the United States. [9] Although officially the ES was just HPB's private group of pupils, and had no formal place within the TS, it quickly became the power centre of the Theosophical movement. After HPB's death, Mrs Besant and W.Q.Judge were jointly appointed by the ES Council to rule over it.
On the physical plane life may not have been easy for Leadbeater, but since his meeting with Mrs Besant, he was, Theosophically speaking, on the ascendant. His name was found alongside that of Mrs Besant, George Mead and A.P.Sinnett answering questions in the British TS journal, *The Vahan*[10], and he was becoming increasing popular as a lecturer in London and the surrounding area. In 1894 he wrote the first volume in the vast range of occult literature that was to flow from his prolific pen in the course of the next forty years.

At that time, the London Lodge under Sinnett held no public meetings, and, apart from regular meetings for members, there were only three or four occasions during the year on which Sinnett issued invitations to a select few people whom he believed had the potential for developing an interest in Theosophy. On one such occasion, Leadbeater was invited to lecture, and chose the topic, "The Astral Plane." [11] He set about preparing his notes for the lecture on the backs of old envelopes, a habit originating in his years of poverty and one which continued throughout his life. He delivered the lecture on November 21st, 1894, and then began to transcribe it for publication in *The Transactions* of the London Lodge. This transcription was also written on the insides of old envelopes, and Jinarajadasa wrote the
manuscript up from these scraps of paper, a process which took him four weeks. He and Leadbeater divided their time between this work and their ordinary daily activities. Eventually the manuscript went to the printers, and was returned with a copy of the printer's proofs. In the ordinary course of events, the original manuscript, now dirty and worn from usage in the printer's office, would have been thrown away.

But like so many other events in Leadbeater's life, the ordinary course of events was interrupted.

...now happened an unusual and unexpected incident which distinctly flustered [him]. One morning he informed me that the Master K.H. had asked him for the manuscript as He desired to deposit it in the Museum of Records of the Great White Brotherhood. The Master explained that The Astral Plane was an unusual production and a landmark for the intellectual history of mankind. [12]

The Master had gone on to explain that never before had such a scientific study been made of the astral plane "in a manner similar to that in which a botanist in the Amazon jungle would out to work in order to classify its trees, plants and shrubs, and so write a botanical history of the
jungle." Therefore the Master wanted it placed in the secret occult Museum, of which he was Keeper of the Records, along with a range of objects of historical interest to the Masters. These included old texts relating to the origins of religions, and models of the earth at various stages of its evolution. [13]

Leadbeater set about carrying out the Master's instructions, although unhappy that the manuscript was soiled and torn.

The question then arose how the manuscript was to be transported to Tibet. This, however, did not bother him because [Leadbeater] had certain occult powers which he did not reveal to others, though I have observed them on certain occasions.[14]

The manuscript was tied with a ribbon, and placed in a small wooden box which had been Leadbeater's mother's workbox. A pile of books was placed on top of the box, since the key had long been lost, and Jinarajadasa hoped to have some sort of proof to offer of a real "phenomenon". The following morning the box was opened: not unexpectedly, the manuscript was no longer there. Jinarajadasa concluded:

My chagrin at losing the opportunity to prove a
phenomenon was not consoled by being told [by Leadbeater] that I myself had taken astrally the manuscript to the Master. [15]

The small difficulty of how one would remove a physical object in the astral body — since Leadbeater says in The Astral Plane that astral bodies cannot affect physical objects — is not explained. Presumably it was part of "certain occult powers", or due to the intervention of the Master. [16] While the manuscript reposed safely in the Museum of the Records, the printed version was published by Mrs Besant as Manual Number 5 in her series of Theosophical Manuals. [17]

While he was undertaking the research for The Astral Plane in 1894, Leadbeater was also developing new areas of interest in employing his clairvoyant powers, and beginning his characteristic emphasis on the scientific nature of these investigations:

...sight on [the astral] plane is a faculty very different from and much more extended that physical sight. An object is seen, as it were, from all sides at once, the inside of a solid being as plainly open to the view as the outside; it is therefore obvious that an inexperienced
visitor to this new world may well find considerable difficulty in understanding what he really does see, and still more in translating his vision into the very inadequate language of ordinary speech. [18]

But he has to learn not only to see correctly but to translate his memory of what he has seen accurately from one plane to the other; and to assist him in this he is trained to carry his consciousness without break from the physical plane to the astral or devachanic plane and back again, for until that can be done there is always a possibility that his recollections may be partially lost or distorted during the blank interval which separates his periods of consciousness on the various planes. [19]

In May, 1894, Leadbeater began his investigations in the past lives of Theosophists; reincarnation had been one of the doctrines of the TS almost from its beginnings. [20]

This is the scheme of evolution appointed for man at the present stage - that he shall develop by descending into grosser matter, and then ascend to
carry back into himself the result of the experiences so obtained. His real life, therefore, covers millions of years, and what we are in the habit of calling a life is only a day in this greater existence. Indeed, in reality it is only a small part of one day; for a life of seventy years in the physical world is often succeeded by a period of twenty times that length spent in the higher spheres. Every one of us has a long line of these physical lives behind him, and the ordinary man has a fairly long line still in front of him. Each of such lives is a day at school. [21]

Past lives, as well as the occult history of the earth and all that constituted Man's past, could be "looked up" by consulting the Akashic Records:

...whatever happens within our system happens absolutely within the consciousness of the Logos, and so we at once see that the true record must be His memory. [22]

The Akashic Records are consulted, to put it simplistically, by psychically "tuning in" to the mind of the Logos, the Soul of the world, within which everything that has happened is recorded or "remembered". [23]
Leadbeater's first investigations of the Akashic Records were stimulated by a discussion in the London Lodge on the subject of Root Races, and sub-races (later to become almost an obsession of his). John Varley, an eminent Theosophist and a former pupil of HPB, was requested to make a study of modern ethnology and to compare it with the history of the races from occult sources and published in *The Secret Doctrine.* [24] To assist Varley in this work, Leadbeater offered to discuss the subject with one of the Masters while in the astral body that night, thus supplying information which might not otherwise be available. The results of the collaboration between Leadbeater and Varley were published in the *Transactions* of the London Lodge, and they were encouraged to continue their research.

Leadbeater focussed on the person of Varley himself, delving into his past lives and associations. For these researchers, Leadbeater did not find it necessary to leave his physical body, and carried out his investigations whilst fully conscious and awake. Sixteen past lives were examined and details noted so far as the investigator could "bring back" the overwhelming mass of material at his disposal.

In truth [the investigator] observes not only what
he would have seen if he had been there at the
time in the flesh, but much more. He hears and
understands all that the people say, and he is
conscious of all their thoughts and motives; and
one of the most interesting of the many
possibilities which open up before one who has
learnt to read the records is the study of the
thought of ages long ago - the thought of the cave
man and the lake-dwellers as well as that which
rules of the mighty civilizations of Atlantis, of
Egypt or Chaldea. [24]

Leadbeater realized the tremendous potential of these
investigations both as a new way of exploring history, and,
more interestingly, of "correcting" it. Theosophical
investigators - including HPB - held that the exoteric
version of history revealed only the outer layer, and became
distorted - either deliberately or with the passage of time
- until the underlying facts were all but lost. Through
access to esoteric sources of knowledge the facts could be
recovered.

What splendid possibilities open up before the man
who is in full possession of this power many
easily be imagined. He has before him a field of
historical research of most entrancing
interest...[He can] review at his leisure all history with which we are acquainted, correcting as he examines it the many errors and misconceptions which have crept into the accounts handed down to us...[25]

The results of his investigations into the past lives of John Varley, and thus into the history of the civilizations into which he was incarnated, were eventually published as The Lives of Erato. Erato - the Muse of lyric poetry - was the name given to the incarnating entity which was John Varley in the present life. For, as Leadbeater noted

As a history cannot be written without names, and as reincarnation is a fact - and therefore as the reappearance of the same individual throughout many succeeding ages if also a fact, the ego playing many parts under many names - we have given names to many individuals by which they may be recognized throughout the drama in which they take part...a human being, in the long story in which the lives are days, plays hundreds of parts, but is himself throughout - be he man or woman, peasant, prince or priest. [26]
It was originally intended that the names of constellations would be used, together with the names of stars and Greek heroes, for the incarnating entities, but as the number of the "lives" being investigated grew (reaching some three hundred reincarnating entities at its zenith) other categories were eventually included.

Leadbeater usually required a "point of departure" in his investigations of past lives; as he noted in Clairvoyance, a special link to put the investigator en rapport with his subject is a requirement of clairvoyant investigation of the past - either an object to be psychometrized, a memory of an historical place, or something similar to "tune in" to the point in time at which he wishes to begin his research. [27] In the case of the first investigation with John Varley it was a particularly vivid dream of Varley's which was used. Neither Varley nor Leadbeater initially interpreted the dream as referring to a previous life, and thought it but a strange astral experience. But when Leadbeater "looked up" the dream on the astral plane, he discovered that it had been a recollection of a previous life "flashed" on the "astral light".

From that point the investigations progressed with energy and enthusiasm. Each of the lives was carefully tabulated: an average of 1,264 years between incarnations.
was noted, with an average life-span of 55 1/2 years. The lives were seen to run in cycles of gender, the first three and the last seven being male, and the intervening seven female. They had information on seventeen lives, including the present John Varley, ranging from Chaldea 19,245 BC, in the 6th sub-race of the 4th Root Race, through Egypt, Atlantis, North America, China, Japan, India, Athens and to Germany in 1503 AD for the last incarnation before the present. Great attention was given to detail — a characteristic of all Leadbeater's work — as, for example, in the account of the first life he investigated, that of a priest in ancient Chaldea:

Your ceremonial vestments are gorgeous and remarkable— a sort of triple tiara of white metal on the head, a robe of most curious texture seemingly metallic, white but taking various colours such as blue and red in different lights somewhat like shot silk. [28]

Varley, his artistic interest aroused, enquired "whether it could be a mixture of spun glass with silk", to which Leadbeater replied:

Possibly...but we hardly have time to deeply inquire into the matter just now. [29]
Precise dates were added later – after 1910[30] – when each life was concluded with a statement of information as, for example, the first life in Chaldea:

Born 19,245 BC
Died 19,159 BC
Length of life 76 years
Period in Devachan 2,022 [31]
Note: The period in Devachan refers to the time spent out of earthly and includes the time spent in Kama Loka. [31]

The process of dating clairvoyant investigations of past lives could be complicated: in the case of events known to orthodox history these could be supplied from memory, although orthodox history was sometimes shown to be wrong. However, for unknown events, or events in the very distant past, other methods were necessary.

It must be remembered that it is possible for the investigator to pass the records before him at any speed that he may desire – at the rate of a year in a second if he will, or even very much faster still. Now there are one or two events in ancient history whose dates have already been accurately
fixed - as, for example, the sinking of Poseidonis in the year 9,564 B.C. It is therefore obvious that if from the general appearance of the surroundings that a picture seen is within measurable distance of one of these events, it can be related to that event by the simple process of running through the record rapidly, and counting the years between the two as they pass. [33]

For the measurement of very distant periods - millions of years ago - Leadbeater made use of his astronomical knowledge and calculated time by the movement of the stars.

During the course of his investigations Leadbeater identified various individuals by mythical names, some of whom he recognized in their present incarnations. In some cases these identifications were revealed so that those concerned might know who they had been in the past lives. For example, in a past life in India from 4,032 BC to 3,987 BC Varley had been introduced to Leadbeater and Sinnett, and while in Peru, when he lived from 12,089 BC to 12,004 BC he had been a brother to the entity now living as Francesca Arundale. In Atlantis, 9,603 BC to 9,564 BC, he had ignored the advice of his grandfather, and lost his life when the continent sank. Much of the information given in The Lives of Erato and those lives which followed it was sufficiently
vague and general to be beyond either proof or refutation in a scientific sense. Whether or not a particular scribe had lived thousands of years ago in a now lost civilization, the son of a "nice looking mother", had been a successful artist, and lost his own first son at an early age, is beyond scientific assessment. [34]

However, in one of the lives Leadbeater offered what Jinarajadasa was to interpret as some sort of tangible proof of his historical accuracy. In Life XV (Greece, 520 BC - 449 BC), when Varley and Leadbeater were brothers, Varley produced some statues under the name of "Kalamis". Leadbeater gave a list of the statues, which included a number of figures of Apollo, including one in the British Museum, the "Apollo of Omphalos", and a figure of Aphrodite produced for a rich man named Kallias, who offered it to the goddess. Upon this latter statue was an inscription in Greek. Jinarajadasa, in his account of these investigations, recalled:

I well recall C.W. Leadbeater copying out this inscription. He could make nothing out of it, though he knew a little Greek when at school. At this time I was studying Greek for the London University intermediate examination; but I had not studied Palaeography, so this was above me...I
took it to my professor, who was an ex-Fellow of St Peter's College, Cambridge. He read off instantly from the slip I have him, and gave the meaning: "Kallias son of Hipponikos, makes a votive offering." [35]

It should be noted that Leadbeater had studied Greek for his examinations prior to ordination.

This sort of phenomena impressed the Theosophists of the time, and contributed to Leadbeater's reputation as a clairvoyant. And it was this reputation more than anything else which encouraged Mrs Annie Besant to develop a friendship with him, and to begin to work with him on a long program of occult research. She began to collaborate in the investigation of past lives, and Olcott asked them to trace out his previous incarnations. Leadbeater also explored the past lives of Dr Arthur Wells, formerly a Roman Catholic monk who had left the Church to join the TS, [36] and Basil Hodgson-Smith, the eight-year-old boy who was Leadbeater's companion at the time. [37]

Mrs Besant, who had shown no inclination to psychic gifts prior to her meeting with Leadbeater, developed them "overnight" (as she said) under his influence, so that by 1895 Theosophical journals were giving
accounts of their joint investigations into the astral and mental planes, life after death, reincarnation and past lives. [38] In August, 1895, she invited Leadbeater and Jinarajadasa to move to the Headquarters of the TS in Avenue Road. She also invited Leadbeater to accept the position of Assistant Secretary of the European Section of the TS, a position which had become vacant as the result of internal struggles in the Society, and the "schism" of W.Q. Judge in the USA. [39]

Shortly before this time Leadbeater had been living in Ealing, sharing a house with Dr Wells, and Jinarajadasa, although the latter was at Cambridge for most of the year. Another Theosophist, F.T. Brooks, stayed with Leadbeater for several months, occupying Jinarajadasa's room, and engaging in conversations with Leadbeater who "dropped hints about occult development", and also investigated Brooks' past lives, although these were not published. [40] Also in the house was Basil Hodgson-Smith, described by Brooks as "Leadbeater's boy-companion of the time".

Brooks later achieved notoriety within the TS when he resigned and wrote a series of vitriolic attacks on the Society, Mrs Besant and Leadbeater under such titles as The Theosophical Society and Its Esoteric Bogeydom and,
No-Theosophy Exposed. [41] In these he both attacked those of whom he did not approve, and revealed a great deal of "inside information" about the Esoteric Section of the Society of which Mrs Besant had now declared herself Outer Head (as contrasted with the Inner Head, who was a Master). However, at the time he was staying with Leadbeater, Brooks was a young rising star, anxious to learn all he could from the leading figures of the Society. But he did not like Leadbeater, and sought the advice of Bertram Keightley, an eminent Theosophist who did not like Leadbeater either. [42] Keightley warned Brooks that Leadbeater was

...persistently pursuing, in spite of many friendly warnings, a very risky path of psychical development. It meant, in the forced unfolding and constant use of the astral and lower mental senses, a tremendous outpouring of the "personality" at the expense of the real High Self, and might ultimately lead to most dire results, the least of which was an almost indefinite retardation on the day of real liberation. [43]

Leadbeater himself, in one of his later books, referred to exactly the same dangers when talking about "Cases in which the personality captures the part of the ego which is put
down, and actually breaks away", and talked about a type of
Black Magician "in outward appearance more respectable, yet
really even more dangerous because more powerful" who used
the techniques mentioned by Keightley. This person sought
the acquisition of occult power "to be used always for his
own gratification and advancement, to further his own
ambition or satisfy his own revenge", and adopted "rigid
asceticism as regards mere fleshly desires and starves out
the grosser particles of his astral body" but "the centre of
his energy is none the less entirely in his personality."
[44] There were some Theosophists, Brooks and Keightley
among them, who saw or came to see this description by
Leadbeater as a diagnosis of his own case. Brooks felt
himself being progressively and involuntarily drawn under
Leadbeater's influence, and heeding the warning given by
Keightley, appealed to Mrs Besant for help. Eventually, she
sent him to India.

But, risky path or not, Leadbeater continued to
make use of his psychic powers. The Devachanic Plane was
published in 1896 as Theosophical Manual Number 6, without
any reference to Mrs Besant's role in its production.
Following the success of his works on the astral and
devachanic planes, articles on his investigations appeared in
The Theosophist and Lucifer. The two small books - The
Astral Plane and The Devachanic Plane.[45] - are
characteristic of Leadbeater's style when writing of his clairvoyant investigations, appearing to be scientific and objective even though the subject matter would be regarded by most scientists as unscientific to the point of fantasy. Jinarajadasa, in his introduction to later editions of The Astral Plane, noted:

A close analysis and study of these facts by any eager student who has an unprejudiced and impartial mind, cannot but give him the feeling that, though he may be unable to believe in the statement recorded, yet nevertheless there is one characteristic about them, that they appear to be descriptions of objects and events seen objectively, as through a microscope or telescope, and not subjectively, as in the case of a novelist spinning out the incidents of a vivid story. [46]

A typical example of this "objectivity is found in Leadbeater's record of a clairvoyant examination of Christians found on the devachanic plane after death:

The unintellectual devotion which is exemplified on the one hand by the illiterate Roman Catholic peasant, and on the other by the earnest and sincere "soldier" of the Salvation Army, seems to
produce results very similar to those [of other religions], for these people also are found wrapped up in contemplation of their ideas of Christ or his mother respectively. For instance, an Irish peasant was seen absorbed in the deepest adoration of the Virgin Mary whom he imagined standing on the moon after the fashion of Titian's "Assumption", but holding out her hands and speaking to him. A medieval monk was found in ecstatic contemplation of Christ crucified and the intensity of his yearning love and pity was such that as he watched the blood dripping from the wounds of the figure of his Christ the stigmata produced themselves on his own body. [47]

In 1897 Leadbeater contributed a series of articles to *Lucifer* entitled "Our Relation to Our Children" in which he outlined his views of children, parents and education. Feeling it "presumptuous that a bachelor should venture to offer suggestions to parents on a subject so especially their own", he began with a brief account of his own experience with children:

...though I have none of my own, I have always
been fond of children, and in very close relation with them through almost the whole of my life — for many years as a Sunday School teacher, then as a clergyman, school manager and choir trainer, and as headmaster of a large boys' school. So that I am, at any rate, speaking from long practical experience and not merely vaguely theorizing. [48]

His conclusions, based on his observation and experience of children and the educational system, were that young people were being misled by the ignorance and perverted by the hypocrisy of their elders and the inadequacies of the schools. He was harshly critical of the public school in particular and educational methods in general, and stated:

The practical result of nineteen centuries of ostensibly Christian teaching is that our boys live among us as an alien race, with laws and rules of life of their own...[49]

He nowhere commented on "our girls", but considering his eccentric attitude towards women, more manifest in later years but already developing, this is not surprising.

He believed that children should be listened to,
and talked to as individuals in their own right, given firm but gentle discipline, and encouraged to grow up into a carefully pre-planned mould. As he commented:

It is simply impossible to exaggerate the plasticity of these unformed vehicles. We know that the physical body of a child, if only its training be begun at a sufficiently early age, can be modified to a very considerable extent... Now if the physical body of a child is thus plastic and readily impressionable, his astral and mental vehicles are far more so. [50]

He believed that not only the physical environment of the child was important, but that the very psychic atmosphere surrounding the child was vitally important in shaping his development, and the child could be damaged by negative or destructive thoughts emanating from the parents or friends. Parents had a responsibility to protect their children from the undesirable influences which might be projected towards them. Leadbeater, possessing of clairvoyant powers, was in a better position to comment on such influences, and was capable of watching the inner development of the child, while its parents could only see the physical growth:

If the parents themselves possessed the astral
sight it would, no doubt, be of great assistance to them in showing exactly what were the capabilities of their child; but if they have not that advantage, there need not, therefore, be the slightest doubt or question about the result, for that must follow sustained effort with mathematical certainty, whether the process of its working be visible to them or not. [51]

The message was clear: parents who could not observe the inner development of their children should accept the advice, or even the direction, of one who could. And indeed they did. Theosophical parents welcomed the opportunity to consult an occult paediatrician, and so the training and development of children became another area of special interest and concern for Leadbeater.

He began to take two or three boys under his special care and tuition, bringing them up in accordance with the best Theosophical principles. He was especially interested in cases of "difficult" boys, or boys with "difficulties". Basil Hodgson-Smith, son of Leadbeater's close friend, Alfred Hodgson-Smith, had already been placed under Leadbeater's tutelage, and accompanied him on his travels for some years. [52] Obviously, had there been any hints of immorality when Miss Arundale and Mr Sinnett
withdrew their charges from his care, these were not widely known. Leadbeater expanded his work with children when he took over the Lotus Circle in London, an organization for the children of Theosophists, which grew and expanded under his direction. [53]
Chapter 9: Occult Work Expanded

In the summer of 1896, Mrs Besant, Leadbeater and Jinarajadasa spent a holiday at the summer home of Mr and Mrs Bright, at Shepperton on the Thames; with them were Professor and Mrs Chakravarti. [1] Mrs Besant was at this time very much under the influence of Chakravarti, whom she came to regard as a "Master in the flesh", and he had been her "earthly plane" teacher for some years. As Arthur Nethercot noted in his biography of Mrs Besant, Chakravarti "lurks ... seriously in the wings of the whole melodrama without ever coming directly on stage".[2] Mrs Besant had met Chakravarti when he was about thirty, and had immediately been captivated. Other Theosophists were less impressed: W.Q. Judge said he was "perverted by the forces of evil" and was a powerful hypnotist, and Archibald Keightley attacked him for being a meat-eating psychic and a medium. Undeterred, Mrs Besant continued to look to him as her source of occult inspiration, and published a small volume of fragments from his letters to her under the title, The Doctrine of the Heart.[3] Mrs Besant believed, until Leadbeater enlightened her after his own investigation of the matter, that HPB had reincarnated as Chakravarti's daughter, then aged three years old. As in life, so in death, HPB was to prove restless, and the vehicle of her
alleged reincarnation changed according to who was in favour at the time. The daughter of "The Master in the flesh" soon lost her exalted position.

Chakravarti was also to lose his place as the principal occult influence on Mrs Besant. She progressively lost interest in the Bengali Tantrik, and became more interested in another learned member of the TS, Bhagavan Das. [4] His philosophy began to appear in her books, and she prescribed his *Science of the Emotions* for study by all members of her Esoteric Section. In 1901 Mrs Besant finally abandoned Chakravarti, and broke contact with his group, considering him to be no longer a "safe guide". She was later to write to a fellow Theosophist:

Like many of the older members I have known how you and others for quite a long time regarded [Chakravarti] as a Master in the flesh and later had to repudiate him when certain facts indicated the mistake. [5]

She did not mention herself among the "others".

Bhagavan Das was less enthusiastic about playing the part of her guru, and this left a vacancy into which Leadbeater fitted perfectly. For Mrs Besant has always
required a "leading man" in whatever role she played. Long after her death George Bernard Shaw wrote:

Like all great public speakers she was a born actress. She was successively a Puseyite Evangelical, an Atheist Bible Smasher, a Darwinian Secularist, a Fabian Socialist, a Strike Leader, and finally a Theosophist, exactly as Mrs Siddons was Lady Macbeth, Lady Randolph, Beatrice, Rosalind and Volumnia. She "saw herself" as a priestess above all; that was how Theosophy held her to the end. There was a different leading man every time: Bradlaugh, Robertson, Aveling, Shaw, and Herbert Burrows. That did not matter. Whoever does not understand this, as I, a playwright, do, will never understand the career of Annie Besant. [6]

Arthur Nethercott adds to the list of "leading men" Charles Voysey, Thomas Scott, Moncure Conway, the "masculine Helena Blavatsky", and Chakravarti. Followed by Leadbeater. [7]

Following the success of their investigations into the past lives of Erato, Mrs Besant collaborated with Leadbeater in exploring the previous incarnations of her travelling companion, secretary and confidante, Miss Annie
J. Willson, a spinster of independent means. [8] With the symbolic name of Arcor, she kept a record of the investigations as they proceeded.

In 1896 they began to extend the range of their research. One weekend Leadbeater, Mrs Besant, Jinarajadasa, Bertram Keightley (presumably forgetting his objections to Leadbeater's psychic development) and Jinarajadasa's cat, Ji, left London for a period of "escape" at Box Hill, Surrey. Here, staying on an isolated holiday cottage, safe from the "malevolent thought forms" of the metropolis, they began to investigate the occult history of the earth, its past races and civilizations, with Jinarajadasa taking copious notes. Amongst the details he recorded were accounts of civilizations on the moon, Atlantis and Lemuria. Jinarajadasa noted that Leadbeater did most of the "seeing", whilst Mrs Besant merely added an occasional detail. The explorers were assisted by visits from the Masters, as well as HPB and Damodar (astrally, of course).

Most of their weekend investigations were undertaken while lying on a rug in the Ashdown Forest. Leadbeater, it was noted, worked from the Akashic (higher mental) level, while Mrs Besant worked from the Buddhic. Their investigations were continued once they returned to London, largely during walks on Hampstead Heath, and
eventually part of the results was published.

The concept of an "inner side" of the history of the world was long established in occultism. It could either be argued that the events of history were but the manifestations of unseen forces, or that the public version of history was an inadequate and inaccurate representation of what had actually occurred. HPB presented both arguments in *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine* and various of her lesser works. Spiritualists had argued, on the basis of teachings from "the other side", that there was an occult side to history, as had Emmanuel Swedenborg, who claimed to be able to decipher the message of recorded history through divine inspiration. [9] Leadbeater and Mrs Besant were working within this well-established tradition in their own explorations.

In August, 1896, Mrs Besant, Leadbeater, Jinarajadasa and cat, and Bertram Keightley spent four days at Lewis Park Farm, near Nutley, in Sussex. They extended their investigations from lost continents and forgotten civilizations, moving on to other planets in the solar system, including four as yet unknown to astronomy, through which waves of life were passing. For, as Leadbeater had discovered, in confirmation of the teachings of Theosophy:
The scheme of evolution of which our Earth forms a part is not the only one in our solar system, for ten separate chains of globes exist in that system which are all of them theatres of somewhat similar processes. Each of these schemes of evolution is taking place upon a chain of globes, and in the course of each scheme its chain of globes goes through seven incarnations. The plan, alike of each scheme as a whole, and of the successive incarnations of its chain of globes, is to dip step by step more deeply into matter, and then rise step by step out of it again. Each chain consists of seven globes, and both globes and chains observe the rule of descending into matter and then rising out of it again. In order to make this more comprehensible let us take as an example the chain to which our Earth belongs. At the present time it is in its fourth or most material incarnation, and therefore three of its globes belong to the physical world, and two to the lower part of the mental world. The wave of Divine Life passes in succession from globe to globe of this chain, beginning with one of the highest, descending gradually to the lowest and then climbing again to the same level at which it began.\[10\]
Leadbeater discovered that most of the human race had arrived at Earth via Mars and would eventually move on to Mercury; this was regardless of the opinions of scientists who continued to insist that neither of these planets would be suitable environments for any forms of life imagineable to them, and equally regardless of HPB who taught that Mars and Mercury were not part of the Earth chain. [11] The more advanced amongst the human races, into which category Leadbeater and Mrs Besant placed themselves, and most Theosophists, had come from the moon, the relics of whose great civilizations they confidently predicted man would one day discover. They remain, however, as yet unknown to more orthodox means of exploration.

Having developed their ability to travel in time and space, and to use a sort of psychic "telescope", they now turned their vision from the great to the small, and using what Arthur Nethercot called a "Theosophical microscope", they began to examine atoms and molecules in research called "Occult Chemistry". They set about examining the very nature of matter, penetrating clairvoyantly into the structure of the elements, and exploring the universe of the atom. The power of "magnification" is said to be one of the powers, or, siddhis, of the great yogi, meaning that he is able to look at small objects and see them greatly.
enlarged. [12] This did not involve either Leadbeater or Mrs Besant in trance, or loss of consciousness, and whilst undertaking this research they were able to dictate their findings to a secretary, and to draw diagrams of what they saw.

After what must have been astrally, if not physically, an exhausting weekend, the company returned to London. Far from concluding their investigations of occult chemistry, this was just the beginning. Leadbeater had first used his psychic powers in delving in to the atom at the request of Mr Sinnett, and thus discovered that he possessed "ultramicroscopic" vision. As Sinnett recalled:

It occurred to me to ask Mr Leadbeater if he thought he could actually see a molecule of physical matter. He was quite willing to try and I suggested a molecule of gold as one which he might try to observe. He made the appropriate effort and emerged from it saying the molecule in question was a far too elaborate structure to be described. [13]

However, practice making perfect, after his collaboration with Mrs Besant, descriptions of molecules, gold amongst them, were produced. These began to appear in *Lucifer* in
November 1895, shortly after the research had begun, and in a pamphlet entitled *Occult Chemistry*, in which the authors stated:

The physical world is regarded as being composed of between sixty and seventy chemical elements, aggregated into an infinite variety of combinations. These combinations fall under the three main heads of solids, liquids and gases, the recognized substances of physical matter, with the theoretical ether scarcely admitted as material. [14]

Hydrogen was the first atom to be investigated: it consisted of

...six main bodies, contained in an egg-like form. It rotated with great rapidity on its own axis, vibrating at the same time and the internal bodies performed similar gyrations. [15]

The six "bodies" each contained three "ultimate physical atoms".

The ultimate physical atom, the basic unit of matter, had been discovered one afternoon whilst strolling...
along the Finchley Road. Leadbeater and Mrs Besant settled down to resolve the difficulties of the periodic table of the elements, a problem which had been bothering chemists of a more orthodox persuasion for some time. They examined the elements in their atomic structure, and discovered the "ultimate physical atom", the smallest individual unit of matter. To this, the Sanskrit term *anu* was given, and they realized it was the basic building block for all the other elements - hydrogen contained eighteen such units, oxygen two hundred and ninety, and nitrogen two hundred and sixty one.

A diagram of the *anu*, together with details of these remarkable discoveries, were published. Some critics were unkind enough to suggest that the diagram of the *anu* bore a remarkable resemblance to a drawing found in *Principles of Light and Colour*, a strange work by Dr Edwin Babbit, first published in 1878. [16]

Leadbeater and Mrs Besant had discovered yet another new world untouched by the feet of previous explorers, and they set off on their "fantastic voyage" to investigate it the most scientific way they could. However, few scientists found their work interesting, let alone worth taking seriously. A few Theosophically inclined scientists have attempted to relate the occult discoveries to the...
scatentific ones. [17]

Turning from atoms and ancient civilizations to thoughts, Leadbeater and Mrs Besant found yet another new area for collaboration. They began examining the workings of the human mind in so far as such workings extruded into the external world via "thought forms". [18] Making another announcement of a scientific breakthrough in *Lucifer*, Mrs Besant stated that two "clairvoyant Theosophists" (of whose identity no details were given in print, but of which the select few within the Society were aware) had begun observing the substance of thought. This announcement was accompanied by four pages of illustrations of various thought-forms, good and ill, which they had observed and described to an artist. Mrs Besant added scientific flavour to the article by making mention of Rontgen, Baraduc, Reichenbach, vibrations and the ether. [19] Olcott recommended the article highly, and Bertram Keightley reviewed the work enthusiastically.

The results of their joint efforts were eventually published in a book with the prosaic title, *Thought Forms*, for which the art work was undertaken by John Varley, a Mr Prince and a Miss McFarlane. [20] The illustrations showed such fascinating thoughts as "grasping animal affection" (brown-red swirls), "murderous rage" (a...
bright red spike) "self-renunciation" (a pale blue lotus), "sudden fright" (a cloud of red-grey crescents), and "at a shipwreck" (a grey-brown cloud). Some musical effects had also been examined: Wagner produced weird mountains in pink, green and red. These were to be preferred to the atmosphere at a funeral (a grey orange mushroom-cloud) or in a bar (where the craving for alcohol produced undesirable brown-red hooks).

There was a tradition of "seeing thoughts" and even of photographing them in spiritualism, although it generally developed somewhat later than the earliest explorations undertaken by Leadbeater and Mrs Besant. But in the early 1890's spiritualist publications were referring to photographs of thoughts. The idea was popular in France, as well as in England. Dr Hyppolite Baraduc, a French spiritualist, published a number of works on seeing and photographing thoughts. These included Photographie des États Hypervibratoires de la Vitalité Humaine (1897). A summary of his work is found in his book The Human Soul, Its Movement, Its Lights, and the Iconography of the Fluidic Invisible (1913). He included photographs of a child in a happy, sad and meditative state, of a person after prayer, and of a person after hearing a sermon. [21] "Thought photography" became something of a fad amongst spiritualists around the turn of the century. [22]
In 1899, doubtless still drawn in some way to the Anglicanism of his earlier years, Leadbeater wrote a Theosophical interpretation of the doctrines of Christianity. Published under the title *The Christian Creed: Its Origin and Significance*, this volume presented the basic doctrines which were later to become known as "Theosophical Christianity". [23] In July and August, 1898, Mrs Besant had delivered five lectures on "Esoteric Christianity" in which she extended the theories of G.R.S.Mead and presented Christianity in a Theosophical form. [24] These lectures were later expanded into a book and published as *Esoteric Christianity, or The Lesser Mysteries*, in 1901. By 1904 Mrs Besant was lecturing at Queen's Hall, London, on "Is Theosophy Anti-Christian" in response to a statement by the Anglican Bishop of London that it was. [25]

So Leadbeater was riding on, or perhaps stimulating, a wave of interest in the Theosophical interpretation of Christianity when he began his occult investigations of Christian origins. In *The Christian Creed* he noted that the ordinary churchman

confuses (a) the disciple Jesus; (b) the great Master whom men call the Christ, though he is known by another and far grander name amongst the
Initiates; and (c) the Second Aspect or Person of the Logos. [26]

He assured his readers that the Creeds had been basically misunderstood for centuries, and that his clairvoyant research into their history revealed the true meaning. For example, in the earliest copies of the creed written in Greek which have "yet been clairvoyantly examined by our investigators" (again, unnamed) the words commonly translated as "Jesus Christ" appear in the Greek as "the chiefest healer" or "ra deliverer", or as "the most holy one". Transliteration and mistakes, deliberate and accidental, had produced the present corrupt version.

Leadbeater, however, realized the difficulty of persuading unenlightened orthodoxy of his newly discovered interpretation:

It is, however, of little use for us to speak of these various readings until some explorer on the physical plane discovers a manuscript containing them, for then only will the world of scholars be disposed to listen to the suggestions which naturally follow from them. [27]
misreading that "Pontius Pilate" was a mistake in transliteration for the Greek meaning "the dense sea", and that the phrase "suffered under Pontius Pilate" should read "endured the dense sea", meaning that the Logos descended into the dense material plane. That was, according to Leadbeater, the real sacrifice of Christ, unrelated to the myth of Calvary. Most of these errors were, he noted, the results of mistakes by scribes, and he observed, via the Akashic Records, some of the scribes making the mistakes. Some errors were, however, due to deliberate forgery.

His clairvoyant investigations further led him to agree with G.R.S. Mead that Jesus had been born in 175 BC, became an Essene, had been trained by men from Egypt and India, and travelled to Egypt where he was initiated. Jesus yielded up his body for the use of the Christ - who had previously made use of the body of Krishna in India - at the age of twenty-nine when he was baptized. Neither Jesus (the body) nor Christ (the Occupier of it temporarily) was a direct manifestation of the Second Person of the Trinity, with whom they are often confused in orthodox theology. [28] This interest in the occult side of Christianity was to develop later in Leadbeater's life as a major preoccupation, bringing with it a whole new series of books, a theology of Theosophy, and a Theosophy of theology.
In July, 1899, 19 Avenue Road, where Leadbeater had lived with Mrs Besant, was sold; ironically the purchaser was Mrs Katherine Tingley, head of the rival TS organization established by W.Q. Judge in the USA, who loathed Leadbeater and Mrs Besant in equal terms, but wanted the house because of its associations with HPB.[29] Leadbeater did not have to worry about accommodation, however. In 1890 a number of American Theosophists, having heard of this rising star of occultism, guaranteed his expenses for a lecture tour of the United States. Before leaving for the United States, Leadbeater joined Mrs Besant, Chakravarti, G.R.S. Mead and Colonel Olcott in addressing the Convention of the European Section of the TS in London, following this with a tour of Holland during which he received favourable coverage in the press. He was described in Theosophical journals as a "meteor", showing a "profound learning and deep knowledge". He arrived in New York in October. Jinarajadasa meanwhile returned to Ceylon in September, 1899, having completed his degree in Sanskrit and Philology at St John's College, Cambridge. [30]

The Theosophic Messenger, the American TS journal, emphasized Leadbeater's special interest in the development of young boys, their training and education, and mentioned his involvement with the Lotus Circle and the Golden Chain, another Theosophical Group for children. [31]
After lecturing in New York, Boston, Toronto and Toledo, Leadbeater moved to Chicago in November and was introduced to another worker for children, Mrs Helen Dennis, with whose interests Leadbeater had much in common, and with whose family he was to have considerable dealings in later years. From Chicago he moved to Seattle, Washington, and San Francisco, achieving success and popularity wherever he went, and accompanied wherever he went by Basil Hodgson-Smith, his boy companion.

During his visit to California he was confronted with practical problems resulting from the division within the TS which followed the separation of W.Q. Judge from the Adyar-based organization of which Colonel Olcott was President. Judge had been accused of forging letters from the Masters. [32] He established the rival Theosophical Society in America, and after his death in 1896, was succeeded by Katherine Tingley, popularly known as "the Purple Mother". [33] By 1900 she had established the International Theosophical Headquarters at Point Loma in California, and opposed Mrs Besant and Leadbeater with vigour and enthusiasm. [34] When Leadbeater arrived in California Mrs Tingley persuaded the hotel in which he was to lecture to cancel his booking by threatening to withdraw her organization's business. This unhappy confrontation was only a hint of the unpleasantness that was to emanate from
Mrs Tingley's Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, pursuing Leadbeater from California to Australia, and there causing a police investigation into his activities and morals. [35]

For the moment, however, his only problem was locating another venue for his lectures; he was in the ascendant and, it seemed could only go on ascending. In May, 1901, he attended the US convention at which Olcott, whose past lives Leadbeater was currently investigating, presided, and by July he was addressing the European Convention in London on his highly successful tour of the United States and Canada.

In November, 1901, The Theosophist announced that Leadbeater was holidaying in the country after his US triumph, and shortly afterwards he departed for a six month tour through Europe after the Convention of the British Section. He visited France, Belgium, Holland and Italy, before returning to London, where he picked up the threads of his interest in Theosophical Christianity, and lectured on "Theosophy and the Higher Criticism", "Theosophic Christianity" and "Steps to First-hand Knowledge", a subject which must have given his listeners the hope that he would reveal the secrets of his clairvoyance, enabling them to engage in astral exploring, the investigation of past lives.
and the probing of the atom. They were reminded that it was a long and arduous process, the precise details of which Leadbeater was sworn not to reveal.

In March, a charter was granted to Leadbeater and some twenty young people to establish a Lotus Lodge of the TS for those who were now too old for the Lotus Circle; he was authorized to spread this movement throughout the world, and established a magazine, The Lotus Journal. Basil Hodgson-Smith was, naturally, a prominent member of the Lodge.

By May, Leadbeater was lecturing on "The Ancient Mysteries" in Paris, and the Theosophic Messenger announced the glad tidings that the "Leadbeater Fund" had raised enough money to bring him back to America, and have his stay for at least two years. Local branches desiring to have him lecture were requested to provide accommodation for Leadbeater and young Basil Hodgson-Smith. While the American lodges were preparing for his lectures, Leadbeater was lecturing in Florence, and attending the 12th European Congress on July 5th and 6th. The Theosophist that month announced his forthcoming visit to America, and informed its readers that the Steinway Hall in Chicago had been booked six months in advance for Sunday nights for the next six months to provide a suitable venue. Funds were being solicited, and seats were
being sold.

In August, Leadbeater returned to America, and, beginning in Chicago, undertook another triumphant lecture tour, addressing meetings in halls filled to overflowing. Hundreds of people had to be turned away from his lectures, and many of his listeners hurried to join the TS. The Press found him excellent copy and the tour received widespread and favourable publicity. The first six months were spent lecturing in the Steinway Hall in Chicago, and during the course of some twenty-six lectures he ranged from "The Gospel of Wisdom", "Man and His Bodies", through to "The Necessity of Reincarnation", "The Nature of Theosophical Evidence" and "Invisible Helpers". He intended the lectures to "put before the public in broad outline the principal teachings of Theosophy", and they were subsequently published as Some Glimpses of Occultism Ancient and Modern. [36]

During this particularly successful Chicago season he was introduced to Robin Dennis while staying in the home of the boy's parents. Like several others in the USA, Robin was to re-appear as one of the ghosts that would spoil Leadbeater's feast in the coming year. At present, the only recurring cloud was Mrs. Tingley, and she was not making
Theosophists not only with his lecturing, but also with his psychic abilities and his specialist knowledge of children. He investigated the past lives of Alex Fullerton, General Secretary of the American section, under the name of "Alastor" [37], and was asked to take care of Douglas Pettit, a boy whose parents had read Leadbeater's article on the responsibilities of Theosophical parenthood.[38]

As he travelled from Chicago to Montana, enlivening a number of lodges in the central States, he was accompanied not only by Basil Hodgson-Smith, and an eminent Theosophist, Thomas Prime, but also now by Douglas Pettit. They toured Yellowstone National Park and travelled to the northwestern cities of the United States and Canada, finally arriving in San Francisco. In September, 1902, he had attended the annual American Convention, and it was planned that his tour should take him back to Chicago for the 1904 Convention; Alex Fullerton had planned the itinerary. Twenty-five thousand copies of *What Theosophy Does For Us* had been printed for gratuitous distribution during the tour, and they proved popular.

At the annual Convention of the TS in Benares, India, in December, Olcott's Presidential Address praised Leadbeater highly, concluding that "A more indefatigable and tireless worker when on tour could not be imagined." [39]
The Convention also heard that five books by Leadbeater has appeared in 1902 - a revised edition of *The Devachanic Plane, The Unseen World, An Outline of Theosophy*, a French translation of *Invisible Helpers*, and a Dutch translation of *Dreams*. By December, 1903, when the next Annual Convention was held at Adyar, Olcott could once again praise Leadbeater in the Presidential Address, noting that his tour had been met with "surprising success". [40] Leadbeater's literary output in 1903 had been even more considerable, and was remarkable since many of the books had been written whilst he was on tour. The new works included *Man Visible and Invisible, The Soul and Its Vestures, The Other Side of Death, The Nature of Theosophical Evidence, Reincarnation, The Life After Death - Purgatory and The Life After Death - The Heaven World*. Several of these were pamphlets, but *Man Visible and Invisible* and *The Other Side of Death* were major works on areas of special interest to him. [41] The former extended the work on thought-forms, and was pleasantly illustrated with coloured diagrams of the invisible constitution of man at various stages in his moral evolution. The coloured pictures demonstrated the differences between savages and saints as far as auras and emanations were concerned. This book was published both by the TPH in London and John Lane in New York. While writing *Man Visible and Invisible*, Leadbeater had consulted an earlier work on a similar subject, A.Harque's *The Human*.
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Aura. [42]

The Other Side of Death contained a lengthy account of the after-death state, heaven, hell, purgatory, reincarnation, spiritualism, hauntings, vampires, and related phenomena, with a chapter on Leadbeater's own experience of spiritualist phenomena in his Anglican days. It represented a considerable expansion of a series of lectures he had given in England, which had been published by the Theosophical Publications Committee of Harrogate, and parts of which had been reproduced in Lucifer:

We are not separated from the dead, for they are here about us all the time. The only separation is the limitation of our consciousness, so that we have lost, not our loved ones, but the power to see them. It is quite possible for us to raise our consciousness, that we can see them and talk to them as before, and all of us constantly do that, though we rarely remember it fully. [43]

In later years Leadbeater made frequent use of this raising of his consciousness when answering letters from those who enquired after their deceased loved ones; having consulted the dead he could reply with unusual authority. And his post-mortem communication was not limited to human beings,
for, as he wrote to a woman enquiring about her deceased cat:

Dear Madam,

Your need have no anxiety about the departed Tom. Your affection has brought him to the stage of individualization, and he will therefore not be reborn in feline form. You will therefore certainly encounter him in the course of evolution, but you must remember that it will only be at a much later stage and therefore in another world than this.

Yours faithfully,

C.W. Leadbeater. [44]

Evolution, of all life forms, was a major concern of Theosophy; Jinarajadasa described the theory as "The greatest achievement of modern science". [45]

The report of the American Section of the TS for 1903 announced that seventy branches of the Society existed in America, some of which had formed as a direct result of Leadbeater's work, and added that the tour had been extended to February, 1905, when Leadbeater planned to travel to Australia. Meanwhile, Leadbeater continued his tour of America, lecturing, writing, undertaking psychical
investigations and meeting people. At the 18th Annual Convention of the American Section in Chicago in September, 1904, he noted that "a most wonderful wave of Theosophical feeling has swept over this country and is sweeping over it," and concluded: "It is due to the radiation of thought on these subjects." [46] The American Section of the TS by that time had 2,299 members in sixty-nine branches (one had been "lost" in the preceding year). Leadbeater's tour had lasted two years and four months and had been characterized by "incessant labour and incalculable good."

Watching with interest and a certain amount of envy, the TS in Australia has set about raising funds to bring Leadbeater to its shores, and Theosophy in Australia was able to announce early in 1905 that the "Leadbeater Lecture Fund" had raised enough money to do so. [47] Leaving Douglas Pettit behind, and acquiring another young companion, Fritz Kunz [48], the seventeen-year-old son of an Illinois farmer, Leadbeater journeyed across the Pacific to begin another successful lecture tour. He was met in Sydney on May 5th by Mr T.H.Martyn. Martyn was a highly successful businessman, and treasurer of the TS in Sydney, and he welcomed Leadbeater with great enthusiasm. [49] Shortly after Leadbeater's tour concluded, Martyn presented Sydney Lodge with a large portrait of the eminent Theosophist.
Having paid a brief visit to New Zealand prior to his arrival in Australia, Leadbeater and his companions travelled throughout Australia, visiting Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Cairns, Tasmania, Adelaide and Perth. Although the Australian Section of the TS could only claim 517 members, it felt itself stimulated and revitalized by Leadbeater’s visit. In November, 1905, accompanied by Basil Hodgson-Smith and Fritz Kunz, he sailed for India, promising the Australian Section that he would try to persuade Mrs Besant to allow him to return.

He arrived at Adyar in time for the 30th Annual Convention held there from December 27th to 30th, at which the principal lectures were those given by Mrs Besant on the Bhagavad Gita. [51] The Estate at Adyar was so changed that Leadbeater hardly recognized it. He presented a glowing account of his lecture tours to the assembled gathering, and much impressed the 800 delegates from various parts of the world. No doubt they had already been impressed by his interesting articles in The Theosophist of recent months, based on his current research into "Successive Life Waves" (accompanied by a complicated chart showing the movement of life around the planets in the solar system), "The Future of Humanity", and "The Use and Abuse of Psychic Powers". His books continued to be translated into other languages, and
to sell widely.

The only hint of disharmony within the TS came in a brief mention of some protest at Mrs Besant's involvement in a new Masonic movement for men and women; much more was to be heard for Co-Masonry in later years. [51] The enthusiasm and praise heaped upon Leadbeater's head at the Convention was a fitting conclusion to almost five years of hard work on behalf of the Society; Leadbeater had established himself as the greatest Theosophical authority of his time in matters psychic and occult phenomena, as a brilliant lecturer, and an outstanding publicist for the Theosophical cause. Few of the delegates who applauded him so enthusiastically can have anticipated the shattering announcement Olcott would be obliged to make only five months later, turning the "Rising Star" into a "Fallen Prophet".

Meanwhile, riding on the crest of his acclaim, Leadbeater undertook a tour of India, and arrived in Benares in February, staying there with Mrs Besant who had established her Indian home in that city. While the two of them were renewing their collaborative efforts in Theosophical work, Mrs Besant received a letter from the United States. No doubt when she saw the Chicago postmark and the sender's name - Mrs Helen Dennis - she anticipated
another letter of praise and enthusiasm for Leadbeater's work in America. This letter, however, was to destroy, at least temporarily, the friendship and collaboration between Leadbeater and Mrs Besant, force him from the Society for which he had worked so enthusiastically, and haunt him for the rest of his life.
Chapter 10: Accusations of Immorality

The letter from Mrs Helen Dennis, Corresponding Secretary of the Esoteric Section in the United States was dated January 25th, 1906. [1] It began:

I have suddenly learned the cause of the Pettigrew boy's hatred and contempt for Mr Leadbeater, of which I spoke to you in London and which cause he had at that time refused to reveal. It is not, as I had suspected, a childish and personal grievance but as you will see from the charges and evidence formulated below, was the result of morally criminal acts on the part of Mr Leadbeater himself. Before he was allowed to go to California with Mr Leadbeater he told the parents of this boy that his first effort in training boys, was a frank talk on the sex question with careful instruction to them on the necessity for an absolutely pure and virgin life. He stated that he liked to gain their confidence while they were young and before they had erred through ignorance. He wished to inform them before even a first offence which he said was fatal, so absolute must be their virginity. This was the understanding between Mr Leadbeater and the boy's parents in
arranging his travels with him...[2]

Mrs Dennis then specified the charges against Leadbeater:

First: That he is teaching boys given into his
care habits of self-abuse and demoralizing
personal practices.
Second: That he does this with deliberate intent
and under the guise of occult training or with the
promise of the increase of physical manhood.
Third: That he has demanded, at least in one case,
promise of the utmost secrecy. [3]

Mrs Dennis added the testimonies of the mothers
of two boys (one of whom was herself, although she did not
state this) giving details of how the information had been
received. The first boy had suddenly become antagonistic
towards Leadbeater, but despite rebukes from his mother
would not explain his feelings, saying: "Mother, I shall
never tell you, but if you knew what I know, had heard and
seen the things I have heard and seen, you would not
wonder." Eventually:

A few months ago charges reached me of immoral
sexual practices by Mr L. with boys, having been
made in India, and the same having been suspected
in England. When [the boy] was again questioned he testified that Mr. L. had taught him how to practise self-abuse. When asked what reason he gave for teaching him such practices he said, "Mr Leadbeater told me that it would make me grow strong and manly." Asked his reason for concealing these facts so long from his parents, he said, "He made me promise not to tell." [4]

The mother of the second boy had also noticed her son's sudden change of attitude toward Leadbeater after a short trip the boy had made with him when he was fourteen years old. The boy no longer replied to Leadbeater's letters until his mother insisted upon it, whereas previously affectionate letters had been frequent between them. When questioned the boy said he could not tell why his attitude has changed. When the charges against Leadbeater became known to the boy's mother, she questioned him again:

With great reluctance he admitted the facts of Mr L.'s immoral conduct and in reply to the question "When did it happen?" he said "The very first night I visited him we slept together." When asked what excuse Mr L. gave for such conduct, the boy's words were "Mother, I think that was the worst part of the whole thing, somehow he made me
believe it was Theosophical." [5]

The boy had rejected Leadbeater's advances and the matter was dropped, although the boy felt that Leadbeater no longer liked him, and he was glad to return home.

The letter from Mrs Dennis was countersigned by Alex Fullerton (General Secretary of the American Section), F.F. Knothe (Assistant General Secretary) and Helen M. Chidlester (Assistant Secretary of the ES in America). [6] They pledged that the matter would be kept secret, but demand that "searching investigation and prompt action" should follow. A copy of the letter was also sent to Leadbeater. Both he and Mrs Besant received their letters at Benares, discussed the charges and talked about what action should be taken with regard to them.

On February 26th, Mrs Besant wrote to Mrs Dennis:

Your letter causes me some grief and anxiety, and I think I shall serve you, Mr Leadbeater and the Society best by perfect plainness of speech. Mr Leadbeater is intimately known to you, and you have definite experiences in connection with him on superphysical planes; you know something of his
relations there, and the impossibility of the existence of such relations with deliberate wrong-doing. All this must not be forgotten in the midst of the terrible [sic] to which you are subjected. I know him better than you can do, and am absolutely certain of his good faith and pure intent, though I disagree with the advice he has in rare cases given to boys approaching manhood. [7]

She went on to discuss the problems faced by those "who have had much experience with boys", how some boys are ruined by self-abuse and others by seeking immoral women, and how others are simply tormented by sexual thoughts "which poison the whole nature". She suggested that nature provided for the relief of such torment by "involuntary emission", but that this left the boy subject to long periods of torment when the mind was full of "unclean images". Leadbeater's view, she had determined, was that the natural process of discharge could be hastened, though he said he would only recommend this in rare cases, and after a careful diet, exercise, and a "rousing of the boy's pride and self-respect against yielding" had failed. He had told her that he had given "the advice" in only three or four cases "believing that it would save the boys from worse peril". Leadbeater had agreed not to give the advice again, and offered to
retire from active work; Mrs Besant opposed his retirement, and urged Mrs Dennis to understand that, given Leadbeater's occult status, the charges made were an impossibility. She reminded her that "all who approach the path have to face these searching ordeals, and hold on through all".

On February 27th, Leadbeater wrote a long and extremely interesting letter to Alex Fullerton. In it he explained the principles behind his approach.

The business of discovering and training specially hopeful younger members and preparing them for Theosophical work has been put into my charge. Possibly the fact that I have been associated with the training of young men and boys all my life (originally, of course, on Christian lines) is one reason for this, because of the experience it has given me. As a result of that experience, I know that the whole question of sex feelings is the principal difficulty in the path of boys and girls, and very much harm is done by the prevalent habit of ignoring the subject and fearing to speak of it to young people. The first information about it should come from parents or friends, not from servants or bad companions. Therefore I always speak of it quite frankly and naturally to those I
am trying to help, when they become sufficiently familiar with me to make it possible. The methods of dealing with the difficulties are two. A certain type of boy can be carried through his youth absolutely virgin and can pass through the stages of puberty without being really troubled at all by sensual emotions; but such boys are few. The majority pass through a stage when their minds are filled with such matters, and they surround themselves with huge masses of most undesirable thought forms which perpetually react upon them and keep them in a condition of emotional ferment. These thought forms are the vehicles of appalling mischief since through them disembodied entities can and constantly do act upon the child. The conventional idea that such thoughts do not matter so long as they do not issue in overt acts is not only untrue; it is absolutely the reverse of the truth. I have seen literally hundreds of cases of this horrible condition, and have traced the effects which it produces in after life. In this country of India the much abused custom of early marriage prevents all difficulty on this score. Now all this may be avoided by periodically releasing that pressure, and experience has shown that if the boy masturbates at stated intervals he
can comparatively easily rid his mind of such thoughts in the interim and in that way escape all the more serious consequences. I know that this is not the conventional view, but it is quite true for all that, and there is no comparison in the harm done in the two cases even at the time apart from the fact that the latter plan avoids the danger of entanglement with women or bad boys later on. You may remember how St Paul remarked that while it was best of all to remain a celibate, in the rare cases where that was possible, for the rest, it was distinctly better to marry than to burn with lust. Brought down to the level of the boy, that is practically what I mean, and although I know that many people do not agree with the view, I am at a loss to understand how any one can consider it criminal, especially when it is remembered that it is based on the clearly visible results of two lines of actions. A doctor might advise against it, principally on the ground that the habit might degenerate into unrestrained self-abuse; but this danger can readily be avoided by full-explanation and it must be remembered that the average doctor cannot see the horrible astral effects of perpetual desire.

[8]
Leadbeater then considered the specific cases, and admitted having taught masturbation to the Pettit and Douglas boys, and to having told one boy that his physical growth might be encouraged by the practice. He concluded his letter with a post-script:

I see that there is one point in Mrs Dennis' letter on which I have not commented—her reference to a conversation on the necessity of purity for aspirants for occult development, and to the fact that (for a certain stage of it) one life without even a single lapse is required. It is, of course, obvious that the lapse referred to meant connection with a woman or criminal relations with a man and did not at all include such advice as has been suggested in the body of my letter. [9]

In the case of Douglas Pettit, Leadbeater continued to claim that the incident had been an isolated one, occurring as the result of the boy's request for advice regarding the psychological and physiological effects of the onset of puberty. Leadbeater said he was able to tell from the boy's aura that he was experiencing desires and feelings which disturbed him, and offered masturbation as a natural
The boy, however, subsequently made a sworn statement in which he gave his account of events:

Mr Charles W. Leadbeater and myself occupied the same bed, habitually sleeping together. On the morning succeeding the first night that we slept together and before we rose to dress, Mr Charles W Leadbeater explained to me the practice [of masturbation] and urged me to engage in the practice, giving as a reason therefore that it would aid me in overcoming any desire to have sexual intercourse with women — which desire, he told me, would develop in the course of nature at my age very soon. Mr Charles W Leadbeater also told me that the practice was recommended by his Master and teacher for that reason and advised me not to speak of the matter to anyone. This reciprocal practice continued for the greater part of seven months. [10]

In the case of Robin Dennis, Leadbeater claimed that Mrs Dennis had been concerned about the influence of another boy on her son, and had therefore asked Leadbeater to have Robin stay with him in the hope that he would be able to help in the situation. Leadbeater claimed that Robin confessed the "relationship with regard to sexual matters"
to which he has entered" with the other boy, and said that he has discussed the problem with Robin, giving him advice on diet and physical exercise, the latter not including masturbation. He claimed that it was only when Robin wrote to him expressing further concern that he recommended occasional masturbation.

While a few members of the TS may have felt suspicion about Leadbeater, there is little doubt that many of them to regard these charges as unsubstantiated and false, and probably connected in some way with Black Magicians and the enemies of the Masters. It came as a surprise, therefore, when a letter allegedly from Leadbeater to one of the boys was found in a house in Toronto. Copies of the letter were widely circulated, as was another letter also allegedly from Leadbeater to a boy. The first of the letters, some of which was written in code, became known as the cypher letter" and copies of it were distributed throughout the Theosophical world, and widely discussed.

The letter began:

Private. Mr own darling boy...it is better for me to write in cypher about some of the most important matters. [12]
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Most of the letter concerned astral experiences, but in the midst of this discussion there was a passage seemingly unconnected with the rest, and it was on this passage that what Mrs Besant called "a foul construction" was placed by many who subsequently read it. Part of the passage was written in code:

Eg eu dinat xeuiiou iamq ia oaaet socceoh nisa iguao. Cau oiu uii iguao, is ia xemm oiu dina xamm. Euiat uiuu iuqqao xiao zio usa utmaaq; tell me fully. Hmue taotueio et ti qmautuou. Uiitotuoe lettat eusmeoh. [13]

The code was a simple one and merely involved rearranging the letters of the alphabet by a given number of spaces: the consonants were reduced by one letter (thus b becomes a, a becomes m, and so on) and the vowels were moved one space in the a-e-i-o-u sequence (thus a becomes e, e becomes i, and so on). It was, interestingly enough, the code used by Leadbeater in his story "The Perfume of Egypt", published in later years. [14] When the coded passage is translated, the paragraph in which it occurs read:

I am glad to hear of the rapid growth and strength of the results. Twice a week is permissible, but
you will soon discover what brings the best
effect. The meaning of the sign [here appears a
circle with a dot in the centre] is urethra.
Spontaneous manifestations are undesirable and
should be discouraged. [Then the coded passage
which reads:] If it will not come without help, he
needs rubbing more often, but not too often or he
will not come well. Does this happen when you are
asleep? Tell me fully. Glad sensation is so
pleasant. Thousand kisses darling.[coded passage
ends] [15]

When confronted with a legally attested copy of
the letter, Leadbeater admitted that he recognized it, but
said that he did not know it in "its present form", but did
not explain what that meant. It remained one of the
mysteries associated with his life; he never denied that he
had written it, although others, including Mrs Besant,
suggested that it was a forgery. Miss Edith Ward, in a
circular letter to the British Section of the TS, called for
a full investigation and a denial or admission of the letter
by Leadbeater. He refused to give an answer, saying it was
"a gross impertinence" to suggest that he should. [16]

The American Theosophists began moves to have
Leadbeater expelled from the TS, and Mrs Besant tried rather
desperately to defend her colleague, writing letters to those making the charges in an attempt to pacify them. In response to the letters from Mrs Besant and Leadbeater, the American committee decided that it was necessary for definite action to be taken. It was felt that Leadbeater should be "tried" by the British Section, since he was a member of a Lodge within that Section, and also be "tried" as a Presidential Delegate. The American Section sent a representative, Mr R.A.Burnett of Chicago, to see Colonel Olcott, the General Secretary of the British Section, and officials of Leadbeater's Lodge. Burnett also saw Leadbeater himself. The American Section demanded that he should resign all connection with the TS and its activities, or accept a "trial" before the Section, leading, they assumed, to his expulsion from the Society.

Olcott, in London, appointed a committee to advise him in the matter: it consisted of Mr Sinnett, Dr Nunn, Bertram Keightley, G.R.S.Mead, Mr W.H.Thomas, Mrs I. Stead, Mrs I. Hooper, Miss E.Ward, Miss K. Spink, and Mr A.M.Glass as secretary. The American Section was represented by Mr Burnett, and the French Section by Mr. P.Bernard. [17] In later years, Mrs Ranson, in her history of the Society, referred to the committee as "unconstitutional court, judge and jury". [18] The Committee began its meetings at the Grosvenor Hotel, Buckingham Palace Road, London, on May
16th. Leadbeater attended, having been given the assurance that the proceedings would be confidential. [19] The Committee was to consider not only the two American cases, but the general subject of Leadbeater's relations with his pupils.

Leadbeater's response to the allegations was very much as he had written to Fullerton. He stated that he recommended masturbation as a "prophylactic" for the prevention of something far worse. The following extracts are taken from the official transcript of the "trial":

Thomas: I should like to know definitely whether it was simply in the nature of advice or whether there was any action.
Leadbeater: I want to call up quite clearly the exact incidents. I scarcely recollect. There was advice but there might have been a certain amount of indicative action. That might be possible.
Mead: The boy suggests in the most distinct way that the difference between "Z" [the other boy said to have been involved with Douglas Pettit] and you was that in the case of "Z" he spoke of these things, and in your case something was done to him.
Leadbeater: Nothing was done to him. You can't be
suggesting what seems to be the obvious suggestion.

Mead: You say the boy lies?
Leadbeater: He has misrepresented. I don't like to accuse people of lies, but a construction has been put upon it which is not right.
Thomas: Your reply as to scarcely recollecting suggests that there were so many cases. I would like to know whether in any case - I am not suggesting sodomy - there was definite action.
Leadbeater: You mean touch? That might have taken place.

......

Thomas: You admit giving advice to more than the two boys?
Leadbeater: You are to take it that the same advice was given to several.
Olcott: How many? Twenty altogether?
Leadbeater: No, not so many.

......

Mead: The second charge read: "That he does so with deliberate intent or with the promise of the increase of physical manhood." The evidence of these boys says nothing about applying to him for help. I want to ask whether this advice was given on appeal or not.
Leadbeater: Sometimes without, sometimes with. I advised it at times as a Prophylactic.
Miss Ward: I suppose from what you saw on the other planes?
Leadbeater: From what I saw would arise. [s+c]
Olcott: That is not within our discussion. [20]

Leadbeater eventually gave clues as to the origin of the principles behind the advice. These amazed the Committee and constitute yet another mystery in this affair.

Bernard: Since Mr Leadbeater was teaching these boys to help them in case of need, considering that men may be in the same difficulty, has he ever taught this to any grown-up man? Has he taught the same thing in the same personal way to grown-up men as to children?
Leadbeater: I believe that at least on two occasions in my life I have given that advice to young men as better than the one generally adopted.

Oclott: Since you came into the Society?
Leadbeater: I think not, but one case might have been. [21] You are probably not aware that one at least of the great Church organizations for young
men deals with the matter in the same manner.
Mead: Do you deliberately say this?
Leadbeater: Yes.
Mead and Burnett: What is its name?
Leadbeater: I am not free to give this. I heard of the matter first through it.
Mead: Mr Leadbeater states then that there is an organization in the Church of England which teaches self-abuse.
Olcott: Is it a seminary for young priests or a school?
Leadbeater: It is not a school but I must not give definite indications.
Olcott: Is it found in the Catholic Church?
Leadbeater: I expect so.
Olcott: I know that in Italy Garibaldi found many terrible things.
Mead: This last statement of Mr Leadbeater is one of the most extraordinary things I have ever heard. It is incredible to me that there is an organization of the Church of England which teaches masturbation as a preventative against unchastity. I ask, what is the name of this organization?
Leadbeater: I certainly should not tell.
Mead: I understand that it is an organization
pledged to secrecy and I take it that Mr Leadbeater received his first information from this organization.

Leadbeater: I suppose it would have been better if I had not mentioned it.

Mead: I absolutely refuse to believe that this is so.

Leadbeater: I decline to prove it in any manner.

[22]

As to the identity of the organization, if indeed it did exist, no clues were given. [23]

Finally, with Leadbeater out of the room, the Committee considered the case, and decided to accept his resignation, although they were divided over the issues of whether he should be expelled, what sort of publicity should be given to the case, and what sort of official announcement should be made. Bertram Keightley commented:

Unless in some public manner the Society is informed that Mr Leadbeater is no longer a member, he will be visiting branches and giving lectures and picking up boys, as he has done in the past. I cannot leave this room satisfied until I know that no member of the Society can be taken unawares. We
cannot allow there to be any doubt that Mr Leadbeater has ceased to be a member of the Society. [24]

The "trial" then concluded:

Olcott: I should like to ask Mr Leadbeater if he thinks I have acted impartially?
Leadbeater: Absolutely, if we should consider later I can do anything, let me know.
Mead: Do you mean to continue this course of teaching?
Leadbeater: Seeing there is such a feeling on the matter by people whose views I respect, I do not. [25]

By modern standards, the advice Leadbeater gave, if it simply was a recommendation to accept masturbation rather than the mental anguish of sexual desire, would not seem immoral or dangerous. But in 1906 attitudes towards "self-abuse" were very different, a legacy of the Victorian period when masturbation was seen as the cause of insanity, immorality, or, at the very least, blindness and physical collapse. Those who "indulged" were easily identifiable according to medical texts of the time:
The frame is stunted and weak, the muscles undeveloped, the eye is sunken and heavy, the complexion is sallow, pasty or covered with spots of acne, the hands are damp and cold, and the skin moist. The boy shuns the society of others, creeps abroad alone. [26]

So the encouragement of anything less than an absolute avoidance of "self-abuse" (the name reveals the attitude) was regarded as unhealthy, immoral and criminal.

Leadbeater's arguments, then and later, fell down when it was realized that he, first, admitted to giving the advice to pre-pubescent boys who had not sought it, and, second, admitted employing some form of "indicative action" which might have included touch. Precisely what Leadbeater did or did not do has been a matter of debate and conjecture ever since the matter first became known. However, even the semi-official *Short History of the Theosophical Society* acknowledges:

[Leadbeater] said that in regard to one boy, in order to obviate this trouble [i.e. sexual disturbance] of which he was clairvoyantly aware he advised a certain regulated practice. To about three other boys in difficulties he had advised
caution and the gradual overcoming of their troublesome habits. To the first boy he had written in cypher, not only about his sex problems, but also on another matter of higher import, the development of which was contingent not only upon controlling the physical distress but also on the mental necessity of outgrowing it. On the nature of this higher purpose Mr Leadbeater was pledged to secrecy and did not divulge it however fierce the attack upon him or the misunderstanding of his motives, though to Mrs Besant he admitted its existence. [27]

So Leadbeater's resignation was accepted, and Olcott cancelled his special appointment as Presidential Delegate.

But Leadbeater continued to defend his actions, alleged his opponents were under the influence of Black Magicians, and claimed that two of his most damning admissions before the Committee were mistakes made by the stenographer, and did not constitute part of the original transcript. Immediately upon receiving the Committee's decision, he cabled Mrs Besant, seeking her advice.

Brief report of Committee meeting Col. advised resignation. Best course. Copies of your letter to
Mrs Dennis and mine to Mr Fullerton put before Committee. M. exceedingly hostile. Bertram implicated you, stormy debate. Col. accepted resignation. What work should I do now? Cannot do public lecturing. Burma good. I should prefer to spend time in the tropic rather than in England. If there is any work that I can do, please let me know. I might be useful in Australia or in New Zealand. Technically my resignation from the T.S. removes me from the E.S. But I can answer questions in unofficial capacity as friend. [29]

Mrs Besant replied by letter on May 17th. She agreed that Leadbeater should have resigned, and suggested that she might do so in protest. She intended to expel from the ES all who had taken part in "this insane action", and to cancel her American tour. But she was "fully, utterly, certain" that Leadbeater had acted with good intentions "in the most difficult problem that parents and teachers have to face". She also speculated on what he could do, though she suggested if public activities were impossible it was because the Master had more important work for him. "They are so indifferent to the world's opinion." [29]

On the same day that she wrote her letter to him, he followed his cable with a letter to her, giving an
account of the "two hours of discussion and cross-examination" which preceded the Committee's findings. He speculated on his future, wondering whether he could find work in India or Burma, and regretting that he could not take a Headmastership because he lacked a University degree. He wanted some quiet time to do some writing, but did not want to spend it in England. Basil Hodgson-Smith and Fritz Kunz were to continue as his secretaries, though Basil was preparing for university. He included some discussion of ES matters in the letter: Mrs Besant had recently established an "Inner Group" (known as the IG) within the ES, and its existence was already causing some problems amongst those who had not been invited to join. [30]

Mrs Besant also wrote to Colonel Olcott on May 23rd, expressing her disapproval both of the advice Leadbeater had given to the boys, which she thought "likely to lead the boys into a very vicious practice ruinous to health", and of the proceedings against him being "founded upon "one sided statements by hysterical people and their report of statements forced from frightened boys by people determined beforehand to convict". She thought the Americans had "behaved disgracefully" in making the matter public. Fullerton had issued an official circular to all American members: it dealt with the rumours about Leadbeater and stated that stories which had been current "for years" in
India, Ceylon and England had finally reached America, where proof had been found to substantiate them. Mrs Besant felt Leadbeater's loss was a "terrible blow to the Society":

"It is a serious thing to destroy one of our best workers, and the procedure should be grave and judicial, not a mere chorus of howls." [31]

Leadbeater, meanwhile, continued to reside at 10, East Parade, Harrowgate, and it was from there that his next letter to Mrs Besant was addressed. He advised her against resignation, and felt her suggestion that he might remain in England was impractical, fearing that "the enemies of the Society will endeavour to set the law in motion" against him, and that Mead and Keightley would follow with their "persecutions". He planned to rest for a few months.

Mrs Besant's understanding of her colleague seems to have taken a change of direction, for on June 9th, she issued a strongly worded letter to members of the ES in which she condemned his teachings, and, implicitly, him.

Mr X [Leadbeater] appeared before The Council of the British Section, representatives of the French and American Sections being present and voting; Colonel Olcott in the chair. Mr X denied none of
the charges, but in answer to questions very much strengthened them, for he alleged that he had actually handled the boys himself and that he had thus dealt with boys before puberty as a prophylactic. So that the advice supposed to have been given as a last resort to rescue a boy in the grip of sexual passions, became advice putting foul ideas into the minds of boys innocent of all sex impulses; and the long intervals, the rare relief, became twenty-four hours in length - a daily habit. It was conceivable that the advice as supposed to have been given had been given with pure intent, and the presumption was so in a teacher of Theosophical morality; anything else seemed incredible. But such advice as was given, in fact such dealing with boys before sex passions were awakened, could be given with pure intent only if the giver were, on this point, insane.

[32]

And she concluded:

Let me here place on record my opinion that such teachings as this given to man, let alone to innocent boys, is worthy of the sternest reprobation. It distorts and perverts the sex
impulse, implanted in man for the preservation of the race; it degrades the idea of marriage, of fatherhood and motherhood, humanity's most sacred ideals; it befools the imagination, pollutes the emotions and undermines the health. Worst of all is that it should be taught under the name of the Divine Wisdom, being essentially "earthly, sensual, devilish". [33]

Mrs Besant's sudden, and never explained, change of attitude, and her refusal to give him the support he had come to expect of her, was a serious blow to Leadbeater. However, they continued to exchange letters as Mrs Besant went on working in India, and Leadbeater lived quietly at Harrowgate, the island of Jersey, or Sicily, continuing his occult investigations. He continued to seek her advice regarding his future, and to remind her of their past occult work together:

You have been in daily contact for years with my astral and mental bodies, and you know they are not impure or sensual in the ordinary meaning of those words, and there are other higher things too. You doubted the highest once, you remember, not unnaturally, but summoned up again, and said at leavetaking: "You will not think again that I
am only a dream will you?" Can you have doubted again? [34]

Leadbeater was thinking of going to Japan, perhaps becoming a Buddhist monk, although he feared this would mean that he had to leave Basil behind in England, preparing for his University work, and take only Fritz, and a new young man, Johan van Manen, with him. [35] Leadbeater's letters to Mrs Besant were long and friendly; hers in reply were short and formal.

Jinarajadasa, meanwhile, was in America, and wrote to Fullerton defending his former teacher. He pointed out that he had lived for many years in close contact with Leadbeater, and had never had the slightest reason to suspect him of sexual irregularity. Jinarajadasa disagreed with Leadbeater on his theories about the benefits of masturbation, but stated that he believed his colleague held these views sincerely, and largely as a result of the work as an Anglican clergyman, during which he had been confronted with so much evidence of the evils of illicit sexual intercourse. Fullerton objected strongly to Jinarajadasa's views. Olcott, who was strongly antagonistic to Leadbeater at this time, was visiting New York, and heard of Jinarajadasa's defence of Leadbeater. Taking exception to
this, he issued an "Executive Notice" cancelling his diploma of membership, unnecessarily, as it happened, since Jinarajadasa had already resigned. [36]

Meanwhile, there was concern over the matter in other Sections of the Society. In Germany, Rudolph Steiner, then General Secretary of the German Section, sent a circular on the Leadbeater case to all members in Germany, in which he declared:

I can speak the more freely of the Leadbeater affair since I have always deemed it necessary to repudiate the methods by which he arrives at his occult information, the spreading of which he so extols. [37]

Steiner had developed a dislike for Leadbeater and his (by Steiner's standards) crude psychism, and a concern for the dominance Leadbeater was acquiring over the TS. Steiner's intellectual approach, together with his emphasis on western occultism and Christianity, conflicted with Leadbeater's view of occultism. Steiner was likewise coming more and more into conflict with Mrs Besant, and his personal following, which made up most of the German Section of the TS, was generally of a different character to the rest of the Society's membership. From around 1905 Steiner began
lecturing on "Anthroposophy", and his individual interpretation of Theosophy, contrasting both with the "orthodoxy" of HPB and the teachings of Besant and Leadbeater, began to acquire dominance in the German TS. [38]

By September 27th, Mrs Besant's attitude was again changing, and she wrote a much friendlier letter to Leadbeater. She was, however, still concerned that she may have been under a "glamour", that is, an artificial and illusory image, throughout her working with Leadbeater. [39] This could have explained why she thought she had done great things in the spiritual worlds with a man who was "earthly, sensual, devillish". [40] Leadbeater's next letter to her, on October 17th, reassured her on this, implying that this sort of doubt was likely to have been fostered by the Black Powers. [41] He informed her that he has sent out a little printed letter giving his side of the affair, and that there was a move in the USA to establish a fund to compensate him for the financial loss resulting from his resignation. And he warned her against Chakravarti, to whom she was turning again: "He is playing a double game", warned Leadbeater.

By November 6th he was giving Mrs Besant an account of his attempts to contact Mrs Dennis on the astral plane:
Mrs Dennis' attitude is a mystery. I have tried to reach her astrally but it is useless; she gives me the impression of a different person altogether. Does this seem to you also? I do not like to make the suggestion, and I shall not hint a word of it to anyone but you, but the truth is that it seems to me a kind of half obsession. The Mrs Dennis that I used to know would not have behaved as she has done even if I has committed all the crimes that she appears to believe. She had not such bitterness and rancour in her.[42]

The exchange of letters between them moved from the first phase of support and collaboration, through a period of formality and coldness on Mrs Besant's part as she was more and more influenced by the Theosophists at Adyar who had been horrified by Leadbeater's behaviour, to a gradual resumption of friendliness by the end of 1906. As the result of his frequent letters, regular reminders of their occult work together and the occult bonds which indissolubly linked them, she came gradually to reinterpret the events of 1906.

The relationship between Leadbeater and Mrs Besant was too close to be dissolved, even by so great a
scandal. The fallen prophet gathered his forces, and awaited his return to power. He did not have long to wait. [43]