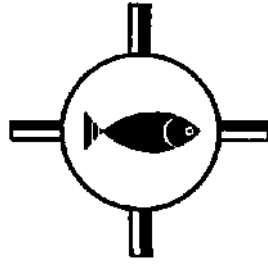


LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES



Unit 3

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH : HISTORY

Paper 1

PART II



Printed in Australia

UNIT 3

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

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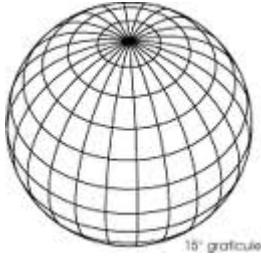
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EXPANSION AND OPPOSITION: 1920 - 1925

As in the case of the Liturgy and the other documents of the Church, the basic teachings of the new branch of the Catholic Church had by this time (1920) been given a definite foundation. In the space of about 3 years the two Bishops, between them, had accomplished what now seems an almost impossible task. For that reason they have not only earned the right to be called "founders" of the Liberal Catholic Church, but they have earned the deep gratitude of our own and all future generations of Liberal Catholics.

Following the "public launching" of the Church in Sydney in 1917, the Church continued to grow, and Bishop Wedgwood, in truly apostolic missions carried the Church further into various parts of the world.

NEW ZEALAND

Already in December 1916 he visited New Zealand with the purpose of establishing the Church there. During those first and later visits, he ordained priests and laid the foundation for the future growth of the Church in that country.

U.S.A.

In July 1917 Bishop Wedgwood visited the United States on his way from Sydney to London. During that visit he ordained several priests. The first regular service took place on August 11, 1917 in Los Angeles. The Church in the U.S.A. soon took root so firmly that in 1919 it was decided to constitute the United States of America a separate Province. In July 1919 Irving Steiger *Cooper* was consecrated in Sydney as Regional Bishop of the U.S.A. In May 1922 the first Liberal Catholic Church building in the United States was consecrated in Los Angeles. After that the growth of the Church proceeded rapidly.

INDONESIA

(Formerly the Dutch East Indies)

Many prominent Dutch theosophists from the then Netherlands East Indies came to Sydney in the early days of the Church and were ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Leadbeater, who himself later visited Java on several occasions. Already in June, 1917, a Dutchman, Julian Adriaan *Mazel* was consecrated to the episcopate in Sydney. In 1918, together with the Reverend (later Bishop) A. G. Vreede he began the translation of the completed parts of the Liturgy into Dutch. The complete Liturgy in Dutch was finally published in 1923, in the same year as a Dutch translation of "The Science of the Sacraments".

In 1919 Bishop Mazel visited Java and established the Church there. The Church grew rapidly and later several fine church-buildings were erected in the main cities of Java.

GREAT BRITAIN

While Bishop Wedgwood travelled abroad, the work in Great Britain was carried on by Bishop King and a group of enthusiastic priests. Already in 1917 and 1918 centres were established in the larger cities in England and in Scotland where regular services were held. The central Oratory in London was moved from Red Lion Square to No. 1, and later to No. 2 Upper Woburn Place.

THE NETHERLANDS

In 1920 Bishop Wedgwood visited Holland where he ordained priests and created great interest in the Church through his lectures to members of the Theosophical Society. In January 1921 the first public services were held in The Hague. Soon regular services were also held in Amsterdam and other cities.

Bishop Mazel, who had been appointed Regionary Bishop for The Netherlands East Indies in 1919, was in January 1924 additionally appointed Regionary for the Netherlands. The Church continued to grow and in the years that followed several church-buildings were erected in the principal cities.

In the years that followed the Church spread and grew with undiminished vigor in many countries around the world. In most countries where the Church operates today the first activities can be found to have started during this decade (the 1920's). Bishop Wedgwood, now together with Bishops Mazel and Cooper, continued the truly apostolic missions which led to this continued growth and expansion. In the meantime Bishop Leadbeater in Australia and Bishop King in England helped expand the Church further in those countries.

ATTACKS ON THE CHURCH

As mentioned before, this world-wide growth was made possible almost entirely by the interest and support received from members of the Theosophical Society. However, gradually a reaction set in and the Church was attacked by certain groups and individuals within the society. It is perhaps understandable that some theosophists, who had sought freedom in the Society from the narrow dogmatism still prevalent in many Christian churches at that time, would be suspicious of this new Church to which some of their fellow members were attracted. Most of the criticism leveled against the Church rested on ignorance of its true nature.

Today these attacks seem totally unfounded and rather pointless. They often show a complete ignorance of the true facts. They came from many quarters, but the most damaging ones were launched by various theosophical groups in the U.S.A. and by some individual members of the Theosophical Society in Australia and the U.S.A. In many cases they accused the Church and its leaders of being agents of the Roman Catholic Church trying to "take over" the Theosophical Society. It did not help that the Jesuits in their English organ "The Month" also attacked the Church. The following paragraphs in the interim constitution of 1916 of the "Old Catholic Church in Great Britain" were regarded as particularly offensive:

"The Old Catholic Church in Great Britain confesses Christ as the Fountain Head, the Supreme Pastor and Bishop of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which all baptized people are members.

It regards the Pope as the Primate of Christendom and Patriarch of the West and in that capacity prays for him in its Liturgy."

Some people did not realize that praying for the Pope in the Liturgy did not necessarily mean that the Church was part of the Roman Catholic Church. Bishop Wedgwood and others wrote several pamphlets defending the Church and giving the correct facts. In one of these Bishop Wedgwood wrote:

"That our Church should be made a storm-center is not surprising. We stand between not two, but four fires. The Church people find us too theosophical. Theosophists find us too

"Churchy". Catholics and ritualists consider us too free in our beliefs; Protestants too Catholic in our worship. We, however, believe firmly in our principles; and the hope and courage that people derive from the teaching of our Church, the inspiration they gain from our worship and the phenomenal growth of our membership, are the true test of the work we do.

The world would certainly be happier if each man could but learn to show towards others the tolerance he claims for himself."

Partly for reasons of a private nature, partly for health reasons, Bishop Wedgwood, weary after years of hard work, resigned as Presiding Bishop in 1922. He was succeeded in that office by Bishop Leadbeater in April, 1923.

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD

The following year (1924) the First General Episcopal Synod was held in Sydney. This Synod confirmed the election of Bishop Leadbeater as Presiding Bishop and accepted the Constitution as provisionally authorized by him as Presiding Bishop in 1923. From this time onward the role of the Joint Clerical and Episcopal Synod in London as the governing body of the Church was definitely taken over by the Liberal Catholic Bishops as a body, either meeting in council or transacting business through correspondence.

With the consecration of several more Bishops (for Great Britain, New Zealand and South Africa) during the year and the return of Bishop Wedgwood to active work the number of Bishops in the Church (8 at the end of 1924) from now on made the General Episcopal Synod the fully operative government of the Church.

The Joint Clerical and Episcopal Synod of Great Britain had operated under Matthew (as the "Chapter of our Lady and St. Willibrord") and later under Wedgwood as the governing body of the Church while there were only few Bishops and the Church was confined to Great Britain and the Dominions. Once the Church started to spread to other countries and the number of Bishops increased, a different body had to take over this function. The obvious choice was the General Episcopal Synod, the body of Bishops. This was in the true apostolic tradition of the early Church.

We see then that in 1924, at the time of the First General Episcopal Synod, the basic structure of the Church was completed. It has functioned ever since along the lines laid down during the years 1916-1924, by:

1. Using its *Liturgy* (regulated ritual and worship for the working of the Sacraments),
2. Under its *Constitution* (the organizational form under which the Church acts and makes decisions),
3. With its *Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine* (the basic doctrinal, theological and philosophical background against which it functions).

PUBLISHING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The first official monthly magazine of the Church, "The Liberal Catholic", commenced publication in October, 1924. It was the continuation of the local Sydney periodical "St. Alban's Monthly Paper" which had been in publication since Easter, 1921. The new magazine was print-

ed in Sydney but copies were sent overseas in bulk and it was published simultaneously every month in Sydney, London and Los Angeles, with locally added covers.

Most publications of the Church were issued through the *St. Alban Press* (Sydney, London, and Los Angeles), the name chosen for the publishing activities of the Church. Apart from the Liturgy several books were published by the St. Alban Press in the early 1920's, including the first edition of Leadbeater's "The Science of the Sacraments", his "Hidden Side of Christian Festivals"; "The Science of Prayer" by Prof. Ernest Wood, and "The Parting of the Ways" by Bishop Pigott. Later the publication of several of these books was transferred to the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar and London, as this Publishing House had better facilities for distribution.

The year 1924 saw the publication of a 2nd Edition of the Liturgy.

In July, 1924 Bishop Wedgwood's health improved and he returned to active work in the church. A Dutch lady, Mrs van Eeghen, offered her country estate at *Huizen* in Holland for Bishop Wedgwood's use and built a small chapel on the estate for him. Bishop Wedgwood took up his residence there and St. Michael's, Huizen, soon became the centre for the activities of the Church in Europe. Especially during the summer months many people came to Huizen, and Wedgwood trained and ordained many priests there for the Church in the European countries. St. Michael's, Huizen, now functioned as a training centre just as Sydney had done - and continued to do while Bishop Leadbeater lived there.

In 1925 a large church-building, temporarily in disuse, was purchased in London. This building was consecrated in 1926 as St. Mary's pro-Cathedral by the Regionary Bishop, Frank Waters Pigott. At this period of the history of the Church there were four main centres of activity:

- St. Alban's pro-Cathedral - Sydney (Bishop Leadbeater, Presiding Bishop)
- St. Michael & All Angels - Huizen, Holland (Bishop Wedgwood)
- St. Alban's pro-Cathedral - Los Angeles (Bishop Cooper)
- St. Mary's pro-Cathedral - London (Bishop Pigott).



THE EXPECTED COMING: 1926-1930

In early 1926 the presence of most of the Bishops at the Jubilee Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, India, was an opportunity to hold the *Second General Episcopal Synod*. Among the decisions made at this Synod were some slight changes in the Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine so as to bring it into line with the "Basic Truths of Religion" as recently proclaimed by Mrs. Annie Besant.

The expectation of the Coming of the Lord was at this time at its peak. The day after the Convention an enthusiastic crowd of several thousand listened to the talks of Krishnamurti and others under the great Banyan tree at Adyar. As in 1911 in Benares, this was one of the few occasions when the Lord is said to have spoken through Krishnamurti. At the end of his address there came a sudden change from the third person to the first, which produced a deep impression on the large audience.

Dr. J. J. van der Leeuw who was present on the occasion wrote:

"The address was very fine, but nothing indicated its startling conclusion. Then in the midst of a sentence came the change. I stood nearby and I remember being struck first of all by the change of pronoun "I" instead of "HE". Then came a feeling of wonderful tenderness, almost a hush while the actual words were spoken, I did not feel a rush of power like some, but rather a holy silence as if the portals of some shrine were opened'. But it was only hours afterwards that I began to realize what had happened..... There was a solemn joy in nature like the joy of a mother when her child is born, a radiant and holy joy, more than a great power. There was about the whole event the tenderness and the sacred mystery surrounding the BIRTH; I was reminded of the shepherds who worshipped the Babe in the manger, but also of the saying that He comes like a thief in the night. It was all so simple, so natural."

Some of us may now feel rather sceptical about these events, but there is no mistaking the utter sincerity of belief, the exaltation and enthusiasm of the people present on those occasions. Dr. van der Leeuw was certainly not a man to be swayed by mass hysteria or emotionalism.

There is a marked difference between the experience of the "presence of the Lord" as described by those who witnessed it on the few occasions when He is said to have spoken through Krishnamurti and the alleged manifestation of the Holy Spirit as witnessed in the "Charismatic" and Pentecostal movements which seem to occur from time to time with cyclic regularity and are accompanied by "speaking in tongues" and other phenomena of an emotional nature. The description by Dr. van der Leeuw of "a holy silence as if the portals of some shrine were opened" seems to ring true, particularly to those of us who have had the privilege of being the ordinand in the service of ordination to the priesthood.

The expectation of a Coming is of course not new, neither in Christianity nor in most other religions. Some Hindus expect an *avatara* or divine incarnation of Vishnu, some Buddhists expect the Bodhisattva Maitreya, and some Moslems the Imam Mahdi, some Jews expect the coming of the Messiah. The very first Christians expected the Christ to come again in their life time, and since then there has nearly always been one group or another within Christendom which expected his immediate Coming. The Catholic Apostolic Church expected Him last century and

there are several Adventist bodies which expect Him to come this century. So if the Liberal Catholic Church v/as one of the movements which expected the Coming of the Lord in the early parts of this century, there is nothing "unchristian" in that fact.

I have dealt with this subject at some length here, as it is something we as Liberal Catholics all have to face up to. We cannot understand the short history of our Church without this knowledge of the past. There has been a tendency to depreciate and try to "sweep under the carpet" some of our history (both of the "Theosophical" and "Catholic" heritages). A candidate for Orders needs to have some knowledge of the past history of the Church, that he may be able to answer inquiries. An impartial and objective attitude is needed to fully appreciate not only our own, but also the history of other Christian churches and movements.

THE OMMEN CAMPS

During this period the summer gatherings at Ommen in Holland played an important part. Krishnamurti spoke to thousands gathered round the campfire on those occasions. But his message gradually developed in a different direction from the simple and practical teaching of "At the Feet of the Master" (first published 1910). In September, 1926 Bishop Pigott could still write:

"Those who went to Ommen for the Star gathering must have returned gladdened, strengthened and refreshed by another manifestation of the Lord's Presence amongst us - speaking again through a bodily form. His Presence in this form at this time, I take it, for the helping of the world, not especially for those of us who believe that He is here; yet those who are privileged to hear Him speak now in these early days of His visitation are undoubtedly very greatly uplifted and are so deeply moved that, as so many of them express it, they themselves can never be the same again and the world a-round them takes on a different aspect."

Apart from the few occasions when the Lord was said to have spoken through him, Krishnamurti's teaching at this period was chiefly mystical. He often expressed himself through poetry reminiscent of the Eastern Pantheistic Mystics, as in his "Hymn of the Lord Buddha":

"I must bring the world to Thee; I must make Thee their eternal Companion. They must know Thee as I know Thee — the Perfect, the Simple, the Glorified, the Fountain of Truth, Knowing Thee, they will set aside their toys, their small worlds, their playthings, their pomp, the complications of their religions, their rites, their ceremonies. For Thou art the end of all sorrow, of all joy, of all knowledge, of all searches."

In the summer of 1927, while attending the Ommen camp, one of our priests, the Rev. Herbrand Williams, M.A., M.C. wrote:

"The spiritual atmosphere of the Camp is extraordinary in its power and simplicity. It is as though we were all gathered together in the very presence of the Lord, were made one in Him, in the love and the peace that flow out from Him to the world. I feel as though in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament enshrined in some great Cathedral; but the Cathedral is no earthly one of sculptured stone, but is fashioned of the woods and the heather and the still pools of Eerde¹; and the Presence therein is not confined to any

¹ Eerde: name of the country seat.

one especial place, but enfolds all in its sacred peace. Here we are close to the heart of Nature, close to the ultimate secret and source of life. There are *over* two thousand five hundred people of all nationalities gathered together in Camp--which is a marvel of efficient organization — living in a friendly, simple way, talking and laughing together, going for walks in the woods.....

The highest moments of the Camp are spent round the Camp fire, lit each evening at sunset by Dr. Besant and Krishnaji. It is laid in the centre of a sandy clearing in the pinewoods; and the scent of the pines fills the air like incense..... While the dusk slowly falls, Krishnaji speaks.

His teaching is utterly new, yet as old as Time itself. It is simple and beautiful as the evening or the dawn, and as difficult to interpret. It is full of paradox, yet clear and penetrating as a ray of sunlight in a dark place or as a breath of fresh air in a crowded room. Because it is so simple a child could understand it, yet to live it as it should be lived would be the life's work of a great saint.....

The truth that he teaches is the existence of the Beloved and the Kingdom of Happiness.....

The Kingdom of Happiness is the abode of the Beloved, and union with the Beloved is the goal of the seeker. By union alone liberation is to be found. The Beloved is not to be limited in our minds to any one form, however great or beautiful or holy; He is the heart of all forms, high or low, the "inner God seated within the shrine." Speaking of a wonderful vision of the Beloved, Krishnaji says: "Ever since then it has been my happiness, my intense joy to see all things through Him, to see trees, human beings, skies, all in Him...."

'Yea, I have sought my Beloved, and discovered Him seated in my heart.
My Beloved beholds through mine eyes,
For now my Beloved and I are one.'

Such are the truths that Krishnaji is teaching, striking in their simplicity and their depth. But there is a way to be followed to the Kingdom, and that way lies within. 'The Kingdom of Happiness is within you.' The way to liberation is not outside ourselves or apart from us, but within us; and only by seeking the way in the heart can we find the Truth. Krishnaji repudiates all outer authority, and calls upon us to recognize the inner Voice alone, the key to the Kingdom of Happiness....

There is a life to be lived, an ethic to be practiced, by means of which the way is to be trodden. That is the life of renunciation and of love - the ethic of all true mystics throughout the ages.... His doctrine of renunciation, however, shows us clearly that the Kingdom of Happiness is indeed the very Kingdom of the Spirit, only to be won by suffering and unselfishness and many bitter trials. Another aspect of this renunciation is that we should learn to depend upon nothing that is outside ourselves, but to look within us for the rock upon which we must build our lives. Hence, Krishnaji believes that we cannot attain liberation while we cling to the ceremonies of the great religions. The ceremonies are crutches to help the weak in spirit, but if we would attain true liberation, so he teaches, we must go beyond the ceremony, and find within ourselves the Truth that was veiled in the symbolism, the Life that was outpoured through the sacrament..."

We discern here already the points in Krishnamurti's teachings which would lead to the bewilderment of many within our Church and within the Theosophical Society. Here we see a pure Mystic teaching that which all Mystics have taught through the ages: the direct mystical path to God, No authority, no organisation, no ceremonies, but "oneness with the Beloved".

Father Williams' further remarks are pertinent to the situation in which many Liberal Catholics find themselves when faced with this teaching:

"...with regard to the great claim that has been made that the teaching given by Krishnaji is that of the World-Teacher, we must affirm that upon this, as upon all other matters of faith and revelation, we are free to think as we please. We can reject the message of Krishnaji in its entirety and refuse to admit its inspiration, or we can accept it with gratitude and reverence - and still remain true and loyal members of the Liberal Catholic Church, so long as there is love and not strife in our hearts, and so long as we extend to others who do not share our views the tolerance that we claim for ourselves. Entire freedom of thought is our most treasured possession in the Liberal Catholic Church; if we should ever forsake the principle of freedom, our value as a separate branch of the Church Catholic would largely be destroyed...."

The Catholic Church throughout her history has followed a conservative policy in all matters of individual spiritual experience; as a Body Corporate she has assimilated only those revelations which have stood the test of time. There is abundant testimony to this in the lives of her saints. It should not, however, be forgotten that we have no criterion of judgment in matters of this nature. We do not fully understand the consciousness of any human being standing at our own level, let alone that of a great Mystic treading the heights of the Path of Liberation. Nor do we know anything of the Consciousness of Our Lord the Christ, save only that He is one with all that lives, and that the spiritual life consists in an ever-growing realization of the Christ-life within our hearts....

Some of our people appear to have been troubled because Krishnaji teaches that the way to Liberation is not to be found through ceremonial. In the ultimate that is unquestionably true. There comes a certain stage in the spiritual life when the aspirant must realize that ceremonies are not necessary for the attainment of liberation, or salvation, as it has been called in Christian terminology. That does not mean that sacraments are not exceedingly valuable in the spiritual life; it does imply that all that can be done by ceremony can be done by the power of the Christ within each one of us.

It is unquestionably true that the sacramental method of worship is of enormous help in quickening our spiritual faculties and calling out the power of the Indwelling Christ in our hearts. The Presence of the Lord upon the altars of the Catholic Church is a true Presence, before which we rightly bend the knee, for it is the very Presence of God. But there is a Presence also within the human heart, and in the deepest sense our spiritual progress will alone depend upon our recognition of that Inner God and an ever growing union with His wisdom and power. The Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist is a true Sacrifice -a Sacrifice of God as well as of the love of man -but not until each one of us offers that Holy Sacrifice all day long upon the altar of his own heart, pouring out his life in union with the mighty Life of God, shall we have achieved the full significance of the rite. And

then the inner, mystical Transubstantiation will take place, and we shall be changed into the likeness of His glory....

But in our use of ceremonial-we are not especially thinking of our own spiritual progress, but of the helping of others. The Catholic Church is a great Institution designed to safeguard certain channels of spiritual power for the helping of the world as a whole; and the world is as yet very far from Liberation. We, who are Clergy of the Church, and the laity too to a lesser extent, are stewards of that power, having as our principal work the outpouring of the love and the life of God in ways intended to help mankind in the mass, as well as the individual worshipper who approaches the altar.

To accomplish this work we join together in the services of the Church, and we believe that the Lord uses us as a collective channel through which His Love may reach and help His people.... The Church exists to help all; she has a message for people at every stage of evolution. Therefore she gives sacraments to those who need sacraments, and through her sacraments brings them into direct touch with the Lord Who founded her; and she uses sacraments in her work of lifting the heavy burden of the sin and sorrow of the world. Her function is quite different from that of the great Mystic who proclaims the Path to Liberation." (The Liberal Catholic, November, 1927)

I have quoted Herbrand Williams at some length as what had to be said could hardly have been better expressed.

During the years that followed many clergy and members left the Church. The Theosophical Society also lost many of its members. Krishnamurti's teaching became more and more radical as time went on. In 1929 he dissolved *the Order of the Star in the East* and severed all connections with the Theosophical Society and the other movements that had supported him. We can now see that this step was essential if he was to give his own individual teaching, away from the influence of Theosophy.

THIRD GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD

It was in a rather different atmosphere than 4 years earlier that the 3rd *General Episcopal Synod* met at Adyar in early 1930. A statement was issued by the Synod to the membership from which the following is quoted:

"Many questions have been asked in regard to the Coming of the World Teacher. The General Episcopal Synod has taken into careful consideration the widely divergent opinions held and expressed by various members of the Church, not only as to the fact of the Coming, but as to its nature and extent; and it feels strongly that it has no right to impose a belief upon its members, but must maintain its universal policy of granting them perfect freedom to hold to their own individual convictions upon this matter as upon all others; so that in its official capacity it must remain all-inclusive, and must therefore take up an attitude of strict neutrality.

It has therefore withdrawn from the Summary of Doctrine, any mention of the World Teacher....

Re-affirming our belief in the abiding presence of the Lord in His Church as a whole, and in His willingness to use the Liberal Catholic Church in particular as an instrument for the out-pouring of His benediction upon the world, we exhort our brethren everywhere to continue to devote themselves to His service in His Church with unabated confidence and zeal."

The policy adopted by the Bishops at this Synod is clear from the last sentence. It was one of what may be termed "a falling back on the Catholic heritage of the Church".

But after so many years of expectation of the Coming many clergy and members were still quite bewildered by the situation. In 1927-1928 Bishop Wedgwood published several booklets defending ceremonial. In 1930 Bishop Leadbeater wrote in "The Liberal Catholic":

"I am constantly receiving letters and verbal requests, imploring me to give the writers and enquirers some guidance on this subject--to express, in fact, my own personal opinion. I hold very strongly that in all such matters as this every man must face the responsibility of making up his own mind; it is the duty of each member not to ask to be told what he ought to think, but to weigh the evidence and decide for himself. . .

Some have refused to believe that Krishnaji can possibly be a manifestation of the World-Teacher because of certain statements which he has made - such, for example, as: "You cannot approach Truth by any Path whatsoever, nor through any religion or rite or ceremony whatever. Forms of religious ceremony may be intended to help man, but I maintain that they cannot help. . ."

This is in flat contradiction to the experience of thousands of people; we *have* been greatly helped and uplifted by ceremonies, and (what is of far more importance) we have been able through them greatly to help others. . .

Cannot you see that if a great reformer is to move a supine and inattentive world, he *must* speak strongly, he *must* insist upon the particular point which he is emphasizing; he *must* ignore all considerations which tell against it. He must be entirely one-pointed, he must see no side but his own--in short he must be fanatical. . ."

Such questions — as to whether Krishnamurti was the expected World Teacher or not, or the value of ceremonial and other aspects of religion - kept occupying the membership at this period. As Leadbeater said: "Krishnamurti and his teachings constitute the greatest test to our members so far."

We may now pay little attention to this period of the Church's history, but during the first 15 years of the life of the Church it was a subject uppermost in the minds of many members. The rapid growth of the Church was to a certain extent due to the expectation of the Coming. The disappointment and puzzlement when the Coming turned out quite differently from what had been expected must be realized. How many of us would stand up to such strain today?



DIFFICULT YEARS: 1931-1955

The early 1930's were a difficult period for many. Many people were out-of work during the years of the Great Depression and the work of the Church suffered both through the lack of finance and a decline in membership.

In 1934 Leadbeater died and was succeeded by *Frank Waters Pigott* as Presiding Bishop. Pigott had been a Priest in the Anglican Church before becoming a Liberal Catholic and for 22 years he was to lead the Church through a rather difficult period of its history. Membership everywhere had dwindled considerably but those that remained constituted a small but keen and devoted group which carried the Church forward through the trying period of the Second World War and beyond.

After Leadbeater's passing and in the spirit of the 3rd General Episcopal Synod, Pigott, assisted by Wedgwood (who was now living in retirement in England) made certain changes in the Liturgy, particularly in the wording of the Shorter Form. He was supported in this move by the majority of the Regional Bishops at the time. These changes were incorporated in the 3rd Edition of The Liturgy which was published in London in 1942.

Mainly for practical reasons the General Episcopal Synod decided (by correspondence) in 1936 that only Regional Bishops should be entitled to vote. This reduced the number of Bishops which the Presiding Bishop had to consult and thus saved correspondence.

DIFFICULTIES IN AMERICA

It seems unavoidable that at some stage in the growth of any movement a division occurs. Thirty-one years after its inception and during the stressful period of World War II, the Liberal Catholic Church was not to be spared this fate.

When the first Constitution of the Church was prepared, the spiritual and ecclesiastical authority was vested in the body of Bishops, i.e., in the General Episcopal Synod, and within individual Provinces in the Regional Bishop and the Provincial Episcopal Synod, where such may exist. This is of course right and proper in a Catholic Church which is Hierarchical. The framers of the Constitution (including Bishop Wedgwood) hoping to maintain a certain balance in the Church had stipulated that: "Both in the Province and in each Parish or Center of work in the Church the administration of finance shall if practicable be left in the hands of representatives of the laity." Unfortunately this has proved in practice to be a weak point in the Constitution and at times a source of discord. To a great extent it was the underlying cause of the conflict which erupted in the American Province.

The American Province was the first to adopt a Provincial Constitution. It was incorporated in California in September 1928. This Constitution provided for the management of financial affairs by a Board of 6 Trustees elected every 3 years by the Clergy and laity of the Province. The Regional Bishop was *ex officio* Chairman of the Board.

When Bishop Cooper died in 1935, the G.E.S. elected Auxiliary Bishop Charles Hampton as his successor. In late 1940 and early 1941 friction developed between a majority of the members of the Provincial Board of Trustees and Bishop Hampton. In May, 1941, 5 members of the Board wrote to the Presiding Bishop in London suggesting that Bishop Hampton be relieved of his duties as Regional Bishop of the U.S.A., but remain Regional Bishop of Canada which was then also under his jurisdiction.

Bishop Pigott wrote to Bishop Hampton informing him of the action of the members of the Board and asked if he would be willing to accede to their proposal. Bishop Hampton then invoked a provision of the Constitution and removed the 5 Board Members from office.

The 5 Board Members then appealed to the G.E.S. against their suspension over the head of the Provincial Episcopal Synod of the Province. The G.E.S., after a long delay, finally directed that they be re-instated. This was during the critical stage of the war and Bishop Pigott had great difficulty in keeping up contact with the other Regional Bishops. Bishop Hampton refused on Constitutional grounds to abide by the Synod's decision. As a result, in August, 1943, the Presiding Bishop suspended Bishop Hampton from office. The G.E.S. designated Auxiliary Bishop John Eklund as "acting" Regional Bishop.

Many of the Clergy and members of the Province were in doubt about the wisdom of this move. A group headed by the senior Bishop of the Province, Auxiliary Bishop Ray Wardall, claimed that the interference of the Presiding Bishop and the G.E.S. in what they regarded as local affairs of the Province was unconstitutional. When, as laid down in the Constitution, a ballot was taken among the Priests and Deacons of the Province to ascertain whether Bishop Eklund was acceptable to the Clergy, the required majority was not obtained. His position as Regional Bishop was therefore not constitutional and the group under Bishop Wardall did not recognize him as such. To overcome this deadlock Bishop Eklund eventually dropped from the rolls all those Clergy who did not recognize his position, either because of inactivity or for "being in defiance of the authority of the G.E.S." A ballot among the remaining Clergy resulted in a majority for Bishop Eklund. This action naturally led to further alienation between the two parties.

In 1947, two new Auxiliary Bishops for the American Province were elected by the General Episcopal Synod and consecrated by Bishop Eklund. Bishop Wardall refused to take part in what he considered an illegal act. He was petitioned by a majority of the Clergy supporting him to consecrate the Vicar of the Los Angeles pro-Cathedral, the Rev. Edward M. Matthews to the Episcopate. This consecration took place on September 14, 1947. As Matthews had not been elected by the G.E.S., Bishop Pigott objected to this consecration and declared Bishop Wardall's membership in the G.E.S. terminated.

The group under Bishops Wardall (who died in 1953) and Matthews continued as the official Liberal Catholic Church in the U.S.A., incorporated in California. In 1961 the group under Bishop Dahl (who had succeeded Bishop Eklund) was incorporated as the Liberal Catholic Church in the State of Maryland. The two Liberal Catholic Churches in the U.S.A. continued to exist side by side up to 1976, when a complete reconciliation took place and the two groups were again united.

In retrospect, if there is a lesson to be learned from this case, it is that Bishops, Clergy and laity should always do their utmost to cooperate in harmony for the good of the Church.

THE POST WAR PERIOD

The Churches on the Continent of Europe and in Indonesia went through a time of great difficulties during the Second World War. After the cessation of the war, the Church in Western Europe and Indonesia soon recovered, but the work of the Church in the Eastern European countries, which had come under Communist domination, had to cease, at least in public.

The following years showed increased activity in the Church all around the world. In 1946, five new Bishops were consecrated and in 1947-1948, again five. Growth has since then been steady, but very slow; nowhere has there been anything like the spectacular growth of the 1920's.

Bishop Wedgwood, who had been living in retirement in England, died in 1951.

NOTE: In the writing of this chapter, the author has had the valuable assistance of Bishop Edward M. Matthews.



A NEW SPIRIT: 1956-1963



In 1956 Bishop Pigott died and *Bishop Adriaan Gerard Vreede*, Regionary of the Province of the Netherlands and Belgium, was elected Presiding Bishop.

THE DECLARATION OF HUIZEN

For some time there had been a feeling among some of the Bishops that the Church during the last 20 years or so had tended to drift back into "orthodox" Christianity. This trend could be said to have begun with the 1930 Synod, at which the Church had to take a stand on the Krishnamurti question, and had accordingly declared a policy of "back to the traditional sacramental aspect" of our Church. The whole question of the Coming which had occupied our members so much in the 1920's was now largely forgotten. There was a feeling that the Church needed a revival of the original spirit of the early days.

Bishop Vreede decided to invite all Bishops who were able to come to a conference which was held at Huizen in Holland, in August, 1956. The main question posed at this conference was: "What may have been the intention of our Lord Christ in promoting or permitting the founding of the Liberal Catholic Church?"

There must have been much soul-searching among the Bishops on this question and on what was the purpose of the Liberal Catholic Church. Was it to remain a Church with a theosophical type of teaching, and with certain unique features, or was it to become a purely Catholic (in the traditional sense) though "liberal" type of Church? Was there actually a need for such a body any loner, now that a more liberal trend was becoming apparent in the larder Churches? These are questions which have been asked many times in our Church, but seemed particularly important at that time.

There were 9 Bishops present at the end of the 5-day conference; the following unanimous declaration was issued as a recommendation to all the other members of the Synod:

"That the Liberal Catholic Church exists to carry out the original intent of Our Lord when He brought it into being and, under His continuing inspiration, to maintain in purity this new attempt to restore Theosophia, the Divine Wisdom, to His people, with special reference to the need for greater recognition of the Feminine Aspect also in our worship;

That it is essential to regard our Church as a body corporate in its own right, which accepts responsibility for its own viewpoint and standard, rewarding them as having inherent validity, irrespective of tradition, dogma and expediency;

That, accenting Our Lord — the LIVING Christ--as our Inspirer and Guide, we should ever be open to inaugurate change as His Spirit moves us to do so."

The contributions from the Bishops in reply to the question posed at the Huizen Conference were published in subsequent issues of "The Liberal Catholic" and thus gained publicity among the membership. The importance of the "Declaration of Huizen" was that it set as it were a positive note for the further development of the Church. The doubt and uncertainty of the

1930 Synod was now replaced by a definite outlook and purpose which has guided the Church ever since.

THE FOURTH GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD

In 1958 the 4th General Episcopal Synod met in Huizen, Holland with 14 Bishops attending. This Synod took some important decisions concerning the *Liturgy*, the *Constitution*, and the *Statement of Principles*.

The alterations which had been made in the Shorter Form since 1930 and incorporated in the Third (1942) Edition of the Liturgy were not favoured by many of the Bishops. This also included the relegation (at the 3rd Synod) of what was commonly called the "First Ray Benediction" to the section "Occasional Prayers" at the end of the Liturgy. Many wanted the Shorter Form restored to its original wording (as it appeared in the 2nd, 1924 Edition of the Liturgy) and the First Ray Benediction again placed in its original place in the Liturgy. Though supported by a majority of the Bishops, a two-thirds majority for this move was not obtained.

The eventual result was a compromise: It was decided that both the original and the revised version of the Shorter Form should be allowed to be used as alternatives, and the First Ray Benediction was restored to its original place at the end of the Holy Eucharist, but with the proviso that it was only to be used if authorized by the Regionary.

A number of changes were made in *the Constitution*, of which the most important ones were:

1. Voting rights were restored to all Bishops. (Since 1936 only Regionary Bishops had been entitled to vote.)
2. A standing committee of Bishops called the *Interim Committee* which was to exercise the powers of the Synod between actual meetings of the Synod was created. It was to consist of the Presiding Bishop (as ex officio chairman) and 4 members, each elected for a term of 8 years. All decisions taken by this committee were to be reported to the Synod. This would replace the previous system of only the Regionary Bishops voting and making the decisions. There were now too many provinces, which would tend to make such a system cumbersome.
3. The *Liturgy*, the *Constitution* and the *Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine* were now defined as "Official Documents" of the Church. Synod resolutions proposing changes in these documents had to be put before the whole Synod six months before voting on their adoption could take place. It was envisaged that every 10 years the official documents would be considered for revision. (This, however, was not observed in 1968 and changes continued to be made at subsequent Synods.)
4. A system of *Canons* was adopted. These were administrative and regulatory resolutions of the Synod additional to or implementing the Constitution. They were to have the same authority as the Constitution. This *Code of Canons* has proved a very useful addition to the former.

5. A Judiciary *Committee* consisting of the Presiding Bishop and 4 members of the Synod was instituted to deal with any appeals or disputes which may be referred to the Synod.

Some important changes were also made in the *Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine*. In the spirit of the "Declaration of Huizen" of 1956 a paragraph was added on the "mother-nature of God" and on "the holy Lady Mary, whose tender care of all women and children and for all who suffer, supplements the divine ministry of our Lord Christ."

The doctrine of *reincarnation* was now definitely included as a teaching of the Church by inserting words and sentences like: "through successive lives on earth" and "in *each* life", etc. Previous wordings relating to this subject had been ambiguous.

At the end of the *Summary of Doctrine* the following words were added:

"and the Bishops of the Church are prepared to accept as candidates for ordination only those who find themselves in general agreement with it."

The last provision seems reasonable. It could hardly be expected that the Bishops would ordain Clergy who held widely divergent views from those expressed in the "Summary". The word "general" gives scope for a certain freedom and avoids rigidity.

The Fourth General Episcopal Synod was the most important one held so far in the history of the Church. Many of its decisions have had and continue to have, lasting importance for the Church.

THE BONJER CASE

In 1928 Bishop Wedgwood had consecrated *Johan Bonjer* as Auxiliary Bishop in Holland. Bonjer resigned for personal reasons in 1935. In 1948 he was appointed Regionary Bishop for South Africa. He resigned again in 1949 and then lived in retirement in Holland. In 1959 he took the unexpected step of consecrating one of the Priests of the Dutch Province, H. Dubbink, to the Episcopate. Having acted without its authority the Synod had no other choice but to terminate his church membership and declare that Bonjer and his followers were no longer part of the Church.

A little later another Dutch Priest was consecrated Bishop by Bonjer, and for a short time this group calling themselves "The Brotherhood of the Blessed Sacrament" joined Bishop Matthew's group in the U.S.A. However, this union was short-lived and lasted only until 1962. The group so far has not attracted any sizeable following in Holland or any other country. Bishop Bonjer died in 1972.



THE RECENT YEARS: 1964-1977

THE FIFTH GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD

This Synod was held in the summer of 1964, again (as in 1958) at Huizen, Holland, at the centre once founded by Bishop Wedgwood, but later established as an "International Theosophical Centre" (ITC).

This Synod was attended by 18 Bishops, the largest attendance at any Synod so far. For the first time Bishops from Latin America and New Zealand were present. Compared to the Fourth G.E.S. however, there were few decisions of significance.

A new "Form of Healing Service for Use in Private" was added to the Liturgy and the "Procedure in Extremis" from the service of Holy Unction in the Third Edition became with some minor alterations - "Extreme Unction"

In the Statement of Principles, under the heading "Freedom of Thought" the words "but not of course to its Clergy" were omitted. This removed a somewhat discriminatory attitude towards the Clergy in respect to their freedom of interpretation.

Proposals for a revival "of the ancient order of deaconess" and for "a system of training for spiritual development along the lines of the Minor Orders" and for "a system of spiritual training as a preliminary to formal study for Major Orders" were also discussed. However, no action was taken on these proposals and they were left in abeyance for the time being.

Towards the end of the Synod Bishop Vreede announced his retirement as Presiding Bishop. A few months later, in November, 1964, *Sir Hugh Sykes*, Regionary Bishop of the province of Great Britain and Ireland, was elected Presiding Bishop. Bishop Vreede died two years later, in 1966.

In 1967, after much preliminary work by Bishop Sykes, the *4th Edition* of the *Liturgy* was published.

THE SIXTH GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD

The Sixth Synod was held in April, 1971 at Durham in northern England, and was again well attended.

Some decisions concerning the Liturgy were taken, such as the use of the word "you" instead of "thou" and "thee" when human beings are addressed. The prescribed periods of kneeling during the Holy Eucharist were reduced. (In practice these decisions will become fully applicable only when a new edition of the Liturgy is published.)

Other decisions embodying new policies were:

1. The placing of an age limit of 75 years on Bishops holding jurisdiction, i.e., Regionary and Diocesan Bishops.
2. Permission was given to hold Area Synods by mutual consent of Regionary Bishops. The function of such Synods to be consultative and advisory only.

3. All rulings of the General Episcopal Synod up to 1940 were reviewed, and those approved by the 6th Synod were now incorporated as Canons. Any other rulings from before 1940 unless already incorporated in the official documents of the Church, were rescinded. Among the rulings rescinded was the one barring women from the sanctuary. This has resulted in the admittance of women and girls as altar servers in some provinces since 1971.

A thorough revision of the *Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine* was decided on at the Synod and was now undertaken by correspondence. This work was completed early in 1973 and published as the 7th edition, dated the Feast of the Ascension 1973.

Bishop Sykes retired in June 1973. The Synod elected Bishop Sten von Krusenstierna, Regionary of the Australian Province, as the new Presiding Bishop. Bishop Sykes died in 1974.

Three Area Synods were held in 1973. The Bishops of Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia came together in Synod in Adelaide in January, In August the European Bishops held a Synod at Huizen lasting 3 days. In September the Bishops of the U.S.A. and Canada held their area Synod at Ojai, California. Both the European and American Synods were attended by the new Presiding Bishop.

TRENDS IN LATER YEARS

In the period since 1960 some of the historic church buildings from the 1920's have been abandoned for various reasons.

St. Alban's, Sydney, (built in 1866) mainly due to severe deterioration of the stonework (due to chemical smog) had to be vacated in 1966. A new smaller building has been erected on a new site nearer the inner city. This building was completed in 1976.

St. Mary's, London, (also built in the 1860's) had to be vacated for similar reasons in 1976. The London congregation now worships temporarily in rented premises until a new building can be built or purchased.

St. Alban's, Los Angeles, (built in 1923) mainly due to decrease in membership in the area, was sold to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1963. Bishop Matthews then moved his headquarters to Miranda in Northern California, where a new church centre was established.

St. Michael's, Huizen. The new church built in 1928 was destroyed by fire the same year, and from then onwards the combined Co-Masonic Temple and Lecture Hall on the estate also served as a Church. In 1966 this building also burned down. A new Church was completed and consecrated in 1972. Now (2010) the county is Naarden instead Huizen (borders changed).

Radio Broadcasts. During the years 1930-1960 the Sunday morning Holy Eucharist services followed by "Answers to Questions" addresses, were broadcast regularly from the Church of St. Alban, Sydney. The estimated number of listeners was 35,000. The sermons and addresses were of a high standard, usually given by the Reverend (later Bishop) Lawrence W. Burt, the Rev. Charles B. Hankin, and others including the author. The mail received in response to these broadcasts was quite considerable during the war years and shortly after (50 or more letters a week at times). Following the war period the flow of letters decreased considerably.

For some years a special, magazine was published with a wide circle of subscribers entitled "The St. Alban Answer". When broadcasts ceased in 1960 the attendance at the Sunday morning services in Sydney increase only marginally. The number of people who joined the Church as a result of listening to the Broadcasts was comparatively small.

Similar radio broadcasting sessions were conducted by the Reverend (later Bishop) Edward M. Matthews in *Los Angeles* from 1940 to 1963 and later from a station in Northern California. During the 1940's a quarterly magazine entitled "The Liberal Catholic Church Quarter Hour" was published in connection with the broadcasts. In later years Bishop Matthews has been the organizer of a religious ecumenical television program sent out from Eureka in Northern California. His weekly radio broadcasts ceased in 1981.

PUBLISHING

From 1966 onwards the St. Alban Press has again been active in publishing. Apart from the official documents of the Church many new books and new editions of early works are now being published regularly by the St. Alban Press, either from London, Ojai or Sydney .

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

After reaching a peak during the years 1925-1928, membership decreased considerably during the 1930's. Later there has been a slow but steady rise in membership.

The number of *Parishes and Centres where* regular church services are held are also subject to fluctuations, often due to the availability or lack of Clergy. During the last 12 years their number has remained fairly constant. For the countries from which figures are available the number of Parishes and Centres in the year 1933 was 105. For the same countries this figure had risen to 146 in 1964. There were 172 Parishes, Missions and Centres at the end of 1979.

THE SEVENTH GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD

This Synod was held at Ojai, California, in June/July, 1976. Eighteen Bishops were present. The work-load of this Synod was the greatest yet experienced at any Synod. A greater general interest among clergy and laity in the general policy and the work of the Synod had resulted in a great number of propositions being placed before the Synod.

One of the main subjects dealt with at the Synod was that of *Clergy Training*. Fifteen Priests from 7 Provinces met during the first week of the Synod to work out a scheme of Clergy training acceptable to most Provinces, for presentation to the Synod. This general outline of the Clergy training course as prepared by the Committee of Priests was approved by the Synod. So was the founding of *The Liberal Catholic Institute of Studies* and the Charter establishing the same.

The presentation by the fifteen members of the Clergy Training Committee of their draft-scheme to the Synod in session was a deeply moving occasion. Both Bishops and Priests felt the strength and inspiration received when the Priestly Order added the result of their efforts to that of the Episcopate.

Another important subject dealt with was that of *the role of women* in the Church. The Synod established an *Office of Deaconess* to which suitably qualified women may be admitted,

especially for work with children and the visitation of the sick. It was also decided that a Service of Our Lady may be compiled with women-officiants involving "suitable but distinctive" ceremonial. The Synod also authorized the participation of women Servers in the sanctuary during the Holy Eucharist and other Services.

On traditional and other grounds the Synod decided against the ordination of women to Holy Orders. In this decision the Synod was influenced by the attitude of the great traditional Churches: The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. It was also influenced by the view expressed by Bishop Leadbeater in his writings that the sacramental force is not adapted to work efficiently through the feminine body.

In the field of *Church government* there was a trend towards democracy. As part of this policy Presiding, Regionary and Diocesan Bishops were in future to be appointed for a term of seven years only, after which time they may either retire or be re-elected. It was also decided that in principle each country should eventually constitute a Province, though it was realized that this is a long-term aim.

It had been felt for some time that the Church was lacking in teaching definite spiritual disciplines, including the practice of meditation. The Synod therefore authorized the establishment of a Course for Spiritual Development and Discipline under the authority and guidance of the Presiding Bishop. This is not an easy matter and will need time and careful preparation.

THE END OF THE AMERICAN DIVISION

The most important decision by the Synod was the action taken to heal the existing division of the Church in the U.S.A. As described in Chapter 9 constitutional and other differences during the period 1941 - 1947 had led to this division. It was now felt that the time was ripe for reconciliation. For some time contact had been established between the Regionary Bishop for the U.S.A., Bishop Gerrit Munnik, and the Head of the Liberal Catholic Church Incorporated in California, Bishop Edward Matthews.

The Synod authorized the Presiding Bishop and Bishop Munnik to invite Bishop Matthews and his Church to amalgamate with the main body. After the Synod the two Bishops visited Bishop Matthews in Miranda, Northern California. As a result of the discussions held, the following Statement was signed on July 15, 1976:

"It is herewith agreed by the undersigned that all past differences between us have been resolved. Furthermore we agree to merge our two bodies and become once again One Church with international Headquarters at 30 Gordon Street, London, England."

(signed) + Sten von Krusenstierna
+ Edward Matthews

This action finally closed an unhappy chapter in the history of our Church.



SHORT RECAPITULATION OF EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

- 1908 April 28: Consecration of A. H. Mathew to the Episcopate at Utrecht, Holland, as head of the Old Catholic Mission to Great Britain.
- 1910 Leadbeater publishes article on his clairvoyant discovery of the inner side of the Sacraments, their reality and power. December: Mathew's break with Utrecht.
- 1913 Wedgwood comes into contact with Mathew and is ordained to the Priesthood.
- 1916 February 13: Wedgwood consecrated Bishop in London and assumes leadership of the movement. July: Leadbeater consecrated Bishop by Wedgwood in Sydney. Revision of the Liturgy begins.
- 1917 Easter Day: First public service in Sydney. The movement begins to expand. First service booklets of the new rite published.
- 1918 First church buildings consecrated in Melbourne and Sydney. September: New name officially adopted and confirmed by London Synod.
- 1919 First full edition of the Liberal Catholic Liturgy published. First "new type" Constitution and Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine adopted for Australia and New Zealand.
- 1920 Leadbeater's "Science of the Sacraments" and "The Hidden Side of Christian Festivals" published.
- 1920-22 Continued attacks on the Church by groups and individuals within the Theosophical Society.
- 1922-23 Wedgwood resigns as Presiding Bishop. Leadbeater elected as his successor.
- 1924 *First* General Episcopal Synod held in Sydney, Australia. Wedgwood founds Church Centre at Huizen, Holland.
- 1926 *Second* General Episcopal Synod at Adyar, India. Expectation of the Coming of the Lord through Krishnamurti at its peak.
- 1928-29 Krishnamurti denounces all organizations, ritual and ceremonial, and severs his connection with the movements supporting him.
- 1930 *Third* General Episcopal Synod held at Adyar, India. New Policy adopted.
- 1934 Leadbeater dies. Pigott elected Presiding Bishop.
- 1941-47 Disagreement between the Regionary and the Board of Trustees leads to a division in the Church in the U.S.A.



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- 1956 Pigott dies and is succeeded by Vreede. Bishops' Conference at Huizen.
- 1958 *Fourth* General Episcopal Synod held at Huizen, Holland. Constitution re-drafted.
- 1964 *Fifth* General Episcopal Synod again held at Huizen, Holland. Vreede retires and is succeeded by Sykes.
- 1971 *Sixth* General Episcopal Synod held at Durham, England.
- 1973 Revised version of Statement of Principles published. Sykes retires and is succeeded by von Krusenstierna. Area Synods held during the year in Australia, Europe and America.
- 1976 *Seventh* General Episcopal Synod held at Ojai, California.
- 1931 *Eighth* General Episcopal Synod held at Ojai, California.
- 1988 9th General Episcopal Synod held at Zeist, The Netherlands.
- 1992 10th General Episcopal Synod held at Egham, England.
- 1996 11th General Episcopal Synod held at Sydney, Australia.



APPENDIX

THE MODERN FOUNDERS

The reason we have used the title "Modern Founders" is that the original founder of the Christian Church is of course Jesus Christ (some say St. Paul). There have been many who have laboured to continue His work: the apostles, St. Paul, and many Christians throughout the ages. And in these late days of the Christian dispensation there were two men, *James Ingall Wedgwood* and *Charles Webster Leadbeater*, who can truly be said to have founded the particular branch of the Catholic (universal) Church we call the Liberal Catholic Church. There can be no doubt about the effectiveness of their labours; they have completely put their stamp on this Church. Therefore, a short biography of our founding Bishops is called for in this brief history of the Church.

J. I. WEDGWOOD

James Ingall Wedgwood was born May 24, 1883. He was therefore, a comparatively young man (32) when in 1916 he took up the leadership in what was then the Old Catholic Church in Great Britain. He was a member of the well-known family of fine porcelain manufacturers, and though by no means wealthy, was a man of independent means. Wedgwood was an expert on organs and had a degree of *Docteur (sciences)* from the University of Paris.

EARLY YEARS

We know comparatively little about his early years. The following extracts are quoted from a short autobiography which he wrote for the *Adyar Bulletin* (reprinted in "Theosophy in New Zealand", December, 1916):

"My liking of ceremonial was one of these early interests. One of my earliest recollections is that of standing with my nurse in the old Parish Church at Folkestone and watching a procession. I remember, even now, how stirred I was at the sight of it, and how I questioned my nurse later, when at Bedford, I passed a building bearing the inscription "Freemason's Hall". I had never before heard that it was a secret society, thereupon made up my mind to join it when I could.

In due course I went to school (I was sent to a boarding school at the early age of five, being, I understand, more than a trifle unmanageable at home!), and on Sundays we went to the usual Anglican Church where there was no ritual worth mentioning. The services tired me, but from the very beginning I was always interested in the organ; and during the Psalms which were specially trying to my patience, I used to count the number of pipes visible in the organ case. Later I had a good deal to do with organ construction. But it was only after coming in touch with Theosophy that I realized that my chief interest in the organ, and music generally, centred round the magical and psychological effect of sound....

But there was one important element in my childhood. My grandfather, Hensleigh Wedgwood by name, was one of the pioneers of the Spiritualist Alliance, and of the Society for Psychical Research....

My mother was an extremely good clairvoyant (she figures in some of the Myers, Gurney and Podmore books), and knew H. P. Blavatsky. And so, although I knew nothing of

Spiritualism or Theosophy, I heard of them, and took a great interest in the little I was told.....

My interest in the organ continued, and I liked to go to churches where there was good music. At about the age of seventeen, I strayed into a ritualistic church at East Clevedon, and heard a sermon which dealt incidentally with bowing the head at the name of Jesus. This interested me and the Priest gave me a little book which soon turned me into a full-blown High-Churchman. I became a server at the altar and so gained some experience of ecclesiastical ceremonial. I had read a silly Protestant book called "The Secret History of the Oxford Movement", by one Walter Walsh; its effect was to fire me with enthusiasm to join all the supposedly secret societies therein "exposed". Those that I did join I found to be perfectly innocuous and really edifying, like the "Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.".....

I became sincerely religious, and on that account was greatly troubled because I found that the ceremonial side of the worship appealed to me a great deal more than prayer, etc., which, in my ignorance of "rays" I considered a wrong state of affairs. Gradually I abandoned the idea of being an analytical chemist and thought to enter the Church. My people were at first opposed to this, and I was not sure of my vocation; so I decided to take up the study of music as the most useful preliminary for a Clergyman's work, and, as destiny would have it, I was led to become a pupil of one of the chief authorities on the old Gregorian music or Plainsong. "

After having spent some time at St. Alban's, Nottingham, the young Wedgwood moved to York where he continued his studies under the organist of York Minster. It was at this time that he attended a lecture by Mrs Besant and decided to join the Theosophical Society. We now continue in Wedgwood's own words:

"From that time forward I renounced all thought of church work and of a church career, and having just enough income on which to live decided to devote myself to work in and for the Theosophical Society. From 1911-1913 I acted as General Secretary of the Society in England and Wales, relinquishing that office to become Grand Secretary of the British Jurisdiction of the Co-Masonic Order. So much for preliminary history.

In 1913 a letter appeared in one of the London daily newspapers dealing with the habits of birds. The letter caught my eye especially because it was signed by Archbishop A. H. Mathew, of whose existence as an Old Catholic Bishop in England I knew vaguely. Something impelled me to write to him to ask for particulars of the Church of which he was head. He sent a very friendly answer. The idea of taking Orders re-entered my head. I told him something of the story of my life, of my interest in church work and of the studies I had made.

He asked me to go and see him, and at once accepted me. I was re-baptized and reconfirmed by him *sub conditioner* given the Minor Orders, those of Subdeacon and Deacon, and finally ordained by him as Priest on July 22, 1913. These ceremonies all took place in an oratory which I equipped in my rooms at 1 Upper Woburn Place, London, opposite the Headquarters of the T.S. where I worked as General Secretary.

The following two years saw the ordination to the Priesthood by Abp. Mathew of other members of the Theosophical Society.

In the autumn of 1914 I went to Adyar, India to the Headquarters of the T.S. on the invitation of Mrs Besant, and in the following year visited Australia. I was at the time Grand Secretary of the Order of Universal Co-Masonry for the British Jurisdiction, and I went there largely in connection with that work. It was in that year, 1915, that I had the privilege of initiating C. W. Leadbeater into Freemasonry. I talked with him about my ordination and he came to various celebrations of the Eucharist by myself. He was greatly impressed by the power for good which such ordination bestowed and with the splendid scope that the celebration offered for spreading spiritual blessing abroad on the world.

In the meantime Abp. Mathew had consecrated F. S. Willoughby as Bishop. In September, 1914 he had addressed a letter to his clergy saying that in view of his advancing years it seemed to him desirable that 'immediate steps should be taken to preserve the valid episcopal succession in our portion of the Church from risk of loss.' The election then held resulted in the consecration of the Rev. F. S. Willoughby by Abp. Mathew on October 28, 1914. My name came second in the voting and it was understood that I was to be consecrated on my return, so that there should be bishops to the canonical number of three.

Abp. Mathew then tendered his 'unconditional submission' to the Roman Church. The announcement appeared in *The Times* during the last days of 1915.

I was myself consecrated bishop on February 13, 1916 by Bishop Willoughby, assisted by Bishops King and Gauntlett. Our Oratory was much too small for the occasion and we made use of the Co-Masonic Temple in London.

Our situation was not an easy one. We had not entered the movement with any idea of starting another Church. Nothing was further from my mind. We found ourselves in relation with a devout and earnest congregation who had learned to value greatly the spiritual privileges which the movement afforded them.

A few months later I was once more on my way to Sydney to take counsel with C. W. Leadbeater. The worldwide journeying was decidedly expensive, but I realized some capital in order to make it possible. Bishop King was left in charge of the work in England and admitted some good workers to the Priesthood.

Mr Leadbeater saw great possibility for usefulness in the movement and placed his services unreservedly at our disposal. He was consecrated Bishop on July 22, 1916s having previously received conditional baptism and confirmation and the earlier Orders, again conditionally, at my hands.

There now began one of the happiest and most interesting phases of my life. The many and sundry rites of the Church were carefully studied and through these researches were laid the foundations of our existing Liturgy and of the valuable and interesting book later published by our great colleague, *The Science of the Sacraments*.

We agreed that in the work of the revision of the Liturgy there should be no question of departing from the general outline of Christian thought and worship. Ours was a Christian church and we intended to keep it such. And we followed the general plan of the

Roman Liturgy which had been in use in our Church and which we found to be the most suitable as a basis for work.

The work on the Liturgy was interrupted by a good deal of travelling about needed for the founding of our movement in different countries. It may be small so far as membership is reckoned in terms of numbers, but it makes its own distinctive contribution within the fellowship of Christian churches and serves its own good and intrinsic purpose as an instrument in the service of our common Lord and Master."

The above short extracts are quoted from an article by Bishop Wedgwood in the February, 1937 issue of *UBIOUE*, the magazine of the American Province. The same article is reproduced in: "The Beginnings of the Liberal Catholic Church" (St. Alban Press, 1976), which the student should study at this point.

The completed "Liturgy according to the use of The Liberal Catholic Church" was published in 1919. This period and the years that followed were an extremely busy time for Wedgwood. He often travelled from place to place lecturing about the Church, forming Centres and ordaining Clergy wherever suitable candidates could be found.

As the main history of the Church has been outlined in the previous chapters we shall now limit ourselves mainly to events as they concerned Bishop Wedgwood himself.

ATTACKS ON THE CHURCH

Once the Church had begun to grow it seemed almost inevitable that it should be attacked from various quarters. These attacks lasted from about 1918 to 1924 and were generally directed against the Church, but at a later stage also against Bishops Wedgwood and Leadbeater personally.

After some six years of constant pressure of work and much travelling his health was affected and the first signs of an illness which in later years would severely limit his work became apparent. At this time there was a split in the Theosophical Society in Sydney in connection with attacks on Bishop Leadbeater and the Church. On March 7, 1922, Wedgwood wrote to Mrs Besant:

"I am writing to tell you that I have decided, after some weeks of careful consideration, to sever my connection with the Theosophical Society, the Co-Masonic Order and the Liberal Catholic Church, and to retire into private life.

I am heartily weary of the campaign of slander and malicious intrigue, which has now persisted for some years and is growing ever more unscrupulous and personal. It does incalculable harm to the Theosophical movement as a whole, and has the effect of frustrating work among those classes of the community that one specially wishes to reach."

However, it took more than a year before Wedgwood could actually retire as Presiding Bishop. He was still too involved in the affairs of the Church, which at that time included negotiations with various Churches on the Continent of Europe. He also had to arrange by correspondence with the other Bishops for a successor. Finally, at the end of March, 1923, he called Bishop Leadbeater in Sydney:

"My resignation effective; you unanimously elected. Wedgwood."
The Church now had a new leader in the person of Bishop Leadbeater.

THE HUIZEN PERIOD

But Wedgwood's work for the Church was by no means finished. By the middle of 1924 his health had improved and Mrs Besant (who had refused to accept his resignation from the Theosophical Society) and the Bishops, Clergy and members of the Liberal Catholic Church wanted him back in the work. Mrs Besant happened to suggest to some Dutch members that a quiet place might be found where Wedgwood could train people in ceremonial work.

A Dutch member, Mrs Mary van Eeghen, who had recently been baptized in the Church, heard of the plans for Bishop Wedgwood, and offered her beautiful country house and estate at Huizen for his use. Earlier, in 1920, the great Indian sage and poet Rabindranath Tagore, when on a visit to Europe had stayed at her house. To quote Bishop Vreede:

"It was soon arranged that Bishop Wedgwood would come to stay (for three weeks!) to see whether the surroundings suited him. On August 1, 1924, the Bishop arrived. The same room which Tagore had occupied was assigned to the Bishop together with the room opposite (called the Sea-room). Every morning the hostess heard some furniture being moved and so she asked whether the arrangement of the furniture did not suit the Bishop. Then he told her that he celebrated the Eucharist every morning and that he had to move and arrange the big table to use it for his altar. Soon some people attended these celebrations and Mrs van Eeghen then offered to build a little chapel for her quest in the garden, where everything could remain in its place after the service was over. The Bishop gladly accepted and the plans were drawn up and executed so quickly that on September 21, the chapel was ready."

This little chapel was consecrated and dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels on September 29. It was the beginning of one of the most active and creative periods in Wedgwood's life. But the results achieved came only after much concentrated effort. Mrs van Eeghen wrote:

"When visitors come to the centre and admire the wonderful atmosphere and speak about the beautiful influence they can feel I always see in my thoughts a solitary figure who in the autumn and the winter of 1924-1925 went to that little chapel through the rain and snow and storms and who meditated there for many an hour."

Mrs van Eeghen made notes from Bishop Wedgwood's first sermon at Michael's delivered on January 25, 1925, from which we quote:

"The service since the Reformation in the Protestant churches has tended more to concentrate on the needs of the individual soul to get straightened in its relation to God. The people come to church for their souls' own edification and help. In the Liberal Catholic Church also there are many beautiful services to help people in this way. But the central thought in this Church is the bringing together of many people in one act of worship, to bring the many together in harmony - so as to form good channels through which Christ's living Presence can pour through.

The first half of the ceremony of the Holy Eucharist is intended to bring all the love and adoration to the altar to be offered unto the Lord. And this great outpouring of self to

God opens up the Channel for Force to flow back unto the people. The great thought in every member of the congregation must be to merge himself in all the others, to take the others along in the wave of love one sends out to God, to enfold all in the arms of love. The prayers of the Service have been carefully prepared and the words are meant to serve as channels of our thoughts and we must put the full force of all our experiences of meaning into each word as we say it. When for instance we use the word 'peace', we must think of the greatest sensation of peace we know of.

We must turn ourselves entirely towards Christ and we must be filled with all possible love and devotion towards him. The hymn sung at the most holy moments of the whole service "Thee we adore, O hidden Splendour Thee" must be used as a vehicle for the utmost we can bring of ourselves to the altar of Christ. We must dwell in the words, think of their meaning and fill them with all we can put into them of ourselves.

Each prayer when used by us must be realized and our very lives must be breathed into the words, we must feel ourselves one with the entire congregation, not assert ourselves too much nor hold back too much, not individualize the prayers for ourselves but rather put ourselves into the consciousness of all the other members of the congregation."

This sermon can be said to contain the general idea of what Wedgwood taught in his Huizen years. Soon the congregation increased and many Clergy and members came from all over Europe, even from all over the world to be near Bishop Wedgwood and to be taught by him. There are still Clergy in our ranks who will remember those Huizen days as highlights of their careers.

Wedgwood trained not only the Clergy, but also the congregation. Everything had to be just right: the ceremonial, the music, the tempo, and the words spoken. And not only had the physical side of the work to be correct, graceful and precise. The thoughts and emotions of all participants had to be just right. Strong, concise, controlled. Here was a great ceremonialist and perfectionist at work. And hundreds, nay thousands of Clergy and members, from being untrained, willing but vague newcomers, changed into understanding and skillful co-workers in the great work for Christ during those years through the efforts of Bishop Wedgwood. In 1926 he was appointed Bishop-Commissary for Europe.

During the summer congregations of several hundred were not unusual. At a Priests' conclave in 1927 there were 61 Priests present from 22 countries. The original chapel was enlarged several times. In 1928 a new church was built which could seat over 300 people. On August 15 the Rev. A. G. Vreede was consecrated Bishop in the new church by Bishop Wedgwood, assisted by 4 colleagues.

About a week later, dramatically sudden, disaster struck. A terrible thunderstorm raged and lightning struck the church, which in a short time was totally destroyed by fire. A workman working on the lightning conductor that day had forgotten to connect the wires. The services were continued without interruption in the combined lecture hall and Masonic Temple on the estate, but it must have been a heavy blow to Bishop Wedgwood.

LATER YEARS

This event marked the end of an era. Soon many Clergy and people began to leave the Church, influenced by Krishnamurti's teachings. Soon Wedgwood's illness again became apparent and grew worse as time went on. After some time he settled at Camberley (near London) where he celebrated daily (when able) in the small chapel on the estate.

He still occasionally wrote articles and was often consulted by Bishop Pigott (our 3rd Presiding Bishop) and by some of the English Clergy. His interest in the Church was as strong as ever during the last years of his life. He died in 1951, 67 years old.

The Church lost with him not only its first Presiding Bishop, but also a great theologian, liturgiologist and ceremonialist. But, he left us in our beautiful liturgy a worthy memorial to himself and his great colleague, Bishop Leadbeater.

Looking again at the earthly life of James Ingall Wedgwood, we see that it fell into five distinctive periods:

1. His Anglican High Church period with training in ceremonial and as an organist.
2. The period of his work for the Theosophical Society and Co-Freemasonry.
3. The period of building up the Liberal Catholic Church and writing its Liturgy.
4. The period of intensive ceremonial training of church workers at Huizen.
5. The last period of his life at Camberley when illness prevented any sustained work.

Finally, we shall quote from some personal appreciations by two of our Priests who knew him well. First the Rev. *G. Nevin Dririkwater*, B.Sc. who knew Bishop Wedgwood both in England and during the Huizen period:

"An outstanding ceremonialist, it was remarkable what the Bishop could get out of the congregations and clergy he trained. He was particular about details. While some of these owed their importance to recondite reasons, others arose through the need to have an agreed procedure when a number of people are working together. A ceremonialist was not one, as he represented the matter, who was wondering, what to do next. The details should be as automatic as driving a car, leaving the consciousness free to concentrate at higher levels. This meant hard work on behalf of all those concerned, but the results were outstanding.

Over and over again the bishop stressed that the secret of the spiritual life was to forget oneself in the service of others. Acting on this principle in the liturgy, each should forget himself and worship as one body corporate.

As he put it:

'Ceremonial is the intelligent use of form that it might find the best expression of the life, flatter is just as important as spirit. We must spiritualize our view of matter. If you receive the blessing of Christ through the Host, you make of matter a vehicle of the spirit. The Eucharist has one stupendous purpose; this is nothing less than in bringing our Blessed Lord into repeated incarnation.'

The Lord is to be found in nature and in the depths of our own hearts, but it is especially easy to find him at the altar. By offering him our very highest and outward turned devotion at the elevation of the Host, the Chalice, and of the monstrance, as at other times, we can come to know the Lord if we have not already done so. This devotion is to be offered as from all and not just from each as a separate individual, for the church is the body of the Lord, his corporate vehicle. Illustrating one aspect of this principle, the bishop explained that in his early days he used to experience certain dryness at the reception of the Host. There was not the feeling coming from it which he expected. But one day he realized that after communion he should ray out on all he met, and this immediately transformed the situation. Thus may we come to know him who is the King of the angels, the Babe of Mary, the white vision of the Mount, and the Morning Star rising in our hearts. To know this is to know Eternal Life. Death has no more dominion over us."

Secondly we shall quote the Rev. *Oscar Kollerström* who as a boy knew Wedgwood in the early days in Sydney and later stayed in Huizen with Wedgwood. Kollerström later trained as a psychoanalyst under Dr. Groddeck, one of the originators of psycho-analysis.

"To me it was just like bursts of organ music to someone who had not known about music. At least that was the sort of impression I got when he arrived into the very midst of our lives, and started standing us all on our heads. A little later we realized that he was really standing us the right way up...

What I am trying to say is that he really did arrive into the very midst of our lives. He was so completely natural, so free of any nonsense or affectation that he was like an old friend from the very start...

Indeed I have never worked with anybody who gave one a greater sense of freedom, not only in one's personal relationship with him, but in the work itself. The sacraments bound one to the heart of things, to reality, tradition, to the life divine. They bound, he left one free. Undoubtedly this was the clue to his authority, his brilliant leadership, and his power to convert. . .

And then everything began to happen. I was the blessed witness of a sacramental act of creation. I sat in the same room in which, day after tremendous day, those two men worked out and planned The Liberal Catholic Liturgy - though it was nearly all Bishop Wedgwood's work - planned, for the first time in two millennia, a Christian and sacramental worship that opened wide the way to communion with all other faiths, indeed with all individual interpretations. The bond with God incarnated in freedom, there before my amazed eyes. Our oak sideboard became the first altar of the new faith, and after the services were over, the dining room furniture would be reassembled for a great meal. My mother would sometimes leave the service immediately after communion to see about the cooking, for in those days there was always at least a dozen to feed. It was all so intimate, personal, and natural, and there was much tumultuous rush of doings - my mother making vestments, the preparation of the hymn book, endless typing, and the running of errands, buying a church and - vivid in memory - the great day when I took my first minor orders. What with the candles, and the incense, and the singing, I was intoxicated anew each day...

I could never, though dead on every plane of being forget my arrival at Huizen. Description would bore as well as falsify the magic and ecstasy of the moment. He was the same man, but he had become nothing. There was nothing but the over-shadowing reality of sacramentalism. He had disappeared into it, and there seems nothing to say about him. Cambridge dropped out of my horizon, and all that happy autumn was springtime of spirit. At midnight mass, on Christmas Eve, 1924, he ordained me to the priesthood. Throughout this greatest moment of my life, he, the pontiff conferring the Order, remained the unaffected human person I loved.

He carried on the good work with a tenacity of devotion that stood out to the very end of his terrible illness. And difficulties arose for him, not only from within, but from without also. Yet there remains one word about him that cannot be too often quoted. Groddeck himself saw him when he was most distressed. Groddeck said that he had seen many people in this condition, and that it had always brought out horrible qualities, yet that in this case there was nothing but the most saintly thought of others. "*Er ist ein wahrer Heilige, ein wahrer Heilige*" (He is a veritable saint) Groddeck affirmed.

Such was the man I knew, 'the real founder of our Church'."

Wedgwood was the author of the following books and booklets:

"Meditation for Beginners" (1914)

"Varieties of Psychism" (1914)

"The Distinctive Contribution of Theosophy to Christian Thought" (1926)

"The Place of Ceremonies in the Spiritual Life" (1927)

"The Presence of Christ in the Holy Communion" (1928)

In Dutch (transl.): "Nieuwe Denkbeelden over Kerkelijk Ceremonieel" (1930)

(The above books, except "Meditation for Beginners", are now all out of print.

"The Larger Meaning of Religion" (Reprinted 1980)

"Selected Works of J. I. Wedgwood" Vol. I: *New Insights into Christian worship* (St. Alban Press, 1976)

Further volumes in this series are in preparation.



C. W. LEADBEATER

Charles Webster Leadbeater was born on February 16, 1854, according to the official birth register. But the generally accepted date of his birth in later years was February 17, 1847. (See *C. W. Leadbeater, a Biography*, by the Rev. Hugh Shearmen, St. Alban Press, 1980)



He had planned to enter Oxford University, but had to give up further studies because of the collapse of a great bank in which his family had invested. After working for some time in a bank he decided to study for orders in the Church of England where his uncle was a minister. Leadbeater was a very religious man with definite "High Church" leanings. He was ordained to the Priesthood on December 21, 1879, at St. Andrew's, Farnham, Surrey, by Bishop Harold Browne of Winchester. He was appointed curate in the parish of Bramshott, Hampshire, where his uncle was the Rector. His uncle, the Rev. W. Capes, was an Oxford don, and often away from his parish.

During his period at Bramshott his mother died. As many other clergymen at this period Leadbeater was very interested in Spiritualism. He was personally convinced of the existence of God and a life after death, but felt that proof was needed to convince people of these facts. He witnessed most of the spiritualistic phenomena of the time. As he wrote himself:

"In the course of my inquiries into spiritualism I had come into contact with most of the prominent mediums of that day, and had seen every one of the ordinary phenomena about which one reads in books upon that subject."

One day he came across the book "The Occult World" written by Mr A. P. Sinnett who was at that time one of the prominent members of the Theosophical Society. He was intensely interested as he said:

"Naturally the stories which it contains interested me deeply, but its real fascination lay in the glimpses which it gave of a wonderful system of philosophy and of a kind of inner science which really seemed to explain life rationally and to account for many phenomena which I had observed. The more I heard of Theosophy the more anxious I became to learn all that could be told me...."

He was not the only one. Many of the outstanding intellectuals of the day were interested in the Theosophical movement. In 1883 Leadbeater was admitted as a member of the Society together with Professor William Crookes, the well-known scientist, and his wife. He soon met Madame Blavatsky in London. In contrast to the majority of the members of the time who were mainly interested in the theosophical teaching as such Leadbeater was keen to place himself under the guidance of one of the great Indian Masters or Adepts who stood behind "the Theosophical Society. Having written to one of the Masters that he wished to place himself under him as a pupil, 6 months later he received a reply from the Master and decided there and then to go to India to help in the work of the Society.

VOYAGE TO INDIA

In November, 1884 Leadbeater left England and in Egypt joined Madame Blavatsky, then on her way to India. She immediately started training him for his work. One thing, Leadbeater relates, that he learned from her was not to worry about what people thought:

"When I came into her hands I was just an ordinary lawn-tennis-playing curate - well-meaning and conscientious, I believe, but incredibly shy and retiring, with all the average Englishman's horror of making himself conspicuous in any way or occupying a ridiculous position. After a few weeks of her treatment I had reached a stage in which I was absolutely hardened to ridicule, and did not care in the slightest degree what anybody thought of me. I mean that quite literally; it was not that I had learnt to endure disapproval stoically, in spite of internal anguish, but that I actually did not care what people thought or said of me, and indeed never considered that matter at all. And I have never cared since! I admit that her methods were drastic and distinctly unpleasant at the time, but there was no question as to their effectiveness."

Eventually they arrived in Ceylon where they met Colonel Olcott, the president of the Society. There he was given the opportunity to become a Buddhist. He said he was quite willing to do so as long as he could' do so without abjuring the Christian religion into which" he had been baptized. When this was assured him he took the *Pansil*. This included the *Tisarana* (the three Guides, which are the Buddha, the Law and the Order - in a wider sense the Communion of Saints), the *Pancha Sila* or five precepts, somewhat similar to the 10 commandments:

1. To refrain from destruction of life.
2. To refrain from taking what is not one's own.
3. To refrain from unlawful sexual intercourse.
4. To refrain from falsehood.
5. To refrain from intoxicating liquors and stupefying drugs.

At this time the teachings of Buddhism had found great favour with the members of the Theosophical Society and this may have influenced Leadbeater when making his decision, especially since the broadmindedness of the Buddhist religion allows the person who takes the *Pansil* to continue whatever religion he is following.

After arriving at Adyar, the headquarters of the Society near Madras, Leadbeater was employed in various positions during the following years, including Recording Secretary, editor of the "Theosophist" and manager of the bookshop. Madame Blavatsky soon left again for Europe and Colonel Olcott spent much of his time travelling. During 1885 Leadbeater was most of the time alone in Adyar.

CLAIRVOYANCE DEVELOPED

During this period his Master came to him and gave him certain instructions which resulted in the development of clairvoyance. Leadbeater relates:

"He recommended me to make efforts along certain lines, which he pledged me not to divulge to anyone else except with His direct authorization, and told me that He would Himself watch over those efforts to see that no danger should ensue. Naturally I took the hint at once, and worked very steadily, and I think I may say intensely, at that particular kind of meditation day after day. I must admit that it was very hard work and sometimes distinctly painful, but of course I persevered, and in due course began to achieve the results that I had been led to expect. Certain channels had to be opened and certain partitions broken down; I was told that forty days was a fair estimate of the average time required if the effort was really energetic and persevering. I worked at it for for-

ty-two days, and seemed to myself to be on the brink of the final victory, when the Master Himself intervened and performed the final act of breaking through which completed the process, and enabled me thereafter to use astral sight while still retaining full consciousness in the physical body, which is equivalent to saying that the astral consciousness and memory became continuous whether the physical body is awake or asleep. . .

It must not for a moment be supposed, however, that the attainment of this particular power was the end of the occult training. On the contrary, it proved to be only the beginning of a year of the hardest work that I have ever known. . ."

Another Master came to help him in the further development of his clairvoyant faculty:

"I can never be too thankful for the enormous amount of care and trouble which He took in my psychic education; patiently and over and over again He would make a vivid thought-form, and say to me: What do you see? And when I described it to the best of my ability, would come again and again the comment: 'No, no, you are not seeing true -, you are not seeing all; dig deeper into yourself, use your mental vision as well as your astral; press just a little further, a little higher. 'This process often had to be many times repeated before my mentor was satisfied. The pupil has to be tested in all sorts of ways and under all conceivable conditions...."

The result was that after this and further training in the years to follow, Leadbeater developed this clairvoyant faculty to an exceptional degree. Not only was he able to move and observe freely in the emotional world (the astral plane) and in the world of the mind (the mental plane) but on "higher" or "inner" planes as well, in the realm of the human soul and the even more elusive realm of the spirit. He acquired the rare ability to bring down into his physical brain consciousness - with the greatest precision - his observations of higher or inner worlds. He was able to discern objectively the phenomena he encountered in these higher worlds. There have been many seers throughout history but none so far who observed with such almost tedious accuracy and scientific precision.

In the years that followed Leadbeater spent most of his time in Ceylon where he worked in the educational and religious field, often under great difficulties. He established an English school which later became Ananda College, and wrote a small book in Sinhalese: "*The smaller Buddhist catechism*".

Among the many boys he contacted was the young C. Jinarajadasa who later followed him to England.

In 1889 Leadbeater accepted an invitation to become the tutor of Mr Sinnett's son in London, and for a period also had the young Jinarajadasa and George Arundale under his charge (both later presidents of the Theosophical Society).

ACTIVE YEARS

It was during this London period that Leadbeater began his many clairvoyant investigations in which he was later joined by Mrs Annie Besant. He soon began to lecture and wrote many books on a great variety of subjects, mainly in connection with his clairvoyant observations. He gradually extended his lecture tours outside Europe and together with Mrs Besant became the most prominent lecturer of the Society for quite a number of years.

In 1906 a storm arose in the Society because Leadbeater was said to have given confidential advice to some youths in America on overcoming the habit of masturbation. His advice was practically the same as that given by doctors and Clergy to boys trying to overcome the habit, but in this case it was misconstrued as advising just the opposite. The Victorian era with its peculiar moral attitudes regarded the former practice as highly dangerous and immoral, while prostitution with its many risks and degradation of women was generally accepted.

Feeling that he had become an embarrassment to the Theosophical Society, Leadbeater resigned from the Society. He spent most of his time on the Continent, continuing his clairvoyant investigations, chiefly into the nature of matter. In 1908, when it was finally realized that the accusations against him were untrue, he was invited by Mrs Besant, who had in the meantime become president of the Society, to re-join. He accepted, and in 1909 settled at Adyar to continue his work for the Society.

In the same year Leadbeater found among the young boys at Adyar one who was destined to play an important role in the future, J. Krishnamurti. He brought him to the notice of Mrs Besant who undertook to arrange for his education and later proclaimed him as the future vehicle for the World Teacher.

When on a lecture tour in Australia in 1914, Leadbeater decided to stay in Sydney, where, he lectured and built up a strong following. He had by this time through his clairvoyant discovery of the power of the Christian Sacraments become keenly interested in Catholic worship and had for some time been in contact with Wedgwood whom he had known since 1906.

In 1915 Wedgwood visited Australia and during his stay initiated Leadbeater into the Co-Masonic Order (which admits both men and women). Leadbeater found Free-Masonry of extreme interest and usefulness and by clairvoyantly investigating the rituals of the Order he was able to explain their meaning and suggest changes which rendered them more effective.

BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

The following year (1916) Wedgwood came to Sydney again, this time as a Bishop, and on July 22 he consecrated Leadbeater to the Episcopate. The two Bishops now set about working on the revision of the Old Catholic Liturgy. What followed is described both in Wedgwood's "Beginnings of the Liberal Catholic Church" and in the chapter "The Formative Years."

From this time onward the work of the Liberal Catholic Church became one of his most important avenues of work, though he still continued to work for the Theosophical Society, Co-Masonry and other movements. He was especially interested in training young people, both boys and girls, to build character and prepare them for a spiritual life and as servants of humanity. In the words of Mr Jinarajadasa:

"Ever kindly, a rigid task master, training us to perform each task efficiently, inspiring us with a lofty ideal of truth and honour, unsparing of himself in the Master's work, giving us an unforgettable vision of Righteousness, these he taught me, my Brother of the past, the present and the unending future."

The growth of the Liberal Catholic Church at this time was not without difficulties. During the period 1918-1924 the Church was strongly attacked by certain groups in the Theosophical Society, mainly in Australia and the U.S.A.

First the attacks were mainly on the Church, which was suspected of being an agent of Rome trying to take over the Theosophical movement. Later the attacks became more personal and were directed against Wedgwood and Leadbeater personally. The old accusations of 1906 against Leadbeater were revived and in 1922 Mrs Besant was also attacked and a split among the members of the Society in Sydney took place, which led to the formation of a new Theosophical Society Lodge loyal to Mrs Besant and Bishop Leadbeater.

The Media in Sydney soon became interested and in some sections of the press the wildest stories and attacks on Leadbeater continued for some time. Tired of this slander campaign, two prominent members of the Society asked the New South Wales Minister for Justice for an inquiry into the allegations. This was done and the result was that no evidence could be found to substantiate the accusations.

Bishop Leadbeater never defended himself. But a whole group of young people in his care went to the police and offered testimony that all the charges against him were untrue. A well-known lawyer came to Bishop Leadbeater and offered to open a case against a newspaper for libel and defamation. He assured him he would be awarded a large sum by the court as compensation for character defamation. Leadbeater's reply was characteristic:

"No, while they are busy accusing me, they will leave some other poor fellow alone."

In the same year Bishop Leadbeater and a group of his followers moved to a large house on the shore of Sydney Harbour called "The Manor" where he could continue his work for the Church, the Society and all the other movements. Leadbeater now became Presiding Bishop of the Church after Wedgwood's resignation. "The Manor" became a centre to which many people flocked from all over the world to be near the great man. Here is what an American lady, Dr. Mary Rocke writes about this period:

"To watch his ways is to learn wisdom. He is the great transformer who works upon seemingly quite ordinary children as well as upon even old people, changing them in a wonderful way, till their faces become radiant with the light of the spirit within, and their lives beautiful in helpfulness to others and in aspiration of the Supreme.

Yet as there are always those who 'love darkness rather than light', so have there been some who have used that very devotion which he shows so strikingly to the young, to misrepresent his character; although we who have lived with him for years know how absurd, as well as wicked, is such an idea in connection with one who is the *very* soul of purity, refinement and honour, one whose life is open as the day.

Several families have moved to Sydney from other cities of Australia and from other countries of the world merely in order to be near the Bishop. To live near him is like living near a dynamo or great power-house, whose vibrations tune others to rates ordinarily impossible to be reached: it is to bask in a down-pouring of sunshine which saturates with peace and joy, wherein all that is good is stimulated, and weaknesses fall away for lack of nourishment. His very presence is a silent benediction continually out-poured,

and everyone feels invigorated and joyous as well as spiritually uplifted after even a few minutes of his company.

His life at present is lived in the midst of a large household of some fifty people. Persons of repute, of learning, and of title come from the ends of the earth to sit at the feet of this pure and holy man, counting it the greatest privilege to be taught by him, and if possible to find accommodation under the same roof. When he walks abroad people turn to gaze after him, attracted by his rare nobility and dignity of mien, and by the benevolence and joy which ever radiate from him. 'What beautiful old age', remarked a passer-by the other day."

Sydney was at this time the centre of activities of the Liberal Catholic Church now spreading all over the world. The first General Episcopal Synod was held in Sydney in 1924 and "The Liberal Catholic" was published with a large circulation, never achieved since. The central attraction was the patriarchal figure of Bishop Leadbeater. His prestige and influence was enormous, especially after the publication of his book "The Science of the Sacraments", a most original and revolutionary work.

Many significant ceremonies took place in the Pro-Cathedral of St. Alban in Sydney. Fine sermons, embodying the teachings of the young Church were given to large congregations. The Sydney Town Hall was used for a series of lectures in connection with the Church by Dr. J. J. van der Leeuw.

These were the hey-days of the Church in Sydney. Bishop Leadbeater drew around him a group of outstanding and brilliant men and women from many walks of life.

While Bishop Leadbeater continued his work in Sydney Bishop Wedgwood in the period 1924-1928 did a similar work for Europe from his headquarters at St. Michael's Huizen. And in the U.S.A. Bishop Cooper from the Cathedral Church of St. Alban in Los Angeles carried the work all over America.

LAST YEARS

After this peak period a decline set in when in 1927-1930 Krishnamurti began to denounce all organizations and ceremonial. This period is covered in the chapter "The Expected Coming".

In 1930 Mrs Besant asked Bishop Leadbeater to come to Adyar to help in the work there, and after a strenuous tour of Europe he settled down at Adyar for the last years of his life.

In 1934, on his way to Sydney for a visit, he fell sick in Perth, Western Australia, and died there. His last words, we are told, were: "Carry on, push on; enthusiasm". They are taken to mean: Carry on the work - push on with your own development - always keep up the enthusiasm.

Bishop Cooper speaking at the Requiem Eucharist for Leadbeater in Los Angeles said:

"Charles Webster Leadbeater has meant more than any one else in my life. What I want to speak on is certain great things for which he stood— the power of the man, the beauty of his character. The greater the man the more he is misunderstood. I was intimately associated with him and know him as much as one human being can know an-

other. I have never met a finer, more wholly sane personality. His whole life was marked by service-Priest in the Anglican Church, then lecturing, and assisting multitudes, changing the lives of thousands of people, giving them new hope and new courage. In 1916 he came back into the Church, was elevated to the rank of Bishop and devoted his time to building up this work, a new venture and a new point of view, planned not only for our own day but for the years and centuries to come. This Eucharist is the finest thing we have to offer to man. It is not a mere ceremony; it is a great spiritual outpouring. There is something bigger than the quest for bread and wealth, and that is what the Presiding Bishop stood for. There is no need for sorrow in this service because death is not the end, it is only an episode. We are immortal. He is alive."

There is no doubt that Bishop Leadbeater was a remarkable man. He never imposed his views on people. He always left them free:

"It is not because I say so that you should believe those things; if you accept them it should be because they seem to you inherently reasonable. . ."

Much of what he taught may seem controversial and some Liberal Catholics (even some Clergy) do not feel they can accept his teachings on certain points. Many of his teachings, however, only throw new light on ancient teachings which have been subjected to many interpretations throughout the ages.

Then there are his clairvoyant observations which he carried out with the utmost accuracy and precision. It is in this field that some people find it difficult to follow him, especially where cherished orthodox opinions and beliefs are upset.

He never claimed infallibility of any kind; he always left it to a person's own reason and intuition whether one accepts his observation. But all his observations fit into a system, and as the philosopher Keyserling said:

"His statements are so plausible that it would be more wonderful if Leadbeater were in the wrong."

Inside the cover of his missal the following was found:

1. I will try to think of the Master's work first.
2. I will make it an absolute rule not to take offense at all.
3. I will strictly mind my own business, and not criticize. I will not listen to or repeat gossip about others.
4. I will try to avoid irritability, to keep calm and peaceful. I will endeavour to put aside all personal thoughts."

This is typical of the man. Before going into the service - and even right through our lives - we can do no better than follow these simple rules for human conduct, which he always tried to follow himself. He taught us that it is in the small things of life that the training towards perfection and sainthood takes place. One of his most characteristic sayings was:

"Perfect unselfishness is the crown of all virtue."

Leadbeater was a prolific writer. These are some of his books:

"The Science of the Sacraments"
"The Inner Side of Christian Festivals" (St. Alban Press)
"The Christian Creed" (St. Alban Press)
"The Hidden Side of Things" 2 Vols.
"The Inner Life" 2 Vols.
"The Masters and the Path"
"Invisible Helpers"
"The Astral Plane"
"The Monad"
"The Hidden Life in Free-Masonry"
"Glimpses of Masonic History"
"The Other Side of Death"
"Dreams"
"Clairvoyance"
"Man Visible and Invisible"
"Textbook of Theosophy"
Written in collaboration with Mrs. A. Besant:
"Thought Forms"
"Talks on the Path of Occultism"
"Man, whence, how and whither"
"Occult Chemistry"
In preparation:
"A Christian Gnosis"
For further details consult:
Hugh Shearman: *C.W. Leadbeater, a Biography*, St. Alban Press, 1980.

