

THE GREAT UNITY

A New Approach to Religious Education

BY MARGARET BARR M.A.

“The world’s piteous need is of men and women who, rich in the wealth of renunciation, will wander from place to place with the Dream in their eyes of the Great Unity of Races and Religions.”—*T. L. Vaswani*

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO
BROTHER JOHN
WHO INSPIRED IT

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is the outcome of an educational experiment which was carried out at the Gokhale Memorial Girls' School in Calcutta in the years 1933-36.

The authorities of that school had long felt that some form of religious instruction was necessary to complete an otherwise well-balanced curriculum. But as the school was strictly non-sectarian, and included in its ranks orthodox Hindus, Brahmos and Muslims, and was open to receive children of any other faith, it was clearly impossible to give any form of sectarian instruction. It was therefore decided to entrust the working out of a suitable scheme to someone with a broad Universalist point of view. The writer of this book, an English Unitarian minister, was deemed to be such a person, and was duly invited to undertake the work. For three years the experiment continued under her leadership, and the following chapters contain an outline of her method and of the material which she used.

Though the experiment was conducted in an Indian school, and would be of especial value to other Indian schools finding themselves in the same position owing to the variety of faiths represented amongst their members, there is no doubt that similar schemes could be used by broad-minded people all over the world. It is a development fraught with tremendous possibilities, especially at this time when the whole "to be, or not to be" of religious education is once more at the forefront of people's minds.

There is a large and growing number of persons, both in the East and the West, who are in favour of the complete secularisation of education; my sympathy is entirely with them, *if the alternative is sectarian Religious*

Education. For I am convinced that the major reason why the world is cursed with so many narrow-minded and prejudiced people in the matter of religion is sectarian education in childhood. Others again would omit all that is specifically religious, and teach just ethics, the science of conduct and the good life. With these too I have sympathy, *if the alternative is Sectarian Teaching.* But I believe and know that there is another alternative, namely the teaching of Comparative Religion, and it is that alternative that was the basis of our experiment at the Gokhale School. And here let me hasten to add that by Comparative Religion I do not mean (as is all too often meant) to take one's own religion as a standard with which to measure and compare all the rest, treating them, at best, with a sort of tolerant patronage, and at worst measuring what is best in one's own with what is inferior in others, and so, of course, strengthening prejudices already strong. By Comparative Religion I mean genuine interest in and unbiased study of all the world's great religious traditions. And this can and should be started at a very tender age, by saturating the child's mind with story material, not from one, but from all; till Christians are as familiar with the story of Buddha carrying the little lamb in his arms as they are with Jesus blessing the children: till Muslims know as much about Arjuna's conversations with God as they do about Mohammed's: and until all of them have sensed something of the reality of the experience which led Lao Tse to the assurance that his Immortal Mother Above was bending over him in his last moments, and Christ to surrender unhesitatingly to the Father into whose hands he committed his spirit. And if anyone is thinking that this last is impossible for children, let me assure him that the childlike trust which has been the outstanding characteristic of the religion of the world's supreme

spiritual masters is far more comprehensible to the child mind than to the average mature one. It is this that convinces me that ethics is not enough, for to teach only ethics, and withhold such things as these, is to deny the children the very thing which they are most capable of entering into, and which will stand them in good stead later in the development of their own religion.

The important thing, however, is not so much to try to teach religion (which after all must be caught, not taught), as to stimulate and appeal to the children's tendency to hero-worship. The material used, therefore, will be, for little children, stories only, the best available from all different sources; and for the intermediate age, primarily biography and history, meaning by the latter, not battles and conquerors, but the part played by the world's religious leaders, and the movements founded by them, in the development of the mind and spirit of man down the ages.

Until the age of fifteen or over there should be practically no question of abstract teaching, and certainly no creeds and catechisms, but just the attempt through history and biography to inspire the children with love of, and reverence for, the greatest spirits of the human race. Children are hero-worshippers by nature. Why should we not utilise that valuable trait by giving it a more worthy object than the latest aviator, cricketer or film star? Or even than any one of the world's great souls? And surely there is nothing so calculated to awaken in growing minds a sense of the greatness of the human spirit, and of its oneness with the divine, as to come early under the sway of the greatest and noblest of the sons of men. This is doubtless what a great deal of religious education is seeking to achieve. The tragedy is that so much of it should be vitiated by its narrowness in presenting one only of those great souls. A course in the life-stories of some of the greatest men

of the world of every age and race would correct that narrowness, and at the same time reveal certain basic facts. First, that religion rightly understood, is the greatest force for good in the world—meaning by religion, of course, not primarily what these great souls have taught about God and man, and not all the creeds, rites and formulations which have grown up around them and in their name, but their own vital religious experience. Second, that it is this that is the most important thing about them and that gives them their selflessness, their fearlessness and their fidelity even unto death. Lastly, and above all, that as they were men like us, their religion is not something into which we cannot enter, but an experience which is possible to all who sincerely seek to follow them along their way of life.

I believe that such an approach as this would lead, not only to sympathetic understanding between those belonging to different religious traditions, but also to that vital, courageous and self-reliant attitude to life, which generates a type of religion as superior to the average superstitious, fear-ridden type still all too prevalent, as the rolling, boundless, mysterious ocean is superior to the shallow, muddy, treacherous river.

That children belonging to any or none of the world's religions will respond to this type of teaching, there is no doubt whatever. The chief difficulty and the primary requisite is teachers to teach it in the right spirit, whose chief qualifications will be, not scholastic knowledge of theological and philosophical systems, valuable though such knowledge is, but other and more important qualities. First, a profound love and reverence for the world's great spiritual masters. Second, a thirst for truth, and a willingness and ability to recognise and revere it wherever they may find it. And above all, a real understanding of religious experience. Like the

pilgrim to Lyonesse in Hardy's lovely poem, they must have been themselves and come back "with magic in their eyes". They must be people who believe and have tested that religion is the quest for spiritual realities, Beauty, Truth, Goodness, the quest for God, the supreme reality, and that those who seek, find. People who are unheld and carried forward by what Kabir calls "the spirit of the quest" to which alone they are slaves and *never* to mere authority or tradition—people who realise, with Plotinus, that even at its best, religious teaching can never be anything more than a signpost showing the way that the pilgrim must tread, "for the teaching is but of the whither and how to travel: the vision itself is the work of him who has willed to see." Those words might well be the teacher's motto, helping her never to forget that her function is not primarily to imbibe book-learning or to impart information, and, never, never under any circumstances whatever to dogmatise, but by her own knowledge of and love for the world's greatest souls, to stimulate the children's interest and desire to know more; and above all by her "radiance rare and fathomless" to prove that the quest is no idle dream nor cold-blooded intellectual exercise, but the most splendid and magnificently worthwhile of all the activities possible to the mind and soul of man.

The consequences of such religious teaching, if widely spread and done in this spirit, are incalculable. Professor T. L. Vaswani said not long ago, "The world's piteous need is for men and women who, rich in the wealth of renunciation, will wander from place to place with the Dream in their eyes of the Great Unity of Races and Religions." I agree, and I believe that religious education carried on in this spirit, and by the right people, could do more than anything else to satisfy that piteous need.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW BEGINNINGS

THE study of the history of the living religions of the world, based upon Kellett's *Short History of Religions* and summarized in the preceding chapter of our book, will have revealed the essential continuity of the whole subject. Even a very superficial survey suffices to shatter the illusion that the various religious systems are wholly separate from, and independent of, one another. On the contrary they grow out of one another, each being strongly influenced by those that have gone before, and at a later stage modified in its turn by those that follow.

The so-called "founders" of the great religious systems, therefore, were not consciously or intentionally founders at all, but *reformers*. Each in turn, dismayed by the irreligion that he saw around him, started a religious revival which drew its strength partly from older traditions and teaching, and partly from the reformer's own contribution, which, when we come to analyse it, was more a matter of change of emphasis than the introduction of anything really new. Thus Buddha's reformation stressed religion as a way of life, but the theology behind it was essentially Hindu. Jesus emphasized the doctrine of Divine Love already present in germ in the Old Testament, and at the same time developed and spiritualized the teaching of the Law and the Prophets, which, as he said, he came "not to destroy but to fulfil."

But it is not only in the person of such supremely important reformers as these that we can see this process at work. The history of religion is full of similar new beginnings, some of which branched off from the main

stem and became sects, while others were either crushed out, or reabsorbed by the larger group from which they momentarily emerged. Some of these were reform movements comparable, though on a smaller scale, to those which resulted in the founding of the various religious systems. Others were deliberately and consciously Universalist from the start, the leader setting out to extract, as it were, the highest common factor from two or more apparently conflicting systems. But in most cases one of three fates befell the new movement, either it was exterminated by persecution, as in the case of the Manicheists, or it prospered and then became a new sect, or else it ran all to breadth and tolerance and became lukewarm and ineffective through lack of the urgent missionary spirit which generally characterizes those who are convinced that they alone possess the words of life.

But until that happened all these new beginnings were fundamentally the same, despite their widely different backgrounds. Each was a recall to religion on the basis of the irreducible minimum of religious faith; namely, a mystical experience of God on the one hand and the outcome of that experience in a life of service and brotherliness, on the other.

Let us review briefly a few of these new beginnings.

First in chronological order comes Akhnaton, the great Egyptian king who lived some fourteen centuries B.C. and who has been called alternatively "The World's First Monotheist" and "The World's First Pacifist." At once a tragic and challenging figure Akhnaton stands out from a misty background as the forerunner of Universalism. Known to the history books chiefly as a weak ruler who allowed his empire to disintegrate, a closer study of him reveals something vastly different.

Akhnaton was a pioneer of monotheism who aroused

the hostility of priests and people by forbidding the worship of all gods save Aton, the sun god. A mystic, a dreamer and a poet he devoted much time to reorganizing the religion of his people, and as he apparently believed in the brotherhood of man, it is hardly to be wondered at that the warlike prowess of the ruler of a great empire did not appeal to him. He caused a revolution in Egyptian art by insisting on having himself and the royal family depicted as they really were, instead of with formal flattery.

And he wrote some lovely hymns which are perhaps the earliest poetry whose authorship can be attributed to any given man. It was probably he who originated the symbolism of the sun's disc with rays ending in hands reaching out in all directions to touch all things, as representing the all-embracing care of God.

His teaching was altogether too advanced for his age and the new beginning which he made did not outlive him. But he still stands out as the first to teach that there is one God who cares for all His creatures, men, animals and plants; that men of different races are brothers; and that God is not only like the flaming sun, distant and all powerful, but a spirit alive in the hearts of men.

Next comes Mo-Ti, the gentle, chivalrous, humorous Chinaman, who probably lived between 468 and 382 B.C., and whose "new beginning" actually resulted in the founding of a religion which flourished for about three hundred years.

Mo-Ti was a heretic. He believed in the essential teaching underlying Confucianism, but was dissatisfied with the elaborate ritual that was growing up, and still more with the hypocrisy and luxury of many nominal Confucians. He believed also in the essential teaching of Lao Tse, and put into practice in his own life the basic principles of simplicity, humility and gentleness

which he found therein. His great principle was "to love all equally," a principle which clearly cannot tolerate either war or class distinctions.

At first people gathered round him and a church was formed. But his standards were too high for the multitude. Confucianism had a more accommodating ethic, so Confucianism won the day and Mohism died out as a religious system. But Mo-Ti will always be remembered as one of the world's earliest messengers of the gospel of selflessness, simplicity and brotherhood.

Next come the Essenes, whose origin is wrapped in mystery but who enter history as a Jewish sect in the time of Christ. Some find Buddhist influence in this new beginning. The Essenes lived a simple communal monastic life of meditation and homely service, and there is a strong probability that Jesus served his apprenticeship with them during the hidden years that led up to his ministry. The successive founding of the various monastic orders within Christianity are a new beginning similar to this one, in which groups of earnest men (and sometimes women) dissociated themselves from the pomp and ceremony of the Church and from the vanity of the world, and established religious brotherhoods on a basis of worship and service, the irreducible minimum of religion.

Then came Manicheism founded by the Persian Mani, who lived during the third century A.D. This prophet did not start a monastic order, but issued a challenging recall to religion in such a way as to combine elements from at least three of the major religious systems of the world, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity. Official Zoroastrianism and official Christianity both denounced him as a heretic. A Zoroastrian king put him to death, and fierce Christian persecution finally crushed out his followers, so that

those two must share responsibility for the fate of Manicheism.

Mani declared that though all the great prophets before him, Moses, Zoroaster, the Buddha and Jesus were true prophets, he (Mani) had been sent by God to clarify and crown their imperfect teachings and unite them all into one. His appears to have been a sincere attempt to overcome the differences which divide the great religious systems. He was, therefore, a genuine Universalist.

For over a thousand years Manicheism survived, though always a persecuted religion. Under Christian persecution it grew rapidly, especially in France, as a reaction against the oppression and corruption of the Catholic Church, but was finally wiped out with great savagery by Count Simon Montfort in the thirteenth century.

A kindred group which suffered persecution at the same time were the Waldenses, also in Southern France. They did not hold Manicheist ideas and had no desire to sever themselves from the Christian Church. But they believed in individual experience rather than ecclesiastical orders, as giving authority for preaching and teaching. They reverted to the simple customs and way of life of the early Christians, and were in every way very similar to the English Quakers, especially in their doctrine of the Inner Light.

The Quakers give us yet another example of a new beginning within the fold of one of the great religious systems. And though they later reverted into a more or less orthodox Christian sect, their original basis was (and theoretically still is) Universalist. They took their stand upon the doctrine of the Inner Light, which could be relied upon to guide any honest man who sought it; in other words, upon the individual mystical experience of God. Having done that they further

asserted that religion, properly understood, had its application to every branch of human activity and relationship. It is this assertion, and its faithful carrying out by successive generations of Quakers, that has given them their unique reputation among Christians for the practical social application of the Christian Gospel.

Another new beginning not unlike the one that took place under Mani, is the one that took place under Kabir and Nanak in India in the sixteenth century A.D. and led to the starting of the Sikh religion.

Kabir was essentially a seeker not a dogmatist, consequently though a Muslim by birth, he wanted to explore the other great religion of his country. This led him to a profound appreciation of Hindu mysticism, which, combined with the monotheism and hatred of idolatry which he had learnt from Islam, became the new Sikh religion. His mission, like Mani's, was to take the best from conflicting systems and weld them into something better than either would achieve alone. His successor, Nanak, carried on his work, and though the actual adherents of Sikhism are comparatively few, there is no doubt that the movement has done something to modify and universalize both the Hinduism and the Islam of subsequent centuries.

Two more important new movements started under the influence of Islam—the Sufi and Baha'i movements. Perhaps reference should also be made to the group started by the Mogul Emperor Akbar for studying the various points of view represented by the people under his rule; probably the first Adult Class in Comparative Religion that was ever held!

The Sufi religion derives its authority from the Koran, but is far more mystical than orthodox Islam, and its chief exponents are the Persian poets Sadi, Hafiz, Jalalu'd Din Rumi, Omar Khayyám, Firdusi and

others. The consequence of this is that there is more unity of spirit than of creed amongst its adherents; their main point of agreement being that God is revealed in the personal mystical experience of each worshipper. One point of common agreement is finely expressed by Omar Khayyám in the lines:

“Hearts with the light of love illumined well,
Whether in mosque or synagogue they dwell,
Have their names written in the book of love,
Unvexed by hopes of heaven or fears of hell.”

(*Whitfield's Translation*)

The Baha'i movement was founded in the middle of the nineteenth century by a Persian Muslim whose name was Mirza Ali Mohammed, but who was generally known as the “Bab” or Gate. He was put to death after only a few years of his mission, but before his death he foretold the coming of another prophet of whom he was the forerunner. In due course that prophet appeared and is known as Baha'u'llah, and in spite of the fact that he spent most of his life in prison, he became widely known and dearly loved, and under his leadership and under that of his son Abdul Baha, the movement grew rapidly.

The two main principles of the movement as expounded by a present day disciple are: (a) The Unity of Mankind, and (b) the spiritual continuity of religion through divine manifestations of the One God through the ages. Its chief function is to press for a new order of society under which the Brotherhood and the spiritual nature of man may be given full expression. And its religious point of view is frankly and completely Universalist. Not to convert people to a new faith, but to purify and universalize all the old ones, is its aim:

“There is every variety of flower in a perfect garden.
Would you have every bloom alike in fragrance, colour and

form? There is every form of faith in the Garden of God, and He finds those which are free from the weeds of prejudice and intolerance the most beautiful in His sight.”

Though all these movements were essentially Universalist in character, in that they took their stand on the irreducible minimum of universal religion, they were not yet consciously Universalist in the sense of realizing that their message was shared by people in the ranks of other faiths and movements. That position had been approached by Mani and to some extent by the founders of the groups arising out of Islam, especially the Baha'i movement, but not by the others. The early Quakers, for instance, knew little or nothing of the common ground between the elemental Christianity for which they stood, and elemental Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

The beginning of the study of Comparative Religion in the nineteenth century opened a new chapter, and paved the way for such movements as the Theosophical Movement, which drew its strength from its introduction to the people of the West, of much that was great and of enduring value in the traditions and scriptures of the East.

In some ways the most interesting of all new beginnings is the Brahma Samaj started by Rajah Ram Mohan Roy. One of the most interesting things about this prophet is that, at a time when the study of Comparative Religion was in its infancy, he made it the foundation of his own message, refusing steadfastly to accept anything on the authority of partisan exponents of the different faiths. His intellectual achievement alone is one of the most astonishing in the history of the human mind. He knew intimately no fewer than seventeen languages, at least five of which (Sanskrit, Pali, Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic) were classical languages which he mastered in order that he might

study for himself the sacred scriptures of the world's dominant religions. Having done so, he was forced to what he himself describes as "the stupendous discovery" that not only had each religion got hold of *some* truth, which could be pooled, but that each, rightly understood, had got *the* Truth. And that central truth he found to be what we have called the irreducible minimum of religion:—namely, that God is One and in mystical experience man can know God, and on the other hand that "faith without works is dead." In other words, his researches led him to the conclusion that religion is two-fold—communion with God and a practical way of life. And it was on this foundation that he built his movement, the keynote of which is struck perhaps most clearly and attractively for the average reader, in the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, which are for the most part but lovely variations on these two basic themes—mysticism and brotherhood.

"Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. . . .

"He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil! . . .

"The question and the cry 'Oh, where?' melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance 'I am!'"

At the present time the Universalist spirit is being reborn in many movements in all parts of the world.

The Ramakrishna Movement in India is a rebirth of essential, elemental Hinduism, based upon the broader view, and co-operating readily, in its chief work of service to the poor, with anyone of any faith who worships God and loves his fellow-men. The Liberal Jewish Movement is frankly Universalist and there

are Liberal elements within Islam, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism which are approximating to the same position. Christianity, too, has a growing number of adherents who can sing with sincerity and gusto (though perhaps not always with complete understanding of the meaning of what they are singing!):

"One holy church of God appears
Through every age and race,
Unwasted by the lapse of years,
Unchanged by changing place.

"From oldest time, on farthest shores,
Beneath the pine or palm,
One Unseen Presence she adores,
With silence or with psalm.

"Her priests are all God's faithful sons,
To serve the world raised up;
The pure in heart her baptised ones,
Love, her communion-cup.

"The truth is her prophetic gift,
The soul her sacred page;
And feet on mercy's errand swift
Do make her pilgrimage.

"O Living Church! thine errand speed;
Fulfil thy task sublime!
With bread of life earth's hunger feed;
Redeem the evil time!"

This is a Unitarian hymn, but many besides Unitarians sing it. Unitarianism, usually regarded as a Christian denomination, is becoming a growing-point for World Religion. Soon we shall have many "Unitarians of the United World," to quote Emerson's fine phrase.

And surely if ever there was a time in the history of the world when the Universalist message was both essential and possible, it is now. In a world which is

shrinking every year as a result of new discoveries in science, new developments in commerce, rapid travel and communication and widespread literacy and education, it is becoming increasingly difficult for any people to live in isolation, and the necessity for mutual understanding is becoming more obvious every day. And mutual understanding and co-operation need not involve the loss of anything that is of value. Unity of spirit does not mean uniformity of thought, and is indeed more likely to be crushed than encouraged by it. "Unity not uniformity" should be the watchword of Universalism.

"I would not destroy, I would *cleanse* the Temples of God," writes a modern Universalist. "I would not empty the churches, I would fill them with worshippers of the Most High! God is neither Catholic nor Protestant, Muslim nor Hindu. God is Most Great. He is not confined within the limits of any single creed."

Surely this message, with its insistence on unity, brotherhood and co-operation instead of on chosen people, superiority and strife, is the one which alone can meet the needs of our age; and, if taught to children from their earliest years, make of them what perhaps the world of to-day most needs—men and women who shall be citizens of the world.

Appendix A

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICAL WORK

IT is not necessary to add much to the suggestions made in Chapter I for practical work in connexion with the Junior Course. Dramatization is perhaps the most valuable of all, and was resorted to freely throughout the experiment. Also the writing, by the children, of their own story-book. This may be either a class effort, in which each child writes one story, and the best artists in the class do some illustrations, or each child may keep her own book. These were the only projects actually carried out, but in schools where handwork is a regular feature of the curriculum, it could be used to illustrate the Religion Lessons in exactly the same way as it is for the History, Geography and other school subjects.

Dramatization is not so easy with older children, but remains nevertheless the most valuable means of riveting lessons in their minds. Scenes can be acted from the lives of any of the great teachers. For instance, a series of three short scenes in one performance, showing the Temptation of Zoroaster, the Buddha and Jesus, would be a dramatic and challenging study in Comparative Religion for those who took part, and an equally dramatic and challenging introduction to the subject for any parents or friends who might be present.

In connexion with the History of Religion course the girls drew maps illustrating the distribution of the different religions at different periods, the birthplaces of the founders, etc. They also drew up charts similar to those used in any kind of history teaching, giving in parallel columns the outstanding events of the history

of the different systems. And two or three classes made albums in which they collected pictures illustrative of their subject.

For the oldest girls essay writing is a possibility, but should be resorted to sparingly, if at all. It is far better to concretize their thought by means of pictures, charts and dramatization, than to encourage them to become prematurely facile in expressing in words that which is really unutterable.

The best form of written work is for the girls to keep "Common Place" books, in which they write out the passages which most appeal to them amongst the ones read by the teacher to illustrate her lessons. In this way they begin making for themselves their own anthologies of the sacred scriptures.

Appendix B

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHORT COURSES

FURTHER suggestions for possible courses, any of which can be worked up from the Universalist standpoint:

- (1) Creation Stories.
- (2) Flood Stories.
- (3) Theories of Immortality.
- (4) Sacraments. Especially important is the symbolism of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the god.
- (5) Studies of Sacred Scriptures, giving the titles, dates and principal thoughts of the chief scriptures of the different religions and a few key passages from each. The serious study of this subject, involving as it does, major problems of Higher Criticism, is, of course, too difficult for children. But a simple course is valuable as an introduction.
- (6) Some outstanding parallels of thought and phrase in different religions, with special reference to Lao Tse, the Buddha, Jesus, and Krishna.
- (7) Short studies in the lives of great men and women other than the founders of religions. The choice here is so large that the teacher will, of course, confine herself to great men and women who have gripped her own imagination, taking care that her choice does not fall within any narrow groove.

Examples actually used by the writer were Socrates, Galileo, Asoka, Abraham Lincoln, Mo-Ti, Nansen and Joan of Arc (as depicted by Bernard Shaw).

The chief aim of this course (apart from broadening the girls' general knowledge) was to illustrate that religion as a living, dynamic force in the lives of men and women, need not be thought of in terms of any particular creed or system. Few of those who have made the greatest contribution to the evolution of the mind and spirit of man, have been people of whom one thinks primarily as great Hindus, great Muslims, or great Christians. They were just great men and women, actuated by faith in God and man, and willing to toil and suffer for the sake of the spiritual realities in which they believed. This conception of religion, not primarily as a system or as anything that can be learnt from books, but as a living reality in the lives of human beings, is the most important point for the girls to grasp, and should be clear in the teacher's mind throughout the whole of her teaching. The value of a short course of this kind is that it enables her to make explicit what has been implicit, but perhaps hidden, in all the rest of the work.

(8) Tenets of World Religion.

This is another method of approaching the sacred scriptures, a little scrappy, but valuable as a subsidiary course taken in addition to, and not instead of, the main course.

The method used was to take successively a few of the major tenets of religion and illustrate them by quotations from as many as possible of the sacred books, e.g. :

The existence of God.
 God is One.
 God is Spirit.
 God in man.
 God is Love.
 Religion is a way of life.
 The Brotherhood of man.

- (9) Theories of redemption, and the part played by Sacrifice in the different religions, also make a good theme for a course of lessons, and help to illustrate the fact that there is (or was originally) something living and real behind what often appears to be nothing but lifeless dogma.
- (10) The theory and practice of prayer in the different religions.
- (11) Hymnology. A study of popular doctrines as revealed in the words of the hymns and chants used in public worship in the different religions.
- (12) The meaning and value of ascetism.
 This is an important subject, especially for Indian children, owing to the dangerous tendency in the east to identify religion with ascetism. A careful consideration of Buddha's life and his teaching about the Middle Path, coupled with the words and example of Jesus who was reproached for being "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber" and with certain passages from the Gita, should do much to clear up this unfortunate misunderstanding.
- (13) Temples. A study of the different types of buildings used for worship by the people of different faiths, and by those of the same faith at different stages of their development. This would resolve itself into a short introduction to the part played by architecture in religion.