



BUDDHA ZOROASTER CHRIST CONFUCIUS MUHAMMAD

AT UNITY—MARGAR

# THE GREAT UNITY

BY  
MARGARET BARR, M.A.

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# THE GREAT UNITY

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*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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*First Published 1937*

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED  
TO  
BROTHER JOHN  
WHO INSPIRED IT

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
JARROLD & SONS, LTD. NORWICH

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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 ONE

## TRUTH EMBODIED IN A TALE

THERE is no doubt that if the study of Comparative Religion is to play an important part in a child's education, and not be regarded merely as an extra, tacked on to religious education of a sectarian nature, it cannot be started too early. Long before the child is old enough to know anything about the history of religion, or to understand much of the teaching of the world's great religious systems, he is able to appreciate stories. And the child whose early stories have been drawn from here and there and everywhere, instead of from one alone of the world's religious traditions, will be in a far more favourable position for embarking at adolescence upon the true study of Comparative Religion than his less fortunate companion brought up on narrower lines. The first part of our course, therefore, will consist of stories and story-lessons for young children.

There is no need, nor is it desirable, for the teacher to stress the moral of the stories told. Let her use all the time at her disposal for telling and re-telling a choice selection of great stories, so that the children's minds may be saturated with them. The moral may be safely left to look after itself at this stage; though the judicious linking of stories already told, in a series of revision lessons, in each of which one central idea is embodied, will be found to be both an aid to memory and also to the ultimate emergence of the child's comprehension of the meaning of the stories.

Normally, of course, one lesson would consist of the telling of one story, as clearly, simply and vividly as possible, followed, if time allows, by a few questions to

ascertain that the children have got the outline of the story clear in their minds. Pictures should be used wherever it is possible to get good ones. But it is well to realise that a good word-picture painted by a teacher with imagination will be of more service to the average child than a bad picture.

Dramatisation is invaluable, and should be resorted to as frequently as time allows. Many children will also enjoy making their own story books, by writing up, at home, the stories which they have heard at school, and perhaps even drawing pictures to illustrate them.

Of the actual material to be used it is scarcely necessary to write, as it exists in abundance and every teacher will wish to make her own selection. But perhaps some indication of stories actually found in experience to be suitable and acceptable will be of use here. Stories of Rama, Krishna and Buddha, well-known to all Indian children, of course played an important part. Bible stories included Samuel, Elijah, Naaman, and the "burning fiery furnace" from the Old Testament; the Good Shepherd, the Good Samaritan and the Widow's Mite from the New Testament. China gave us Sun Hu Tzu and the story of the little slave girl who gave her only coin to help to make a statue of the Buddha. Greece and Rome gave us Persephone and King Midas. From Christian legend we gleaned the Building of San Sophia; the story of St. Basil; and the Legend Beautiful; also some illustrations of "the might of gentleness" drawn from the lives of Quaker saints such as William Penn. Islamic legend gave us the lovely story of Mohammed and the deer, and the Sufi one of Ibrahim and the angel. From the far north came the polar myth explaining the robin's red breast.

These and many more were used. The books listed in the Bibliography (p. 94), will be found to contain abundant material. Only care must be taken to vary

the choice as widely as possible, so that it may be representative of many lands and many faiths.

The following are illustrations of the Revision lessons described above.

## COMPARATIVE LESSONS FOR THE LITTLEST ONES

### I. THE GOOD SHEPHERD

There was once a shepherd who had a hundred sheep, and one day as he was returning with them from the hills, one of them went astray and got lost. When the shepherd discovered this he was very sad, because night was coming on, and he knew that it was dangerous for one little sheep to be left alone among the hills all night. So he quickly fastened the other ninety-nine safely into their fold, and set off alone to look for the lost sheep. He was not afraid of the many dangers, the steep and slippery places, the rushing rivers, the wild beasts. His only fear was lest he should be too late to save his sheep. All night he wandered, weary and hungry and footsore, but he did not give up hope; and at last, as the dawn drew near, he heard the sad little bleating of a lonely, frightened lamb. Then the shepherd hurried to where the lamb was, and picked the tired little creature up in his arms, and laid it across his shoulders and carried it home rejoicing.

Now that, as you all know, is one of the stories that Jesus told. And sometimes he is called the Good Shepherd himself because of his great love for lonely, frightened, unhappy people, and his desire to make them happy.

Now listen to the story of another Good Shepherd, this time from faraway India.

Long years before Jesus lived in Palestine there lived in India another great man who loved, not only people, but animals also, and wanted them all to be happy, and never considered any time wasted that he spent in helping any

creature that was in trouble. We call this great man Buddha. One day as he was walking up a hill he met a flock of sheep which were being brought down to the city to be sacrificed at the Temple. And he noticed among the flock one poor mother-sheep who was very troubled, for she had two little lambs, one of whom was lame. Now this little fellow could not skip along as fast as his brother and kept falling behind. And the one that was not lame did not like walking slowly and kept skipping off to the front of the flock. What was the poor mother to do? How could she keep a watchful eye upon both? Then came Buddha and seeing her trouble, he said, "Poor woolly mother, be at peace!" And very tenderly he picked up the little limping lamb and laid it on his shoulders and carried it down the hill, and so comforted the mother sheep and made her happy. And when they reached the city and he found that many sheep and goats were being killed for sacrifices, he went to the temple, and in the presence of the king and the priests and all the people, he pleaded that these innocent creatures should not be killed, for they loved their life as much as man did, and the great God who had made them all loved them too. So gently, yet so earnestly he spoke that the people were amazed, for they had never heard anyone speak like that before. Then the priests threw away their knives, the sheep and goats were sent back to their native hills to live out their little lives in peace and happiness, and the king sent out a decree saying that in future throughout his kingdom no animals were to be killed either for sacrifice or for food, for all life belongs to God and comes from God, and we have no right to take from others that which God has given.

We are taught, and indeed men have always believed, that men like Jesus and Buddha show us what God is like. And if we are right in believing that, then it follows that God is at least as kind and loving and gentle as the best of all human shepherds, and that He loves all His creatures at least as tenderly as a mother loves her children—loves them even when they go astray, and especially those who are weak and lonely and sad. So that we need never be afraid of anything so long as we keep close to Him.

It was another shepherd who had the same thought about God before either Buddha or Jesus came into the world—a shepherd lad who grew up to be a great king and leader of men, and who wrote a little prayer-song which I hope you all know, beginning, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

## II. THE MOTHER OF ALL LIVING CREATURES

In the last lesson we saw how two of the great sons of God taught that God is like a good shepherd who loves and cares for his sheep, and how they showed by their own kindness and gentleness what God is like. Many other people also, in all ages and in all parts of the world, have had the same thought that God is the Shepherd, or the Father, or the Mother of all living creatures, and therefore if we want to please Him and be like Him we must be gentle and kind and try never to hurt any living thing if we can possibly help it, but even, like Buddha, to help them when they are in trouble.

You all know the beautiful stories of St. Francis and how he loved the birds and beasts and called them his brothers and sisters. To-day I am going to tell you some stories from faraway lands for you to think of when you hear of St. Francis. The first is another true story of the same great man who carried the little lame lamb down the hill. Long before that time, when he was quite a young man, a prince living in his father's palace, he was out in the palace grounds one day when a wounded swan fell at his feet, shot by an arrow from the bow of his cousin, who was a great hunter. Very gently the young prince drew out the arrow, and tended the wound, and soothed the frightened bird. Then came the cousin demanding that the bird should be given to him, for since he had shot it it was his by right. But the young prince refused to give it up. Then a council was held and all the wise men assembled to decide whose it should be, and most of them agreed that he who had shot it had a right to it. But there arose one wiser and gentler than the rest, one who spoke with an authority which

marked him out as the messenger of God. And he said, “No, the living thing should belong to him who tries to save, not to him who tries to kill, for the life comes from God and He loves not those who take away what He has given.” So Buddha kept the bird and nursed it back to health and strength—the first of many creatures which he won to him by his pity, gentleness and love.

The next story is about a king who decided to build a very beautiful church, so that for centuries to come men would know what a great and rich and pious king he was. The building started and day after day the patient oxen drew their heavy loads of stone up the hill to the place where the church was to stand. At last the building was finished, and a great opening ceremony was arranged, at which was to be unveiled a statue of the king, which he had ordered to be placed above the main door. The great day came. The king in all his state awaited with pride the moment when the statue would be revealed to the people, and everyone would shout the praises of him who had built the beautiful church. Imagine everyone's amazement and horror when the curtain was removed and it was seen that the statue was not of the king, but of a little old woman who lived in a cottage at the foot of the hill. In terrible anger the king ordered the sculptor who had made the statue to be brought before him. Then stepped forward the king's chief councillor, and said, “Sire, the man prepared the statue as you commanded. It has been changed since yesterday. This is the work of God. Let us inquire concerning this old woman.” So the old woman was brought before the king, who asked her what she had done in the building of the church that God should have honoured her in this way. She replied, “Sire, I had nothing to give; I am too poor. I could not work; I am too old. All that I did was to spread straw beneath the feet of the oxen that they might more easily draw the heavy loads up the hill.” Then the king bowed his head in humility, realising that in God's sight to help to ease the burden of dumb beasts was a nobler deed than to build a splendid temple.

The last story is another magic tale, this time from China, and is about a man called Ho Kwan. Ho Kwan was a

kind-hearted man who never killed a living thing. He had a jar in which he kept a lot of silver. The white ants, however, got into his jar and ate some of the silver. Then his family found where the ants lived, and thought that if they took a great many of them and put them into a vessel and melted them over the fire, perhaps they would get back some of the silver. But Ho Kwan would not let them do it, for he said, "I cannot bear to see so many creatures killed for the sake of a little silver." That night Ho Kwan had a dream in which the white ants came and took him to their king, who told him that as he had been so kind to them they were going to reward him by telling him where he could find a lot of buried treasure. And when Ho Kwan awoke in the morning and dug in the place which he had seen in his dream, he found the treasure even as the ant king had promised he should.

These stories, and many more, show us that always and in all lands there have been men who have believed, as Jesus did, that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father, or (as the people in India and China would say), the Mother of all living things. And further that that great Father-Mother Spirit wants His children to be like Him in gentleness, kindness and helpful sympathy one towards another and it is those who are most like Him who come nearest to His great heart and know Him best. I wonder if you know these lines by a great English poet. Perhaps you could learn them to remind you of these stories, and of the Mother of all Living Things:

He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast;  
He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us  
He made and loveth all.

## III. THE EVER-PRESENT GOD

One of the most interesting things about visiting distant lands is to see the different ways people have for doing the most simple and ordinary things. Carrying a baby is something that every mother knows how to do, isn't it? But you would be surprised how many different ways there are of doing it. I suppose your mother used to carry you in her arms, or push you in a pram. But if you'd been a little brown Khasi baby instead of a little white English one, you would have been fastened on to her back with a wide piece of cloth making a sort of sling cradle. That's how all the babies get carried about up there in those far-away hills of India.

Now that means that a hill baby very rarely sees his mother. Only when she takes him in her arms to give him his meals, or when she bends over him for a moment after laying him in his bed, is he able to look up into her face. For the rest of the time he does not see her. But he knows that she is always there, and that wherever he goes she goes too, and he is content.

In earlier lessons we saw that those who have known God best have thought of Him as a Shepherd, or a Father, or a Mother. I think He is a little like a Khasi mother, don't you? We cannot see Him, but we know that He is always there, always with us; that it is He who gives us life, He who helps us to grow, and gives us strength to move and act and think, not only, like our human mothers, while we are little babies, but all through our lives.

Now, of course, nobody with any sense would ever dream of saying that he had never had a mother, or that he could manage just as well without one, would he? Even someone who had never seen his mother at all would know that there must have been one, to give him life and to care for him in the early days when he was a tiny, helpless baby. But that is just what many people say about God. They say, "There never was a Divine Parent who gave us life.

Or if He ever existed we have long since left Him far behind. We know so much now, we are so clever and powerful. We can fly through the air or skim under the sea at the most tremendous speed. We can build the most amazing machines. We can make the winds and the waters and the lightning come and serve us in our homes. We can do almost anything we want to do. Why then should we worry our heads about God, who is of no more importance in our lives than our human mothers who are dead and gone, or whom we have long since left far behind on the road to knowledge or wealth or fame or power?" Many people talk like that nowadays.

Here is a funny old story from ancient China about a man who had ideas of that kind. It's the story of Sun Hu Tzu, the Monkey Man.

Sun Hu Tzu had learnt to do so many things that he had become very proud, and decided that he ought to be the King of Heaven because he was so much more important than God, and so much cleverer, and could travel so far and so fast. "Very well," said God to Sun Hu Tzu, "we will have a wager. If you can go out of my hand I will make you King of Heaven." So Sun Hu Tzu rose up, and with the speed of light travelled to the boundary of the universe. There he saw the five great pillars which mark the boundary, and in order to prove that he really had been so far he wrote his name on one of them. Then back he shot, triumphant, to claim the reward. Proudly he told what he had done, and added, "And now you must keep your promise and make me King of Heaven." But God shook His head, "You never went out of my hand," He said. "See here the words that you wrote." As He spoke He raised His hand, and there written on one of His fingers Sun Hu Tzu saw the words that he had written on the pillar at the boundary of the universe.

When you are older you will read other passages to put beside that quaint old story. There is one in the Rig-Veda the world's oldest Bible, which says, "This earth belongs to Varuna (God), and the wide sky. He who should flee far beyond the sky, even he would not be rid of Varuna." And in the Hebrew Psalm 139, which is one of the loveliest

bits of poetry ever written, we read, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

These are much too difficult for you to understand yet. I have put them in for your teachers to read, so that they may know that others besides Sun Hu Tzu have heard the gentle voice that says, "You never went out of my hand." For you kiddies it will be enough if you remember just that bit, and the bit about the Khasi baby who does not often see his mother's face, but who knows that she is always there.

## PARABLES

A later development of the use of stories in religious teaching was taken with older girls, after the two years devoted to the lives of the founders and the history of the World's Living Religions (Chapters II and III). It took the form of reading a few great parables from the Scriptures of various religions and discussing the teaching that they were intended to convey. It was no longer a question of just telling a story and leaving it to convey its own moral, as with the younger children, but a deliberate attempt to study the use made of the parable method by some of the great teachers and to analyse the message conveyed by them.

The teacher should make her own selection of parables for this course. Any will do, provided they are chosen on a sufficiently broad basis. The ones included in this chapter are some of those which were actually used in the experiment made by the writer. For that reason alone are they included here. The list makes no claim to be authoritative or exhaustive. It

merely illustrates the method. It is a course which was found useful for occupying a few weeks towards the end of a session, when one of the longer courses had come to an end. And it could, of course, be extended almost indefinitely. Suggestions for other similarly adaptable short courses will be found in Appendix B.

## I. HINDU

## THOU ART THAT

(From the *Chandogya Upanishad*)

Uddalaka spake unto Svetaketu, his son, saying: "Learn from me, beloved . . .

"If one should smite upon the root of this great tree, beloved, it would sweat sap, and live. If one should smite upon its midst, it would sweat sap, and live. If one should smite upon its top, it would sweat sap, and live. Instinct with the Live Self, it stands full lush and glad.

"But if the Live One leave one bough, it withers. If it leave another bough, it withers. If it leave a third bough, it withers. So know, beloved, the thing whence the Live One has departed does indeed die; but the Live One dies not. In this subtleness has this All its essence; it is the True; it is the Self; thou art it, Svetaketu."

"Let my lord teach me further," said the son.

"Be it so, beloved," the father replied.

"Bring from yonder a fig."

"Here it is, my lord."

"Break it."

"It is broken, my lord."

"What seest thou in it?"

"Here are but little seeds, my lord."

"Now break one of them."

"It is broken, my lord."

"What seest thou in it?"

"Naught, whatsoever, my lord."

And he said to him: "Of that subtleness which thou canst not behold, beloved, is this great fig-tree made. Have faith, beloved. In this subtleness has this All its essence; it is the True; it is the Self; thou art it, Svetaketu."

"Let my lord teach me further," said the son.

"Be it so, beloved," replied the father.

"Lay this salt in water, and on the morrow draw nigh to me." And he did so. Then he said to him: "Bring me the salt which thou laidst in the water yester eve."

He felt, but found it not; it was melted away.

"Drink from this end thereof. How is it?"

"It is salty."

"Drink from the midst. How is it?"

"It is salty."

"Drink from yonder end. How is it?"

"It is salty."

"Lay it aside, and draw nigh to me." And he did so.

"It is still present," said he to him. "Herein forsooth thou canst not behold Being, beloved, but herein soothly it is. In this subtleness has this All its essence; it is the True; it is the Self; thou art it, Svetaketu."

## Meaning

The parable was discussed with reference to all that the girls already knew about the teachings of the Upanishads, and it was seen that in the space of this one short story the major principles of Upanishadic teaching were embodied:

- (a) A thing is not necessarily non-existent because it is invisible.
- (b) The most important thing about living things is the *life*-invisible, inexplicable, mysterious, but all-important. When it departs the body may remain but is no longer of any consequence.

- (c) The oneness of all life—It was the same “Live One” in the tree, the living seed, and in us.
- (d) The “Live One” (i.e. the heart of reality) is a spiritual reality—a pervading essence.
- (e) This “Live One” is sometimes spoken of as the “Inward Ruler” which means that the Upanishads identify it with God. God, therefore, is not a Person who gives life—He *is* the life. Therefore man, too, is God. And the more he realises this, obeys the Inward Ruler, and lives as though it were his spirit and not his body that mattered, the more God-like he becomes and the nearer to Nirvana, the complete At-one-ment.

## II. BUDDHIST

### THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

(*Udana, VI, 4*)

Thus have I heard: once the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi at Jeta Grove, in Anathapindika's Park. Now, on that occasion a number of sectarians, recluses and brahmanas who were wanderers entered Savatthi to beg an alms; they were men of divers views, accepting divers faiths, of divers aims and by divers opinions swayed to and fro.

Now, some of these recluses and brahmanas held such views as these: “Eternal is the world: this is the truth, all else is delusion.” Others held: “Not eternal is the world: this is the truth, all else is delusion.” Others again held: “The world is finite,” or “The world is infinite.” Or again: “Body and soul are one and the same.” Others said: “Body and soul are different things.” Some held: “The Tathagata exists after death,” or “The Tathagata exists not after death,” or “The Tathagata both exists and exists not after death,” or “The Tathagata neither exists

nor exists not after death.” And each maintained that his own view was the truth, and that all else was delusion.

So they lived quarrelsome, noisy, disputatious, abusing each other with words that pierced like javelins, maintaining: “This is the truth, that is not the truth. That is not the truth, this is the truth!”

Now a number of the brethren, robing themselves early and taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthi to beg an alms, and on their return they ate their meal and came to the Exalted One, saluted him and sat down at one side. So seated, those brethren described to the Exalted One what they had seen and heard of those recluses and brahmanas who were sectarians.

Then said the Exalted One:

“These sectarians, brethren, are blind and unseeing. They know not the real, they know not the unreal; they know not the truth, they know not the untruth. In such a state of ignorance do they dispute and quarrel as ye describe. Now in former times, brethren, there was a Raja in this same Savatthi. Then, brethren, the Raja called to a certain man, saying: ‘Come thou, good fellow! Go gather together all the blind men that are in Savatthi!’”

“‘Very good, Your Majesty,’ replied that man, and in obedience to the Raja, gathered together all the blind men, took them with him to the Raja, and said: ‘Your Majesty, all the blind men of Savatthi are now assembled.’”

“‘Then, my good man, show the blind men an elephant.’”

“‘Very good, Your Majesty,’ said the man, and did as he was told, saying: ‘O ye blind men, such as this is an elephant.’”

“And to one he presented the head of the elephant, to another the ear, to another a tusk, the trunk, the foot, back, tail, and tuft of the tail, saying to each one that was the elephant.”

“Now, brethren, that man, having presented the elephant to the blind men, came to the Raja and said: ‘Your Majesty, the elephant has been presented to the blind men. Do what is your will.’”

“Thereupon, brethren, that Raja went up to the blind men and said to each: ‘Have you studied the elephant?’”

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Then tell me your conclusions about him."

"Thereupon those who had been presented with the head answered 'Your Majesty, an elephant is just like a pot.' And those who had only observed the ear replied: 'An elephant is just like a winnowing basket.' Those who had been presented with the tusk said it was a ploughshare. Those who knew only the trunk said it was a plough. 'The body,' said they, 'is a granary: the foot, a pillar: the back, a mortar: the tail a pestle: the tuft of the tail just a besom.'

"Then they began to quarrel, shouting, 'Yes, it is!' 'No, it isn't!' 'An elephant is not that!' 'Yes, it's like that!' and so on, till they came to fisticuffs about the matter.

"Then, brethren, that Raja was delighted with the scene.

"Just so are these sectarians who are wanderers, blind, unseeing, knowing not the truth, but each maintaining it is thus and thus."

Whereupon the Exalted One, on that occasion, seeing the gist of the matter, uttered this solemn saying:

"Oh, how they cling and wrangle, some who claim  
Of Brahman and recluse the honoured name!  
For quarrelling, each to his own view they cling.  
Such folk see only one side of a thing."

#### *Meaning*

- (a) Difference of opinion is generally due to the fact that our knowledge is only partial—hence the need for tolerance.
- (b) It is stupid to quarrel instead of trying to see the problem from the point of view of the person with whom we do not agree.
- (c) In the story none was wholly wrong, and none wholly right. Each was describing truthfully what *he* had experienced, and was wrong only in asserting that his was the only description which was true. Fuller knowledge would have resolved the controversy, not in favour of any

one contention as against the rest, but by revealing something bigger than all. Since all human knowledge is but partial, this can be applied to every difference of opinion.

### III. HEBREW

#### THE VINEYARD

(Isaiah V)

Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression: for righteousness, but behold a cry.

#### *Meaning*

This parable was taken as an illustration of the use of parables to drive home a lesson to people who would not

listen if it were given in any other form. The same method was used by Nathan to David (2 Sam. xii).

The message that Isaiah wished to convey was the very simple and unwelcome one that God was angry with the people for their faithlessness, and having found that they could not be trusted to fulfil His will, would give their inheritance to someone else. The people could hardly be expected to listen to this if put baldly in a sermon, so the prophet dressed it up in a story, and by asking them what *they* would do under similar circumstances got them to condemn themselves.

#### IV. CHRISTIAN

##### THE PRODIGAL SON

(*Luke xv*)

And he said, A certain man had two sons.

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country: and he sent him into fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.

And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was

yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry.

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing,

And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come: and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

##### *Meaning*

- (a) The story illustrates Christ's conception of the relation between God and man, as being analogous to that between a father and a son.
- (b) God the Father loves His children even when they go astray and grieve Him. He does not think in terms of punishment, but of tenderness

and forgiveness, waiting and watching for the wanderer to return.

- (c) The story further draws attention to the tragedy of deliberate exile from the Father's love, either at home or away. The Elder Brother was as far away as the Prodigal in spirit. Both missed the best.
- (d) The position of the Elder Brother further illustrates the fact that self-righteousness and negative goodness are even more hopeless than positive wrong doing. The Prodigal returned "when he came to himself," but the Elder Brother was unconscious of the need for return, since he had "never transgressed," though his attitude to his repentant brother should have been enough to show him how far he was from sharing his Father's spirit.
- (e) Man is the child of God, and therefore capable of being like Him, but *free to choose* whether he will be or not.
- (f) Perfect comradeship between man and God is possible to those who choose to live in harmony with Him—God does not want cringing slaves or obedient subjects, but *sons* to share His purposes and be fellow-workers with Him.

## V. MODERN

### THE BEGGAR AND THE KING

(Tagore's *Gitanjali*, No. 50, by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan)

I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at

an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say "What hast thou to give me?"

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.

#### Meaning

- (a) So long as we think of religion as being primarily a question of begging favours from God we get nothing out of it. God does not give at first—He challenges us to give.
- (b) What we give to God or use unreservedly for Him is returned to us with its value increased.
- (c) Hence it is only those who surrender completely to Him, not through hope of reward but through sheer devotion, who know the heights and depths of religion (e.g. the great saints of all time).

See Matthew, xvi, 25 :

"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it. And whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Also the *Bhagavad Gita* (*Song Celestial*):

"Whereso any doeth all his deeds,  
Renouncing self for Me, full of Me, fixed  
To serve only the Highest, night and day  
Musing on Me—him will I swiftly lift  
Forth from life's ocean of distress and death.  
Whose soul clings fast to Me!"

And the prayer of Rabea the Moslem mystic:

"O Lord if I worship thee from fear of hell,  
burn me in hell; and if I worship Thee from hope  
of Paradise, exclude me thence, but if I worship  
Thee for Thine own sake, then withhold not from  
me Thine eternal beauty."

## MYTHOLOGY

Mythology is another aspect of our vast subject which cannot be dealt with in any detail, but which will prove a fruitful avenue of exploration for anyone who follows it up, and which in any case should not be omitted from such a scheme of instruction as the one outlined in this book. (For Bibliography, see page 94.)

To most western children a "myth" is a story of a Greek or Roman god or goddess. They do not know that every religion and every civilization has had its mythology, not only Greece and Rome. A comparison of the varying treatment by different people of some universal theme, such as the return of Spring, would quickly put the subject of mythology in a new and more accurate perspective. It would also introduce the children to other "dead" religions, as they are called, such as Babylonian and Egyptian, in which mythology and religion are inextricably interwoven.

But it is not only mythologies of ancient times upon which we can draw. Recent research has revealed vast masses of material especially amongst the Irish, the American Indians, the Maoris and other peoples, much of which is of a type that has great fascination for children. The Norse Eddas are also coming into their own and bringing to light some delightful new stories which can be added to those about the Norse Gods already well-known to European children through the operas of Wagner and other channels.

In addition to parables, fables, legends and myths, there remains yet another type of "Truth embodied in a tale," examples of which can be studied by senior scholars. A short series of these was taken, as part of the original experiment, with seventeen- and eighteen-year old girls as the culmination of their course of study. The aim was to drive home once again that the most important thing about religion is not theories and rites, ceremonials and sacred books, gods and demons, schemes of salvation and historical systems, but a living power aflame in the hearts and lives of human beings. If it is not that, all the rest is but "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

The stories were chosen therefore, from amongst those which can easily be found, both in the sacred scriptures and elsewhere, containing revelations of the height and depth of human love. They included the death of Absalom and the story of Ruth from the Old Testament of the Bible, the Great Renunciation of the Buddha, from the *Light of Asia* and the story of Savitri from the Mahabharata, and the last days of Jesus from the New Testament.

It will be observed that the keynote of all of these is the splendour and courage of selfless love, which is, surely, the only true test, vindication and crown of a man's religion. A text for the series was found in the story of St. Basil in the Child's Book of Saints—"The love which gives all and asks nothing is the prayer of prayers."

After reading and being gripped by the elemental truth and beauty embodied in the stories, the class and the teacher discussed together the implications of the central theme, with special reference to the doctrine of Non-Attachment, with which the girls were already familiar through their study of the Gita. At first sight that seemed to be a contradiction, since the people in

## THE GREAT UNITY

the stories were notable for their "attachment" to other human beings. But we decided that it was not really so, the confusion arising from our use of the word "love" to cover two different things—the love that desires, and the love that sacrifices. Most human love combines the two in varying degrees. The greatest human love rises above desire completely into "the love that gives all and asks nothing." That is why the Christ and the Buddha are the supreme examples and the supreme revelation of God, the Infinite Love.

In conclusion the girls copied into their note books the following great passages from the five stories :

*Ruth i, 16, 17*

"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

*2 Samuel, xviii, 33*

"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!  
Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son,  
my son!"

*St. Luke, xxiii, 34*

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

*Light of Asia (Book IV)*

" . . . that love is false  
Which clings to love for selfish sweets of love;  
But I, who love these more than joys of mine—  
Yea, more than joys of theirs—depart to save  
Them and all flesh, if utmost love avail . . .

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## TRUTH EMBODIED IN A TALE

" . . . if I conquer, Lo! all earth is mine—  
Mine by chief service!—mine by love!  
Since there is hope for man only in man,  
And none has sought for this as I will seek,  
Who cast away my world to save my world."

Savitri (*Wisdom of the Hindus*, Brian Brown, pp. 40-41).

[She is speaking to the God of Death who is taking her husband from her.]

"I must go where my husband goes. That is my duty. The wise men say that to walk seven steps with another makes them friends. So let me walk more than seven steps with you. And the wise men also say that the best road to walk is that of right."

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WAY-SHOWERS

OUTLINES OF THE LIVES AND TEACHINGS OF THE  
FOUNDERS OF THE WORLD'S LIVING RELIGIONS

#### HINDUISM

THE religion which is still professed by about four-fifths of the people of India is the oldest of all living religions, and has its origins so far back in the misty prehistoric times that it is not possible to say who founded it. But the scriptures and traditions which have come down to us from those "high and far-off times" suggest that it owed its rise to the inspiration of certain holy and gifted men known as the Rishis; and that later it got a new life from the teaching of inspired men like the noble Rama and the cow-herd Krishna.

#### THE RISHIS

Of the Rishis we know nothing except what is revealed in the poems they wrote, which are contained in the Rig-Veda, probably the world's oldest book, and certainly the oldest poetry-book.

From these poems we know that the Rishis were lovers of beauty who felt within them a divine urge to utter their gratitude to the Great Spirits who made all lovely and wonderful things. Most of the hymns of the Rig-Veda are pæans of praise to God, under varying names, for the beauties and wonders of nature, for satisfying the needs of man, or for stimulating and directing his thought. There is a childlike simplicity and freshness about them, though coupled often with a keenness of intellectual and spiritual insight which sets them at once in the front rank of the world's religious

#### THE WAY-SHOWERS

poems, as, for instance, in the famous passage whose author leaps at one stride from pantheism to monotheism:

"Wise poets by words make the Beautiful-winged manifold, though he is One."

#### *The Rishis' Teaching.*

In the hymns of the Rig-Veda we find thoughts such as would naturally spring up in the minds of simple but thoughtful observers, who felt that there must be some power or powers directing the course of Nature, responsible for the orderly behaviour of day and night, seed-time and harvest, and even sending such irregular phenomena as thunderstorms and earthquakes. Worship of these powers; awe at the wonder and majesty revealed in Nature; gratitude for sun and rain, food and fire; prayers for light for mind and spirit—these are the keynotes of the Vedic hymns, and interwoven with the rest, like a golden thread, is the thought of the unity of God. Many are the powers referred to, and many the names used, Surya and Savitri, Agni and Varuna. But behind them all is the Nameless Self-Existent One.

"In the beginning was neither non-existence nor existence—THAT only breathed by ITS own nature: Apart from THAT was naught." *Rig-Veda* x, cxxlx, 1, 2.

#### RAMA

Of Rama and Krishna it is much easier to write. The detailed stories of their lives are to be found respectively in the Ramayana and the Vishnu Purana.

Rama was the son of King Dasaratha of Ayodhya. As the eldest son he was heir to his father's throne, but in a moment of weakness the king undertook to grant his second wife any two boons that she should ask.

Jealous of Rama and ambitious for her own son, Bharata, she asked that Rama should be banished for fourteen years and Bharata should become king in his place. Overcome by the shock of the disaster that he had caused, the old king died almost at once. Bharata, who was an honourable youth and who both loved and respected his elder brother, refused to mount the throne, and both he and the people besought Rama to enter into his birthright. But a royal vow is inviolable and Rama steadfastly determined to carry out his father's will. He remained in banishment in the forest. The land went into mourning. His shoes occupied the throne to remind the people of the absent king, and Bharata acted as regent.

Rama was not alone in his banishment, but was accompanied by his wife Sita and his young brother Lakshman. For a time they all lived happily together; then Sita was carried off by the demon Ravana. Many allies flocked to Rama's banner to help to rescue her, notably Hanuman the monkey-leader and his faithful followers.

After much tribulation and warfare Ravana was at last conquered and Sita rescued, and as the fourteen years' banishment were by then at an end, they all returned in triumph to Ayodhya.

#### *Rama's Teaching*

The teaching of Rama emerges more from the story of his life than from his words. It is a message of absolute integrity. A man must be true to what he believes to be right, no matter what hardships, temptations, obstacles and apparent futility such integrity involves, true to Right because it is right and not for the sake of any reward.

The keynote is struck in the splendid speech he uttered after Sita had been carried off. At first he was

tempted in his agony to curse the Gods: "Do the Gods mock me?" he said. "Is the pain of man a pleasant jest to the Eternal Powers who look down from heaven? Or, are the Gods dead? and has a blind Destiny, ignorant of justice, become the ruler of our fates? Was not I virtuous? Was not my Sita innocent? What means this evil fortune which pursues me and culminates in this crowning misery? Why am I, who have made Truth and Purity and Kindliness my rule of life, thus hated by the Gods? It were best to change my conduct, since this is the meed heaven keeps to pay the righteous." Then the clouds rolled away, and the sunshine of his faith shone out again, "I was wrong," he said, "Virtue is a service man owes *himself*, and though there were no Heaven, nor any God to rule the world, it were none the less the binding law of life. It is man's privilege to know the Right and follow it. Betray and persecute me, Brother Men; pour out your rage on me, O malignant devils; smile, or watch my agony with cold disdain, ye blissful Gods; Earth, Hell and Heaven, combine your might to crush me; I will still hold fast by this inheritance. My strength is nothing—time can shake and cripple it; my youth is transient—already grief has withered up my days; my heart—alas! it seems well-nigh broken now! Anguish may crush it utterly, and life may fail; but even so, my Soul that has not tripped shall triumph, and dying, give the lie to soulless Destiny, that dares to boast itself Man's Master."

#### KRISHNA

Krishna was the son of Vasudeva and Devaki. It had been predicted that a son of theirs would kill Kansa, the evil and unscrupulous king of Mathura. So Kansa kept a watchful eye on Devaki and had all her children slain at birth. Krishna was the eighth and was rescued

by his father, who carried him off in the night and handed him over to a cowherd named Nanda to be cared for and brought up. Krishna, therefore, became himself a cowherd, living a simple life in the woods amongst herdsmen and shepherdesses. In due course he fulfilled the prediction by killing Kansa, and so set free the enslaved people of Mathura.

But the most important story of Krishna is in the Mahabharata, where we find him acting as the charioteer of Arjuna, the warrior hero of that great epic, and in that disguise giving to Arjuna and the world the pearl of Hindu teaching known as the Bhagavad Gita.

#### *Krishna's Teaching*

For the teaching of Krishna we turn to the pages of the Bhagavad Gita, the most intimate, beautiful and popular of all the Hindu scriptures. Most of the contents of this exquisite gem of devotional literature are too difficult to be included in this section. But a few of the keynotes of the message associated with the name of Krishna can be struck here.

One of these is the one already referred to under the teaching of Rama—absolute integrity of soul; doing right, not with any idea of reward but simply for its own sake:

“Find full reward  
Of doing right in right! Let right deeds be  
Thy motive, not the fruit which comes from them.”

Another is the idea of the unity of all life, and of God, “the Lover of all that lives,” as the indwelling spirit in all:

“There is ‘true’ knowledge. Learn thou, it is this:  
To see one changeless Life in all the Lives,  
And in the Separate, One Inseparable.”

Above all is the thought that in absolute devotion to God lies the only way of peace and harmony for the soul of man. Once he has surrendered to God he can live a life which will be active but not restless, above the battle of right and wrong, love and hate; detached, free from desire; in whatever sphere of life he may find himself, doing his duty untroubled by passion or doubt, independent of rites and ceremonies.

“Nay! but once more  
Take My last word, My utmost meaning have!  
Precious thou art to Me; right well-beloved!  
Give Me thy heart! adore Me! serve Me! cling  
In faith and love and reverence to Me!  
So shalt thou come to Me!  
And let go those  
Rites and writ duties! Fly to me alone!  
Make Me thy single refuge! I will free  
Thy soul from all its sins! Be of good cheer.”

#### ZOROASTER

1000 B.C.

Zoroaster of Zarathustra almost certainly lived at least 1000 B.C. and perhaps as long ago as 1500 B.C. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that little which is authentic is known about him, though the religion which he founded still exists. The Parsees are Zoroastrians.

Tradition says that his coming had been predicted ages before, and though demons conspired to prevent his birth they were unable to do so as the divine babe was Ahura Mazda's chosen messenger of salvation to man. He laughed the moment he was born, and all Nature rejoiced.

Like the infant Jesus, and like Krishna, he was miraculously saved from death at the hands of a jealous king.

At the age of twenty-four he retired to the lonely mountains to meditate, and six years later he had a vision which sent him forth on his public ministry. He describes his vision as a visit to heaven and to the presence of Ahura Mazda himself. From then onwards he knew that God was Righteousness and that he was dedicated to the cause of Righteousness. This he states clearly in one of his hymns:

"I who have set my heart on watching over the soul in union with Good Thought—will, while I have power and strength, teach men to seek after Right."

It was probably at this time while still alone on the mountain, and before he had actually put his hand to the plough, that his Temptation occurred. Angra Mainyu, the Evil One, made a last desperate effort to conquer the young prophet. Three times he offered him world-dominion, riches and power if he would give up his mission. But Zoroaster stood firm and drove away the Evil One by chanting aloud the prayer which is used by Zoroastrians to this day:

"The Will of the Lord is the law of holiness. The riches of Good Mind shall be given to him who works in this world for Mazda, and wields according to the will of Ahura the power he gave to him to relieve the poor."

The prophet having won his victory over his own lower self then returned to his people full of reforming zeal. But there is considerable evidence that he endured some years of loneliness, hatred and scorn before he began to win others to his way. Several verses in his hymns echo the heart cry of one who was despised and rejected:

"As the holy one I recognised thee Mazda Ahura, when Good Thought came to me, when first by your words I was instructed. Shall it bring me sorrow among men, my devotion, in doing that which you tell me is the best?"

But in spite of discouragement and suffering he held to his faith in the ultimate triumph of Right, and at last he began to get a following, first amongst the common people, and later amongst the nobles, the latter coming over as a consequence of the conversion of King Vishtaspa. This event may or may not have happened during the lifetime of Zoroaster, but at least it is certain that ultimately Zoroastrianism became the state religion of Persia, and at a later date was adhered to by no less a personage than the great king Darius.

Zoroaster was not only a religious, but also an agricultural, reformer. Indeed there is some evidence that progressive ideas in the two spheres went hand in hand, and that the triumph of his reformed religion over superstitious sacerdotalism, meant the triumph also of enlightened agriculture over traditional and unproductive methods.

He was also a poet, and above all a passionate believer in the responsibility of the individual human soul for the progress of the race, and in the possibility of man being fellow-worker with God, the God who is at once the God of Nature and the God of Righteousness.

"So may we be of those that make this world advance."

### *Zoroaster's Teaching*

"While I have power and strength I will teach men to seek after Right." That sentence gives us the keynote of Zoroaster's teaching—Righteousness.

He believed that the popular Nature gods were not gods at all but demons tempting men to destruction. He saw in Nature and in his own soul a great contest ever taking place between Good and Evil, Light and Darkness. These he personified as the two great rivals

of his dualistic theology—Ahura Mazda or Ormuzd, the God of all Good, Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the power of Evil.

To Zoroaster must be given the credit for being the first great prophet to see clearly the relationship between morality and religion. If the central fact of the universe was the struggle between Good and Evil, then the soul of man must be the centre of the battle and man's primary duty as worshipper of Ormuzd was to range himself on the side of Goodness. Whether or not any individual would be found in the last supreme battle to be fighting on the right side, would depend entirely on the use he had made of the training period afforded by his life on earth.

It followed, therefore, that the most important part of the worship of Ormuzd was not ceremonial or hymns of praise, but Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds. Of these a strict account was kept in heaven, and as the mighty Ormuzd was more concerned with justice than with mercy, the only way of atoning for evil deeds was to do enough good ones to counter-balance them in the Great Accountant's book, and so turn out in the end with a balance on the right side. It is easy to see how such teaching would make for honesty, virility and self-reliance, as well as for a realisation of man's partial responsibility for the ultimate triumph of Light over Darkness. It is true that Ormuzd had made man, but He had made him free, which left him susceptible to the power of Ahriman and threw upon him the responsibility of choosing for himself the way his soul should go.

But though Ahriman, the tempter, was a very real being to Zoroaster, Ormuzd "The Beautiful" was far more so, a being with whom a man might have intimate converse, and who was ever ready to give strength and comfort to those who sincerely strove to worship him.

## BUDDHA

560-480 B.C.

Probably more has been written about the Buddha than about any other of the great teachers of antiquity. The Buddhist scriptures give much information, and the English teacher can easily find all she needs in such books as *The Light of Asia* and *The Gospel of Buddha*. But legend and history are so mixed together that it is difficult to know which is which.

The Buddha was the eldest son of a rich Hindu rajah of the Sakya people, and his early life was passed in great luxury. His father, troubled by the strange prophecies which attended his birth, and by the unusual thoughtfulness of the young prince, made every effort to keep his mind from dwelling on serious things and surrounded him with every possible delight. But in spite of this, when the prince reached the age of twenty-nine, the call came to him to renounce all that he cared for in the world, including his lovely young wife and infant son, and go out in direst poverty to seek salvation for mankind.

First he tried the accredited Hindu method of philosophic speculation concerning the relationship between God and man. But this failed to give him what he sought. So he resorted to the method of extreme asceticism. But this also failed.

At last, in quiet meditation under the Bo-tree, the light came to him and the great truths which were to become the theme of his message became clear in his mind. But before he could begin to preach them, he had to undergo a fierce temptation, as happened also to Zoroaster before him and Jesus after him. Wealth, love, and world-dominion were all offered to him by the Evil One if he would give up his mission. But the

Buddha remained firm and Mara the Evil One retreated discomfited.

Then the Buddha set out on his mission as preacher and teacher, and for the rest of his life he wandered up and down the country winning people to him by his gentleness and simplicity as well as by the loftiness and splendour of his message. He died at the advanced age of eighty, worn out in body but invincible in spirit, and his last words were:

"Behold now, brethren, decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your own salvation with diligence."

#### *Buddha's Teaching*

Setting aside the profound metaphysical subtleties of the teaching of the Buddha, which are clearly too difficult for school-children, we are left with a few points of great simplicity and beauty such as children can both understand and appreciate. Of these the most important are selflessness (or the conquest of desire) gentleness, humility and compassion. His life reveals him as one who practised these virtues himself and thus delivered his message in the best of all possible ways.

He did not believe in the efficacy of religious rites and ceremonies, but in religion as a way of life.

Though often called an ascetic, he neither preached nor practised ascetism after his enlightenment. What he taught (and practised) was the Middle Path between ascetism and indulgence; not indulging his desires nor yet torturing himself with denials, but living a life of continence and temperance in all things, a perfect example of the life of the spirit in the flesh. Here are a few of his great sayings:

"Let a man overcome anger by love; let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth!"

"For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love; this is an old rule."

"Speak the truth; do not yield to anger; give if thou art asked; by these three steps thou wilt become divine."

"Lead others, not by violence, but by law and equity."

"He who struggles in the interest of self so that he himself may be great or powerful or rich or famous, will have no reward, but he who struggles for righteousness and truth will have great reward, for even his defeat will be a victory."

"The first meditation is the meditation of love in which you must so adjust your heart that you long for the weal and welfare of all beings; including the happiness of your enemies."

"Even if a man has power over others, yet ought he to be gentle with the weak."

"With a pure heart full of love, I will act towards others exactly as I would act towards myself."

"Whoso injures no living thing, whether strong or weak; Whoso neither kills nor yet causes to be killed—call him noble."

"Goodwill towards all beings is the true religion."

"Though a man conquer in battle thousands and thousands of men, a yet greater conqueror still is he who has conquered himself."

#### MAHAVIRA

The leader with whose name is associated the beginning of the Jain religion was a contemporary of the Buddha. Very little is known about him, but references to him in one of Asoka's edicts and in some Buddhist writings, imply that he was an historical figure.

He was called the Jina, which means conqueror, leader or prophet, and from that word his followers came to be called Jains. But he made no claim to be the founder of a new religion. On the contrary, he said that there had been many Jinās before him, and that he was in their succession, as reformer and giver of a new life to the old religion of India.

Many miraculous stories are told of him, but the historical data are few. He was the second son of a petty rajah in north-east India, and until the age of thirty he lived a life of great luxury and ease. Then he renounced all wealth and comfort and became an ascetic, and after gaining complete control over his physical nature he became a leader and teacher of an order of monks. He gained many adherents and continued preaching and teaching till the end of his life.

#### *Mahavira's Teaching*

Mahavira's teaching is very similar to that of the Buddha.

He believed in Nirvana as the goal of the human spirit and taught religion as a way of life calculated to attain that goal. He therefore stressed such qualities as gentleness, liberality, humility and self-control. But he believed more in ascetism than did the Buddha. Also, though he denied the existence of the Hindu gods, he believed that worship was necessary. Worship was to be given, therefore, not to one or many supreme beings, but to all the great spirits which have inhabited the flesh and shown the way of life.

The chief rules which he laid down were: To have faith in Jainism, to abstain from intoxicants, flesh food and all food which involves taking life. Never to gamble, hunt, kill or tell a lie: to perform religious exercises every day. By obeying these rules a man could learn self-control, the conquest of the flesh by the spirit, and thus attain Nirvana.

Here are a few sayings which illustrate his teaching:

"Alone, living on allowed food, he should wander about . . . He should beg food. A wise man should not care whether he gets alms or not."

—(*Sacred Books of the East*, 45, 12-13).

"This is the quintessence of wisdom, not to kill anything."  
—(*Sacred Books of the East*, 45, 247).

"Knowledge, faith and right conduct are the true causes of final liberation."

—(*Sacred Books of the East*, 45, 123).

#### LAO TSE

"THE OLD BOY" C.694 B.C.

Not very much is known about the strange genius who founded the Taoist religion, except that he was about 50 years older than his better-known contemporary, Confucius, and that he was librarian in one of the State libraries of China.

Perhaps his close contact with books led him to think more deeply than most people and to dwell on those deep philosophical problems which have ever haunted the minds of the world's great thinkers.

Legend tells that he was never young, being 80 years old at birth (hence his name, The Old Boy), and that he never died, but just "went west"—curious legends which indicate that people felt there was something great and strange about him. More valuable than these, however, is the record of an historic interview which he once had with Confucius, from which the latter emerged profoundly impressed.

The story of how he came to write the little book which contains the cream of his philosophy also rings true. Silent and uncommunicative by nature, absorbed with the care of other men's books, he wrote nothing himself. Until, in his old age, when he had resigned from his work and was clearly preparing to make his last long journey to "the land from whose bourn no traveller returns," it was realized by a soldier disciple that when the Master should be gone

they would be left with nothing save their memories of certain cryptic utterances which they did not understand. He therefore urged the old sage to commit his thoughts to writing before it should be too late. This Lao Tse did, entrusting the precious book when written to the care of the soldier who had persuaded him to write it.

### *Lao Tse's Teaching*

As in the case of the Buddha, the teaching of Lao Tse contains much profound philosophy which is far beyond the comprehension of children. But it contains also some simple messages which they can readily grasp and respond to.

Perhaps the most attractive of these is the idea of God as the Great Mother—the Mother in Blue, overarching all like the sky—Lover of all that lives, near and dear to all Her children, to Whom the individual spirit returns when life in the flesh is ended.

Then there is his stress on certain qualities of heart and mind as man's greatest riches:

"I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize.

The first is gentleness; the second is frugality;

The third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others.

Be gentle, and you can be bold;

Be frugal, and you can be liberal;

Avoid putting yourself before others, and you can become a leader of men.

Gentleness brings victory to him who attacks, and safety to him who defends.

Those whom Heaven would save, it fences round with gentleness.

The greatest conquerors are those who overcome their enemies without strife."

Lastly there is his final word that the way of goodwill is the only way of salvation.

In illustration both of his last point and of the first one, the best passage to give children is the last speech attributed to the old sage. It has a dignity, simplicity and conviction which never fails to grip them, even though they may but imperfectly grasp its meaning.

"Look! See! All men seem in a glow of happiness; well satisfied with themselves . . . But me; I am forlorn as one who has no home . . . I droop and am thrown to the waste like a threadbare flag for which no wind will ever blow again! . . . Yet a spirit stirs in me as restless as the waves of the ocean. I hear the sounding for the great change. The wind that is not of this world is come. And now I see what others may not see; for I see that I am not forsaken of my Immortal Mother Above. In my destitution she comes and bends over me. To her only I bow; trusting her now and for ever.

"Come you near, all of you—and hear! My words are easy to understand; my way is a plain way and easy to follow . . . Goodwill is the only way to a better beyond; and Good-will is the only way of peace and restoration here. Is there any dark thing in that? All my teachings are founded on one universal rock; and all my teachings stand straight and unafraid in the light of Heaven . . . Yet the world will not understand my words . . . Those who know me here are few. . . .

"But now the crooked is to become straight; now the empty is to become full; now the worn-out is to become new; and that which was shattered is to become whole. Men of the world, I go! Ho, Keeper of the Western Gate! Open wide for one who goes forth obscure and in old garments! But these old garments cover a jewel that is too precious for any barter of this world. And the glory of it is alight in my heart for evermore!"

## CONFUCIUS—KUNG-FU-TSZE

551-479 B.C.

The most famous and influential of Chinese sages started his working life as a school teacher. But later he became Minister of Justice to Duke Ting of Loo, a position that he occupied with such success that crime disappeared from the State and it looked as though he had succeeded in inaugurating a Golden Age of contentment and prosperity. This inspired a neighbouring duke with jealousy, as he was afraid that his own subjects would begin to be discontented when they heard of the idyllic state of affairs in Loo. He therefore plotted to turn Duke Ting against Confucius and with the aid of flattery and presents, succeeded in doing so. The duke fell back into his old idle, pleasure-loving ways, the people became demoralized and Confucius left the state in disgust.

For some years he wandered up and down China, looking for a prince and people who would value and follow his teaching. But he failed to find them, and never again did he have a chance to prove the practical value of good government and even justice.

Later in life he gave up the quest in despair and set about the task of collecting and editing all the old traditional, religious and ethical teachings of China, and writing at least one original production, *Spring and Autumn*.

Though never without faithful disciples and an unshakeable faith in his message, and though more venerated throughout succeeding ages than any other Chinese sage, Confucius died a disappointed old man.

"There is not one in the Empire that will make  
me his master!  
My time has come to die!"

*Confucius' Teaching*

Though Confucius was always careful to perform the ceremonies imposed upon him by the traditional religion of his country, his teaching contains very little that can really be called religious. It is true that he connected morality with the Higher Powers who had given a mind to man, but the bulk of his teaching is essentially moral and ethical rather than religious. This may be said to be the same in the case of the Buddha, but in Confucius one misses the deep mystical sense which seems to have dominated the experience of the Buddha. So that we find in Confucius moral precepts, sound advice and shrewd common sense, rather than the profundities of metaphysical speculation or mystical paradox.

He was probably the first to enunciate clearly the Golden Rule as the touchstone of human conduct. "Never do to anyone anything you would not like done to you." And he made it abundantly clear that his criterion of what constituted a Superior Person had nothing to do with birth, wealth or position, but simply and solely with character. The Superior Person was self-reliant, courteous, kind, sincere, honest, forgiving, temperate, and full of reverence for his parents and ancestors.

Here are a few quotations illustrative of the teaching of Confucius:

"To give oneself earnestly to the duties due to man, and, while respecting the gods, to respect also their distance, may be called Wisdom."

"To see what is right and not to do it, is want of courage."

"Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles."

"The abject man sows that himself or his friends may reap: the love of the perfect man is universal."

His version of the Golden Rule has been already quoted. To this may be added:

"When you are labouring for others, let it be with the same zeal as if it were for yourself."

## MOSES

C. 1200 B.C.

The Hebrew religion goes back much farther than the time of Moses, but as it was he who first organized it and gave the people the foundation of the law which has since played so important a part in its development, he is generally regarded as its founder.

He was born during the time of the Hebrews' slavery in Egypt, and tradition says that he would have been killed in infancy had not his mother placed him in a cradle on the Nile, where he was found and adopted by the Egyptian princess. Whether this story is true or whether he found favour in some other way, the fact remains that he occupied a remarkably high position at court, until, in a moment of passion, he killed an Egyptian whom he saw ill-treating a Hebrew. As a result of this he fled from the court, and became a shepherd in a lonely spot, where, apparently, he had time to think things over.

There he became convinced that Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, was calling him to rescue his people from slavery. At first he tried to evade the responsibility, but the conviction grew that this was God's work for him, and that therefore he need not fear, for God himself would be with him. So he returned to the court, and suddenly appeared there as the champion of Hebrew liberty, reiterating with unwearied persistence his demand for emancipation, "Let my people go."

At first Pharaoh would not listen, but when several disastrous plagues fell upon his people, and Moses declared that these were sent by Yahweh to punish him for his disobedience, he decided to get rid of the troublesome Hebrews, and gave Moses leave to lead them from the country.

This Moses did forthwith and then began a period of wandering which lasted till the end of his life. Through hardships and vicissitudes of many kinds, he remained their leader, father and law-giver and though he never reached the Promised Land himself, his faith in God's promise never wavered. Often he was driven to the verge of despair, not through fear that God would fail to keep his promise, but through the weakness, faithlessness and apostasy of the people. The supreme instance of this and of the old prophet's superb gift of leadership is to be found in the incident recounted in Exodus 32.

For the last of many times the people had proved unfaithful and had turned to the worship of a golden calf. In spite of all Moses' splendid efforts, his teaching and his own example, it appeared that he had failed. A lesser soul would, at that juncture, have wanted to dissociate himself from those whom he had striven so faithfully and so long to lead in the right path. But not so Moses. On the contrary he preferred to identify himself with them completely, even in their failure, disgrace, and punishment. The prayer which he then uttered is one of the sublimest in all religious history:

"Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32).

So the pilgrimage went on until at last they came within sight of the Promised Land. But Moses was by

then too old to face the perils and conflicts that lay ahead, so after appointing Joshua his successor he went alone to the mountains and was never seen again.

### *Moses' Teaching*

The first five books of the Old Testament are attributed to Moses, but we know for a certainty that much of their contents derives from a later date. It is difficult, therefore, to know how much is really the teaching of Moses, but we do at least know that it was under his leadership that the foundations were laid for the great religion and law which subsequently developed.

So if we select from those first five books of the Bible a few outstanding thoughts and passages, we shall perhaps not be far wrong in attributing them to Moses.

First there are the ten Commandments, with their sincere and courageous attempt to establish something like even justice amongst a hitherto lawless people, and by the stern suppression of idolatry to maintain a more spiritual form of worship than is usual amongst such simple, nomadic people. That they had not yet reached the stage of pure monotheism is clear from many passages. But it is certain that Moses taught with no uncertain voice, that under no circumstances whatever must they divide their allegiance, but must worship Yahweh and Him alone if they were to hope for His continued blessing. Gratitude and unswerving loyalty were supreme virtues in the eyes of Moses.

It is possible also that we are right in attributing to Moses the two great commandments later claimed by Jesus as containing the whole Law and the Prophets:

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

and

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Lastly, though we generally think of Moses as the great law-giver, it is possible that some of the tenderer and more intimate passages of the book of Deuteronomy also derive from him. If so, and the lovely passage in Deuteronomy 30 can be traced to him or his inspiration, he stands revealed not only as a great leader of men, but also as one who fully understood the inner meaning of religion as a sense of communion with a God not far removed, but in the inmost heart and mind of the individual worshipper.

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

"It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

"Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?'

"But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

### JESUS

4 B.C.-29 A.D.

As in the case of the Buddha, and indeed, of most of the prophets contained in this course, it is difficult to separate history from legend in unravelling the life story of Jesus of Nazareth.

He was born in Bethlehem, whither his parents had gone for the census which was held in 4 B.C. And

though Christian tradition affirms that he was of supernatural birth, he was undoubtedly recognized throughout his life as the son of Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, and of his wife Mary.

He was evidently a thoughtful and unusual child, and at the age of twelve astonished both his parents and the learned doctors of the temple by his interest in religious conversation and by the acuteness of his questions and answers.

When he was about 30 years old a religious revival took place under the leadership of his cousin, John the Baptist. Jesus responded to this appeal and was baptised by John, and then retired to a lonely spot to meditate on the inspiring experience through which he had passed, and to think out what it was to mean in his life. It was probably at this point that there grew up within him a realization that he was son of God, divinely appointed to carry to men the good tidings of the Fatherhood of God and the divine sonship of man.

He therefore started his public ministry, and went about amongst the towns and villages of Judea teaching, preaching, healing the sick and making friends amongst the common people. But though "the common people heard him gladly," the trained leaders of the Jewish Law hated and feared him as a revolutionary, and as one whose message and influence would undermine their power. At first they did not interfere, but when they saw how rapidly his influence was spreading and how radical was his reformation, they became his bitter enemies. They did all in their power to poison the minds of the people against him, and eventually succeeded, aided by the treachery of one of his own inner band of trained disciples, in arresting him at Jerusalem during the Feast of the Passover. He was condemned to death by the supreme Jewish Court because he had admitted that he was the Christ, the

Son of God, a claim which could only be regarded as the most terrible blasphemy.

The Roman governor, who had to confirm the sentence, declared that he found no offence in him, but rather than stir up trouble, he allowed the execution to proceed and Jesus was accordingly crucified. It is significant that the death meted out to him was not that generally inflicted as the penalty for blasphemy, which was stoning, but the one in common use for all rebels against the Roman authority. Jesus, in short, was put to death for sedition, although the charge was a charge of blasphemy—a circumstance which has always rendered insoluble the question as to whether the responsibility for his death rests upon the Jews or the Romans, no longer a burning issue, but one which must have been so in the early days when the Christian Church was enrolling both Jewish and Roman converts.

At the time of his arrest all his disciples forsook him and fled and apparently went back home in despair. But Christian tradition tells that two days afterwards the tomb in which his body had been placed was found to be empty, and to this day devout Christians believe that he rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.

### *Jesus' Teaching*

The teaching of Jesus can be summed up in the great twofold commandment which, when quoted from the Old Testament by one of his listeners, he himself declared to contain the whole Law and the Prophets.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself."

For Jesus, religion was essentially two-fold: on the one hand a mystical sense of God as Father, and of communion with Him; and on the other, the outcome

of that experience in a way of life, the keynote of which was service, and the driving force, love.

In such parables as the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep he taught in unmistakeable terms that God is a Father who loves his children, and that His children are not only men and women but even such little creatures as the sparrows "not one of which falls to the ground without your Father."

In the Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, he taught a complete reversal of the whole worldly scale of values, praising the poor and lowly, the humble and meek, and belittling the criteria of greatness which the world generally adopts.

He also carried much farther the ancient Hebrew Law, not contradicting the great sayings of Moses, but enlarging and spiritualizing their meaning.

"Ye have heard it said of old time an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that spitefully use you."

Moses had done much when he had replaced vengeance by justice. Jesus went still further and replaced justice by forgiveness and love.

It must be chiefly to the Sermon on the Mount and the parables, that we look for the message of the historical Jesus. If parables already referred to contain his doctrine of God, others equally lovely, give his doctrine of man. In the Good Samaritan, the Talents, the Sheep and the Goats, we find his teaching that religion is a way of life, and it is those who walk that way who are beloved of the Father. Not those who perform any special rites or sacrifices, or belong to any chosen race, but those of every age and race who love their neighbours as themselves and who make the most of every opportunity to serve God and man.

## MOHAMMED

BORN A.D. 570

At a very early age Mohammed was left an orphan in the charge of his uncle. He was a highly strung, imaginative child and at an early age showed signs of a great love of Nature and a poetic temperament. Both of these were nurtured by the years he spent as a shepherd during his youth.

During these years he often accompanied his uncle on trading journeys, and soon proved himself both an able and a trustworthy business man. This led to his obtaining the position of steward to a wealthy widow, Kadijah, to whom, shortly afterwards he was married. He speaks very beautifully of her and of her loyalty to him during the early, friendless days of his mission.

"She believed in me when no one else would believe. In the whole world I had only one friend, and she was that."

It was not until he was nearly forty years old that he began to be conscious of a special "call"—a call which took the form of an inspiring vision and a peremptory command to take a message from God to the people of Mecca.

With great courage and unwavering faith he attempted to obey this command, only to find himself hated, derided and driven out of Mecca. He fled to Medina, with Kadijah as his only friend and follower, and began to deliver his message to the people there. He was welcomed by the people of Medina, at first with easy tolerance, but very soon with eager enthusiasm. The new teaching spread rapidly and many converts joined him, attracted probably partly by the lofty nature of his message and partly by the personal

magnetism which all through his life drew people to him and inspired them with the most passionate devotion for him and his cause.

When it became clear that he was strong enough to carry all before him, he returned to Mecca with a large force, conquered the town, and became from that time forward the most powerful person in Arabia. This was probably unfortunate, as it led him to believe that God approved of the spreading of religion by force of arms. But it is certain that he used his power to initiate many great and much needed reforms, such as the abolition of infanticide and the curtailing of drink, vice and dishonesty.

Mohammed did not claim to found a new religion. He acknowledged all the prophets who had been before him, and said that he in his turn had come as God's last messenger to call people back to faith in One God, and to religion as a way of life lived in that faith.

#### *Mohammed's Teaching*

The message of Mohammed was primarily a recall of degenerate Jews and Christians to the pure monotheism of their early days, and to lives of sobriety, kindness and service worthy of their great founders and traditions. The refrain which runs all through the Koran strikes the keynote:

"There is no God but God—Glory to God the merciful and compassionate."

He taught, not the Fatherhood but the Kingship of God, who is to be worshipped, obeyed and served, rather than loved, but who will infallibly reward those who serve Him faithfully.

Religion, for Mohammed, could be summarized in the one word ISLAM which means surrender to the will

of God. In other words the true worshipper is the one who listens to the voice of God and obeys.

But true worship is not possible without justice and mercy towards one's fellow-men, for these things also are the will of God.

"What thinkest thou of him who treateth our religion as a lie?

He it is who thrusteth away the orphan,  
And stirreth not up others to feed the poor  
Woe to those who pray,  
But in their prayer are careless;  
Who make a show of devotion,  
But refuse help to the needy."

—(*Koran*, Sura VII).

In addition to this, Mohammed taught tolerance for other religions. What he sought was not converts to a new religion called by his name, but converts to the religion of Islam—surrender to the will of God and the way of life following such surrender.

"The Jews say, 'The Christians lean on naught.'

'On naught lean the Jews,' say the Christians.

Yet both read the same Scriptures. So with like words say they who have no knowledge.

The east and the west belong to God; therefore  
Whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God.

But until thou follow their religion, neither  
Jews nor Christians will be satisfied with thee.

Say to them, 'The direction of God is the true direction.'

We believe in God, and that which hath been  
Sent to us—and to Abraham and the tribes—

And to Moses and to Jesus—No difference do we make  
Between any of them; and to God are we resigned.

Will ye dispute with us about God? He is our Lord  
and your Lord.

We have our works, and you have your works:  
And unto Him we are devoted."

—(*Koran*, S. 2, "The Cow").

## LIVING RELIGIONS

IT was found impossible, in the short time at our disposal, to trace the history of religion back to its beginning in primitive man and in the influential, though now extinct systems of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. The utmost that we could do was to examine as far as possible the background and later history of the great religions already studied in Chapter II. The work, therefore, fell naturally into three sections:

- (a) The background, by which was meant conditions prior to the rise of the founder.
- (b) The contribution of the founder, which was largely revision work.
- (c) Subsequent developments arising, after the death of the founder, amongst those calling themselves by his name.

One or two important considerations emerge from a study of this kind, and when taking the course with students of school age it is important that these should be brought out clearly and not buried under a mass of detail.

In the first place historical study reveals the fact that the so-called "Founders of Religions" did not set out to found new religions at all, but were all reformers of older religions, dismayed by the apostasy of the people of their own day, and calling them back to a renewed grasp of what was really vital in their own faith.

This fact doubtless accounts for the second thing which it is important to note at this point, namely—the similarity of the message of these great prophets, each in turn being concerned, not with the founding of

a new sect, but with the re-establishment of essential religion as a way of life instead of a creed or a sacerdotal system.

Thirdly, even the most cursory survey of the subsequent history of the various religions reveals the fact that trouble invariably starts and degeneration sets in through the disastrous tendency of followers to deify and worship their Master instead of obeying his commands and following his example.

## ZOROASTRIANISM

*Background.*—There is little doubt that the religion of Iran (or Persia) before the coming of Zoroaster, was very similar to the old Vedic religion. A pantheon of Nature gods were believed in and worshipped, amongst whom the sky-god Mithra was probably supreme. There was also an important fire cult in which fire was regarded as a messenger to bring the gods down to help the worshipper, the whole being largely based on magic and superstition, and like all primitive religions, having little or no relation to conduct.

*Zoroaster's contribution* was the supremely important one of recognizing the connexion between religion and morality. Taking over the cult of fire no longer as a thing of magical efficacy but as a symbol of purity, he insisted on the crucial importance of purity in thought, word and deed.

He dismissed as evil powers all the popular gods except Ahura Mazda the God of Light, and taught that man's chief duty is to help the God of Light in His conflict with darkness. He taught further that though there is a power for evil in the universe (personified as Angra Mainyu) it is Ahura Mazda who has created all things and ordained the great struggle in which He relies for help on His faithful worshippers. And that

though He has given a just and moral government to the world, He is yet a being with whom man can have communion.

Thus at one stride Zoroaster lifted religion from the realm of magic and fear on to the high level of mysticism and morality.

*Later History.*—It was hardly to be expected that such a high level could be maintained at so early a stage of the spiritual evolution of man, and so, as we should expect, we find a rapid deterioration setting in after the time of Zoroaster. The Magi or priests of the new faith, in order to increase their own power or perhaps because they did not understand Zoroaster's pure doctrine, soon re-introduced the magic and superstition of the earlier religion as well as a mass of new ritual.

The good qualities to which Zoroaster had called attention became personified as gods to be worshipped—the old gods were restored and Mithra in particular came to be worshipped as co-equal with Ahura Mazda, being thus restored to his old place in Vedic hymns as co-equal with Varuna. And Zoroaster himself came to be regarded more as a lofty soul to be revered and even prayed to, than as a leader to be followed. His personality was exalted and his precepts forgotten.

But in spite of this, Zoroastrianism remained an important and living religion, influencing successively Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and in spite of all popular fallacies there remained always a devoted, if small, succession of faithful followers who refrained from worshipping Zoroaster, and walked instead in his path of the quest for truth and purity.

For many centuries Zoroastrianism was the State religion of Persia until it was overthrown in the seventh century A.D. by the Muslim invasion. And even then there were many hundreds who preferred

death or exile to apostacy. Many fled to the west coast of India, and the Parsees, as their descendants are now called, have maintained to this day the old ideals of truth and purity, and the old reverence for fire as the sacred symbol.

## BUDDHISM

*Background.*—It was during a period of transition that the Buddha was born in India. A decline had set in in the belief in the minor gods, and in the ritual and sacrifice which they demanded. This led to a decline in the power of the Brahmins, and a breaking up of class dominance.

Concurrently with this was a growth in the belief in Karma, and in ascetism, both of which supplied the need for something more intellectual than the old formal, semi-magical rites and ceremonies in honour of the gods.

*The Buddha's Contribution.*—It was at this point that the Buddha came upon the scene with his great revolutionary message of religion as a way of life in which compassion, gentleness and truth are the important things, and not rites and ceremonies, and with his agnostic attitude towards the existence of a transcendent God, though he clearly believed in an all pervading Life Essence.

*Later History.*—Buddhism made considerable progress in India during the first few centuries and was especially popular during the reign of the great emperor Asoka in the third century B.C. But in so far as it was true to its founder it was not in any sense a "New" religion, but rather a recall of Hindus to what was vital in Hinduism. And in so far as it introduced new elements it was not acceptable to Hindus. It is hardly surprising

therefore, that its subsequent development as a religious system did not take place in India so much as in other countries, and that by the beginning of the Christian era it had practically ceased to exist in India as a separate system, though the Buddha continued to be loved and revered as one of the greatest of all India's sons.

But though it speedily disappeared from the land of its birth, Buddhism has always been one of the greatest of missionary religions and claims to-day more adherents than any other faith, an outcome very largely of the missionary zeal of Asoka, Buddhism's greatest convert.

Asoka sent his missionaries to the north, the south, the east and the west. In the north, south, and east Buddhism flourished and became established as a result of this missionary enterprise. But in the west this did not occur, though there is considerable evidence that Buddhism influenced certain developments of thought, and during the last fifty years it has begun to spread again towards the west, especially in Germany. But the major part of the history of Buddhism is concerned with its travels north and east of India.

Southwards to Ceylon went Asoka's son and daughter taking with them a branch of the sacred Bo-tree under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment, and preaching his gospel of emancipation to the Singalese people—Ceylon became Buddhist and has remained so throughout her subsequent history. It was there that the Pali scriptures were produced and much of the spread of Buddhism can be traced to the work of Singalese missionaries.

About the year 100 A.D. Buddhism was divided into two great parties representing two view points—one became the prevalent faith of the northern countries, China, Japan, Korea, and Tibet, and the other of more

southerly Ceylon, Burma, and Siam. The northern type is called Mahayana Buddhism and the southern type Hinayana. The names mean "The Great Vehicle" and "The Lesser Vehicle," the Great Vehicle being the Broad Way by which all men may reach heaven, and the Lesser Vehicle the Narrow Way which only few find.

The main difference between the two is that Hinayana Buddhism regarded the Buddha as a human being who taught the gospel of deliverance through self-discipline, whereas the Mahayana school believed that the Blessed One came from heaven to be the "Saviour" of men. And later on, when the historical Buddha had become the Cosmic Buddha, it began to teach that deliverance must be sought through faith in Him. In other words Hinayana believes in salvation by works, Mahayana in salvation by faith.

This makes the history of Buddhism difficult to follow.

For though in a sense it is the Hinayana school that preserved the original message best, it has at the same time tended to be narrower and less truly universalistic in tone than some at least of the developments of the Northern school.

Perhaps the best place of all in which to study Buddhism at first hand is Burma, where live the merriest, most contented and truly happy people in the world, and where the original Buddhism has been most nearly preserved. Anybody who thinks that Buddhism is a pessimistic religion should make a point of visiting Burma; and if he cannot do that he should do the next best thing—read *The Soul of a People*, by H. Fielding-Hall.

Mahayana Buddhism probably spread first to Tibet. Research during the last few years has unearthed some very valuable traces of original Buddhist teaching in that country. But what is popularly known there as

Buddhism is a decadent type almost unrecognisable as having anything to do with the Buddha. It is a mass of formality and priestly ritual centring round the image of the Buddha as godhead, and the Lama as High Priest, despotic ruler and the latest incarnation of God. Prayer wheels and other mechanical aids to salvation are in regular use. And a form of High Mass is celebrated in which the worshippers eat the body of their Master in the form of rice-cake.

But though overlaid with much that is useless, and tarnished by remnants of their old demon worship, there still emerge the main principles of original Buddhism. And, according to the recent researches of Madame David Neel, some of the Lamas have a very deep philosophy of life, though they consider it (probably rightly) to be too difficult for the illiterate masses.

It was probably in about the middle of the first century A.D. that Buddhism spread to China and thence to Japan, where it has continued to hold its own ever since side by side with the other religions of those countries.

Fortunately the people of China are very tolerant and willing to accept good counsel or good news from whatever quarter it may come, with the result that in Chinese temples to-day may often be found shrines to Confucius, Lao Tse, and the Buddha, side by side. And there is no doubt that Buddhism has played a leading part in bringing about the religious unity that undoubtedly exists in that country. For Buddhism, though essentially a missionary religion, has never been a persecuting or an exclusive one. Its method has been more the method of peaceful penetration, so that its commanding position in the east to-day may justly be claimed (in the words of a modern Universalist) as "one of the world's best examples of the might of gentleness."\*

\* Quotation from an unpublished lecture on "How Buddhism Spread," by Will Hayes.

In Japan, Buddhism has had an even greater influence than in China. It was introduced in 552 A.D. and within a few years it had become accepted as the foundation both for religion and politics. For over a thousand years, education, art and medicine were in Buddhist hands and the whole development of Japan cultural, political, social, intellectual and religious—was directed by it.

## TAOISM

*Background.* The early religion of China consisted of Nature Spirit worship. The spirit of Heaven was the greatest and was known as Shang-te. The spirits of earth and the elements of rivers and mountains were worshipped; also the reigning emperor. Filial piety was strong even at this remote time and has been the corner stone of Chinese morals all through her history. The Golden Age of China is reputed to have been between 1000 and 2000 B.C. and the two great emperors Yao and Shun are revered even to-day for their economic and political wisdom. Back to the Golden Age, when princes ruled in equity and people were honest and contented, has been the keynote of much traditional Chinese wisdom.

*Lao Tse's contribution* was to supply deep philosophical and mystical roots to this attitude. He urged men to return to their natural simplicity and stop straining after effect, to realise the oneness of all life in the arms of the Universal Mother. Such teaching was too mystical for more than a few to comprehend. An atmosphere of mystery hovered round Lao Tse. He was regarded as a great and wise thinker but his true disciples were of necessity few.

*Later History.* It is hardly surprising therefore, that Taoism as a religious system degenerated more rapidly

than any other, though not more completely than did Buddhism in Tibet. Lao Tse was worshipped as God, idols were made, ceremonies, rituals and a hierarchy of priests instituted. To-day popular Taoism consists of practically nothing but ceremony, magic and idolatry.

There have been a few Taoists, however, who have caught the true spirit of Lao Tse's teaching from his book and set it forth for themselves and others in books of their own. Whenever Taoism has been truly understood it has resulted in the highest philosophical thinking and in the grasping of truths which the modern world, no less than the China of Lao Tse's time, is all too prone to disregard.

## CONFUCIANISM

*Background.* The background of Confucianism is the same as that of Taoism, the two sages being contemporaries except that Confucius was some fifty years younger than Lao Tse.

*Confucius' contribution* was a call to the Chinese people to revert to the good government of the Golden Age. He claimed that this could be achieved by perfect individual behaviour, the rules for which he set out in great detail in his books. Indeed it is probable that his unique position in the history of Chinese religion and morality is largely due to the fact that he embodied in his person, both in precept and example, the perfect illustration of the Superior Person, so long and so highly honoured by the Chinese people.

*Later History.* The history of Confucianism is the history of China since the fifth century B.C. The two are inseparable. The system of conduct established in his books became the basis of Chinese politics, law and

education. And as he claimed not to have originated this, but to have inherited it from the sages of the Golden Age, it is true to say that the whole of Chinese civilisation and culture stands upon the foundation which, if not actually laid by him, is at any rate associated with his name. A ceremony is held every year in his honour in Peking, but though he is revered above all the other sages he has not been deified. He remains not God but man, albeit the perfect man, the great teacher who not only taught but also followed his own teaching. If we are ever tempted to think that Confucius was not so profound a thinker or so great a personality as some others amongst the world's greatest men, let us remember that China enjoyed many centuries of almost unbroken peace in the midst of a war-ridden world—a feat which must, in justice, be attributed to the fact that her greatest teacher had a message not too profound or exalted for ordinary people to understand and live up to.

## JUDAISM

*Background.* The early Hebrews were a nomadic people, and there are indications in the Old Testament that their religion was of a very primitive nature. The gods were localised, Yahweh, who later became their only God, being originally a storm-god living amongst the clouds that veiled Mount Sinai. Natural objects like mountains, wells and stones, were regarded as sacred.

*Moses' contribution* was principally that he laid the foundations upon which the later greatness of the Jews was built. He was a great political and religious leader, and under his leadership a number of scattered, though kindred tribes, were welded into a nation with a strong

sense of national responsibility and national pride, united under one law and the worship of one God—a god who demanded from his worshippers not only an undivided allegiance but also righteousness.

*Later History.* The Jews were fortunate in having, after the time of Moses, a succession of teachers unique in the history of religion. Though they had a number of setbacks the general trend of the history of Judaism, till about the beginning of the Christian era, is one not of deterioration, but of development and of the steady erection of a stately and stable edifice on the foundations laid by Moses. Whenever the people got slack and began to fall away from their faith, someone arose to speak as the mouth-piece of God. And in every case the keynotes of the message were the same as those struck by Moses, though carried somewhat further by the great writing prophets of the sixth, fifth and fourth centuries B.C. "Ye therefore shall be holy, for the Lord your God is holy" had been an early injunction, perhaps uttered by Moses himself. This was developed by the later prophets into a magnificent and consistent gospel of social righteousness. Sacrifices and rituals, prayers, professions and temple services were of no consequence in comparison with justice and mercy.

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

"Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is Good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

—(Mic. vi. 6-8).

"Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul

hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

"And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

—(Isaiah i. 14-17).

Early in the sixth century B.C., the country was subdued by the Babylonians, and large numbers of the people were carried off into captivity in Babylon. This probably marks the beginning of Zoroastrian influence on Judaism, and the grafting on to it of certain characteristically Zoroastrian ideas such as Satan, angels and Heaven and Hell.

In the year 538 after fifty years of exile, the Jews began to return to their own country, under the rule of the tolerant and sympathetic Cyrus. They rebuilt the temple and formulated a strict code of rules calculated to keep the race pure and to consolidate the old faith. During this period a priestly class grew up, ritual and sacrifice became of supreme importance, and the characteristic prophetic note ceased to be heard. But further oppression in the time of Antiochus (second century B.C.), who tried to force the Roman religion upon all peoples within the Roman Empire, led to a fresh purification of the Jewish faith. And under the leadership of the Maccabees a sturdy defence of national traditions and the national religion was made. This was good so long as it lasted, but by the end of the first century B.C. formalism and priestcraft were again in the ascendance.

The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the subsequent scattering of the Jewish people, opened a new

chapter in the history of Judaism. But it has retained its individuality and remains to this day, one of the greatest of the world's living religions.

## CHRISTIANITY

*Background.* As Christianity arose directly out of Judaism, the résumé of its background will be found in the passage above dealing with the history of Judaism up to the beginning of the Christian era.

*Jesus' contribution* was two-fold. In the first place he recalled the people to the great religion embodied in the teachings of Moses and the prophets, rebuking them for falling away, for being hypocrites and for not attempting to understand and practice the faith which they professed. And in the second place he carried further than Moses and the prophets the implications of their faith, stressing and making even clearer than they had done, the practical implications of faith in God, and of the great commandment to love our neighbour as ourself. Above all, he developed the idea contained in germ in the prophet Hosea, that God is a God of Love, and so formulated the most important (and most misunderstood) part of his teaching, namely that God is a Father who loves His children, and that men, as His children, must be likewise actuated by love for one another.

*Later History.* Shortly after the death of Jesus the position of leadership amongst his followers fell to the lot of Paul, who had not known him during his lifetime, but who was firmly convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, sent by the Father to play the part of the offering in the great sacrificial scheme by which mankind was to be saved from sin. In this way he reconciled his Pharisaic faith in sacrifice, with the teaching of

Jesus about divine sonship, and with his own passionate loyalty to the crucified Christ. But the consequence of this was that a theology and scheme of salvation rapidly grew up wholly different from that taught by Jesus. The human teacher and his superb message of love for God and man were relegated to a place of secondary importance; and faith in the efficacy of his blood to save man from the consequences of his sin became the keynote of the new religion. Thus standing as a mediator between man and God, Jesus soon began to be prayed to as a divine being. And by the third century the process of deification was complete, Jesus being no longer the carpenter of Nazareth, but the second person of the Trinity, co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father and God the Holy Ghost. And to this day, within the ranks of the Christian Church, the test of membership is a creedal test concerning faith in the person of Christ, not the test contained in his own saying:

"Not those who say unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven."

It is a significant fact that Christianity, like Buddhism, made singularly little progress in the country of its birth. But while Buddhism spread east, Christianity spread west, and its importance in the world to-day is to a considerable extent due to the fact that it has become the official religion of the progressive and ambitious white races.

## ISLAM

*Background.* The religion of Arabia before the coming of Mohammed was a mixture of Christianity, Judaism and a primitive polytheism. All three were in a state of degradation and decay.

*Mohammed's contribution* was a challenging recall to religion and morality. Judaism attracted him by its strict monotheism and its high moral tone. The personality and teaching of Jesus attracted him, but he attacked the Christians for their idolatry and polytheism, in that they were worshipping Jesus, instead of recognising him as one of the long line of prophets sent by God for the guidance of the human race.

All around him he saw drunkenness, vice, cruelty and dishonesty, and he set himself to preach a practical religion based upon belief in the unity of God, and upon surrender to the will of God as the first duty of man. He also laid down certain other duties, obligatory though secondary, such as prayers, fastings, pilgrimage and almsgiving.

*Later History.* The history of Islam, like that of Judaism is inextricably involved with the history of the Arabian people. The death of Mohammed was followed by a period of the most rapid and startling conquest that the world has seen, and by the ninth century the Muslim Empire extended eastwards to Persia and westwards to Spain.

This was due to strict discipline, missionary fervour, and the belief in predestination, which gave Muslims the absolute conviction that they were doing God's will in destroying or converting the infidels.

Also there is no doubt that Islam appealed to many people who had begun to lose faith in Christianity. It was so much simpler in creed and in the demands that it made upon men; it abolished idols, and talked in terms that the common man could understand.

Its weakness lay in the fact that it went hand in hand with absolute despotism politically, and so was doomed to failure when no strong or able Sultan was available. Also in the fact that faith in predestination cuts both

ways, making for success so long as the will of God seems to denote success, but for failure when once even a small setback has occurred.

There have been many sects and schisms in Islam during the course of its history, but they have been over minor matters and it has remained essentially the same religion.

Its adherents are equalled only by the Jews in the faithful consistency with which, century after century, they have resisted the temptation to deify their founder. He is still to them, what he always claimed to be—not God, but Mohammed the prophet of God.

## 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 Khayyam, 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 Brahmo 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.

## 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.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## CHAPTER FOUR: NEW BEGINNINGS

- Humanity's Greatest Need: The Common Message of the World's Great Teachers.* By H. M. Woodward. (Putnam.)  
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## THE GREAT UNITY

Smaller books of readings, etc., which were used throughout the experiment include:

*The Stamper of the Skies.* By Will Hayes

*Indian Bibles.* By Will Hayes.

*Leaves from the Larger Bible.* By Will Hayes.

*Water from the Old Wells.* By Will Hayes.

Any of the above books will be found useful. But the following are ESSENTIAL:

*The Bible: Old and New Testaments.* The best edition for the purpose is *A Golden Treasury of the Bible.* (Lindsey Press.)

*The Bhagavad Gita.* Best English version: *The Song Celestial.* By Sir Edwin Arnold.

*The Koran.* Best English version: *The Holy Qur-an.* By Maulvi Muhamad Ali.

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