

FOREWORD

In this second book of the Living Faiths series our educational approach is identical with that described in the Foreword to the first. We there referred to a report of a working party of the Religious Education Council which described their view of religious education in the following terms:

In the present situation we see religious education in schools as helping pupils to be informed and concerned about religions and other life-stances rather than attaching them to any particular faith.

An appendix to that same report stated that

much of the material now being produced by believing bodies either assumes that the pupils accept the beliefs described or that the purpose of education is to persuade them to do so. If faith systems could produce authentic information about themselves which, while doing full justice to the depth of their own conviction, assumed an uncommitted spirit of enquiry in the students, the teacher's task, as we have envisaged it, would be generally assisted.

The books in this series are an attempt to produce such authentic information for the use of teachers and students of world faiths. In this book, following the introductory essays by Professor Parrinder and Dr. Brian Gates, we have endeavoured, within the inevitable limitations of space, to present a brief account of attitudes to death (and what may lie beyond it) in each faith. We have also given, where appropriate, extracts from funeral liturgies and some account of burial ceremonies.

These accounts, given by adherents of each faith represented, are inevitably uneven but that unevenness itself may reflect something of the different approach to the subject in the various faiths and no attempt has been made to iron it out.

In our first book, *Initiation Rites*, the Christian section in-

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cluded extracts from the initiation rites of the principal Christian denominations. This we felt to be justified by the fact that there were significant differences in these rites and because the book would be used mainly in Britain and North America.

In considering attitudes to death, however, we felt that the most significant differences within Christianity were between the Roman Catholics, the Protestants and the Eastern Orthodox. We have therefore confined the Christian section to these three. This makes for a better balance in the book as a whole since the Christian section is not as predominant as it would otherwise have been.

Most of these papers were originally presented to the Annual Conference of the Standing Conference on Inter-Faith Dialogue in Education held in Bedford in 1977. A few have been written subsequently. The liturgical extracts have, for the most part, been chosen by the editor after consultation with the contributors. This selection often raises controversial issues concerning different versions, especially where translation is involved. The editor accepts full responsibility for the final choices recognising that in such a matter it is not possible to please everyone. When the choice has been between a traditional form and a recent revision, the most recent version has usually been chosen.

The editor wishes to express his thanks to the contributors, whose names are listed elsewhere, and to Rabbi Hugo Gryn (Chairman of the Standing Conference) who has very kindly read the book in manuscript form. We are also indebted to the Noel Buxton Trust which has helped us financially with the preparation of this book.

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