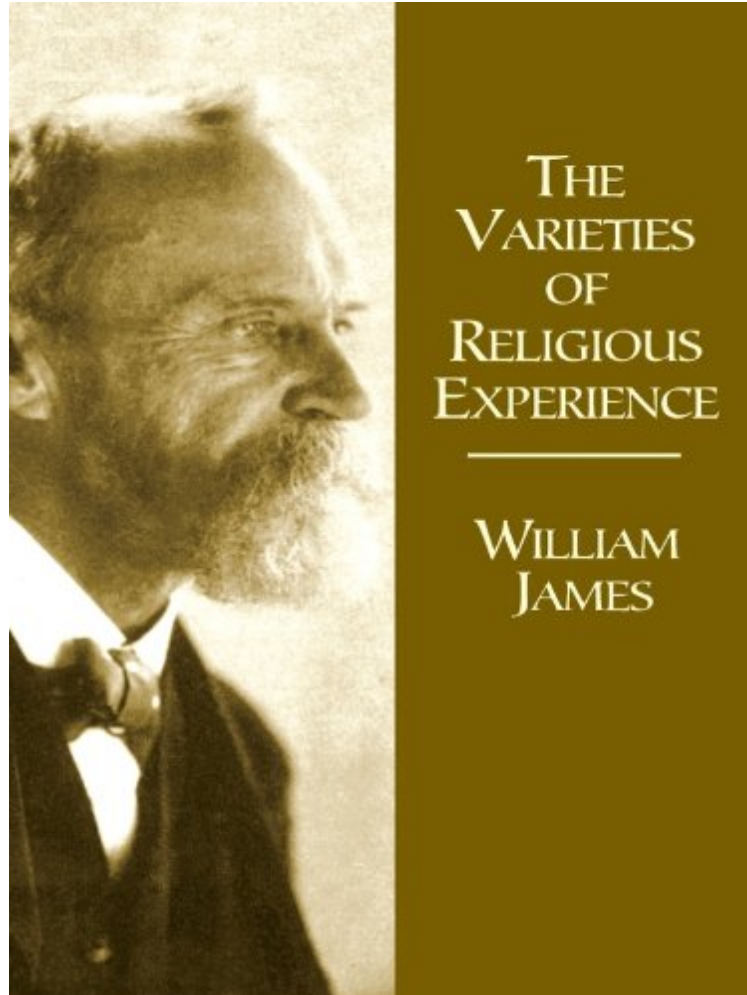


(Mobile library) The Varieties of Religious Experience (Economy Editions)

## The Varieties of Religious Experience (Economy Editions)

*Von William James*

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**Von William James : The Varieties of Religious Experience (Economy Editions)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Varieties of Religious Experience (Economy Editions):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen4 von 4 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Classic Wisdom TextVon Peter UysIt has been said that Henry James wrote his novels as philosophical treatises while his brother William wrote his philosophical works as novels. This 1902 publication is justifiably considered as one of the 20th century's most influential books on psychology and spirituality.James considers the feelings, actions and experiences of individuals, insofar as they understand themselves to be in a relationship with whatever they consider the divine. It is thus about the religion of everyday life and has nothing to do with churches and dogma.He writes objectively about a wide spectrum of religious experiences and quotes from the autobiographical writings of famous

mystics from many traditions and of people like Whitman, Luther, Voltaire, Emerson, Tolstoy and many others. No religions are compared, only the experiences of the individual, and his arguments are well-reasoned. In his own words: "Both thought and feeling are determinants of conduct, and the same conduct may be determined either by feeling or thought. When we survey the whole field of religion, we find a great variety in the thoughts that have prevailed there; but the feelings on the one hand and the conduct on the other are almost always the same, for Stoic, Christian and Buddhist saints are practically indistinguishable in their lives. The theories which religion generates, being thus variable, are secondary. If you wish to grasp its essence, you must look to the feelings and the conduct as being the more constant elements." This book is a treasure trove of insights and collected wisdom that simultaneously serves as a trenchant plea for religious tolerance. And yes, it does sometimes read like a gripping novel, especially the chapters on the religion of healthy-mindedness, the sick soul, and mysticism. The reader should be patient though. Although it is not a difficult text to grasp, every sentence is loaded with so much meaning that one has to return regularly to previous paragraphs in order to fully understand and process the arguments and insights. A thorough, patient study of the text will richly reward the reader. An even more rewarding experience can be had by studying Richard Maurice Bucke's "Cosmic Consciousness" and Stephan A. Hoeller's "The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead" at the same time. These three classic works complement one another in a most marvelous way.

3 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Treasure trove of information, insight and wisdom

Von Peter Uys This 1902 publication still takes pride of place as a landmark study and remains one of the most influential books ever on psychology and spirituality. The style is accessible and engaging, consistently interesting with well-reasoned arguments. Religions are not compared; the study is restricted to the experiences of the individual. James considers the feelings, actions and experiences of people insofar as they understand themselves to be in a relationship with whatever they consider the Divine. It has nothing to do with churches, doctrine or dogma, concerning itself only with the religious experiences of everyday life. He emphasizes the passionate aspect of religion and its power of adding enchantment to life. Dealing objectively with a wide spectrum of observed and personally related religious experiences, James also quotes from the autobiographical writings of famous authors, theologians and mystics from many traditions including Whitman, Luther, Voltaire, Emerson, Tolstoy and many others. The terrain of study is clearly identified and circumscribed. Chapter titles include Religion Neurology, the Reality of the Unseen, the Religion of Healthy-Mindedness, the Sick Soul, the Divided Self the Process of Unification, Conversion, Saintliness, Mysticism and Philosophy. In his own words: "Both thought and feeling are determinants of conduct, and the same conduct may be determined either by feeling or thought. When we survey the whole field of religion, we find a great variety in the thoughts that have prevailed there; but the feelings on the one hand and the conduct on the other are almost always the same, for Stoic, Christian and Buddhist saints are practically indistinguishable in their lives. The theories which religion generates, being thus variable, are secondary. If you wish to grasp its essence, you must look to the feelings and the conduct as being the more constant elements." This book offers a treasure trove of insights, revelation, wisdom and points to ponder that contributes substantially to the reader's understanding of consciousness, psychological processes, mystic states, thought emotion, and the relationship to the Eternal Divine. Although it is not a difficult text to grasp, patience is called for since every sentence is loaded with so many layers of meaning that one often has to reread a previous paragraph in order to fully comprehend and properly process the insights and information. A mindful, meditative study of the text will richly reward the reader. Other works on religion and/or spirituality that I have found illuminating, inspiring or thought-provoking are Bible Mystery and Bible Meaning The Creative Process in the Individual by Thomas Troward, Religion in the Making by Alfred North Whitehead, The Hidden Power of the Bible by Ernest Holmes, Alter Your Life by Emmet Fox, Cracking the Bible Code by Jeffrey Satinover, The Thirteen Petalled Rose by Adin Steinsaltz and One Cosmos Under God by Robert Godwin.

3 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Great Book by a Great Man

Von C. Sahu The previous reviews are very good descriptions of this book. I'd like to reiterate that it helps while reading to remember that this is primarily a study of many case histories of very personal and profound experiences with God. They are mostly in the form of excerpts from autobiographies and memoirs, mainly Christian and contemporary (the book was published in 1903), but many also from other times and faiths. There is no addressing the pros and cons of organized religion here, or, for that matter, of questions like whether miracles really happen, etc. This book is a microcosm, though. James touches on so many matters of religion and, indeed, life and philosophy overall that the book makes valuable reading for anyone interested in humans generally. He talks, of necessity, quite a bit about the subconscious, which had just recently been "invented," showing that profound religious experiences comes from there, though that doesn't mean that they're not of divine origin: perhaps it's our subconscious self that connects to God. James then analyzes these experiences from the pragmatic point of view of, Are these experiences healthy? What are their "fruits"? But there are no ultimate "Answers" of the kind you find suggested in other works of philosophy or theology. Despite some heady speculation towards the end, James sticks to the facts, and never expects his audience to accept anything unproven. Especially interesting, I thought, were the descriptions of "conversion," a two-fold experience consisting of spiritual crisis and of release from that crisis and the reaching of a profound state of surety and, usually, happiness. Besides many others, he describes the conversion processes of John Bunyan (a schizophrenic) and Leo Tolstoy. James makes the very interesting comparison

of the process (nowadays called "being born again") with the natural process of adolescence, and speculates that conversion crisis, as encouraged by the Protestant churches, is perhaps one of the healthiest and safest ways of attaining adulthood. Also fascinating is James' description of "the Healthy-minded Individual," who is born with a trusting assurance of God's loving presence, and who never goes through any crisis of conversion because he doesn't need to. I myself would doubt the existence of these lucky people, but then I recalled a person (my children's teacher) who is always cheerful, energetic, and kind, and who I sincerely believe has never lost her temper or been anything more than necessarily stern with her students, parents, and other teachers. She has a profound, almost instinctive, faith in God. That for me is living proof of the veracity of James' categories and conclusions. And James' own almost chivalrous kindness, honesty, and respect for us, his audience make me feel that he himself, whether "once-" or "twice-born," had reached that higher level of morality and happiness; it made reading this book a profound and inspiring experience. Oddly, the preface (by Martin E. Marty) of the version of "Varieties" that I have (Penguin) does not mention the following, found in the preface to the William James volume of the "Great Books" series: "James had been concerned with religion from an empirical point of view as early as 1869, when he had noted in a review the 'anomalous' and 'discreditable' attitude of a so-called enlightened society toward psychical phenomena. To ascertain the appropriate 'stall or pigeonhole' for these 'wild facts,' he helped organize the American Society for Psychical Research in 1884. Two years later he was invited to give the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion at the University of Edinburgh." "On a vacation climb in the Adirondacks in 1898, James underwent a variety of religious experience: 'It seemed as if the Gods of all the nature-mythologies were holding an indescribable meeting in my breast with the moral Gods of the inner life.... Doubtless in more ways than one, things in the Edinburgh lectures will be traceable to it,' he wrote his wife. The climb, however, overtaxed his heart, which would not have impaired his health if he had not essayed the Adirondacks the following summer and lost his way. There followed two years of complete collapse. Thus the Gifford Lectures were not finished until 1902, when they were also published in book form as "The Varieties of Religious Experience."

**Kurzbeschreibung** First-rate study of spirituality documents and discusses a variety of religious states of consciousness, covering the meaning of the term "divine," reality of the unseen, religion of healthy-mindedness, sick soul, divided self and process of its unification, conversion, saintliness, and mysticism. Studded with richly concrete examples; a classic of its genre.