

THE EARLY RECEPTION OF JAMES'S *VARIETIES*

WILLIAM JAMES SOCIETY
2014 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

JAMES CAMPBELL



*This paper takes up a series of four related themes from among the many that appear in *The Varieties*, and considers how they were received by early commentators. The four themes are: (1) James's adoption of a psychological standpoint for examining matters religious; (2) his position that personal experience is a better indicator of the meaning of religion than any second-hand evidence; (3) his view that extreme, even morbid, experiences are more valuable to study; and (4) his exploration of the question of religious truth. The value in returning to these early commentaries after over a century is that they offer us a sense of how *The Varieties* was received by his presumed target audience.*



William James's Gifford Lectures in Natural Religion, published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, were delivered in Edinburgh, Scotland, in two series of ten lectures each between May 1901 and June 1902. His original plan was to divide the twenty lectures in half, offering in the first series a consideration of "Man's Religious Appetites," a psychological or descriptive account of our religious propensities, and in the second series a more metaphysical consideration of the philosophical significance of these propensities in "Their Satisfaction through Philosophy" (VRE 5; cf. 13). As he prepared the lectures, however, the amount of psychological material continued to grow. The experiential data fascinated him, and he was drawn to explore it more deeply than he had originally intended. As a result, the exploration of the religious propensities of his many witnesses came to make up the bulk of the volume. While the metaphysical material consequently became much less prominent, this fact should not suggest that the latter inquiry into the significance of these experiences was of lesser interest to James.

In my remarks, I want to tease out a series of four related themes from among the many that appear in *The Varieties*, and consider how they were received by early commentators. The four themes are: (1) James's adoption of a psychological standpoint for examining matters religious; (2) his position that personal experience is a better indicator of the meaning of religion than any second-hand evidence; (3) his view that extreme, even morbid, experiences are more valuable to study; and (4) his exploration of the question of religious truth. The value in returning to these early commentaries after over a century is that they offer us a sense of how *The Varieties* was received by his presumed target audience. In our ongoing attempts to understand and evaluate this text, we can benefit from a familiarity with the interpretations of its early readers.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STANDPOINT

Beginning with the psychological standpoint, James admits that he was "neither a theologian, nor a scholar learned in the history of

religions, nor an anthropologist.” He was, rather, a psychologist — a very skilled psychologist — and, as he notes, for the psychologist “the religious propensities of man must be at least as interesting as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution” (VRE 12). Thus, he believes that the phenomena of nervous instability and psychical visitations, of trances and voices and visions, of melancholy and obsessions and fixed ideas, that he details in *The Varieties* should be just as interesting to the psychologist as are other mental phenomena. Considering the phenomenon of “instantaneous conversion,” for example, he writes “[w]ere we writing the story of the mind from the purely natural-history point of view, with no religious interest whatever, we should still have to write down man’s liability to sudden and complete conversion as one of his most curious peculiarities” (VRE 188). Regardless of our eventual interpretation of such a conversion as either “a miracle in which God is present as he is present in no change of heart less strikingly abrupt,” or as “a strictly natural process . . . neither more nor less divine in its mere causation and mechanism than any other process, high or low, of man’s interior life. . .” (ibid.), the conversion experience itself is an event to which the psychologist should attend. In his careful — almost clinical — introduction to the lectures, James the psychologist proceeds with an inquiry that attempts to provide “a true record of the inner experiences of great-souled persons wrestling with the crises of their fate” (VRE 14). For him, experiential religion is of immense importance to a full understanding of human nature, not to be neglected by psychology. It is further necessary to avoid the prejudices of “medical materialism” (VRE 20) that these experiences represent evidence symptomatic of mental illness. He admits that those who lead deeply religious lives — saints, martyrs, and others — may be statistically unusual; but he maintains that they are not significantly more unusual than those who live for sports or music, for gardening or philosophy.

James assumes the perspective of physiological psychology that maintains that “definite psycho-physical connexions . . . hold good” and assumes that “the dependence of mental states upon bodily

conditions must be thorough-going and complete” (VRE 20). He continues that, while the methods of psychology are far different from those traditionally associated with inquiries into spiritual matters, this mode of inquiry should not be seen as a rejection, or even a disparagement, of religion. While handling the phenomena of religious experience “biologically and psychologically as if they were mere curious facts of individual history” might suggest to some individuals “a degradation of so sublime a subject,” or even worse an attempt “to discredit the religious side of life” (VRE 14), he sees no necessary connection between his use of the methods of psychological science and any efforts to undermine the potential human value of religion. As he writes, “how can such an existential account of facts of mental history decide in one way or another upon their spiritual significance?” (VRE 20). Psychology explores, in a manner that applies equally well to “the dicta of the sturdy atheist” and to “those of the Methodist under conviction anxious about his soul” (ibid.), human self-understanding. Religious behavior is ultimately human behavior; and the various phenomena of the religious life — melancholy, trances, conversions, and so on — are each “special cases of kinds of human experience of much wider scope” (VRE 28).

Some of the commentators on *The Varieties* were not as comfortable as James was with adopting the standpoint of psychology. Frank Sewall, for example, writes that “[t]o treat religion as a psychologist and at the same time to regard it only as ‘natural,’ necessitates the elimination of the spiritual element and the directing of attention only to exhibitions of what is called the religious emotions on the sensuous and neurotic plane of life.” (Sewall 1903, 244-245). Ferdinand Courtney French goes in the opposite direction. Rather than suggesting that psychology undermines religion, he maintains that religion undermines psychology. French writes that, because experiences like “sudden conversions, celestial visions and mystic ecstasies” begin in “the hidden region of the subconscious,” they are quite frequently ascribed “to a supernatural source” (French 1905, 380). He notes that for the most part modern psychology treats these experiences as

“subjective facts,” while at the same time denying their presumed “ontological significance” (ibid.). James, however, offers a different approach, one that maintains that the phenomena of religious life indicate access to a spiritual world. French responds that to follow James is to abandon the scientific approach: “Whatever metaphysics or epistemology may say of such a view, psychology as a science must regard these religious experiences as purely phenomenal” (ibid.). Science must be “as rigorously phenomenalist in the mental sphere as in the physical sphere,” he continues; and, regardless of any personal interpretation of these experiences, psychologists should not discover in them “any manifestation of the transcendent” (ibid.).

THE PRIMACY OF EXPERIENCE

The second theme in *The Varieties* that I wish to consider is the primacy of experience. For James, the personal aspects of religion are the core, and all of the rest — the non-experiential — is second-hand. “In seeing freshly, and not in hearing of what others saw, shall a man find what truth is” (ERM 111), he writes at his most Emersonian.¹

James continues that personal religion is “the primordial thing,” and that it “will prove itself more fundamental than either theology or ecclesiasticism.” Churches and other religious institutions, once established by founders as diverse as Christ, the Buddha, Mahomet, and the originators of the various Christian denominations, “live at second-hand upon tradition; but the *founders* of every church owed their power originally to the fact of their direct personal communion with the divine” (VRE 33). Further, he notes that “the evidence for God lies primarily in inner personal experiences” (P 56). He writes that religion does not continue because of its “abstract definitions and systems of concatenated adjectives,” nor its “faculties of theology and their professors.” These are simply “after-effects” and “secondary accretions” upon what he calls the “phenomena of vital conversation with the unseen divine” that renew themselves over the ages “in the lives of humble private men” (VRE 352; cf. P 266). For Edwin Diller Starbuck, the focus of James’s inquiry remains such

questions as “[w]hat does this particular religious experience feel like from the *inside*, and how does the world look viewed from this standpoint?” (Starbuck 1904, 101). We cannot advance such an inquiry through the study of doctrines or institutions, but only through the exploration of religious personalities. One anonymous reviewer praises James for his ability “to understand and interpret experiences which he does not share, except as a poet sympathetically shares the experiences which he portrays” (Anonymous 1902, 993). In this regard, Sewall notes that “we see good old John Bunyan, and the preacher Whitefield, and Saint Theresa, and Cotton Mather, Channing, Tolstoi, and Thoreau, Billy Bray, Madame de Guyon, Sister Seraphique, Saint Francis and Saint Xavier, William Penn and John Woolman, and many others led out by the magic of this master to dance, so to speak, to the measures of the modern psychology of religion” (Sewall 1903, 244). Freed of all historical context and doctrinal blinders, these individuals are able to portray the fullness of their religious experiences.²

Most of the early commentators on *The Varieties*, perhaps because of their roots within the Protestant tradition, seem not to have been greatly bothered by the personal aspect of James’s study.³ Other commentators, however, note that James’s personal, even private, approach to his topic runs counter to the social understanding of the religious life that they favored. For John Grier Hibben, for example, “the significance of the individual case of personal religious experience can be adequately appreciated only in its general religious setting and historical antecedents” (Hibben 1903, 185). Thus, the meaning of even “[t]he extreme case of religious experience” must be evaluated through a consideration of “its effect upon the community, the tribe, the nation, or the age in which it occurs” (ibid., 184). Further, Hibben notes that while even “great religious movements” are rooted in “the personal religious experience of a conspicuous leader of thought,” at the same time that leader must be “accounted for in a large measure by the religious atmosphere of the age in which he lives” (ibid., 185). So, while it is true “that Luther founded Protestantism; it is also true that Protestantism produced Luther” (ibid.).

THE VALUE OF THE EXTREMES

The third theme that I wish to explore is James's belief that it is better to study religious experiences of the more extreme sort. From his initial focus upon the personal, we now turn to consider "the acute religion of the few against the chronic religion of the many" (VRE 98); and James urges us not to waste time with individuals for whom religion is "a dull habit." Rather, we should examine those for whom it is "an acute fever." The typical member of the former group he sees as only being religious at "second-hand": "His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit" (VRE 15). Thus, little is to be gained by our study of such individuals. Much, however, is to be gained by studying the members of the latter group, made up of individuals who burn with religious fervor. These individuals, whom James characterizes as the "geniuses" of religion, have demonstrated in their lives all sorts of "peculiarities" that the average believer has not; but, while admitting that these experiences are "ordinarily classed as pathological" (*ibid.*), he advocates their careful examination.

We know that, in general, James "loaded the lectures with concrete examples," maintaining, as we might expect, that "a large acquaintance with particulars often makes us wiser than the possession of abstract formulas, however deep" (VRE 5). We know further that he chose many of these examples from among what he calls "the extremer expressions of the religious temperament." While he recognized that his focus on these "convulsions of piety" (*ibid.*) might make some in his audience uncomfortable, his intention was to portray religion in what he called "its more completely evolved and perfect forms" (VRE 12). It was his belief that we should stay away from the vague border areas and focus upon the most central and flamboyant instances of religious experience. He writes that "at their extreme of development, there can never be any question as to what experiences are religious. The divinity of the object and the solemnity of the reaction are too well marked for doubt" (VRE 40). When there is doubt or hesitation on our part, it is because the religious state of mind is weak, and thus "hardly

worthy of our study at all.” For him, it is important to concentrate on those “exaggerated” cases “where the religious spirit is unmistakable and extreme” (VRE 40; cf. 26, 44, 48, 303). In this context, when he introduces the concept of “pathology,” he should not be understood to be implying that he views religious experiences as episodes of mental disorder. The term should suggest, rather, an amplification or magnification of a sort that he believes is particularly helpful to scientific inquiries. If we hope to understand these religious phenomena as continuous with the rest of human behavior, he continues, “we cannot possibly ignore these pathological aspects of the subject. We must describe and name them just as if they occurred in non-religious men” (VRE 17).⁴ After all, he writes, “[t]he sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down” (VRE 46; cf. ERM 62; C 10:458).

James’s interest in the more extreme forms of religious experience met with far greater resistance from the religious commentators than his personal focus. While Eric Strickland Waterhouse maintains that had James’s volume “been limited to normal forms, the disregard of the abnormal would have been held sufficient condemnation,” and F.C.S. Schiller has no problem with the fact that James explores “the dark corners of the human mind,” others complained about the overall emphasis of the work (Waterhouse 1910, 327; Schiller 1903, 404). George B. Stevens writes that the volume exhibits “especially the abnormal and bizarre manifestations of religious sentiment,” and as a result produces “the most unconventional and the raciest treatment of the philosophy of religion which has yet appeared” (Stevens 1903, 114-115). George Albert Coe writes that James made no attempt “to separate the typical from the aberrational.” Rather, “[t]he average religious man is even said to be an imitator of the extremist, who is the ‘pattern-setter’” (Coe 1903, 66-67). Further, James gives “exceeding prominence . . . to morbid growths,” and as a result the volume “can hardly be regarded as a portrait” of religious consciousness (*ibid.*). A. Caldecott offers his similar impression that James has made “too much of the abnormal and the morbid: more than we can make use

of if we are bent on attaining a really scientific view of the religious nature of man” (Caldecott 1910, 312).⁵

In defense of the everyday, Hibben grants that “while the extreme case may throw much light upon the nature of religious experience . . . the abnormal in turn cannot be adequately estimated save through the light shed upon it by the normal” (Hibben 1903, 183). For him, our focus should thus be “midway between the extremes,” and our goal should be attempting to understand “the normal man, the great body of sane individuals whose religious experiences are no more connected with pathological phenomena than their experiences of friendship, of patriotism, or of moral obligation” (ibid.). Our inquiries in religion should be grounded in “the common experiences, the commonplace experiences if you will, of simple conviction and quiet devotion” (ibid., 184). In a similar fashion, Starbuck notes that “James sets great store by intense experiences, and passes by the ordinary experiences as being poor copies or mere conventionalities” (Starbuck 1904, 103). He continues that James believes that these “extreme examples” presented to us by “the expert specialists in religion, even though eccentric, . . . yield the profounder information” (ibid.). For Starbuck, however, “one must believe that the study of variants in development gives fruitful results only in that they illustrate in a graphic way the normal processes of growth” (ibid.). Without the background of normal processes, we cannot tell what to make of the others. The focus of our efforts in psychology must thus be to understand the commonplace. Further, Starbuck suggests that “the dramatic souls, the specialists in religion,” had not been as “original and causative” in the development of religions as James believes (ibid.). He maintains, on the contrary, “that the great and solid results of human attainment are wrought out within the everyday life of the compact mass of humanity; that it is there we are to go if we are to get the truest picture at last of what religion really is” (ibid., 104). It is these individuals, Starbuck writes, whom we must study because it is likely that “this mass of living, acting, striving persons, with its varying shades of experience, and its fine feel each for the other . . . has done more, not only in refining and fixing our modes

of religious life, but in discovering and shaping them in beliefs, than have the ‘revelations’ of all mystics combined” (ibid.).

In further defense of normalcy, Sewall would avoid both “dreary examples . . . of the dull, habitual kind” of religion that James rejects, and “the acute kind of religious emotional pathology” that he champions (Sewall 1903, 246). For Sewall, we should seek out examples of “normal religion,” by which he means “religion as a perfectly normal, healthy, and happy factor in human life” (ibid.). As a result, he contends that, in *The Varieties*, James has dealt with “every variety of religious experience, save that of genuine religion itself” (ibid.). He writes further that what James offers in these “entertaining and oftentimes amusing chapters . . . is only a collection of eccentric examples of emotional or intellectual disorder, and by no means of the normal and healthy religion of every-day life as the average world know it and respect it, however varied and unsuccessful are their efforts to realize it” (ibid., 248-249). Thus, Sewall calls into question James’s assumption that “the abnormal is the way to the normal, and the diseased life the best means of studying the life in health” (ibid., 249). For him, James’s method of studying religion is like “walking through a medical museum, as compared with watching a body of healthy youth on a spring morning in the athletic field” (ibid., 250).⁶

For his part, Adolph Augustus Berle wants religious experiences to be taken seriously, and thus he has a good deal of sympathy with James’s approach; but, he continues, “we do not want, and the Christian people as a whole will not permit, the experiences of the church to be grounded even superficially in these transitory and least impressive elements, which, while furnishing the materials for thought and suggestion, are never to be confounded with the real power which is over and behind them” (Berle 1903, 14). As he continues, James is mistaken to draw so heavily from cases of a pathological sort. “There are millions of people who know nothing, and will never know anything, of most of the diseases which occupy the medical practitioner and the surgeon. This whole method is the method of the pathologist, which is fundamentally false as applied to the spiritual life” (ibid., 18-19). Finally, Rashdall protests against

James's study in which his "sole interest" seems to be in the "abnormal character" of the experiences. Rashdall has serious doubts about "James's preoccupation with the marvelous and the abnormal" (Rashdall 1903, 246-247). He believes that James finds "the essence of religion in feeling and emotion," and that he rejects religion's "rational or intellectual side" (ibid.). Further, because James seems to ground religion "entirely upon the evidence afforded by these abnormal experiences to the few who have gone through them," others who have not been so blessed "must apparently depend entirely upon the external testimony of those who have experienced such things" (ibid., 248).⁷

RELIGIOUS TRUTH

The final theme that I wish to consider is James's discussion of the question of religious truth. Wedged between "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" (1898) and *Pragmatism* (1907), *The Varieties* offers us a sketch of his developing Pragmatism. He is particularly interested in grounding theoretical discussions of religion in the practical differences that would "result from one alternative or the other being true" (VRE 350). Using this criterion, he maintains that discussions of God's familiar "metaphysical attributes" — aseity and necessariness and immateriality and indivisibility and so on — have no significance for human experience (VRE 351). If, however, we engage with what James calls God's "moral" attributes, like holiness, omnipotence, justice, and love, we will find there material that functions in life. "They positively determine fear and hope and expectation" (VRE 353).

Exploring these moral attributes reminds us that for James happiness is at the core of our being. "How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness, is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure." He believes, further, that religion contributes to this pursuit, and that the happiness that religious belief offers us serves "as a proof of its truth." When such belief brings a person happiness, it "almost inevitably" is adopted. "Such a belief ought to be true," he writes of the believer's ideation, "therefore it is true" (VRE 71). Throughout

The Varieties, James discusses the various religious experiences as possessing “enormous biological worth.” Still, we may wonder whether there is any worth to the content-claims of these revelations? As he himself writes, “[w]hat is the objective ‘truth’ of their content?” While he admits that “the natural propensity of man is to believe that whatever has great value for life is thereby certified as true,” he still means for ‘truth’ itself to be “taken to mean something additional to bare value for life” (VRE 401; cf. 300). Believers, of course, assume that religion is true in the sense that their theological doctrines correspond with some supernatural reality. James writes that religious people believe “that not only they themselves, but the whole universe of beings to whom the God is present, are secure in his parental hands.” In this comfortable state of dependence, they rest assured that “we are *all* saved, in spite of the gates of hell and all adverse terrestrial appearances.” Because God exists, there is “an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved” (VRE 407; cf. P 55, 264).

The question of religious truth remains a complicated topic. Theological ideas seem to exist on at least two levels; and each of them, in some sense, claims to correspond with reality. First, there is the idea of an existent Being, a God, with whom believers have a nurturing relationship. Second, there is the idea of palpable benefits that we derive from the feeling that we have a relationship with this God. For traditional believers, the former has priority; and actual benefits from believing in a God are possible only if there is a relationship with an actual God. James suggests an alternate approach that enables us to count the benefits themselves as evidence of the relationship with a God. The problem that he sees with focusing initially on the existence of a God is that our attempts to reach an answer may defy ages of serious effort. In the meantime, the lives of many potential believers would suffer if they were forced to forego the potential happiness from a belief in a God whose existence could not be antecedently proven. This open stance is the one from which he writes “the uses of religion, its uses to the individual who has it, and the uses of the individual himself to the world, are the best arguments that truth is in it” (VRE 361). He had

recognized all of this earlier in *The Varieties*, when he wrote that religious opinions, like any other respectable opinions, must be tested “by logic and by experiment”; but when we test our beliefs, these tests must be broad in nature, considering such criteria as “[i]mmediate luminousness, . . . philosophical reasonableness, and moral helpfulness” (VRE 23).⁸

James’s folding of the question of truth back into the question of value is another instance of his belief that in the fullness of experience there is much that reason cannot prove. In our lives, we are frequently without “articulate reasons”; and rationality is only one of the values in the full life of the person. If individuals have spiritual intuitions, he writes, “they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits . . . something in you absolutely *knows* that the result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it” (VRE 67). James admits that he is speaking here descriptively rather than prescriptively, of lived experience, simply recognizing the fact that people tend to follow their intuitions. “I do not yet say that it is *better* that the subconscious and non-rational should thus hold primacy in the religious realm,” he writes. “I confine myself to simply pointing out that they do so hold it as a matter of fact” (VRE 68; cf. 340-342).

James’s presentation of the matter of religious truth in *The Varieties* was opposed by early commentators in at least two ways. Some thought that the volume betrayed credulity about the objects of religious belief; others challenged his understanding of how religious belief “works.” Beginning with the charge of credulity, Hibben notes that James is open to infiltration from the subconscious. Hibben fears, however, that the subconscious “may be also the region of chimeras and delusion” (Hibben 1903, 185). Berle continues that James refuses to distinguish between more familiar Christian experience and “all of the pseudo-experiences which more or less masquerade under the appellation Christian” (Berle 1902, 933). Here he points to the way that James would allow “Mrs. Eddy’s Christian Science, [John Alexander] Dowie’s Zionism and other similar cults [to] stand on precisely the same scientific

basis with Christian experience” (ibid.). In James’s attentiveness to the testimony of his sources, he “opens the gates to all” and “accepts the statements of all his witnesses at face value” (ibid.). As a result, his many informants present a wave of testimony that is offered as “just as true and valuable for the interpretation of religious experience as the body of Christian testimony which has been the bulwark of the church’s confidence for centuries” (ibid.). Elsewhere, Berle expands along this line that nowhere in *The Varieties* do we encounter a single passage in which James’s attitude “is other than one of serene and absolute confidence” that the experiences he portrays are “real things to those who present them,” and he remarks that “the simplicity with which the most startling records are introduced as evidence is calculated to make one rub his eyes to see whether after all it is not merely a dream” (Berle 1903, 8-9). The experiences that James recounts are all “accepted as accurate and substantially true transcripts of what the subject passed through”; in no case is the “actual, real, and valid character” of the experience “brought into question” (ibid., 9). For Berle, James “exhibits here a credulity which is hardly accordant with the demands of the enlightened intellect of our age” (ibid., 10). In fact, he continues, James commits “one of the worst cases of the credulity of science, if it be science,” that he has ever encountered (ibid., 11). Berle is unwilling to “swallow in this reckless fashion,” the various testimonies that James presents. “Most of these data have absolutely no means of verification,” he concludes. “They can be subjected to no test at all, but the subjective test of the investigator’s own mind” (ibid., 11-12).

From the different perspective of truth and working, John Henry Muirhead approaches this question in the broad fashion that James does. “The belief that ‘works’ is true but it must work all round,” he writes. “It must satisfy our needs but it must satisfy them all, the needs of the reason not less than those of the will and emotions (if indeed they are different) our demand for harmony in our intellectual as well as for harmony in our moral world” (Muirhead 1903, 245). John Ellis McTaggart inquires more critically about the objects of religious beliefs. Supposing on James’s account that a

person has a working belief that “God is powerful,” McTaggart asks, what does this belief tell us about? Not anything about God, he maintains, but only about the functioning of the belief: “‘God is powerful’ is true . . . *means*, according to Dr. James, that the belief that God is powerful works” (McTaggart 1908, 106-107). The assertion that appeared to be about God is in fact “an assertion about my belief” (ibid). Other commentators, like Rashdall, focus on the perspectival problem that James has opened up by rejecting the universal claim that “it must be true for you as well as for me” (Rashdall 1903, 249). He maintains that James’s view would undermine our “faith in the validity of Reason, in the existence of truth and the duty of pursuing it” (ibid., 248). As a result, he sees James’s view “as a deliberate abandonment of the search for truth and a handing over of Religion and Morality (and why not Science?) to the sway of willful caprice” (ibid., 249).⁹

I hope that I have managed to convey, in this brief survey of the early reception of James’s *Varieties*, a sense of the meaning that early readers took from the volume. Although these readers were interested in many aspects of James’s study, I have tried to tease out his ideas, and their responses, on four central themes: his psychological approach to the topic of religion; his emphasis upon personal experience; his stressing of more extreme cases; and his attempt to rethink the meaning of truth with regard to religious themes. As we continue to study and evaluate James’s text, we can benefit greatly from a familiarity with its earliest commentators who constituted James’s intended audience.

University of Toledo
james.campbell@utoledo.edu

REFERENCES

Anonymous. 1902. “Review of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.” *Outlook* LXXII (December): 991-995.

- Berle, Adolf Augustus. 1902. "Professor James on Religious Experience." *Congregationalist and Christian World* LXXXVII/51 (20 December): 933.
- _____. 1903. "The Psychology of Christian Experience." *Bibliotheca Sacra* LX (January): 1-27.
- Caldecott, A. 1910. "The Work of William James: I - As Pragmatist." *Sociological Review* III/4 (October): 310-314.
- Coe, George Albert. 1903. "Review of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*." *Philosophical Review* XII/1 (January): 62-67.
- Crooks, Ezra B. 1913. "Professor James and the Psychology of Religion." *The Monist* XXIII/1 (January): 122-130.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. (1838) 1904. "Address." In *Complete Works*, Vol. 1, Concord Edition, 119-151. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin.
- French, Ferdinand Courtney. 1905. Abstract of "The Relation of Psychology to the Philosophy of Religion," *Journal of Philosophy* II: 380-381.
- Hall, Granville Stanley. 1904. *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. 2 vols. New York: Appleton.
- Hibben, John Grier. 1903. "Review of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*." *Psychological Review* X/2 (March): 180-186.
- Hollinger, David A. 2004. "'Damned for God's Glory': William James and the Scientific Vindication of Protestant Culture." In *William James and a Science of Religions*, edited by Wayne Proudfoot, 9-30. New York: Columbia University Press.
- James, William. (1898) 1975. "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results." In *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 255-270. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- _____. (1902) 1985. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* [VRE]. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- _____. (1907) 1975. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* [P]. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- _____. 1982. *Essays in Religion and Morality* [ERM]. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- _____. 1992-2004. *The Correspondence of William James* [C]. 12 vols, edited by Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Jastrow, Joseph. 1902. "Pathology." In *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Vol. 2, edited by James Mark Baldwin, 267-269. New York: Macmillan.
- McTaggart, John Ellis. 1908. "Review of *Pragmatism*." *Mind* N.S. XVII, Issue 65 (January):104-109.
- Muirhead, John Henry. 1903. "Professor William James's Philosophy of Religion." *International Journal of Ethics* XIII/2 (January): 236-246.
- Proudfoot, Wayne. 2004. "Pragmatism and 'an Unseen Order' in *Varieties*." In *William James and a Science of Religions*, edited by Wayne Proudfoot, 31-47. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rashdall, Hastings. 1903. "Review of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*." *Mind* N.S. XII, Issue 46 (April): 245-250.
- Russell, Bertrand. (1908) 1966. "William James's Conception of Truth." In *Philosophical Essays*, 112-130. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Schiller, Ferdinand Canning Scott. 1903. "Review of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*." *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* XVII/4 (February): 403-411.
- Sewall, Frank. 1903. "Professor James on Religious Experience." *New-Church Review* X (April): 243-264.
- Smith, John Edwin. 1985. Introduction to *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, by William James, xi-li. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Starbuck, Edwin Diller. 1904. "The Varieties of Religious Experience." *Biblical World* XXIV: 100-111.
- Stevens, George B. 1903. "Review of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*." *American Journal of Theology* VII/1 (January): 114-117.
- Taylor, Charles. 2002. *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Waterhouse, Eric Strickland. 1910. *Modern Theories of Religion*. New York: Eaton and Mains.
- Watson, John. 1907. *The Philosophical Basis of Religion*. Glasgow: Maclehose.
- Webb, Clement Charles Julian. 1902. "Psychology and Religion." *Journal of Theological Studies* IV/1 (October): 46-68.

NOTES

1. In his 1838 "Address" at the Divinity School, Emerson maintains that "[h]istorical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion. As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual . . . whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely; it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul" (130, 126-127).

2. Wayne Proudfoot suggests that our greatest obstacle in appreciating *The Varieties* a century after its publication "is likely to be James's lack of attention to historical context. He juxtaposes material from biographies of Counter-Reformation saints with quotations from Tolstoy, Ramakrishna, and contemporary proponents of mind-cure . . . he wants to construct a composite portrait of types of religious experience that he takes to be the same across different historical and cultural settings" ("Pragmatism and 'an Unseen Order' in *Varieties*," 43).

3. Some more recent commentators have been troubled by his personal inclination. David A. Hollinger, for example, writes that "James's ostensibly species wide account of religious experience is deeply Protestant in structure, tone, and implicit theology . . . *Varieties* is constructed to foreground certain religious sensibilities and not others, and to present the core of religion in general as having been most attractively manifest in exactly the cultural tradition to which James's listeners and readers were directly heir"

(“Damned for God’s Glory,” 11, 14; cf. John Edwin Smith, “Introduction” to *The Varieties*, xviii-xix; Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, 23-24).

4. Joseph Jastrow indicates the importance of recognizing this continuity when he writes in Baldwin’s *Dictionary*: “The broadest and in many respects most scientific and suggestive use of the term pathology regards it as coextensive with normal in biology; the latter applies to normal life in all its variety and complexity, the former to that of the morbid, the diseased, and the abnormal in no less extensive and comprehensive a sense . . . anatomy, physiology, psychology, sociology present pathological as well as normal aspects” (“Pathology,” 267).

5. Compare John Watson, *The Philosophical Basis of Religion*, 154; Rashdall, Review of *The Varieties*, 246-248.

6. In a similar fashion, Granville Stanley Hall writes: “Most of the cases and experiences which constitute so large a part of his volume are abnormal and teratological [monstrous], from which true religion, I believe, saves its followers” (*Adolescence*, 2:293 n.8; cf. Webb, “Psychology and Religion,” 68).

7. Compare Ezra B. Crooks, “Professor James and the Psychology of Religion,” 124-125. John E. Smith notes that in James’s consideration of mysticism he disavows any “first-hand acquaintance with the phenomena he was describing. This is surely paradoxical; it appears that James was convinced at second-hand that only first-hand experience in religion represents the genuine article” (“Introduction” to VRE, xvi).

8. James later writes in *Pragmatism*: “If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will depend entirely on their relations to the other truths that also have to be acknowledged” (P 40-41, emphasis original).

9. Compare Bertrand Russell, “William James’s Conception of Truth,” 124-125.