

The sub-title "A Study in Human Nature" explains the author's approach to his subject. He applies the method of scientific investigation to the religious emotions felt by particular people, drawing on a variety of sources that range from the confessions of St. Augustine to the case histories of the psychologist. Simply as an anthology of authentic religious experience this book would have held the place that it won on its first appearance. It is in fact much more. The fairness and sympathy with which the author carries out his philosophical task of analysis and comparison add immeasurably to the value of his material. As Professor A. D. Nock writes in his Introduction, "This is not only a masterpiece of understanding: it is a masterpiece of imagination and a masterpiece of art."

William James came of one of the most remarkable Bostonian families. His brother Henry was the novelist. His father was a man of highly cultivated tastes and great independence of mind. Brought up in an atmosphere of good talk and high spirits, William was as much at home in Europe as in America. Qualifying as a doctor at the Harvard Medical School, his real bent was for philosophy and psychology, in which he early established his reputation. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was originally delivered as the Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh University.