CONTENTS

Preface
Foreword
Introduction

PART

1. The Universality, Necessity, and Oneness of Religion
   The Common Goal of Life
   A Universal Definition of Religion
   What It Means to Be Religious
   Religion “Binds” Us to Benevolent Laws
   Religion Is a Question of Fundamentals
   Universal Religion Is Pragmatically Necessary

2. Pain, Pleasure, and Bliss: Their Differences
   The Ultimate Cause of Pain and Suffering
   The Immediate Causes of Pain
   Pleasure Is a Double Consciousness
   Mistaking the Means for the End
   Bliss-Consciousness Arises With Severing of Body Identification
3. **God as Bliss**

   The Common Motive for All Actions  
   Only Bliss-Consciousness Can Effectively Put Excitation to Rest  
   What Is God?  
   Proof of God’s Existence Lies Within Ourselves  
   Religion Is Made Universally Necessary Only When God Is Conceived as Bliss  
   In God or Bliss-Consciousness Our Spiritual Aspirations Find Fulfillment  
   The Great Play of Life

4. **Four Fundamental Religious Methods**

   The Need for Religious Methods  
   The “Son of God” and the “Son of Man”  
   The Origin of Sectarianism  
   Four Fundamental Religious Methods  
   1. The Intellectual Method  
   2. The Devotional Method  
   3. The Meditational Method  
   4. The Scientific Method or Yoga  
   Physiological Explanation of the Scientific Method  
   Practice of Scientific Method Results in Freedom From Bodily and Mental Distractions
Continued Practice of Scientific Method Leads to Bliss-Consciousness, or God
Scientific Method Works Directly With the Life-Force

5. **Instruments of Knowledge and the Theoretical Validity of Religious Methods**

Three Instruments of Knowledge
1. Perception
2. Inference
3. Intuition

By Intuition God Can Be Realized in All His Aspects

*About the Author*
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to outline what should be understood by religion, in order to know it as universally and pragmatically necessary. It also seeks to present that aspect of the idea of the Godhead which has a direct bearing on the motives and actions of every minute of our lives.

It is true that God is infinite in His nature and aspects; and it is also true that to prepare a chart detailing, so far as is consistent with reason, what God is like, is only an evidence of the limitations of the human mind in its attempt to fathom God. Still, it is equally true that the human mind, in spite of all its drawbacks, cannot rest perfectly satisfied with what is finite. It has a natural urge to interpret what is human and finite in the light of what is superhuman and infinite — what it feels but cannot express, what within it lies implicit but under circumstances refuses to be explicit.

Our ordinary conception of God is that He is superhuman, infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, and the like. In this general conception there are many variations. Some call God personal, some see Him as
impersonal. The point emphasized in this book is that whatever conception we have of God, if it does not influence our daily conduct, if everyday life does not find an inspiration from it, and if it is not found universally necessary, then that conception is useless.

If God is not conceived in such a way that we cannot do without Him in the satisfaction of a want, in our dealings with people, in earning money, in reading a book, in passing an examination, in the doing of the most trifling or the highest duties, then it is plain that we have not felt any connection between God and life.

God may be infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, personal, and merciful, but these conceptions are not sufficiently compelling to make us try to know Him. We may as well do without Him. He may be infinite, omnipresent, and so forth, but we have no immediate and practical use for those conceptions in our busy, rushing lives.

We fall back on those conceptions only when we seek to justify, in philosophical and poetical writings, in art or in idealistic talks, the finite craving for something beyond; when we, with all our vaunted knowledge, are at a loss to explain some of the most
common phenomena of the universe; or when we get stranded in the vicissitudes of the world. “We pray to the Ever-Merciful when we get stuck,” as the Eastern maxim has it. Otherwise, we seem to get along all right in our workaday world without Him.

These stereotyped conceptions appear to be the safety valves of our pent-up human thought. They explain Him, but do not make us seek Him. They lack motive power. We are not necessarily seeking God when we call Him infinite, omnipresent, all-merciful and omniscient. These conceptions satisfy the intellect, but do not soothe the soul. If respected and cherished in our hearts, they may broaden us to a certain extent — may make us moral and resigned toward Him. But they do not make God our own — they are not intimate enough. They place Him aloof from everyday concerns of the world.

These conceptions savor of outlandishness when we are on the street, in a factory, behind a counter, or in an office. Not because we are really dead to God and religion, but because we lack a proper conception of them — a conception that can be interwoven with the fabric of daily life. What we conceive of God should be of daily, nay hourly, guidance to us. The
very conception of God should stir us to seek Him in the midst of our daily lives. This is what we mean by a pragmatic and compelling conception of God. We should take religion and God out of the sphere of belief into that of daily life.

If we do not emphasize the necessity of God in every aspect of our lives and the need of religion in every minute of our existence, then God and religion drop out of our intimate daily consideration and become only a one-day-in-a-week affair. In the first part of this work an attempt is made to show that in order to understand the real necessity of God and religion we must throw emphasis on that conception of both which is most relevant to the chief aim of our daily and hourly actions.

This book also aims to point out the universality and unity of religion. There have been different religions in different ages. There have been heated controversy, long warfare, and much bloodshed over them. One religion has stood against another, one sect has fought with another. Not only is there a variety in religions, but there is also a wide diversity of sects and opinions within the same religion. But the
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question arises, When there is one God, why should there be so many religions?

It may be argued that particular stages of intellectual growth and special types of mentality belonging to certain nations, owing to different geographical locations and other extraneous circumstances, determine the origin of different religions, such as Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism for the Asiatics, Christianity for the Westerners, and so forth. If by religion we understand only practices, particular tenets, dogmas, customs, and conventions, then there may be grounds for the existence of so many religions. But if religion means primarily God-consciousness, or the realization of God both within and without, and secondarily a body of beliefs, tenets, and dogmas, then, strictly speaking, there is but one religion in the world, for there is but one God.

The different customs, forms of worship, tenets, and conventions may be held to form the grounds for the origins of different denominations and sects included under that one religion. If religion is understood in this way, then and then only may its universality be maintained; for we cannot possibly universalize particular customs and conventions.
Only the element common to all religions may be universalized; we may ask everyone to follow and obey it. Then may it be truly said that religion is not only necessary but universal as well. Everyone may follow the same religion, for there is but one — the universal element in all religions being one and the same.

I have tried to show in this book that as God is one, necessary to all of us, so religion is one, necessary and universal. Only the roads to it may differ in some respects at the beginning. As a matter of fact, it is illogical to say that there are two religions, when there is but one God. There may be two denominations or sects, but there is only one religion. What we now call different religions should be known as different denominations or sects under that one universal religion. And what we now know as different denominations or sects should be specified as different branch cults or creeds. If we once know the meaning of the word “religion,” which I am going to discuss presently, we shall naturally be very circumspect in the use of it. It is only the limited human point of view that overlooks the underlying universal element in the so-called different religions of the
world, and this overlooking has been the cause of many evils.

This book gives a psychological definition of religion, not an objective definition based on dogmas or tenets. In other words, it seeks to make religion a question of our whole inward being and attitude, and not a mere observance of certain rules and precepts.
PART 1

The Universality, Necessity, and Oneness of Religion

The Common Goal of Life

First we must know what religion is; then only may we judge whether it is necessary for all of us to be religious.

Without necessity there is no action. Every action of ours has an end of its own for which we perform it. People of the world act variously to accomplish various ends; there is a multiplicity of ends determining the actions of men in the world.

But is there any common and universal end of all the actions of all the people of the world? Is there any common, highest necessity for all of us, which prompts us to all actions? A little analysis of the motives and ends of men’s actions in the world shows that, though there are a thousand and one proximate or immediate ends of men in regard to the particular calling or profession that they take up, the