

## *International Congress of Religious Liberals*

Paramahansa Yogananda (then Swami Yogananda) gave his first talk in the United States, as a delegate from India to the International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals. He spoke at Unity House on Wednesday afternoon, Oct. 6, 1920,<sup>1</sup> delivering a speech titled “The Science of Religion” which was later published as a book by Self-Realization Fellowship.

The published proceedings of the congress is titled “New Pilgrimages of the Spirit, Proceedings and Papers of the Pilgrim Tercentenary Meeting of the International Congress of Free Christian and Other Religious Liberals Held at Boston and Plymouth, U.S.A., October 3-7, 1920.” The publication states that “The International Congress seeks to bring into closer union for exchange of ideas, mutual service and the promotion of common aims, the liberal churches in all lands and the liberal elements in all churches.”<sup>2</sup> The proceedings describe Paramahansa Yogananda’s speech in this way:

Swami Yogananda Giri, delegate from the Brahmacharya Sanghasran of Ranchi, India, brought the greetings of his Association to the Congress, with which his Society desires henceforth to be enrolled. In fluent English and a forcible delivery he gave an address of a philosophical character on “The Science of Religion,” which has been printed in pamphlet form for a wider distribution. Religion, he maintained, is universal and it is one. We cannot possibly universalize particular customs and convictions, but the common element in religion can be universalized, and we can ask all alike to follow and obey it. As God is one, necessary for all, so religion is one, necessary and universal. It is only the limited human point of view that overlooks the underlying and universal element in the so-called different religions of the world.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New Pilgrimages of the Spirit, Proceedings and Papers of the Pilgrim Tercentenary Meeting of the International Congress of Free Christian and Other Religious Liberals Held at Boston and Plymouth, U.S.A., October 3-7, 1920*, (The Beacon Press, Boston Mass., 1921), pages 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> *New Pilgrimages of the Spirit*, first page of the Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> *New Pilgrimages of the Spirit*, page 8.