

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

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The problem of religion by Emil Carl Wilm

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EMIL CARL WILM

**THE PROBLEM
OF RELIGION**

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By

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in Philosophy, Cornell University, and Assistant
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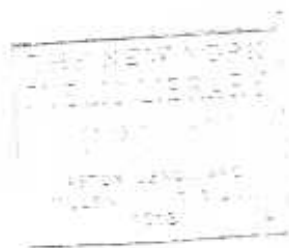
Play no tricks upon thy soul, O man!
Let fact be fact, and life the thing it can.

—*Clough.*



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To
JOHN R. ALLEN, D.D.
A SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN WHO COMBINES
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT WITH
ESSENTIAL JUSTICE
OF LIFE
MY FIRST TEACHER OF PHILOSOPHY
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IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

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PREFACE

THE little book presented here is not a treatise on theological apologetics in an old sense of the term. I have rather been interested to trace out, in a way which would be fairly consonant with our present knowledge, and satisfactory to my own scientific conscience, the natural implications of our common and our scientific experience with a view to seeing what justification could be given for a religious conception of the world, independently of revelation, or of any other cabalistic sources of religious truth. My way has not been an entirely new way. If it were, it would rightly be under suspicion. The philosophical reader will likely miss many of the refinements of modern philosophical speculation, and any distinct recognition of the very energetic reaction to idealism, of which (I trust he will believe) I am not entirely innocent. To the essential truth in pragmatism, that new version of a very ancient way of thinking, I have indeed tried to do justice. What I have endeavored to do is to present, in as

P R E F A C E

simple a manner as the subject would bear, the idealistic tradition in its best known historical forms as bequeathed to us by Berkeley and Kant. I have tried, in the second place, to incorporate with this the essential features of modern voluntaristic philosophy with its rightful emphasis upon the purposive and active aspects of our experience, and the closely related tendencies in the philosophy of religion, which have stressed the belief in the conservation of values as the essential characteristic of religion. All this seemed to me well worth doing, and in a manner as free from the subtler technicalities of scholarship as possible. I have, I hope, stated the whole argument in a direct and fresh way, and have given the problem of religion a somewhat novel, and, I trust, a natural and true perspective. That a phenomenon of such enormous social and historical significance as religion has been would be capable of some sort of justification I have all the while been confident. How far I have succeeded in keeping my mind free from the disturbing influence of scientific pride, on the one hand, and of religious prejudice, on

PREFACE

the other, and have assessed religion at its true status and worth, the reader must judge.

This book is the property of Harvard University, and I wish here to express my thanks to President Lowell, and to Professor Bliss Perry, chairman of the committee on the administration of the Bowdoin Prize, for permission to print it in the present form. My best thanks are also due to my former student, Miss Helen Ingham, for reading the proof of the book, and to my wife, Grace Gridley Wilm, for the same service, and for removing a number of foreign idioms which would otherwise have marred my pages.

E. C. WILM.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,
June 15, 1912.