

**THE WORLD A SPIRITUAL
SYSTEM: AN OUTLINE
OF METAPHYSICS**

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The World a Spiritual System: An Outline of Metaphysics by James H. Snowden

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AN OUTLINE OF METAPHYSICS

BY

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To

ALEXANDER T. ORMOND, Ph.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN APPRECIATION OF

HIS DISTINGUISHED SERVICES IN PHILOSOPHY

AND IN MEMORY OF

DAYS OF DELIGHTFUL FELLOWSHIP ON THESE HIGH THEMES

THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED

PREFACE

METAPHYSICS has been defined as "that, of which those who listen understand nothing, and which he who speaks does not himself understand"; and a metaphysician has been declared to be a "blind man looking on a dark night for a black cat that isn't there!" These extreme statements probably represent the view many persons entertain of this field of thought. It appears to them to be a region of cloud and smoke, conflict and confusion, where men are blindly groping about and "ignorant armies clash by night." They hear the distant din and occasionally see its dust, but are uncertain as to what it is all about, or whether it has any real meaning.

This chaos, however, is more apparent than real, and it requires but slight acquaintance with metaphysics to see that it is a world of order and has an object in view; in fact, so far from being confusion worse confounded, metaphysics is distinctly an effort to escape intellectual confusion and reach a clear and consistent view of the world. It is probable that there are many persons, students, professional men, teachers, and general readers, that have given little special study to the subject, who

would be glad to be led into this world along an elementary and plain path. It is in the hope of meeting this want that this book is offered to such readers. It does not attempt to cover the whole field, and scarcely touches some of its deeper problems, but it endeavors to give an outline of metaphysics from the idealistic point of view. It especially seeks to be constructive and work out a general theory of the world as a spiritual system. The popular aim of the book explains its elementary form, and its avoidance, as far as possible, of technical terms.

The trend of metaphysics has long been in the direction of idealism, but in recent years this system has assumed popular forms, true or perverted. It is now out on the street and in the air, and this creates an occasion for a plain exposition of the subject. Theology is also being rewritten in the light of idealistic or monistic philosophy, and this book endeavors to apply idealism in the field of religion and life. Metaphysics must submit to the pragmatic test, and at this point idealism wins large vindication.

The main object of this book, however, is not to make converts to the theory it presents. The metaphysician as a rule is chiefly intent on seeing and stating truth, and is less concerned in controversy and converts. He knows he can only catch his own glimpse of reality and that ultimate truth is infinitely wider and deeper than he can see; therefore, he strains his vision to discern what he can of the great world, and then is content to