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The Scottish scholar James McCosh (1811-94) was a champion of the Free church, a successful and much-published philosophy professor at Belfast for 16 years, and an energetic and innovative President of Princeton University from 1868 to 1888. *The Religious Aspect of Evolution* was published in 1888, and this second edition from 1890 took account of A. R. Wallace's latest work, *Darwinism* (1889, also reissued in this series). McCosh, who already in Ireland had developed a 'theory of the universe conditioned by Christian revelation' was one of very few clergymen in America who defended evolutionary theory and insisted that, if properly understood, far from denying the existence of God it increased the reader's wonder at the mystery of creation. He impressed upon his students that while there seemed to be great truth in Darwin's theory, there was also error in the common expositions surrounding it, and that the work of the coming age must be to separate the truth from the error. In doing so, McCosh claimed, illustrations of God's existence would be found as it relates to the origins of species, thus enabling scholars to follow and even embrace science while also retaining their faith in the Bible.

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THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT
OF
EVOLUTION

BY

JAMES McCOSH, D.D., LL.D., Litt.D.

Ex-President of Princeton College

AUTHOR OF "METHOD OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT"; "REALISTIC PHILOSOPHY";
"PSYCHOLOGY—THE COGNITIVE POWERS"; "PSYCHOLOGY—THE MOTIVE
POWERS"; "FIRST AND FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS"; "TESTS
OF VARIOUS KINDS OF TRUTH."

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PREFATORY NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

THIS work was first published as one of the Bedell Lectures, founded by the Rev. Dr. Bedell, Bishop of Ohio, and Mrs. Bedell. In issuing this second edition in a somewhat different form, I have inserted a chapter on "Final Cause," and used materials from Dr. A. R. Wallace's recently published work on "Darwinism."

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PREFACE.

IN my first published work, "The Method of Divine Government," I sought to unfold the plan by which God governs the world, and I found it to be in an orderly manner—that is, by law. As having pursued this line of research, I was prepared to believe that there might be the like method in the organic kingdoms, and to listen to Darwin when he showed that there was a regular instrumentality in the descent of plants and animals. I noticed that he and others, such as Lewes, Huxley, and Spencer, who took the same view, were not swayed by any religious considerations, and that religious people generally were strongly prepossessed against the new doctrine. But I saw, at the same time, that Darwin was a most careful observer, that he published many important facts, that there was great truth in the theory, and that there was nothing atheistic in it if properly understood—that is, in the ac-

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knowledged tenet of the government of organic nature by means and according to law.

I felt it to be my only course not to reject the truth because it was proclaimed by some who turned it to an irreligious use, but to accept it wherever it might lead, and to turn it to a better use. I let it be known that while I thought there was truth, I believed there was error in the common expositions of evolution, and that the work of the coming age must be to separate the truth from the error, when it would be found, I was sure, that this, like every other part of God's work, would illustrate his existence and his wisdom.

When I was called from the Old World to the office which I now hold as president of an important college, I had to consider—I remember seriously pondering the question in the vessel which brought me to this country—whether I should at once avow my convictions or keep them in abeyance because of the prejudices of religious men, and lest I might unsettle the faith of the students committed to my care. I decided to pursue the open and honest course, as being sure that it would be the best in the end. I was not a week in Princeton till I let it be known to the upper classes

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of the college that I was in favor of evolution properly limited and explained; and I have proclaimed my views in lectures and papers in a number of cities and before various associations, literary and religious. I have been gratified to find that none of the churches has assailed me, and this has convinced me that their doubts about evolution have proceeded mainly from the bad use to which the doctrine has been turned. I am pleased to discover that intelligent Christians are coming round gradually to the views which I have had the courage to publish.

I have all along had a sensitive apprehension that the indiscriminating denunciation of evolution from so many pulpits, periodicals, and seminaries might drive some of our thoughtful young men to infidelity, as they clearly saw development everywhere in nature, and were at the same time told by their advisers that they could not believe in evolution and yet be Christians. I am gratified beyond measure to find that I am thanked by my pupils, some of whom have reached the highest position as naturalists, because in showing them evolution in the works of God, I showed them that this was not inconsistent with reli-

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gion, and thus enabled them to follow science and yet retain their faith in the Bible.¹

¹ As I am a mere amateur naturalist (at one time a very enthusiastic one) I have laid these papers before my former pupils, now eminent naturalists, Dr. Macloskie, Professor of Natural History, Dr. Scott, Professor of Geology, Dr. Osborn, Professor of Comparative Anatomy, in Princeton College, and accepted their corrections. I have made use of the able works of Dana, LeConte, and Geikie on geology; also of Dawson's "Story of the Earth and Man," of Cope's "Origin of the Fittest," of Conn's "Evolution of To-day," and of Wallace's "Darwinism."

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