



*James M. Losh*

## JAMES McCOSH.

1811-1894.

*Young to the end, through sympathy with youth,  
Gray man of learning! champion of truth!  
Direct in rugged speech, alert in mind,  
He felt his kinship with all human kind,  
And never feared to trace development  
Of high from low--assured and full content  
That man paid homage to the Mind above,  
Uplifted by the "Royal Law of Love."*

*The laws of nature that he loved to trace  
Have worked, at last, to veil from us his face;  
The dear old elms and ivy-covered walls  
Will miss his presence, and the stately halls  
His trumpet-voice. While in their joys  
Sorrow will shadow those he called "my boys."*

*Robert Bridges '79.*

*November 17th, 1894.*

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## DOCTOR McCOSH.

The venerable ex-President of the College died on the sixteenth day of last November. He had been steadily failing during the summer and autumn and the end came peacefully and without pain. He is greatly missed: for while he had not taken a very active part in the affairs of the College since he resigned the Presidency in 1888, he continued to the last to feel a deep interest in the institution to which he had given twenty of the best years of his life. He never lost his enthusiasm for Philosophy and some of us will long remember a meeting of the Philosophical Club not more than a year ago, when he entered into the discussions of the evening with his old energy and alertness.

We shall never forget the debt which Princeton owes to Dr. McCosh. A great chapter in the history of the College was closed when he laid aside the burdens of his office and turned over the responsibilities of the Presidency to his successor. Beyond all question his was the most brilliant administration that Princeton has ever had. Everything contributed to add to the glory of that administration: the circumstances attending the Doctor's coming, the condition of the College when he came, what he was, and what he did. He found Princeton depleted by the war, yet already awakening to a new life. The

money necessary for her equipment was ready and he came in time to give wise direction to its use. He brought to the service of the College, a high reputation as a thinker, a commanding personality, and ripe experience as an educator: and with a purpose that was never daunted he bent himself to the task of making Princeton one of the foremost seats of learning in America.

The death of Dr. McCosh was the close of a great career. His young manhood was spent amid the stirring scenes connected with the disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843. He was a prominent champion of the intuitional philosophy in the days when Mill and Mansel were recognized leaders of opinion in Great Britain. Leaving the pastorate for a Professorship in Belfast, he became not only a great teacher of philosophy, but a public spirited student of educational questions. He came to America in the prime of manhood. As President of Princeton College he was enthusiastic, vigilant and wise. He loved the College. He loved his pupils. He had the rare gift of being able to kindle and keep alive in others that zeal for philosophy which was so characteristic of himself. He was hospitable to new ideas, yet zealous also for the maintenance of the great Christian verities that are woven into the entire web of our College history. He has placed the English-speaking world o

Evangelical Christendom under obligation to him for his defence of fundamental truth. To that world he was a Christian philosopher; but to us he was more than that, he was a Christian man—a reverent believer in the faith of his fathers and a humble follower of the Saviour. May his successors in the great office which he filled with such signal success ever have the liberal spirit, the strong convictions and the Christian faith which he possessed in such large degree!

It is not difficult to fix Dr. McCosh's place in philosophy. He had been a pupil of Chalmers, and was greatly influenced by Sir William Hamilton; and though he never occupied a chair in a Scottish University, his name should really follow next to Hamilton's in the History of the Scottish philosophy. Hamilton's successors can hardly be said to belong to this school. Fraser is too much of a Berkeleyan, and Seth though he has returned to a position more akin to Reid's than the one he occupied in the days of his Hegelianism is apparently aiming to represent the best elements in the replies of Reid and Kant respectively to the scepticism of Hume rather than the traditional Scottish philosophy.

For this infusion of German thought into Scotch Metaphysics, Dr. McCosh would say that Hamilton is in a great measure responsible, and it was the Kantian element in Hamilton's metaphysic that was the occasion of Dr. McCosh's first philosophical polemic. Dr. McCosh began his career as an author when he was a Free Church minister at Brechin, and the preface to the first edition of the *Divine Government* is dated 1850. It is not an uncommon thing for a great writer to embody an outline of all his subsequent thinking in his first book. Later books may be more elaborate, learned, scientific; they may take greater hold upon the public: but to one who makes a careful study of all that

an author has written it will very often appear than in a few bold statements at the very beginning of his career he has outlined the entire system which in after life he has elaborated with such care and attention to detail. The *Divine Government* is probably not so much read now as it was a generation ago, but any one who is curious in such matters can easily satisfy himself that the great distinctive ideas which Dr. McCosh laboured with so much zeal to inculcate are all to be found in a germinal form in his first book. We may take his classification of the mental faculties, his doctrine of the intuitions and his distribution of them into three groups; his doctrine of perception and his theory of causation as illustrations of what we mean.

The *Divine Government* is a synthetic statement of the author's whole philosophy, and that philosophy was a theory of the universe conditioned by Christian revelation. It may be taken as in some respects the work which is most typical of Dr. McCosh, though it did not represent him in the maturity of his powers. It was a most important contribution to the literature of religious philosophy, and served a good purpose in antagonizing the views presented by Morell in his *Philosophy of Religion* which was very popular at the time of its appearance. If we are to understand Dr. McCosh and the influence he has exerted, we must think of him always as a Christian philosopher and a defender of the fundamental truths that underlie Christianity and, indeed, all religion. Even his book on the *Intuitions* which is perhaps the best of his didactic treatises is really a piece of philosophical apologetic, and was so regarded by Dr. Shedd who wrote the preface to the first American edition.

Whether intuitions can be "inductively investigated" may perhaps admit of debate; but Dr. McCosh's position was well de-

finer, and he embodied it in the title to his book upon this subject. He never wavered in his belief in, and his devotion to the intuitional philosophy; and when in later years he presented his views to the public in the treatise on *First and Fundamental Principles*, he reaffirmed with fresh emphasis the positions which he had taken before. It is not to be denied that Dr. McCosh repeated some of his favorite ideas in several of his books. This was inevitable in a writer so voluminous as he was. And herein, indeed, lies, in no small degree, the secret of the great influence which he exerted. He had a message for this generation. He would not let men forget it; and he succeeded through industrious and indefatigable iteration in impressing himself upon the men of his time.

Dr. McCosh was a controversialist. It is perhaps safe to say that he appears at his best in his controversial writings. He wrote in strong, direct and forcible English. His meaning was always plain. He was never dull, and there was a naturalness in all that he wrote that constantly brought the image of the author to your mind as you read the printed page. He was a lover of nature, and saw it with the discriminating look of both the poet and the naturalist. Sometimes, especially in his didactic treatises, the reader feels that there is just a suggestion of the sermon. But all the best qualities of his style are seen in his polemic writings. His first contention was with Hamilton in regard to the relativity of knowledge. After that he had a tilt with Mansel. In later years he antagonized some of Spencer's positions, especially in regard to ethics; and when the celebration of the Kantian centenary filled the land with the deluge of Kantian literature Dr. McCosh appeared as an able and earnest opponent of the agnostic element in the Kantian philosophy. But perhaps the

strongest and most effective piece of controversial work that Dr. McCosh ever did was his masterly *Examination of Mr. J. S. Mill's Philosophy, being a Defence of Fundamental Truth*.

Dr. McCosh, either as teacher or author, traversed the whole field of philosophy. He lectured for many years on the History of Philosophy, and his History of the Scottish philosophy is the authoritative treatise on that subject. He wrote a short treatise on fundamental ethical problems and a valuable text-book on logic. His text-book on Psychology, which has been widely used in our colleges, was one of the first to recognize the conclusions reached by men like Wundt and Fechner, and to embody the results of recent studies in physiological psychology. He had his own classification of the powers of the mind, and in spite of what Professor Ladd has to say against the use of the word "faculties" in this connection, he would have seen no reason, we feel sure, for abandoning it. He did not teach "psychology without a soul," nor did he, on the other hand, give us such a discussion of what the word "soul" stands for as we find in the brilliant pages of Professor James. But he believed in the soul as something that knows and remembers, is immortal and can be saved or lost. He believed in immediate knowledge through the senses. He was thus—to use Sir William Hamilton's phrase—a natural Realist. He defended this realistic philosophy with religious earnestness, as being the only sure protection against agnosticism. Those who speak of Dr. McCosh's liberality and his sympathy with progressive thought must also remember that he was a firm believer in a certain type of philosophical orthodoxy, and that for this he was always ready to contend earnestly as for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

FRANCIS L. PATTON.