

**THE TESTS OF THE
VARIOUS KINDS OF
TRUTH: BEING A TREATISE
OF APPLIED LOGIC**

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The Tests of the Various Kinds of Truth: Being a Treatise of Applied Logic by James McCosh

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JAMES MCCOSH

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THE TESTS
OF THE
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BEING
A TREATISE OF APPLIED LOGIC

BY
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PREFACE.

THE age may be characterized as one of *unsettled* ✓ opinion. Our ambitious youths are not satisfied with the past, its opinions, and practices. Authority is not worshiped by them; they have no partiality for creeds and confessions. They do not accept, without first doubting, the truths supposed to be long established. In searching into the foundation of the old temples they have raised a cloud of dust and left lying a heap of rubbish. It is an age out of which good and evil, either or both, may come, according as it is guided. We may entertain fears, for it is dancing on the edge of a precipice down which it may fall. We may cherish hope, for it is an inquiring age.

Every form and phase of opinion seeks to have a philosophy, in which it may embody and express itself and by which it may be defended. Agnostics is the shape or figure which the doubting and hesitating spirit takes. It is not a new heresy. It has been held by a few in every age; it is now espoused by many, provisionally, till something more solid or

showy is propounded. It used to be called *nescience*, which maintains that nothing can be known, and *nihilism*, which holds that there is nothing to be known. It is of little use trying to argue with it, for it allows us no premises as a ground on which to start, and has no body or substance that we can attack. It is easy to show that it is suicidal. It is an evident contradiction to affirm that we know that we can know nothing. But when we have demonstrated this we have not destroyed it any more than we have killed a specter by thrusting a spear into it; for its defense is that all truth is contradictory. The best way of dealing with it is to allow it to dance as it may, like the shadows of the clouds, and, meanwhile, to found and build up truth and set it up before the mind, that it may be seen in its own light. It is well known that when we see a solid object through and beyond a specter the specter melts away and disappears. So it will be with agnosticism—it will vanish when we fix our eyes upon the truth.

But meanwhile an immense number and variety of crude views and opinions on the most momentous subjects, such as morality and religion, are set before the young and pressed upon their acceptance. In consequence they often feel a difficulty in knowing what to believe, and they may be led to

believe too little or too much. In these circumstances it is of vast importance to provide them with tests which may enable them to distinguish between reality and fiction and settle them in the truth.

This is what is attempted in this work, which is meant for those who wish for their own satisfaction to know on what foundation the truths on which they are required to believe rest.

It is hoped that, being a treatise on what Kant calls applied logic, which may be quite as useful as primary or formal logic, and announcing as it does, the laws of Inductive as well as Deductive thought, this work may be profitably used as a text-book in those colleges and upper schools where there is not time or taste to study metaphysics, or the technicalities of Formal Logic, or the full applications of Inductive Logic.

These papers were first delivered and then published as Lectures in Ohio Wesleyan College, on the foundation established by my estimable friend, Dr. Merrick.

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INTRODUCTION.

WE have truth when our ideas are conformed to things. The aim of this work is to show that there is truth, that truth can be found, and that there are tests by which we may determine when we have found it. We do not propose to guide inquirers in any particular department of investigation; this can best be done in introductions to the books and lectures treating of the several branches of knowledge.

Kant and the German metaphysicians have shown again and again that there is no one absolute criterion to settle all truth for us; that will determine, for example, at one and the same time, whether there is a fourth dimension of space, whether the planet Jupiter is inhabited, where the soul goes at death, and what kind of crops we are to have next year. But it can be shown that there are truths which may be ascertained and that there are criteria which prove when they are so; and these clear, sure, and capable of being definitely expressed. But the test which settles one truth for us does not neces-