

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

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SERMONIC LITERATURE, AND DISCUSSION  
OF PRACTICAL ISSUES.

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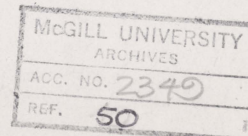
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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE DARWINIAN THEORY OF EVOLUTION.

BY PRINCIPAL SIR WILLIAM DAWSON, LL.D., MONTREAL, CANADA.

THE subject stated above may be compared to a shot at a wild duck on the wing rather than to a sober literary effort. Darwinism is only a portion of the great evolutionary philosophy which is now running its course, and a portion ever varying in importance in the midst of a doctrine which is itself in a constant state of flux, and has well been termed by an eminent German writer a confused movement of the mind of our time. It is, however, an important factor in the drift of the public mind, and it is useful both to students of nature and of theology to take stock of it from time to time, to note its changing characteristics and the direction in which it is tending.

It is well to observe, in the first place, that the term evolution is currently used in a very wide sense, or rather in several different senses. Its literal sense, that of unrolling or development, applies to the evolution of the germ in an egg or a seed, whereby that which was potentially or in embryo present, becomes a perfected organism. A second and figurative sense is that in which it is applied to the works and inventions of man, as for instance to the evolution of varieties of speech or systems of government, or of new varieties of domestic animals by breeding and selection. Here, it is not the things themselves that are evolved, but certain mental plans by which the things are changed or improved. Akin to this, by an anthropomorphic analogy, is the affirmation of evolution when the plans of the Creator are evolved, for example in the succession of animals on the earth in geological time. All these are varieties of modal evolution or development simply, and do not exclude the idea of causation either primary or secondary. There is, however, another use of the term in which it is employed to designate an imaginary power or influence producing new things or

