

CONVOCATION.

OPENING OF THE THEOLOGICAL HALL.

MATRICATION Examinations in Theology and Medicine, *plus* Supplementaries and for B.D., were held on October 30 and 31. The Theological classes opened for work on November 1, the Principal giving as his introductory lecture part of a paper he had read at the Parliament of Religions on "Presbyterian Re-union desirable (in the United States) if based on Reformation principles." The lecture is to appear in Queen's Quarterly for January. His class this session numbers 26, including Wilkie, who is taking the work extra-murally, in consequence of an arrangement made with his Presbytery.

On Friday evening, November 3rd, the public opening took place in Convocation Hall, a halcyon calm characterizing it, in blissful contrast to the proceedings of "University Day." The Principal presided. The minister of St. Andrew's Church acted as Chaplain, and an able remnant of last session's choir led the service of praise. There was a good audience and the closest attention was given to the opening lecture and subsequent addresses. Dr. Ross, Professor of Apologetics and New Testament Criticism, announced as the title of his lecture—"Christianity and Recent Thought." He said that during the last quarter of the present century the comparative study of the religions of mankind had secured a large measure of attention. It is now acknowledged to be an essential part of a complete system of theology and indispensable to the thorough equipment of missionaries to the heathen. The result of research into the leading faiths of the world has been to dissipate the notion that paganism was altogether dark, that it contained nothing which could nourish and stimulate spiritual life and that it possessed nothing in common with christianity. Investigation has shown that the ethnic faiths include important elements of religious truth, testify in some degree to the divinity and power of God, and teach in an imperfect way that the true end of man is to be in moral and spiritual harmony with God. But by what process or means that accord with the divine thought and will is to be attained, how a man shall be just with God, how the moral evil that sundered man and God is to be removed, and the filial relationship and fellowship fully restored, they did not satisfactorily set forth. Yet it was inconsistent with the christian conception of the divine fatherhood that the larger portion of the human race should be left in complete ignorance of all things pertaining to life and godliness, and that no light should have been granted to seekers after God in heathendom. Christ said that under other forms of faith than that of Israel, nations and indi-

viduals were objects of divine solicitude. They were being educated to prepare the world for the coming of Christ.

On the other hand, it is now being asserted that the christian religion is just one of the ethnic religions, differing from every other only in the fact that it is the ripest fruit of the religious thought and life of the world. In other words, it is not a religion which centres in a divine person and is based on a special revelation from God to man, but is simply the result of the impress of the Greek on the Jewish mind in an age which was striving to combine into one the various philosophical and theological systems that then prevailed. The great battle of the christian faith is now being fought around this question, "Is Christianity a Supernatural Religion?" Is it natural development from primitive religious forms? By the principle of evolution an attempt has been made to explain its rise and growth. Christianity is said by some to be simply the product of the striving of man's religious nature and the reaction upon it of its environment. But where, we may ask, did Moses get his conception of God as merciful, gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. This is too lofty an idea of the divine character to have originated in his own consciousness. Until Christ proclaimed the fatherhood of God it had not been surpassed by the utterance of any of the subsequent teachers of Israel. Apart from what is revealed in the bible, we would have no reliable knowledge of God as creator, orderer, sovereign, saviour, judge. The sacred writers were conscious that they were divinely inspired, and this they testified to. They were the vehicles of revelation made to them by Him who seeth the end from the beginning. The writers were led by the spirit to compose the records which disclose the progressive evolution of God's redemptive dealings with mankind. According to the Bible, man is the final expression of the creative purpose. He is not to be succeeded by a different and higher order of being, but he is to be transformed and brought into full accord with the ideal after which he was fashioned and whose realization has been baffled by his self-will. The divine plan is that a man should be regenerated, renewed in his disposition, raised to the position which the possibilities of his nature entitled him to occupy, and the religion that is adapted to raising men to this high level must be the perfect religion. This is the professed aim of christianity, and the life which is under the sway of its spirit is changed from glory to glory and approaches ever nearer to the similitude of Him who is acknowledged by all to have been immaculate in thought and deed, the true ideal for the race. In Him men beheld a new kind of power