

gracious character of the supernatural; the revelation given in Christ's mission and sacrifice completes these, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit is merely "the continuance of the completed supernatural manifestation" given in Christ. Prof. Thomson indicates the sense in which he uses the term evolution. He says "the order of these various manifestations"—which have been referred to—"may be called an evolution, if they are found to bear witness to an agency continuous, progressive, and gradually attaining fuller development so as to reveal new features and deepen the definiteness of those already revealed." He guards himself against possible misconceptions by declaring that he "does not mean that supernatural qualities come into fuller being from time to time in the history of the world or contain a fuller self-consciousness, as if the supernatural became clothed with greater divinity, or gradually came to the full consciousness of that divinity." "The supernatural comes with increasing fullness into the sphere of nature." But the use of the term evolution in this sense, in a philosophical discussion, is scarcely justifiable. In the strict scientific sense evolution implies an advancement or progress, each step of which is due to the action of forces within that which has been already evolved. For example, the Cosmos was evolved and fashioned into its present form step by step, simply by the energies or potencies which the atoms of the fiery nebula contained. Animals of the highest type were evolved through many stages from the first simple organic form that had been created,—each higher species springing out of the next beneath it by the combined influences of environment and inherent potencies. Prof. Thomson would have been more accurate had he announced his subject to be, "Progress in the Manifestation of the Supernatural." This title would have exactly expressed the idea he has elaborated so fully.

He starts with the assumption that there is a Supernatural Being. Being of some kind is the necessary postulate of every system of philosophy or religion, and the great question is, what is the nature of this Being? Is it Power, or Thought, or what? Prof. Thomson has shown that this Being has given manifestations of his attributes in orderly sequence—power first, then intelligence, wisdom, goodness, mercy. The existence of a Personal Intelligence, the Creator and Governor of the universe, is the central point about which the conflict with unbelief rages at present. Religion must have as its basis the idea of a personal God. If it can be shown that this idea has no rational foundation, that God is only a name to conjure with, but has no real existence, the whole dogmatic structure of Christianity falls to the ground. What, then, can claim the homage and devotion of our religious nature? What shall be counted worthy to receive our highest and best service? "Worship Humanity," say some. But to ask us to do that is to offend our reason and outrage our moral sensibilities. "Let Beauty, Truth and Goodness receive your admiration and devotion," say others. Truth and Beauty may well excite the admiration and devotion of our intellectual and æsthetic faculties, but goodness must be incarnated in a perfect being, otherwise it cannot call forth toward

itself our supreme confidence and self-surrender, our love and obedience. None of the substitutes for the supernatural being, in whom the phenomena of nature, the constitution of man, the course of history, the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and the influence and growth of the christian Church, find the only explanation that satisfies the laws of intelligence, will meet our religious needs. They offer a stone instead of bread. None of them can impart such nourishment and strength as will enable us to attain to the spiritual perfection of which we are capable. The ideal life set forth in Christianity is acknowledged, even by unbelievers, to be the best that has ever been given to mankind. But this ideal corresponds in miniature to the character of God as revealed in Scripture. Even upon their own admission, then, men cannot live more nobly and truly than by following the teaching of the great Master who declared Himself to be the Light of the world, and who is described by a sacred writer to be the express representation of One who is from everlasting to everlasting God.

### LIFE AS A MINISTRY.

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One cannot give attention to the motives which actuate the multitude in all the grades of present day society without feeling that very shallow ideas of life and greatness prevail. The merchant, entering upon any new enterprise, seldom asks, "Will I in this be rendering greater service to the community?" but, "Will it pay." Men with little ability often leave their farms, where they have been rendering excellent service in producing a share of the world's food, to swell the number of agents as middle men and prey upon society, because, as they say, though they made a living on the farm, there was no money in it. Hard working men, who have had little education themselves, often send their boys to school and college, giving as the reason, that they wish their children to make a living more easily than they did.

To make a living as easily as possible, or to amass wealth with the least work possible is the whole meaning and purpose of business or professional life to the majority. And even among the few ambitious, who seek honour as scholars, statesmen, public leaders, the same low ideas of life are frequently manifested. To have the honour is considered more important than to have earned it; to occupy the position more important than to deserve it. He who obtains a great name and high position without having rendered the service that alone qualifies for the position and gives a right to the name is considered the most fortunate of men.

This conception of good fortune dares even to enter the sacred precincts of our colleges, and there are students—let it be hoped their numbers are few—who have no other aim than to obtain a degree with the least work possible. Some would be well pleased if they could graduate without any study. Students and Professors both know how many persons there are anxious to have high sounding degrees, imposing letters after their name, without the years of close and careful study which alone entitle to such distinction. And as in this free country, and especially across the border, there is usually a supply to