

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN

THE UNSECTARIAN MISSION TO CHINA.

THOSE friends and students of Toronto University College, who may be styled the Y. M. C. A. section, have recently given attention to the heathen condition of the Chinese. As a result of this, owing mainly to an appeal made by a missionary from China, several students of that College have been induced to leave their Canadian homes under a spell of such thoughtless enthusiasm, that, without any training for mission work, they have gone to China as Christian missionaries. They have taken this honor on themselves on the call of no "Church," or society. They have gone to proclaim themselves ministers of Christ, without any form of ordination,—unless being patted on the back by Mr. S. H. Blake, may be so regarded. They are proclaimed with a great flourish of trumpets to have gone as "unsectarian missionaries." They are, it is proudly declared, "to preach and to teach only such doctrines as are not the subjects of controversy."

With every desire to recognize with honor the spirit of devotion, of self-sacrifice, shown by these young men, we regard them as the victims of a foolish, mischievous, dangerous delusion; we are certain that they will do more harm than good. The plea that they are *unsectarian* is almost incredible, as their standing apart from the Church, and all other religious societies, simply constitutes them another sect—the sect of the "non-denominationalists." The plea that they will teach and preach no doctrine that is the subject of controversy, is almost too humorous for comment, in any other connection it would be treated as a joke. Suppose one of these young men rises amongst a group of Chinese, stretches forth his hand in which is held a Bible, by that act he, without a word, declares two things that are hotly controverted. First, he asserts his authority to teach and to preach, then he holds forth a book which is in the centre of a hurricane of controversy. Let a Chinese ask such a one, "Who sent you?" would his answer, "A few Y.M.C.A. friends of Toronto University College" be "according to Scripture?" Let this lay missionary be asked for his Commission, his authority to declare that the Bible teaches so and so, would not any answer he could give, be almost profane? Suppose he succeeds in moving some Chinaman to seek baptism, who asks about the name and constitution of the Church, would he reply, "O! the Church, there is no real Church you know, it is an invisible company, it has no particular name, it is unsectarian, you know." That is the only answer possible from his standpoint, and its utter folly would strike even a heathen Chinese, as its utter opposition to Scripture glares before us. That supposed convert would have read his New Testament, he would demand, "Where is now the Church Jesus said he would build, has it gone to pieces, and are you floating on a raft made out of the wreck?" The Chinese are shrewd, by such questions they would teach these missionaries that mere excitement, and

patting on the back by men without clear convictions about the Church, and with all manner of eccentric ideas about religion, are not quite enough to fit them for mission work.

Suppose these men begin to proclaim Jesus, to speak of His birth, life, works, death, resurrection, ascension, mediatorial, and reigning glories, His Church and people, is it not the vainest of false pretences for them to pretend to do so without entering upon subjects of controversy, subjects even in dispute amongst the new sect of "Non-denominationalists?" Why should religious men act so deceptive a part as to declare that the whole counsel of God can be preached without touching a controversy? But, it is said, "mission work does not require that the Gospel in its fulness shall be taught—only that part that is unsectarian." This plea is made in all its shameful, its cowardice, and contempt for Biblical precept, and Biblical examples. Fancy St. Paul preaching in the fetters of nonsectarianism! Fancy St. Peter dreading lest his utterances should offend some other sectarian! Imagine any Apostle or Martyr of the early Church being bound not to declare this thing, or to say that, or to enlarge upon the other, or to perform this rite, or omit it, lest he pass beyond the cage surrounded by non-denominational bars! Fancy St. Paul being challenged, "Who sent you, What Church do you serve?" answering in unsectarian fashion, "I have not the ghost of an idea!" Or imagine St. Peter telling his questioners, that he was sent on the sole authority of a small private committee at Jerusalem!

Yet we cannot but be thankful for this extraordinary and eccentric mission. Let us ask a plain question or two of those who sent these missionaries. We address a Presbyterian—"Pray, if you believe in the Presbyterian Church as Christ's Church, and in Presbyterian doctrines as the counsels of God, why did you not openly send a Presbyterian to China to speak these convictions of your's as God's truths?" We speak to a Wesleyan, "Why do you send an unsectarian missionary to China who will avoid setting up a Methodist Church, if you really believe that Church to have been built by Jesus Christ?" So we could go round among the unsectarian sect, and out of their own mouths put them to shame. This unsectarian mission is an open declaration by its supporters that their several systems, and their several Churches, are not worthy of proclamation to the heathen. We thankfully recognize their honest verdict upon themselves for every unsectarian proclaims that his own sect is founded not on Christ, but on human opinions.

To Churchmen it is a source of the proudest satisfaction, that they have not the shadow of a shade of doubt as to the divine origin of the Church of England, nor one iota of desire to question the Scriptural foundation of her doctrines and her ministry. Churchmen know that Jesus came to found a Church and did it. He did not come to publish a book, that work was done by the Church. They, therefore, following His example, and that of His apostles, proclaim to the heathen, Jesus as the Head of

a society into which they, for whom He was born and died, are invited to enter, so as, by faith in Him and through His sacraments, they may share in His Divine life. That is the highest form of evangelical mission teaching. To draw men into this relation to Christ and His Church, our missionaries in all ages have given up their lives, even to the stake and dungeon. The martyr band of heroes of the Cross cared naught for man's criticism. They were not made cowards by the necessity of avoiding "subjects of controversy." In all divinely inspired boldness the men who moved the world lifted the Cross as the symbol and centre of their work. From Pentecost to this hour every faithful missionary has first secured a Commission from Christ through His Church. Then, without a thought about such follies as sects, or parties, or denominations, this authorized Ambassador has boldly proclaimed Jesus, as God Incarnate, God in human life, God in death, God in the grave, God in resurrection and ascension, and God now still pleading for His flock that sects may disappear, and His Church on earth reign triumphant.

SCIENTIFIC RELIGION.*

NOT very long ago we reviewed a work modestly entitled "a Study of Religion," by Dr. Martineau. In doing so, we confessed that the writer might very fairly have entitled his work a "Philosophy of Religion;" for the whole treatise was of a thoroughly scientific character. It began with facts either universally or generally acknowledged. It reasoned upon those facts in a thoroughly legitimate manner, and if its proofs could not be called demonstrative, this is because demonstration in the strict sense of the word, is inapplicable to the subject, and, as Aristotle long ago remarked, we must be contented with that kind of proof which is adapted to the matter in hand. Nothing of all this can we say in reference to the curious, and, in a way, interesting book of Mr. Oliphant's now before us. Why he calls it scientific, it might puzzle one to say, unless, indeed, it is because he has got hold of the atomic and molecular theory and transferred it from the physical to the psychical and pneumatic world. But this theory in physical science is an hypothesis, and it is even less in psychology. Certainly this book could not be called scientific, because it proceeds upon a careful and complete induction of facts; for it does nothing of the kind, nor does it bring before us any phenomena which we are able to verify, since it is only to the initiated that it will disclose its mysteries. After this we might be excused if we passed it by; but it has no small amount of interest as illustrating one of the directions taken by the mysticism of the age, and as showing that the denial of the supernatural in the biblical and ecclesiastical sense almost always leads to an assertion of the same in some other way. Hardly ever does an age of unbelief go by

*Scientific Religion—or Higher Possibilities of life and practice through the operation of natural forces. By Lawrence Oliphant. (W. Blackwood and Sons, 1888.)