

WHAT TROUBLED ME.

"THAT CHRISTIAN'S PIOUS EXAMPLE TROUBLED ME."

So said a youthful inquirer as he was lately asked what had aroused his attention to religion. He referred to one whose personal character was from day to day displayed before him. Many and deeply interesting themes of thought were started by that statement.

1. Genuine modern piety is like the ancient. David would cry, "Restore me unto the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free spirit—so shall I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." "And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Ancient piety bore down with great power on the consciences and hearts of men. It spoke for God and eternity in a language so clear and loud that it broke the sinful peace of worldly minds, and sent them trembling to ask what they should do to be saved. Modern piety does the same. It uses just such language in the ears of sinners, and produces the same results. They are both links in the same golden chain of God's mercy to men.

2. Were Christian character everywhere what it ought to be, how rapidly might conversions be multiplied. The number of nominal Christians is great. They are found in every community one or more in five out of seven of the families in our congregations. In addition, therefore, to all the other means of grace, how much moral power is here to operate on sinful minds, provided Christian character take the elevated station demanded of it. Sinners in that case would meet in all directions with orbs of light pouring their sanctifying radiance upon them. These saints shining in the beauty of holiness, would compel sinners constantly to see the painful and alarming contrast between themselves and the people of God—would then arouse conscience, and by the visibility of their good works, others would be led to glorify God. How desirable to throw around every traveller in the in the downward road a cordon of such agencies which shall so powerfully retard his dangerous progress! Let him escape from that frown upon his guilty life which is given by one pious disciple to meet that of another. Let him be obliged to feel that he must meet, wherever he turns his eyes, striking specimens of the beauty of holiness. Let him feel that he is hedged about by travellers to Mount Zion, where beautiful examples shall constantly point his benighted soul that way. Let such be the circumstances of sinners, and how many more of them might we not see setting their own faces toward the kingdom of Heaven!

3. How sublime the relation which one human being can hold to another? I see the falling tree, I hear the earnest inquiry about salvation. Ere long I see a face radiant with the joys of God's salvation, the idea of a soul now on terms of happy harmony with Infinite Love. As I look with joy unspeakable, on the effect, I look for its cause; and while I find that in the infinite compassion of God, I find that the pious example of an humble and obscure Christian has been employed in this work of mercy. God used that disciple's moral excellence of character to awaken the careless soul, and to lead it to set its face towards the realms of glory. And if one disciple's holy example is thus used, why may not another and another be thus used? Why may not every Christian feel that God is willing to use him in this manner? What dignity and honour can thus be conferred upon the saints! What a privilege to be used as the channel of the Eternal Comforter's communications with the immortal spirits of men—to be used as an agent in bringing men into the glorious liberty of the sons of God!

Disciple! you may shine in the beauty of holiness, and the radiance of your example may awaken to deepest intensity the thoughts of sinful minds around you. You may set conscience on fire, and thus make the path of sin so full of thorns that the transgressor will feel that he cannot longer go that way. There is not a more powerful reprove of a sinful life than the steady brightness, the pure moral loveliness of an eminently devoted Christian. Will you not be that Christian?

PERPETUAL COMPLAINING.

Perpetual complaints, to use the simile of an old writer, "are like unto a new cart, which creaks and cries, even whilst it has no burden but its own wheels; whereas, that which is long used, and well oiled, goes silently away with a heavy load."

[From the New York Evangelist.]

Does Election Destroy Free Agency.

The doctrine of election is simply this: God determined, before the world was, to save certain persons of the human family. What, now, is free agency? It consists in a capacity to know what is right and what is wrong according to a law—to choose, prefer or like one or the other—and to act according to that choice, or preference, or liking. The being who has intellect to know duty, heart to like or dislike a duty, and physical liberty to act according to his likes or dislikes, is a perfectly free moral agent. He has every thing that can possibly be desired or conceived as belonging to free agency. He has every thing that belongs to the free moral agency of God himself.

Now, if the doctrine of election destroys free agency, it must be because it destroys it in some one of the three things just named; for if it destroys neither of the three, but leaves all three in as perfect exercise as if there was no election, then the objection falls to the ground.

But with which of the three does election interfere? Does it teach that man does not act as he chooses? If it teaches this in respect to any man, it certainly does in relation to the man who is elected. For whatever influence it may be supposed a decree of election exerts on those not elected, it will not be denied that it exerts an influence, at least equally direct and as much inconsistent with free agency upon the elected. Does the doctrine of election teach that the man elected does not act as he chooses, or according to his preference and liking? In what? That he does not move his hand, or tongue, or muscles as he wills? That he does not read his Bible, or pray, or attend on public worship if he chooses, or that he performs those duties when he chooses not to? Does election teach or imply this? Or does it teach or imply that the elected man, in any one thing, acts without a choice, or not according to his choice? Every one sees that it teaches nothing of the kind.

Does election, then, interfere with either of the constituents of free agency?

Does it take away from a man the capacity to know what is right and what is wrong?—Does God's determination to save the elected man destroy, in that man, the power of discerning truth and error? Does it obliterate his knowledge of law and duty? Does it diminish the capacity or the actual attainment in the slightest degree? No person can maintain that it does.

And as to the other point. Does election interfere with the man's capacity to like or dislike, choose or not choose duty? Election implies that God will certainly and infallibly save the man; but does this imply any infringement of the man's capacity for choosing or rejecting? Does it operate upon his nature, so that truth and duty presented to his mind awaken no feelings either of like or dislike? Unless it teaches this, it teaches nothing that interferes at all with man's capacities and powers of choice.

Perhaps, however, the objector will say that the election of the man makes it absolutely certain that he will like duty, and choose truth, and walk the right path. But I ask, does this infringe or diminish the man's capacity for choice, or in any way destroy his free agency? If it is certain that a man will feel and choose as he ought, does it follow that he is not a free agent? If so, then God is not and cannot be a free agent. For what can possibly be more certain than that God will infallibly feel and choose as he ought.

From this analysis of the constituents of free agency, it seems plain that the doctrine of election teaches nothing which interferes in the least degree with man's capacity to know truth and duty—his capacity to love or hate it—or his capacity to act according to his love or hatred, and therefore leaves every imaginable element of the most perfect free moral agency entirely untouched. It only makes it certain that every elected man will, in the full and proper exercise of his free agency, love truth and duty.

And much more is it true that the doctrine teaches nothing that can interfere with the free agency of the man who is not elected, for it asserts nothing whatever in relation to such a man.

Every man is walking in the road that leads to Heaven or that which leads to hell. It becomes every one to ascertain which of the two he has selected.

Hints to Ministers.

A sermon should be made for a text, and not a text found for a sermon.—Burnett.

In preaching, study not to draw applauses, but groans from the hearers.—Jecomb.

We want nothing but the return of apostolical simplicity, self-denial, and love, to bring a Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit upon our ministrations.—Bridges.

Steep your sermons in your hearts before you preach them.—Bishop Felton.

Choose rather to teach than to charm, to convert than to be admired, to force tears than applause. Give up everything to secure the salvation of your hearers.—Gilbert.

Brethren, if saving souls be your end you will certainly intend it out of the pulpit, as in it.—Barter.

The life of a pious clergyman is visible rhetoric.—Hooker.

Satan would have me while away my life in inactivity, under pretences of modesty, diffidence, and humility, and he is never wanting to furnish me with excuses for delaying or shifting service.—T. Scott.

The Christian minister should endeavour to turn the eyes of every one of his hearers upon themselves.—R. Hall.

Let your life be a commentary on your sermons.—Lamont.

The great secret of ruling a Church is to convince them that you love them, and say and do every thing for their good.—A. Fuller.

Am I more fit to serve and to enjoy God than I was last week?—S. Pearce.

You must rather leave the ark to shake as it shall please God; than put unworthy hands to hold it up.—Lord Bacon.

Help me, Friend of sinners, to be nothing, to say nothing, that Thou mayest say and do everything, and be my all in all.—Whitefield.

The virtuous life of a clergyman is the most powerful eloquence.—Herbert.

The Testimony of Dying Beds.

A powerful testimony with regard to the way of salvation is found in the history of dying beds. You have known every way of salvation renounced in its turn by one and another as they came to die, except that way of peace with God which the Christian world receives as the only way of salvation. Should we gather the votes of the dying, if all those emaciated hands could be lifted up in testimony on this subject, we know what the result would be. Has any member of this Convention, has any Christian pastor, ever been addressed by a parishioner in such language as this: "You have taught me the way of salvation by Jesus Christ; I have embraced it, but now I feel it to be insufficient in my dying hour?" If there be any record or well-founded tradition of such testimony, though in a single instance, we should be more concerned than when, as controversialists, we hear of an exhumed manuscript, or, as believers in the Old Testament chronology, are confronted with fossils older than Adam. The first Christian martyr seems to have given the tone note to the dying beds of believers since his day: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." That minister has reason to be happy who enjoys these two kinds of testimony, the one to his natural, and the other to his spiritual character: First that the children love him; and secondly, that the broken in spirit, and the dying place a high value on his presence with them. Has any one of us, as a minister of the Gospel, ever been rejected or superseded at a dying bed?—An ecclesiastical council might depose that man, but this should not be to him the occasion of so much solicitude for his spiritual condition, as that a poor, dying believer in his church should prefer some other pastor for spiritual counsel and succor. In that honest hour when the soul is ready to appear before God, we frequently have striking verifications of those words respecting the way to be saved: "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste."

Pastoral Visits.

To the experienced minister there is every danger of substituting social for pastoral visits, in this department of his labours. Especially in seasons of religious relapse and indifference when the realities of eternity recede in the distance, there is a strong temptation to let go these realities altogether, and substitute in their places subjects of nearer and more im-

mediate interest. Unless strong temptation be constantly resisted, the Christian pastor will not only be guilty of coming down from his great work upon the plains of worldly compromise and accommodation, but also of leaving behind him all the influence of a minister's example to sanction an unremitting attention to the claims of eternity. Religion as a distinct theme of conversation in all seasons, but especially in seasons like these, is too much neglected by the people. "Negligence, negligence," cried a Roman orator, "is the ruin of the Eternal City," and we may add, "negligence, negligence" is the ruin of our eternal interest! The great object of pastoral, as well as pulpit labors, is to keep religion before the people. If every ministerial visit is strictly pastoral in its nature, and experimental piety the distinct theme of every pastor's conversation, much, very much, is accomplished toward the attainment of this object. But if this work is not done by the pastor, it often happens it will not be done at all. If the sacred moments, which he ought to spend in finding out and travelling the shortest way to the heart, are idled away on unsanctified themes the pastor must expect that his people will follow his example, however unchristian in its character and unworthy of imitation. We claim that it is not enough that a pastor's conversation be moral or religious generally; it should be entirely and decidedly so. Worldly interests are already cared for—the interests of trade and commerce are not suffering for inattention; but the interests of religion are suffering by being neglected in thought and conversation. The minister of Christ is the man to relieve this suffering. Let him stretch out a strong hand and take the neglected daughter of heaven, and introduce her to his people in all his pastoral intercourse. Let him bring forward religion as the primary and worthy theme of conversation which needs no worldly subject to induce it; no worldly considerations to commend it. Much, very much we apprehend, is lost to religion, by introducing it as a secondary or subsidiary theme.—This, we fear, gives it an air of dependency and inferiority which never belonged to the religion of the skies.

The Solitary Witness.

Some years ago, a missionary went to a heathen village in India; but no one there would attend to his words. When he went away, he left one New-Testament behind him, in the shop of a native. It was but a single seed cast into a bad soil, and he feared that it would be thrown aside, or else that its sacred leaves might be used to wrap up tobacco, rice, or salt. But no! The eye of God was upon that book. Like Lot in Sodom, like the captive maid in the house of Naaman, that New-Testament was a solitary witness for Jehovah in the midst of idols and idolaters; and it became a light to them that sat in darkness.—Some of them it led into the way of peace.—Soon after it was left, three or four heathen came to that shop. They saw the strange book. They asked that they might read it.—They took it home. As they heard what it told them about God and man, sin and salvation, hell and heaven, they wondered, they trembled, they believed. A church was formed in that village, and two of those who borrowed that testament are now preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.—*Juvenile Missionary Magazine.*

Miss Jane Taylor.

The amiable and gifted Jane Taylor, the last time she took up her pen—it was on the day preceding her death—wrote as follows: "Oh, my dear friends, if you knew what thoughts I have now, you would see as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death."

How much time is spent in preparing to live! How little in preparing to die!

One who had lived more than fifty years said, as the hand of death was upon him, "I have all my days been getting ready to live, and now I must die!"

Would men but spend as much time in preparing to die, as they spend in preparing to live, the physical agonies of death would not so frequently be heightened by the agonies of despair.

It is a comfort that if our cross be heavy we have not far to carry it.

No sin can be little, because there is no little God to sin against.

Sin has brought many a believer into suffering, and suffering has kept many a believer from sinning.