



The
CHRISTIAN TREASURY

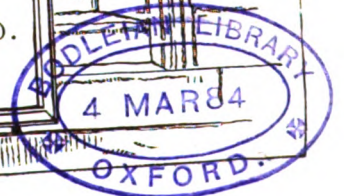
CONTAINING

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MINISTERS AND MEMBERS
OF
VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS



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CHRISTIAN TREASURY.

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FOOLISHNESS AND POWER.*

BY EUGENE BERSIER, PASTOR OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF PARIS.

‘For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us
which are saved it is the power of God.’—1 Cor. i. 18.



FOOLISHNESS—power! These are the two names that Paul here gives to the preaching of the cross. I propose, my brethren, to study in succession these two ideas, in order afterwards to show you the tie that closely unites them together. This will be the plan

of our reflections.

The preaching of the cross is **FOOLISHNESS**. I pray you to remark, my brethren, that it is not an enemy of the gospel, but an Apostle, who says this to us. Christianity has not waited until the world cast this reproach at it; it has not left it this satisfaction. This insult it has itself seized, and been the first to claim as its lawful property. And let not men say to us that it is here a figure of speech, a bold apostrophe, that has escaped from the Apostle. The gospel is sparing in its use of these exaggerated epithets, of these figures of rhetoric; and, moreover, the same thought is found underlying the entire teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ presented His doctrine as a thing that the world would charge with folly. He clearly speaks of the incompatibility that there is between man's view of things and that which He preached; He foretold

His disciples that they would meet with opposition, hatred, and contempt.

This is, indeed, a strange method of seeking to gain men; so strange that it would be foolishness if it did not show a divine inspiration. Usually, when a man wishes to succeed, he promises to himself and to his disciples success. Every general well knows that in order to succeed he must announce victory to his soldiers. It is the same in the order of intelligence; a philosopher, a chief of a school, is forced to prove that his doctrine answers to all the needs of the age, and will satisfy all its aspirations; he points out intelligences already prepared to embrace it, and proselytes who are about to range themselves under his standard. We ourselves, sometimes yielding to this attraction, have we not announced the near triumph of our beliefs! Jesus Christ alone said to His disciples, ‘You will be judged, calumniated, hated because of My name;’ and it is this thought that Paul takes up when he speaks with so much assurance of the foolishness of the cross.

The cross specially merited this distinction and this reproach, for it is it which epitomises our entire Christianity. It is its centre; it is in it, above all, that there appeared what was strange and opposed to human wisdom. The preaching of the cross was designed to be foolishness; it has been so, my brethren, and Paul has said not a word too much.

And, first of all, considering it only from an

* Translated from the French for the *Christian Treasury*, by permission of the author, from the seventh edition of the second volume of his sermons. Paris: M. Fischbacher.



A GOOD MAN.

BY J. R. MILLER, D.D., EDITOR OF WESTMINSTER TEACHER.



NE of the finest characters in the history of the Apostolic Church is that of Barnabas. He is one of the men to whom full justice has not been done by Bible students. His portrait is drawn in bright colour in one single phrase. 'He was a good man,' writes the historian. This is not an empty eulogy, for the

Bible never pays compliments. It is an inspired characterisation of the man. No higher eulogy could be paid to any one. It may be worth our while to take some pains to find out the kind of person the Holy Spirit eulogises as 'a good man.'

The first mention of Barnabas shows him parting with his land and giving the proceeds to be used among the poor. Here at the very beginning his goodness shines out. He was thoroughly unselfish. With him, to be a Christian meant the consecration of his money as well as his life. He understood that love for Christ meant also love for all who bear the image of Christ. His religion was not of the sentimental kind, but was intensely practical. His goodness was of a sort that *did* good to others, and was not content with *being* good.

The next mention of Barnabas presents him in another favourable light. The young persecutor, Saul, returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, and tried to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and would not believe that he was truly a Christian. It is hard to get away from one's past. The memory of an evil life clings long even after one repents. It is not strange, therefore, that the Christians at Jerusalem were afraid of this fierce persecutor now claiming to be turned Christian.

Yet we can readily see what harm to Saul himself might have come from this reception by the believers in the mother Church. There is no time when a convert needs so much to find sympathy, confidence, and true brotherly help in other Christians, as when he has just begun his Christian life. Saul expected to find all this in the Apostles and believers at

Jerusalem, but he found instead suspicion, distrust, fear, and the cold withdrawal of the hands whose warm clasp and strong support he had hoped to receive. Had no one come forward as a true brother, who can tell what might have been the result? But just at this point we find Barnabas ready with his good offices. In some way he knew that Saul was truly converted, and he stepped forward and vouched for him, thus gaining for him at once the confidence of all the Church.

This was a very noble thing to do, and in making up our estimate of this man's 'goodness' we must not leave out the element which here appears. There are a great many people in this world who are misunderstood. There are some in similar case with Saul. Their past life has been wrong, and when they turn to the Lord their old neighbours refuse to believe that they are sincere, and will not accept them as brethren. It is very hard to continue in faithful discipleship in the face of suspicion and coldness. This is the time for just such manly, noble friendship as Barnabas showed to Saul. We preach the wideness of God's mercy. We declare that *Christ* opens His arms wide, and receives the guiltiest to the closest love. Why, then, should not *we* receive them too? What Christ hath cleansed shall we call common or unclean? It is the part of true, generous Christian friendship to come forward at such a time, and take by the hand any one, whatever his past life may have been, who gives reasonable evidence of conversion and renewal of heart.

Another mention of Barnabas, a little later, gives us still other glimpses of his genuine goodness of heart. Word had reached Jerusalem from Antioch that the gospel was winning great victories there. The Apostles decided to send some one of experience and wisdom to give direction to the work, and Barnabas was chosen for this important and responsible duty. The words that describe his feelings and his course when he arrived at Antioch disclose a very fine phase of his character. When he saw the grace of God there he was glad. A pastor is expected to be

made glad when he sees souls turning to the Lord in his own parish, the fruits of his own ministry. A teacher is naturally glad when the pupils of his own class are converted. But how is it when it is our neighbour's parish in which the great work is going on; or when it is the class across the aisle from ours that shows the power of the divine presence in penitence, earnest inquiry, and conversion?

A little while after this there is another bit of the history of Barnabas which reveals the same unselfish generosity. He remained at Antioch and conducted the work there. Seeing the need at length of more help, he went to seek Saul, who was engaged somewhere in the quiet country, and brought him to the great city to labour there. He made no account of the fact that Saul would soon outshine him if he brought him, and that he himself would soon have to take a second place. This large-hearted spirit of Barnabas toward Saul is one of the fairest lines in his portrait.

But no human life is perfect. Once only in the roll of ages has there lived a perfect man. Barnabas' goodness has a spot. A sharp quarrel occurred between him and Paul with reference to Mark. It has been the fashion to assume that Paul was innocent, and that all

the blame belonged to Barnabas. Is this true? Was not Paul's fault really the greater? It is human to err; it is divine both to forgive and to give another a chance. Was not the conduct of Barnabas on Mark's behalf just what Christ would have done in the same circumstances? It is just what He did with Peter. All quarrelling is wrong; no doubt both did wrong; but Paul's error surely was the greater.

Thus the character of Barnabas shines out in fair and lovely lines. 'He was a good man,' and goodness is finer and better than greatness. Greatness is only a laurel wreath, which fades in a little while; but goodness is an immortal crown that shall never be dimmed.

The source of this goodness was not in the man himself, in his natural qualities, but is laid bare in the statement that he was 'full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.' A gardener found a bit of fragrant clay, and asked whence its perfume came. 'One laid me on a rose,' was the answer. It had lain on a rose, and the fragrance of the flower had gone all through the clay. The way to have the perfume of real goodness is to lie on the bosom of Jesus so habitually that the sweetness of His spirit shall flow through all our nature.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER.*

A DISCOURSE BY RABBI J. L. LEUCHT, TOURO SYNAGOGUE, NEW ORLEANS, LA.
DEDICATED TO REV. DR H. M. SMITH.



LNASMUCH as the Book of Esther is still a stumbling-block to the critics, we submit the following considerations in defence of a sacred inheritance, dear to every one whom the waves of materialism or atheism have not strangled in their poisonous embrace; the defence of a book of Holy Writ, regarded for centuries as a step-child in that sacred family, because that in it the name of the Father is not mentioned. For this reason it was denied equal respect; nay, it was even claimed that it ought not to be received into the canon of Scripture.

Now, while fully acknowledging the singular fact that there is one book of Scripture, 'The Book of Esther,' from which the name of Jehovah is entirely omitted, it is precisely our object to show that this is in reality the conclusive argument to establish its claim as a genuine historical document.

We take it for granted that every one is acquainted with the beautiful and touching romance of Esther. How a heroic Jewish

maiden, assisted by her cousin Mordecai, came to the rescue of the Jewish people, doomed to die by King Ahasuerus, inspired by his jealous Minister of State, Haman. By a peculiar concurrence of events Israel is saved, and his enemy, Haman, is defeated.

IS IT HISTORICAL?

Let us first inquire whether the Book of Esther is historical; whether the related facts agree with the general history of those remote times. Who was King Ahasuerus? He certainly was a Persian king, for the whole scenery, all the customs and usages, are Persian in character, all the actors in this drama bear Persian names, and the city of Susa was the winter residence of the Persian kings.

Let us see who Ahasuerus might have been. Was he perhaps Artaxerxes, at whose court Ezra lived and was honoured? This cannot be, for this king was very kind to Ezra, and would not have permitted his compatriots to be delivered into the hands of Haman; and, furthermore, if Artaxerxes was Ahasuerus, we are inclined to think that Ezra would have played the rôle of Mordecai.

Insurmountable chronological difficulties

* From the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, Columbia, S. C.