



The
CHRISTIAN TREASURY

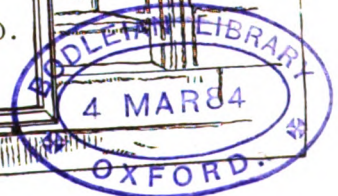
CONTAINING

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MINISTERS AND MEMBERS
OF
VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS



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CHRISTIAN TREASURY.

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EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS.

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.



REVIVING.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D., BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.



O revive signifies to return to life. When the prophet Elijah stretched himself on the body of the Sareptan widow's lifeless child, and cried unto the Lord, we are told that 'the soul of the child came into him again, and he *revived*.' There had once been life there, and it had departed,

This is the precise condition of quite too many members of Christian churches. Their spiritual vitality has run down so utterly that they have only 'a name to live,' and for all practical purposes are dead. A Calvinist would call this a spiritual declension; a Methodist would call it falling from grace; it would be partially defined as backsliding; but, really, the soul of genuine piety has for the time gone out of them. Very possibly the reader of this article may candidly admit, 'This is my case; this means me.'

The core of your case consists in the fact that you have separated yourself from Christ, the source of all true godly life. 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.' In spite of this faithful, tender warning, you have put yourself out of personal contact and connection with your Saviour. I care not whether the indulgence of some evil lust, or an increased greed for worldliness, or the benumbing influence of slow unbelief, or some other specific sin, have sundered the connection, the indisputable fact exists that you have got away from Christ. He does not hold His old place in your heart. His service is no longer a delight, and you shirk it. You have grieved away His Holy Spirit. Your name is still on the church-register; but His name is no more 'in your forehead.' Other people cannot recognise it there in your daily walk before them. You are out of contact with the prayer-gathering, and for a long time have deserted the room where it is held. Your Bible is practically a sealed book, and prayer, if still maintained, is a dreary formality. If you

continue to come to the communion-table, it is with an uncomfortable thump of conscience. You feel that you have no business there, and only come in order to save appearances. Old Jeremy Bentham requested that his embalmed body should be brought in at the annual dinner of his philosophic disciples—a rather ghostly guest; but we fear that there are too many such at the sacred feast which commemorates the atoning love of our Lord.

If you continue thus sundered from heart union with Jesus Christ, and go into eternity and up to the judgment-seat in this condition, what hope have you? Our Lord tells us that the 'branches' which are separated from 'the vine' wither away, and are finally flung into the flames. This does not certainly give much encouragement for your restoration to vital union with Christ in another world. If done at all, it must be done now and here. Surely you cannot expect to 'enter into the joy of your Lord' in the next world if you have no joy in being with Him here. It would be a positive shock to you to be suddenly transported into heaven in your present condition. You are not meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. My sagacious old Princeton teacher, Dr Alexander, used to say to us theological students, very solemnly, 'Young friends, if any of you wander away from Christ, and die in that condition, I will not answer for you.'

The time to *revive* is now. The way to revive is to put yourself again into close personal contact with Him who is 'the Life.' The pale, motionless child of the Shunamite began to wax warm as soon as it was brought into contact with the form of God's prophet. Its eyes touched his, and began to open; its mouth touched his, and breath returned; its hands stirred into activity when they felt the imposition of one who was penetrated with power from on high. There is only one being in the universe who can perform this service of recovering you to spiritual life, and that is the divine Redeemer, who died that you might live, and who still calls unto you with pitying

tenderness, 'Come unto Me.' There is this difference between your case and the poor widow's child: the prophet was brought to its breathless form as it lay upon the bed, but the Saviour offers to bring Himself to you. This vital process of *reviving* is partly Christ's and partly your own, just as the healing of the leper was a joint act. Our Lord laid His hand on the poor, loathsome creature, and the contact brought instant recovery; yet, if the leper had not come for the blessing, and asked for it, he would have rotted away into his grave. So you must *seek* the contact, or it will never come about. Of course, you will never do this as long as you are perfectly content to be what you are—a useless, graceless, lifeless professor, a cumberer of the ground. '*Repent and do thy first works.*' This is Christ's imperative condition, on which He alone will recover and restore you.

No sinner is ever forgiven until he is penitent. No backsliding Christian is restored until he is penitent. Those persons who have been drowned and brought back to life always say that the process of resuscitation caused them sharp, shooting pains, and if the process of your recovery to spiritual life is attended with sharp self-upbraidings, and a keen sense of shame and guilt, it will be only a proof that the work is a genuine one. The most effective speech I ever heard in a prayer-meeting came from a penitent professor, who had disgracefully wandered into sin, until we had given him up for dead. That erring man did not merely put himself into contact with his brethren, and make his confession to them; he put his wayward, guilty heart into connection with the divine heart of power and of love. His neighbours spoke of his recovery as a 'miracle,' and it was just as surely an exercise of supernatural power as was the opening of the eyes of blind Bartimeus. But it was the result of a voluntary act on his part. Like the blind man, he 'arose and came to Jesus.' What a thrilling spectacle it would be if into our prayer-meetings there should stalk a great company of lifeless church members, crying out: 'Lord, open Thou our eyes!' 'Lord, heal these withered arms!' 'Lord, be merciful to us sinners!' Then should we see the prophet's miracle repeated in a profounder, holier form, and the dead would cast off their grave-clothes and *revive*.

Nothing short of this process of coming back to Christ with penitence, and putting away of sin, of coming back into personal contact with His divine life-giving power, can save you and all others who have been lying

in a death-slumber. Sinners stumble into perdition over such dead professors; but the divine Voice to you is: 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' Reunion to Him is your only possible recovery. When your heart touches His it melts, it is purified, it is quickened into new life, and a new affection masters it. When He touches your hand, it opens to charity, it works for Him. Your blinded eye of unbelief will get a new vision when you begin again to keep His commandments. I never knew an obedient Christian yet who was tormented by doubts and scepticism. A new joy will spring up in your soul, richer than any that money-making or pleasure-gaddings can afford, as soon as you lay hold of duty, and achieve some good work for Him. You will become another man. Your heart, like the reanimated boy of Sarepta, will 'wax warm' with a spiritual glow. Coming back from the dead to your Father's house, you will receive the ring, the 'best robe,' and the welcome.

A church in which even one soul is thus quickened by the personal contact with Jesus has the first tokens of a revival. The only death, the only life possible is in individual hearts. If *you* live again, your church catches a new breath, opens a new eye, feels a new throb, utters a new prayer, and speaks out in one new voice. Revivals commonly begin in one or two hearts, and the fire spreads. These are times of awful deadness and barrenness. Conversions decrease and defections multiply. A dying world needs living Christians, men and women in whom Christ lives. Their influence is a salt, their example a light, their voice a trumpet, their prayers a power. Such will you be as soon as you bring your lifeless self and lay it against the mighty heart and will of the loving, ever-living Son of God.

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INDOCTRINATE YOUR SCHOLARS.—Some say, Oh, we want practical religion; we want to teach the children to 'Come to Jesus.' Of course we all need more of Christ; but too often that phrase is made the emptiest catchword of excuse for inculcating mere sentimentality and vapid emotion. Men are invited to 'come to Jesus,' without any definite conception of what it means. You must take that word and fill it up with the doctrinal statements of Scripture, to know who Christ is, and why we *must* come, and how He *alone* can save us. We must carry the history of Christ back to the eternity past, and forward to the eternity to come. We must not teach a gospel without law, or a law without gospel. —*Christian Intelligencer*.