

THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST

by Dr. T. W. Brents

“What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?” Matt. xxii: 42.

The faith of man seems to be like the vibrating pendulum of a clock; when it goes in one direction as far as it can, and turns back, it goes just as far in the other direction; and thus it seems ever swinging from one extreme to another. When the pendulum ceases to move it seeks a perpendicular, midway between the two extremes; but then the clock no longer keeps the time, and becomes worthless. The truth is generally to be found, like the perpendicular, between the two extremes; but men seem to think that if they stop there they will be as worthless as the clock; and hence they are rarely content until they swing off into one extreme or the other.

These extremes are clearly seen in the faith of men concerning Jesus Christ. *Trinitarians* insist that He is the *very and eternal God*; and if you deny this they set you down as denying the *divinity* of Jesus Christ. The *Unitarian* believes that He was entirely human—a very good man, but simply, and only man. We think the truth is unquestionably between these extremes. Neither Trinitarianism nor Unitarianism is true. No one is commanded to believe either; nor is he promised any thing for believing either; nor is he threatened with any punishment if he fails to believe either. On the contrary, he who fails to believe that Jesus Christ is the *son of God* will be lost—forever lost. Jesus said to the (22) unbelieving Jews: “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” John viii: 24. Men believe this they tell us, but at the same time they believe that “Jesus Christ was, is, and ever will be the only true God.”

We once debated this proposition, worded just this way. How any one can believe it, is more than we can understand. He was both Father and Son; the sender and the sent; the mediator and one party to the mediation; equal to the Father, and the Father greater than the Son; seated at the right hand of the Father, and was the Father.

Lord Bacon said, “A Christian is one who believes three to be one, and one to be three; a father not to be older than his son, a son to be equal to his father, and one proceeding from both to be equal to both; a virgin to be the mother of a son, and that very son to be her maker. The more incredible and absurd a divine mystery is, the more do we honor God in believing it, and so much the nobler is the victory of faith.”

God is never honored by believing any such incredible and absurd thing, because He is not the *author* of any such thing; nor did He ever command any one to believe any such thing; and fortunate it is that He did not; for it must have filled the world with infidels if He had required any such faith as this.

When a man reaches the point that the more incredible and absurd a thing is the stronger he believes it; and feels that he is all the more honoring God in believing it, he will reject every thing *that is not incredible and absurd*; and he will reject it *because he can understand it*. He concludes that whatever is *not incomprehensible*, is not in harmony with his ideas of God, and therefore is unworthy of belief. Is it possible that any one can work himself into such condition as this? Don't deceive yourself. Their

name is legion. How much better was Lord Bacon's theory? But we are not expecting to benefit such.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God

This is the grand central truth of the Christian religion. It is that around which revolves every thing connected with the scheme of human redemption; hence there is more and stronger proof establishing it than any one proposition of which the Bible treats. John says: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 John v: 9-13.

This is the testimony that God has given of His Son; and he that does not believe it makes God a liar. We have not room for all the testimony given us on this subject, but we will examine some of it—enough to show that it is nothing less than a contradiction of God Himself to refuse to believe it.

God's Testimony

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. iii: 16, 17. John said: "And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." John i: 31. Thus Jesus was made manifest. God spake from heaven to the assembled multitude, in plain and unmistakable terms, "This is my beloved Son." This testimony came from heaven, when Jesus was coming up out of the water. Surely no one will say that the water, out of which Jesus came, was heaven from which the voice came. The Spirit descended—Jesus came up.

Once more: On the mount of transfiguration, "a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Matt. xvii: 5. Peter says: "This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the Holy mount." 2 Pet. i: 18. To every one who believes the Bible, this testimony is sufficient to show that *Trinitarianism* and *Unitarianism* are both false, if there was not another word in the Bible on the subject.

The voice came from God in heaven to where Jesus was on the earth; and He acknowledged Jesus as His Son; hence He was not the very and eternal God; and as He was the Son of God, He was more than man. No man is the Son of God in this sense. Thus we see that when any one denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God he makes God a liar, for God

says, "This is my beloved son." This is true, or it is false. This is not very well calculated to prove that He was very and eternal God. Did God mean that Jesus was the son of himself; and the father of himself?

The Testimony of John the Baptist

"And John bear record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God." John i: 32-34. This is virtually the testimony of God and John together. God told John how he would be able to know the Son, and John gives the testimony. John heard the Father say, "this is my beloved Son" at His baptism, hence he was fully competent to testify that Jesus was the Son of God; but he never testified that He was the very and eternal God.

Jesus Bore Witness of Himself

"I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." John viii: 18. If Jesus was the only true God, then the Father and the Son were the same witness. He was the Father of Himself, and the Son of Himself; and sent Himself. This is not respectable nonsense.

When Jesus restored the blind man to sight, the enraged Jews cast him out. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." John ix. 35-37.

Again: "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me and I in him." John x: 36-38.

Once more: "Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am." Mark xiv: 61, 62. It is said that Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God; but this honor was thrust upon Him by His followers. We leave these quotations to speak for themselves. Many others might be added but these are enough, and plain enough. He never claimed to be the very and eternal God; but He did claim to be the Son of God in divers places.

The Apostles Testimony

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye

that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Mat. xvi: 13-17.

This question was propounded to all the apostles and answered by Peter in their presence; hence may be regarded as the answer of all of them. And as Peter's answer was made known or revealed to him by the Father it was the testimony of the Father. And as Jesus blessed Peter for making it, He is fully committed to it. So in this quotation we have the combined testimony of the Father, the Son, and all the apostles to the fact that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God.

When Jesus walked upon the water, to the ship in which the apostles were being tossed by the angry waves in a howling storm, after saving the doubting Peter from a watery grave, He went up into the ship and the wind ceased. “They that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” Matt. xiv: 33. Thus testify the twelve.

Paul's testimony is in every epistle he wrote. We can only give a few samples with which his letters abound. His salutations in his letters clearly show that the Father and Jesus were a plurality of persons. “Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. i: 6; 1 Cor. i: 3; 2 Cor. i: 2; Gal. i: 3; Ephes. i: 2; Phil, i: 2; Col. i: 2; 1 Thess. i: 1; 2 Thess. i. 2; 1 Tim. i: 2; 2 Tim. i: 2; Tit. i: 4. Why make such distinctions between God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ if they were the same person? But he says: “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Cor. i: 9. This shows not only a plurality of persons, but that Jesus Christ our Lord was God's Son.

The Testimony of the Devils

“And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.” Mark iii: 11. “And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying. Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.” Luke iv: 41.

The Testimony of the Wicked

“Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.” Matt. xxvii: 54. Thus we have the testimony of God, the Father; John the Baptist; Jesus Christ; all the apostles; devils; and wicked men to the fact that Jesus Christ was, and is the *Son of God*, not one of them testifies that he was the very and eternal God.

The Testimony of Miracles

“Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.” John x: 24, 25. “Believest thou not that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake.” John xiv: 10, 11.

Jesus here intimates that the works wrought by him were done by the Father through him. These were stronger, or more convincing testimony than even what he had told them, though his words were given him by the Father. They might not believe what he said, but how could they disregard what he did before their eyes. These they saw, and were bound to know that unaided human power could not do them.

Who could see him hush to silence the howling storm; calm the surging waves of the sea of Galilee, and walk upon them as a pavement beneath his feet; open the eyes of those who had been born blind; unstop the ears of the deaf; cure all manner of disease, even the loathsome leprosy; cast out devils by the legion; and raise the dead to life and health, without being convinced as was Nicodemus: “No man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.” John iii: 2. God would not have aided an impostor to do these things, nor could an impostor have done them himself; hence that he was what he claimed to be his miracles abundantly show. “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John xx: 31.

The miracles which Jesus did are recorded to prove that he is the Son of God; so that sinners, in need of salvation, may have an intelligent faith in him; and yield a hearty obedience to him; that they may have eternal life through him. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Matt. vii: 21.

Does it Make a Difference?

But suppose a man believes that He is the *very and eternal God*, will that secure the same blessings that were intended for him who believes that He is the Son of God? Why not? If these propositions are the same why not as well believe one as the other? This is the faith that must be confessed in order that God may dwell in us, and we in him. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.” 1 John iv: 15.

Surely there can be no more sacred relationship than this. Will it do just as well to confess that Jesus is the only true God as to confess what is required of us—that he is the Son of God? “That which we have heard and seen declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

1 John i: 3. Here are two persons with whom the saints have fellowship—the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

That they are distinct persons is as clear as language can make anything. If Jesus Christ was the only true God, then it occurs to us that during the three days in which he was dead the world was without a God. And we insist that the fact that he rose from the dead is conclusive proof that he was not the only true God; for there must have been a living power equal to the task of raising to life that which was dead, otherwise a resurrection never could have been; and He would have remained dead forever.

But the Trinitarian smiles at this difficulty when it is presented; saying: “It was only *humanity* that died. As God He did not die. As man, He wept, suffered and died; as God, He rose from the dead.” Plausible as this theory may appear, it is both contradictory and unreasonable. How could He, as God, rise from the dead, if, as God, He did not die? Only that which died could be raised from the dead. If only humanity died, then only humanity was raised from the dead. It matters not by what power that which was dead, was made alive, only that which was dead could be raised from the dead.

If that which was raised did not die, then there was no resurrection of the dead at all. The whole theory of a resurrection of the dead was a sham, a fraud, a deception, and all our hopes of a resurrection of the dead through Christ are delusions. “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not; for if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” 1 Cor. xv: 14-19.

It was the fact that Jesus Christ was the Son of God that gave efficacy to the blood of the atonement. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John i: 7. It occurs to us that if nothing more than humanity died when Jesus died, the blood of any other man would have been as efficacious in cleansing from sin as would the blood of Jesus. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John iii; 16, 17.

Thus we see that it took richer blood than that of mere humanity to secure the world's redemption. It took nothing less than the *blood of God's own Son* to magnify his law and make it possible for him to be just and pardon those who violated his law. John says. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. -Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John iv: 9, 10.

Now if nothing but humanity suffered, as *Jesus derived all that from his mother*, then there was nothing sent from God that suffered at all. And it

looks a little like God sent himself to earth, and placed himself in a human body, made of a woman; and submitted that body to be crucified, while he, the Divinity, suffered not at all, and then claimed to have so loved the world as to give his only Son to suffer and to die for it. This claim was unjust according to this theory; for it was only the Mary part of Jesus that suffered and died, for the divine part was God himself and he never suffered at all. We cannot very well understand such a sending as this.

In place of sending any one or any thing, he came himself, and did not suffer any when he came. Mary made all the sacrifice—God made none. Such a theory is a slander upon God and his Son, both. It really seems to us that there was quite a useless commotion in the material universe when Jesus died if only humanity suffered. The sun, “the bright orb of day,” that had never refused to give his light from the time God swung him in the heavens until then, refused to light up a scene like that, and the earth was mantled in darkness for three long hours. The earth trembled as a leaf, until the rocks about Jerusalem were broken: and the veil of the temple, that had stood for ages, was rent from top to bottom. Why all this? Humanity is suffering on the cross. Humanity had suffered in the death of men every hour of every day for a thousand years; but nothing like these things had ever occurred before. Then again we ask, why all this? The truth is, *the Son of God is dying*; and the heavens and the earth are in commotion. We say, as did those who stood by: “Truly this was the Son of God.” Matt. xxviii: 54.

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.” Heb. x: 5, 6. If the body of Jesus Christ was *wholly human*, it was an exception to all law known to us. It is a fact well known, even by common observation, to say nothing of any thing else, that physical appearance and general temperament are derived from the father as well as from the mother. Indeed it is within the observation of every man that has given attention to the subject that *complexion* is derived even more from the father than from the mother; so much so that in the course of many generations the color of the mother is lost in that of the father.

We predicate nothing of this, however; the idea to which we object is that the body and blood of Jesus Christ is *entirely human*, like his mother, and partook not of the nature of the Father at all. This absurdity is assumed to justify the theory that nothing but *humanity* suffered on the cross. A body that did not partake of the nature of Father and mother both, has never been seen on this earth—never.

It is all a myth too, that the divinity that was in Jesus Christ was the power by which he arose from the dead. Paul says: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Rom. x: 9. We have already quoted him saying: “Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.” 1 Cor. xv: 15. Peter said: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” Acts ii: 32. “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from

the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.” Acts iv: 10. “But God raised him from the dead.” Acts xiii: 30. It was by the power of God that Jesus was raised from the dead— not by any inherent quality in Him, either human or divine.

But we must further notice a quotation made some time ago: “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me. The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.” John xiv: 10, 11. We are told that as the Father was in the Son, and the Son in the Father they were necessarily the same person. Well, in the 20th verse of the same chapter He says: “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you.”

Did the Savior intend to teach that the disciples and he were, or ever would be the same persons because they should know that they were in him and he in them? Hardly, we suppose, yet the form of expression is the same, and if it does not prove that Christ and the apostles were one in person, neither does it prove that God and his Son were the same person. Again: “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.” 1 John iv: 15.

Are we to understand that those who make this confession and God, himself, are, or ever will be one in person? We suppose not, yet the same style is used with reference to their dwelling in God, and God in them, that is used with reference to the Father being in the Son, and the Son in the Father. If the same language cannot prove one proposition it cannot prove the other. All the fullness of the divinity dwelt in Jesus Christ. The nature, attributes, and purposes of God were in his Son, and hence they were said to be in each other.

But Jesus said: “I and my Father are one.” John x: 30. Yes, and be said a man and his wife were one, but be expected them to remain two persons—a man and a woman as before. They were one in purpose and sympathy, (Matt. xix: 5, 6) but not one person, surely. Jesus prayed: “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.” John xvii: 11. Verse 22, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one even as we are one.” Did Jesus pray that the apostles might become one person? Surely not.

But he did pray that the apostles might be one in the same sense that he and his Father were one. Then if the apostles were different persons, and would so remain, it is certain that He and His Father were different persons. From this conclusion there is no escape. Then as God and his Son were one in spirit, object and work, so He prayed that His apostles might be perfectly harmonious in all their labors for the salvation of man.

Paul admonished the brethren at Corinth to this unity. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” 1 Cor. i: 10. Christ prayed for this unity among the apostles and he prayed for them to be one as he and his Father were one. “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world;

again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” John xvi: 27, 28.

If this does not show that while Jesus was on the earth he and his Father were, in some sense, in different localities, and were different persons, then we may as well pronounce the New Testament a riddle and beyond human comprehension, on this subject at least. “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.” John xiv: 28.

Jesus said: “I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman.” John xv: 1. This expression was taken from real life. In horticulture there are the vine, the branches, and the husbandman, or dresser of the vine. Then in order that the figure may fit that which is illustrated the husbandman cannot be the vine dressed by Him. Then Jesus Christ, the vine, could not have been the Father, or dresser of the vine.

Jesus prayed to the Father. John xvii. Matt. xxvi: 39-44 Mark i: 35; xiv: 35-39. Luke i: 35; xxii: 41. Prayer suggests two persons—one to pray, and another to pray to. The prayers of Jesus were senseless if Trinitarianism be true. But they tell us it was the humanity praying to the divinity. When did the humanity of Jesus begin? Not until he was conceived by the Virgin Mary. Very well, then, we will hear him pray to his Father: “O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” John 17: 5.

Jesus then had a glory with the Father before the world was. As his humanity began at the conception this could not have been the *humanity with the Father* before the world was. This effectually disposes of that quibble—that wherever a plurality of persons are shown, one was the humanity and the other the divinity. John says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” John i: 1, 2. The preposition *with*, twice occurring in this quotation, clearly shows *companionship, association of two or more parties*, agreeing with the expression, “The glory I had with thee before the world was,” as seen above.

But He was God. Yes, but let us be careful not to add any thing to that which is written. It does not say He was the *only* God; nor does it say He was the very and eternal God. He was the manifestation, of God's power in creation as seen in the next verse; and He was called God because He inherited the name of His Father. “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Heb. i: 4.

Stephen saw Him at the right hand of God. “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.” Acts vii: 55, 56. “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. Mark xvi: 19. We suppose that it will not be contended that it was the *humanity* which Stephen saw at the *right hand of the, Divinity* in heaven.

Jesus is our mediator. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to

be testified in due time.” 1 Tim. ii: 5, 6. The idea of mediation suggests at least three parties, a mediator and two parties between which the mediation is had. God was one party, man another, and Jesus Christ the mediator between God and man. Surely Jesus did not mediate between himself and the people.

A mediator, to be competent must be entirely disconnected from both parties, or equally related to both, so that no charge of partiality can be brought against him. Jesus was just such a character. He was divine and he was human. He was Son of God and Son of man. His father was divine, his mother was human. He was as nearly related to man as to God. In him humanity and divinity met— pre-eminently fitting him to be mediator between God and men.

Just to *what extent*, or even *how* humanity and divinity were blended in Jesus Christ we may never perfectly comprehend; but we do know that he was born of a woman, that he hungered, thirsted, wept with those in distress, and sympathized with suffering humanity; that he was tempted—sorely tempted as we are, yet without sin; that he was touched with the feeling of our infirmity; that he took not on him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham; hence we know that if we sin we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous; and we gladly trust our cause to the care of such an advocate. He says: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

All our approaches to the Father are made through our advocate—our mediator—our high priest. We have no worth or merit in ourselves to commend us to the favor of God. Our confidence is in Jesus, who as our advocate will order our cause aright—in our mediator who will intercede for us—in our high priest who will present all our offerings before the mercy-seat.

“What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear; What a privilege to carry
Every thing to God in prayer.”

That Jesus Christ is the Son of God has already been fully shown. His divine character may be further seen in his sinless life. Never did man pass through such trials, and persecutions as he, and yet remain undefiled by sin. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Such purity was never seen in any one wholly human. But in nothing is the divinity of Christ more clearly seen than in his own resurrection from the dead. Paul said: “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Acts xvii: 31.

The fact that God raised his Son from the dead gives assurance unto all men that he was what he claimed to be; and that he would judge the world in righteousness by him. God would not have raised an impostor, nor could an impostor have raised himself; hence, in his resurrection, we have the strongest assurance of his divine character. That he did rise from the dead is as certain as it is that the Bible is true. We have seen a number of passages saying, in the plainest terms possible, that God raised him from

the dead. Not that he raised himself by the divinity that was in him, but that *God raised him*.

This being true, we have the strongest possible assurance of his divinity that could be given. The testimony is *direct*, and as certainly true as it is that God cannot lie. What is the probable reliability of the testimony of the apostles? They all say he arose from the dead and that they saw him, and that he was seen by many others—more than five hundred at once. They could not have been mistaken in his identity, for they knew him well before his death. They had associated with him intimately for three years and a half. They ate with him, talked with him, and probably slept with him almost continuously; hence that they knew him is simply certain. They could not have been mistaken. They either saw him alive after his crucifixion or they fabricated a stupendous falsehood.

Men generally act from motive—what motive could have induced them to fabricate and tell such a lie as this? They did not do it for money for Jesus told them he was so poor that he had no place to lay his weary head; and as the soldiers were paid to testify falsely it is quite probable that they could have made a fortune by giving up the false testimony and telling the truth if Jesus did not rise. Their testimony to the resurrection was false if Jesus did not rise, hence they could have exchanged the falsehood for the truth and been well paid for it beside.

Why did they not do it? What else? They could not have expected to gain popularity by the story of the resurrection, for he told them that they would be persecuted and despised of all men for his sake; and they found this quite true. They were put to death for Jesus' sake, every one of them but John; and tradition tells us that he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, and was only saved from a martyr's death by a miracle.

Whether this be true or false, one thing is certain: he did not escape the fire of persecution; for he was banished to the isle of Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. This we have from his own pen (Rev. i: 9). Then they did not hatch up, agree upon, and tell their story for *popularity*. *Why did they tell it?* The persecutions to which they were subjected separated them, and they were martyred in different countries; where, the probabilities are, they did not hear from each other. One could not know that the others had not given up the falsehood so as to make it folly for him to adhere to it; and yet they all stuck to it, and died on account of it; when they could have saved their lives by giving it up and telling the truth. Can any sane man believe that they did it? Is there a parallel to it in the world's history anywhere?

We venture to affirm that not one case can be found, where twelve men, or more, agreed upon a falsehood, and told it, and every one adhered to it, until it brought death upon all of them, when they could have saved their lives by giving up the falsehood and telling the truth; and all without any reward of any kind—with nothing to gain, but everything to lose by it. Is it reasonable? Do you think twelve men could be found on the earth today who would be guilty of such stupendous folly? Surely not. The testimony of the apostles was true. Jesus rose from the dead, and they saw, and knew him. They gave up their lives rather than bear false witness against his resurrection. This one fact establishes his divine character forever.

My dear friend, have you pursued and considered the testimony here presented? If so are you not convinced that Jesus was more than human? Nay, are you not convinced that he was, and is none other than the Son of God? If so, we ask you as he asked the Jews: "Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If you believe him to be the Son of God you are under obligations high as heaven, deep as hell, vast as the universe to believe every word that fell from his lips, to trust every promise he made; and obey every command he gave which applies to such as you. Your faith in him will do you no good unless it moves you to love, trust and obey him.

Come, then my brother, let us renew our devotions to him—love him more and serve him better; and let us cultivate this determination, and act upon it, to the last moment of life. God help us to do it. Friendly sinner, have you no place in your heart's deepest affections for love of a Savior like this? Can you look with indifference on the suffering Son of God, as he hangs bleeding and dying on the cross for you? God loves you. Jesus died for you. Angels are concerned for you. The church invites you, begs you, pleads with you. Your mother weeps over you; but you, the one most interested, are still indifferent and unconcerned.

The sun refused to shine on the crucifixion of Jesus, but you can look upon it without a blush. The earth trembled when the Son of God died, but you can contemplate it without the tremor of a nerve. The solid rocks were shivered, but your heart remains unbroken. This is an abnormal condition of the human mind. No one is so, naturally. He has to educate himself up to it. At first he felt deeply when he heard the story of the cross. It cost him a desperate struggle to refuse obedience to the gospel when first he learned the Master's will. But every successful resistance hardened him a little, and enabled him to resist with less effort the next invitation until he reached his present condition.

Once he could feel, now he cannot. Once he could weep on account of his sins and in sympathy with the sufferings of Jesus; now the fountain of his tears is dried up, and he can resist the most heart-stirring appeals which human tongues can make with the most perfect indifference. When he reaches this condition he is gone. He has passed beyond all the appliances and means by which God proposes to save men and he *will never return*. Resistance to the devil is right—resistance to God is vain and dangerous. O do not start in that direction. You may soon get so far as to make it difficult to turn back.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."
Amen and amen.

Dear reader,

That article was written by Dr. T. W. Brents, a powerful preacher of the good news of Christ who lived during the nineteenth century. I omitted the last part of his article here because it taught a lesson saying that Jesus was punished for our sins, an idea that I deeply regret disagreeing with him about. Therefore, rather than writing here about that question, I

simply omitted what he said. I have written much more elsewhere about why Jesus died for us.

Walter Porter