

## 1 Timothy 6:14 (J. Wilson Smith) 52637

Christian Truth: Volume 15, Christ's Good Confession (6:14)

Paul, in giving his son Timothy a solemn injunction to keep "this commandment without spot" (1 Tim. 6:14), charged him "in the sight of God" and of "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." He links Christ Jesus with God in the wording of this solemn charge. God is spoken of as the quickener [or, sustainer] of all things, and the one feature that marks the Lord Jesus Christ is the "good confession" He made before the Roman governor. No reference is made to His glorious resurrection or ascension, nor indeed to any of the miracles which He wrought, bearing, as each of them did, so rich a testimony to His power and grace; but special notice is taken of His conduct before the judge.

We may ask ourselves, Why is this? Was there anything in that confession that could be placed on a par with His acts of power, or His resurrection? In reading the details of His manner before Pilate, we might, perhaps, fail to see the reason of this inspired reference. If we examine the first three gospels, we find that when asked by Pilate if He were "the King of the Jews," He quietly but firmly admitted the fact. He could not do otherwise. He had been born King of the Jews (see Matt. 2), and as such He died, the superscription on the cross giving the public emblazonment of it.

But that was not all. Though charged with many things, He answered nothing; and Pilate marveled. He made no defense. The accusations, falsely preferred, fell back on the consciences of the accusers. Many there were to condemn; none, alas, to befriend! Where were the nine? Where were the crowds of healed, and fed, and forgiven? Where were those who had shared His benefactions, and heard His accents of love? He looked for pity, and found none! He stood alone and was ominously silent before the governor. He could have repelled every charge, and vindicated Himself against each accuser; but self-defense was not His object when self-surrender, absolute and unequivocal, was the business of His blessed life below.

Washing his hands of the case, Pilate, with sad culpability, gave Him over to His enemies; and, so far as these gospels teach us, other confession the Lord did not make before Pilate. But when we turn to John (see chap. 18) we find the same confession clearly made, enlarged upon, and presented in the manner peculiar to the fourth Gospel. The blessed Lord admits that He is King of the Jews; but, as ever in this Gospel, rejected by them, He, in turn, intimates that He cannot acknowledge the nation. Rejection is mutual, how unwillingly so on His part need not be said. How often would He have gathered them, but as often they would not! That being so, He answered Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." John 18:36. Notice, He does not say that His servants would have fought that He should not be delivered to the Gentiles. That would have been insurrection; but it was the Jews who, instead of accepting this their true King, were bitterly and implacably opposed to Him. Had the Lord, therefore, sought to establish His kingdom by force, there would have been conflict between His followers and the nation. (He was, like David, the rejected King.) Hence He said, "Now is My kingdom not from hence." It was not of this world. Its spring and character were of a new and heavenly order, one to which the idea of carnal warfare was completely foreign. He attaches to His kingdom a new, and moral, and heavenly character. He does not relinquish His claim as King of Israel-that ever abides-but He rises into a higher region, and declares that He came for something more than to reign on the earth.

"To this end," He says, "was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." v. 37. And now, assuredly, we reach the "good confession."

The commandment that Paul enjoined so earnestly on Timothy was that he should keep the truth-that Christianity in its pure and heavenly nature, in its close relation with the new creation, and in its unworldly source and character, should be strenuously maintained by him.

The Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth"-the witness to it-so that, if not found in her, it cannot be found anywhere. And Timothy, too, had an individual part to bear in this sacred witness. Now, says the Lord, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

That, amid a thousand other most gracious objects, was the one grand point in His birth and entrance into the world. Quite true, He was "born King of the Jews," but He was quite as truly born a witness to the truth.

"The Word became flesh" indeed, but here He is seen as born. His manhood is simply stated, though He, thus born, said also, "For this cause came I into the world."

To come into the world, He must have existed before that coming. And thus we have His Godhead stated as simply. We have the "I" who was born, and the "I" who came-the "I" of Bethlehem, and the "I" who was before Abraham. Yet, He it was who stood in human form and in lowly grace before Pontius Pilate. And had no one the eye to see, in that lowly form, One who was infinitely more than "the Man Christ Jesus," who had been sent by the High Priest as a prisoner to the judge? An opened eye was assuredly needed.

To he of the truth is needed for this-then, and only then, is His voice heard.

"What is truth?" said Pilate, as he passed away from His presence who was the Truth.

The same quiet firmness marks our blessed Lord in bearing witness to the truth, as marked Him in acknowledging His kingship. His confession before Pilate was unflinching; it was "good."

And now, we may see, perhaps, why Paul adduced to Timothy the instance of the Master's confession before Pilate, as an incentive to his own testimony. The bright example of Jesus is ever the truest encouragement and stimulus to the faith of His followers.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" -says Paul. The fight is good, though stiff; and the life is true, and precious, and, eternal, "whereunto," he adds, "thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." Words of comfort and cheer (not of flattery) for the oft-tried heart of this faithful young soldier.

And only think, dear reader, that Christ Jesus witnessed a "good confession" before Pontius Pilate, as an example to ourselves that we should do the same. May we follow Him!

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