

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The church was built upon the rock-bed truth that Jesus is the “Son of God.” He was conceived by Mary, and was to be the “only begotten Son” of the Father, or of God, or of the “Highest” (Luke 1:30-35). Five times in the scripture Jesus is called “the only begotten Son” of God (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). This does not mean that we must necessarily **refer** to Jesus **as** “begotten” every time we speak of Him, but we must not deny “this part” of the process in which He became the Son of God when He was born or came into the world (Heb. 1:5f). Some want to translate “monogenes” as **unique**, rather than “only begotten”, which the word actually means. In other words, the steps of His becoming the Son of God would be: (1) Unique, (2) Born of a virgin, then (3) Son of God. “Unique” was not part of the process of Jesus coming in the flesh, but the **manner** in which He came in the flesh (being begotten by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit) was the **way** Jesus was unique. He was not unique simply because He was unique. Those holding the view of His being only “unique” seemingly do not even want to **say** that Jesus was ever “begotten of God” in any fashion. They know that to do so is fatal to their position.

Some confessions or acknowledgments of Jesus **as** the Son of God are Peter's confession of this truth in Matt. 16:16, upon which Jesus built the church (v. 18). Martha acknowledged Him as the Son of God when He came to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:27). We also have to believe that Jesus **is** that Son before we can be saved. Jesus Himself declared that unless we do believe this, we shall die in our sins (John 8:24); and He associated belief with baptism as a condition of salvation (Mark 16:16). The scriptures were written that we might believe (John 20:30-31). Thus, it is not a confession of “sin” that precedes baptism, but a confession of “faith” in the Son of God.

When Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, the eunuch wanted baptism, and asked what hindered him from being baptized. Philip readily pointed out that if he was a “believer” in Jesus, that he could be baptized (Acts 8:35-37). What was the eunuch's statement of faith? He said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” This statement of the eunuch is found in most every translation of the New Testament, such as the KJV, NKJV, NASV, and other reliable translations which include this confession. The RSV, NIV, ESV and about 6 other lesser known translations omit it. However, the marginal note in the ASV of 1901 tells us that “some ancient authorities” **do** have this confession recorded in them. It is interesting to note that when the NASV came out, that the scholars **returned** the confession **to** the text of Acts 8:37. They obviously came to realize that it does belong in the text. Otherwise, how would we know that the eunuch believed, other than his leaving the chariot and walking into the water? Had he not acknowledged his faith verbally, Philip's statement (which simply means, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?”) would have gone unanswered.

In searching the writings of early Christian writers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, we learn that Acts 8:37 fully belongs in the text. Irenaeus wrote “Against Heresies” in the 2nd century, and he referred to the eunuch's confession. Irenaeus was a learner from the sermons of Polycarp, who was burned at the stake for his confession of Jesus. Had Polycarp, who was born in 110 AD **not** believed Acts 8:37, Irenaeus probably would not have believed it either—but he **did**. Cyprian (in his third book of Testimonies), who lived and wrote in the 3rd century, also believed that the treasurer made that recorded confession of

faith. This information about their faith was many years before most manuscripts that we have in existence today. Just because **some** early manuscripts do not have the eunuch's statement, does not mean he did not confess such. Other statements in the KJV are not found in **some** early manuscripts, but they are not called in question as much as Acts 8:37. Why? Is their faith in the deity of Jesus a little shakey?

Jesus said that with the "mouth" the convictions of the heart are made (Matt. 12:34-35). Paul said he "preached...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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:8-10).

Don W. Tarbet, 215 W. Sears, Denison, Texas 75020 <donwtarbet@cableone.net>