

“WE CANNOT TELL”

There are many types of questions that can be asked in the religious world. The enemies of Jesus often asked questions to trick Him into an answer they could use against Him. Sometimes Jesus asked probing questions that could put to silence His opposition. In Matt. 21, we read about the chief priests and elders who came to Jesus as He was teaching in the temple. They asked Him “By what authority doest thou these things?” Jesus turned the tables on them and asked them a question, with the statement that if they would answer His question, then He would answer theirs. This seems fair enough, as He had nothing to hide, and by making this arrangement, He would be able to ask them a question that would be thought provoking, and put them to silence. As a result, He never even had to answer their question, for His question put an end to their treachery. He asked them if the baptism of John (which they rejected) was “from heaven, or of men.” Before they answered, they “reasoned with themselves”, to attempt to find a way out of their predicament. They knew that if they said it was from “heaven”, that He would want to know why they had not believe it, but if they said “from men”, they would arouse the anger of the people. So, they said, “We cannot tell” (KJV), or “We know not” (ASV). They were either lying, or trying to evade giving either answer by simply refusing to answer. They knew they were in a predicament, and would be in trouble with either answer they gave, so their “answer” was simply a refusal to answer the Lord.

There is a philosophy of men that the Greek term “monogenes” in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9, which is translated “only begotten” with reference to Jesus, should actually and properly be translated “unique” or “one of a kind” instead of “only begotten” as found in the KJV, NKJ, ASV, and NASV. It is clear from Matthew 1 and Luke 1 that indeed Jesus **was** begotten by God by means of the Spirit, so that He would be born of a virgin, as Isaiah prophesied in the Old Testament. There could be no birth without a begetting, and the begetting of Jesus was the “only” time that anyone would be “begotten” in this manner in the history of the world, and it was by “God”(or the Father). So, it makes good sense to think or to say that Jesus is “the only begotten Son of God”, or “of the Father”, as these good translations render the meaning of the original Greek. Those who maintain that it should be “unique” are not willing to tell us **why** Jesus was “unique” as God's Son as a gift to the world. He **is** unique because of the way He came into the world, through a miraculous conception and birth through a woman that had not “known” man. **Why** are so many afraid to say or believe this?

I heard one young preacher refer to Jesus as “God's one and only Son.” After his sermon I asked him why he said that, and he said that he was doing so to try to destroy the concept that Jesus was “the only begotten Son.” He had just come out of one of our brotherhood preaching schools. In studying and communicating with some who maintain that “monogenes” should be, or can be translated “unique”, I have pressed them to **say** one way or another, that (1) Jesus **was** the only begotten Son, or (2) Jesus was **not** the only begotten Son. I wanted them to **put into print** either one of these 2 statements. If they would actually **say** Jesus **was not** “the only begotten Son of God”, they know that the tables would be turned on them. They would know that not only were they discrediting the 4 fine translations we have in the world, but would be going against the context of Jesus' conception and birth as plainly revealed in the New Testament. Then, if they would actually **say** (or admit) that Jesus **was** indeed “the only begotten Son of God”, they would be in disagreement with their preaching brothers who deny this truth. They realize their quandary, so, they “cannot tell”, or they “do not know”. Either answer they give (other than saying they cannot tell, or do not know), would get them in

trouble with other preachers, or with the one asking the question. I would like to point this out to the “unique” or “one and only” crowd in our brotherhood. I have, in correspondence, asked some to answer either way, and I am still waiting for their answer. Why cannot they answer, except to say, “I am convinced that 'unique' is the correct translation”?

Jesus was **not** the “one and only son of God”, for Adam is said to be His son, in Luke 3:38. Adam was “unique” because he was the only man God ever created miraculously as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Jesus was not merely “unique”, but He was the only One who became the Son of God by means of the Spirit causing a virgin to conceive and give birth to One who would be “called” the Son of God (Luke 1:30-35). Why is this something to refuse to believe? In view of the context of Jesus' birth, the term “monogenes” correctly describes that Father-Son relationship. The Greek word “monon” means “only”, and “gennao” (changed to “genes” when combined with “monon”) is related to “beget” (to become the father of). The translators of the KJV, NKJ, ASV and NASV were correct in their work.

The deity of Jesus begins with His miraculous conception, and did not begin at the actual birth of Jesus. To deny the miraculous conception is a strike against the virgin birth and the deity of the Lord. What modernist would say he denied the virgin birth, but believed in the miraculous conception? They go together as Siamese twins. What believer is consistent when he denies the miraculous conception, but believes in the virgin birth? I suspect that there are preachers who would **say** they believe in the miraculous conception, who at the same time refuse to **say** “Jesus was the only begotten Son of God.” I am not one of those. Brethren ought to wake up, and get out of the bed of the chief priests and elders who say, “We cannot tell”, or “We do not know.”

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