

What makes a statement properly a confessional statement?

Elsewhere I have argued, in effect, that what makes a statement properly a confessional statement is that it is a second- rather than a third-person statement. But if this may take account of some confessional statements—e.g., Peter's second-person statement in Mt 16:15 f.: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!"—it fails to take account of others, such as the third-person statement of which Paul speaks in Rom 10:9, when he talks about confessing that "Jesus is Lord" with your lips.

But, then, what *does* make a statement properly a confessional statement?

It would seem that the only likely defining characteristic left is that the statement be *a statement of belief*—whether second- or third-person—as distinct from *an assertion of truth*, which is to say, an assertion that as such claims to be true. Of course, any statement of belief, sincerely made, necessarily implies just such an assertion. But "(I believe that) Jesus is the Christ" is one kind of utterance—namely a confessional statement, properly so-called—whereas "Jesus is the Christ (is true)" is another kind of utterance—namely, a proper assertion, of either witness or theology.

So what I now think I should say is something like this: Just as there is a constitutive Christian confession in the form of a statement of belief, so there is a constitutive Christian witness in the form of a twofold assertion of truth (or two such assertions): (1) the properly *christological* assertion that Jesus is the Christ, or, more formally, that he is of decisive significance for human existence; and (2) the strictly *theological* assertion that the meaning for human existence of the strictly ultimate reality rightly called "God" is the pure unbounded (i.e., unconditioned) love that Jesus decisively re-presents.

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