

Homousion

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Twofold ambiguity: philosophic, theological.

Philosophic ambiguity

Athanasius (De syn 53 Aw II 276 27 ff)

Man compared with man is of the same nature homophues and of the same substance (homousios) but man compared with a dog is of a different nature (heterophues) and of a different substance (Heterophues)

Naive realists, guided by picture thinking, would say that man compared with man is of the same nature and substance because both are born of the same human race. Critical or at least dogmatic realists would reach the same conclusion because men have the same essential predicates, through truth, not through a picture ~~of~~ of generation and birth

Theological ambiguity

Peter and Paul are of the same substance, not numerically, but specifically. Peter and Paul are really different substances both of which pertain to the same species, man. God the Father and God the Son are consubstantial, not only specifically, but also numerically. There are not two Gods but only one, but the Father and the Son are two really distinct persons.

After foregoing conceptual clarification we now propose

- (1) to sketch certain radical oppositions
- (2) to add a few notes on Nicea
- (3) to indicate the genesis of the critical notion

Prestige DDT 76 nn 3 & 4

Confirmed by (1) fact that five bishops preferred exile to signing decree at Nicea, (2) that Eusebius of Caes. wrote to the faithful of his diocese a long letter in which he explained that homousios was not to be taken in a materialist sense, (3) that Athanasius Hilary and Basil in their expositions of Nicea denied the materialist meaning of homousios

Now this gives rise to a difficulty: if homousios means 'of the same stuff', and if it is applied to the divine persons with all material meaning excluded, then there seems to be left just no meaning at all

The solution is to move from picture thinking to reflection on true statements: "What through your revelation we believe about your glory, that too we hold without any difference of discernment both about the Son and about the Holy Spirit."

Athanasius: "What is said of the Father, also is said of the Son with the exception of the name of the Father" DDT p 85

Alexander of Alexandria: "The Son is less than the Father only inasmuch as he is begotten" Letter to bpp Thessal AW III 27 14f

Notes on Nicea: The Theological Ambiguity

Appollinaris, who denied Xt to possess a human soul, also denied that Xt was consubstantial with the Father according to the flesh and that Xt was consubstantial with us according to the soul. The Council of Chalcedon affirmed the Son to be consubstantial with the Father in his divinity and consubstantial with us in his humanity.

But consubstantial has not the same meaning in the two cases.

The Son is one and the same God as is the Father.

But the Son is not one and the same man as any of us.

How can the persons be distinct if there is only one God?

How can there be only one God if the persons really are distinct?

The basic answer is that God to us is mystery: any positive knowledge we have of him is analogous, and analogous knowledge is always partial, while analogous knowledge of what is infinite is extremely partial.

On that basis it is possible for systematic theology to set up some analogous account of the divine processions, relations, persons -- Aug De Trin -- Sum theol I 27-43 -- Verbum

In the first period after Nicea there was much obscurity.

*Eusebius of Caesarea wrote two theol treatises (adv Marc, de eccl. theol.) without once using the word homocousion.

*The many councils between 340-60 differ inasmuch as the earlier do not employ the word, homocousion, while the later ones repudiate its use.

*A principle objection to homocousion was that it favored Sabellianism (God one person appearing in³ different ways).

*This was confirmed by the fact that Marcellus of Ancyra had Sabellian leanings but took part at Nicea, had approval of his creed in Rome, was in communion with Athanasius up to 344.

*The Homoeousians (Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea) probably considered homocousion Sabellian: condemn along w tautoousi

*As to the exact meaning of Nicea, one has ~~to~~ to distinguish between its explicit doctrine and what is in it implicitly; and again between what is a conclusion that could be drawn at the time of Nicea and, on the ~~o~~ other hand, a conclusion that would follow only after further clarifications were made.

*Certainly clarity was not had from the start

Alexander of Alex: Father and Son are two natures in hypostasis (Ep ad Alex ep Thess, ix Mg 18 561 b AW III 25 23)

A's intention was to repudiate Sabellianism

Athanasius explaining what the Fathers meant at Nicea not merely that the Son was similar to the father but the same thing by similitude out of the Father
De decret nic syn 20 MG 25 452 b AW II 17 7-10

On the other hand the conclusion had been explicit by 343 in the council at Serdica: one and the same hypostasis of F & S
Hahn pp 188 ss Theodore HE II 6 MG 82 1012CD

Nicea proceeded against those that urged the Son was a creature
It affirmed one God, the Father ~~xxxxxx~~ omnipotent; it added the Son, Lord, God from God, born not made, out of the substance of the Father, consubstantial with the Father.

It did not expressly state that substance of the Father was identical with the substance ~~with~~ of the Son

There was a preiss from which such a conclusion could be drawn, namely, that Xtian~~x~~ converts had dropped polytheism and accepted monotheism

Drawing that conclusion was another matter: according to Athan the Fathers at Nice a were not content to say that the Son was similar to the Father; they intended to say he was the same thing by similitude, but that is clumsy; but to say more probably would have seemed to be Sabellian

Something must now be said on the gradual clrification of Homoousion

In scr the Son is named the effulgence of the Father's splendor and the stamp of his substance (Heb 1, 3), the image of God

(2 Cor 4 4; Col 1 15), the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor 1 24)

Spontaneously this led to adding what can be read in the

Wisdom of Solomon 7 25 f: For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is ~~the~~^a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation if the p glory of the Almighty... She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.

To such images preachers and teachers naturally enough added parallel images of their own, so that the Son was said to proceed from the Father, as a child from its parent, a stream from a spring, radiance from the sun, light from light, fire from fire, a torch lighted from another torch

Now our interest is not in these images as such but in the insight to which they can give rise. That insight is the beginning of a grasp of what consubstantial means, though considerable effort will be needed before by trial and error there are found the ~~appropriate~~ appropriate concepts and language to express the insight exactly

NB We are concerned with the process from common sense and its metaphors to post-systematic thought

A first illustration from the middle of the 3rd century

ob 264-65

Dionysius bp Alexandria was combatting Sabellianism that was spreading in his region; he made it very clear that Father Son and Spirit were distinct; but he was rebuked by Dionysius bp of Rome on the ground that he was not sufficiently observant of the monarchy, dividing the holy unity into ~~xx~~ three distinct and quite separate hypostases, and speaking of the Son as a work opus poiema (DS 112-115)

We know Dionysius of Alex answer only through a work of Athanasius (De sententia Dionysii, 18, MG 25 505B - 508A; De decretis nic syn 25 MG 25 461 BC; De synodis, 44 MG 26 769 BC; AW II 59, 21, 269)

Dionysius is said to have replied that while he did not use the word, consubstantial, still he did say ~~xxx~~ what was equivalent, namely, he used the images already mentioned.

"For I used the example of human offspring, which obviously is of the genus as its ~~genex~~ progenitor; I said that parents differ from their children only in this respect, that they are not children... Again I said that a plant, springing from a seed or a ~~x~~ root, was distinct from its source, though of exactly the same nature....."

A second illustration from Pamphilus Martyr (309-10) exegete author of Apology for Origen; a passage Prestige thinks to be the work of Origen MG 14 1308 CD DDT82

The similitudes from Wisd 7:25 breath of power, emanation of glory reveal the communion of substance of Father and Son. For an emanation is homocousios, ~~xxxxxx~~ of one substance, with its source.

However insight into the image does not bring one beyond the ambiguous notion of consubstantiality: of the same species Athanasius will use the images

splendor of light, child of the spring, son of the Father, how can you name them appropriately except as consubstantial De syn 41 MG 26 765 C AW II 267 18f

The meaning of child and of consubstantial is one and the same, and so if one acknowledges the Son as offspring, also acknowledges him as consubstantial De syn 42 MG 26 768C AW II 267 13 f

But he goes beyond them with scriptural quotations

But the bishops, when they caught on to Arian evasions, collected from scripture the words splendor, spring, river, stamp of his substance, and again In your light we shall see light and further I and the Father are one. Then more clearly and succinctly they wrote ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, for what has been ~~ad~~ said above all has that meaning Ad afros 6, MG 26 1040 AB

Moreover there is needed a process of abstraction to reveal the difference between specific consubstantiality in material things and consubstantiality by numerical identity in divine things

As far as bodies⁸⁰ that are similar to one another, certainly they can be distant from one another as human children can be separated from their parents... But since the generation of the Son from the Father is quite different from human generation, the Son is not only similar to the Father's substance (ousia) but cannot be divided from it, since he is one with the Father, and since the Word is in the Father and the Father is in the Word, as radiance is to a light... So the synod rightly wrote that he is consubstantial with the Father both to repudiate the pravity of the heretics and to show that the ~~xxx~~ Word is quite different from things that are made De decretis nic syn 20 MG 25 452 C AW II 17 12 -21

The process of conceiving the meaning of consubstantiality in God according to Athanasius, then, involves three steps: it begins from the images of like springing from like it adds quotations from scripture to establish the difference between material and divine generation it concludes that consubstantiality in the divine involves identity

There remains still a final step: the identity is not total; the Father is not the Son; they are one God but not one person Athanasius himself never arrived at the distinction between ousia and hypostasis, ousia and person, in those terms but he had its equivalent

Though the Son as begotten is distinct, still as God he is the same; and he and the Father are one, as has been said, both in the property of their nature and in their one and the same divinity

.. the divinity of the Son is also that of the Father, and so it is individual, , and in this fashion there is just one God and there is no other God beside him. Because then they are one, and there is but one divinity, therefore whatever is predicated of the Father, also is predicated of the Son except the name, Father. So the Word is named God Jn 1 1 Omnipotent Apoc 1 8 Lord 1 Cor 8 6 Light Jn 8 12/ 17 10 Able to forgive sins Lc 5 24 All the Father has are mine Jn 16 15;

Orat III c.
Arianos 4
MG 26 328 C
- 329 B

Comparison with Maxwell's equations for the electromagnetic field
 Process of discovery involved a sequence of complicated images,
 cylinders interconnected and rolling in unison /image
 Equations ultimately arrived at and verified - no corresponding
 Similarly, homoousion strats from familiar images, proceeds
 by adding corrections based on scripture, ends up with
 distinctions, as begotten different from Father, as divine
 identical with Father

While Athanasius never himself accepted the distinction
 between ~~ousia~~ ousia and hypostasis (for him ousia, to on,
 huparxis, hypostasis were synonymous ad Afros 4 MG 26 1036 B)
 still he had heard it and understood it
 At the council in Alexandria in 362 some bishops asserted one
 hypostasis in God and others asserted three hypostaseis
 He asked the former whether they agreed with Sabellius and
 admitted no real distinction between F S Sp, and they were
 horrified by the suggestion
 He asked the latter whether they were polytheists acknowledging
 not one God but three; they too were horrified that they
 should be interpreted in this manner.

Conclusion

Owen Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman, The Development of
 Doctrine.

Compares Bossuet's position -- Paul knew exactly what is meant
 by "consubstantial" but he did not know the word itself or use it -
 to that of an American in London who goes into a haberdasher's
 and ask for a pair of suspenders, which in England are
 known by the name, braces. The American knows exactly what he
 wants but he does not know the name employed locally.

What we have been endeavoring all along to achieve is a
 not a notional but a real apprehension of a development in
 doctrine

We have considered Christology
 in the mind of Jesus as implicit in his words and works
 in the earliest Palestinian community
 in the minds of Greek-speaking Jewish converts
 in the mind of mission to the Gentiles
 in the mind of Jewish Christians
 in the convictions of Tertullian
 in the Platonist interpretations of Origen
 in the contentions of the Arians
 in the doubts and confusions that followed
 in the clarifications of Nicea and Athanasius

More basically it is an instance of the process
 from common sense and symbolic thinking
 to the beginnings of systematic thinking

It is a process similar to that from commonsense to scientific thought
 but if it differs inasmuch as it is carried on a groundswell,
 not of scientific advance, but of religious experience and
 religious communication. The conviction that resisted
 Arianism was that man's salvation must come, not from some
 created demi-god, but from God himself.