

an affinity with idealist tendencies, in Athanasius the practical consequences of a critical realism, in Augustine an insistence on veritas, in Aquinas an emphasis on esse, the actus essendi.

This rule formulated by Athanasius was put in the form of a prayer, addressed to God, in the venerable Latin preface for the feast of the Blessed Trinity. Quod enim de tua gloria, revelante te, credimus, hoc de Filio tuo, hoc de Spiritu sancto sine differentia discretionis sentimus. What from your revelation we believe about your glory, that without difference or distinction we hold about your Son and about ~~xxxxxSpixix~~ the Holy Spirit.

To be noted, however, is the fact that neither expression speaks of ousia or of homousios. The trinitarian preface speaks of God's glory, the scriptural kabod Iahweh. ~~TMH~~ But it makes<sup>no</sup> attempt to specify just what that glory consists in. The Athanasian rule is even more open. Whatever is said of the Father, the same is to<sup>be</sup> said of the Son. Any style of conceiving the divine attributes -- scriptural, patristic, scholastic, modern -- could be inserted and the same rule could still be observed.

I would note further that the Athanasian rule is a second-degree proposition, a proposition about propositions. Moreover, such second-degree propositions can serve as definitions. The Athanasian rule can serve as a definition of the term homousion, consubstantial. In similar fashion the rules regarding the communicatio idiomatum can be taken as a definition of what was meant at Chalcedon by one person and two natures. Nor does the use of such second-degree propositions rob the first-degree propositions of their reference to reality. What robs them of that reference is an oversight of the world mediated by meaning.

Of course, it is not to be thought that the Fathers at Nicea or at Chalcedon had any notion of second-degree propositions. Augustine went well beyond the precision of thought at Nicea and Chalcedon when he defined 'person' as what there are three of in the trinity. Father, Son, and Spirit, he argued, are three; but there are not three Gods, nor three Fathers, nor three Sons; what then are there three of? The answer was three persons. But Nicea defined neither ousia nor homousios; and Chalcedon defined neither prosonon nor hypostasis nor physis; the meanings of these terms



Still even minimal interpretations have their uses. What is minimal also is unique. It is easily grasped and easily established. It accords with the canonical principle that doctrines are not defined unless it is evident that they are,<sup>18</sup> and the canonical principle also is a theological principle.

The One Person

The third council of Constantinople, before tackling the question of two wills and operations in Christ, saw fit to repeat with additions the formula accepted at Chalcedon. The subject of the natures is named, not simply "our Lord Jesus Christ," but more fully "our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, one of the holy, consubstantial, and life-giving Trinity."<sup>18</sup> Explicitly here, then, the one person in Christ is the divine person

What, he asked, are there three of in the trinity? There are not three Gods nor three Fathers nor three Sons. To have an answer to this question, one says there are three persons.<sup>16</sup>

If one follows Augustine's lead and asks what Chalcedon meant by person or hypostasis and by nature, the answer will be that person or hypostasis means what there is one of in Christ and that nature means what there are two of. What is the one? Obviously, it is the continuously repeated 'one and the same' that in the prior paragraph<sup>17</sup> is said to be two in four different manners. He is perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, consubstantial with the Father in his divinity and consubstantial with us in his humanity, before all ages begotten of the Father in his divinity and in these last days for our sakes and for our salvation born of the virgin Mary, mother of God.

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16) See De trin., V, ix, 10 and VII, iv, 7; PL 42, 918 and 939 f. Also In IOannis evang., tract 39, n. 4; PL 35, 1683.

17) DS 301.

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In somewhat similar fashion one can say that ousia in the decree at Nicea means the reality mediated by meaning when one speaks of God the Father and that realities are consubstantial when what is true of one also is true of the other except that one is not the other.

Such a mode of exposition, of course, is minimal. It should not prevent the historian from investigating the meaning of the terms in previous and contemporary writers and in the acts of the councils themselves. It should not prevent the systematic theologian from comparing the various interpretations and theories that have been propounded and deciding where his preferences lie.

Pope Leo's letter to Flavian, suggests just as much (or just as little) concerning a pre-existence of the human in Christ as a pre-existence of the divine. The actual personal pre-existence of the Logos or the Son entered the Chalcedonian pattern through later theological expositions, especially that under Alexandrian influence." <sup>20</sup>

19) DS 554.

20) Piet Schoonenberg, The Christ, New York, Herder and Herder, 1971.

Now there is a sense in which Father Schoonenberg's statements in the above passage can be accepted. That sense has to do with patterns of thought and expression. But there is a more material meaning, in which the passage can be construed, and so I think it worthwhile to point out that there was a good deal of Alexandrian influence exercised at Ephesus and that Ephesus provides the background for Chalcedon.

The proceedings at Ephesus under the presidency of Cyril of Alexandria on June 22, 431, were in the main as follows. <sup>21</sup>

21) Documentation will be to E. Schwartz, Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum, tome I, vol. 1, Berlin and Leipzig, 1927.

I shall indicate the part and the page and <sup>at times</sup> the line in parentheses.

First, there was read the Nicene creed (2, 12). Next there was read the second epistle of Cyril to Nestorius (2, 13). Then Cyril asked the Fathers to determine whether or not his epistle was in conformity with the Nicene decree (2, 13). First, one hundred and twenty-five Fathers singly and then rest apparently together pronounce Cyril to have written in conformity with Nicea (2, 13-31). The second epistle of Nestorius to Cyril was then read, and Cyril asked the synod whether it was in conformity with Nicea (1, 31). Thirty-five Fathers spoke in turn denying Nestorius to be in agreement with Nicea, and then the rest together shouted against Nestorius (1, 31-35). Other documents were read (1, 36-52) but no vote was taken in their regard. Finally, Nestorius was condemned (2, 54).

The third meaning of 'one' is associated with judgement; it is one in the sense of identity, of Jones being Jones and nobody else, of this cat being this cat and nothing else