
What about applying a pragmatist (or better, perhaps, existentialist) criterion of meaning, in the sense that a belief that fails to make a difference to one's action (or self-understanding and life-praxis) is, to the extent of its failure, empty or merely verbal or conceptual?

By this criterion, there neither is nor could be more than a merely verbal difference between the belief that Jesus is the Son of God in the Jewish sense and the belief that he is the Son of God in the Hellenistic sense, assuming that either belief would make the same difference so far as the action (or the self-understanding and life-praxis) of the believer is concerned—namely, that either belief would lead the believer to live as though Jesus were the explicit primal ontic source of all that is divinely authorized. Provided the Jewish-Christian belief that Jesus is the (human) Son of God expresses and evokes this kind of a life, with a self-understanding for which Jesus is *κυριος* even as the believer is *δουλος* (as Berger makes clear was quite possible on the Jewish use of the term), then the Jewish-Christian belief functions to do every bit as much as the Hellenistic-Christian belief that Jesus is the (divine) Son of God could possibly do. Both beliefs express in different given contexts the same essential claim that Jesus is the explicit primal ontic source of all that is divinely authorized. But, then, by the invocation of a pragmatist (or existentialist) criterion of meaning, they are not really, but merely verbally, or conceptually, different, and hence are functionally equivalent, or, as Marxsen says, "interchangeable."

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The existentialist version of the pragmatist criterion of meaning is that what makes no difference to my self-understanding and life-praxis, and therefore to my existence, cannot be really different in meaning.

Self-understanding is enacted or actualized by existing humanly. Therefore, a real difference in self-understanding means *eo ipso* a real difference in existence. Conversely, if there is no real difference in existence, there cannot be any real difference in self-understanding.

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