

CHRISTOLOGY



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Chapter 1

Christology of the Evangelists

Christology is that part of theology which deals with Our Lord Jesus Christ. In its full extent it comprises the doctrines concerning both the person of Christ and His works; but in the present article we shall limit ourselves to a consideration of the person of Christ. Here again we shall not infringe on the domain of the historian and Old-Testament theologian, who present their respective contributions under the headings JESUS CHRIST, and MESSIAS; hence the theology of the Person of Jesus Christ, considered in the light of the New Testament or from the Christian point of view, is the proper subject of the present article.

The person of Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the Son or the Word of the Father, Who “was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man.” These mysteries, though foretold in the Old Testament, were fully revealed in the New, and clearly developed in Christian Tradition and theology. Hence we shall have to study our subject

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under the triple aspect of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Christian Tradition.

In the Old Testament

From what has been said we understand that the Old Testament is not considered here from the viewpoint of the Jewish scribe, but of the Christian theologian. Jesus Christ Himself was the first to use it in this way by His repeated appeal to the Messianic passages of the prophetic writings. The Apostles saw in these prophecies many arguments in favour of the claims and the teachings of Jesus Christ; the Evangelists, too, are familiar with them, though they appeal less frequently to them than the patristic writers do. Even the Fathers either state the prophetic argument only in general terms or they quote single prophecies; but they thus prepare the way for the deeper insight into the historical perspective of the Messianic predictions which began to prevail in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Leaving the statement of the historical development of the Messianic prophecies to the writer of the article MESSIAS, we shall briefly call attention to the prophetic predictions of the genealogy of Christ, of His birth, His infancy, His names, His offices, His public life, His sufferings, and His glory.

(1) References to the human genealogy of the Messiah are quite numerous in the Old Testament: He is represented as the seed of the woman, the son of Sem, the son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the son of David, the prince of pastors, the offspring of the marrow of the high cedar (Genesis 3:1-19; 9:18-27; 12:1-9; 17:1-9; 18:17-19; 22:16-18; 26:1-5; 27:1-15; Numbers 24:15-19; 2 Samuel 7:1-16; 1 Chronicles 17:1-17; Jeremiah 23:1-8; 33:14-26; Ezekiel 17). The Royal Psalmist extols the Divine genealogy of the future Messiah in the words: "The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. ii, 7).

(2) The Prophets frequently speak of the birth of the expected Christ. They locate its place in Bethlehem of Juda (Micah 5:2-14), they determine its time by the passing of the sceptre from Juda (Genesis 49:8-12), by the seventy weeks of Daniel (ix, 22-27), and by the "little while" mentioned in the Book of Aggeus (ii, 1-10). The Old-Testament seers know also that the Messiah will be born of a Virgin Mother (Isaiah 7:1-17), and that His appearance, at least His public

appearance, will be preceded by a precursor (Isaiah 40:1-11; Malachi 4:5-6).

(3) Certain events connected with the infancy of the Messiah have been deemed important enough to be the subject of prophetic prediction. Among these are the adoration of the Magi (Ps. lxxxi, 1-17), the slaughter of the innocents (Jeremiah 31:15-26), and the flight into Egypt (Hosea 11:1-7). It is true that in the case of these prophecies, as it happens in the case of many others, their fulfilment is their clearest commentary; but this does not undo the fact that the events were really predicted.

(4) Perhaps there is less need of insisting on the predictions of the better known Messianic names and titles, seeing that they involve less obscurity. Thus in the prophecies of Zacharias the Messiah is called the Orient, or, according to the Hebrew text, the “bud” (iii; vi, 9-15), in the Book of Daniel He is the Son of Man (vii), in the Prophecy of Malachias He is the Angel of the Testament (ii, 17; iii, 6), in the writings of Isaias He is the Saviour (51:1, 52:12 and 62), the Servant of the Lord (49:1), the Emmanuel (8:1-10), the Prince of peace (9:1-7).

(5) The Messianic offices are considered in a general way in the latter part of Isaias ; in particular, the Messiah is considered as prophet in the Book of Deuteronomy (xviii, 9-22); as king in the Canticle of Anna (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and in the royal song of the Psalmist (xliv); as priest in the sacerdotal type Melchisedech (Genesis 14:14-20) and in the Psalmist’s words “a priest forever” (cix); as Goel, or Avenger, in the second part of Isaias (63:1-6); as mediator of the New Testament, under the form of a covenant of the people (Isaiah 42:1; 43:13), and of the light of the Gentiles (Isaiah 49).

(6) As to the public life of the Messiah, Isaias gives us a general idea of the fulness of the Spirit investing the Anointed (11:1-16), and of the Messianic work. The Psalmist presents a picture of the Good Shepherd; Isaias summarizes the Messianic miracles; Zacharias exclaims, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion”, thus predicting Christ’s solemn entrance into Jerusalem; the Psalmist refers to this same event when he mentions the praise out of the mouth of infants. To return once more to the Book of Isaias, the prophet foretells the rejection of the Messiah through a league with death; the Psalmist

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alludes to the same mystery where he speaks of the stone which the builders rejected.

(7) Need we say that the sufferings of the Messiah were fully predicted by the prophets of the Old Testament? The general idea of the Messianic victim is presented in the context of the words “sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not” (Ps. xxxix); in the passage beginning with the resolve “Let us put wood on his bread” (Jeremiah 1 1), and in the sacrifice described by the prophet Malachias (i). Besides, the series of the particular events which constitute the history of Christ’s Passion has been described by the prophets with a remarkable minuteness: the Psalmist refers to His betrayal in the words “the man of my peace... supplanted me” (xl), and Zacharias knows of the “thirty pieces of silver” (xi); the Psalmist praying in the anguish of his soul, is a type of Christ in His agony (Ps. liv); His capture is foretold in the words “pursue and take him” and “they will hunt after the soul of the just” (Ps. lxx; xciii); His trial with its false witnesses may be found represented in the words “unjust witnesses have risen up against me, and iniquity hath lied to itself” (Ps. xxvi); His flagellation is portrayed in the description of the man of sorrows (Isaiah 52:13; 53:12) and the words “scourges were gathered together upon me” (Ps. xxxiv); the betrayer’s evil lot is pictured in the imprecations of Psalm 108; the crucifixion is referred to in the passages “What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands?” (Zechariah 13), “Let us condemn him to a most shameful death” (Wisdom 2), and “They have dug my hands and my feet” (Ps. xxi); the miraculous darkness occurs in Amos 8; the gall and vinegar are spoken of in Psalm 68; the pierced heart of Christ is foreshadowed in Zechariah 12. The sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 21:1-14), the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:1-28), the ashes of purification (Numbers 19:1-10), and the brazen serpent (Numbers 21:4-9) hold a prominent place among the types prefiguring the suffering Messiah. The third chapter of Lamentations is justly considered as the dirge of our buried Redeemer.

(8) Finally, the glory of the Messiah has been foretold by the Prophets of the Old Testament. The context of such phrases as “I have risen because the Lord hath protected me” (Psalm 3), “My flesh shall rest in hope (Psalm 15), “On the third day he will raise us up” (Hosea 5:15, 6:3), “O death, I will be thy death” (Hosea 13:6-15a), and “I know that my Redeemer liveth” (Job 19:23-27) referred

the devout Jewish worshipper to something more than a merely earthly restoration, the fulfilment of which began to be realized in the Resurrection of Christ. This mystery is also implied, at least typically, in the first fruits of the harvest (Leviticus 23:9-14) and the delivery of Jonas from the belly of the fish (Jonah 2). Nor is the Resurrection of the Messiah the only element of Christ's glory predicted by the Prophets. Psalm 67 refers to the Ascension; Joel, ii, 28-32, to the coming of the Paraclete; Isaiah 9, to the call of the Gentiles; Mich., iv, 1-7, to the conversion of the Synagogue; Daniel 2:27-47, to the kingdom of the Messiah as compared with the kingdom of the world. Other characteristics of the Messianic kingdom are typified by the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8-9; 29:43; 40:33-36; Numbers 9:15-23), the mercy-seat (Exodus 25:17-22; Psalm 79:1), Aaron the high priest (Exodus 28:1; 30:1; 10; Numbers 16:39-40), the manna (Exodus 16:1-15; Psalm 77:24-25), and the rock of Horeb (Exodus 17:5-7; Numbers 20:10-11; Psalm 104:41). A Canticle of thanksgiving for the Messianic benefits is found in Isaiah 12.

The Books of the Old Testament are not the only source from which the Christian theologian may learn the Messianic ideas of pre-Christian Jewry. The Sibylline oracles, the Book of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, the Psalms of Solomon, the Ascensio Moysis, the Revelation of Baruch, the Fourth Book of Esdras, and several Talmudic and Rabbinic writings are rich depositories of pre-Christian views concerning the expected Messiah. Not that all of these works were written before the coming of Christ; but, though partially post-Christian in their authorship, they preserve a picture of the Jewish world of thought, dating back, at least in its outline, centuries before the coming of Christ.

Jesus: The King of the Jews in Matthew

Matthew, the first Gospel in the New Testament canon, follows carefully the narrative of Mark. Yet it also presents a highly distinctive theology in general and Christology in particular. While Matthew makes substantial additions to Mark's Gospel, such as the opening genealogy and extensive teaching blocks concerning the kingdom of God (5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25), Matthew is faithful to the major themes of Mark's Christology. Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, Whose fate is the destiny of the Son of Man.

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While theologians have put forth several proposals concerning the structure of Matthew's Gospel, most agree that the defining theme is the kingdom of God, for which Matthew prefers the term kingdom of "heaven" in compliance with the Jewish refusal to use God's name. Matthew bases his story mainly on the materials in Mark, incorporating most of Mark and following Mark's order for the most part (when he does not, Luke does). Typical of Matthew's structure is the intertwining of narrative and discourse and its orderly, systematic nature. Matthew is characterized by a Jewish style and material pertinent to Jews.

If Mark is mainly interested in the miracles and deeds of the Messiah, Matthew has an eye on Jesus' famous teachings. It is in this Gospel that many of Jesus' famous teachings are found, such as the Sermon on the Mount (chaps.5-7), the demands of discipleship (chaps.10), the parables of the kingdom (chap.13), his teaching on eschatology (chap.24-25), and so on. Jesus' most prominent activity in Matthew's Gospel is teaching. As God's Son, he uniquely knows the Father's will and can reveal it to others (11: 25-30). The way Jesus chooses to convey his teachings is mainly in the form of parables, which are meant to hide the "secret" of the kingdom from those who are not yet in the kingdom (13:11). The Sermon on the Mount is a constitution of the kingdom, and the Beatitudes (5:3-12) establish the conditions of entry into the kingdom. Jesus teaches the citizens of the kingdom how to pray to their "father in heaven", the theme of "Father in heaven" runs through the sermon (5:16,45;6:1,4,18;etc).

As the premier Teacher, Jesus reveals God's will in his public ministry, but his teaching and preaching are largely ignored or rejected. It is ironic, therefore, that only non-disciples describe Jesus as teacher (8:19; 9:11; 19:16; etc.). The disciples of Jesus never call him teacher but rather Lord and similar titles. For Matthew, Jesus, the revealer of God's will is not only a teacher but also a preacher of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (4:17;9:35), a message requiring repentance and obedience to God's will. In the tradition of the prophets, Jesus experiences rejection as did the prophets of old (5:10-12; 26:3-5) and John the Baptist (14:1-13).

While it is true that Matthew highlights Jesus' teaching, he does not ignore the deeds of the Messiah. In fact, he records a myriad of healings, exorcisms, and nature miracle (such as walking on the sea

and multiplying food). For example, in chapters 8 and 9, he recounts no less than eight healings and several other miracles. With the same kind of authority with which Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount (chap.5-7), he heals and frees people from all kinds of needs. The one powerful in word is also powerful in deed.

The opening of the Gospel shows how the Markan understanding of Jesus as Son of David and Son of God is distinctively influenced by the Torah, the Bible of the Jews and our Old Testament, and by an interaction with Pharisaic Judaism. The infancy narratives (chaps.1-2) identify Jesus as the Son of David. Matthew establishes not only the Davidic line but also Jesus' link with the whole history of Israel going back to Abraham. The Gospel contains several references to David not found in Mark (9:27; 12:3, 23; 15:22; 20:30-31). The David connection is made most explicit at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, when Jesus is identified as the king and "Son of David" (21:5, 9, 15). Several aspects of the infancy account, such as the escape to Egypt and the killing of babies (2.13-23), also echo the exodus story of the Old Testament and help create the image of Jesus as a Mosaic figure who will save his people (cf. Exod. 3.10). Like Moses of old, the new Moses teaches on the mountain (chap.5-7, the Sermon on the Mount; cf. 20-24, the giving of the law through Moses on Mount Sinai).

It is no wonder, then, that Matthew emphasizes the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He cites Scripture directly fifty-seven times. From these passages we learn that Jesus is God's Son (2:15; cf. Hosea 11:1), he is a Nazarene (2:23 cf. Judg.13:5, a person totally devoted to God and God's service), he was born in Bethlehem as a ruler of the people (2:6; cf. Micah 5:2), and so on. He will also proclaim justice to the Gentiles (12:18; cf. Isa. .42:1-4).

The Matthean Jesus, Son of God, is Immanuel (Hebrew, "God among us"). This line runs through the Gospel. In the infancy narrative, Jesus is identified as "God with us" (1:23), in the promise to the church Jesus promises his presence forever (18:20), and the Great Commandment to spread the good news of the kingdom is backed up by the same promise (28:20).

Matthean scholars have taken various approaches to determining the specific shape of his Christology. Many interpreters regard the titles that Matthew ascribes to Jesus as the decisive clues. This

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approach usually revolves around the centrality of Son of God. Another tradition has argued that while Son of God is a central title, it must be supplemented by additional ideas to achieve a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of Matthew's Christology. Yet another approach highlights the "royal Christology" of Matthew, focusing on Jesus as Messiah King and Son of God. These various emphases need not, of course, be at variance with one another; they may even be complementary to a large extent. What can be said safely is that the royal emphasis is visible in that Matthew wants to introduce his readers, Jews and non-Jews alike, to the Messiah King. This emphasis appears at the beginning of the Gospel when the magi ask about the birth of the "king of the Jews" (2:1-4).

Matthew's main title for Jesus is Messiah; it occurs a number of times (1:1; 2:4; 11:2; 16:16; 27:17; etc.). For the Jews, the term Messiah implies a confession that in Jesus the Old Testament promises of restoration and salvation are coming to pass. The Messiah fulfills the Old Testament in his person and ministry. The Messiah is the new Moses, he brings the fulfillment of the law and prophets (3:15; 5:17;-48; etc.), and he is the suffering and rejected Servant of Yahweh (3:17; 8:17; 13:14-15; 23:37; 27:5-10; etc.). In Matthew 8:17, Jesus' healing ministry is seen as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4, "He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows," While in Matthew 12:15-21, Jesus' withdrawal from public attention is understood in light of the first Servant Song, Isaiah 42:1-4.

As the Messiah, Jesus is described at several crucial junctures in the Gospel of Matthew as the Son of God. This title is perhaps even more crucial to the first Gospel than Messiah, yet there is no need to put them at odds with each other. In 3:17, the Father announces publicly his identification of Jesus as "my Son"; in 4:3, the devil addresses Jesus as God's Son; in 11:27, Jesus refers to his special relationship with God as that of a son to a father; in 14:33, the men in the boat confess Jesus as God's Son; and so on. In light of later Christological developments, it is interesting to note that even though Matthew connects Jesus' divine sonship to his virginal conception (1:18-25), he does not develop the notion of the divine nature of Jesus. He focuses instead on more functional aspects of Jesus' sonship. Jesus is God's Son primarily in the sense that he perfectly obeys the will of his Father, especially the will of God that the Messiah must suffer and die.

Four passages in Isaiah 40-55, usually called “Second Isaiah” by scholars (indicating that this part of the book comes from a later period and another hand than the first thirty-nine chapters), are conventionally designated the Servant Songs” because they together present a distinctive vision of a particular “Servant of Yahweh” or “Suffering Servant” to whom is entrusted a special mission on behalf of his people. This figure has traditionally been identified with Jesus in the New Testament.

As the Messiah, Jesus is also the destined king of Israel, though the crucified one. For Matthew, to be the Messiah is to be the king of Israel (2:2; 21:5). But even though Jesus is the king of Israel, he is a unique king because he is God’s Son and reigns through his sufferings (27:11).

The title Son of Man occurs often in Matthew, over thirty times, and basically follows the usage of Mark. Matthew emphasizes the role of the Son of Man as the coming Savior and Judge (13:41; 19:28), as well as his eschatological role.

Against the framework of Matthew’s Gospel, the centrality of the idea of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus also acts as the inaugurator of the kingdom. This he accomplishes in three moments: in his public ministry, in his passion and in his vindicating resurrection. After the resurrection, the disciples of Christ are sent in to the world to preach the good news of the gospel and to invite all nations to obedience to the master, teacher, and king (28:18-20). This emphasis on the universal scope of Jesus’ ministry culminates in the last verses of the Gospel, but it runs through the narrative as a dominant theme, beginning with the visit of the Gentile magi to the newborn king of the Jews in chapter 2.

Jesus: The Friend of All in Luke

As in Matthew, Markan material serves as the basis for the Gospel of Luke, but Luke arranges and edits it creatively. A basic difference between Luke and the other synoptic Gospels is that Luke’s narrative is divided into two parts: the Gospel and the book of Acts. Mark, therefore, describes events following Jesus’ resurrection to which Mark and Matthew allude but never describe. The Lukan narrator thus extends the story of Jesus by recounting the vital role the risen Lord plays in the life of the early church.

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Although Luke writes with Gentiles in view, his two-volume work presents one of the most traditional Christologies of the New Testament. The Gospel of Luke begins with a prologue in which the narrator explains his purpose, namely, to provide his readers with assurance about the events concerning Jesus. The narrator has done a thorough, critical survey of existing materials about Jesus and offers his best account. The manner in which Luke orders the events of his story produces a narrative with a plot that can be summarized as follows:

The Messiah of God comes to his people Israel as the Spirit-anointed Son of God with a gracious offer of salvation: the forgiveness of sins. Despite this gracious offer, Israel does not repent. Nonetheless, its rejection of the Messiah paradoxically fulfills God's plan that the Messiah must suffer in order to enter into his glory so that repentance and forgiveness can be preached in his name to all nations.

Luke structures his Gospel story around two significant phases in the life of Jesus: the Galilean ministry during which Jesus as the anointed Messiah is introduced (4:14-9:50) and the journey of the Messiah to Jerusalem, where he is rejected (9:51-19:44). Luke 9:51 is the crucial turning point in which Jesus turns his face toward Jerusalem to begin his way to the cross, where he will be slain (19:45-24:53).

Jesus and deliverance stand at the center of the divine plan of God. Questions such as Who is Jesus? What does he bring and How do we know he is God's chosen? are central Christological questions for Luke. In the first two introductory chapters, Jesus is introduced as a regal figure. Both the announcement to Mary and the remarks of Zechariah make explicit his Davidic connection (1:31-33, 69). The royal image is enhanced in his kingly entry into the city of David (19:38). Similar to Matthew, Luke also explicit the connection between Jesus and the history and hopes of Israel. In 2:25-32, Simeon encounters the "consolation of Israel" and sees his hopes fulfilled. The final Lukan affirmation of Jesus' messiahship appears in 24:26-27 (and 44-47), where the risen Jesus identifies himself as "the Christ," whose sufferings and subsequent glories were predicted in the Old Testament. At the same time, Jesus corrects the earthly expectations of his followers and "opens their minds" to the Old Testament so they can see that Jesus suffering was predicted (24:27,45).

The idea of Jesus as a prophet emerges in his inaugural sermon at Nazareth, his hometown (4:16-30). His first sermon is based on the messianic passage of Isaiah 61:1, which talks about the Messiah, the Anointed One, being sent to preach the good news, offer forgiveness, heal the blind, and set captives free. The Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha are depicted as parallels to Jesus (4:25-27), and people soon recognize Jesus as a prophet (7:16; 9:7-9, 19). In the tradition of the Old Testament prophets pronounces woes against the scribes (11:47-51) and mourns for Jerusalem (13:34-35). In the conversation on the Emmaus road, the two men connect Jesus' person with the Old Testament prophetic tradition and the law (24:19,21).

One distinctive features in Luke's portrait of Jesus is Luke's interest in Jesus' prayer life. Jesus is depicted as praying at every critical turn in his ministry, beginning at his baptism (3:21; see also 6:12; 9:18; 23:46; etc.). In Acts, Jesus' followers pray for guidance and for power (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 10:9; 14:23; etc.).

Luke applies a rich variety of titles to Jesus that highlights his ministry and personhood: Jesus is Savior (2:11), the Son of David (18:38), and King (19:38). He is the Son of the Father (1:35; 9:35) but also of Adam (3:38). He is compared to Jonah of old and to Solomon (11:29-32). As the Son of Man, he not only suffers and is exalted but also ministers (5:24) and shares the lot of those who are marginalized and outcasts (9:58). Another frequent title is teacher (7:40; 22:11).

Above all, Jesus reaches out to and is a friend of all kinds of people: Women, the poor, the sick, the despised, and others who are in danger of being ignored by the religious and political establishment. Jesus' love is universal and all-inclusive. Women especially receive a great deal of attention in this Gospel (7:12, 36-50; 8:40-56; 10:38-42; 13:10-13; 15:8-10; 18:1-8; 21:1-4; 23:55-56).

Jesus as the Son of Man introduced as early as 5:24, and the title appears frequently in Luke, as it does in Mark and Matthew. Luke highlights the role of the Son of Man in his mission to save the lost (19:10) and to suffer and die for sinners (chap.24). This theme and Jesus' status as Lord become the focus to dispute later in the Gospel (20:41-44; 22:67-71).

Even though the title Son of God appears quite often in Luke, Jesus' divine sonship receives relatively less attention in Luke than in

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other Gospels. Still, Luke establishes the basic contours of Jesus' divine sonship. The fact that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:32-35) forms the basis for Jesus' intimate personal relationship with God, a central theme in this Gospel (2:49; 10:21-22). By having Jesus' address God as "Father" on the cross, Luke indicates that even at that point in Jesus' life, his intimate fellowship with God continues unabated (23:34,46). Furthermore, as the Son of God, Jesus inherits the kingdom that God promised to the Son of David. Also, as the Son of God, Jesus is holy, set apart for the special service of bringing salvation (1:68-69; 19:9-10).

While all the Gospel writers portray the resurrection as the pivotal event of salvation history, only Luke mentions and develops the ascension, an event that for him provides the link between Luke 24 and Acts 1. A risen Savior is one who can both rule and consummate his promise. He is the one who forgive and signify forgiveness by bestowing blessing (see Acts 2:21; 10:43). Luke sets forth the Abrahamic promise of blessing to the peoples of the earth as realized in Jesus (see Acts 3:22-26). Jesus also fulfills the Davidic hopes (Luke 1:31-33).

Jesus' miracles, indicating the arrival of the new era, also authenticate Jesus' role in the divine plan (7:22 see also Acts 2:22-24). In fact, the scope of Jesus' works of healing shows the breadth of Jesus' authority. He heals those suffering from a flow of blood, a withered hand, blindness, deafness, paralysis, epilepsy, and so on, and he exorcises evil spirits. He even resuscitates the dead and exercises power over nature.

Thus far we have focused on Luke's Christology as it is presented in his Gospel. In his second volume, Luke finishes the Christological portrait of Jesus begun in the Gospel by completing themes introduced in the Gospel. For example, at the announcement of Jesus' birth, the angel Gabriel told Mary that God would give her son the throne of David, and he would reign over the house of Jacob forever (3:32-33). At the end of the Gospel, this promise still awaits its fulfillment. But in Acts, readers discover Jesus' messianic enthronement and exaltation at God's right hand. The Gospel focuses on the earthly Jesus, while Acts focuses on the ascended Christ.

The Pentecost speech of Peter in chapter 2 of the Book of Acts shows evidence that Jesus, having been raised from the dead, has

been exalted to God's right hand, according to the prophecy of David. Peter's next speech in the following chapter is replete with christological themes: Jesus is God's servant, the holy and just one, the leader of life, the Messiah who has been designated for Israel, the prophet of whom Moses spoke. Those who reject this prophet will be cut off from the restored people of Israel, whereas those who repent will experience the forgiveness of sins and times of refreshment.

Jesus: The Word of Life in John

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:30-31

In this passage, the purpose of the fourth Gospel is stated explicitly, and its focus is on Christ and his ministry and significance. That signs should lead to belief and belief to life is clear enough. The ambiguity comes in the precise meaning of the Greek phrase "that you may believe": Does it mean "that you may believe" as a result of conversion, or "that you might go on believing," with reference to those already in the faith. Most commentators opt for the latter. Although the two explanations might not be mutually exclusive. Clearly, this Gospel is preeminently a work of Christology since Jesus is the focal point of its many signs and discourses. This Christology goes beyond anything in the Synoptic Gospels. Most notably, John portrays Jesus as the incarnation of God's preexistent Word.

Current scholarship reminds us that the Gospel of John more than likely went through several revisions, for John's writing is a result of decades of reflection on who Jesus is. Because of these successive revisions, the Gospel contains Christological strata: For example, it contains traditional Christologies that present Jesus as the expected Messiah and more developed ones that present him as the Son of Man who has descended from heaven. The christologies are most fully developed in John (cf. Mark) and are almost put in juxtaposition

John is different from the Synoptic Gospel first in both chronology and geography. In John, Jesus' ministry centers in Judea, not in Galilee, and his ministry lasts three years, not one. Further, in John, Jesus'

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ministry is intimately connected to the observance of the great pilgrimage feasts of Judaism, and even though Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, there is an irreconcilable conflict between the Jews and Christ. Among many other differences, it is highly significant that the Johannine Jesus does not cast out evil spirits. The number of healings is meager; three altogether and one resuscitation (Lazarus, chap. 11). His actions are called “signs” and have an obvious symbolic importance. The Jesus of the fourth Gospel does not teach in parables; in contrast to the synoptics, in John, Jesus is a monologist. John records many miracles, but they often differ from those in Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Even the entire structure of the Gospel of John is unique compared to the other Gospels: After the prologue about the Word (1:1-18), the first part, the “Book of Signs” (1:19-12:50), contains miracles and speeches, and the second part, the “Book of Glory” (chap.13-20). Tells about the farewell speeches of Jesus, his suffering on the cross, and his subsequent resurrection. A later appendix is attached to the Gospel (chap.21).

John’s prologue is unique among the Gospels. Whereas Mark makes no reference to Jesus’ earthly beginnings, Matthew and Luke begin with infancy accounts that trace Jesus’ origins to Abraham (Matthew) and even to Adam (Luke). John, however, begins by placing Jesus in the very bosom of God (1:1), in eternity. The prologue introduces the main themes about Jesus to be developed during the course of the Gospel such as light, life, truth, and so on. The most distinctive feature is the application of the title *Logos* to Christ, which connects Jesus with both the Old Testament beginning, the Word as creative force in Genesis 1, and with the Greek concept of wisdom. This prologue sets the Jesus story in eternity before the Word was made flesh. Before creation, the Word was already with God. The Word was with God and was God. All things were made through the Word, and the Word was life and light (1:1-5). This *Logos*, who became flesh and dwelt among human beings, was full of grace and truth (1:14). He is unique in that he is the only begotten Son of the Father. In him, and only in him, we see who the Father is (1:18).

From the first chapter on, John begins to compile a list of titles, images, and characterizations of Jesus: the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World (1:29, 36), Rabbi (1:38), Messiah (1:41), “the one Moses wrote about in the Law , and about whom the prophets

also wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (1:45), Son of God and King of Israel (1:49).

Typical of John is his dual emphasis on the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. John’s Gospel is in many ways the most human portrayal of Jesus: Jesus experiences fatigue (4:6) and anguish (12:27); he weeps (11:33) and changes his mind (7:1-10). On the other hand, Jesus is “God’s Word”, the *Logos*. He speaks as no man has ever spoken (7:46); he is the one who reveals the Father (1:18).

John’s Gospel is full of symbolic material and contains much less action than the Synoptics. Almost everything about Jesus is conveyed through images and symbols. Names (1:42), numbers (2:1; 21:11), especially the number seven, which denotes perfection to the Jews, and personality portraits such as that of Nicodemus, who stands for all teachers of the Jews, are symbolic.

A central theme in John’s Christology is the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son (chap.5), and this becomes the central issue in the debate between Jesus and the Jews. The first christological debate is occasioned by a Sabbath healing in Jerusalem when, following that incident, Jesus claims equality with his Father. The narrator makes explicit Jesus’ claims of equality with God: The Father has shown him all things and has given him authority to do what God does, even to grant life and to judge. Yet even as an equal, Jesus is totally depended on the Father (5:30). To honor the Son, whom the Father has sent, is to honor the Father. To Jews, this is a blasphemous claim because it seems to compromise the core of their confession of faith, monotheism. Following the miracle of feeding in chapter 6, Jesus claims to be the bread of life who gives life to the world. His flesh and blood are to be eaten. Jesus goes to the extreme by saying that he was before Abraham, the forefather of faith and of the people of Israel (8:58). After such statements, the opposition grows stronger, and already in chapter 8 people are ready to silence him.

Interestingly enough, even Jesus’ death and resurrection are put in ambiguous, mysterious terms: John talks about Jesus “being glorified” (7:39; 8:54; etc.) and “being lifted up” (12:34)-yes, lifted up to the cross but also put down to death, to be raised to life immortal.

It was already mentioned that the Johannine Jesus performs miracle called “signs”. Jesus perform seven sings, perhaps corresponding to

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the seven days of the new creation, and they are carefully timed: In the first part of the Gospel, Jesus' "time has not yet come" (2:4; 7:30; 8:20); then suddenly in 12:23 "the hour has come", and from this point on it is also made clear that the expression refers to the hour of his death.

But the function of the signs is ambiguous to say the least. The more Jesus performs these signs, the more confusion he creates, so that from early on the people start asking, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority?" (2:18) and "what miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you" (6:30). The signs by themselves may fascinate and even lead to superficial assent, but they do not lead to full commitment of faith. This becomes clear to the author, and he quotes the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 6:10), who was also rejected by his people, to make explicit that all Jesus' signs did not lead to belief in him (12:40).

The most distinctive feature of Jesus' self-designation is the list of "I am" sayings, seven altogether, corresponding to the seven signs. The ambiguous "I am" phrase goes back to the self-revelation of Yahweh in the first part of the Old Testament when God names himself "I AM" in response to Moses' request (Exod. 3:14). Each of those sayings is connected to its context, either a sign, a speech, or a feast:

1. "I am the bread of life" (6:35, 48), after multiplying the loaves.
2. "I am the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5), at the Feast of Booths, in which a huge Torch is lit to give light; following the feast, Jesus opens the eyes of a man Born blind.
3. "I am the gate for the sheep" (10:7).
4. "I am the good shepherd" (10:7).
5. "I am the true vine" (15:1); these three self-designations highlight the importance of the relationship between Jesus and his followers.
6. "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25), as a response to the sisters of the Lazarus, whom Jesus would raise from the dead.
7. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (14:6), in reference to the queries of his disciples, who were confused about Jesus' teaching and future destiny.

In addition to these seven “I am” statements, there are also more mysterious open-ended self-designations without an attribute (94:26; 6:20; etc.); these could be translated in English as ‘I am he,’ obviously referring to his divine status as God.

Of all the various titles, images, and symbols applied to Jesus in the Gospel of John, two seem to be the most important: Messiah and Son of God. These are major confessional titles for John. At the beginning of the Gospel, John the Baptist denies he is the Messiah, thereby confirming that Jesus is (1:20). Then Andrew claims to have found the Messiah in Jesus (1:41). Soon after, Jesus names himself the Messiah (4:26), which is extraordinary given that the Synoptics’ Jesus is hesitant to do so. As do the other evangelists, John also qualified his understanding of the Messiah. For John, Jesus is the Messiah because he is the one whom God sent into the world, the son of Man who came from above, God’s Word made flesh.

John contains fewer references to Jesus as the Son of God, but it is another crucial way of identifying Jesus. At the beginning of the Gospel, John testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, and Nathanael confesses, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God” (1:49). In fact, he is “God’s one and only son” (3:18). In 5:25, Son of God appears in a section that otherwise refers to Jesus as “the Son” (5:19, 21, etc.). Speaking of the power Father has given him, Jesus says that “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live” (5:25). Jesus’ claim to be God’s Son ultimately brings about his death sentence; “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God” (19:7).

The existence of four Gospels in the canon is an everlasting testimony to the richness and legitimate plurality of the biblical picture of Jesus Christ. While they all share a common historical and theological basis they do not have a forced uniformity. Rather like a rainbow with many colors, the four Gospels highlight various aspects of the life, death, and resurrection of the one who was and is confessed as Lord and Savior.

Chapter 2

Pauline Christology

Readers of the New Testament need to be reminded that although the Synoptic Gospels are the first three writings in the order of the canon, they are not the earliest writings. Ten to fifteen years before the composition of these Gospels, the apostle Paul had already written most, if not all, of his letters. Nevertheless, because the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John offer the most detailed narratives of Jesus' life and ministry, it is appropriate to place them first among the various New Testament writings.

Paul is the premier theologian of the New Testament. Traditionally, all "Pauline" letters were regarded as written by Paul. Current New Testament scholarship agrees that some letters in the Pauline corpus represent the thought forms of Paul's theology but most likely were not written by him. They were perhaps written by his students and younger colleagues. Letters that most scholars consider authentic (meaning they were written

by Paul himself) are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. A majority of scholars also believes that Colossians and Ephesians were written by Paul, even though Ephesians was most likely a circular letter rather than a letter addressed specifically to the church in Ephesus. The Pastoral Letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) and 2 Thessalonians are regarded as later literary products in the line of Pauline theology.

To do justice to Paul's Christology, one has to take into consideration the special nature of his writings. Paul's writings are letters, epistles, not theological treatises. In fact, all the letters of Paul are pastoral, missionary, and theological response to existing needs and problems in the young Christian congregations. They are occasional in nature. Paul nowhere presents a systematic Christology or theology, and no one letter can be regarded as a comprehensive presentation.

From what did Paul's Christology stem? On what sources did he base it? These questions shed light on the shape and content of his thinking about Christ. Understandably, several proposals have been presented among scholars. Because Paul was a Jew, even a Jewish Pharisee, a religious teacher, it would be most natural to locate the origin of his Christology in Judaism. However, even though Pauline theology, like the rest of the New Testament, is embedded in Judaism for the simple reason that the Bible of the early church was the Old Testament, the origin of Paul's Christology lies elsewhere. This was the view of the so-called History of Religious School, which maintained that the Christology of Paul stems from ideas in the Greco Roman world, particularly those found in its various forms of pagan religions. But this proposal has not met with much acceptance either.

There is no doubt that part of Paul's Christology stems from his Judaic background and that he occasionally borrowed from the secular or religious environment of the Greco-Roman world, but these influences do not explain the main roots and origins of Paul's Christology. The most viable origin of Paul's Christology is his conversion experience, his subsequent call, and the early Christian tradition. In his conversion and call to preach the gospel, Paul received what he calls "the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:7, 1 1-23 is the most extensive account of Paul's call and subsequent events). Paul says that "God... was pleased to reveal his Son to me" (Gal. 1:15-16). As a result of his conversion and call, Paul learned that Jesus was risen

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from the dead and exalted at the right hand of the Father. He claims to have seen the risen Lord (1 Cor. 9:1).

In Romans 1:4, Paul testifies that Jesus was vindicated to be the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead. Paul argues that while we once viewed Jesus from a purely human point of view, we do so no longer (2 Cor. 5:16). In other words, he and all those “in Christ” now view Jesus as the Son of God. Paul appropriates in his writings early Christological confessions, for example, the famous Christ hymn in Philippians 2:5-11. But even the section in his writings that are not based on previously existing hymns and confessions reveal a Christology growing out of the emerging tradition among the Christian churches.

With that in mind, how should we uncover the Christology that Paul develops in his letters? One standard approach has been to study the titles of Christ in the same way practiced in the study of the Gospels. Indeed, the titles highlight many important aspects of Paul’s Christology, but two points have to be taken into consideration. First, individual titles do not offer a complete picture unless a person relates them to one another and to the whole. Second, Paul is more interested in soteriology, the benefits of salvation, than in titles, and so at best the titles he uses reveal only part of his Christology by examining soteriological concepts, such as sanctification, liberation, and forgiveness, and working backward to the person of Christ. For example, the one who sanctifies is the Holy One. But again, the soteriological concepts must be related to one another to avoid the danger of fragmentations. Yet another approach to Paul’s Christology has been a systematization of Christological topics, not unlike the method used in systematic theology. Here a danger is also evident: If one regards Paul’s occasional pastoral response as theological treatises, their distinctive nature is not honored.

The preferred approach in current New Testament studies is to appreciate the narrative framework and nature of Paul’s letters. Theologians, rather than trying to synthesize Paul’s Christology, examine the underlying narrative plot of the letters. This means a careful study of each individual letter in the same way that current Gospel study process. A good care can be made for the claim that for Paul his own personal story, the story of Israel, and the story of God’s saving plan for the world are intertwined with the story of Christ. In

other words, this is “the story of God’s dealings with Israel and the Gentiles in light of what God has done in his Son, Jesus Christ”. Each of Paul’s letters offers a distinctive, context-related response to an aspect of this story in light of the needs and problems faced by a young first-century church.

Because various approaches are seldom exclusive of one another but rather complementary, we will first examine the main Christological titles in Paul’s writings and then will look at the way in which each of his main letters approaches the person and work of Christ.

How Paul Names Christ

Christ/Messiah

Paul’s extraordinarily frequent use of the term CHRISTOS calls for a closer scrutiny. It seems as if Paul often used the term as a second name for Jesus, even though he was no doubt aware of the larger context of the title. Scholarship agrees that Paul frequently used the title because he had received a tradition that associated the term Christ with the core of the early Christian message: the death and resurrection of Jesus, as 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 mentions (this is one of the oldest pieces in the New Testament). Earlier I mentioned, for example, that the Markan Jesus made it clear that Jesus’ messiahship, rather than being political-nationalistic, was that of the suffering and dying One. Now, Paul continues and deepens this tradition, and he tends to mention messianic titles in contexts that speak of death, the cross, and resurrection. *Christ* is a highly theological term for Paul, and he uses it mainly in connection with Jesus’ death, resurrection, and *parousia* (the return of Christ). When he talks about salvation, his preferred expression is “in Christ”.

The fact that Paul makes frequent use of the term Christ already in his earliest letters points to the fact that this titles had already become a virtual name for Jesus and would be recognized as such by the first Christians. In 1 Thessalonians, one of Paul’s earliest letters, if not the earliest, Paul speaks of the “Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1), “Christ” (2:6). And “in Christ Jesus” (2:14).

A summary of Paul’s theology of Christ can be found in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, where he presents the divine plan for reconciliation of the world in Christ. Christ is the one who died and was raised so

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that those whom he redeemed might live for him. Christ is the reconciler of humans and the world to God and of humans to one another. Paul's interest in the death of Jesus as Christ makes him use a daring expression: "Christ crucified" (1Cor . 1:23). This must have shocked his Jewish listeners for whom the idea of a dead Messiah was virtually inconceivable. Moreover, crucifixion was a punishment reserved for the worst criminals. For Jews, crucifixion also denoted God's curse (Deut. 21:23).

Careful study of the way Paul uses the term Christ reveals that he is thinking less in Old Testament categories of the Messiah as an anointed Davidic King and more in terms of Jesus as a crucified and risen Christ who was exalted at the right hand of God and was given authority over the powers and principalities. Especially in his salutations at the beginning of his letters, Paul exalts Christ to an equal position with the Father, and for Jews this fact must not have been overlooked. Yet Paul is aware of the Old Testament background of the term Messiah and gladly affirms, for example, Jesus' Davidic ancestry (Rom. 1:3). Paul never forgets that Jesus is the Messiah of the Jewish hopes, even though the door to salvation has now been opened to Gentiles. While Paul's use of the title Christ usually refers to Jesus' exalted state, Paul does not ignore the fully human character of Christ (Rom. 5:17-19; 8:3; Phil. 2:7).

The phrase "in Christ" appears over 160 times in Paul's chief letters. This number is remarkable given that the phrase is almost completely absent from the rest of the New Testament. Paul never uses the term Christian; his preferred substitute is "in Christ." A good example of Paul's usage is 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation." Not only individuals but also entire congregations are said to be "in Christ" in the same way they are said to be "in God" (phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1). Paul also says that Christ is in the believer (Gal. 2:20) but does so rarely.

Ephesians and Colossians contain the idea of the "mystery of Christ", revealing a further development of Paul's understanding of Christ. This mystery is that God in Christ has provided salvation and reconciliation for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, and even for the entire cosmos. The cosmic orientation of Paul's Christology becomes visible in his focus on the ongoing rule of the exalted Christ. Christ is not only the Savior of individuals but also a cosmic ruler. According to

Ephesians 1:22, Christ rules over the cosmos for the church, and in Ephesians 5:23, the mystery relates to the relationship between Christ and his church.

Lord

In the New Testament, the Greek term *kyrios* is usually translated “Lord,” which in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) is the standard name for God. “The Lord” is a major Christological title used by Paul. The early Christian tradition used the term Lord in reference to Jesus; therefore, Paul uses it frequently without any explanation, assuming that his readers are already familiar with it.

Sometimes Paul applies to Christ Old Testament passages that originally quite clearly referred to Yahweh (e.g., Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32). In other words, Paul equates the Old Testament God and Jesus. Often the title Lord appears in creedal passages, that is, passage reflecting early expressions of Christian faith in Christ. An example of a creedal statement is 1 Corinthians 12:3, which argues that only by the Holy Spirit can one confess that “Jesus is Lord.”

Quite often Paul uses the title Lord in fixed formulas referring to Christ, such as “Jesus Christ our Lord” (e.g., Rom. 1:4), “our Lord Jesus Christ” (e.g., Rom. 5:1), “the Lord Jesus” (e.g., Rom. 14:14), and so on. Paul also frequently uses *kyrios* alone as the designation for Jesus: simply “the Lord” (e.g., Rom. 14:6).

As with any other title, the Lord is also often used in particular contexts. Three are most important: in parenetic passages in which Paul admonishes and encourages the believers (e.g., Rom. 14:1-12), in eschatological passages that are linked to the hope of the return of Christ (e.g., 1 Thess. 4:15-17), and in liturgical context that highlight the worship life of the church (e.g., the Lord’s Supper, 1 Cor. 11:20).

Son of God

The divine sonship of Jesus is a major component of Paul’s Christology even though the term Son of God is overshadowed by the terms Lord and Christ. Son of God appears less than twenty times in the Pauline corpus, and even then most occurrences use the form “his Son” (e.g., Rom. 1:3). Most of the references are in Romans and Galatians.

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Even though the term Son of God conveys the idea of divine sonship, essentially it communicates Jesus' unique status and intimate relationship with God; neither in the Old Testament nor in Paul's writings (in contrast to John) does the title Son necessarily mean divinity. Son primarily means a special standing, status, and favor with God. Clearly for Paul, though, Jesus as God's Son participates in God's attributes and roles. He shares in the divine glory and, most importantly, is worthy to receive veneration with God in the churches.

In several passages, Paul portrays Jesus as having a royal role and status. He does so by drawing on Old Testament Davidic traditions and applying them to Jesus as the royal messianic Son. Romans 1:3-4, for example, is based on the promises made to king David in 2 Samuel 7:12-14. In addition to its royal connotation, the title Son also refers to the cross: The sacrificial Son is destined to die for others (Rom. 8:32). This reference is based on the typology of Isaac in Genesis 22, where Abraham is asked by God to offer Isaac, his only son, as a sacrifice to the Lord.

Last Adam

In two passages, Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Paul draws an analogy between Adam and Christ. Here Adam, rather than being an individual, is a typological or figurative character set over against Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15 is a discussion of the resurrection of the dead in which Paul explains the meaning of Christ's resurrection for the hope of the resurrection of the believer. "For since death came through a man [Adam], the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man [Jesus]. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor . 15:21-22). The other context, Romans 5, relates to Paul's exposition of the origin of sin on the basis of Genesis 3. Adam's disobedience is set in antithesis with the obedience of Jesus as the last Adam, who reversed the fate of sin and death.

Savior

Of the twenty-four New Testament occurrences of the term Savior, one half can be found in the Pauline tradition, almost all in the Pastorals. There are two occurrences in other Pauline letters (Eph. 5:23; phil. 3:20). The frequent usage of the term Savior implies that Paul shifted focus from Jesus' earthly ministry to his death, resurrection, and current rule at the right hand of the Father. While for Paul, Jesus'

teaching and ministry are not insignificant, with the rest of the New Testament writers, he comes to major in the soteriological significance of Jesus Christ.

The Story of Christ in Paul's Letters

Jesus as the Soon - coming Lord: 1 and 2 Thessalonians

First Thessalonians is a pastoral letter of exhortation to a Gentile Christian community facing affliction and perhaps persecution. The second letter, whether from Paul himself or from a later disciple, continues to offer encouragement and hope in light of the second coming of Christ. The Thessalonian correspondence has little to say about the earthly story of Jesus; it focuses on the end of the story, namely the *Parousia*, the coming of the Lord as eschatological Saviour and Judge to rescue his people. Clearly, the story of the church, as it turned away from heaven (1 Thess. 1:9-10), is associated with the story of Israel as an elected community (1:4-5; 2:11-12; 5:9). Jesus, like the prophets of the Old Testament, is presented as a model of victorious suffering its own suffering on the cross and his subsequent resurrection as vindication from the Father lay the foundation for the future hope of resurrection for the afflicted Christians. On the basis of this hope comes an argument call to a life of holiness (4:1-9).

Paul clearly is familiar with the major titles of Christ, such as Messiah/Christ and Son of God, but he does not offer a significant exposition of them. His preferred term here is the Lord, for Jesus is seen here in his dual role as the eschatological Judge (especially 2 Thessalonians) and Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ is elevated at the right hand of God in the heavens and will return soon to take up the believes, both those who have died in Christ and those currently living, to be with him eternally.

Though the Thessalonian correspondence does not provide a complete Christology, it is an overture to a Christology that Paul develops more fully in other writings.

Jesus as the Wisdom of God: 1 Corinthians

Both letters to the church at Corinth are christologically pregnant pastoral responses to a charismatic church. Paul's focus in the first letter is on the cross of Christ as the criterion for a balanced spirituality and theology. It is here that we find Paul's only exposition of the

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Eucharist, which Jesus instituted as a memorial of his death (11:23-26). In chapter 15, Paul records the early Christian creed he had received: Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to numerous witnesses. His resurrection is the basis not only for our resurrection but also for Christian faith in general: If Christ had not been resurrected, our faith would be in vain. Jesus' resurrection is also the pledge of his second coming. In several places, 1 Corinthians also expands on the idea of Christ's pre-existence (8:6; 10:4, 9). In sum, this book contains some of the key elements of the christological doctrine developed in subsequent creeds and formulations of the first centuries: Jesus' pre-existence, death, resurrection, and second coming.

First Corinthians is a pastoral response to issues of church division. To combat the problem, Paul holds up to the Corinthians a view of Christ as the embodiment of God's wisdom. The Corinthians were boasting about their own wisdom (*logos*), but Paul underlines the special nature of Christ's wisdom, namely, the cross. Only the crucified Christ, a "stumbling block", qualifies as true wisdom and God's power in weakness (1:23-24). In fact, the cross of Christ is the focus of Paul's preaching and faith (1:17). This wisdom, hidden from human wisdom, is found in Christ (2:1-9). By virtue of the cross, Christ is not only our wisdom but also our righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1:30).

In addition to the motif of wisdom Christology, Paul makes several other interesting allusions in 1 Corinthians, all of which elaborate his Christology: Christ as the rock of the Moses story which the people drank in the wilderness (10:4); Christ as the last Adam who has reserved the fate of condemnation (15:20-49); and Christ as the Passover lamb (5:7).

Jesus as the Reconciler: 2 Corinthians

When Paul writes his second letter to the church at Corinth, the problem of division is less critical, and Paul has a chance to give an exposition of his gospel and his apostolate. Again, Paul goes back to the Old Testament and compares his mission with the calling of Moses. Recounting the story of Moses' veil in chapter 3 (see Exod. 34:29-35) and the covenant between Israel and Yahweh, Paul argues that in Christ a new spiritual covenant has been made and that he has been

appointed as minister of that covenant. Christ, the mediator of this new covenant, is the “glory of God”. In the Old Testament, whenever God manifested himself in a special way, he was described as “glory” (2 Cor. 4:6). (See, for example, the dedication of the Solomonic temple in 1 King 8). For Paul, Christ likewise is “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). All who behold Christ are transformed “from glory to glory” into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18). In 2 Corinthians, Paul also calls Christ the image of God (4:4) and relates the light of Christ that shone into his heart on the road to Damascus to the light of God that shone at the creation of the World (4:6).

The focus of this letter, as in much of Paul’s theology in general, is the exposition of the role of Christ as the agent of reconciliation. In Christ, God has reconciled the World to himself, the World that because of sin was in enmity with God, so that we may become the righteousness of God; Christ not only bore our sin but was “made sin” for our sakes (5:17-21). This pattern of reconciliation is depicted as the model for overcoming divisions in the church (6:1-9).

Jesus as our Faithfulness: Galatians

The pastoral issue in Galatians is faith in Christ vis-à-vis the Jewish faith. Though faith in Christ, the Jewish Messiah, is based on the Old Testament, it also surpasses and qualifies it. Religiously and socially, the Christian churches were called to live a life free from the prescriptions of the Mosaic law.

Paul’s Christological emphasis once again is on the death of Christ (see the strong appeal in 3:1), but Paul’s focus is distinctive in light of the pastoral challenge: How do Gentile Christians share in the covenant promises given to Abraham, the father of Israel? Paul is always a contextual theologian. For example, when addressing the Corinthians and their question about resurrection, he drew an analogy between Adam, the first human being, and Christ, because this Gentile audience would more readily connect with this Old Testament figure. Here in Galatians, a reference to Abraham is appropriate because Abraham was the father of Israel and their faith, and the Galatians sought to identify with this Jewish patriarch. Paul’s christological emphasis is also shown in the fact that while he is not indifferent to future hope (see 5:5, 21), he says next to nothing about the *parousia* but rather delves into the cross of Christ.

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Paul's argument is based on the story of Israel (chaps. 3-4). To prepare his listeners for a reading of Israel's story through the lens of Christ, he asks why Christ died if righteousness could be attained through the law (2:21). Now that Jesus, who was also born "under law" (4:4), has offered himself freely for our sins, salvation is attainable only through faith in him. Paul also reminds his readers that it is only in and through Christ that the original promise of blessing to all nations given to Abraham (Genesis 12 and 15) comes to fulfillment, since Christ has reserved the curse of the law, changing it into blessing (3:13-14).

The juxtaposition of justification by faith with that of works comes to a sharp focus in 2:15-21, especially in 2:16 (NRSV):

Yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

The translation given here is the alternative reading found in the footnote of the NRSV: "the faith of Christ" instead of "faith in Christ," to show that the passage emphasizes that it is by virtue of the faith and faithfulness of Christ that believers are justified in (in Greek, *pistos* has both these meanings: "faith," "faithfulness"). While "faith in Christ"

is the medium for receiving salvation, the basis is the covenant-faithfulness of the author of salvation. This interpretation is gaining more and more support among New Testament scholars.

Thus, Paul highlights here the all-important significance of Christ's story for the salvation of not only the people of Israel, to whom the promise of blessing was given in the beginning of their history, but also all nations of the world.

Jesus as Our Righteousness: Romans

Romans is a missionary letter from Paul to the congregation at Rome, whom Paul did not know personally but whose support he was seeking in order to extend his missionary endeavors. To substantiate his appeal, he offers the most detailed exposition of his theology and Christology; this was possible because Paul was not combating an urgent pastoral need in the congregation.

To put Christ's work on the cross in the correct perspective, Paul shows the hopelessness of the human situation-both for Jews and for Gentiles-as a result of sin (chaps. 1-3). In fact, so hopeless is their condition that death is the only expected result (chap. 5). As a response, he offers the cross of Christ as the only basis of justification (3:21-31). Taking once again the story of Abraham as his paradigm, he argues on the basis of Christ's story that even Abraham's faith was oriented to and fulfilled in the coming of Christ (chap. 4). Christ has become the end (the Greek term *telos* also means "goal") of the law and has opened up the doors for the salvation of Gentiles (10:4). Yet the story of Israel in light of Christ's story (chaps. 9-11).

In chapters 6-8, Paul gives further exposition of the possibility of life based on faith in Christ. Whatever the meaning of the highly disputed chapter 7-whether Paul is recounting his story before or after conversion-it is clear that only on the basis of the faithfulness of Christ have the demands of the law been met. In chapter 8, Paul also develops the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit with regard to salvation and spiritual life. This is one of the main sources for a Christology that recently has come to be known as Spirit Christology. The Christ story of Romans is both similar to stories in other major letters Paul and an expansion on them. As in Galatians, questions about righteousness and the law play a crucial role, but whereas the underlying story of Galatians moves from Abraham to Christ, that of Romans is more universal in scope, beginning with Adam (as in 1 Corinthians 15) and moving to Christ. In all these stories, however, the death and resurrection serve as the focal point.

Jesus a Humble Servant: Philippians

Often the Christology of Philippians is viewed only through the lens of the Christ hymn in 2:5- 11, a liturgical text Paul gleaned from the Christian tradition and applied to his doctrine of Christ. No doubt, it is one of the main passages, if not the main passage, in Paul's writings that talks about Christ's pre-existence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation. But this is not all that Philippians says about Christ.

Philippians is a friendly letter of encouragement written from prison to a church Paul had founded. The main purposes of the letter are to admonish the Philippians to carry on with their lives in a way worthy

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of the gospel of Christ, to further the proclamation of the gospel, and to thank the Philippians for their gift to him. There is little doctrinal or theological discussion apart from the Christ hymn; still, the book provides a fruitful pastoral exposition of Christology.

In the beginning of the letter, Paul locates the position of Christians in Christ, by virtue of which they are called “saints”, not necessarily in the sense of being more pious than others but rather in the sense of being receivers of Christ’s holiness (1:1-2). In light of the coming *parousia*, “the day of Christ” (analogous to the preferred Old Testament eschatological expression “the Day of the Lord”), Paul reassures the Philippians of the certainty of their salvation (1:6). Already at the beginning of the letter, the story of these Christians is included in the larger story of Israel and the nations in light of Christ’s story:

Through Christ, God began the work of establishing the Philippians in righteousness, consecrating them to himself as he did Israel of old. But this work will only be completed by God at Christ’s *parousia*. In the meantime, the sanctified Philippians must prepare themselves for that day so that they can stand pure and blameless. The primary actor of this story is God who is Father; the agent of salvation is Jesus Christ who is Lord; and the beneficiaries are Gentiles such as the Philippians who have been granted an elected status formerly reserved for Israel of old.

Paul’s own story is linked to that of Christ; Christ; his life and death (1:21). His death and resurrection are part of Christ’s (3:9-11), and knowledge of Christ is the highest goal of his life. Therefore, he is ready to forsake everything for Christ’s sake (3:7-8).

It cannot be mentioned too often that in all his writings, Paul, the theologian, is first and foremost a pastor. Even the Christ hymn in 2:5-11 stands in the middle of a parenetic section in which the apostle urges believers to shape their lives according to the mind of Christ (2:5). Whatever the origin of the hymn and whatever the nuances of translation about which scholarly debate continues, this hymn should be read primarily in its present or and context in Philippians. The text falls into two sections: Verses 6-8 provides the narrative focus on the humility of Christ, while verses 9-11 explain how God vindicated Christ because of his obedience. Christ humbled himself and, unlike

the first Adam (Paul does not refer here to Adam by name, but the reference is implied), who wanted to be equal to God, “emptied” himself. For centuries kenosis Christology (from the Greek term *kenosis*, “emptying”) has maintained that as a result of this emptying, Christ divested himself of divine prerogatives so that he no longer enjoyed divine status. This is probably not what Paul means, since such a meaning would sever the relationship between the preexistent and the incarnate Christ. What Paul means, rather, is that Christ did not take advantage of his divine status but rather was content to be in human form, to the point of surrendering himself to death on the cross. The first point of the text, then, talks about a preexistent being who had divine status and enjoyed equality with God. Nonetheless, he did not take advantage of his divine status but took on the status of a humble servant. This kind of humble attitude is an example to Christians, who are called to consider others higher than themselves (2:14).

The second part of the hymn (2:9-11) shows that on the basis of his obedience, Jesus was exalted by God and was given a name above every other name, *kyrios*, the Lord. Allusion to Isaiah 45:22-23, one of the strongest claims for monotheism in the Old Testament (“For I am God, and there is no other. Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear”), shows that for Paul the resurrected and exalted Christ enjoys the same status as the God of Israel. But it is important to note that this Lord is Jesus: If Lord refers to his status as God after resurrected and exaltation, Jesus, his earthly incarnate name, reminds us that he was Lord means that Jesus is the Lord not only by virtue of his death and resurrection; he was Lord before these events. If that is the case, to avoid adoptionism, one must believe that Jesus shared in the divinity (lordship) of the Godhead before his incarnation, that is, from eternity. Scholarship debates this crucial christological issue, but in my judgment, for Paul the issue was settled.

Jesus as the Embodiment of Fullness: Colossians

According to Colossians, “Christ is all, and is in all” (3:11). Famous is the comment of J.B. Lightfoot, the great New Testament theologian of the nineteenth century: “The doctrine of the Person of Christ is here [in Colossians] stated with greater precision and fullness than in any other of St. Paul’s epistles.” While for most current New Testament scholars this is an overstatement, most agree that Christology plays a vital role in this prison epistle. The hymnic passage

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of 1:15-20 especially has received a greater deal of attention. It talks about Christ as the one in, through, and for whom all things were created and reconciled. Many scholars wonder if an older liturgical hymn is behind this passage, as in the case of the Christ hymn of Philippians 2. The concern in Paul's mind is that the believers at Colossae were in danger of resorting to human wisdom and traditions (2:6-23) that were less than perfect foundations when compared to the fullness in Christ (2:1-5).

The basis of Christ's story in Colossians is the transfer of believers from "the dominion of darkness" into "the kingdom of the Son he loves" (1:13). In the past, people were enemies of God; now in Son's Son they have been reconciled to him (1:21-22). The one who administered the reconciliation is seated at God's right hand and rules over the kingdom of God (1:13; 3:1). While the story of Israel is not explicit in Colossians, there are several hints that Israel's and the church's stories are intertwined. For example, Paul regards the Christians as the true circumcision of Christ (2:11); circumcision (instituted in Genesis 17) was the sign of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.

The hymnic passage in 1:15-20 has two parts. Verses 15-18a tell us that Christ is the image of the unseen God and the beginning of all creation because all things were created in him. Christ is also the head of the church. Verses 1:18b-20 identify Christ as the origin (the Greek term *arche* also means "beginning") of everything, visible and invisible, and the firstborn from the dead in whom the fullness of God dwells. Through Christ's blood, God reconciled the world, the entire universe, to himself. This hymn, therefore, associates Christ with creation, preservation, redemption, the church, and the entire purpose of the world. Even though scholarship is not unanimous, it also seems that Christ's preexistence is affirmed here; how else could Christ be the origin, instrument, and goal of creation? Still, the word firstborn has presented difficulties for christological interpretation because it may be interpreted in a way that makes Christ less than God, in other words, a first creature. This passage, among others, has given rise to unorthodox or heretical ways of dealing with passages such as this in order to recognize that the Bible often uses metaphorical language to describe the way God interacts with the world, and we cannot interpret them too literally.

One of the most distinctive christological claims in Colossians is found in 2:6-23, where Paul intends to show the inadequacy of all human wisdom and traditions in light of the fullness of Christ. Paul states that “in Christ the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (2:9; see also 1:19); not only in his state of exaltation but also in his incarnation, Christ represented divine fullness.

Therefore, Colossians expands considerably Paul’s Christology in that even creation is subsumed under christological categories. In a sense, Paul pushes the christological boundaries beyond the question of individual salvation or even the salvation of Israel and the nations to the final consummation and purpose of everything that exists, unseen powers included. This cosmic orientation of Christology and soteriology is not unusual for Paul, but it is less visible elsewhere, except for Ephesians and Romans 8. It can also be found in the Book of Hebrews (the opening verses).

Jesus as Mystery: Ephesians

Ephesians’ origin, authorship, and other background issues have been debated, as has its theology, especially whether it represents authentic Pauline theology or is a later development that goes beyond Paul. The following discussion follows the mainline scholarly judgment and treats the letter as belonging within the sphere of Pauline theology.

The most distinctive feature of the Christology of Ephesians is that it is closely linked to ecclesiology. Paul’s view of the church here is that of a new humanity, composed of Jews and Gentiles alike (2:11-22), which is in the process of growing into “the fullness of Christ” (4:13).

The Christ story in Ephesians begins with an expanded story of blessing that can be found in Christ; this blessing is constructed along the lines of the Jewish *berakhah*, a liturgical act in which one praises God for all his goodness and gifts. The blessing Paul is talking about comes “in Christ” (1:3); out of that flow all the various facets of the blessing, such as election (1:4), grace and forgiveness (1:6), and redemption through his blood (in other words, the cross) (1:7). Furthermore, true knowledge and wisdom are found in Christ, as is adoption as God’s children (1:9-12). This mystery of salvation has now been disclosed to the elect; for others it is still unknown (1:9-10).

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So comprehensive is Paul's understanding about Christ and the salvation he accomplished that he uses this unique expression: God's plan of salvation is "summed up" (or gathered) in Christ (1:10), an expression that occurs only one other time in the New Testament (Rom. 13:9). A similar comprehensive term appears in Ephesians 2:14, where Christ is called our "peace"; Christ not only brings peace but *is peace* in his person. This saying perhaps goes back to the Old Testament concept of *shalom*, which means not merely peace but wholeness, happiness, and well-being

In a remarkable prayer at the end of the first chapter, Paul expands on the role of Christ "in the heavenlies". He talks about Christ being raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God, "far above all rule and authority power and dominion, and every title that can be given" both in this age and the age to come. Christ has been put in charge and has authority over everything, including the church (1:20-23). Reference to Christ's dominion includes the cosmic victory of all resting spiritual powers (see also 2:1-2).

As already mentioned, the integral relationship in Ephesians is between Christology and ecclesiology. In 1:21-22, Paul makes this connection clear. According to this passage, the enthroned Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. As the body of Christ, the church has been filled by Christ, who is filling all things in creation and the universe. Whereas elsewhere Paul talks about church as the body of Christ in reference to the head (Christ) and members (Christians) and the relationship between the members (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:26), in Ephesians and Colossians, he refers to its cosmic and corporate dimensions.

In Ephesians, Paul writes more about the mystery of Christ that has been hidden for ages and has now been revealed to Paul and through him to other Christians. This mystery is that the Gentiles have become fellow heirs of the promise of the gospel (3:6). As a result, God has effected in Christ reconciliation, the eradication of enmity between God and human beings, and also between the two alienated groups of people, namely, the Jews and the Gentiles. These two groups now form a new person in Christ (2:15).

Summing Up Pauline Christology

An examination of the major letters of Paul with regard to his understanding of Christology reveals that in his pastoral responses to existing church and mission needs, he argues from a Christological foundation. Each letter, read in its own unique context, sheds light on his emerging understanding of Christ. The main features of Pauline Christology may be summarized as follows:

1. Paul's main focus is on the salvation brought about by Christ; therefore he focuses on the cross, resurrection, and *parousia* of Christ.
 2. Paul believes in the preexistence of Christ.
 3. In his later writings, Paul's perspective widens beyond individual salvation and the salvation and union of Jews and Gentiles to encompass cosmic and corporate aspects.
 4. For Paul, Christ's person and work represent the origin and goal not only of human life but also of creation, including all the spiritual powers.
 5. Paul clearly regards Christ both as a real human being (incarnation), even though he rarely discusses the earthly life of Jesus, and as a divine being.
- It was up to the early church to put these various christological perspectives together.

Chapter 3

Early Logos Christologies

Justin Martyr, one of the most important second-century apologists (Christian thinkers who wanted to offer a reasonable defense of the Christian faith vis-à-vis contemporary culture and philosophy), sought to establish a correlation between Greek philosophy, and Judaism. The idea of *logos*, referring to wisdom, learning, philosophy, divine insight, and so on, while originating in Greek culture, was not foreign to Jews. Philo, a contemporary of Jesus who lived in Alexandria in Egypt and was an influential thinker and historian, wrote about Jewish writers who had made a connection between the *logos* and the Old Testament word or wisdom of God. Such a connection is understandable given the important role the word of God plays in the Old Testament. The world is instrumental, for example, in creation (Genesis 1).

Justin creatively made use of contemporary intellectual elements, especially in Stoic and Platonic philosophies, for the purpose of apologetics. Taking John 1:14 as his key text, he argued that the same *logos* that

was known by pagan philosophers had now appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. According to Justin, philosophers taught that the reason in every human being participates in the universal *logos*. The Gospel of John teaches that in Jesus Christ the Logos became flesh. Therefore, whenever people use their reason, Christ, the *Logos*, is already at Work. “We have been taught that Christ was the First-begotten of God, and we have indicated... that he is the Word of whom all humankind partakes. Those who lived by reason are Christians, even though they have been considered atheists.” In Jesus, Christians have full access to the meaning of the *Logos*, while pagans have only partial access to it. According to the early apologists, the divine *Logos* sowed seeds throughout human history; therefore, Christ is known to some extent by non-Christians. This concept was known as *logos spermatikos* (“seeds of Logos sown” in the world). In his Second Apology, Justin explained the fullness of the Christian doctrine of Christ:

Our religion is clearly more sublime than any human teaching in this respect: the Christ who has appeared for us human beings represents the Logos principle in all its fullness... For everything that the philosophers and lawgivers declared or discovers that is true was brought about by investigation and perception, in accordance with that portion of the Logos to which they had access. But because they did not know the whole of the Logos, who is Christ, they often contradicted each other.

The apologists also found in the Old Testament indications of the existence of the *Logos* in human form; an example of this kind of “theophany” (from the Greek terms *theos*,

“God,” and *phaneo*, “appearance,” “manifestation”) is the mysterious angel of Yahweh in Genesis 18 who appeared to Abraham and his wife, Sarah.

Origen, a church father from the Eastern Christian church, brought *Logos* Christology to its fullest development. According to his thinking, in the incarnation, the human soul of Christ was united with the Logos. On account of the closeness of this union, Christ’s human soul shared in the properties of the Logos. Origen brought home this understanding with the help of a vivid picture from everyday life:

If a lump of iron is constantly kept in a fire, it will absorb its heat through all its pores and veins. If the fire is continuous, and the iron is

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not removed, it becomes totally converted to the other... In the same way, the soul which has been constantly placed in the Logos and Wisdom and God, is God in all that it does, feels, and understands.

As a consequence of this union between the Logos and Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus is the true God. Yet to guard the leading theological principle of the Eastern wing of the church, namely, the preeminence of the Father, Origen reminded his followers of the principle of *autotheos*, which simply means that, strictly speaking, God only and alone is God. Origen did so not to lessen the divinity of Christ but to secure the priority of the Father. Origen believed that the Father had begotten the Son by an eternal act; therefore, Christ existed from eternity. In fact, there were two begetting of the Son: one in time (the virgin birth) and one in eternity by the Father. *To make his point*, Origen appealed to John 1:1, which has no definite article in the Greek expression “the Word [*Logos*] was God” and therefore could be translated “the Word was a God” (or perhaps, “divine”). While Origen’s exegetical ground is not convincing to modern interpreters, his *Logos* Christology represents a significant milestone in the development of the christological tradition. *Logos* Christology has been a dominant way of interpreting Christ’s incarnation, and it has taken various forms throughout history.

The Unique Status of the Father in Relation to the Son

The study of theology, as with any other academic field, requires mastery of its basic vocabulary. Some terms are used in everyday language (e.g., person) but in theology have a different, often strictly defined, meaning. Other terms are coined specifically for the purpose of theological accuracy. One of the latter kind of terms was coined to explain the relationship among the members of the Trinity that assured the supremacy of God the Father. The term is *monarchianism*, which means “sole sovereignty.” There are two subcategories of this view, “dynamic” and “modalistic” monarchianism.

Both emerged in the late second and early third centuries and stressed the uniqueness and unity of God in light of the Christian confession that Jesus is God. Such views, similar to those of Origen, were eventually rejected by Christian orthodoxy.

The concern for the uniqueness of God the Father is understandable given that Christian theology grew out of Jewish soil. The leading

theme of Judaism in the Old Testament was belief in the One God, as expressed in Deuteronomy 6:4 and a host of other passages. While these two monarchianist views were rejected, they express a noteworthy milestone in the struggle of Christian theology to retain its ties to the Jewish faith and to explicate fully the implications of Christ's divinity.

Dynamic Monarchianism

The etymology of dynamic monarchianism explains its meaning: The sole sovereignty of the Father was preserved by the idea that God was dynamically present in Jesus, thus making him higher than any other human being but not yet a God. In other words, God's power (Greek, *dynamis*) made Jesus *almost* God; as a consequence, the Father's uniqueness was secured.

Theodotus, a Byzantine leather merchant, came to Rome, the leading city of Christianity, at the end of the second century. He taught that prior to baptism Jesus was an ordinary man, although a completely virtuous one; at his baptism, the Spirit, or Christ, descended upon him and gave him the ability to perform miracles. Jesus was still an ordinary man, but he was inspired by the Spirit. Some of Theodotus's followers went farther and claimed that Jesus actually became divine at his baptism or after his resurrection, but Theodotus himself did not concur.

In the second half of the third century, Paul of Samosata further developed the idea of Dynamic monarchianism by contending that the Word (*Logos*) does not refer to a personal, self-subsistent entity but simply to God's commandment and ordinance: God ordered and accomplished what he willed through the man Jesus. Paul of Samosata did not admit that Jesus was the Word, *logos*. Instead, the *logos* was a dynamic power in Jesus' life that made God dynamically present in Jesus. This view was condemned by the Synod of Antioch in 268.

Modalistic Monarchianism

According to modalistic monarchianism, the three persons of the Trinity are not self-subsistent "persons" but "modes" or "names" of the same God. They are like three "faces" of God, with a different one presented depending on the occasion. Whereas dynamic monarchianism seemed to deny the Trinity, indicating that Jesus is less than God, modalistic monarchianism appeared to affirm the Trinity.

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Both, however, tried to preserve the oneness of God the Father, though in different ways.

Several early third-century thinkers such as Noetus of Smyrna, Praxeas (perhaps a nickname meaning “busybody”), and Sabellius contended that there is one Godhead that can be designated as Father, Son, or Spirit. The names do not stand for real distinctions but are merely names that are appropriate and applicable at different times. In other words, Father, Son, and Spirit are identical, successive revelations of the same person. This view is sometimes called Sabellianism offer one of its early proponents.

A corollary idea follows: The father suffers along with Christ because he was actually present in and identical with the Son this view is known as *patripassianism* (from two Latin terms meaning “father” and “passion”).

Modalistic monarchianism was considered heretical by the church, even though its basic motivation, to preserve the unity of God the Father, was valid. Early Christian theologians soon noticed its main problem: How can three (or two) members of the Trinity appear simultaneously in the act of salvation if they are but three names or modes of one and the same being? The account of Jesus’ baptism, during which the Father spoke to his Son and the Spirit descended on the Son, seemed to contradict the idea of modalism.

But even the orthodox position had to struggle with the question, If Christ is divine but is not the Father, are there not two Gods? Tertullian, one of the ablest early Christian theologians, coined much of the Trinitarian vocabulary. He sought to clarify this problem with a series of metaphors:

For the root and the three are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the fountain and the river are also two forms, but indivisible; so likewise the sun and the ray two forms, but coherent ones. Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being on that account separated.

By analogies such as these, Tertullian and others believed they had clarified the New Testament distinction between Father and Son without leading to belief in two gods. But one may seriously ask if this was the case. Metaphors such as the one depicting the Father

as the sun and the Son as a ray imply subordinationism, that Christ is inferior to the Father. In fact, Tertullian admitted this: “For the Father is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole as He Himself acknowledges: ‘My Father is greater than I.’” In fact these ideas and related problems associated with defining Christ’s relation to the Father led to the emergence of a new set of questions.

As soon as Christian theology had combated these two versions of monarchianism, it faced an even more challenging problem named Arianism, after Arius, a priest of Alexandria. Even though historically it is unclear whether Arius himself ever expressed ideas related to Arianism, it is evident that a major debate took place in the third and fourth centuries concerning the way Jesus’ divinity and relationship to the Father could be expressed. It was not so much a question of denying Jesus’ deity but rather how to express it without diminishing the status of the Father. In many ways, therefore, monarchianism and Arianism approach the same problem and have as their background the same kind of concerns. The issue raised by Arianism was tentatively dealt with at the Council of Nicea in 325, but as with any doctrinal formulation, Nicea also raised new issues and questions.

Chapter 4

Historical Evolution of Christology

The second part of this book delves into the question of how the christological tradition emerged and developed over time. This survey of history, however, is not meant to be examined in some detail. The first topic focuses on christological developments during the first five centuries of the church, the time during which the canon was emerging. During this time, the main questions that have to do with the person and work of Jesus Christ were raised and various foundational answers were offered, though these answers were not final in status. Still, all later developments of Christology, those of our time included, need to take stock of the answers offered during the first five centuries.

Origin of Heresies:

Historically, the first great question that came up in the early church had to do with the Person of Christ. This even took the forefront over the work of Christ because who He was would greatly interpret what He

did. As previously noted, most early heresies therefore based their beliefs on the assumption that Christ must be either divine or human, but not both. Because these two natures in Christ seemed to be mutually exclusive, they either held to one while rejecting or diminishing the other, or vice versa. For that reason, all early heresies either ended up under-evaluating Christ's divinity, His human nature, or both.

The origin of these early heresies must be seen in the context of the current philosophies and religious views into which Christ was born. It was during the second and third centuries that the influence of STOIC and PLATONIC thought caused some to deny the full deity of Christ. For that reason, for the first three centuries in the Christian era, religious discussion centered almost entirely on the relationship between the Father and the Son, almost to the complete neglect of the Holy Spirit. As one theologian said, "The doctrine of the two natures united in one person is the key to understanding the Biblical Christ. The alternatives which we are to encounter face-to-face are: either, the two-natured Christ in history, or a strong delusion." (Christology and Criticism, Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield, p. 309).

However, we must be honest and quick to state that throughout our study of the two natures of Christ, as with the study of the Trinity, we are faced with an impenetrable mystery. It is one of the mysteries which the scriptures reveal but which they make no effort to explain. Christ is absolutely the unique Person of history. As St. Augustine once said concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, "Spend your life trying to understand it, and you will lose your mind; but deny it and you will lose your soul."

Early Christological Disputes

Often, beginning students of theology are tempted to ask two legitimate questions: Why should we bother ourselves with an antiquarian discussion of christological issues of the past that seem irrelevant to our current concerns? And what is the point of these finely nuanced disputes - what difference do they make after all? One may also wonder why the church ever entered into disputes and his humanity. Why didn't it just stick with the Bible?

It belongs to the essence of faith and worldviews in general that we often simply accept the tenets of our faith or worldview without

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much explicit reflection on them. But we also have a built-in need to make sense of what we believe. Therefore, it is most natural that as the church began to establish itself and its distinctive identity apart from Judaism, out of which it arose, Christians began to ask doctrinal questions: Who is this Jesus after all? What is the nature of the salvation he claims to have brought about? How is he different from us, and how is he similar to us?

When questions such as these were asked, Christians naturally went first to the Bible. After all, the Bible was the accepted book of the church. But the New Testament did not yet exist (not until the fourth century were its contents finally ratified), even though Paul's and other Christian leader's writings began to circulate soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Very soon, these writings and written sermons (the Book of Hebrews and 1 Peter, for example, were both originally sermons) were given high regard, but even these writings did not address all the questions, especially those having to do with the exact natures of Christ's divinity and humanity and their relationship.

Thinking about Christ developed in various quarters of the expanding church parallel to the establishment of the New Testament. It is significant to note that the Christological developments of the first five centuries - the topic that forms the first section of part 2 - do not differ from the biblical Christologies. Though the Christian church gives the New Testament canon a higher status than the Christian tradition of the first five centuries, we need to remind ourselves that those who lived close to New Testament times were in a good position to offer a definitive interpretation of the Christ event.

Among theologians there have been differing assessments concerning the development of classical christological dogma as it has come to be expressed, for example, in creeds. Some consider the dogmatic development an aberration that replaced New Testament Christology with philosophical reflection on the person and natures of Christ. Those with this perspective have rejected the Christology of the patristic period, seeing it as a Hellenization of Christianity in which Greek metaphysical speculation supplanted the biblical historical mode of thought. The great historian of theology Adolf von Harnack expressed this view clearly in his celebrated *What Is Christianity?*

He regarded the development of dogma as deterioration and a deviation from the simple message of Jesus of Nazareth. Many others have concurred.

Contrary to this position is a conception that has been called the dogmatic approach to Christology. According to this view, the development of christological dogma moved from the more functional Christology (what Christ has accomplished for us, i.e., the concerns of salvation) of the New Testament to the more ontological thought (Christ in himself, i.e., the concerns of the person of Christ) of the creeds, and this movement was progress. Theologians of this persuasion believe this kind of development in thinking was both helpful and necessary and therefore welcome the more philosophical approach of the creeds.

Yet another position judges the early councils' doctrine to be a true expression of the reality of Christ but nonetheless finds the development of dogma marked by a gradual narrowing of the questions. For example, while the questions surrounding Christ's divinity and humanity are to be taken seriously, even nowadays, they are not the only questions to be considered, perhaps not even the most crucial ones. Thus, while these early developments were legitimate against their own background, they are neither exhaustive nor final formulations. Each age has to wrestle afresh with these issues and provides its own answers, even though building critically on tradition. This last view seems to be the most coherent one, and a majority of theologians have embraced it.

This brings us once again to the relevance of these questions for our own needs and contexts. Nowadays, we hear so much about the need for theology to be contextual, to relate to the question that arises in a particular context. We have to understand that, in fact, these early christological disputes were in themselves contextual response to the culture of the day, the Greek/Hellenistic culture, which was philosophically and conceptually oriented, in contrast to the Hebrew/Judaic culture, which was less philosophical and more holistic in its approach to divine things. Early Christian thinkers attempted to express Christological convictions based on the testimony of the Old Testament and emerging Christian writings in thought forms that would be understandable even to educated people of the time.

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The questions we bring to Christology today are vastly different from the questions of the early centuries; yet we also keep asking the same questions: Who is this Jesus? How does his humanity make sense in the third millennium? what does it mean to believe in this divine Savior? We also ask questions such as, How do men and women together confess their faith in Christ? If Christ is male, is his maleness exclusive of motherhood and feminism? How does the idea of Christ as the Liberator relate to social injustice? How do we understand creation and the world process in light of Christ being the origin and goal of creation? These questions and many others are still related to those tentative, sometimes conflicting, answers our fathers and mothers in faith proposed.

Perhaps life's most crucial question to ask anyone is - "WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?" (Matthew 22:42). As a matter of historical record, the full statement concerning the person of Christ was arrived at only after protracted and violent controversies. During this time, every possible interpretation of the biblical data was examined, its elements of truth sifted out and preserved, while the elements of error which deformed it were exposed and discarded.

Before one can correctly understand the nature of Christ, he must first understand the nature of the Godhead. I will attempt to define "God" according to three main views of understanding:

- ❖ Modalism emphasizes the unity of god to the destruction of the trinity of god and thus results in unitarianism.
- ❖ Trinitarianism (triunity) emphasizes the biblical view that god is one, personal and triune.
- ❖ Tritheism states the trinity of god to the destruction of the unity of god thus resulting in three gods (polytheism).

Definition of Heresy:

As stated previously, the word "heresy" is derived from the Greek word "hairesis", which means "choice." It later came to mean - the part of school of a man's choice. In the New Testament, the term is used for the parties of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, plus the part of the Nazarenes (Acts 5:17, 24:5, 26:5, 28:22). Before the end of the New Testament, the word begins to take on its distinctively Christian sense, i.e., "a line of thought or practice which deviated from the mainstream of Christianity."

Division of Heresies:

There are three major heresies regarding the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. The denial of Christ's Divinity - which lead to the heresies known as Ebonism, Arianism (Jehovah's Witnesses), Nestorianism, Socinianism, Liberalism, Humanism, Unitarianism.
2. The denial of Christ's two natures - which created heretical groups such as Monophysitism, Eutychianism, Monothelitism. These all confuse the two natures of Christ; i.e., absorbed one of His natures into the other.
3. The denial of Christ's humanity - which gave rise to Docetism, Marcionism, Gnosticism, Apollinarianism, Monarchianism, Patripassianism, Sabellianism, Adoptionism, Dynamic Monarchianism.

All of these heresies in some way ended up by "dividing" the theanthropic (God-Man) Jesus Christ!

The Christological Zig-Zag:

The great biblical scholar and theologian, Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield, summarized the rising and falling of these various early heresies as follows: "To the onlooker from this distance of time, the main line of progress of the debate takes on an odd appearance of a steady zig-zag advance. Arising out of the embers of the Arian controversy, there is first vigorously asserted, over against the reduction of our Lord to the dimensions of a creature, the pure Deity of His spiritual nature (Apollinarianism).

By this there is at once provoked, in the interests of the integrity of our Lord's humanity, the equally vigorous assertion of the completeness of His human nature as the bearer of His Deity (Nestorianism). This in turn provokes, in the interest of the oneness of His person, and equally vigorous assertion of the conjunction of these two natures in a single individual (Eutychianism); from all of which there gradually emerges at last, by a series of corrections, the balanced statement of Chalcedon, recognizing at once in its "without confusion, without Deity conversion, eternally and inseparably", the union in the person of Christ of a complete Deity and a complete humanity constituting a single person without prejudice to the continued integrity of either nature.

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The pendulum of thought had swung back and forth in ever-decreasing arcs until at last it found rest along the line of action of the fundamental force. Out of the continuous controversy of a century, there issued a balanced statement in which all the elements of the Biblical representation were taken up and combined. Work so done is done for all time; and it is capable of ever-repeated demonstration that in the developed doctrine of the two natures and in it alone, all the Biblical data are brought together in a harmonious statement in which each receives full recognition, and out of which each may derive its sympathetic exposition.

This key unlocks the treasures of the Biblical instruction on the person of Christ as none other can, and enables the reader as he currently scans the sacred pages to take up their declarations as they meet him, one after the other, into an intelligently consistent conception of his Lord. (Christology and Criticism, p. 264)

Was Jesus a Real Human Being?

Ironically enough, one of the main debates concerning Christ in the New Testament was the question of his humanity. In the Johannine community, belief in Christ's humanity became the criterion for true orthodoxy, as is evident in 1 John 4:2-3: "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does acknowledge Jesus is not from God." It seems that the fact of Jesus' divinity had been settled among Johannine Christians, but the Christians to whom John wrote still struggled with Christ's true humanity and the seeming incompatibility between his divinity and his humanity.

In the second century, the christological debate centered on the question of the divinity of Christ; most early church fathers took it for granted that Christ was human. What required explanation was how he differed from other human beings. In this discussion, the Johannine concept of *Logos* was introduced, and its implications for a more developed Christology were considered.

Two heretical views concerning the specific nature of Christ's humanity were rejected. Both of these views, Ebionitism and Docetism, were attempts to define Jesus' humanity in a way that did not compromise his divinity.

Ebionitism

Ebionites (from the Hebrew term that means “the poor ones”) were primarily a Jewish sect during the first two centuries that regarded Jesus as an ordinary human being, the son of Mary and Joseph. These Jewish believers, to whom the monotheism of the Old Testament was the dearest heritage, could not begin to imagine that there was another god besides the God of Israel. Such a belief would naturally lead to polytheism.

Our knowledge of the Ebionites is scattered, and it is not easy to ascertain what they believed. For example, Justin Martyr thought Ebionites regarded Jesus as Christ the Messiah but considered him still a man, born of a virgin. But what kind of Christ would that be? More than likely, most Ebionites saw Jesus as one who surpassed others in wisdom and righteousness but was still more a human being than god.

According to the early church historian Eusebius from the third century, there were actually two classes of Ebionites. Both groups insisted on the observance of the Mosaic law. The first group held to a natural birth of Jesus, who was characterized by an unusual moral character. The other group accepted the virgin birth but rejected the idea of Jesus’ preexistence as the Son of God.

Ebionitism was quickly rejected by Christian theology because it was obvious that regarding Jesus as merely a human being compromised the idea of Jesus as Christ and Savior.

Docetism

The other early view that defined Jesus’ humanity in a nonorthodox way, prominent especially during the second and third centuries, was called Docetism. The term comes from the Greek word *dokeo*, “to seem” or “to appear.” According to this understanding, Christ was completely divine, but his humanity was merely an appearance. Christ was not a real human being. Consequently, Christ’s sufferings were not real.

Docetism was related to a cluster of other philosophical and religious ideas that are often lumped together under the umbrella term Gnosticism (from the Greek term *gnosis*, “knowledge”). This term is

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elusive and may denote several things. The most important contribution Gnosticism made with regard to Docetism was the idea of dualism between matter and spirit. It regarded spirit as the higher and purer part of creation, whereas matter represented frailty and even sinfulness. The idea of religion in Gnosticism was an exercise in escaping from the material, visible world in to the heaven of spirit. It is easy to see how this kind of orientation was linked to Docetism: To make Christ really “flesh” (cf. John 1:14) would compromise his divinity and his “spirituality.”

Christian theology denied both Docetism and Ebionitism. Docetism had a divine Savior who had no real connection with humanity. Ebionitism had only a human, moral example.

The first major attempt to express in precise language the New Testament’s dual emphasis on Christ as both a human being and a divine figure came to be known as *Logos* Christology, for the simple reason that these early fathers adopted the Johannine concept of *Logos*.

Adoptionism

Jesus was human, but he became the Son of God by Adoption. At some point in Jesus life (usually at his baptism) God adopted him as his Son. The early church document *The Shepherd of Hermas* taught that Jesus was an ordinary man, born of Mary and Joseph; at his baptism the Spirit or Christ descended upon Jesus and at his crucifixion the Christ departed, leaving the man Jesus to suffer alone. Some said Jesus became the Son of God at his resurrection.

Arianism

Arianism teaches that Jesus is related to God as his son, but he is not fully divine. Arius was a presbyter in the church of Alexandria. His teachings were an attempt to defend the transcendence of God. In the end, Arius had to conclude that Jesus Christ the Son of God was a demi-god—and therefore a created being. The argument focussed on two Greek words: *homoousias*, the Son is of the same essence as the Father, and *homoiousias*, the Son is of similar essence as the Father. The Nicene creed uses the word first word “*homoousias*” meaning one of substance with the Father, and so we say today, “Consubstantial with the Father.”

Apollinarianism.

In this heresy the Word (which was a perfect divine nature) assumed a human body in Jesus, and thus replaced his human soul and mind. Apollinaris, the Bishop of Laodicea, proposed this idea in answer to Arius. But if the divine Word of God took the place of the human mind and soul, Christ the Lord was not completely human. After many years of controversy, Apollinarianism was condemned at the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381.

Nestorianism.

Nestorius was the Bishop of Constantinople (A.D. 428). He did not like the term for the Virgin Mary "*Theotokos*" because he said it implied that the baby in Mary's womb had only one nature, divine nature. He proposed the use of the term "*Christokos*", Christ-bearer, to better emphasize the unity of the two natures of Jesus. Cyril of Alexandria countered by saying that God Himself had entered the womb of Mary; therefore she was "*Theotokos*". The Council of Rome in 430 condemned Nestorianism.

Monophysitism

Monophysitism taught that the Lord's humanity was totally absorbed by His divinity, and thus denied the orthodox view of Christ having two natures in one being.

Condemning the Heresies:

- ❖ Council of Nicaea (AD 324) - was called by Constantine to consider and, if possible, settle the ARIAN heresy. It gave the church the first great ecumenical creed.
- ❖ First Council of Constantinople (AD 381) - called by Emperor Theodosius the Great to correct errors of APOLLINARIANISM and MACEDONIANISM.
- ❖ The Council of Ephesus (AD 431) - was presided over by Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, and was called to deal with NESTORIANISM.
- ❖ The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) - three bishops and two presbyters presided. They were representatives of Leo of Rome. The Council condemned EUTYCHIANISM, and gave the church

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the credal statement on Christology which has stood the test of the centuries. The Chalcedonian statement has largely become the orthodox creed or Protestantism.

- ❖ Second Council of Constantinople (AD 680) - was called by the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus, and was directed against MONOTHELITISM.
- ❖ Frankford Synod (AD 794) - was called by Charlemagne and at it, ADOPTIONISM was condemned.

One can easily see, then, from these ancient and contemporary heresies mentioned above, just how Satan has constantly tried to hide and corrupt the true theanthropic nature of Christ. If either nature is “corrupted”, salvation is destroyed

A Survey of Heresies

	Date	Heart of the error	Chief Historical Proponents	Character	Modern Proponents
The judaizers	1 st century	soteriological adding works to grace as grounds of justification	a group of former in the Jerusalem Church	Legalistic, blending OT Judaism with Christian ideas	7th-day Adventists,, Roman Catholics
The Gnostics	2 nd century	Christological, denying the reality of the Incarnation	various early heretics	mystical, blending paganism with Christian ideas	Most New-Age religious, Mormonism
The Arians	4 th century	Christological, denying the deity of Christ	Arius, several bishops	unitarian, denying the full deity of Christ and the Trinity	Jehovah's Witnesses
The Pelagians	5 th century	Soteriological, denying the primacy and sufficiency of divine grace	Pelagius, Coclestius	anthropocentric, denying human fallenness, elevating free will above divine sovereignty; making the sinner responsible for his/her own salvation	Charles Finney and his heirs
The Socinians	16 th century	Soteriological/ Christological	Lelius and faustus Zozzini	rationalistic, absorbing the worst elements of all heresies	Unitarians, Theological liberals, Open Theists

How to Define Christ's Deity

We do not know for sure what Arius taught and therefore are dependent on the writings of his opponents. According to his opponents, the basic premise of Arius's thinking was that God the Father is absolutely unique and transcendent, and God's essence (the Greek term *ousia* means both "essence" and "substance") cannot be shared by another or transferred to another, not even the Son. Consequently, for Arius, the distinction between Father and Son was one of substance (*ousia*); if they were of the same substance, there would be two gods. Rather than sharing the same "essence" with the Father, the Son is the first and unique creation of God. A saying attributed to Arius emphasizes his main thesis about the origin of Christ: "There was [a time] when he was not." This view was problematic because it meant that Christ was begotten of God in time, not from all eternity. Christ, therefore, was a part of creation and inferior to God even though greater than other creatures.

It is easy to see the concerns and logic of Arianism. On the one hand, it attempted to secure the divinity, or

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at least the supreme status, of Jesus in regard to other human beings. On the other hand, it did not make Jesus equal to the Father. In a sense, Jesus stood in the middle.

Mainstream Christian theology had to respond to this challenge because it seemed to compromise the basic confession of Christ's deity. The ablest defender of the full deity of Christ was the Eastern father Athanasius. He argued in response to Arius that the view that the Son was a creature, albeit at a higher level, would have a decisive consequence for salvation. First, only God can save, whereas a creature is in need to being saved. Thus, if Jesus was not God, incarnate, he was not able to save us. But both the New Testament and church liturgy call Jesus Savior, indicating that he is God. Worship of and prayer to a Jesus who is less than God would also make Christians guilty of blasphemy.

The response of Athanasius provides a model of the way early Christian theology developed. Academic or intellectual concerns were not primary, even though argumentation was carried on at a highly sophisticated level. The soteriological concern, the question of salvation, was the driving force behind theological developments. Christology is a showcase example of this. Early Christian theologians did not sit comfortably in their studies seeking to produce something novel about Christ. They were pastors and preachers whose primary concern was to make sure that people knew how to be saved. The fact that what was confessed in church liturgy was considered doctrinally binding shows the full force of the ancient rule *lex ora lex credendi* ("the principle of prayer is the principle of believing"): What is believed and worshiped becomes the confession of doctrine.

In the spirit of Athanasius' and other mainline theologians' response to Arius, the Council of Nicea in 325 defined Christ's deity in a way that made Christ equal to God the Father. The text says:

We believe ...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only begotten, that is of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [*homoousios*]with the Father; by whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth]; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

An appendix at the end listed Arian tenets to be rejected:

But for those who say: “there was a time when he was not;” and “He was not before he was made;” and “He was made out of nothing,” or “He is of another substance” or “essence,” or “The Son of God is created,” or “changeable,” or “alterable”- they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

The Creed said that Christ was not created but was “begotten of the substance of the Father.” The key word was the Greek *homoousios*, which created great debate. It means literally “of the same substance” or “of the same essence,” indicating that Christ was equal in divinity to the Father. Not all theologians were happy with that definition. Even though, as mentioned above, virtually all confessed Christ’s divine nature, the question was how to define it. Especially theologians from the Eastern wing of the church, the Greek Church, would have preferred the Greek term *homoiousions*. The difference is one I, which makes a difference in meaning: *homoi* means “similar to,” whereas *homo* means “the same.” In other words, this formulation because they believed it was not biblical and could lead to modalism. For Eastern theology, the distinctive “personhood” of the Father and the Son was important in addition to securing the privileged status of the Father. Western theologians objected to the “similar to” interpretation, believing it could be interpreted in a subordinationist way, meaning that the Son is (in this case, slightly) different from the Father and therefore less than the Father.

This difference of opinion between the Eastern and Western wings of the church did not lead to a division or a permanent labeling of either side as hermitical, but it did highlight a growing gulf between the Christian East and the Christian West. Even though both traditions at least formally concurred with the Nicean formulation, they began to develop their own distinctive approaches to Christ, namely, the Antiochian and Alexandrian schools. Each school produced a distinctive Christology, which in turn gave rise to distinctive Christological heresies. In a way, the heresies that arose took seriously the concerns of each of these schools and pushed the boundaries until the theological consensus came to the conclusion that they had gone too far.

The Christology of the Council of Chalcedon (451)

The Council of Chalcedon was necessitated by the extreme positions which the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes had taken in explaining the reality of Jesus Christ. The Christology of the New Testament proclaimed Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man without entering into any philosophical speculation. But in the course of time, as we have seen, the questions raised about his being God and human at the same time needed to be resolved. If he was only God, then incarnation and consequent salvation through him have not taken place. Moreover, one cannot think of a God limited by space and time. If he was only a human being or a human being adopted by God to represent him, then God becoming human as experienced and witnessed by the disciples and the early Christian community becomes meaningless. While safeguarding and communicating the truth about Jesus Christ the Alexandrians had taken an extreme position in Eutyches that before becoming the one reality of Jesus Christ there were two natures, divine and human, but at the

incarnation they were united in such a way that there was only one Divine nature or *monophysis*. Such a Christology would separate Jesus Christ from us. Then he would not be one like us. On the other extreme we have the position of Nestorianism of the Antiochenes separating the two natures in Christ.

In his eagerness to safeguard the full humanity of Jesus Christ against the perceived threat to it from Cyril of Alexandria and the real threat to it from Eutyches, Nestorius held a position that seemed to separate divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. In Nestorianism it became a clear separation of the two natures in Christ. This too would go against the apostolic witness and contradict the incarnation or hominization of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, a clear formula of faith that would express the apostolic faith that is handed on through the living tradition of the Church was necessary. It was already there without clear and systematic expressions scattered in the creeds and in the other authoritative documents of the Church. But it was not sufficient to bring unity of faith and to overcome extreme theological opinions and the teachings of the individual patriarchs and bishops. Factions in the Church also endangered the political unity of the Roman Empire. Therefore, the emperor, Marcian called the Council to deliberate on the controversial issues that would bring about the unity of faith.

The council of Chalcedon was the most important Christological Council but it was not only a Christological council. It deliberated also on matters of Church discipline after the Christological issues were settled. 370 bishops or their delegates attended the council. At first the Council condemned Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, who reinstated Eutyches whose monophysitism he approved in the synod of Ephesus in 449. It was disapproved by Pope Leo I, and called it “the robbers’ synod” or *Latrocinium*.

The fathers of the Council of Chalcedon had the following documents before them which were read in the assembly and were approved because they found that the doctrines contained in them as the expression of true faith of the Church. These documents were: 1. Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople; 2. Cyril of Alexandria’s second letter to Nestorius affirming the two natures in Christ; 3. The Text of agreement between Alexandrians and the Antiochenes concerning the union of two natures 4. The Tome or the Doctrinal letter of Pope Leo

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I to Flavian, the Patriarch of Constantinople, in 449 affirming two natures in the One Person of the Son of God taking the terminologies from Tertullian.

In the Fifth Session of the Council the following formula of Christological Faith was approved by the majority of the Council Fathers.

1. The Definition of the Faith of the Council of Chalcedon and Its Meaning

“Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person or Hypostasis or Prosopon], that he is perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly human, composed of a rational soul and [human] body, consubstantial (homoosios) with the Father as to the divinity, and consubstantial with us as to the humanity, like unto us in all things except sin (cfr Heb 4:15). The same was begotten from the Father before ages as to the divinity and in the latter days for us and for our salvation was born as to His humanity from Mary the Virgin Mother of God.

We confess that the one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be acknowledged in two natures[Physis], without confusion, without change, without separation and without division (unconfusedly immutably, indivisibly, inseparably) [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person (prosopon) and one hypostasis. He is not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ has taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers delivered to us.”

The Christological confession of Chalcedon expressed the distinction between the terms *Person* (Hypostasis or Prosopon =

the underlying subject of actions or qualities) and the nature or *Physis*.

The Person is the ultimate subject which possesses the nature or *physis*. The Nature or the *Physis* is the principle of action and the basis of qualities. A human person acts according to his or her rational nature and possesses human qualities. A human person or a human hypostasis is the ultimate subject of human actions in a rational way or that which has the human qualities. It is the answer to the question, “who”? Who acts in a human way? The answer would be ‘a human person’. “Who” acts in a divine way with divine qualities? The answer would be, ‘a divine person’. When one refers to the nature, the question is ‘what?’ What is that person? When one has human qualities and acts in a human way, we refer to the human nature and when one has divine qualities and acts in divine way that person is of divine nature. Now applying these categories of thought to Jesus Christ who is One person in two natures, we can ask the question, “Who is Jesus Christ?” Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity or the Logos. “What is Jesus Christ?” Jesus Christ is both divine and human or he has divine and human natures. The Second Person of the Trinity or the Logos refers to the Ultimate Subject or the Personhood (Hypostasis) of Jesus Christ which possesses the divine and human natures.

The ultimate subject or the ontological subject in every human being is not the subject that is directly involved in every conscious, free or deliberate action of a human being. The Person refers to the subject as the centre of unity that bears the individuality. As such it does not act or become conscious of itself. It is the subject, “who” in the ontological or metaphysical sense. Often we get confused about the ultimate subject, the ontological person, and the psychological, conscious personhood. For this reason, ethics or morality and jurisprudence make a distinction between *the acts of a human person* and a *human action*. A person who is not fully conscious or who is not capable of freely choosing to commit an action cannot be held responsible for that action good or bad. Certainly, that action is done by a human subject or a human person in an ontological sense. However, if he or she is not conscious or free, the actions do not come from the nature of the person. If we consider this example to distinguish between the personhood and the nature, then we may be able to understand what we mean by Person or hypostasis of Jesus

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and his divine and human natures. The Ultimate Subject or Personhood of Jesus is the Logos which does not interfere with his human nature. Jesus' free human decisions, his human qualities and actions flow from his human nature and as such they are *human actions* though their ultimate subject is the Logos, which is his Divine Personhood. He is fully human in this sense though his human nature is rooted in the Divine Personhood of the Logos.

Affirmations of the Chalcedonian formula :

1. The reality of two natures in Jesus Christ, namely, divine nature and human nature is affirmed. This was against the heresies of Arius who taught that Jesus Christ was a creature and had only human nature.

2. Jesus Christ had a complete human nature with a rational soul.

This was against Apollinarius who taught that the higher part of Jesus' soul was replaced by Logos

3. The reality of One Subject in Jesus Christ, namely, the Logos is affirmed. The "one and the same" (*hais kai autos* - as Irenaeus says) Subject was in two natures.

This was against the monophysitism of Eutyches who taught that there was only one nature after the incarnation.

4. The union of divine nature and the human nature in the One Person of the Logos is qualified:

Both natures are united *without confusion and without change*: to affirm the truth against the Monophysists who insisted on one nature in Christ as they believed that the human nature was subsumed into divine nature.

Both natures are in One Person *without division or separation* : to affirm the truth against Nestorianism which separated human nature and divine nature.

The union of the natures is at the level of the ontological subject, the Person of the Logos or the Second Person of the Trinity. So it is a substantial union and not a moral union or an accidental union of two natures as Apollinarius and Eutyches explained about the union.

The Chalcedonian Christological formula addressed the concerns of both Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies. It affirms that the

Pre-existent Logos unites itself with the human nature. The human nature of Jesus has no distinct *hypostasis* or Personhood of its own or it is *anhypostatic* in itself but *enhypostatic* in the Logos or it stands on the hypostasis of the Logos. Therefore, the personhood of the human nature of Jesus is the Logos. It is rooted in the Logos. Its ultimate subject is Logos. But in no way does it reduce the full humanity of Jesus.

2. An Indian Articulation of the Christological Affirmation of Chalcedon

Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, the father of Indian Christian theology, articulated the Christological affirmation of One Person of the Logos in two natures, divine and human, using Indian categories of thought. Since Chalcedon Council in 451 A.D, no one had ever thought that the fundamental truth of Christian faith could be articulated in any categories other than the Greek categories of thought used by the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon except Upadhyay.

B. Upadhyay uses the Indian philosophico-anthropological categories to explain this mystery of hypostatic union. In his journal *The Twentieth Century*, he writes:

According to Vedanta, human nature is composed of five sheaths or divisions (*kosha*). These sheaths are: (1) physical (*annamaya*); (2) vital (*pranamaya*); (3) mental (*manomaya*); (4) intellectual (*vijnanamaya*); (5) spiritual (*anandamaya*). These five sheaths are presided over by a personality (*ahampratyayi*), which knows itself. This self-knowing individual (*jiva-chaitanya*) is but a reflected spark of the Supreme Reason (*kutastha-caitanya*) who abides in every man as the prime source of life and light. (B. Upadhyaya, "Incarnate Logos" BUI, p. 191)

From this understanding of the nature of humans with five sheaths, B. Upadhyay tries to explain the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ the God-Man using this understanding of the composition of humans:

The time-incarnate Divinity is also composed of five sheaths: but it is presided over by the Person of Logos Himself and not by any created personality (*aham*). The five sheaths and the individual agent, enlivened and illumined by Divine Reason... make up man. But in the

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God-man the five sheaths are acted upon directly by the Logos-God and not through the medium of any individuality. (B. Upadhyaya, "Incarnate Logos" BUI, p. 191).

Some detect in this explanation of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ a certain closeness to Apollinarianism, (See Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, p. 80). Apollinarianism taught that the divinization of the flesh of Christ was so total that the Saviour was not a real man and had no higher soul and therefore 'appeared as a man'. It denied Christ the presence of a human free-will and normal human psychological development. But in B. Upadhyay's explanation of the hypostatic union using the Indian philosophico-anthropological categories, the human intellectual and volitional faculties in Jesus are not replaced by the Logos-God or eternal *Cit*, and therefore Jesus remains one like us. The difference between him and us is that in Jesus Christ his humanity is united with the Logos-God as he is, and we have in us only the general presence of him as the 'prime source of life and light'. So in his humanity, he is like us although in his divinity he is essentially different from us, because "Jesus Christ is God by the necessity of His being, but He became human of His own free choice. It was compassion for us, which made Him our Brother, like us in sorrow and suffering but without sin. Jesus Christ is perfectly Divine and perfectly human. He is the incarnate Logos" (B. Upadhyay, "Incarnate Logos" BUI, p. 191). Before judging whether B. Upadhyay's explanation is close to Apollinarianism one must consider that the philosophical and anthropological presuppositions of Apollinarius are different from those of B. Upadhyay and that the latter conveys the meaning of hypostatic union without doing violence to the understanding of human nature and divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ.

1. Implications of the Chalcedonian Formula:

The Chalcedonian formula presents the mystery of Jesus Christ in a static form to overcome the heresies that either denied or over-emphasized the divine or the human nature in Jesus Christ. Using the Hellenistic or Greek categories of thought, namely, substance, person, nature etc., the Fathers of the Council tried to preserve the truth that the reality of the Person whom the apostles and the apostolic community experienced was truly God and truly human. The Greek

terms tried to clarify the reality of Jesus Christ. But it can be misunderstood as a static formula forgetting the dynamic life of the Son of God, who is both divine and human. In him is the fullness of divine life and human life and in him all humans are included. He is the Alpha and the Omega. There is nothing outside the reality of Christ. He embraces everything, divine, human and the cosmos.

The mystery of Jesus Christ transcends all definitions including the most sublime Chalcedonian formula. However, the minimum that is expressed through the Christological formula clarifies the fundamental Christian faith about Jesus Christ and excludes all other Christological formulations that deviate from this foundational Christian faith. It also lays the foundation for the unfolding of the mystery of Jesus Christ through further Christological reflections as well as our personal relationship with Jesus Christ through prayers and worship of him in the liturgy. *Knowing about* the reality of Jesus Christ through the Chalcedonian formula must lead us to know *him* or experience him and be transformed by him through the power of his Spirit that we may be able to live human like him. Following are some of the Christological issues that are clarified in the light of the Chalcedonian formula:

a. *Rejection of any form of Adoptionism*

It may be easy for many people to accept Jesus as a human being in whom God's presence was more intense and deep than in other human beings. It may be easy also to conceive that Jesus was a human being whom God adopted as his son and messenger. Indeed, it was the belief of the Jewish-Christian sect called Ebionites who believed that Jesus was only a messenger of God who had the empowering of the Holy Spirit at baptism. Then Jesus would be a founder of a religion like other founders of religions, a great prophet, a religious revolutionary, an ethical or moral teacher or Guru who had an intense experience of God. But the Christian foundational confession of faith affirms and proclaims the apostolic experience articulated in the Council of Chalcedon that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, God himself who became human and not a human becoming God.

During the development of the Trinitarian doctrines, one of the heretical teachings was that the Father, Son and the Spirit are three

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powers of God and not distinct persons. With the false understanding that the Divine Son in the Trinity is only a power, Adoptionism tried to show that Jesus was adopted to be the Son of God at baptism or at resurrection. Paul of Samosata (AD 200 - 275), the Patriarch of Antioch, taught that “The Saviour became holy and just; and by struggle and hard work overcame the sins of our forefather. By these means he succeeded in perfecting himself, and was through his moral excellence united with God...”.

Theodoret, bishop of Cyhrrus (AD 393-460) following Nestorianism arrived at a solution of the unity of divine and human in Christ through a type of Adoptionism that human Jesus has moral union with Logos. So he was God’s Son in the sense that he was a human filled with the power of God. This type of Adoptionism is different from the extreme Antiochene position which admits the divine personhood of the Son different from the Father and the Spirit and yet considers Jesus as a human person united to the divine personhood of the second person of the Trinity. The Council of Ephesus in 431 AD condemned all types of Adoptionism that reduced Jesus Christ to a human being who was adopted by God. So the false Christological understanding that Jesus Christ as *homo assumptus* or a human person united with the divine person nullifies the revelation of God becoming human or the hominization of the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. If anyone sees the humanity of Christ in opposition to his divinity this problem of Adoptionism arises. The second letter of Cyril presented at the Council of Ephesus explicitly condemns any form of Adoptionism. It asserts that the one who is born of Mary is God himself. Jesus Christ is not a human person who is from Mary united with the Second Person of the Trinity or Logos. Cyril of Alexandria writes in his second letter to Nestorius :

For we do not say that the nature of the Word was changed and became flesh, or that it was converted into a whole man consisting of soul and body; but rather that the Word having personally united to himself flesh animated by a rational soul, did in an ineffable and inconceivable manner become man, and was called the Son of Man, not merely as willing or being pleased to be so called, neither on account of taking to himself a person, but because the two natures being

brought together in a true union, there is of both one Christ and one Son; for the difference of the natures is not taken away by the union, but rather the divinity and the humanity make perfect for us the one Lord Jesus Christ by their ineffable and inexpressible union. So then he who had an existence before all ages and was born of the Father, is said to have been born according to the flesh of a woman, not as though his divine nature received its beginning of existence in the holy Virgin, for it needed not any second generation after that of the Father (for it would be absurd and foolish to say that he who existed before all ages, coeternal with the Father, needed any second beginning of existence), but since, for us and for our salvation, he personally united to himself a human body, and came forth of a woman, he is in this way said to be born after the flesh; for he was not first born a common man of the holy Virgin, and then the Word came down and entered into him, but the union being made in the womb itself, he is said to endure a birth after the flesh, ascribing to himself the birth of his own flesh.”

In the middle ages again this problem of Adoptionism props up. Archbishop of Toledo, Elipandus (717 - 808?) comes out with a strange theological idea that undermines the Christian confession of faith in the Son of God who became human. According to him, Jesus Christ is Son of God by divine nature but “when born from a woman, and put under the Law, he was Son of God not by nature but by adoption”. To prove his point he quotes the sayings from the Gospels, “Father is greater than me” and he is “the first born among many brethren” as well as the use of the title “Son of Man” by Jesus. This type of Adoptionism was condemned by Pope Hadrian (793) and the Council of Frankfurt (794) affirmed that “On account of the oneness of the Person of the Son of God, is the same time born of human, perfect God and perfect human”. The question of *homo assumptus*, the idea that God assumed a human person comes up again and again because of the difficulty in understanding the mystery of God becoming visible in history in Jesus Christ. Leon Seiler, a Franciscan friar, who defended the title *homo assumptus* was condemned in 1951. It shows this false thinking continues to express itself in different ways even in our own times.

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The problem with Adoptionism is that it makes Jesus a composite made up of God and human. Such a concept destroys the very meaning of the hominization of God. God continues to be the Ultimate subject, or the *Ior Ego* of Jesus. This in no way destroys and limits Jesus' human conscious Ego, Jesus' freedom, knowledge and relationship with God, humans and nature and his struggles, temptations and so on. Most of those who think in terms of Adoptionism want to safeguard the human life of Jesus. The monophysitic or docetic understanding of Jesus that makes its appearance in some prayers and practices and emphasizing Jesus' divinity at the cost of his humanity are some of the causes of Adoptionism.

Jesus is the face of the Father. As John would witness, those who have seen the Son has seen the Father. In Jesus Christ the mystery of God is made visible in history. Therefore, any form of Adoptionism makes Jesus Christ one among the religious leaders, religious reformers or a great prophet. It goes against the fundamental Christian faith affirmation that Jesus Christ is Light from Light, true God from true God, the Centre of human life and the Meaning of human existence and the Universe. In the Upanishadic terms, Jesus Christ is "the fullness from the fullness" (*pûrnat pûrnam udacyate* – Isa Up).

To think of Jesus as a double personality, or a composite being, or as a God-adopted human being is to destroy the mystery of God's unique and decisive revelation in human history. The entire New Testament witness is that the Son of God lives our human life in its fullness. In the Christological hymn in Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:6ff) and John's Logos, Christology (1:14) emphasize the truth that the Ultimate Subject of the Divine-Human reality of Jesus is the Logos or the Son of God. The danger of an extreme incarnational or a Christology from 'above' is that it may end up in Docetism which makes Jesus appear to be human and not really human. The danger of a Christology from 'below', starting with Jesus of Nazareth may end up in Adoptionism. The importance of Chalcedonian Christological formula is that it avoids both extremes and articulates the truth of the apostolic experience although expressed it in Greek categories of thought. The Patristic theology as well as the Councils of the Church re-affirms the basic Christian faith-affirmation that *this human Jesus is the Christ, the Word or the second Person of the Trinity.*

b. As Jesus Christ, the Logos is the one Subject, with Divine and Human Natures, Cross-predication is possible

From the beginning of the Christian proclamation, it was difficult for the unbelievers that Jesus the human is God. How can Christ be God and human at the same time? It was a “stumbling block to Jews” and “foolishness to gentiles” (ref. 1 Cor 1: 23-24). This question was raised by the Jew Triphon in Justin’s Apology. Triphon argues, “Your statement that this Christ existed as God before all ages, and then that He consented to be born and become man, yet that He is not of human origin, appears to be not only paradoxical, but preposterous” (*Dialogue with Triphon*, Ch.48). The insights of the Chalcedonian Council on confessing Jesus Christ as One Person with two Natures resolve such problems. Since Jesus Christ is One Person all the predicates about him whether referring to the divine or human nature must refer to his Person, that is the Second Person of the Trinity or the Son of God. Therefore, the rule is that every cross-predication is acceptable and legitimate if it refers to his person. So it is legitimate to say that ‘God died’ because the subject of death is God himself. But the same principle cannot be applied to the natures. The human predicates cannot be applied to divine nature and divine predicates cannot be applied to human nature. Therefore, we cannot say ‘divinity died on the cross’ or ‘Christ’s humanity is eternal’

In fact, the cross-predication refers to the reality of God’s involvement in human history. God takes up on human life and lives it in its fullness. God is the subject of the suffering and death. The passion and death of Jesus affects God. It is because the Logos or the Word became human and lived our lives. God takes upon himself human suffering and pain. God is totally involved in our lives! How can this be possible when we philosophically think that God is immutable or unchangeable? It is possible because God is not the God of the philosophers but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the reflection on the ‘cross-predication’ is not a simple bringing together of the paradoxes but refers to the central mystery of Christian faith, namely, God becoming human, the Infinite God becoming finite, the Absolute becoming relative or time and space-bound. It refers to the paradox of Creator becoming a creature, the All-powerful becoming powerless and the Life itself dies to share life- eternal with us. In

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Jesus Christ God shares our life and destiny and brings it to God-intended fulfilment.

c. Praying through Christ and Praying to Christ

Every Jewish prayer ended with a doxology. The early Christian community influenced by the Jewish tradition ended their prayer with a doxology praising the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Later it was abandoned when Arian heresy made use of this formula to show that the Son is subordinate to the Father. Therefore, after the Council of Nicaea, the doxology was made to confess the equality of the Father, Son and the Spirit, ending or beginning the prayer with a Trinitarian formula, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit”. However, praying to the Father, through the mediation of the Son was an accepted practice from the beginning of the Church. There was no problem in *praying through* Christ. But *praying to* Christ directly and praying to Christ referring to his glorious humanity as in the devotion to the Sacred Heart were questioned in the course of history.

The early Christian community experienced and believed in the continued presence of the risen Lord in the community and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the community confirming the proclamation of the apostles through signs and wonders. The gospel according to Matthew concludes with the promise of Jesus to be present always in the community till the end of time (Mt 28:20). In the context of the Eucharist the community the believers began to pray to Jesus to come again as he promised to lead the community and the whole world to the eschatological fulfilment. Therefore, the prayer was, “Maranatha”, “Come Lord” (1 Cor 11:16). Stephen, one of the first deacons prayed to Jesus, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”, as he was stoned to death (Acts 7:59). The Risen Lord becomes the centre of the worshipping community. Already such worship of Jesus is alluded to, when Matthew refers to the Magi worshipping child Jesus (Mt 2:11) as well as the leper (Mt 8:2) and Jairus (Mt 9:18) kneeling before Jesus. Matthew was probably anticipating the experience of Jesus as Lord after the resurrection and the expression of it in the liturgical celebrations of the early community. This Christological hymn in Phil 2:6 as well as presenting Jesus together with the Father as the centre of heavenly liturgy (Rev 5:8-14) shows the early tradition of worshipping and adoring the Person of Jesus Christ directly. However, in the

Christological controversies this theme of praying to Jesus directly was taken up.

According to the Alexandrians, any prayer to Jesus was addressed to the Person of the Logos and it was legitimate. But for the Antiochenes, adoration, praise, thanksgiving and in fact the entire worship can be directed only to the Logos and the humanity of Jesus can be worshipped only on account of its relationship with the Logos. Here again such a position gives the impression that the humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ are separated. If so, it cannot be accepted as the expression of the true faith of the Church in the Person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this position was condemned in the II Council of Constantinople (388) and in the Council of Ephesus (431). According to the Chalcedonian faith-affirmation, whether the worship is directed to the humanity or divinity of Jesus Christ, it is referred to the Person of the Logos.

In France, the Jansenists in the 17th century opposed the practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart because they considered it as worshipping the humanity of Jesus Christ by separating it from the divinity of Christ. This problem would not arise if the faithful are properly catechized about the content of such adoration. Praying to the Sacred Heart or any worship of the glorious humanity of Christ is directed to the Person of Jesus Christ who is both Divine and Human. Pope Pius VI (1794) affirms this when he says that the humanity of Christ “is adored not for its own sake and merely as flesh, but as united to the divinity”. It is not an honour given to a creature as some considered, including the synod of Pistoia which the Pope opposed stating clearly that by adoring the Sacred Heart there is no “divine honour given to a creature, but one and same adoration by which the incarnate Word with its own flesh is adored”. Worship of Jesus Christ is the worship of God himself, whether we explicitly adore his divinity or glorious humanity. It is in him we live, move and have our being. It is through the glorious humanity of Jesus that we enter into communion with God, the Trinity, both in our historical existence as well as in our life beyond this world. St. Augustine affirms this when he says, “Against all errors, there is one absolutely safe way: that one and the same is God and human: God to whom we go, and the human through whom we go” (City of God, Book XI, Ch. 2). It is in the humanity of Jesus Christ we touch God. In the humanity which the Word assumed

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all humans are included. We are a part of the reality of Christ's human existence. When we adore Christ's humanity, we adore Christ's divinity as well because one cannot be separated from the other. Jesus Christ is the true mediator between God and humans (I Tim 2:5) because in him God and all humans meet because he is both divine and human.

B. Various Theological Approaches Explaining Hypostatic Union

There were many attempts to explain the mystery of hypostatic union. Using theological, philosophical and anthropological categories of thought, some schools of thought and individual theologians attempted to explain the meaning of hypostatic union. Some of the schools of thought like Scotists and Thomists as well as individual theologians like De la Taille, Piet Schoonerberg and Karl Rahner attempted to explain the hypostatic union based on their insights and their philosophical, anthropological and theological perspectives.

1. The Scotist Theological Reflection on Hypostatic Union

Dun Scotus affirms that Jesus is truly and fully human following the Chalcedon Council. But being totally human he could be a human person. Normally, the human nature that is created by God subsists in itself and constitutes a human person. But in Jesus' case the human nature does not subsist in itself but is assumed into the subsistence of the Logos. The human nature of Jesus is dependent on the Word for its subsistence. So the basis of the hypostatic union is not in the Word but in the possibility of the human nature which can be assumed. This possibility of the human nature which can be called '*potentia obedientialis*' or capacity for obedience, cannot be considered a claim of the human nature or its positive possibility, but simply a possibility of being assumed. The initiative and power to actualize such a possibility must come from God. When the humanity is assumed by the Word, it becomes the medium of God's presence. Though this position of the Scotists recognizes the full humanity of Jesus who acts as a human with responsibility and freedom, it cannot clearly show how Jesus Christ can be truly one Person. The Thomists argue against this position saying that a fully constituted being can never become substantially one with another. Therefore, according to them this Scotists' position would end up in Adoptionism. Therefore, the argument

against the Antiochene Christology in general is also valid in evaluating the Scotist position.

2. The Thomistic Explanation of Hypostatic Union

Using the categories of essence and existence the Thomists, represented by Capreolus, Cajetan, Billot and others, tried to explain the unity of Divinity and humanity in Christ. According to them Jesus has a full human nature, namely, he has whatever that belongs to a human being or the complete 'essence'. But this essence has no existence of its own but it exists only through the Word. The person of the Word gives existence to the humanity of Christ. It is the being of the Word that gives being to the humanity of Christ. Without ceasing to be divine it sustains the created human nature. The Word is the determining principle in Christ. In him God exists and acts outside himself. This position can explain the perfect unity in Christ between divinity and humanity. As in the Alexandrian tradition, the Word or the Logos exclusively determines the life and actions of Jesus. In him God is fully present to humans.

The objection to the Thomistic position is that it does not take seriously the human nature of Jesus Christ. To be a human consists in being a human in human existence. God cannot perform a human act. If Jesus is really human, he must have a human existence. Therefore, we have to make a difference between subsistence and existence. Subsistence consists in being in oneself, with an ultimate incommunicability by which one is oneself and one can relate one's experience to the centre of one's being.

Jesus subsists in the Word but exists as a human. If Jesus' human existence is given by the 'esse' or the very being of God as the Thomists postulate, then we would have to speak of the incarnation of God rather than the incarnation of the Word, which has its own hypostasis or personhood. We speak of the Second Person of the Trinity, who is distinct from the Father and the Spirit becoming human. As a hypostasis or subsistence or person, the Word or the Logos, is distinct and not separate from the Father and the Spirit. However, there is only One being of God. Therefore, we have to keep the distinction between the being and the subsistence in the Christological reflections. The hypostasis or the subsistence specific to the Word has become human. In order to understand the mystery of incarnation

and salvation to some extent at least, we have to keep in mind that the human existence of Jesus is by the subsistence of the Word in this human Jesus. In Jesus, both God and Human, there is the full existential depth of human life. In him is the sharing in divine and human nature total and complete.

4. De la Taille's Explanation of Hypostatic Union.

De la Taille remains in the Thomistic tradition in explaining the meaning of hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. However, De la Taille goes beyond the Thomistic solution that the divine 'esse' or being gives human existence to Jesus. He affirms the true human existence of Jesus. He uses the Thomistic categories of 'potency' and 'act' to explain the hypostatic union. For him, the self-donation of God, that is an uncreated Act, finds expression in Incarnation, sanctifying grace and beatific vision. The uncreated Act actuates the creature by a created actuation in all three: incarnation, sanctifying grace and beatific vision. For De la Taille, the pure Act actualizes the potency of the human nature to unite itself with the Word and thus it receives human existence. Through the uncreated act of the Word, Jesus Christ has, thus, a human existence. Though this explanation seems to recognize the full humanity of Christ, the Word is united with the essence of Christ's humanity which is actualized into existence by the union with the Logos. Therefore, the human existence of Jesus is the only link that makes the union of nature with the Word possible. But the question is whether the human existence of Jesus is the real human existence like other humans. Is he really human like us as the Chalcedon confesses and teaches? Does the human existence of Jesus unfold itself in and through an authentic human life? In fact, De la Taille's theory too has not overcome the Thomistic problem of not sufficiently making a distinction between existence and subsistence in explaining the hypostatic union of two natures in Jesus Christ.

5. Felix Malmberg's Explanation of Hypostatic Union

According to F. Malmberg, the whole concrete human nature of Christ is divinized through and through in the highest conceivable way by the "grace of union": it is God the Son's own human nature. This human nature of Jesus Christ is created. It is "created precisely through being assumed" (*ipsa assumptione crearetur*) as St. Augustine says

about Jesus' human nature against Arianism. (*Contra Arianorum* 8:4). Every creation is a self-communication of God. Everything is created outside God but the otherness of the creature is included in God. Christ is the unique creature in which the full otherness implies the most complete and intimate union in such a way that the created humanity of Jesus belongs to the very root of the subsistence of the Word. According to him the grace of union is precisely personal existence divinely and freely given to the human nature in the person of the Word. This means that F. Malmberg saw the creation of the human nature as presupposed for the hypostatic union.

F. Malmberg's reflection on the hypostatic union is in line with the reflection of De Taille. Both of them attempt to go beyond the understanding of the same from a formal union using metaphysical categories to a living relationship by the sharing of the divine life by uniting the divine and human natures. By bringing the concepts of the 'grace of union' as well as the inclusion of the otherness of the creature in God himself F. Malmberg touches upon the soteriological implications of hypostatic union. It also can raise a question to us whether the Western understanding of God as "totally the Other" can meaningfully explain the mysteries of creation, incarnation and salvation. Is incarnation or the union of divine nature and human nature in hypostatic union possible if God is "totally the Other"? Perhaps, a deeper understanding of the theology of the Trinity and the Advaitic intuition of Indian philosophical and mystical tradition can provide new and better insights into the mystery of hypostatic union.

6. An Advaitic Explanation about the Meaning of Hypostatic Union

The advaitic intuition of Indic tradition may give us a meaningful explanation of the hypostatic union. Here what we mean by *advaita* is not as some Indian and Western authors translate it as "monism". The advaitic intuition does not mean monism or the philosophy that the reality is one. Advaita means not-two. In fact, the advaitic intuition is that the Absolute and the relative or God and the world are *neither one nor two*. In the theology of two natures we can overcome both monophysitism (only one nature in Christ) and nestorianism (two separate natures in Christ) as Chalcedon did, if we take seriously the advaitic intuition. If God is the Absolute Other, how can God become human? Advaitic intuition gives us an insight that God and humans are *distinct but not separate*. This is similar to the Trinitarian intuition

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which affirms that the three Persons in the Trinity are distinct but not separate. If the divine and human natures were so separate, hypostatic union between the two natures would not have been possible. Therefore, the incarnation of the Logos or the Word reveals to us that there is an ontological relation between God and human in the very structure of the reality itself. The incarnation of the Word is the historical and the maximum possible actualization of it by the initiative of God.

This is once and for all and unique action of God. Jesus actualizes this relationship in the existential level through the exercise of his freedom in loving obedience to his Father. The former is possible only by God's plan and his salvific will while the latter is not impossible for any human being who responds to God's invitation to live in communion with him and re-orientes his life accordingly in faith.

All the preceding explanations about the meaning of the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the One Person of Jesus Christ refers to the incarnation of the Word or the Logos. The question that led to various controversies before Chalcedon and after Chalcedon was how God could become human. Karl Rahner raises a fundamental question: How can God remain immutable or unchangeable and at the same time share our humanity? He answers this question by stating that God must remain immutable in himself, but is subject to suffering and death in the otherness of his human existence. We need to go beyond the philosophical speculation about God's immutability to understand God's involvement in human salvation as revealed in Jesus Christ. There is an essential interrelation between distance and union. The distance or otherness of humans from God is removed by the dynamic union of God and human in Jesus Christ. "The unity with the Logos must constitute his humanity in its diversity from him, that is precisely as a human nature, the unity must itself be the ground of diversity" (Theological Investigations [TI] , Book I, p,181). Both in incarnation and salvation, God is involved in his otherness, leading both humans and the entire creation to their final fulfilment as planned by God. The creation is re-affirmed as God's own creation, our history becomes God's history of salvation. The incarnation of the Word is the new beginning of God's relationship with the world.

Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS

A Theology of Incarnation

The Council of Chalcedon confessed and proclaimed the meaning of the Word becoming human using Greek categories of thought. It expressed the relation between divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ in such a way that even a small deviation from it would end up in some Christological heresies. The Christological formulation of Chalcedon does preserve the original apostolic experience of Jesus Christ as both God and human but does not provide an opening to further reflection on the mystery of Christ. Therefore, there was not much development in Christology since the Council of Chalcedon. Fifteen centuries after Chalcedon, in 1951, commemorating the Council of Chalcedon, Karl Rahner wrote, “We shall never cease to return to this formula [of Chalcedon], because whenever it is necessary to say briefly what it is that we encounter in the ineffable truth which is our salvation, we shall always have recourse to its modest, sober

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clarity. But we shall only really have recourse to it (and this is not at all the same thing as simply repeating it), if it is not only our end but also our beginning.” (*Theological Investigations, Book I*). So Chalcedon is not the end of Christology but it can be considered as the beginning of further Christological reflection.

The reflections of Karl Rahner on the theology of incarnation as well as his theological reflections are based on the philosophy of Transcendental Thomism developed by Josef Marèchal who synthesized the Thomistic and Kantian epistemology. According to Thomistic epistemology we know objects because they reach senses and the intellect makes abstractions about the object. Kant would affirm that the mind or the intellect has *a priori* categories which go to the object. The Transcendental Thomism of Marèchal synthesised both and affirmed that the mind goes to the object and the object comes to the mind and we know the objects through their meeting. In fact, the mind has the capacity to go beyond the objects to reach the Absolute but they are blocked by the object. Therefore, in every affirmation of the object there is an affirmation of the Absolute or God. The dynamic movement of the mind towards the Absolute is the “restlessness” each one feels till he or she rests in God, according to St. Augustine. Rahner bases his theology of incarnation on the philosophy of Transcendental Thomism. He argues that God is self-communicating reality and humans are created to be essentially self-transcending realities. So there is a possibility of meeting between God and humans and this is what happens at the incarnation of the Word.

a. The Word became Human

The Son, the Word or the Logos is eternally united with the Father. He is the eternal image of the Father, who is the Word of the Father. The Word is distinct from the Father but not separated from him because he is the Word of the Father. He is in oneness with the Father and his nature is the same nature of the Father, or he is one in Being with the Father. However, from the Trinitarian understanding, the Son or the Word is distinct from the Father and the Spirit. The Son or the Word is *from* Father and *for* Father through the Spirit. He eternally proceeds or is begotten by the Father and eternally returns to the Father through the Spirit. His identity is an identity of eternal

relationship. The Word is *from* and *for*. His source and his end is the Father through the Spirit.

The relation of the Son to the Father and the Spirit makes the Son related to the entire creation even before incarnation. It is in him and through him everything is created and eventually saved through the eternal plan of God. He is the Alpha and the Omega of everything. He is not only the uniting force of the entire creation but also the one who through the Spirit brings everything to its fulfilment so that “God be everything to everyone” (I Cor 15:28). In his very Person or hypostasis, the Son is the movement from the Father to the world and the integration of the world into God. In him God and humans are united; in him everything is united in heaven and on earth.

In the theology of incarnation we are concerned with the Word, as the hypostasis or Person, distinct not only from the Father and the Spirit but also from the world which is created in him, through him and for him (cfr.Col.1:15f). Thus, the Word who is *from* Father and *for* Father through the Holy Spirit becomes human.

b. Who or What is Human?

Can a human being be defined? We can describe about the qualities and relationships that make up what we call a human being. Greek philosophy defines a human being as rational animal distinguishing humans from other animals. In fact, humans remain a mystery. They are indefinable. Therefore, Rahner says, “Human is the indefinability coming to consciousness of itself” (TI, 1. p.107). Like Teilhard de Chardin, Rahner too says that in human beings the cosmos has become conscious of its origin and destiny. Human beings can make sense of the reality of the entire creation only when they acknowledge that everything comes from God and everything is for God. In this process humans discover the meaning of their own existence. By nature humans are open to the transcendent Other or God. The more God is transcendent, the more God is immanent in us and this enables us to be more open to ourselves and others. It is this free and dynamic relationship with God that makes humans really humans and let them unfold themselves as human. Rahner says, “... For we can say what human is only if we say what he has to do with and what concerns him. But in the case of human being who is a transcendental subject,

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this is something boundless, something which is nameless, and ultimately it is about the mystery which we call God...When we have said everything which can be expressed about ourselves which is definable and calculable, we have not said anything about ourselves unless in all we have said we have also included that we are beings who are oriented towards the God who is incomprehensible.” (Ibid., p.108). We can know something about the mystery of our own selves only to the extent we realize that we are related to the infinite mystery of God. We could not have been open to the revelation of God or hear God’s word if we were not created with the capacity to listen to God’s word. It is constitutive of the essence of human being to be open to God. Therefore, we, as humans, are *from* God and *for* God. The human beings as finite have the capacity for receiving the Infinite and are destined towards the Infinite. In Jesus Christ the capacity of humans for the Infinite is once and for all actualized. The humans originate from God and their final destiny is God. God is the source and the end of their lives. Humans become truly humans to the extent they freely acknowledge their origin and end and give themselves freely to God who gives meaning to their existence. So by nature humans are self-transcending realities. They go beyond themselves. They are constantly reaching out to the Absolute or God.

c. Christ, the Fullness of Humans

If humans are truly humans to the extent they are open to the infinite mystery of God and recognize God as the origin and end of their life, in Jesus Christ, we have the fullness of humanity. In Christ’s humanity all human beings reach their fullness because his humanity totally subsists in the Word. The Word is *from* Father and *for* Father and humans by nature are *from* God and *for* God. So there is a natural affinity between the Word and the humans. “The incarnation of God is ... the unique supreme case of the total actualization of the human reality, which consists of the fact that human is so far as he/she gives himself/herself up.” (Rahner TI p.110). Jesus Christ as a human comes to himself by getting away from himself. Only through the other, through being with the other, he comes to himself. He reveals that humans become truly humans only by realizing their destiny as intimately united not to any otherbeing but to the Ultimate Other or God. Jesus is fully human because he has ceased to stand in himself

and or closed on in himself but totally open. This is true both in the ontological and existential level. His humanity does not subsist in itself but in the Word and his whole life was totally open to his Father in self-surrender and in total freedom. He becomes himself as full and true human by giving himself up to God. Therefore, in him alone is total fullness of the human reality. So while being the Word, he is truly and fully human.

d. Only the Word could become Human

We have seen that it is the Word who is *from* Father and *for* Father in the inner- Trinitarian life and relationship. Humans too are by nature *from* God and *for* God. So it is the Word or the Son who becomes human because both complement each other. According to Thomas Aquinas, theoretically anyone person of the Trinity or all three persons of the Trinity could have become human (Thomas Aquinas cf. *Summa Theologica*, [ST] III, q.3, aa.5-7). However, he says, firstly, that only the Son could have become incarnate because everything is created and especially the human beings by the Father having the Son as the exemplar. Secondly, the reconciliation of humans through adoption as sons and daughters is possible through the Son. Thirdly, the first human, Adam, committed sin by seeking knowledge through forbidden means and so the Son who is the true Wisdom came to save humans who are fallen because of their inordinate desire for knowledge (Cfr ST III, q.3, a.8).

The Word, the Logos or the second Person of the Trinity, is God's face turned towards the world and at the same time present with the Father and for the Father through the Spirit. Therefore, the Son is the mediator between God and humans. He is the human face of God and God's face for humans. In him is the true meaning of human existence.

In fact, incarnation is the divine presence in the centre of creation to lead everything to its God-intended destiny. This is meaningful only if God enters into the conscious world or enters into the process where the creature comes to consciousness of itself by understanding reality and relate to it in freedom. The world becomes conscious of itself and its destiny in human beings. Therefore, God could not have become any inanimate object or animal but only human.

e. Jesus Christ, God with Human and Human with God

By nature humans are self-transcending realities because they are created to go beyond themselves. This innate movement of humans for transcendence would have been meaningless if the ultimate goal of their reaching out, this “restlessness” of the humans is an infinite nothingness. In fact, it is not so. As the end of the human longing there is the self-communicating and total self-giving reality whom we call God. Humans are self-transcending realities and God is Self-communicating Reality. The self-transcending human reality and the self-communicating God meet at one point in history. That is incarnation. In Jesus Christ God touched humanity and humanity touched God. He is thus God with human and human with God. Thus he is “the only mediator between God and humans” (I Tim 2:5). He is the climax of human capacity to actualize itself by being lost in God. This is the meaning of Chalcedon when it says that he is truly God and truly human without mixing humanity with divinity. He is truly God not only in the philosophical or static metaphysical sense but also he is the living and dynamic presence of God, the most transforming event in history and in the cosmos. He is the transforming Word that is creative, effective and transformative. He is the Son who is coming from the Father and accomplishes his mission in love and in obedience to his Father.

In Jesus Christ all humans become fully open to God because he is himself openness to God. It is because he assumed the entire human nature. Since we are inter-related with him we too are open to God in our being but it becomes an existential encounter only when we like Jesus remain open to God through the Spirit and surrender ourselves to God. In his entire existence Jesus is the Son. He lives it and actualises it in his relationships and actions. He lives a life of love and service. He not only has love but he is love. He is the epitome of love and humanness. In him love and humanness are in full perfection. He is totally for others. He lived his life as a “man for others”. He could not but be so because his being was love and his actions were out of love. In him both the self-emptying of God or the kenosis of God and the self-emptying of humans are total and complete. He found himself as human by losing himself as a human for others. Therefore, he is the most real human of all humans. In him humanity discovers and recovers its origin and destiny. Jesus, indeed, reveals

what humans are and what they can become. Hence, Christology becomes more than a theology of Christ, becomes a theology of humans or real theological anthropology. No wonder then, Rahner affirmed that Christology is transcendent anthropology and anthropology is deficient Christology.

f. Jesus Christ and the Cosmos

It is said that the humans are microcosm. In every human being the universe or the cosmos not only becomes conscious of itself but also is present in a miniature form. Therefore, the Word becoming human has affected the entire cosmos. As the ultimate meaning of human life is found in Jesus Christ, the human, the cosmos also finds its meaning in him. Since Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega or the beginning and end of everything that exists (Col 1:16f), everything becomes a manifestation of Christic presence.

The entire universe has Jesus Christ as its centre. There is nothing outside the reality of Christ. Everything is taken up by the incarnation and is Christified or sanctified. In Jesus Christ God is with us and with the entire creation. Therefore, the creation receives the acknowledgement of God that everything God has created through his Word is good. Not only is the origin of the world but also the destiny of the world intimately related to Jesus Christ, the Word. As he is not only the fulfilment of humans but also of the cosmos it is legitimate to consider Jesus Christ as the Cosmic Christ.

Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS

Theological Reflections on Jesus' Humanity

During the development of Christological reflection questions were raised about Jesus' personhood and his nature. Making use of the philosophical categories available to them, the early Fathers and the Councils attempted to explain how Jesus Christ could be both divine and human at the same time. They tried to articulate the mystery of incarnation in a reasonable way without reducing the depth of the mystery or claiming to know the inscrutable ways of God in relating with humans and the entire creation according to his plan and purposes. Today, many people, especially, the followers of Jesus, are not very much interested in the metaphysics of the hypostatic union. They would like to know how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived an authentic human life as a human. What was his relationship with his Father in heaven? Did he know that he was God? Could he be God without knowing that he was God? What was his consciousness about himself and about others and the world? Was there a psychological development in him like in other humans?

What was his knowledge of secular and religious matters? What was his consciousness of his mission? Did he have faith like other humans? Did he know that he had to die to fulfill his mission? Many such questions can be raised even when we believe and profess that he was truly God and truly human.

The traditional Christological reflections answered these questions without much difficulty because they affirmed that Jesus is the most perfect human being because his human nature is hypostatically united with the Word. Accordingly, in him there are all human perfections in the maximum possible way. The theologians of the middle ages and some even in the last century attributed to him continuous beatific vision or the blessed vision of the Father, universal knowledge of everything and every being of past, present and future. This he knew from the very beginning of his life and some affirm, even from his mother's womb! Thus, it corresponded very well with the belief in him as God. However, they did not realize that these claims made about Jesus make him a mythological figure and not a historical reality with flesh and blood like ours though he was the second person of the Trinity.

The biblical witness about Jesus, in fact, very well integrates both his human and divine dimensions. The 'Jesus of Faith' we discover in the NT witness of the early Church is both historical Jesus of Nazareth and the Word, which "was yesterday, today and same forever" (Heb 13:8). The New Testament witnesses in general that the Word lived a human existence, lived like any other human having normal development of consciousness and knowledge though later gospels attribute extraordinary knowledge to him. According to Luke, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature" (Lk 2:52). According to Mark, Jesus explicitly states that he does not know about the Day of Judgment (Mk 13:32). Based on the biblical foundation, the magisterial pronouncements and sound theological tradition we must discover Jesus of Nazareth, our brother, Lord and Saviour. We must overcome the docetic heretical tendencies of a large number Christians who believe that Jesus is God but have difficulty in accepting that he was a human like us in all things except sin (cfr Heb 2:17; 4.15). Therefore, it is legitimate to inquire into Jesus' consciousness, his relationship with his Father, his knowledge of secular and religious matters, his freedom, his temptations, his faith and so on.

1. Jesus' Consciousness and Knowledge

We are called to have the mind of Christ. "Have this mind among you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5), says Paul. His kenotic attitude is the model for Christian life both in the personal and in the communitarian level of our lives. Therefore, it is important to know that not only as God he emptied himself to become human but also as a human he emptied himself in loving service to others. "The Son of Man came to serve and not to be served and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). This double self-emptying or kenosis both as God and as human prompts us to inquire into the possible way Jesus lived his life as an authentic or true human. Then, what was Jesus' self-awareness about himself? When referring to Jesus' consciousness and knowledge, the problem studied by theologians was about his knowledge of his divinity. "Did Jesus know that he was God?" Those who answer this question positively would quote a number of verses from the gospel according to John to prove their point that Jesus knew that he was God. The most favourite quotation for them is from John 10:30, "I and the Father are one". Those who answer negatively to this question or say that Jesus did not know that he was God would quote extensively from the Synoptic gospels. Though both the synoptic gospels and the gospel according to John were written after the resurrection experience of Jesus as Lord and God, John's testimony about Jesus was written almost a generation after the synoptic gospels when Jesus was already recognized, believed and adored by the early Christian community as God the Son or the Word along with the Father and the Spirit.

According to the biblical scholars the question whether Jesus knew that he was God is a badly phrased one because in the gospels Jesus never uses the title "God" for himself and in fact, he refused to accept the reverence given to God alone (Mk 10:18). God can mean only God the Father in heaven for the Jewish people. It would not have made any sense to them if this term was applied to Jesus in the beginning of the proclamation about Jesus. But only later, towards the third part of the first century, the term 'Lord' and 'God' began to be applied to Jesus due to their faith-experience of Jesus as the beginning and the end of their lives and they had broadened their understanding of God as they entered into dialogue with the Hellenistic culture. So

they could believe and proclaim that Jesus could not but be God though he lived as a human. Then they began to use it in the Christian worship.

Before we discuss whether Jesus knew that he was God in his human consciousness we have to clarify what type of knowledge we are talking about. When we consider the term ‘knowledge’, we have to distinguish between *objective knowledge* and *subjective knowledge* or subjective, intuitive awareness which is a reflex knowledge. We receive objective knowledge from outside of ourselves. The sources of our objective knowledge are experience of outside reality through the senses and the intellect, by reasoning through induction or deduction and finally, through the testimony of reliable witnesses. The subjective knowledge has its source in the subjectivity of the person or it is human self-awareness which is intuitive. It cannot be defined but only can be described through symbols and metaphors rather than concepts. It is like St Augustine saying, “If you don’t ask me, I know what it is, but if you ask me, I don’t know.” One’s knowledge about oneself is such intuitive, subjective, reflex awareness which receives objectification in the course of one’s psycho-physical as well as spiritual growth. When we reflect about Jesus’ consciousness and knowledge as a human we have to keep in mind the type of knowledge we have about objective realities as well as our subjective, reflex awareness about ourselves.

Did Jesus, as a human, know objectively that he was God? There was no possibility for him to know objectively that he was God because for him, as a Jew, Yahweh alone was God. No Jew could ever think of a human as God. What about evil spirits shouting that he was Son of God (Mk 1:24, 5:7; Mt 8:29)? The Christology of Mark employs even such witnesses as evil spirits to affirm that Jesus was truly Son of God and Matthew follows Mark. Though Jesus was God or Son of God during his earthly life, that he was God could not have entered into his human consciousness. If we claim that even for a moment he knew in his human mind *objectively* that he was God or Son of God, the Christian faith confessed by Chalcedon that he was *truly human* would become meaningless. Then he is no more like us. It would deny the true meaning of incarnation or God becoming human through kenosis or self-emptying. Then Jesus would be like an *avatara*, an appearance of God or a God pretending to be human and not really human. The early Church and great apologists like Ignatius of Antioch,

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Irenaeus and others rejected such docetic understanding of Jesus and affirmed that God became truly human in Jesus Christ.

The possibility of Jesus having an objective knowledge about his divinity needs to be excluded in order to affirm Jesus' true humanity. Was there a subjective awareness in Jesus, the human, that he was God? Here again, it is not the subjective knowledge that he is God but a subjective awareness that he is *intimately, immediately, personally, uniquely* and *exclusively* related to God as his Father whom he called *Abba*. It is not a beatific vision that the Scholastics attribute to him but is to be recognized as an immediate knowledge, spontaneously arising in him, in his human consciousness. It is this intimate union with his Father that makes him aware of his unique Sonship in his human consciousness. This Father-Son relationship constitutes the very Person of the Son. His whole life and mission originates from this relationship and is oriented towards the fulfillment of the mission which he intuitively discovers from this intimate relationship with his *Abba*. It is the source of his revelation about the Father whom he experienced so personally and uniquely and it is also the source of his mission of proclaiming the Kingdom. It is only after the resurrection experience that the disciples realize that this Son of Man was indeed Son of God or this Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Logos.

While the synoptic gospels witness to the relationship of Jesus with his Father without reducing or minimizing his authentic humanity which was like ours, John makes the invisible divinity of Jesus as the pre-existent Logos and as the risen Christ visible in the historical life of Jesus. It may give the impression that Jesus knew both objectively and subjectively that he was God or Son of God. This is possibly because John emphasizes the fact of his and our knowing more about the reality of Jesus than what Jesus knew about himself during his earthly life. Further, John refers to his witnessing to Jesus after experiencing the resurrection of Jesus (1 Jn1:1-3). However, attributing an objective knowledge of his divine sonship to Jesus as human would do violence to his true humanity. It is true that the union of divine and human natures makes it possible for Jesus to have an intimate, personal, unique and exclusive relationship with God whom he calls his Father and he is subjectively aware of this relationship in his human consciousness. Such a theological position would defend the basic Christian confession that he was truly God

and truly human. It also affirms the Scriptural witness that Jesus' earthly life was a state of kenosis sharing our condition of suffering, learning to obey (Heb 5:7), struggling and growing in wisdom and knowledge etc.(Lk 2:52)

Jesus' Self Consciousness

Any reflection on the inner life of Jesus as human would raise in our minds questions about the psychological centre of his life. Since Jesus is the model of our life, our relationships, attitudes, behavior and life-style we would like to know what the psychological centre of Jesus' life was. Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Sempiternus Rex* recognizes the value of enquiring into the psychological dimensions of the humanity of Jesus with a caution that it should not go against the faith of the Church expressed in Chalcedon. The encyclical written in view of jubilee of Chalcedon in 1951 and in the context of the erroneous positions of Deodat de Basly (1862-1937) and Leon Seiller, both Franciscan theologians, who, claimed that Jesus was an 'autonomous subject' and "*homo assumptus*" (assumed human) respectively. Both positions come very close to the Nestorianism which separates the humanity of Christ from his divinity. Therefore, these positions were condemned by the Church. However, Pope Pius XII says: "While there is no reason why the humanity of Christ should not be studied more deeply also from a psychological point of view, there are, nevertheless, some who, in their arduous pursuit, desert the ancient teachings more than is right, and make an erroneous use of the authority of the definition of Chalcedon to support their new ideas" (No.30). The encyclical further denies there are double ontological subjects in Jesus, the Logos and the individual human ontological subject. However, it leaves room for the inquiry into the possibility of recognizing a relatively independent human psychological ego or subject or self-consciousness in Jesus (W. Kasper. *Jesus - The Christ*, p.223). The Magisterium of the Church recognizes a legitimate inquiry into the humanity of Jesus from a psychological perspective.

Every human being is an ontological subject who becomes conscious of being human with a unique personhood, an ontological ego or *I* as distinct from others. At the same time every person has a psychological centre or psychological or empirical ego by means of which one recognizes his or her self as a person. It is this psychological centre or the point to which all experiences, actions and relations to

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others, including the conscious relation to God, are referred to. This psychological centre is an essential dimension of our human nature and is rooted in our ultimate subject, self or the personhood. The Chalcedon faith-statement affirms that Jesus' human nature has its ultimate subject, the Personhood of the Logos, or the Second Person of the Trinity. The human nature subsists in the divine personhood of the Logos.

The hypostatic union does not take away the psychological centre or the empirical ego of the human nature of the Logos, but in fact, enhances its possibilities that it becomes transparent to itself and makes it capable of an *immediate* experiential relation with the Father. Concerning Jesus' self-consciousness there are two representative theological positions, namely, that of P.Parente (1891 - 1986) and P.Galtier (1872 - 1961) who base their theological argument on the Alexandrian and the Antiochene traditions respectively.

(a) P. Parente's Position on Jesus' Self-Consciousness

Following Alexandrian tradition of emphasizing the divinity of Christ and the Thomistic position that Jesus had the perfection of all knowledge, P. Parente holds the view that Logos, the Word or the Divine Person controls and guides Jesus' life. The Logos is the 'hegemonikon' or the ruling faculty of the mind of Jesus. The ego or the *I* of all the statements, actions and relations of Jesus is the Logos or the divine Person. The Logos is both ontological and the psychological subject. There is no human psychological ego in Jesus and so we cannot speak of his human psychology. Every thought, word and action of Jesus is totally controlled by the Logos. For Parente this can easily explain Jesus' knowledge of his Father and the consciousness of his divine Sonship as well as of his mission.

Parente's position can easily explain Jesus' knowledge of the Father and his divine Sonship as expressed in the Gospel of John. However, it is obvious that if we hold Parente's position of Jesus' knowledge and consciousness we would certainly separate Jesus from us. His life and actions would become unreal. If the Logos controls and regulates all the activities of the human mind of Jesus, it would substantially interfere with Jesus' human *freedom* and *will* which would make "his actions from being free, from being human actions, from being meritorious, indeed makes his human nature nothing but

an irrational, irresponsible instrument of the Divinity — a machine, of which the Divinity is the motive power” (*Catholic Encyclopedia* on Monotheletism). The third Council of Constantinople in 680-681 A.D. strongly affirmed the human will and human actions in Jesus against those who denied them. Therefore, the Logos cannot substitute the human consciousness of Jesus. Though Jesus’ relationships are rooted in his divine sonship, it takes place in his human consciousness. Jesus is truly human and it means that he is conscious of his human existence and he lives a human life. It is meaningless to speak of the true humanity of Jesus if this humanity is not conscious of its own individual life in a concrete historical situation with its struggles and fears, hopes and anxieties, joys and sorrows. Jesus encounters people and situations with genuine involvement and with conscious relationships and perceptions. If this is not so, Jesus cannot be really human and we cannot proclaim meaningfully our faith that God became truly human.

(b) P. Galtier’s Position on Jesus’ Self-Consciousness

P. Galtier following the Antiochene and Scotist positions affirms genuine human consciousness in Jesus in his book *L’Unite du Christ* (publ. in 1931). His argument is that a spiritual human nature must be conscious of itself because it is proper to the human nature to be so and it realizes itself as a psychologically autonomous subject. The hypostatic union does not enter into Jesus’ human consciousness. The Logos is only the ontological subject of his subsistence. It does not control or interfere with his decisions and actions. How does Jesus know that he was Son of God? For this, Galtier proposes that Jesus had beatific vision by which he realizes that he is united to God. By this supernatural beatific vision Jesus’ human psychological ego is prevented from being psychologically independent. If he had constant beatific vision, how can we explain his passion and suffering, experience of being abandoned by his Father etc.? Galtier would give the typical Thomistic solution, that the beatific vision was suspended during the time of his trial and passion.

Galtier’s positive contribution is his recognition of genuine psychological ego in Jesus like any other human. This psychological or empirical ego is the center to which all actions, experiences and relations are referred to and in it they find their coherence. The empirical or psychological ego is essential to the human nature which

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is united to the ultimate ontological subject of the Person of the Logos. But Galtier's proposal that Jesus had beatific vision of the Father and his awareness of his sonship as a part of this objective vision cannot be accepted as it goes against Jesus being truly human. Jesus' awareness of his Sonship does not belong to any objective vision but to Jesus' subjectivity by which he realizes that he is related to the Father in a unique way.

b. Jesus' Genuine human Consciousness

In order to remain faithful to the Scripture and Tradition that witness to the authentic humanity of Jesus while confessing that he is God, we have to affirm that Jesus had a genuine human consciousness with an empirical ego which is *immediately* aware of his filial relationship with his Father because his human nature subsists in the Logos.

The hypostatic union is the highest possible actualization of the human nature as its foundation is the Logos itself. It does not take away any positive quality of the human nature but rather actualizes it to the maximum. The principle: the higher the being, the more it is conscious or transparent to itself. This can be applied to Jesus. As the human nature was assumed by the Logos, the human nature of Jesus reached the highest degree of its capability of its actualization. Therefore, in Jesus, his self-consciousness also reached its maximum. The awareness of the unique relation to the Father must be a primary factor of the human subjectivity of Jesus. Thus Jesus has a genuine human consciousness as it belongs to any human being growing according to the psycho-physical development (Lk 2:52). This must be admitted if we take the NT account about his human life seriously. The NT attests that he has human knowledge, awareness and freedom and as a human he too stands before God in full freedom, obedience and adoration.

c. Jesus' Abba-Consciousness

We have seen that the self-awareness of his relation to his Father was the primary and unique aspect of his human consciousness. It was not an objective, beatific vision of his Father but a subjective awareness which was immediate and spontaneously arising in him. The intensity and the depth of this relationship increased as he 'increased in wisdom and in years' (Lk 2:52), as he grew physically

and psychologically. The source of his Abba-relationship is, certainly, the hypostatic union by which his human nature subsists in the Logos and enables him to have an *immediate* and unique experience of the Father in his human consciousness. This relationship spontaneously arises in him and always seeks to enter into communion with his Father. The gospels witness to this intimate relationship as expressed in his eagerness to be in communion with his Father by going to a ‘lonely place’ or to ‘a mountain’ to be in prayer. It is like instinctive hunger for a communion with his Father. This relationship is expressed in his addressing God as *Abba* (Mk 14:36). There is absolute originality in addressing God in this way.

The disciples and the evangelists preserved Jesus’ way of addressing God as Abba, probably, because he repeatedly spoke of God as his Abba. It springs up from his personal consciousness. This God whom Jesus experienced as his Abba was not an exclusive monopoly of the Jews as they thought him to be but the all-pervading, all-transcending and yet an intimately personal God. He embraced everyone and everything with his unconditional love. He makes his “sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Mt 5:45). The Abba whom Jesus experienced does not exclude anyone. He is the Father of all yet uniquely Jesus’ own Father as John would say that Jesus makes a distinction of relationships by saying ‘my Father and your Father’ (Jn 20:17).

Jesus’ intimate relationship with his Father is like that of a child to his mother and father. The intimacy grows by the experience of being loved and by loving, surrendering, accepting and trusting in his Father. This Abba-consciousness of Jesus is expressed by John using symbols of word, well, stem etc. Jesus realizes his relationship with the Father like the inseparability of the utterance and the word. John witnesses that no one has seen the Father and heard him except the Son (Jn5:37). Jesus is the well which has its source, the Father and the water, the Spirit (Jn4:13-14; 7:37-38, cfr Jer 2:13; Ps 36:9). Jesus’ relationship with his Father is like the stem and the sap running in it giving life (Jn15:5). This mysterious and unique relationship can be expressed only through symbols.

Jesus’ divine sonship refers to the Christian conviction that the Father was related to him in a unique, decisive and definitive and exclusive way. However, he offers this relationship to all humans

and he mediates it. Therefore, it is through him that all other humans can enter into this new relationship with God that they too can call him *abba*. Therefore, Paul says that we too can call God *abba* (Rom 8:15). In fact, his mission was to establish this new relationship of all humans to God that the human society becomes the Kingdom of God. Jesus shares his *abba*-relationship and mediates it. He indicates that this relationship originates in him. He realizes in his human consciousness that God is his *Abba*, and therefore, he is the son in a distinct manner, absolutely and without any condition. We can call God *abba* and become God's sons and daughters only if we accept Jesus and his transforming message (Mt 5:8).

Jesus' unique relationship with his Father is not only revealed through the way addresses God as *Abba* but also through the person and the work of Jesus through whom God's reign on earth is established. Therefore, the evangelists witness to the fact of his being *the Son* with the use of definite article (Mt 11:27;21:33; Lk 20:13). John says that the gospel was written to witness to Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Jn20:30). He expresses the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with his Father by reserving the term *huios* or the Son only for Jesus and others who share this relationship through Jesus are called 'children'.

d. Jesus' Consciousness of his Mission

Jesus' consciousness of his mission flows from his *abba*-consciousness. From the very beginning of his ministry the way he proclaimed the arrival of God's reign, it is indicated that he is the unique agent of establishing God's Kingdom. It could be perceived by his disciples and the people who heard him that he had unshakeable confidence that he could authoritatively interpret the demands that the Kingdom of God makes on the people. His consciousness of his mission and the clarity with which he understood its implications prevented him from accepting any titles given by the people. They called him Rabbi, but he knew he was not a Rabbi like other Rabbis of Jewish religion. They call him messiah and prophet but he knew for certain that he was not a messiah of the Jewish expectations or like the prophets of old who spoke in the name of God. Only in John's gospel once Jesus accepts the title Messiah for himself (Jn 4:25-26). In fact, Jesus was not happy with any of the titles which the people had given him. His reluctance to accept the title, Messiah

and the warning not to divulge it comes from his awareness that both the disciples and the people would misunderstand and misinterpret his mission (Mk 8:30). He refuses to answer directly to the question of the High Priest about his identity (Mt 26:63-64) His reluctance to accept any titles was not because of his inner insecurity but because he was conscious that his mission cannot be defined by any of these titles.

Some of the main features of his mission and ministry would reveal to us that he was conscious of his mission and its implications with certain clarity. His mission consists in proclaiming and establishing God's reign which is often called the Kingdom of God. He was clear about its meaning and demands. He announces that it is at hand and not a distant or future reality. He had a clear idea about the Kingdom that he rejected any political (Jn 6:15; Lk 13:1-3) or pharisaic interpretation of it. In the coming of the kingdom proclaimed by the Pharisees, they had privileged positions and it was expected to be a hierarchical society with full establishment of the Mosaic Law but in the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaims there are only brothers and sisters with the only law of self-emptying love. Unlike most of the other prophets who announced the coming of disaster and destruction, Jesus, the new prophet, proclaims the good news of liberation and salvation. It is good news to the poor for whom life has become a burden because of economic and religious oppression and discrimination. It is good news for the sick who suffered physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. It is the good news of liberation for the so called sinners and publicans, good news for women who are marginalized by those who wielded religious and political power (cfr Lk 4:18-19). His good news is about the forgiving and saving power of God actively present in the midst of his people to be recognized, accepted and celebrated.

Jesus announces the kingdom of God with an authority hitherto not found in any of the prophets or teachers before him or after him. All of them knew that God was loving and forgiving but never experienced God as Jesus revealed. He clearly demonstrated it in his words, deeds and the life-style and relationships. In him there was no dichotomy between his words and his deeds. Both were supremely integrated. He was a prophet who disturbed the comfortable and comforted the disturbed. He, not only announced the good news of

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the Kingdom, but also with prophetic courage, denounced all forms of injustice, oppression, discrimination and dehumanization. He challenged the social and religious systems that would not let humans live and unfold as God's children. He welcomed the sinners and forgave them if they were repentant because of his experience of his *Abba* as unconditional love itself. He was conscious of his unique mission of dispensing the forgiveness offered by the Father (Mk 2:15; Lk 7:36f; 15). He had table-fellowship or commensality with the so called sinners of the society, namely, the poor, the publicans, the prostitutes and the other marginalized people of the society in which he lived. He let them know that they were loved as the children of his Father.

The above characteristics of Jesus' ministry reveal the clarity with which he was conscious of his mission. The urgency of decision he demanded from his listeners shows that he was so aflame with the life-transforming message of liberation and salvation that needed to be communicated to the people whatever be its consequences. He was conscious too that he was the unique agent of the Kingdom calling people to response and repentance. In all other secular and religious matters we can consider him as a child of his time or the one who shared some of the ideas of his contemporaries. But with regard to his consciousness of his mission, it was uniquely his own, originating from his *abba*-experience.

2. Jesus' Human Knowledge

An enquiry into Jesus' human knowledge based on the Scriptural witness is necessary and legitimate because it can liberate people from a docetic and mythical understanding of Jesus Christ. It also strengthens our faith in him when we understand that he had gone through the same struggles and difficulties that we go through. He stands by us in our struggles to unfold ourselves as better human beings. The traditional Christology exaggerated Jesus' human knowledge and distanced him from us and to some extent devaluated the radicality of God becoming human. The Scholastic theology denied Jesus the possibility of acquiring knowledge because they claimed that he had all perfections in him. In other words, to the question, 'Did Jesus acquire knowledge like all other humans?' the Scholastics would answer that there was no need for Jesus to acquire knowledge like other humans because he had the infused knowledge of all things created. The Scholastics had also no difficulty in accepting that Jesus

had beatific vision or blessed vision. Later in his theological reflections, Thomas Aquinas affirmed that Jesus had acquired knowledge like other humans but he exaggerated that too. He said, “Through his acquired knowledge he knew everything that can be known by means of the ‘intellectus agens’ (*Summa Theologica*. III. Q.12.a.1). In other words, according to Aquinas, Jesus knew everything that could be known, *all at once*, by the use of active and passive human intelligence.

Such claims that Jesus, as human, possessed the fullness of knowledge, is not supported by the Scripture. Moreover, the claiming for Jesus both infused knowledge and beatific vision separates him from us and it would go against the NT witness, that he was in every respect like us (cf Heb 2:17). Rahner expresses this clearly when he states: “The theological tradition attributes a knowledge to Jesus as man which embraces and exhausts all past, present and future reality, at least to the extent in which these realities are related in some way to Christ’s soteriological task; thus the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* [1943] for instance, attributes to Jesus an explicit knowledge of all people and all places. This theological tradition furthermore attributes to Jesus – from the very first moment of his human existence – the possession of the direct vision of God as it is experienced by the blessed in heaven. Such statements sound almost mythological today when one first hears them; they seem to be contrary to the real humanity and historical nature of Our Lord. At first sight they seem to be in complete contradiction to statements in the Scriptures which speak of a developing consciousness in Jesus (Lk 2, 52), of a Master who himself professes ignorance of decisive matters precisely in the soteriological field (Mt 24, 36; Mk 13, 32).” (Rahner *Theological Investigations* V, 1966, pp 194-195). Though Jesus was Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity and his human nature was subsisting in the Logos, was truly and really human. There is no reason to deny Jesus the normal development of a human being, growing in human consciousness and knowledge.

a. Jesus’ Knowledge of Secular and Religious Matters

According to the Greek philosophical thinking, the perfection of human being consists in having the perfection of knowledge. Therefore, any ignorance is an imperfection in humans. When we think about Jesus as truly human or perfectly human, probably, influenced by the

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Greek philosophical thinking, we consider him in this way with the perfection of all knowledge. If so, he is separated from the rest of humanity. Following the NT witness to the fact that though he was God, he was human like us, we need to consider him as a real human. So Jesus must not be and need not be the perfect human with absolute knowledge of everything but a real human, sharing our own human situation. The Gospels seem to indicate that he had certain limitations of knowledge like any of us as well as extraordinary knowledge.

As normal human beings we are aware of the limitations of our knowledge. We are ignorant of many things in life. Only for Greek philosophical thinking, especially, that of Stoics, ignorance is a deficiency. In the present understanding of humans as free beings, searching for the meaning of existence, seeking to understand the mystery of human origin and destiny, ignorance or limitations of knowledge is seen in a positive way. Rahner says: "A philosophy of the person and of the freedom of a finite being, a philosophy of history and of decisions, could undoubtedly show with comparative ease that the fact of challenge, of going into the open, of confiding oneself to the incalculable, of the obscurity of origin and the veiled nature of the end – in short, of a certain kind of ignorance - are all necessary factors in the very nature of the self-realization of the finite person in the historical decision of freedom"(*Theological Investigations*, V, 1966, p.202). The exercise of freedom is very challenging in a concrete situation when all the factors that could help us to take right decision are not available. The ignorance and the uncertainty of future haunt us. Such limitation of knowledge is part of being human. Did Jesus have such limitations of knowledge or ignorance?

There are texts in the NT indicating certain ignorance of Jesus. According to R.E. Brown the best example is in the context of healing the woman suffering from haemorrhage (*Jesus: God and Man*, 1967, p.46-47). The woman is healed by his miraculous power but Jesus did not know who touched his clothes (Mk 5:30-33). Matthew narrates the same incident but leaves out the question of Jesus about who touched him, probably because Matthew thought it would not be appropriate to indicate the ignorance of the Messiah (Mt 9:22). However, Matthew could not avoid mentioning about the surprise of Jesus at the faith of the centurion (Mt 8:10). Expression of surprise or astonishment is an indication that the person who is surprised did not

know about the matter before it was made known. Luke's infancy narrative presents Jesus as God's Son from the moment of his conception in his mother's womb and yet Luke had no hesitation to narrate that Jesus grew in wisdom (Lk 2:52). Growing in wisdom and knowledge presupposes a progression from ignorance to knowledge or less knowledge to more knowledge. That is the normal development of knowledge in any human being. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No.472)

Was there extraordinary or superhuman knowledge in Jesus? There are some texts indicating that Jesus had extraordinary knowledge. The later gospels have the tendency to suppress the fact of ignorance of Jesus or that he had to acquire ordinary human knowledge. It is very clear in John's gospel as well as in many apocryphal gospels. When Jesus asks Philip where to get bread to feed the crowd in Jn. 6:5, immediately it is added that it was only to test him and Jesus already knew what he was going to do. John would report that Jesus knew from the very beginning who would not believe in him (6:64) and who would betray him (6:71; 13:11). Johannine tendency is to eliminate any type of weakness in Jesus. According to E. Kaesemann, Johannine Jesus has not undergone a kenosis or taken the form of a servant!

Jesus is attributed the ability to know the secret thoughts of other people according to all the gospels; the misgiving of the scribes or the dispute among the disciples about who would be greater than others (Mk 2:6-8; 9:33-34; Lk 9:46-47; Jn 2:24-25; 16:19,30). Is it an extraordinary knowledge or the ability of a keen observer of persons and events to know what is happening? There are incidents narrated in the gospels which show that Jesus had the ability to know things from a distance or he had a telepathic knowledge. John narrates that Jesus knew what Nathaniel was doing under the fig tree (Jn 1:48-49). This type of knowledge from distance and the knowledge of the future events were attributed to prophets of the Old Testament (I Sam 10:1-6). Before entering into Jerusalem Jesus sends disciples to bring the colt they would find tied, on which no one ever sat (Mk 11:2). In the context of the preparation of Passover disciples are sent to find the man carrying a water jar to ask him for the guest room (Mk 14:13-14; Lk 22:10). However, in Mt 26:18 narrating the same incident there is no hint of any mysterious knowledge of Jesus. Matthew narrates

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about Jesus' instruction to Peter to catch a fish which would have a shekel in its mouth to pay the tax (Mt 17:24-27). According to R. Brown, many scholars consider it as a popular tale following that of Hellenistic miracle workers.

It must be admitted that Jesus had a deep knowledge of people around him, both his friends and enemies. He could see through their intentions, schemes and plans. Therefore, it is quite possible that the evangelists would use these traits of his personality to highlight his messianic mission. They would attribute extraordinary knowledge to him similar to that of the prophets of the Old Testament. There are texts indicating his ignorance when he asks questions about things which he did not know. But the later gospels have the tendency to remove the traces of such ignorance. Jesus' growing in wisdom as well as his ignorance about certain matters, his struggle to take a decision in the garden of Gethsemane, his tendency to run away from the impending death etc. show that he was real human like us in spite of being God.

b. Jesus' knowledge of Religious Matters

Jesus' knowledge of the Scriptures and of theological concepts was far superior to that of his contemporaries. According to the evangelist John, Jesus' knowledge of the Hebrew Bible impressed both his friends and enemies (Jn 7:15). However, it is difficult to affirm, according to the Scripture scholars whether his quoting of the Scriptures and his interpretation of some of the texts are *ipsissima verba* (the precise words) of Jesus himself or that of the apostolic preaching. This problem is raised because there are some instances of mistake in the citations attributed to Jesus. For example, Jesus says that David entered the house of God when *Abiathar was the high priest* and ate the loaves of the presence (Mk 2:26). In fact, the high priest at that time was not Abiathar but *Ahimelech*. This is clear from 1 Sam 21:1-6 where the incident is narrated. Abiathar was more closely associated with David and better known than Ahimelech and probably the popular tradition made a confusion of names. This popular inaccurate version enters into Jesus' discourse as if they are his own very words.

In reference to Zachariah who was killed between the sanctuary and altar mentioned in Mt 23:35 too there is such confusion and

mistaken identity. Zachariah who was murdered in the Temple around 825 B.C. was not the son of Barachia as found in Matthew's gospel but the son of Jehoiada (2 Chr. 24:20-22). Zachariah, the son of Barachia, lived almost 300 years later and was a minor prophet. In Mk 12:36 Jesus quotes Ps 110, "The Lord said to my Lord..." and attributes this Psalm to David. Jesus' argument is founded on the assumption that David composed this psalm which was a popular belief but modern biblical scholars including Catholics consider that it is a psalm written by a court poet.

It can be affirmed that Jesus knew his Scripture well and used them to affirm his role and the demands of the kingdom sometimes even by contradicting the scholarly interpretations of his time. However, concerning the authorship of some texts, literary form, historicity and principles of hermeneutics, the Jesus of the gospels does not exhibit any extraordinary knowledge but, in fact, follows the inadequate and sometimes erroneous interpretations of his time (R. Brown, p. 54).

c. Jesus' knowledge of Religious Ideas

Jesus is presented in the gospels as correcting some of the religious ideas which were related to his person and mission especially ideas about the Messiah and Son of Man as well as about ritual purity love of neighbor etc. But when he speaks about religious ideas that are not immediately related to his mission, namely, the Jewish religious concepts about the world, evil spirits, after-life and the apocalyptic notion about the end of the world, he shares the religious ideas of his contemporaries without correcting or modifying many of them.

According to Jewish religious belief this world is a battle-field of evil spirits. All kinds of sickness both physical and psychological as well as natural calamities were believed to be caused by evil spirits. In our own times in many remote villages of Asia, Africa and other continents, such beliefs still persist. The gospels narrate many cases of demon possession during the public ministry of Jesus. But some of these cases are obviously instances of natural sickness according to our present day understanding. Mark 9:17 narrates the symptoms of the sickness of the boy who was believed to be possessed by a demon, namely, foam in the mouth, grinding the teeth and the rigidity of the body etc. They show that he had epilepsy and was not possessed. Sometimes the evangelists narrate demon possessions which express

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the ‘inexact medico-religious understandings of their times’. Jesus is also presented as driving out the demons from an insane man and sending them to a herd of swine (Mk 5:1-20; Mt 8:28-34). It is also said that the demons were wandering around looking for a place to live (Mt 12:43-45; Lk 11:24-26). This was also a popular belief of the Jewish people. Occasionally Jesus corrects the popular idea of the relationship between sickness or calamity and personal sin (Lk 13:1-4; Jn 9:2-3). However, the gospels do not show that Jesus clearly saw the inadequacies of the popular belief concerning evil spirits, sickness, natural calamities etc.

With regard to the belief in life after death or after-life Jesus does not give any details though he speaks about this subject. He speaks of a man entering into life after death with only one hand, one foot etc. as if he would have physical body in the next life (Mk 9:43). With regard to the punishment for the wicked, he describes it in terms of unquenchable fire (Mk 9:48; Mt 25:41), worms (Mk 9:48), grinding of teeth and weeping and insatiable thirst (Lk 13:28). However, in the place of beatitude the righteous enjoy sumptuous meal in the presence of patriarchs and God (Mt 8:11; Lk 13:28). However, Jesus corrects a too materialistic understanding of life after death which was a popular belief in his time especially with regard to the married life. Jesus says, “they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Mk. 12:25). It is very difficult know whether the sayings of Jesus about afterlife, with a material conception of the same, are the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Even if they are the words of Jesus, it is very difficult to determine whether they are used as figurative or metaphorical religious language.

Though some biblical scholars hold that Jesus did not preach immortality, there are clear references to show that Jesus believed in after-life in terms of the resurrection of the body and continued life after death (Mk 8:36; Mt 10:28,; Lk 23:43). The reference to immortality in the gospels might have been influenced by the experience of actual resurrection and continued presence of Jesus after his death according to some scholars. However, one should not assume that Jesus had no knowledge about after-life and immortality which are very fundamental to one’s religious faith.

In narrating the end of time or end of the world, Jesus uses the traditional apocalyptic language. He says that the sun and moon will

be darkened, the stars will fall from heaven (Mk 13:24-25) and there will be earthquakes, famine and wars (Mk 13:7-8). The traditional Jewish apocalyptic literature is full of such narrations. Whether Jesus believed that these things would happen at the end of time is not clear. But there is nothing contrary to show that he did not believe it.

After making a scholarly study on the above issues, R.E .Brown says, “In the three areas of demonology, the afterlife and apocalyptic signs, Jesus seems to draw on the imperfect religious concept of his time without indication of superior knowledge and without substantially correcting the concepts. Once more, to prevent confusion, we emphasize that there is an important religious area where the teaching attributed to Jesus was unique, outdistancing the ideas of his time – the area of his own mission and the proclamation of the kingdom of God.” (*Jesus God and Man*, p.59).

What was Jesus’ knowledge of the future? Jesus was recognized as a prophet by his contemporaries. And traditionally it is believed that the prophets would know what would happen in the future. However it is difficult to determine from the gospels how much Jesus knew about the future because what Jesus thought to have predicted were written after his death and resurrection. About Jesus’ prediction about the fall of Jerusalem (Mk 13:2) we can reasonably conclude that the details of it were probably written after the actual event had taken place. Jesus might have already indicated such an event because of the rejection he experienced in Jerusalem. The great prophets were interpreting the current events of their time with a keen sense of their implications for the future. As a keen observer of the events and persons and aware of the types of responses he received from people who listened to his proclamation of the Kingdom, he could already know with certain conviction what would happen to him and to his message. To have a detailed knowledge of the future is superhuman but to have a firm a conviction about things about to happen because of their inevitability is not necessarily beyond human powers.

Did Jesus know about the exact day of the Last Judgment? To answer the question about Jesus’ foreknowledge concerning the time of the arrival of the Parousia and the last judgment is very difficult. The NT witness about the indication of the time ranges from immediate to indefinite. It was expected to take place during the life-time of his

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disciples (Mk 6:7, 30; Mt 10:23) or in the near future. It could come during the life-time of his hearers (Mk.13:30; 9:1; Mt 16:28) . It could be immediately after the death of Jesus (Mk 14:62; 25; Lk 23-42-43). The Parousia could arrive at an unexpected time (Mk 13:32) preceded by apocalyptic signs (Mk 13; Mt 24-25; Lk 21). According to Mk 13:32, even the Son of Man does not know the time of the arrival of Parousia.

In the tradition there were a lot of controversies about Jesus' lack of definite knowledge about the Parousia or last judgment. The Arian heretics referred to it to prove that Jesus was only a creature and not God. Irenaeus, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen and Cyril of Alexandria responded to the position of the heretical teaching by affirming that it was not the Logos but the human soul of Jesus that was ignorant about the time of the last judgment. In the sixth century, a group called "Agnoetes" (not-knowers) claimed that Jesus had a divinized human nature – different from divine nature and therefore, he did not know about the time of the last judgment. In response to it, Pope Gregory the Great, supporting Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria, makes a distinction between the human knowledge of Jesus from Logos as its source (*in humanitae*) and from the human nature as its source (*ex humanitate*) (ND 624-626). So he says that Jesus knows the day of the last judgment *in* his human nature but does not know it *from* his human nature. Eastern Fathers such as Leonitius of Byzantium, Sophronius Patriarch of Jerusalem, Maximus of Constantinople, and John of Damascus also held similar views. However, there is no defined dogma concerning this matter. The disciplinary decrees are against those who deny the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one Person of the Logos. We can go along with Rahner who says that the knowledge of the day of the Last Judgment was not a part of his human consciousness or knowledge because it was not a part of his mission.

Did Jesus know that to establish God's Kingdom he would have to die? According to the witnesses of all the gospels, Jesus had a foreknowledge of his tragic end. The passion predictions of Jesus in Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34 indicate clearly about his passion, death and resurrection. The problem about this predication is that if Jesus spoke about his end with such clarity, why did the disciples not understand

it? Are these Jesus' own sayings or are these clear articulations of what Jesus vaguely indicated about his crucifixion, death and resurrection? Probably, it is so. Further, Luke 24:19-26 explains the attitude of the disciples that they were slow in understanding. The other evangelists too give the same reason. From the situation in which he proclaimed the message of the Kingdom and the hostility it evoked in the minds of the religious leaders of his time, Jesus could easily conclude that his life was in danger. Probably, Jesus spoke in a vague way about it (Jn 2:19; 3:14; 12:32 etc.). Increasingly Jesus became aware that he had to surrender to the plan of his Father and give himself up for the cause of the Kingdom.

To sum up, we can say that regarding the knowledge of secular and religious matters, Jesus was a child of his time, in the sense that his knowledge was very similar to his Jewish contemporaries. But his consciousness and knowledge of his mission was uniquely his own, welling up from his abba-experience. He knew for certain that he had to give up his life for the cause of his mission.

Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS

Jesus' Freedom, Sinlessness, Holiness and Faith

Jesus is, indeed, the mystery of freedom incarnate. In him, human freedom, in all its genuine aspects reached its true and full unfolding. The Christian faith-affirmation that Jesus is truly human in spite of being the Word implies that Jesus had human will and freedom. However, it was very difficult for some to accept that Jesus had genuine human will and freedom because they thought that it would reduce the importance of the hypostatic union and the influence of the Word on the actions of Jesus. They thought that it would contradict the purpose of the incarnation to establish God's plan and purposes over and against the self-centred human freedom and autonomy. This led to a lot of discussion and condemnations about the will and freedom of Jesus after the Council of Chalcedon.

The influence of the Alexandrine theologians with their emphasis on the dominance of the Logos in Jesus continued even after accepting the two natures in Christ

in Chalcedon. Claiming to achieve political unity in the empire by placating the Monophysites who opposed the Chalcedon formula of two natures of in Christ, Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (610-638) proposed a new formula of reconciliation which was acceptable to the Patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria that there was only one action (*Monoenergism*) in Christ and requested Pope Honorius I (625-638) to avoid the use of the formula of “two actions” and “two wills” in Christ. In fact, he was proposing the heresy of “one action” (*Monoenergism*) and “one will” (*Monothelism*). Probably for the sake of buying peace and with the confidence that he could explain the compromise formula of “one will and one action” in Christ properly without any violence to the Chalcedonian formula, Pope Honorius I accepted the formula of Sergius. This happened, in spite of, Sophronius of Jerusalem opposing the new formula following the *Epistola Dogmatica* of Pope Leo, the Great, that “Each of the two natures does what is proper to it in communion with the other, the Word doing what pertains to the Word, and the flesh doing what pertains to the flesh” (ND 611). When Pope Honorius I explains that in Christ there is only one will, in the sense that the Word has not assumed our human rebellious and sinful attitude but our nature uncontaminated by sin and so the human will is totally conformed to the divine will. He avoids the question of two operations and stating that Jesus Christ himself is operating in the divinity and in the humanity. His successor, Pope John IV tried to explain officially the position of Honorius as affirming that the flesh of Jesus Christ did not have two opposing wills of his flesh and his mind but only one will. He clarified that Honorius was speaking of the one will of the human nature and not of the divine nature and condemned Monothelism. Whether Pope Honorius understood it properly or not, Sergius meant that there is only one will both in divine and human natures.

Maximus Confessor opposed the position of one will and one action in Jesus Christ and affirmed the full human and rational nature of Jesus which implied that he possessed human will and true freedom. The Council or the Synod of Lateran (649), inspired by Maximus Confessor and held under Pope Martin I, in its main canons 10 and 11 confessed that there are “two wills in the one and same Christ our God, divine and human, united to each other... and two operations of one and the same Christ our God, divine and human, united to each

other, because he, one and the same, is the author of our salvation through both his natures.” In the Third General Council of Constantinople (680-681) the doctrine of two wills and two operations in Christ was defined (ND 635,636 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No.475). It affirmed that, “For just as his most holy and immaculate flesh, animated by his soul, has not been destroyed by being divinized but remained in its own state and kind, so his human will has not been destroyed by being divinized” (ND 635). It further confessed, “In the same our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, we glory in proclaiming two natural actions, without division, without change, without separation and without confusion, namely, a divine action and a human action, as Leo, the master in matters related to God, asserts with utmost clarity” (ND 636). The same council condemned the heretical doctrines of Monotheletism and Monoenergism.

The Third General Council of Constantinople preserved and affirmed the faith of the early Church about the freedom and human actions of Jesus Christ, the Lord and God, as a member of the human race. The gospels give a number of instances which clearly reveal the human will of Jesus. The most important text expressing Jesus’ will and freedom is Mk 14:36 (Mt 26:39) “Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.” Jesus, the human, aware of the impending cruel death, feeling within himself fear and anxiety, pleads with his Father that he be spared from this terrible and agonizing way of ending his life. Eventually, he, in his human will, decides to surrender himself totally to the divine will. Though John in his gospel emphasizes the divinity Jesus, still, he refers to Jesus’ human will to fulfill the mission in obedience to his Father. In John 5:30 Jesus says, “I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me”. Further, Jesus says, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” (Jn 10:17-18). According to Paul, Jesus brings about salvation through obedience (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8). Jesus’ obedience to his Father and his Father’s plans presupposes genuine human freedom. He grew in his freedom (Heb.5:8) and it involved real struggle (Mk 14:36) revealing to us that even in this important aspect of his human existence he was not separated from us.

2. Jesus' Sinlessness

Both the Scripture and Tradition affirm that Jesus experienced genuine human freedom. This affirmation about his freedom raises some questions about his sinlessness. If he was free, could he commit sin? Further, if he was sinless, was he not separated from us? If the popular understanding of justifying human weakness with the saying, "to err is human", was it not possible for Jesus to err in some matters as a human? These and related questions must be faced when we discuss about Jesus' sinlessness.

According to the NT witness, Jesus' freedom does not imply sin. Therefore, when we consider Jesus' sinlessness we have to make a distinction between *de facto*- sinlessness and *de jure*-sinlessness. The de-facto sinlessness means that in fact or in reality Jesus *did not* commit any sin. The de-jure sinlessness means that Jesus *could not* sin. The constant teaching of the Church is that Jesus is *defacto* and *dejure* sinless. In other words, Jesus did not commit any sin and he could not have committed any sin. Though it is said that 'to err is human', one can choose not to commit sin. So the fact of sinlessness in Jesus as a moral high stature does not separate Jesus from other human beings radically. But the affirmation that Jesus could not commit any sin needs theological reflection and explanation because it seems to separate him from us and it may go against our understanding of human freedom which implies the possibility of sin.

The fact that Jesus did not commit any sin is attested by the NT witness. According to the Scripture, it is necessary for Jesus to be sinless to liberate humans from sins. The Old Testament speaks of the sinlessness of the Servant of Yahweh (Is 53:9; I Pet 2:22) so that he could take upon himself the punishment for the transgressions of everyone (Is 53:4-6). According to John, Jesus claims himself to be sinless: "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (Jn 8:46) in the context of forgiving the sin of a woman caught in adultery. Jesus says that the prince of this world has no power over him (14:30). These claims might have originated from the Christological position of John but it clearly reveals that John sees Jesus separated from the sinful people. Paul who had written about Jesus, almost a generation before John, affirmed the sinlessness of Jesus in spite of his becoming a member of the sinful human family. For Paul, Jesus is being sinless, is necessary pre-condition to save us from sin. Paul says, "For our sake he made

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him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). The Letter to the Hebrews which emphasizes Jesus’ solidarity with the trials, temptations and weaknesses of human beings asserts that Jesus remained sinless. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin”(Heb 4:15). Further, the Letter to the Hebrews says: “For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens (Heb 7:26). These texts witness to the de-facto sinlessness of Jesus and affirm that it is essentially related to his mission of saving humans from their sin.

According to Tertullian Jesus has the same flesh that is by nature in every human being but the flesh in other humans is sinful but not in Jesus. The divinity of Jesus is the reason for his sinlessness. “Only God is without sin, and the only man without sin is Christ, because Christ is God (*De anima*, 41). Tertullian’s insight is very valuable but he does not elaborate his argument. Origen explains the meaning of sinlessness for the personal life of Jesus. He says, “But since the power of choosing good and evil is within the reach of all, this soul which belonged to Christ elected to love righteousness, so that in proportion to the immensity of its love it clung to it unchangeably and inseparably...so we must believe that there existed in human and rational soul, without supposing that it had any feeling or possibility of sin” (*De Principiis*, Bk II, 6.5). For Augustine, Jesus is sinless because he was not affected by original sin as he was born from the Virgin. Augustine believed that the transmission of original sin was through generative act. This did not happen in the conception of Jesus and so he is without sin. This solution does not make much sense for those who do not accept Augustine’s explanation about the transmission of original sin. Theodore of Mopsuestia (d.428), holding his Antiochene Christology, argued that Jesus could have sinned and by his struggles against sin he became an example for other human beings. His position was condemned in the second Council of Constantinople (553). The Fathers, in general, affirmed that Jesus is sinless because he is divine and as he is Saviour he cannot be subject to sin.

The teaching of the Church that he could not sin or Jesus is *de jure* sinless raised questions about his true freedom in the course of

Christological development. The issue is that if Jesus cannot sin, he is different from us, set apart from our struggle and he does not share our pilgrim situation in this world. To give a reasonable answer to this question is not easy. However, any theologically reasonable answer to this question must take into account the Scriptural revelation that there was a divine mandate for Jesus to lay down his life for the salvation of others and Jesus' free acceptance of the same in total obedience. The Scripture witnesses also to the fact of Jesus' radical sinlessness and the inner impossibility of Jesus to sin against the will of his Father.

How to reconcile the fact that Jesus could not sin with his freedom and obedience? One of the solutions to this problem is by employing Thomistic understanding of freedom. According to Thomas Aquinas, freedom is self-determination or "one's mastery of one's own action" and not choosing something among many options. One is free when one is not determined from outside by force. But one can be determined from within his nature by the fullness of knowledge and the absoluteness of what one is irresistibly attracted to. The beatific vision of God by humans can be an example for this understanding of freedom. One is necessarily attracted to God. God is the absolute attraction and desire of humans that is fulfilled in beatific vision and yet at the same time one is free. Applying the same to Jesus' human freedom, the Thomists would hold that Jesus is drawn by the necessity to obey his Father. As it corresponds well with the orientation of his innermost being, he is free and could not sin. This solution is very metaphysical. It makes Jesus very different from us. We, who are in a pilgrim situation with limited knowledge of situations and persons, struggle to make the right use of our freedom in taking decisions. Jesus wanted to share our situation of pain, helplessness and confusion. The solution to the problem must be found safeguarding Jesus' human freedom in our human condition and his sinlessness not by analyzing his nature philosophically but in the context of his awareness of his mission and the divine disposition with regard to his life and mission.

Jesus' consciousness proceeds from his abba-experience which is not an objective beatific vision but an inner subjective awareness of his unique sonship. This awareness does not take away his freedom but he is burdened with the consequences of this awareness. He was tempted throughout his life to take an easy path to fulfill his mission,

to fall in line with the expectation of the people, to play the role of a political leader. But increasingly he sees his mission with such clarity that he rejects both the popular expectations about the role of the Messiah and the political interests of his own disciples and his own inclination to run away from the reality of suffering and death (Mk 14:36). His intimate union with his Father does not interfere with his freedom. Though he was truly free like any other human to choose a path, his intimacy with his Father and his deep awareness of his mission as the will of his Father, made it impossible for him to reject it. He could not alienate or separate himself from his Father or his mission. In other words, if sin is an alienation from oneself, God, others and nature, Jesus could not sin. He was totally in communion with his Father, with himself, others and nature. Even though one is free, when one is in total love relationship and experience being loved totally and unconditionally, one cannot alienate oneself from such a relationship of love. Love compels without destroying freedom.

God also can achieve his purposes through the disposition of his grace without doing any violence to human freedom and subjective self-determination. Jesus' sinlessness also can be safeguarded by God through the disposition of his grace which is his intimate relationship with him. So Jesus has true human freedom and at the same time he is in the ambit of divine disposition with his unique relationship as divine Son having an absolute mission. However, Jesus' temptations and struggles are real as in his human consciousness he did not and could not know the outcome because he was tempted as we are. God gives the grace to overcome the temptation without interfering with Jesus' freedom or our freedom. The difference is that we may not always respond to God's grace but Jesus always did. Jesus really faces the gravity of his temptations and struggles to take decisions but his Father knows that his Son ultimately would not fail him. Thus the victory is assured though he would not know it during the time of his temptation. So it is better to express this absolute assurance of the Father for the fulfillment of the mission by Jesus without interfering with his freedom rather than speaking about Jesus' impossibility to commit sin.

3. Jesus' Holiness or Sanctity

The traditional reflection on Jesus' holiness was focusing on his substantial sanctity because of the hypostatic union of his human nature

and divine nature. It is affirmed that he is holy because his humanity subsists in the Logos. Thus the Scholastics reflected on the sanctity of Jesus as the perfection of his human nature. We can also reflect on Jesus' holiness or sanctity from the fact of his being human in intimate, personal and unique relationship with his Father and his commitment to his mission. First of all, Jesus' holiness consists in his unconditional commitment and faithfulness to his Father and total belongingness to him. If holiness is wholeness which consists in one's right relationship with oneself, with God, with others and with nature, then Jesus was the most holy because he was totally transparent in himself and in total communion with his Father, others and the nature. The evangelists express his substantial sanctity by describing him as the one anointed by the Holy Spirit or filled with the Spirit and John would witness to him as the Word, light, truth and life. The evangelists also reveal his earthly life as a life of obedience to his Father and total communion with his Father through prayer. Luke presents Jesus as a prayerful person. His holiness finds expression in his humanness, love, sensitivity, availability, respect for all persons, concern for the marginalized and his commitment to the values of the Kingdom.

We should not define Jesus' holiness with our pre-conceived ideas about sanctity or holiness. Some of the Apocryphal books present him as an epitome of all super-human qualities as well as devoid of all temperamental weaknesses which other humans have. But the gospels present Jesus' historical existence as a real human with stages of psycho-physical growth which would imply also occasional outbursts (Mk 9:19), expressions of just anger as at the time of cleansing the temple (Jn 2:13-17), his disappointment, his using of harsh words against the Scribes and the Pharisees etc. If Jesus used harsh words and expressed his just anger against the hard-heartedness of the people it was only out of love for them and not out of hatred. He wanted them to be converted and become authentic humans. He wanted all to experience the unconditional love of his Father and experience of joy of being brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of his Father. His own holiness consisted in his radical surrender to his Father and radical belongingness to him. This was integrated into his life, words and actions.

4. Jesus' Faith

The New Testament presents Jesus as one who had deep faith in his Father. The Letter to the Hebrews, after explaining the meaning

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of faith and supplying a list of the Old Testament witnesses who are models of heroic faith (Ch.11), presents Jesus as “the pioneer and the perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2). Then we are exhorted to model our faith looking at his faith. The response to the question whether Jesus is able to cure the epileptic boy, his answer that everything is possible for the one who believes (cfr Mk 9:23) can refer to both Jesus’ own faith and also the faith of the one who seeks his help. In spite of the apostolic witness about Jesus’ faith, the Scholastic manuals of Christology affirmed that there was no need for Jesus to have faith. The reason for this assertion was the Scholastic position that Jesus had beatific vision. If Jesus has beatific vision he does not need faith. Such an assertion goes against the NT witness about his faith and his being as human sharing our condition of life in this world as well as against the Chalcedon faith-affirmation that he is truly human like us.

According to the NT testimony, the Son of Man offers total fidelity to God whom he experienced as his Abba. He is totally committed to his Father and his mission. He shows absolute preference for his Father’s will, love and commands over his own wishes (Mk 14:36). He perseveres in his faithfulness to his Father come what may. He seeks communion with his Father through his prayer. He lets his Father plan and arrange everything for him and he totally surrenders himself to his Father’s will. Thus, for Jesus, his faith in his Father was not an abstract idea. It had to be actualized at every moment of his life in the concrete situation of his life (J. Sobrino, *Christology at Crossroads*, 1978, pp 87-95).

The actualization of Jesus’ faith in the context of his life can be compared to anyone’s faith in general. Faith is an essential dimension of every human being whether he/she believes in God or not. Both the believers in God and non-believers share one thing in common, namely, their faith in some basic human values and its actualization. Such a faith in general has three stages in its progression and expression. The first stage of the faith in general is basing one’s personal life on some accepted values like love, justice, equality, fellowship, peace, reconciliation etc. which need to be concretized in one’s actual life situation. In the second stage of faith one concretizes these values with commitment in the context of one’s life which would eventually evoke conflict because of the forces that oppose these

values. One grows in this faith when one encounters the challenges and in the midst of the conflicts one may be able to change the situation or one may be affected by the situation in such a way that one may call his or her faith into question. The struggle is to move from an abstract faith to a new faith that is liberative as it would make one a truly unfolded human being. In a situation of injustice, oppression, discrimination, dehumanization etc. to live one's faith as the conviction of upholding the values justice, love, equality etc., and challenging the structures would inevitably lead to conflict. The institutionalization of injustice and dehumanization, corruption and so on calls one's faith into question. When one is in such a painful situation, there is no assurance of the victory of faith or the values one believes in. Thus the faith enters into the third stage where one has to decide to give up faith, that is, to give up the values one believes in or give up life itself for the cause of one's faith.

Jesus' faith in his Father finds expression in his fidelity to his mission. His mission is to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God. Every Jew believed that God's reign was coming in the future. But Jesus is absolutely certain that God's kingdom is not a future reality but a present one and it has already come. He is certain too that the Kingdom of God is inseparably connected with his very person. In fact, he realizes that he is the agent of the Kingdom. His fidelity to the Father and his mission is expressed in the values of the Kingdom he preached. The first value of the Kingdom which he preached was the sovereignty of God, the Father, who makes every human value authentic. The values of the Kingdom that flow from his experience of his Father are self-emptying love, justice, peace, equality, fellowship, reconciliation and so on. The socio-religious systems of his time opposed these values and created a situation of injustice, dehumanization, discrimination and marginalization. In the process of actualizing his faith, Jesus sides with the poor and the marginalized and prophetically denounces structural sins and injustice. He proclaims the unconditional love of his Father and forgives and reconciles those who repent of their personal sins and are willing to live the values of the Kingdom. Thus, in the process of concretizing his faith, Jesus encounters conflicts.

The NT witnesses to this conflict of Jesus with powers that oppose the values of the Kingdom. The whole gospel according to Mark narrates this conflict very dramatically as a battle between God's

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power manifested in Jesus and all forms of evil powers. It is in this second stage of his faith that Jesus also experiences his real temptation to discontinue his mission. Jesus experiences rejection and he withdraws even geographically for some time. (Mk 8:11). He is not understood even by his disciples as they are thinking of him as a political Messiah and seeking positions in his kingdom. It appears that his mission is going to fail. The conflict reaches its climax in the third stage of his faith when Jesus has to take a decision and the conflict is no more with the powers that oppose him but a conflict within himself. It takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:32-42; Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:39-46; Jn 18:1). In the final stage of his faith, Jesus faces not only his impending death but also the death of his cause. Jesus has to take decision either to give up the cause of the Kingdom which the Father has entrusted to him and which he proclaimed with authority and signs or give up his life. The temptation to give up the cause of the Kingdom is very strong in him and at the same time he is tormented by his faithfulness to his Father and his mission. Luke narrates the intensity of Jesus' agony as he prayed, stating that "his sweat became great drops of blood falling down on the ground" (Lk 22:44). Finally, he gives up his life rather than giving up the cause of the Kingdom he stood for. He had let his life go and surrenders totally to the will of his Father (Mk 14:36).

Jesus' faith is his exclusive confidence in his Father and total obedience to his mission. Therefore, faith is very central to his life. It is this faith that he valued more than his own life. He had to go through real struggle to overcome the temptation to give up his faith and to recover it in situations that called his faith into question especially with regard to his own experience of his Father as unconditional love and forgiveness, and as the one who valued humans more than the Sabbath and the temple. The faith *of* Jesus is the model for our commitment to the values of the Kingdom and the faith *in* Jesus means that in him we discover the way to God and encounter God. Jesus' faith leads him to the Cross. The faith of the disciples also cannot be lived and expressed without the cross.

Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS

The Significance of Jesus' Cross and Resurrection

In the course of history, the Cross has become the symbol of Christianity. However, in the beginning it was not so. The early Christians used a number of symbols to express their faith. According to Clement of Alexandria (d.215) these symbols included a dove, a fish, a ship, a lyre, and an anchor. The most popular among them was the fish because the Greek word for it, *Ichthus* could be used as an acronym to express the foundational Christian faith (*I*=Jesus, *ch*=Christ, *th*=*theou* (God's), *u*= *uios* (Son), *s*=*soter* (Saviour). In our times this symbol is being revived.

Though Paul in his writings glorify the Cross because it was associated with paschal mystery and brings out its significance for his life (1 Cor 1:17; Gal 2:19; 6:14; Eph 2:16; Phil 3:18;), probably, because the Jews and the Gentiles considered it a symbol of punishment and shame, it did not become a very popular symbol. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman

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Empire, the Cross became the symbol of glory. According to the popular tradition, St. Helena, the mother of emperor Constantine discovered the Cross when Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, ordered the excavation of the holy sites which had temples for Greco-Roman gods which were built over them. St. Cyril of Jerusalem writing to Constantius, the son and successor of Constantine, says, “The saving wood of the cross was found at Jerusalem in the time of Constantine”. Chrysostom, Ambrose and Rufinus narrate the story of a miraculous cure of a woman after being touched by the true cross among the three crosses discovered at one place. Eventually the relic of the Cross became an object of veneration. St. John Chrysostom says: “Kings removing their diadems take up the Cross, the symbol of their Saviour’s death; on the purple, the Cross; in their prayers, the Cross; on their armour, the cross; on the holy table, the Cross; throughout the universe, the Cross. The Cross shines brighter than the sun” (*Epistles*. xiv, 12).

Even the iconoclasts who destroyed sacred images spared the Cross. The Second Council of Nicaea (787) held in the context of the iconoclastic controversy, condemned both the extreme cult of the Cross as well as the dishonoring of the Cross and images of the saints. It defined that the cult which is *latria* or absolute worship can be offered only to God and relative cult of veneration can be given to the Cross, relics and the images of the saints. The Fathers of the Council said, we salute the image of the honourable and life-giving Cross” (Session IV). The the Council of Trent in its XXV Session states : “Images are not to be worshipped because it is believed that some divinity or power resides in them and that they must be worshipped on that account, or because we ought to ask anything of them, or because we should put our trust in them, as was done by the gentiles of old who placed their hope in idols but because the honour which is shown to them is referred to the prototypes which they represent; so that through the images which we kiss, and before which we kneel, we may adore Christ, and venerate the saints, whose resemblances they bear.”

The liturgy, especially in the Eastern Churches, gives much importance to the veneration of the Cross. The Cross without the figure of the body of Christ, venerated in the Oriental liturgy powerfully symbolizes the paschal mystery as the Cross represents the sacrificial

death of Jesus in history and the absence of the body on the Cross represents his glorious resurrection. The absence of Jesus on the Cross reveals his living presence. It is important that we know the significance and challenges of the Cross which we venerate and celebrate in our liturgies and as the symbol of Christianity.

1. The Cross reveals God

The history of the Christological reflections on the mystery of the Cross has been unfortunately one-sided. The emphasis was on justifying the necessity of the Cross for saving us from sin with a further elaboration of the same by showing how the death on the Cross was an efficacious sacrifice. Influenced by the Pauline emphasis on the paschal mystery as the means for our salvation the theological reflections on salvation were centred on the Cross. The immediate answer to the question, how we are saved, is, "It is through the death of Jesus on the Cross". In fact, the whole Christ-event is salvific according to the entire NT witness. Besides the salvific importance of the Cross, it should reveal to us the mystery of God hitherto unknown in history. The Cross is a unique revelation of God like the incarnation. However, both the revelatory aspect of the Cross and its challenges to the believer, are not sufficiently brought out while reflecting on the mystery of the Cross. There are various theological and historical reasons for the lack of a comprehensive reflection on the meaning and significance of the Cross.

In the context of the scandal of the Cross, both for the Jews and the Gentiles, there was an attempt to mystify or spiritualize the meaning of the Cross. This began in the New Testament itself. According to J. Sobrino, "In the various descriptions of Jesus' death in the New Testament we can already detect a trend toward mollifying the death in theological terms" (Jon Sobrino, 1978, p.184). The last words of Jesus on the Cross according to Mark and Matthew are: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46). It is a verse from Psalm 22 (verse 2). Mark, is probably summarizing the life of Jesus as a whole as a failure. Jesus dies abandoned by his Father. It is probable too that towards the end of his life on earth Jesus might have expressed from time to time this assessment of his life and his cause, referring to the one who felt abandoned in Psalm 22. Matthew follows Mark's version of Jesus' experience of abandonment by the Father. Luke writes about the death of Jesus on

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the Cross as a necessity and as a part of his prophetic mission (Lk 24:26). Therefore, the cry of Jesus on the Cross, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”, is an expression of his total surrender to his Father (Lk 23:46). In the context of John’s Christology, Jesus is already aware of his death on the Cross as a part of fulfilling his mission in obedience to his Father. It is as though Jesus is running towards the Cross to accomplish the mission in order to be glorified. So the last words of Jesus on the Cross are: “It is finished” (Jn 19:30) or it is accomplished. It is a triumphant cry after accomplishing the mission. Thus, in the NT itself there is an attempt to overcome the scandal of the Cross. However, it led to a cult of the Cross without the accompanying Christian vision of God and life in the society. Thus the worship of the Cross in the liturgy further gave the impression that it was sufficient to preserve the mystery of the Cross. Sometimes the varieties of crosses of different sizes and cost were used as a means to exhibit the wealth of a community or an individual. By and large, the Christian life remained unaffected by the challenges revealed by the Cross.

Often the theological reflections on the Cross considered it only as a mystery and a design of God. In this understanding, the presumption is that we know the God who plans the death of his Son on the Cross to some extent. But the Cross is indeed a revelation of God. So the Christian theology should have raised the question, “Who is this God who designs a Cross for his Son?” As in the incarnation, God is totally involved in the event of the Cross. Jesus’ death on the Cross not only affects humans and their world but also it affects God. Thus it reveals a God who is deeply involved in human history. A philosophical understanding of God as all perfect and immutable, excludes the possibility of God’s suffering. The death of Jesus on the Cross reveals that suffering is a mode of God’s being. So the theology of the Cross must admit that God can suffer.

The Cross reveals *a God who suffers because God is love*. Authentic love involves suffering. God’s suffering out of his fullness of love for humans is his way of being. Suffering was considered as a deficiency, weakness and instability of being according to the Greeks. For them impassibility or the inability to suffer is an attribute of gods. Therefore, the Crucified God is a “folly to the gentiles” (I Cor 1:23f). God’s suffering accomplishes his purpose as it expresses his love.

According to D. Bonhoeffer, only a God who suffers can help us or save us (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, 1967, pp. 348-9, 360-1, 370). According to J. Moltmann, an inability to suffer would contradict the basic Christian faith-affirmation that God is love (*The Crucified God*, 1972). J. Sobrino says, "On the Cross of Jesus God himself is crucified. The Father suffers the death of the Son and takes upon himself the pain and suffering of history. In this ultimate solidarity with humanity he reveals himself as the God of love, who opens up a hope and a future through the most negative side of history. Thus Christian existence is nothing else but a participation in the same process whereby God loves the world and hence in the very life of God" (J. Sobrino, *Christology at Crossroads*, p. 225). To affirm that it is the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, who became human and suffered, the involvement of the Father in the suffering was denied by declaring *Patripassianism* as a heresy which did not recognize the distinction of the persons in the Trinity. The present day theological reflection on the Trinity holds the true Trinitarian faith of the Church and yet considers the involvement of the Trinity not only in the incarnation but also in the death and resurrection of the Son.

2. The Death of Jesus

The death of Jesus on the Cross is not an arbitrary design of God but the consequence of God's own decision to become human in a world that is closed against him or a world that is in sin. This world of sin is the power that stands against Jesus and his message during his historical life and continues to be so even today. In a situation that opposes God, Jesus' life and message are meaningful only when he confronts the powers that manipulate religion and in God's name destroy humans who are the images of God. Jesus' journey to the Cross is a trial about the true nature of God. Jesus was accused of blasphemy. Therefore, the Cross is the result of a long confrontation between two notions about God, the God whom Jesus intimately experienced as his *Abba* and the God of Religion in whose name humans can be subjugated, discriminated, marginalized and dehumanized. The God whom Jesus experienced is the God who loves human beings. For this God humans are more important than Sabbath, moral purity is more important than ritual purity because one cannot be defiled by anything from outside but only by the evil that comes from within oneself. The love of this God cannot be separated from

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one's love for other humans. But the God of religion stands for the Sabbath, the Temple, the laws and the established order. Jesus was accused of blasphemy and was killed because those who wanted him to be killed preferred to have the God of religion. It provided them the security of the law and the temple and the confidence in their good works according to the law at the cost of genuine love and compassion. The God of Jesus provided only insecurity because those who are committed to the God of love needs to be affected by the sufferings of others out of love. They need to stand by and struggle with those who are oppressed and dehumanized because for the God they believe in, humans are more important than himself. "God so loved the world and sent his Son... (Jn 3:16).

The Christian existence is participating in the process where God loves humans and makes it possible for them through the power of his Spirit to become authentic humans like Jesus. Therefore, the spirituality of the Cross cannot be reduced to the worship of the Cross but it involves standing for the values of the kingdom and suffering the consequences of it. The Cross is the end of a process and if, we, the disciples, do not go through that process of prophetic commitment to the values of the Kingdom, the Cross we accept and honour may not be the true Cross of Christ. Since God is love, God continues to love and continues to suffer for the world. Jesus continues to be on the Cross whenever and wherever human beings suffer. We participate in his suffering when we too suffer out of genuine love for others. Therefore, the significance of the Cross continues even after resurrection. The Cross is not the last word on Jesus because there was resurrection and the resurrection is also not the last word because God is now yet become "all in all" (1Cor 15:28).

B. The Meaning of Resurrection

Christian faith is born out of two foundational experiences: "This Jesus of Nazareth is Lord and God" and "This Jesus was dead but rose again" (cf. Rom 10:9). The whole edifice of Christian Tradition is built on these two foundations. Paul would emphatically assert that if there was no resurrection of Jesus, the believers in Jesus Christ are the ones most to be pitied (1 Cor 15:19). The proclamation about Jesus' resurrection is the most prominent feature of Paul's gospel (Rom 1:3f; 4:24f; 8:34, 10:9; 1 Cor 15:3-11; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Tim 2: 8) (D.G.Dunn, 1990, p.22). Both human history and the entire creation

enter into a new mode of existence because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That was the heart of the Christian proclamation. However, from the apostolic times there were people who could not accept the truth of the resurrection. They would even ridicule those who believed in it and committed themselves to Jesus Christ and made claims that they had experienced him as alive after his death.

The anti-Christian propaganda since the birth of the Church directed all its forces against proclaiming that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord and God and that he was murdered but overcame death and is alive. It continues even today! However, the Church understands and proclaims that the mystery of humans and their destiny in this world and beyond this world is in relation to the mystery of God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, any theological reflection on the mystery of resurrection continues to evoke interest among all sections of the Christian believers.

1. Various Reflections on Resurrection

The theological reflections on Jesus' resurrection from the dead oscillate between the so-called reasonably safe theological positions to presumptuous affirmations about the nature of God and popular misconception of identifying resurrection with resuscitation. Resurrection must reveal to us who God is. If resurrection is so fundamental to Christian belief it must lead us to an insight into the mystery of life and death that can be reasonably articulated. Therefore, the truth of the resurrection lies between two extremes: one empties the meaning of the resurrection and the other exaggerates it in such a way as to make it a happening of dubious nature.

There are theologians who would explain away the reality of resurrection or interpret the event in such a way that their theological opinions do not conform to the content of faith in resurrection, something that is believed as certain, lived and proclaimed by the Church. Rudolf Bultmann, for example, would not deny resurrection but affirms that the New Testament witness about resurrection is in a mythical language and therefore it is difficult to reach the reality expressed by it. Therefore, Bultmann would affirm that "Christ is resurrected in the Kerygma". Willi Marxsen's theological reflection on resurrection went a step further to explain away the reality of resurrection by affirming that what is historically verifiable is the faith of the disciples as to what happened to

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them in their personal life and as the continuance of the 'cause of Jesus'. Wolfhart Pannenberg begins from the presupposition that the historicity of faith of the disciples cannot be the basis for the affirmation of the historicity of resurrection. Anything of importance to theological reflection must be a historical event or a fact that has three characteristics: it must be embodied in a tradition; it must be expressed in some language and finally it must respond to metaphysical need or expectation of humans. According to him all these characteristics are found in the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

For E. Schillebeekx, resurrection can be explained as the disciples' interpretation of the Old Testament belief in the continued life of a just man, for example, like that of the innocent and just man of Wisdom 2:17-3:4, whose life of intimacy with God as his father and whose just life challenged the wicked who condemned him to a shameful death. What happened to the disciples after their encounter with the risen Jesus and the content of their proclamation about the person and message of Jesus shows that the resurrection of Jesus is more than a mere reflection of the disciples on the fate of a just man as Schillebeekx claims. For Leonardo Boff, resurrection of Jesus is the answer to the question whether death is more powerful than love or whether death or life is the final word of God on Jesus and all human beings. It is the realization of hope that is present in all aspects of human life. For Jon Sobrino, who makes a critical appraisal of some contemporary theological positions on resurrection proposes his own understanding of resurrection. He affirms that resurrection is the event that reveals God. Like the Cross of Jesus reveals a God who suffers because he is love, resurrection reveals a God, who is faithful and just. If in the Old Testament God is known not through his attributes but his action of liberating his people from slavery, in the New Testament God is revealed through his action of raising Jesus from the dead. God's fidelity finds expression in the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus is presented as a universal event because the resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of the resurrection of all humans (1 Thess 4:15, 1 Cor15:51). It is concerned with the justice of God as it is the final vindication of the life and mission of Jesus proclaiming the reign of God. It gives meaning to the Cross because the one who rose from the dead is none other than the one who was crucified.

2. Resurrection reveals God

In the Old Testament God is not described by his attributes but by his functions. It is he who liberated his people from slavery and brought them out of the land of Egypt (Ex 20:2; Deut 5:6). In the New Testament the creed confesses the function of God in history: “We believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom 4:24) God’s fidelity to his promises and his love are revealed in his actions in history. If the Cross reveals God’s love, the resurrection reveals God’s power. According to Sobrino, “Without resurrection love would not be authentic power. Without the cross this power would not be love” (*Christology at Crossroads*, p.261). So the primary context of understanding the mystery of resurrection is the historical life of Jesus. The way of life which Jesus lived and his ministry of preaching, teaching and healing evoked an initial faith response in some of his contemporaries. At least they believed and experienced that he was different from other prophets and spoke with such authority about the unconditional love of God and the presence of the reign of God as well as the demands it makes on the people. It is in the background of such initial faith that the reality of resurrection must be understood. If they did not have this initial, incomplete faith they would not have been able to recognize the event of resurrection and its meaning for their existence.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus gives us an indication of this fact when it says, “they would not be convinced even if one comes back from the dead” (Lk 16:31). Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus should not be understood and preached as an extraordinary event that forces one to accept it in faith. It is the recognition of the new dimension of his being which was already present in his teaching about his intimate union with his Father and his affirmations about the destiny of humans. No one saw resurrection and no one could see resurrection. It is an act of God on Jesus which could not have been seen. We can only affirm that something mysterious happened that transformed the life of the disciples in such way that they began to proclaim boldly that Jesus is alive.

The reality of Christian existence is because of this foundational experience of encountering Jesus as alive after his death by his disciples and the early Christian community. It became the central truth that revealed who Jesus was during his earthly life and who Jesus is after his death and who he would be at the end of time. This

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foundational truth of resurrection gave new meaning to their existence in such way that they experienced him as the beginning and the end of their lives, the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord and God.

The reality of the empty tomb and the experience of the apparitions of Jesus further confirmed their faith in Jesus' resurrection. So the empty tomb and the apparitions are not the proofs of resurrection but its confirmation. Their faith in the resurrection is not based on the fact of the empty tomb but a confirmation because they experienced Jesus alive and also found the tomb empty. The conviction of faith and the transformation of the lives of both the preachers of the resurrection and the hearers of the Word were such that the community of the Church was established and spread rapidly. Even fifty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Roman historian Tacitus who mentions about the crucifixion of Christ under Pontius Pilate wrote calling the Christian community a "deadly superstition" that was checked for a moment but broke out again not only in Judea where the source of this is but also in the city of Rome (*Annals* XV. 44,2-8). The truth of the resurrection experience could not be contained. It had to be proclaimed with all the available means at the apostles' disposal.

3. Pauline Testimony about Resurrection

Paul's witness is one of the most important testimony of the resurrection of Jesus. He writes about it in his first Letter to the Corinthians 15:3-8. Paul affirms the truth of the resurrection event for two reasons. First of all, he received the testimony of those who originally experienced the resurrection of Jesus and had faithfully handed it over (*paradosis* or *tradere* means passing on a tradition) to him. Then he narrates that the Twelve disciples and more than five hundred others had the resurrection experience of Jesus and finally he too encountered the risen Jesus, who is now experienced as the Lord and Master of his life.

In the kerygma that is handed over to Paul (1 Cor 15:1-3), it is said that Jesus was raised up. The term rising or raising is used in the apocalyptic language expressing the general resurrection at the end of time. Therefore, it is intended to express the transition from one mode of existence to a new mode of existence (cfr Is 26:19). Paul

explains this transition at the resurrection comparing it with the transformation of the corn of wheat that is sown and is transformed into a stalk of wheat (1Cor 15: 42-44). The seed has the potentiality to be transformed into a plant but they are different modes of existence of the same reality. So the resurrection is not resuscitation like that of Lazarus who had to die again. The reality of resurrection is something different that can be explained only symbolically like newness, change, transformation etc.

Paul gives the testimony about the appearances of the risen Jesus. The expression that he ‘appeared’ (ophthe) meaning that he was seen or he made himself manifest emphasizes the fact that the invisible was made visible though the initiative of the one who made himself known. So it may seem that the reality is coming from outside (objective) rather than being a subjective experience of those who have “seen the risen Lord”. It is similar to the narration about Paul’s encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:13). It is also a subjective experience in the sense that they encountered and understood Jesus in a new way; Paul is referring to the eye-witnesses and so there must be some basis for the reality behind it. The appearances of Jesus occur also in the ‘normal’ circumstances (Mk 9:2-8; Mt 28:3).

4. The Reality of Resurrection

From the point of view of rationalistic thinking after the Enlightenment everything that is true must be historically verifiable. According to the rationalists, any event is historical only if it happens within space and time and is verifiable. In this sense, the resurrection of Jesus is not historical as it happened beyond space and time and only its consequences are historical. Karl Barth says, “The death of Jesus can be certainly thought of as history in the modern sense, but not the resurrection” (*Church Dogmatics* IV/1,p.336). We can affirm that the resurrection of Jesus is real but not historical like the crucifixion. It could not be under the limitations of history but an act of God beyond space and time. It can be called a trans-historical event. We can say that an event had happened hitherto unknown concerning Jesus after his death and burial and the awareness of that mysterious event is grounded on the real experience of actual appearances of Jesus after his death and now he is experienced as alive. This real experience is

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interpreted in terms of resurrection. The language describing the event of resurrection is metaphorical and symbolic. Using such a language the NT writers describe the transition and personal transformation that happened to Jesus after his death. This personal transformation of Jesus manifests itself through appearances which are real, historical and revelatory experiences.

5. The Reports Concerning Resurrection:

The reports about the event of Jesus' resurrection in the gospels vary and are inconsistent in certain points though we may not expect even an insignificant difference in narrating such a central truth of Christian faith. But we have seen already that the evangelists have their particular theological interests according to the catechetical needs of the community of both Jewish and the Hellenistic Christians whose inherited world-views are different. The Jewish Christian community could understand Jesus as alive after his death only if he had a body with marks of wounds on it as well as if he would have eaten food like anybody else alive. However, for the Hellenistic Christians if Jesus is alive after his death he could only be a spirit that could enter a closed room and with a form that is visible to those who are a given a vision of his presence.

The reports in the gospels about the resurrection of Jesus (Mk 16:1-8; Mt 28; Lk 24; Jn 20-21) include both these needs when they narrate about the resurrection because what they wanted to share with the community is the experience of the disciples that Jesus is alive after his death.

There are some common factors about the appearances of Jesus of Nazareth to his disciples after his death in the narrations about it in the four gospels. 1, Situation of the disciples after the death of Jesus is disappointment (Lk 24:1); 2. The initiative of the appearance comes from Jesus (Mt 28:9; Lk 24:15); 3. The form of greetings: "Peace be with you" (Lk 24:36; Mt 28:9; Jn 20:19); 4. The recognition: "It is the Lord" (Mt 28:9; Jn 21:7); 5. A command is given (Mt 28:19; Jn 20:21). The climax of the encounter with the risen Jesus is the recognition that "it is the Lord".

The reports about the resurrection affirm that there is a certain continuity and also a certain difference between the historical Jesus

and the risen Jesus. They express the continuity of historical Jesus with his trans-historical existence by showing that it is a corporeal continuity, for example, touching (Jn 20:27; eating (Lk 24:4-43); speaking (Jn 21:15). There is also certain difference between the historical Jesus and the risen Jesus. It is reported that the disciples did not recognize him at the first moment of their encounter with him as the risen Jesus (Lk 24:16; Jn 20:14). He comes and goes in a way that someone with a physical body cannot do (Lk 24:31; Jn 20:19). Probably, he appeared in another form (Mk 16:12) which has similarities and dissimilarities with his earthly existence as Jesus is now beyond space and time.

6. Empty Tomb

The reports about the empty tomb in relation to the resurrection of Jesus belong to the primitive literary tradition. However, Paul does not refer to it. Probably, he relied only on his transforming experience of Jesus to proclaim about the resurrection. The report about the empty tomb might have been referred to by some in the preaching about the resurrection for apologetic reasons. In fact, the transmission of this tradition would not have been possible if the tomb was not really empty. As the credible witnesses to the experience of the resurrection, the disciples through their preaching, probably brought many Jews to believe in Jesus as the true Messiah. To halt the flow of the Jews from accepting the new faith based on the resurrection of Jesus, the Jewish authorities planted the false story that the dead body of Jesus was stolen (Mt 28:11-15; Jn 20:13).

According to R. Bultmann, the story of the empty tomb is a later addition. However, W. Pannenberg accepts it as an independent tradition. The Catholic Church, while accepting the truth of the testimony of the disciples about the empty tomb, does not teach that it is the proof of resurrection of Jesus but affirms that it is a confirmation of the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead as experienced by the disciples (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 640). The object of Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and not the empty tomb. The mystery of the transformation of the physical body of Jesus into a glorious spiritual body as Paul explains in 1 Cor 15:44, is the mysterious act of God like that of the incarnation. It is the full flowering of Jesus' own human transcendence but also the

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beginning of our own. Peter says, “Without having seen him you love him, though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with an unutterable and exalted joy” (1 Pet 1:8).

In conclusion, we can say, that for the disciples the hitherto unknown and uniquely real experience of Jesus after his death and burial was not only an encounter with Jesus in a new mode of his existence but also a real and total transformation of their lives that they began to proclaim that Jesus is alive. The disciples who had experienced Jesus during his earthly life as a unique prophet, different from all other prophets known to them, now recognize, believe and proclaim boldly and joyfully that he is the Lord and the only Saviour of the world.

Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS

Christological Reflections in the Syrian Christian Tradition

The Christological reflections both in the Western and in the Eastern Syria were determined by the soteriological concerns as well as by their cultural contexts. The Syrians had a Semitic heart but a Hellenistic mind. Aramaic was the language of ordinary people. The educated spoke Greek and articulated their thoughts mostly in Hellenistic categories. They made a synthesis of the Hebrew and the Greek world views and they used the ontological categories of thought inherited from the Greeks to express historical concerns. Jesus Christ is significant in this context only if he is able to bring about an ontological transformation as well as a moral re-generation of human beings. In fact, it was the belief that Jesus Christ was fulfilling this expectation of human beings for an integral liberation that triggered the Christological reflections of many Antiochene theologians like Diodore, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John of Antioch and others. In the course

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of the development of Christology in the Syrian Christian tradition, the West Syrian theological reflections shifted from Logos-Anthropos Christology to Logos-Sarx Christology of the Alexandrines which was influenced by Hellenistic categories of thought. The East Syrian tradition continued the original Syrian tradition of Christology. East Syria had a unique Christian tradition “which retained relative autonomy in comparison to the Greek West and had virtually no contact with the still more distant Latin West”(Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol II, 1975,p.215). The Christological reflections of a few important Fathers and theologians of the Syrian tradition presented here, give us an insight into the way of articulating the faith-experience of Jesus Christ meaningfully to the cultural context of one’s life.

A. Aphrahat

Aphrahat, the Persian sage, is called ‘one of the giants of early Christianity’ though little is known about his life and works. He is believed to have lived between c.280 and c.345. He was a ‘son of the covenant’, an early form of Syrian monasticism, like St. Ephrem who was born a quarter century after Aphrahat. The Christology of Aphrahat is found in his work, the *Demonstrations*. In 23 Demonstrations he articulates various themes of his theological reflections. The Christology of Apharahat is evaluated by the Western authors as archaic, primitive or Semitic because he developed a Christology independent of Roman or Hellenistic thought and expressions which were claimed to be the criteria for judging the quality of a Christology. Some critics find his Christology not systematic and others even find it not orthodox enough. In fact, they are using the yardstick of a developed Christology in evaluating Aphrahat’s attempts in the fourth-century to interpret the meaning of Jesus Christ using the Syrian tradition of Christian faith. In fact, Aphrahat developed his Christology before the canons of Nicaea were officially introduced among the Christians of Persia at the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon of 410.

In his *Demonstrations* 17, Aphrahat instructs his friends how to respond to the Jews who accuse Christians of worshipping a human being as God. He says, “Therefore, (say Jews), you are opposing God in that you call a man, God. Concerning these things, my beloved, so far as I, in my insignificance, can comprehend, I will instruct you about them, that while we grant to them that He is man, and (while) we at the same time honour Him and call Him God (Alaha) and Lord

(Mara), yet it is not in any novel fashion, that we have so called Him, nor that we have applied to Him a novel name, which they themselves did not employ. Yet it is a sure thing with us, that Jesus our Lord is God, the Son of God and the King, the King's Son, Light of light, Creator and Counsellor, and Guide, and the Way, and Redeemer, and Shepherd, Gatherer, and the Door, and the Pearl, and the Lamp; and by many (such) names is He surnamed." Like Origen, Aphrahat's interest is in the soteriological function of Christ as God and human more than demonstrating his ontological dimension using abstract categories of thought.

It is typical of the Syrian tradition and the oriental tradition, in general, to express mysteries concerning God more in its functional relationship to humans rather than in abstract conceptual language. Aphrahat says, "But, as for us, it is clear to us that Jesus is God, Son of God, and through Him we have come to know his Father, and have steered away from all [fallacious] veneration. Therefore we do not have [how] to reward him who has borne these things for our sake. But through veneration we shall tribute to him honor, in exchange for his anguish, which was for our sake".

In the oriental tradition which emphasizes *lex orandi lex credendi* (the law of praying is the law of believing), Aphrahat demonstrates to the Jews who accuse Christians of worshipping Jesus, that Jesus is the true messiah and the Son of God. In the conclusion of *Demonstrations* 17, he says: "I wrote you this short argumentation, my dear, so that you may refute the Jews about the fact that they say that God does not have a Son, and about the fact that we call him "God", because he is God and King and Firstborn of all creatures. The demonstration about the Messiah, the Son of God, has finished." The uniqueness of the Christology of Aphrahat, the Persian sage, is that it makes use of the Scriptural revelation as the sole foundation of his reflections on Jesus Christ, making intelligent use of the prophecies, metaphors and symbols contained in the Scriptures to demonstrate to the Jews that Jesus is truly Lord and God.

B. Ephrem, the Syrian

Ephrem was born in Nisibis around 306 and died in Edessa in 373. He is venerated as a saint both in the West and in the East and

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recognized as a Doctor of the Church. Ephrem was baptized in his youth and became most probably a *son of the covenant*, a type of Syrian monasticism. His bishop Jacob, the second bishop of Nisibis ordained him as deacon and appointed him as a teacher of the Christian doctrines (*malpana*). Ephrem is recognized as the founder of the School of Edessa which became a great centre of learning. He composed numerous hymns articulating his faith-experience and theological reflections through poetry using evocative symbols drawn from the Scriptures and the religio-cultural context of his Christian community. Probably as a part of his teaching he also wrote biblical commentaries.

Ephrem wrote hymns containing the doctrines of the Church for catechetical purposes and to prevent the Christians of his time from following the erroneous teachings of the Docetics and other heretics. In his *Hymns against Heresies* he uses rich and colourful symbols and metaphors to describe the incarnation of Christ as fully human and fully divine. In the context of docetic heresy he affirms the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ for the benefit of humans as it brings about peace, unity and salvation to all humans. He challenges the docetic heresy that devalues the true humanity of Christ and therefore, devalues both his incarnation and the salvation he has brought to all humans.

Ephrem developed his Christology in the context of Edessa which had various sects of heretical Christian communities. These communities were formed of Jewish-Christians, Gnostic and Docetic Christians and the Christians who followed Arianism. Against their teachings he had to affirm the true divinity and humanity of Christ, the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ as well as his divinity as the Son of God. Therefore, he develops his Christology in the framework of the Trinitarian theology as well as by affirming the true humanity of Christ.

Though Ephrem used symbols and metaphors to explain the meaning of incarnation and the person of Jesus Christ he also used technical terms in Syriac to explain the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ. In his commentary on *Diatessaron* Ephrem uses the term *itya* or self-existing being and *itutaor* essence for the Being of God, the Father. The term *kyana*, or nature which can be translated as *physis*

in Greek can also mean *itya*. However, Ephrem uses *itya* only for God and *kyana* for beings other than God. While *kyana* refers to nature in abstract and inclusive and general way, *qnoma* is the same nature in the particular, singular person and so it could stand for the personhood. Therefore, Ephrem has no difficulty in stating that God has three *qnome* (plural) of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Ephrem also affirms that the Word of God is the subject in Christ and he has both human soul and human will. The genius of Ephrem is that he could express many of his theological insights in symbolic, evocative and metaphorical language through his ability to articulate them in poetry as well as using the expressions available in the Syriac language to articulate his Christology. He attempts to develop a Christology that is faithful to the apostolic witness about Jesus Christ in a language and thought meaningful to his context. Ephrem's Christology is a challenge to those who are committed to develop contextual Christologies in order to proclaim Jesus Christ in a language meaningful to their context.

C. Narsai of Nisibis

Narsai (c.399–c.502) is one of the foremost poet-theologians of the Syriac Church, perhaps equal in stature to Jacob of Sarug. In the Church of the East, he is also known as the “Harp of the Spirit.” About 80 of his metrical homilies (*mîmrê*) are extant though many are lost. Narsai developed his Christology following the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia whose works were translated into Syriac and were well received in the School of Edessa before Mar Rabbula, the bishop of Edessa from 411-435, introduced Alexandrian Christology and opposed the theology of Theodore. Many still studied Theodore's Christology and his biblical interpretations and re-interpreted them in Syriac and thus created a synthesis of Antiochene and Syrian Christologies. One of the foremost champions of this cause was Narsai of Nisibis, who became the director of the School of Edessa and articulated his Christology integrating the Antiochene Christology on the humanity of Christ, human history and salvation through his poetic homilies following the literary style of Syriac tradition. When his theological position was opposed, he founded a School in Nisibis in the Persian territory and the School of Nisibis became the centre of learning for Persian Christianity which accepted the two-nature Christology of Theodore.

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The Christology of Narsai emphasized the full humanity of Christ and his biblical interpretation highlighted the human way of God's dealing with humanity for its salvation. He interpreted the story of the fall as a rebellion against God that did severe damage to the human nature which had to be restored through the humanity of Christ. In his homilies he strongly opposed Monophysitism which submerged Christ's humanity in the divinity. As the Word cannot be thought of without the divine nature, the First and the Second Adams cannot be thought of without human nature. He says, "It was not according to His nature that He limited Himself in a womb of flesh; His own good pleasure structured flesh and made it his dwelling place; It was not His nature which contains all limit that became limited." (*Homily on Nativity*, I, 93-95). In his homily on John 1:14, Narsai alternates between the suffering of the body and the soul as well as the suffering of the Logos and the human. When the body suffers the soul also is involved, not because of its nature but because of the union of love and in the same way the Logos does not suffer by nature but because of the union of love it suffers when the body suffers. In the Antiochene tradition of Logos-Anthropos Christology, Narsai develops his Christology giving full importance to the humanity of Christ. According to J. Pelikan, "Syriac was a richer and more complex language than either Greek or Arabic, and it allowed for more precise distinction". However, probably, aware of the limitations of using precise terminologies for articulating the mysteries of faith experience, like other theologians of the Syrian tradition, Narsai also uses the metaphorical language in explaining the union between the Logos and the humanity that is assumed. It would create confusion when such a language is used in defining the faith experience in doctrines but it has its advantage in evoking faith-experience which well-defined dogmas cannot do.

D. Jacob of Serug

Mar Jacob of Serug (451-521) is called "the flute of the Holy Spirit and the harp of the believing Church," by his biographers. He was born at Kurtam, a village on the Euphrates to the west of Harran. Probably he was educated at Edessa. At the age of 68, he was consecrated bishop of Batnan, a town in the district of Serugh, but he only lived until November 521. After Ephrem he is known to be

one of the best theological writers in Syriac who expressed his theological reflections through hymns, homilies in verses and prose.

Jacob's Christology was controversial even in his own times and he was forced by the monks of Mar Bassus to denounce the heretics and the Christological positions of Nestorius, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore. Some consider him as a moderate Monophysite and anti-Chalcedonian but still others consider that towards the end of his life he was converted to the Chalcedonian position. In Edessa he became familiar with the writings of Diodore, Theodore and Nestorius concerning the two natures in Christ which he rejected as a false doctrine. Jacob of Serug's Christology is influenced by the Alexandrine Christological tradition. It makes a distinction between what God is in himself and what God becomes in the economy of salvation, or God by his nature (*naturaliter*) and by *oikonomia* expressed by being Emmanuel, God with us.

Jacob approaches the mystery of incarnation of the Son of God by seeing it as the union of God's nature (*kyanayit*) with God's being as human for the economy of salvation. According to him what is to be stressed is what God is in himself (*naturaliter*) who is the subject of the economy of salvation. The identity of the subject must be stressed as revealed in Jn 1:14, God becomes human. According to Jacob, the death of Jesus on the cross reveals the mystery of union between God's nature and the economy of salvation. He accuses Nestorius and his followers even the Council of Chalcedon for their Christological position of two natures - of thinking that "one was crucified and the other had nothing to do with it." Jacob says that the divine person (*qnuma*) of the Son, the only begotten, sent by the Father suffered on the cross. Besides, God becomes human, Jacob says, 'God was crucified for you'. Though the Son continues to live, his life in the flesh made it possible for him to die on the cross. Death is not a property of the divine nature but the Son voluntarily accepted it by means of his flesh (*ba-sar*) which he assumed. Though Jacob stresses the divine nature of the Son as an 'embodied single nature', a variant of *mia-pyxisis* Christology, he does not devalue the humanity of Christ. According to him, the Son has assumed human body, soul and spirit and has no hypostasis or *qnume*. If it were to be so, there would be quarterinity and trinity.

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Jacob's Christology is sometimes accused of Docetism and Monotheletism because he insisted on the immutability of God and therefore did not take incarnation seriously. This accusation cannot be justified as he is fighting against Docetism and Nestorianism. He does not deny the Word becoming human and the Word as the subject of suffering but it is for the sake of the economy of salvation. The suffering does not affect the property or the attribute of God as God is immutable. Jacob seeks to preserve the immutability of the Logos and at the same time its becoming as human. His Christological position may be considered as a position between the Christologies of Eutyches and Nestorius. Though some of the terms he uses like "single nature" is anti-Chalcedonian, the Christological insights behind them following Syriac tradition appear to be very close to Chalcedonian Christology.

E. Babai the Great

Babai the Great (ca 551-628), one of great East Syrian theologians was the Abbot of the monastery of Mt. Izla. He studied at the School of Nisbis before he became a monk. He became an important figure who contributed to the development of the East Syrian theology, especially, Christology. According to the *Catalogue of Abdiso* he had written 83 works but most of them are lost. Among those that survived is the important work on Christology, *On the Union [of the Incarnate Word]*.

Babai's Christology has its sources in the writings of Theodore, Diodore, Chrysostom, Cappadocian Fathers and Ephrem the Syrian. He attempted to show that the differences of the Christology of Theodore and the Christologies accepted in the West are also superficial and most of the problems are created by the misunderstanding of the terminologies used by both Theodore and others. Remaining in the tradition of Antiochene Christology he tries to overcome the problem of interpreting the Antiochene emphasis on the humanity of Christ by its opponents as separating or dividing the divine and human natures of Christ.

Babai affirms that Christ is both God and human. How are they united? In the book *On Union* he explains that two *qnome*, the divinity and the humanity are unmingled but everlastingly united in the *parsopa*. The term *qnoma* can mean essence or nature and the term *parsopa* means person or *hypostasis* in the sense Chalcedon Council used it.

If the terminologies are to be understood in this way, there would not be any problem with the Christology of Babai the Great. However, the problem of Babai was that he could not accept that the Word died in the flesh because he rejected any form of theopaschism or that God can suffer. “One of the Trinity suffered” was the position of Cyril of Alexandria and it was opposed by the theologians of Antiochene tradition. Babai the great was not an exception to it. However, in Babai’s Christology, the Antiochene Christology has its best expression and it has become closest to the Chalcedonian faith affirmation of one person and two natures in Christ.

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Interpreting Christ in India Some Hindu Views on Christ

Though Jesus Christ was known in the south-west of India from the first century onwards, he did not have much impact on the subcontinent in the following centuries. It was in the 16th century due to the missionary movement of Francis Xavier, the inculturation attempts of De Nobili and the other Jesuits in the Mogul Court of Akbar, Jesus Christ and his teachings came to be known to a wider section of the Indian society. During the Hindu Renaissance of the nineteenth and twentieth century, Jesus and his teachings were taken seriously by some Hindu reformers for the transformation of the Indian society. It is also at this time Christ and Christianity were devalued by some apologists of Hinduism. Before we introduce the positive and inspiring views of Jesus Christ expressed by some eminent Hindus, it is important to see the negative image of Jesus projected by some anti-Christian apologists to complete the whole spectrum of the Hindu view of Christ.

We can chart the evolution of views on Christ from the Hindu point of view. However, it is not a historical evolution of the reflections on Christ but a thematic development as it happened in the beginning of Christological development.

A. Rejection of Jesus by the Anti-Christian Apologists

It is often stated that all Hindus accept Jesus as one of the avatars or the manifestation of the Absolute. This seems to be an over statement. There were some who completely rejected the person of Jesus Christ as a false manifestation to deceive the followers of the *Sanatana Dharma* or the eternal religion. Nilakanth Goreh, a scholar from Varanasi, appalled by the tremendous appeal of Christ and Christianity, wrote a treatise in Sanskrit, in the first half of the nineteenth century to prove that Christ could not have been a real manifestation of God and Christianity was of a demonic origin. According to him Jesus Christ was a *mohavatara* (delusory manifestation) and Christianity was a *mohadharma* (delusory religion) (Richard F. Young, *Dharma Deepika* 2, 1996, p.68). Their purpose, according to him, was to wean away the followers of the true religion and to lead them to their own destruction. In fact, in the fifth century A.D. some myths were created for apologetic reasons that Vishnu, the supreme God, himself produced illusory and delusory forms from his body as Mahavira, the founder of Jainism and Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, to deceive the enemies of gods so that the gods could destroy them. Probably, Nilkanth Goreh meant that Jesus Christ too was a delusory manifestation like Mahavira and Buddha. However, a few years later, in 1848, Nilkanth Goreh experienced a conversion, surrendered himself to Jesus, the incarnation of the Eternal Word. He took the name Nehemiah and contributed much to an Indian Christian Theology.

In the mid-nineteenth century various Hindu revivalist societies like Society of the Four Vedas were formed in Madras by prominent Hindus to resist the influence of Christianity. Certain Umapati Mudaliar of the Society of Four Vedas created a story that since the heaven was overcrowded with devout Hindus and the hell was empty, the King of Hell, Yama, sought the help of God Vishnu to recruit some for Hell. He was advised by Vishnu to send one of his soldiers to Virgin Mary, to be born as her son who would be killed as a criminal but would eventually be considered God by evil men. Their doctrines would

deceive people and thus lead them to hell. Such stories, new versions of the archaic myths explaining the presence of good and evil in the world, were put to service for apologetic reasons show the extreme negative view of Christ. Such negative views on Christ are nothing compared to the admiration and acceptance of Jesus Christ by many other Hindus.

B. The Reception of Christ and his Teachings in India

The Hindu Reformers of nineteenth century who influenced modern Hinduism drew much inspiration from Jesus Christ and Christianity to transform Hinduism. They acknowledge the influence of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ in their lives and their vision of a new Indian society.

1. Jesus, a Guru for Moral Transformation:

The father of Hindu Reformation Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833) found in the moral teachings of Jesus the powerful message to liberate Hinduism from its superstitions, polytheism and certain dehumanising practices. According to him the moral teaching of Christ is indeed the way to freedom and happiness (*The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness*, Calcutta, 1820). In a letter he wrote to his friend in 1815 he says, "The consequence of my long and uninterrupted search into religious truth has been that I found the doctrine of Christ more conducive to inculcate moral principles and better adapted to the use of rational beings than any other that has come to my knowledge" (Hans Staffner, *The Significance of Jesus Christ in Asia*, Anand, 1985, p.6). Though Roy recognised the superiority of the moral teachings of Jesus and accepted the titles of Jesus as Son of God, Messiah, Lamb, Light etc., he rejected the content of faith expressed by these titles. Influenced by the strict monotheism of Islam and a-Trinitarian theology of the Unitarians he could not accept that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God. However Roy's recognition and application of the moral teachings of Christ for the reformation of the Hindu Society influenced the view of other Hindu reformers about Jesus and his message.

2. Jesus, the *Satyagrahi*, the Prince of Non-Violence

For Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), the social and political reformer of the modern Indian society Jesus Christ is the ideal *Satyagrahi* or

one who clings to Truth. He says, “Jesus Christ is regarded as Prince of those who practice non-violence. I maintain that non-violence in this case must be understood as satyagraha, satyagraha and nothing else” (Hans Staffner, p. 25). Gandhi never hesitated to acknowledge the influence of the person of Jesus and his Sermon on the Mount on him. In his book *The Message of Christ*, Gandhi writes, “The gentle figure of Christ, so patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck but to turn the other cheek - it was a beautiful example, I thought, of the perfect man.” (M.K. Gandhi, *The Message of Christ*, Bombay, 1963, p. 3) Gandhi recognised Jesus as perfect man with a divine dimension. He affirms the influence of Jesus on all human beings. He says, “I refuse to believe that there now exists or has ever existed a person that has not made use of Christ’s example to lessen his sins....The lives of all have, in some greater or lesser degree, been changed by his presence, his actions, and the words spoken by his divine voice” (Hans Staffner, p.26). For Gandhi Jesus is not the monopoly of Christianity. Jesus belongs to the entire world, to all races and peoples, though they may differ in religious practices. Gandhi’s views on Christ represents the view of many educated Hindus who recognise Jesus as an apostle of peace and one of the divine messengers who achieved the Hindu ideal of self-realisation in its fullness.

3. Jesus, the Perfect Yogi, the Ideal Sannyasin or Ascetic

Those Hindus who follow the Advaitic or non-dualistic tradition of Hinduism consider Jesus a perfect Yogi or an ideal ascetic. In the advaitic tradition there is no duality between the Absolute and the relative, between God and the world. They are not one and not two. It is not a rational statement. It is an intuition, an experience. So in the advaitic tradition, the self-realisation of a person consists in the ultimate realisation of his/her identity with the Absolute. For Advaitins or so called Neo-Vedantins like Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan Jesus is the perfect Yogi who attained the fullness of self-realisation. Jesus realised the ideal of Hindu view of life, namely, the experience, “I am That” (*aham brahmasmi*), or the realisation of identity between the individual and the Absolute. They often quote the Johanine statement of Jesus “I and the Father are one.” (Jn 10:30) as the articulation of the non-dualistic experience of Jesus Christ. Jesus realised this truth about himself progressively. Everyone has the potentiality to become like

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Christ or to realise the divinity within through self-denial. Vivekananda says, "Christ was a Sannyasin, and his religion is essentially fit for Sannyasins only. His teaching may be summed up as: 'Give up;...'" (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 6, Calcutta, 1966-71, p. 109). He further confesses that this way of a life is suitable only for a favoured few. In this view Jesus is not fully God by his very nature but attains the fullness of divinity by his own effort. He seems to claim a deep insight into mystery of the person of Jesus Christ. He says, "I pity the Christian who does not reverence the Hindu Christ. I pity the Hindu who does not see the beauty in Jesus Christ's Character." (E. Bassuk, *Incarnation in Hinduism and Christianity: The Myth of the God-man*, London, 1987, p.180).

Radhakrishnan, an eminent Indian thinker, seems to express the same when he says, "Though conscious of his imperfections, Jesus recognised the grace and love of God and willingly submitted himself entirely to him. Thus delivered from all imperfections and taking refuge in Him, he attained to a divine status" (S. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavadgita*, Bombay, 1982, p.31).

Those Hindus who follow the advaitic or the non-dualistic tradition would not accept that Jesus is the true Son of God as confessed by the Christians. But they find him as the ideal of human perfection which can be attained by all. If he is son of God, all can become Sons of God like him if one follows his way of self-denial, discipline, meditation and commitment to work for the welfare of others. They admire Jesus for achieving the vedantic ideal of self-realisation and acknowledge his tremendous influence on their lives. But he is not true God as the Christians believe, confess and proclaim.

Among the Hindu views on Christ one that comes much closer to the Christian faith-affirmation about Jesus Christ is the view of Keshab Chunder Sen (1838-1884). Though he never became a baptized member of any Christian Church, his views on Christ influenced many Hindus as well as the Indian Christian thinkers. Sen attempted to reconcile the Indian concept of incarnation (*avatara*) and the Christian theology of incarnation. However he tried his best to show that Jesus Christ was not an incarnation like the incarnations of Hinduism. He exhorted Christians: "Tell our people distinctly that Christ is not an incarnation like the myriad deities of worshipped in this land"(David C.Scott, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, Bangalore, 1979, p.241).

4. Jesus, Incarnate Son of God

Unlike Ram Mohun Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen was deeply committed to Christ. He confessed: “Unless I can live Jesus to some extent at least, I cannot talk Jesus. Nor could I undertake to preach Jesus to my countrymen till I am fully persuaded that the time has come for such a preaching” (Manilal.C.Parekh, *The Brahma Samaj -A Short History*, Rajkot, 1929, p. 155). Sen believed that the correct presentation of Christ to India was his life-mission for the regeneration of India. For Sen the Indian myths of evolutionary incarnations are the portrayal of a process of the evolution in perfection. He says: “Indian Avatarism is indeed a crude representation of the ascending scale of Divine Creation.” (K.C.Sen, *Keshub Chunder Sens’s Lectures in India, Vol. II*, London, 1904, p.14).

Long before Teilhard de Chardin articulated his views on the relationship of Christ to evolution, Sen affirmed that Christ is the apex of organic evolution. In Christ the evolution has reached its maximum perfection and so Sen calls this perfection in Christ ‘Divine Humanity’ (Ibid. p.13) Is this Divine Humanity, this Christ, God-became-man or God-in-man? Sen oscillates between these two notions and he seems to term both as incarnations. For Hindus, according to Sen Christ as God incarnate would mean that Father has become human. This way of understanding and preaching Christ as the ‘Father in human shape’ is a preaching of idolatry, heresy and antichrist. Sen prefers the term God-in-man to explain incarnation to God-became-man. Yet he would insist that it was Logos, the pre-existent that expresses itself in full humanity in Jesus. Further he affirmed that in Jesus Christ, the ultimate term of evolution, the Logos is offered to all. “The problem of creation,” according to him, “was not how to produce one Christ but how to make every man Christ.” (Ibid. p. 15) Sen affirms that Christ is not the monopoly of Christianity. “I deny and repudiate the little Christ of popular theology, and stand up for a greater Christ, a fuller Christ, a more eternal Logos of the Fathers, and I challenge the world’s assent. This was the Christ who was in Greece and Rome, in Egypt and India. In the bards and poets of the Rig Veda was he. He dwelt in Confucius and in Sakya Muni [Buddha]. This is the true Christ I can see everywhere, in all lands and in all times, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, in ancient and modern times. He is not the monopoly of any nation or creed” (David C.Scott, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, pp.237-238).

Sen had no hesitation to confess that Christ as the Divine Son of the Father, the Second Person of the Trinity which he called. *Saccidananda* (*Sat*=Truth, *Cit*=Intelligence, *Ananda*=Bliss) At the same time he affirmed that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and was an Asiatic ascetic or Yogi with full of Hindu devotion, communion and self-surrender. Sen was certain that the Hindus would recognize him as their brother and friend, Lord and Master and not as a doctrine.

5. Jesus the Unique Incarnation

In the progressive development of the Hindu views on Christ, Pratap Chander Mozoomdar comes very close to the Christian confession of faith in Jesus Christ. In his writing *The Oriental Christ* he tried to show the soteriological value of Christ being both Son of God and Son of Man. According to him Jesus Christ is unique incarnation because he completes all other partial and limited incarnations. “Other incarnations are the incarnations of one age, ... are partial, local, imperfect, bounded by time, nationality and circumstance. Socrates is for the Greeks, Moses for the Hebrews, Confucius for the Chinese, Krishna for the Hindus, and Mohammed for the Musalmans... The need of a man is for a central figure, a universal model, one who includes in himself all these various embodiments of God’s self-manifestation. The need of man is for an incarnation in whom all other incarnations will be completed. Such an incarnation was Christ” (M.M.Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, London, 1969, p.89). According to Mozoomdar, Jesus Christ was present in all that was great and good in humanity and he perfectly embodies the true and universal relation between God and man.

Some of these Hindu thinkers, we have discussed, have written extensively. We have only highlighted some of their striking views on Christ. It may be clear how the Hindus belonging to the advaitic or non-dualistic tradition of Hinduism see Jesus as the fulfillment of the human potential to realize the divinity within while others belonging to the theistic tradition see him as an incarnation. The popular Hinduism too see Jesus as one of the Incarnations or *avatara* of the Supreme God.

Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism

The mystery of Christ is beyond all speculations. For some even the question of ‘uniqueness of Christ’ itself is an affront to the mystery of Christ which cannot fall into the category of any individuation or comparison. One can only grow in faith in the realization that he or she belongs to mystery of Christ which surpasses all human understanding and categories of expression. No explanation about Christ can exhaust the mystery of Christ. One can only surrender to this sublime and ineffable Mystery and realize in the course of one’s journey of life that he or she is a unique dimension of the Reality of Christ rather than speculating about the uniqueness of Christ. Only possible response to this grace of realizing that one belongs to mystery of Christ is worship in its true sense. However, a believer in Christ cannot escape the questions about him raised by those who have not encountered Jesus Christ.

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In the context of India/Asia where there are so many religions as well as so many poor people, questions are often raised about the person and mission of Jesus Christ. On the one hand the Christological reflection cannot be separated from the actual life-situation of the people but on the other hand one must overcome the tendency of a crypto-nestorianism that separates humanity and divinity in Christ and makes him only a liberator of the people from socio-political, cultural and religious oppression and discrimination. The understanding of uniqueness of Christ in the Western world which is predominantly Christian is different from the understanding of the uniqueness of Christ in the Indian/Indian/Asian context. In India/Asia, any discussion about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the context of a plurality of religions would reduce the Person of Christ into any one of founders of a religion or a great religious teacher of moral precepts. How does it happen? We are articulating our Christic experience in a category of thought which may be meaningful in the Western world-view, but does not convey the same meaning in another world-view. A typical example of such a difference in the understanding of a truth due to the difference of the world-views is the expression 'the uniqueness of Christ'. A Christian believer experiences Christ as the absolute meaning or the beginning and the end of his or her life. However, if this experience is expressed in the category of *uniqueness*, it not only obscures the content of this experience but also conveys the opposite of what is intended by this confessional statement. In fact, there is nothing that can be compared or contrasted with the reality of Christ. But when this faith-experience is merely translated into a world-view different from its original articulation it distorts the content and meaning of the originary experience. The meaning of the originary experience needs to be lived and articulated using the categories of thought which belong to the world-view of the one who experiences the mystery of Christ. No argument or explanation can change a world-view. Only genuine dialogue with openness to the Spirit of Truth can lead the partners in dialogue to have some insights that go beyond the understanding. Therefore, in sharing the Christian experience of Christ, what theology understands by the expression *uniqueness of Christ* needs to be communicated in the Indian/Asian world-view with a commitment to Truth and pastoral concern.

What a Christian believer understands by the so called uniqueness of Christ may be communicated to those who do not share the Christian

world-view as the experience of Jesus as the absolute meaning of one's life. The quest for meaning is universal. In this context the question often raised is 'What is the absolute significance or meaning of human existence?' Someone or something cannot give absolute meaning and significance to human existence if it is not of infinite and absolute value. It cannot be anything other than the Absolute or God himself. Humans can discover themselves, the meaning or significance of their lives only by referring to the source and destiny of their lives. In their discovery of themselves they discover who God is. In this process humans can discover, though they may not always, that they belong to the mystery of God. Though distinct from themselves they are not separate from God. He is not, then, the absolute Other, the God of the philosophers but the God of relationship because "in him we move, live and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

A. Identifying and Recognizing Jesus Christ in India/Asia

How is Jesus Christ recognized and known in the /Indian/Asian context of religious pluralism? How would one distinguish him from other gods, goddesses and founders of religions? Here, the question is about his identification in the Indian/Asian context. In the past the Western missionaries dismissed the worship of different gods and goddesses by Hindus and others as a pernicious superstition, a horrendous worship of devils, a blatant idolatry or the affirmation of an untenable pantheistic belief system. They hoped that it would slowly fade away with the advent of Western education and eventual secularization of the society. They affirmed that all these mythological divine figures would disappear with the passage of time when the believers realize that a god with an elephant-head or a monkey-head and thousands of such manifestations could not have existed in reality but only in the fertile imagination of those who have created them. But they are all there with a wider acceptance and a stronger appeal even among the educated classes. They are worshipped with festive celebrations, pilgrimages, special prayers, fasting and other religious observances. Do such practices and the belief behind such practices tell us something about religious attitude of the people? Doesn't it indicate that there is a different type of spirituality, not based on spatio-temporal symbols and representations, however bizarre they may appear to be. Due to its irrational and superstitious external expressions this popular religiosity may be dismissed by others who do not share

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the world-view of this people. It would indicate that for a large majority of the people of India/Asia, whatever is externally seen in the sphere of religion whether mythical or historical would not make much difference as long as it is a medium of entering into communion with the Absolute or God who is beyond such forms and names and is affirmed by using their own genius by those who are real seekers of the Truth.

People have the innate need to be connected to everything that transcends them especially with the absolute reality which they acknowledge as the One beyond name and form. Therefore, whatever be the form through which one establishes this relationship is unimportant, but they realize the need to be related to this reality is important. Where is the place of Jesus Christ in the pluralistic religious context of Asia? Is he like Rama or Krishna, the incarnated appearances or *avatars* of Vishnu in Hinduism? Or is he like those historical founders of religions like the ascetic Mahavira or the Buddha, the enlightened one with a prophetic mission? Or a prophet who revealed God's will like Mohammed? The Christian answer would be an emphatic, "No."

The Christian proclamation claims that Jesus Christ cannot be compared with any of the gods of the Hindus or with the Buddha, the enlightened or with Mohammed, the prophet. Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God. He is the Lord. He lived and died at a particular time and place. He was the expected Messiah. He saved humans from sin and meaningless death by his own death on the cross and by his resurrection. He is the only mediator and saviour. All these faith affirmations and historical facts are absolutely clear to a Christian believer. But all these identifications of Jesus Christ and faith affirmations would not be meaningful to those who do not share the Judeo-Christian view of God, humans and the world. Some would respect this view of the Christians; sometimes they may even be sympathetic to the Christian claims. But some have real epistemological or ideological and theological problems with the Christian claim.

For people who are convinced of such an understanding of mystery of God, even a historical reality, however unique it is, as the self-revelation of God in history as in the case of Jesus Christ, would be one among many revelations of God. The Western theology's obsession with the historicity of God's self-revelation or oft repeated affirmation

of the uniqueness of Christ would not be intelligible to the Indian/Asian religious mind. The content of the faith-affirmation in the uniqueness of Christ needs to be expressed in another language and idiom.

It is a serious theological problem, for example, for the Hindu mind when Jesus Christ who is a particular historical person is proclaimed to be the only Saviour and God. For the Hindu view of reality it is not a “folly” to proclaim a historical person as Lord and God or Son of God. They would affirm that there were many such persons and each one of them had a particular and unique message to give. It is the exclusive claim that Jesus is the only Saviour and Lord that would not find an echo in the Hindu mind. Moreover, an overemphasis on the historical existence of Jesus Christ as if the historical dimension were to be the only important dimension of reality is not acceptable to those who hold that the spatio-temporal existence, perhaps, is the least aspect of the whole of Reality. In other words, whatever is real need not necessarily be historical. Such a notion is not alien to the Christian world-view as certain fundamental Christian faith-affirmations are based on the real but not on historical facts. Further, the belief in a God, who can relate to humans only after the historical reality of Jesus on earth and only with those who believe in him, seem to be partisan, exclusive and unconcerned about millions and millions of humans who may never come to believe in him.

There are both epistemological and ideological problems connected with the understanding and proclamation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Indian/Asian context of religious pluralism. The epistemological problem consists in attributing universality to something particular and historically limited. Jesus Christ, as presented by the traditional Christian proclamation, cannot claim any universality because he is presented as a sectarian God, who seems to exclude all who have other names for the Ultimate reality whom he claims to reveal. The ideological problem connected with the understanding the person and mission of Jesus Christ is that according to some Jesus Christ is brought by the colonial powers that oppressed the people, destroyed their national identity and violated their sovereignty and robbed them of their wealth. The image of Christ as the Lord and God of the ruthless colonizers naturally would not appeal to those

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who seek liberation not only the liberation of their own selves but also from socio-economic and political oppression.

The believers in Christ insist on his particularity and uniqueness that distinguishes him from other saviours and mediators. But in the process they have made him one of the incarnations who is to be approached by cult and rituals and other religious observances similar to those followed by people who believe in the gods and the goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. Therefore, Jesus Christ of the Christian proclamation does not challenge the listeners to make a radical decision to encounter him and experience their own liberation and the transformation their society. For them he is the Christian God, one among many.

An identification of Jesus is necessary but it should not be by the repetition of those symbols and images of identification emerged in a particular cultural context which would not be meaningful in the Indian/Asian context. The creative commitment to Jesus' tradition is to discover in the Indian/Asian context those symbols and thought patterns that would reveal the real identity of Jesus Christ. Thus they can encounter him and discover the mystery of their own being in relation with him and in solidarity with others and with the world.

B. Christic Identity in the Indian/Asian Context

A meaningful faith-affirmation and proclamation of Christ in the Indian/Asian context must be the one that articulates the Christic identity in a way that is intelligible, challenging and decisive for the seekers of Truth. Then they encounter Jesus Christ as the beginning and of their lives. When the mystery of Christ is thus encountered as the meaning of their lives they would find the meaning of human existence in the world offering them a transforming and joyful insight into the mystery of their own being in relation to other humans, God and the world.

The NT witness gives a deep insight into the fact that the proclamation of Jesus cannot be and should not be limited to his historical identification but an identity that transcends historical limitations. Yet it should not exclude the historical dimension of Christ's existence. This mode of existence which connects the historical and transhistorical is not something unfamiliar to the Christian tradition.

The traditional Christian world-view and Christian anthropology speak of a continued existence of humans that transcends historical existence but determined by it. Human existence begins in history but goes beyond it. This mode of existence includes a transformed historical existence beyond the ordinary existence in history. For this, I have no other term that expresses it other than an apparently contradictory term *inclusive transcendence*. The Christian faith-affirmation of the Christic identity includes the pre-existence of the Word, its historical existence and its trans-historical existence. There are various instances of such a Christic identity in the New Testament as *inclusive transcendence*, for example, the apostolic encounter with Jesus in his historical existence as well as with Jesus' trans-historical mode of being as the Risen Lord, Paul's encounter with the resurrected and yet suffering Christ, the cosmic Christology of Paul and the Logos Christology of John. They all refer to the whole reality of Christ, namely, his pre-existence, historical existence and trans-historical continued existence articulated in the Christian confession, "Jesus Christ is same, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

While the reality of Christ transcends space and time it includes the historical dimension of Jesus Christ which was limited by space and time. The question of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ may be discussed with regard to the identification of Jesus Christ because he was also a historical existence but it cannot be applied to his entire reality that includes but transcends space and time. Therefore his true identity brought into the question of his uniqueness.

R. Panikkar has convincingly shown that a mere identification of Jesus would make him only one of the founders of religion, a "remarkable Jewish teacher, who had the fortune or misfortune of being put to death rather young". The identity of Jesus Christ is the living Christ who is encountered and the Mystery in which one is involved, the Mystery that is encountered as the bond of everything Divine, Human and Cosmic, without separation, division or confusion but distinct and different from one another. But this Jesus Christ is not an a-personal principle. The Christ that 'sits at the right hand of the Father, is the first-born of the universe, born of Mary: he is Bread as well as the hungry, naked, or imprisoned.

To recognize this identity of Christ is both a grace and a task. When he is encountered as the only mediator of everything human,

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divine and material, each human being is given an insight into the mystery of his or her own being. In this mystery of Christ one is called to become what he or she really is. Then everything and everyone is recognized as a *Christophany*, a manifestation of the reality of Christ. In this insight lies, perhaps, the deepest meaning of the Eucharist, the greatest Sacrament of communion where God, human and the world, the Absolute and the relative, the Infinite and finite historical and trans-historical, material and spiritual unite without losing the distinction and difference of each but inextricably united to one another. Such an understanding of the Christic identity challenges the one who is committed to Christ to be responsible for one's own unfolding as a person in radical relationship to others, struggling with others to create situations where humans can authentically become humans, to be responsible for the entire creation, to be open to celebrate plurality and embrace everything that "God has cleansed" Acts 10:1.5).

Therefore it is imperative for Christology to re-capture the NT witness to the whole Christ, the insights of the Patristic theology of Trinity and Christology and the *advaitic* intuition to articulate the universal significance of Jesus Christ challenging to encounter into the mystery of his identity. This can meaningfully explain his presence in everyone who is searching for meaning of the mystery of their being and in everything that is eagerly waits for liberation.

A. Pastoral Solutions to the Challenges of the Meaning of Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism.

In the context of many religions in Asia that claim to be ways of liberation from the misery of human existence, the Christian claim of the uniqueness of Christ as saviour from a phenomenological perspective would be considered by the people of other religions as an untenable, exclusivist, arrogant and triumphalist position. A theological approach to the question of uniqueness stating that Christ is *the only saviour* and an implicit affirmation that the membership of the Church is necessary for salvation would create enormous problems for dialogue with other religions which would consider Christ one among many saviours and mediators as well as the Church as a sociological entity. Therefore, it is important to for a Christian disciple to communicate the mystery of Christ from his or her experience of

the Christic identity which transcends the question about the uniqueness of Christ whether it is approached from a phenomenological, historical or theological perspective.

The gift of faith in Christ is a transforming experience that radically changes one's understanding of God, humans and the world. Paul's encounter with the risen and yet suffering Christ on the road to Damascus was such a transforming experience that changed his world-view radically. His understanding of God, religion, human beings, world and his own existence was changed in such a way that nothing mattered to him except Christ, the pre-existent, the crucified, the risen, the cosmic and the eschatological. He experienced every dimension of the reality in its newness hitherto unknown to him. He saw himself and those who encountered Christ and was transformed a new creation in Christ (II Cor 5:17) What he proclaimed in his ministry was the reality of Christ he encountered and continued to experience and what was handed over to him about Jesus Christ by those who encountered both the historical Jesus and the same as the risen Christ. Paul preached this Christ as 'the power of God and wisdom of God' though if objectively seen the crucified one would be, as he said, ' a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles' (1 Cor 1: 18-22).

A pastoral approach in communicating the Mystery of Christ in the context of the plurality of religions in India/Asia is to share about the *newness* of God's revelation in and through Jesus Christ rather than his uniqueness which does not convey the meaning of the reality of Christ. Therefore, it is important to proclaim what is *new* about the person and message of Jesus Christ. This *newness* must be communicated through meaningful words, actions and life-style rather than repeating terms which are unintelligible, exclusive and offensive to the people of other religions. The whole of apostolic witness and praxis was about the newness of God's action in history in the person of Jesus Christ that it became the *New Testament*. The covenantal relationship God established through him was interpreted and proclaimed as the *New Covenant*. Till the establishment of the *new heaven* and *new earth* this new message has to be proclaimed. Unlike the exclusive and univocal terms that we prefer to use to explain who Jesus Christ is, the challenging newness of Jesus Christ, if properly communicated, can bring many to encounter him.

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Can we identify some of the elements that can communicate the *newness* of God's revelation in Jesus Christ that can adequately respond to the soteriological concerns of the people of other religions, their quest for integral liberation and their longing for harmony among humans, God and cosmos? It is possible and necessary in order to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the people of other religions and to invite them to experience Jesus Christ. Some of the elements of this *newness of Christic revelation* can be outlined as follows:

1. In Jesus Christ one can encounter a self-emptying God, hitherto unknown in the history of revelation. In him the Absolute became relative, Infinite became finite, God became human, Word became flesh (Jn 1:14). In him God came to serve and not to be served (Mk 10:45). Thus the self-emptying figure of Christ (Phil 2:7) can be encountered as the servant of everything perfect, good, true, beautiful and authentically liberative in all religious traditions whether Great or Little, meta-cosmic or cosmic, unitive or messianic. He is not only the liberative potential of Indian/Asian religious traditions but has the power to actualize it in reality.

2. It must be a pastoral imperative to reveal to the people of other religions that the community of the disciples of Christ, the Church is a community that experienced the self-emptying Christ by its commitment to true ministry to the people of all religions and ideologies transcending the borders of the Christian community. If Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human as the Council of Chalcedon confesses and proclaims, he cannot but be what he revealed himself to be in history, the servant of God, humanity and the cosmos. In him is the self-disclosure of God that God is not only the Lord but also the servant of all and everything. This is the radical *kenosis*, the paradox of Christic revelation. "There is no other name" (Acts 4:12) that reveals this mystery of the God as a self-emptying God who becomes the servant of his own creation. The *newness* of Jesus Christ consists in his servanthood of everything authentically human, be it culture, religion, systems or structures. This self-emptying servanthood is expressed in the foot-washing of the disciples at the Last Supper (Jn 13:3-15). This revelation subverts all human categories of discrimination: superiority and inferiority, higher class and lower class, high caste, low caste and untouchable, patriarchalism and matriarchalism, male and female, Christian and Pagan, believers and non-believers, civilized

and uncivilized etc. It challenges the religious and secular structures that perpetuate the systems of discrimination and dehumanization and energizes the forces of liberation whether religious or secular.

3. The Christian community needs to live the self-emptying image of Jesus Christ. It should become really a Church of the poor which believes in the transforming power of Christ through his Spirit and lives it by empowering the powerless, entering into solidarity with them and energizing them to struggle for a fuller human life. The disciples of Christ need to share their experience of Christ who can liberate all people, whatever their religious beliefs may be, from the forces of alienation within themselves as well as within the structures and the systems which enslave them.

4. It is in the self-emptying community of the believers in Christ a new insight into mystery of God as a suffering God is revealed. God suffers when humans suffer as he is absolute love itself. Love involves suffering. This new revelation of God in Jesus Christ has a tremendous influence on the people who suffer from oppressive images of God.

5. The Church through its committed and exemplary pastors, the faithful and through its institutions manifest the self-emptying Christ who can fulfill the longing of the Indian/Asian people for liberation from greed, acquisitiveness, egoism and the fragmentation of reality. He can reveal the necessity of an ethical religiosity for an integral liberation of the people transcending the exclusively cultic religiosity. Jesus Christ encountered by the community of the believers reveals a God who is not self-centered but human-centered. Therefore, the Church that is the sacrament of Christ, needs to fulfill Christ's prophetic function in the Indian/Asian context by challenging all the religious traditions including Christianity to be authentically anthropocentric and care for the whole creation.

6. The love of Christ must impel the Christian community to recognize and respond to the kenotic dimension of Christ in all that is authentically human wherever it is found. This Christ of their experience needs to be shared as the one who can energize all those who encounter him to promote everything authentically human and liberative in the various religious traditions, cultures, and socio-political and economic systems. This faith-conviction is to be manifested by the community of the disciples of Christ or the Church by an attitude of respect, love

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and a kenotic loving service to all people, especially the poor and the marginalized. Thus, a possibility is opened to the people of other religions to encounter the kenotic Christ. The kenotic Christ of Christian experience would also empower the disciples to identify themselves with those who are committed to fight against the forces of unfreedom in order to build God's own Kingdom where the self-emptying of God is the source and model for communion and communities of justice, love, compassion, fellowship, peace, reconciliation and, indeed, wholeness. Thus, the mystery of Christ can be lived in the history of the struggles of the people of different religions and ideologies and a possibility is offered to all to encounter Christ and be transformed.

The Christian faith-affirmation in the uniqueness of Christ for the salvation of humankind cannot be meaningfully and easily communicated in the Indian/Asian context of a multiplicity of religions which claim to be ways of salvation. The underlying faith-experience that is expressed in the confessional statement about the uniqueness of Christ needs to be articulated through a meaningful approach of the disciples of Christ to the people of various religions and cultures of Asia. Where a phenomenological and a theological approach may not only fail to communicate the truth about the Mystery of Christ but also may evoke negative attitudes and even a rejection of Christ by the people of other religions, a pastoral approach in communicating the mystery of Christ may be meaningful and effective. The core of this pastoral approach in communicating what is meant by the expression 'uniqueness of Christ' is to live and share the experience of self-emptying God in and through Jesus Christ who reveals a God who becomes the servant of his own creation leading humans to unfold themselves as humans in freedom. The challenge to every disciple of Christ and the Church as a community is to witness to the newness of Jesus Christ as the kenotic Christ though the pastoral concern for the people of all religions by becoming truly the servant of the people as Christ did and through a radical commitment to integral liberation.