Jesus

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Consciousness, freedom, redemption

Section I: The Human Knowledge of Christ

1. The foundation

From the time of the Church's condemnation of Apollinarianism, the existence in Christ of a human intellect and knowledge[1] became dogma. The Apollinarian theory which denied the human intellect of Jesus and "replaced" it with the divine Logos implied, as a direct consequence, that the man Jesus knew as much as the Logos, because he knew with the same intellect as the Logos. The thesis was rejected by the Church of the time. In the following century, the Council of Chalcedon reaffirmed the integrity of the humanity of Christ, true God and true man, and, therefore, endowed with a human intellect, and affirmed the existence in Jesus of two different intellectual faculties, of two different modes of knowledge, one divine and the other human, which, for that very reason, were not identical. Jesus, then, being God made man, knew reality in a divine way and in a human way. Since then, the doctrine of the Church has remained unchanged: two intellects, two modes of knowledge. The progress of reflection on Jesus led St Thomas to affirm that if Christ had had no other way of knowing than the divine

[1] Apollinaris believed that two "perfect" persons could not give rise to true unity. As a convinced supporter of Christ's divinity, he came to propose a Christological model that did not consider Jesus' humanity to be full. His error consisted in attributing to the Word (*Logos*) the role proper to the intellectual soul of the humanity of Jesus. Cf. J.N. D. Kelly, *Il pensiero cristiano delle origini*, Dehoniane, Bologna 1992, pp. 354-360. A similar thesis was proposed by the Arians.

way (the knowledge present in the divine intellect), his human soul would have known nothing of itself and he would not have exercised his intellect[2].

The Thomistic statement gives us a good starting point for introducing the subject of the human knowledge of Christ. With His divine intellect Jesus knew all things as the Father and the Holy Spirit know them, for He was with them one omniscient God. This, however, does not imply that He had human knowledge equivalent to divine knowledge. He could not know with the human intellect all that He knew with the divine intellect, because the human intellect has limitations that are inherent in the finiteness of the human[3] creature. There are necessarily lofty ideas that are accessible only to the divine intellect because the human intellect is unable to reach such heights. It is true that God can communicate contents of truth unattainable to man (as happens in the case of the prophets), and make him know things that only He can know, but to do so, he must adapt these contents to the natural capacities and limits of man, which already implies in itself a reduction, an almost infinite "lowering" of divine knowledge. To affirm the contrary, that is, to sustain a sort of cognitive equivalence between God and man, would mean diminishing the differences between the two natures (divine and human), which would be absurd and unheard of[4].

There was therefore a sphere (indeterminate a priori) of realities that Jesus knew *ab aeterno*, with the Father, in the unity of the Spirit, and that, instead, he did not know as a man, both because it absolutely transcended what a human being can know, and because He Himself, in His providence, had established not to communicate these

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[2] *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 9, a. 1; ad 1°: "Christ knew everything with divine knowledge by means of an uncreated operation which is the very essence of God, the understanding of God being His very nature, as Aristotle says. But evidently such an operation could not proceed from the human soul of Christ, which is of another nature. Therefore *if the soul of Christ had had no other knowledge than the divine, it would have known nothing.* And so it would have been assumed in vain" (italics ours).

[3] As daily experience shows, in man the exercise of the intellectual faculty is bound up with the conditions of matter, and matter, while making sensible knowledge possible, introduces into it its fallibility. An angel, for example, has a clearer and more precise understanding of reality than a man has, because his knowledge is not subject to the distortions of the laws proper to the material world.

[4] For example, no human intellect is capable of understanding an excessively long and complex mathematical formula.

realities to his human intellect. In His earthly journey, therefore, Jesus did not know them, He lacked information about them. The aforementioned Thomasian conception of the human knowledge of Jesus leads to the conclusion that about such realities the soul of Christ had no science.

Determining what Jesus knew as man, therefore, is not easy: it is something to be investigated on the basis of Scripture and through theological reflection. In general terms, it must first be observed that the *truth of the Incarnation* requires that the Word truly subject himself to the conditioning of assumed humanity. This, in principle, implies a real renunciation on the part of Jesus to transcend ordinarily the laws of created nature and its conditions of existence. If he had come into the world without subjecting himself to the laws of creation and to the conditioning that limits human knowledge of the real, his incarnation would have been a fiction, a kind of disguise.

This, of course, does not mean that Jesus, in his knowledge and activity, could never exceed the limits proper to human order and nature. The limits assumed by Christ had a meaning and a purpose. The Christological space delineated by those limits is determined by that purpose. Jesus assumed our humanity in view of a *mission of salvation*. The human limits assumed with it could therefore be transcended in accordance with and in function of that mission. Examples of events and situations in which Jesus transcended the laws of nature and manifested divine wisdom or power are not lacking in the Gospel: in the miracles, Christ's divine power, while unfolding through his humanity, went far beyond what is possible for created nature. Something similar happened in the area of knowledge, when elements of his divine knowledge, inaccessible in themselves to the experience of ordinary mortals, were communicated to his human intellect so that he could use them for the fulfilment of his mission. The Gospels, in fact, attest that Jesus often had knowledge of a supernatural nature, such as, for example, the perception of the innermost thoughts of certain people. In this context, his knowledge of God and of his own mission should be noted above all.

The theological principle of incarnation and the principle of mission, united to the examples we have mentioned, attest to the fact that the life of Jesus had a real and true resemblance to ours, but it also had a singularity, a uniqueness specific to his person. By virtue of his similarity to us, his human condition entailed limitations and restrictions that extended to the realm of knowledge[5], but his singularity allowed him access to the mystery of God and his plan (although experts disagree on how this could happen). It follows that Jesus "knew", but "to a certain extent": he knew what was necessary to carry out his ministry among men, he sensed in himself the mystery of God and of the kingdom he was going to establish in the world, but about every other else he informed himself and learned according to the normal human condition. It is logical that He knew the mystery of God, because He came from the Father, but it is equally logical that, given the impossibility of human omniscience, He informed Himself in order to know reality and learn. His being true God and true man was reflected, therefore, in His earthly knowledge.

We must not forget, moreover, that what Jesus did on earth (the mission of salvation) was mediated by his human knowledge, because, as a scholastic adage states, "nothing is wanted that has not first been known" [6]. Action follows knowledge. In order to intervene in the world, to decide on the various events in which he was involved, to carry out his mission, Jesus needed to know reality with his human intellect. His journey on earth, of which the Gospels have handed down to us a concise account, was the *immediate* fruit not of his divine knowledge but of his human knowledge, which was not as omniscient as the former. The whole "story" of Jesus, in synthesis, depended on his intellectual and rational activity.

Traditionally, research into human knowledge of Christ has been based on the parameters of *quantity* and *modality*: *how much did* Jesus know? (how far did his

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[5] Cf. *infra*, paragraph *The data of the Gospel*, point c).

[6] In the case of Jesus, we might say: nothing is *humanly* desired that has not first been *humanly* known.

knowledge extend?), and *how* did he know? (from where his knowledge proceeded?). The priority aspect, in any case, is always that of the knowledge that Jesus had of his identity. On this point the question can be formulated in different ways[7]. The answer, strictly speaking, is obvious: Jesus was the Word and, as such, had eternal knowledge. Framed in the context of Jesus' life and earthly experience, however, the question itself becomes more articulate and extends to both the manner and the categories with which Jesus expressed his understanding of himself.

2. Gospel data

In the gospels we find many noteworthy facts about the human knowledge of Jesus. According to current theology, however, the most significant areas toward which research should be directed are three: a) what Jesus knew about himself and his mission; b) what he knew of external realities that transcend normal human knowledge; c) what he knew of external reality through the normal process of knowledge. To give an exhaustive answer to these questions is surely impossible, not only because it is presumable that Jesus knew many more things than those attested by the Gospels, but also because the latter, by their nature, are not impersonal transcriptions of what He said, but preserve in the memory of the Church His words "filtered" by the light of faith in Him, and therefore do not guarantee a direct access to His *ipsissima verba*[8]. Often, moreover, they inform us as to what the Lord knew, but they do not say why, how or from where he derived such knowledge. The canonical gospels, however, are our most complete source and provide in various ways access to Jesus' words and what he thought and knew.

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[7] One may wonder what Jesus thought of Himself and what titles He used to express it (Messiah, Son of God, etc.). An acute formulation of the question about Christ's self-awareness is the title of F. Dreyfus' book, *Did Jesus Know He Was God?* Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 1985.

[8] The inspiration of the gospels undoubtedly guarantees substantial fidelity to the truth of Jesus' words and events, but not that unaltered transmission of facts which would have allowed direct access to the content of his human knowledge.

a) The gospels attest that Jesus knew he had a special relationship with the God of Israel: a unique relationship that transcended the scope of man's normal religious relationship with God. Jesus spoke of Himself as the "Son"[9], in the sense of the unique or only Son[10]. In the parable of the murderous vinedressers, He clearly distinguished His *status* in relation to God from that of all other servants of the Lord [11]. He did not count himself among the servants, but identified himself with the son, with the heir of the owner of the vineyard, that is, of God Himself. This awareness of his was matched by the familiarity with which he addressed God, his Father, clearly testified to by his use of the term *abba* (my Father, father). This Aramaic word, so characteristic of Jesus' prayer, attests to a closeness to God that was unthinkable for Jewish[12] piety, in which, even when (rarely) the term Father was used in reference to God (God the Father of the people, merciful, holy, etc.), a certain sense of distance from the holy and transcendent Lord was always maintained.

His special relationship with the Father was the basis of Jesus' idea of His mission in the world. One can deduce what He thought by analyzing the titles He used in reference to His mission and by observing the unfolding of the latter. We thus conclude

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[9] This title already appears in the synoptics and is even more frequent in John's gospel.

[10] In the Synoptics the *loghia* in which the title "the Son" appears have considerable guarantees of historicity. In Mk 13:32 it says: "as to that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son except the Father". This *loghion* probably goes back to Jesus himself, if not in its literal formulation, at least in its content, because it would have been difficult for the first Christian community to elaborate on its own initiative the idea that Christ was ignorant of the hour and day of the end of time. In Mt 11:25-27 we read: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to the little ones. Yes, O Father, for thus you have decided in your goodness. All things have been given to me by my Father; no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and the one to whom the Son will reveal him." The origin of these words is probably the remembrance, on the part of the apostles, of the exultation of Jesus at the manner in which simple souls received his word. Other explanations of the text seem implausible. Cf. J. Ratzinger, *The legitimacy of Christological dogma*, in ID, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 6/2: *Jesus of Nazareth. Writings on Christology*, Libreria editrice vaticana, Vatican City 2015, pp. 245-251.

[11] "Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first, but they treated them in the same way. At last he sent them his own son, saying, 'They will have respect for my son! '. But the peasants, seeing the son, said among themselves, 'This one is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and we will have his inheritance! (Mt 21:36-37).

[12] The term *Abba* ("father" or "my father" in the Aramaic language) was usually used in the context of domestic relations to address the father. It was in any case a familiar expression which, outside of the New Testament, never appears to have been used to address God personally. Cf. G. Segalla, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament. Tra memoria esatologica di Gesù e promessa del futuro regno di Dio*, Elledici, Leumann (TO) 2006, p. 174ss. The fact that the term was preserved in the Aramaic language by Mark (Mk 14,36) and by Paul (Gal 4,6; Rm 8,15), attests its belonging to the praxis of prayer of Jesus. The God of Christians is the God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One whom Jesus called *Abba*.

that Jesus considered Himself invested with full powers to carry out the Father's will in the world, that is, to establish the Kingdom of God.

With regard to the titles, there seems to be no doubt that Jesus often used the expression "son of man" in reference to Himself[13], and it is very likely that with it He wanted to refer to the figure of the Messiah-King who would reign over Israel[14] forever, described in chapter 7 of the book of Daniel. The prophet's vision has a messianic content. After having spoken of the succession in the world of the various pagan empires (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman), represented by fantastic animals endowed with destructive power, it describes, in fact, the coming of the definitive kingdom[15], represented by the figure of the "son of man", who receives from God "power, glory and kingdom", and of whom it is said that "his power is an eternal power, which will never end, and his kingdom will never be destroyed" (Dn 7,14). The prophet does not say how this will happen, but the preceding terrifying description of the beasts suggests that the kingdom of the "son of man" will not be established without sacrifice. Appropriating this figure and applying it to Himself, Jesus identified Himself with the Messiah-King of the universe, whom, in Daniel's vision, "all peoples, nations and languages served" (Dan 7:14).

Jesus not only considered Himself the Messiah-King, but He also behaved as such. He judged Himself with the category of the definitive, of the last and supreme envoy of

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[13] "In short," says James Dunn, "we are confronted with two clear elements. First, 'the son of man' hardly appears in early Christology as an element independent of its use in the gospels. Second, the expression is totally integrated in the tradition of Jesus and it is therefore very difficult to believe that it originated outside the tradition of Jesus and was accepted only after Easter. (...) *the expression was remembered as a distinctive way of Jesus because that is what it properly was.* It was Jesus who introduced the expression 'the son of man' into the tradition of Jesus. The record could hardly be clearer about this conclusion." *The Dawn of Christianity*, vol. I: *The Memory of Jesus*, t. 2: *The Mission of Jesus*, Paideia, Brescia 2006, pp. 773-774. See also N. Ciola , *Jesus Christ Son of God*, Borla, Rome 2012, pp. 255-262.

[14] Analysing Jesus' use of this title, one understands how it implies a messianic and transcendent conception, in line with the figure of Dan 7 and with some figures, similar in some respects, that appear in apocryphal literature (Book of the Parables of Enoch, IV Book of Ezra). Cf. N. Ciola , *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, p. 258ff. See also N.T. Wright , *Jesus and the Victory of God*, SPCK, London 1996, pp. 360-367; 510-519. Naturally, however, the expression also encompassed the aspect highlighted by Ezekiel and the Psalms: the true humanity of Jesus, who, with this title, could therefore indicate both his fragile human condition and his transcendent messianism.

[15] Cf. B.J. Pitre , *The Case for Jesus. The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ*, Image, New York 2016, ch. VIII. According to J.J. Collins , et al, *Daniel. A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia (PA) 1993, p. 312, "The beasts are not simply collective symbols but can also be understood to represent the rulers."

God. He announced the Kingdom as a present and definitive reality, and manifested it with his extraordinary powers and acts, with his exorcisms, miracles and healings. He linked the Kingdom to his person and to the adherence of others to it. While always maintaining an attitude of constant meekness and availability towards all, He considered Himself superior to Moses, so much so that He "corrected" la Law given by God to the prophet, but also to all the other figures and institutions in the history of Israel. He ruled over demons, had a reputation for performing extraordinary miracles, and for forgiving sins as only God can do. All of this, as many of the best-known scholars of the historical Jesus have observed, has a solid foundation in the testimonies offered to us by the Gospels[16].

We could certainly go into these themes in greater depth, but we will not dwell on them further, because what interests us here is that Jesus knew that he was the Son of God and that he had full powers to establish on earth the Kingdom promised to Israel. He did not count himself among those who, in the history of Israel, had received a particular mission from God, because his perspective and paradigm were immediately eschatological: he had come as the final and definitive fulfilment of the hopes of the Jewish people[17], but his mission concerned the whole world. His only true reference, therefore, was the Father himself. He had the power of God (he was filled with the divine Spirit) to establish the Kingdom. From the point of view of human knowledge, which is what interests us here, all this leads to the question of *how* Jesus came to have such an understanding of himself and his mission, that is, how he came to know his unique and unparalleled relationship with the Father and his very singular mission. The Gospels

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[16] We refer to M. Bordoni , *Jesus of Nazareth. Lord and Christ*, vol. II: *Jesus at the Foundation of Christology*, Herder - PUL, Rome 1982; N. T. Wright , *Jesus and the Victory of God*; ID. *Jesus of Nazareth: Challenges and Provocations*, Claudiana, Turin 2003; P. Stuhlmacher, *Jesus of Nazareth, Christ of Faith*, Dehoniane, Bologna 1992; G. Segalla, *The Kingdom of God, unitary center of the mission and work of Jesus*, in ID, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 131-201, R. Bauckham, *Jesus. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011; F. Varo Pineda, *Rabí Jesús de Nazareth*, BAC, Madrid 2005.

[17] Cf. B. F. Meyer , *Jesus' Ministry and Self-Understanding*, in B. Chilton - C.A. Evans (eds.), *Studying the Historical Jesus. Evaluations of the State of CurrentResearch*, E.J. Brill, Leiden. New York 1994, p. 352.

clearly attest to these facts, but they leave to theology the task of investigating, deepening and studying every further aspect of the question.

b) Another fact highlighted by the Gospel accounts is that Jesus was able to have knowledge that transcended the possibilities of ordinary human knowledge. This capacity was manifested above all in the prophecies He uttered (the best known of which is the denial of Peter), in the ease with which He intuited people's thoughts (as, for example, on the occasion of His first meeting with Nathanael) and in the knowledge of data that were beyond human reach (as when He foresaw an encounter with a man who would indicate to Peter and John the place where the Last Supper would be consumed). This knowledge, clearly, was of supernatural origin. Beyond the possibility of ascertaining them historically (note, however, that in the case of Peter's denial it is difficult to think that things took place differently from what is reported in the Gospel texts), there is no doubt that the Gospels often repeat that Jesus knew the hidden thoughts of people[18]. Although in some cases one might think of a simple knowledge by natural deduction, that is, obtained from external data and signals, the insistence of the texts on this point leads to the conclusion that this peculiarity was remembered in the context of the first Christian community as one of the most significant traits of Jesus' personality. It seems certain, therefore, that he knew realities inaccessible to ordinary human ability, although it is not easy to determine how far this knowledge of his extended.

c) All this, however, does not mean that Jesus was endowed with every kind of human science. The Gospels testify, discreetly but unequivocally, that He had an experience of intellectual life similar to that of every human being and subject, in many respects, to the limitations proper to the historical human condition. Like every man, Jesus had to inform himself in order to obtain the data necessary to act, and, like everyone

[18] See, for example, Luke's passages on the healing of the paralytic (5:17-23) and of the man with the offended hand (6:6-11), the scene that took place in the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50), the discussion among the disciples about who among them was the greatest (9:46-48), and the discussion about the power of Jesus and that of Beelzebul (11:14-32). Cf. the study by C.B. Bullard , *Jesus and the Thoughts of Many Hearts. Implicit Christology and Jesus' Knowledge in the Gospel of Luke*, Bloomsbury - T&T Clark, London - New York 2015.

else, he was sometimes surprised by people's reactions, pondered what to do when faced with unexpected news and acknowledged that he did not know certain things.

The Gospel texts contain a number of examples of this. Jesus reacted when he learned that John the Baptist had been arrested[19]; he went to the region of Tyre, but did not manage to remain unnoticed[20] as he would have wished; after healing a leper, he could not prevent the news from spreading and drawing the attention of the crowds to him[21]; he could not withdraw with his disciples to a secluded place to rest[22], nor obtain food from a fig tree that was luxuriant but unfruitful[23]. At times, then, he was amazed at the behaviour of people: at the unbelief of his fellow citizens[24], for example, or at the hardness of heart of some of the Pharisees[25]or the disciples, who wanted to take the children away from him[26]. But he also marveled at the good dispositions of some people: at the faith of the Canaanite woman [27]and the Roman centurion[28], and at the gesture of the poor widow who had put a penny in the offering box[29].

Sometimes he questioned and inquired in order to learn the information he needed to act. For example, he asked a father how long his son had been suffering from

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[19] When Jesus "heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee, left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum" (Mt 4:12).

[20] "He could not remain hidden" (Mk 7:24).

[21] Cf. Mk 1:42-43.

[22] The plan failed because many "saw them leaving and understood, and from all the cities they came on foot and went before them" (Mk 6:30-34).

[23] Cf. Mk 11:13.

[24] Cf. Mk 6:6.

[25] Who especially disapproved of healings performed on the Sabbath day. Cf. Mk 3:4-5.

[26] Cf. Mk 10:13-14.

[27] So much so that he said he had never "found anyone with such great faith" in Israel. Cf. Mt 8:9-10.

[28] Cf. Mt 8:9-10.

[29] Cf. Mk 12:41-44.

convulsions[30]; he asked blind Bartimaeus what he needed[31]; he asked Martha, Lazarus' sister, where her brother's body had been laid[32]. And in the episode of the hemorrhoid, although he knew that he had brought about a healing, he did not know, at first, who the beneficiary was[33].

Mark and Matthew, moreover, expressly state that Jesus did not know the hour of the end of time: "as to (...) that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, except the Father" (Mk 13:32; cf. Mt 24:36). The text, known as the "*loghion* of the hour", is significant because the evangelists obviously had no interest in pointing out the limits of human knowledge of Jesus. Rather, they intended to present him as the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel, and to testify to the wisdom contained in his teaching, which often aroused astonishment in the crowd. This therefore argues in favor of the historicity of the *loghion*, which probably goes back to Jesus himself, and which has found a place in the Gospels because it emphasizes the futility of speculating about the time of the end. It is evident, moreover, that Jesus' statement is part of his coming and mission in the world, that is, of what he knows in his human consciousness, and cannot be extended or transferred within the horizon of what today we would call the "immanent Trinity"[34].

The Gospel of Luke contains another significant passage: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and age and grace before God and men" (2:52)[35]. The evangelist therefore speaks of a normal process of human development and maturation, which he connects in his

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[30] Cf. Mk 9:21.

[31] Cf. Mt 20:31-32.

[32] Cf. Jn 11:34.

[33] Cf. Mk 5:25ff. The Gospels also tell of other questions asked by Jesus: to the demon who took possession of a man in Jerash, for example, he asked what his name was (Mk 5:9), and in the episode of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes he inquired how many loaves the disciples had brought with them (Mt 15:34).

[34] In Christological terms the *loghion* of the hour refers to what the divine person of the Son of God grasped with his human consciousness. All of Jesus' statements about Himself or His knowledge concerned this knowledge: none of them can be directly attributed to what the divine person of the Son knows in the context of the immanent Trinity. We never have in the Gospel direct and immediate testimony of this second aspect. On this subject cf. J. Galot, *Le Christ terrestre et la vision*, "Gregorianum" 67 (1986), 437-439.

[35] Preceded by a similar statement in Lk 2:40.

account to Jesus' stay in the Temple at the age of twelve. The text shows on the one hand the lively interest of the child, who, standing among the teachers, asked, listened and questioned to know every detail of the Israelite religion, and on the other hand a depth of religious understanding exceptional for his young age[36]. The importance of this episode, therefore, derives not only from the fact that it shows Jesus' precocious religious intelligence (thus pointing to the hidden source from which it derives), but also from the fact that it attests that his understanding matured in accordance with the culture of his time and through his relationships with the people with whom he came into contact. In this respect, then, his knowledge reflected his historical, embodied condition.

It was precisely the latter that made it possible to find in Jesus' words notions belonging to the way of thinking and the culture of the time, but not always entirely correct. During the controversy with the Pharisees, for example, He referred to King David, who entered the Temple and ate the loaves of offering. The episode is recounted in 1Sam 21:1-6, where it is said that it was then pontiff Abimelech and not Abiathar, as Jesus erroneously claimed. According to Raymond Brown it is possible that Jewish tradition, for various reasons, had confused the two pontiffs, and that, as a result, Jesus had committed the same inaccuracy[37]. Admitting that it was indeed an error, one could impute it, of course, to the evangelist, but, even if it were not so, if Jesus had committed it, it would not cause any problem for the Christological doctrine[38]. These episodes, in fact, are secondary aspects, unimportant for his mission.

From what has been said, however, it can be seen that the disciples, while attributing to Jesus a unique and very singular wisdom, did not consider him extraneous

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[36] Cf. Lk 2:42-47.

[37] Cf. R.E. Brown , *Jesus God and Man.Modern Biblical Reflections*, Macmillan- Collier MacmillanNew York. London 1967, p. 51.

[38] The American exegete also reports other examples of statements attributed by the evangelists to Jesus, but considered, at present, not entirely accurate. Among these, for example, the attribution to David of Psalm 110 and to Moses of the Pentateuch. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 52.

to the normal conditions of the exercise of knowledge[39]. It follows that, while having a clear perception of his own person and mission in the world, Jesus also had an experience of time and history similar to that of all human beings. For him, as for every human being, time unfolded into past, present and future: the past, time linked to concrete lived experience; the present, time to be considered and enjoyed; the future, time to be fathomed, time open and mysterious, uncertain and unpredictable.

At this point it could be objected that the historical dimension of Jesus' knowledge finds a very limited confirmation in John's Gospel. This is probably true, but it is necessary to consider the intention behind this evangelist, whose primary aim was to affirm the divinity of Christ as the unique revealer of the Father and of Trinitarian love. For John, Jesus was itself the Truth, because he attested to what he had seen and heard from God for the salvation of the world[40]. The source of his knowledge was God himself, the eternal God, and it was logical, therefore, that he had "words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). In accordance with this purpose, the Fourth Gospel emphasizes the perfect knowledge that Jesus had of people and circumstances: "Lord, you know everything" (Jn 21:27), Peter says to the risen Jesus on the shore of the lake.

The Johannine account, however, cannot be considered in opposition to that of the Synoptics, because it does not have their same intent or their "sphere of reference", but it looks at the person of Jesus from another perspective and with a different key to interpretation. What the Synoptics recount by unfolding it in time, the Fourth Gospel tends to concentrate it in the person of Christ[41]. As he is the light, the life, the resurrection,

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[39] The same can be said of Jesus' fellow-citizens, the inhabitants of Nazareth, who, as far as we know, saw nothing unusual in him. This attests to the naturalness and "normality" with which he led his life among his fellow men. Cf. Mk 6:2-3.

[40] Cf. Jn 3:31; 8.40. On these aspects cf. I. de La Potterie, *Jesus Truth. Studies in Johannine Christology*, Marietti, Turin 1973.

[41] "Typically Johannine is the Christological focus," states Donatien Mollat (*John, Spiritual Teacher*, Borla, Città di Castello 1984, p. 64), in agreement with most John scholars.

the bread, the shepherd..., so Jesus is also the truth[42]. His whole "phenomenon", His words, His actions, everything in Him is truth and communicates life. John does not look at what is transitory and changeable in Jesus, but at what is eternal and saves; he is not interested in the flesh itself and its dynamics, nor in how Jesus' intellect translates the word of God into human concepts: what interests him is that it reveals the Word, and that, consequently, the Eternal can be in time, la Word can resound in history, and the glory of the Only Begotten can be manifested[43]. This is the Johannine vision of the knowledge of Christ: the evangelist strongly emphasizes the first two elements that we have analyzed, that is, those relating to the supernatural aspect of the knowledge of Jesus, and deals with the properly human aspect (the third element) only insofar as it manifests and communicates the previous two.

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3. The emergence of the theme at the time of the Fathers

The patristic age saw the progressive development of Christology. This also strongly influenced the way of conceiving the knowledge of Christ. The authors of the first centuries barely distinguished between the two sciences of Jesus. The denial of any knowledge in Him, therefore, appeared to them as an implicit affirmation of the inferiority of the Son with respect to the Father and, therefore, as a subordinationist thesis. In some cases, then, the distinction between human and divine science in Christ was seen as a kind of undue "division", as an attack on the unity of the personal subject that is the Word and, therefore, as a form of Nestorianism. In these centuries the language was often imprecise, and the positions of the various authors were considerably discordant. Also, for this reason the theology of the Fathers on the science of Christ did

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[42] All well-known symbols through which John expresses and synthesizes the meaning of Jesus for man.

[43] Cf. Jn 1.

not come to be normative, but limited itself to offering some guidelines that we shall analyze later.

a) Knowledge of Jesus in the ancient texts

In a significant text written in the context of the anti-Arian controversy Athanasius of Alexandria affirmed that as a man Jesus did not know everything. The Arians claimed the inferiority of the Son with respect to the Father, citing several biblical passages in support of their thesis, including the *loghion* of the hour of final judgment (Mk 13:32). Athanasius objected that when it's said that not even the Son knows the final hour, Jesus was not referring to his divine knowledge, but to his human knowledge:

> "Nor does the Son know such a time; he also says this, as a man, because of the flesh. In this case also it is not a matter of a defect of the Logos (...). For just as, once he became man, he hungers and thirsts and suffers together with men, in the same way, together with men and as man, he does not know; but as God, being in the Father as Logos and Wisdom, he knows and there is nothing that he does not know" [44].

Although Athanasius' argumentation was very clear, most scholars believe that, in practice, in his conception of Jesus the Alexandrian theologian denied what he asserted in this passage. The model of the *Logos-sarx*, which he used to think of the Incarnation, did not prevent him from admitting the existence of a human intellect (*nous*) in Jesus, but neither did it help him to attribute any role to that intellect[45]. With regard to truth, according to Athanasius the active role was played by the Word (*Logos*), which exercised over the assumed human body a motive function similar to that usually attributed to the soul[46]. But if in the world was present the eternal Image of the Father (the *Logos*), the One

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[44] Against the *Arians* III, 45-46 (in *Athanasius . Treatises against the Arians*, Introduction, translation and notes by P. Podolak, Città Nuova, Rome 2003, pp. 307-308 .

[45] Cf. A. Grillmeier , *Jesus the Christ in the Faith of the Church*, vol. I/1: *From the Apostolic Age to the Council of Chalcedon (451)*, Paideia, Brescia 1982, p. 583.

[46] Another text by Athanasius of Alexandria sheds light on the general principle he adopted to explain Christ's operative dynamic: the active role was proper to the divinity, the receptive or passive role to humanity. Christ gave as God and received as man: "He Himself, who is the Son of God, became the Son of man, and as Logos gives what comes from the Father: whatever the Father does and gives, He does and bestows through Him; as Son of man, He Himself is said to receive what comes from Him". *Against the Arians*, I, 45 (Podolak, 103).

who was "God from God and Light from Light", what relevance could his created image (the *nous*) have? [47]. Jesus' lack of human knowledge of the hour of judgment was, in the Alexandrian's eyes, entirely irrelevant, because Jesus, in any case, was the omniscient Logos. The Logos was really the engine of Christ's spiritual and intellectual life, the one who moved and energized the assumed flesh. "In Christ," says Raymond Moloney in reference to Athanasius, "the dominion of divine knowledge is such that, ultimately, there seems to remain in him no real room for ignorance. The interpretation prevailing today on the doctrine of the Alexandrian doctor, therefore, is that, for him, the statements of Scripture which give the impression that there is ignorance in Christ are just that, *impressions*, permitted by Jesus as a concession to the truth of his life in the flesh. To indicate this conception scholars have forged the strange concept of *ignorantia de iure*, by which they mean [to say] that, by virtue of the reality of his humanity, Christ has obtained the right to act *as if* he did not know! But in truth Christ's alleged lack of knowledge is only apparent" [48].

Cyril of Alexandria took a position similar to that of Athanasius, from whom he borrowed the Christological schema. In his commentary on the Lucan text which speaks of the growth of the infant Jesus in age, wisdom and grace (Lk 2:52), Cyril observed that it would have been unthinkable for Jesus to show himself in the fullness of his wisdom and power while his body was growing; consequently, the Egyptian theologian continued,

> "when you hear that Jesus grew in age and grace, you must not think that he was given additional wisdom, for the Word of God needs nothing, but think that the wisdom and grace which he possessed

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[47] On this point cf. K.K.N. Nathan , *The Soul of Christ in Athanasius: a Review of Modern Discussions*, "Coptic Church Review" 22 (2001), 23-29; P.S. Russell , *Ephraem and Athanasius on the Knowledge of Christ. Two anti-Arian Treatments of Marc 13: 32*, "Gregorianum" 85 (2004), 445-474; T.G. Weinandy , *Athanasius: The Incarnation and the Soul of Christ,* "Studia Patristica" 41 (2006), 265-269; A. Louth , *Athanasius' Understanding of the Humanity of Christ*, "Studia Patristica" (1985), 309-318; J. Roldanus , *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie. Étude de la conjonction de sa conception de l'homme avec sa christologie*, Reimpr. avec correction E.J. Brill, Leiden 1977, pp. 355-356; J.R. Meyer , The *Soteriology of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria*, *The Divinization of Redeemed Man*, Facultad de Teología, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona 1992.

[48] R. Moloney , *Approaches to Christ Knowledge in the Patristic Era*, in Th. Finan - V. Twomey (eds.), *Studies in Patristic Christology*, Four Courts Press, Dublin - Portland (OR) 1998, p. 43 (our translation).

were gradually manifested more patently to those who attended him. It is said that he grew, but the growth is rather to be referred to the attitude of those who marveled at him" [49].

The intellectual growth of Jesus, therefore, did not concern, according to Cyril , his human wisdom, but the judgment of those who attended him. In other words, the infinite Wisdom of Christ did not change in itself, because it was divine, but, because of his growth as a man, Jesus was increasingly able to transmit it[50] . Like Athanasius , Cyril reserved little attention to the role of Christ's human intellect, confirmed, among other things, by his commentary on the Gospel passage about the Son's ignorance of the day and hour of judgment:

"When, I do not know how, [Jesus' disciples] want to ask questions and learn things beyond their ability, he invites them to be quiet, convincing them by stringent reasoning that the Father did not reveal them to the angels, nor would He have made them manifest to the Son Himself, had He been a mere man of the earth similar to them and not by nature God" [51].

Although one must undoubtedly take into account the anti-Arian context in which Cyril wrote, and which led him to emphasize the perfect knowledge of the Word (who was God as well as the Father), the fact remains that he did not want to resort to the distinction between human and divine knowledge, between what, in Christ, belonged to the assumed nature and what belonged, instead, to his own nature[52].

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[49] Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate, Assertio 28 (PG 75,428).

[50] Although in *assertio* 22 of his *Thesaurus* Cyril clearly admitted the true humanity of Jesus and, therefore, the possibility that there was a certain ignorance in Him, from his subsequent statements we understand how such ignorance was, in reality, only theoretical (*theoria*) for the Alexandrian. In fact, he wrote: "We have contemplated his divinity in the fact that for our sake he did not refuse to descend to such a low level as to bear all that belongs to our nature, including the ignorance which it entails" (PG 75, 369). In practice, however, this principle translated itself only into the fact that Jesus may or may not have seen fit to reveal in the economy what he knew (cf. , e.g., PG, 75, 377D).

[51] *De sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate*, *Dialogi* VI (PG 75, 1074A). A similar thesis is found in John Chrysostom (cf. *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, 77,1 [vol. 3, Città Nuova, Rome 2003, p. 213]). On the knowledge of Jesus according to this last Father of the Church, cf. C. Hay, *Saint John Chrysostom and the Integrity of the Human Nature of Christ*, "Franciscan Studies" 19 (1959), 298-317.

[52] According to Raymond Moloney (cf. *Approaches to Christ Knowledge*, p. 55) the fundamental problem is that Cyril held that Christ came from two natures, but was of one nature (or concrete reality) after the incarnation. For the Alexandrian, therefore, Christ would have been one reality, in which the natures could only be separated by intellectual abstraction, but not really (whether this was Cyril's actual thought is a question still debated among scholars). From this perspective, after the implementation of the incarnation, scriptural statements about ignorance in Jesus could only be referred to humanity in *theoria*, but never *in re*.

The Antiochians attached greater importance to the role of Jesus' human intellect and human knowledge. In Antioch, as is known, a Christology had developed that was contrary to that of Alexandria: where, in fact, the latter tended to consider the union of the Word with the flesh according to the *Logos-sarx* schema (which basically recalled the union of soul and body), the Antiochene Christology instead emphasized more the true humanity of the Savior. Like the Alexandrians, the Antiochians (Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, Theodoret of Cyrrhus) accepted the Nicene doctrine, but thought of the union according to the *Logos-anthropos* model, which confessed Jesus as a true and perfect man and as an immutable God. They started therefore from a "duality", but in their Christological elaborations they then had difficulty in explaining the unity of Christ and attributing it to a single subject. Some of their formulations seemed rather to propose a unity of two subjects coordinated or in perfect agreement between them.

Theodoret of Cirrus wondered, for example, about the manifestations of Jesus' fragility, such as his hunger, his sadness, or his ignorance of the day and hour of judgment. For the lack of knowledge of the day and hour of the end implied, according to him, that the Word was ignorant and, therefore, was not equal to the Father. And if He was not ignorant, but said He was, then He was lacking in truth. The conclusion which the Antiochian reached led him to distinguish between the *Word of God* and the *form of a servant* assumed by the Word:

> "The Word of God is not ignorant of the day which He has appointed and predestined, in which He will come to judge the world, because, being the immutable image of the Father, He possesses the knowledge of the Father. Ignorance is not to be attributed to the Word of God, but to the form of a servant who, during all that time, knew as much as the divinity that clothed him revealed to him." [53].

Theodoret, therefore, admitted a real ignorance in Jesus, because it did not involve any nescience in the Word of God. According to the Antiochian, in fact, the subject of

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[53] The text is reported by Cyril of Alexandria in the work: *Apologeticus contra Theodoretum pro XII capitibus*, *Anathema* IV (PG 76, 416-417).

passions and ignorance was not the Word, but the "form of a servant," which he understood as a reality united to the Word but different from Him[54] . The man Jesus, therefore, could ignore some things, because this did not imply *tout court* attributing the same ignorance to the Word of God. On the contrary, Jesus knew what "the divinity that clothed Him had revealed to Him": He had a wisdom of supernal origin[55], but not full. Unlike the Alexandrians, the Antiochians did not attribute to Jesus a *de jure* or fictitious *ignorantia* (it was not necessary), but the solution they proposed, deriving from the distinction between "the form of a servant" and "the Word", remained linked to an erroneous and inadequate Christology, which in the following centuries was rejected by the Church.

In the Christian West, meanwhile, Christology proceeded along less tortuous paths. Ambrose generally attributed perfect wisdom to Jesus, but he also managed to distinguish adequately between his two knowledges, the divine and the human. In a passage from *De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento*[56] , in fact, he acknowledged that Jesus could progress and perfect his knowledge, since, being equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit, he possessed divine Wisdom, but was not omniscient in his humanity:

> "With human intelligence he 'progressed,' according to what is written, '*And Jesus progressed in age and wisdom and grace with God and with men.*' How could the 'Wisdom of God' have progressed? You're taught the order of the words. There is a progress in age and a progress in wisdom, but in human wisdom. [The evangelist] put age first in order that you might believe that this was said in reference to man; age, evidently, does not refer to God but to the body. If he progressed in human age, he progressed also in human wisdom. Wisdom progresses with intelligence, if it is true that wisdom is derived from intelligence. *Jesus progressed in age and in wisdom* (Lk 2:52). What intelligence did he progress? (...). What changed was not divine, and therefore human intelligence progressed"[57].

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[54] Cf. *Reprehensio XII Anathematismorum* (ACO, I, vol. I, part. 6 pp. 107-148). On the Christology of this author see P. B. Clayton , *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus. Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)*, OxfordUniversityPress, Oxford(UK) - New York 2007.

[55] Cf. *supra*, note 58 and correspondingtext .

[56] This is a homiletic writing, composed around 382 in response to the claims of the Arians.

[57] *De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento*, 7, 71-72 (in *Tutte le opere di sant'Ambrogio* [Intr., trad., notes and index by C. Moreschini], Città Nuova, Milan-Rome 1977, p. 429).

Note that Ambrose was fully aware that to speak of two intelligences involved the risk of splitting Christ into two subjects. Preventing a hypothetical objection to this effect, therefore, he explained:

> "Do we perhaps divide Christ when we worship his divinity and his flesh? Perhaps we divide him when we honor in him the image of God and the cross? (...). I do not divide Christ when I distinguish the substance of his flesh from the substance of his divinity, but I preach one Christ." [58].

In virtue of the Incarnation, in other words, in Christ there was a dual element, human and divine, structured in unity, even if the human was precisely human and behaved as such, and the same was true of the divine. Ambrose's passage is christologically significant, because the thought expounded in it anticipates the doctrine of Chalcedon[59] by half a century.

The same can be said of Augustine's christology. In reality, the Hipponian author did not leave us a systematic treatment of the human knowledge of Christ, but in some texts he touched on subjects connected with our theme. His theology, in general, led him to consider Jesus omniscient. In the light of certain passages of Scripture, such as Lk 2:52, however, he distinguished between divine and human knowledge of Jesus, and recognized that, in some way, there had been an advance in his human knowledge. Augustine's position ultimately does not seem entirely clear.

In principle, however, he believed that Jesus knew all things. He never admitted any ignorance in Him, and in the face of scriptural texts which more or less explicitly presuppose it, He resorted to various expedients to show that such ignorance was in fact

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[58] *Ibid.* , 75.77 (*Ibid*., 431.433).

[59] In the introduction to *De Incarnatione Dominicae Sacramento* (in *Tutte le opere di sant'Ambrogio*, p. 366) Claudio Moreschini says: "Ambrose senses that if in Christ there are two intellectual principles, there must also be two sciences: uncreated science, divine, perfect and immutable, and human science, finite, destined to develop. These are paras. 72-74, which represent a significant advance in theological reflection". According to other Fathers, however, in Christ there was only one divine science, and the progress in science of which the Gospel speaks must therefore be understood as the progressive revelation of the infinite science of the Son of God. Thus, for example, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistle 101. ACledonius* V, 24 (PG 37,181A). Cf. also John Damascene , *The Orthodox Faith*, 66. Ambrose and Gregory of Nyssa (*Antirrheticus adversus apollinarium*, 24 [PG 45:1173f]) took a different position.

only apparent[60]. With regard to the *loghion* of the hour of final judgment, for example, he affirmed that the Son knew the day because the Father knew it, but he did not want to reveal it to the disciples. The *loghion*, therefore, would have been a metaphor to express the ignorance not of Jesus, but of the Church, the Body of Christ, which ignores the final day because of the silence of its Head[61].

When he spoke of the knowledge of Christ, the Hipponian referred mostly to divine wisdom and felt no need, so to speak, to distinguish between the two modes of knowledge. He did not, however, deny such a distinction, and did not hesitate to "resort to it" when he thought it necessary. In the *Controversy with Maximinus* (II, 23), for example, commenting on Lk 2:52 ("Jesus grew in age..."), he affirmed:

> "Certainly, we read that *Jesus progressed in age and wisdom, and in him was the grace of God*, but this was according to the form of man which, for us, he received from us, not according to the form of God, in which he did not judge it foreign to himself to be equal to God. However, even as regards the same form of man, we read that he progressed in age and wisdom, not however that he merited, by believing, to become good from not good."

Here, then, Augustine distinguished between the *form of God* and the *form of man*: Jesus could not progress as God, but he could progress as man[62]. For anthropological and epistemological reasons, however, this progress could not concern anything essential. The African bishop, in fact, believed that ignorance (especially in the moral sphere) was linked to sin. Man, he asserted, created in the image of God and having God as his inner Master, originally possessed moral rectitude; illuminated by the light of the Logos, his

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[60] This is the opinion of T.J. van Bavel , *Recherches sur la christologie de saint Augustin. L'humain et le divin dans le Christ d'après saint Augustin*, Éditions universitaires de Fribourg, Fribourg (SZ) 1954. On pages 149-175 of the volume the author offers an accurate study of the human knowledge of Christ in Augustine.

[61] "In accordance with this same mode of expression our Lord also says that He is ignorant of the day and hour of the end of the world. Now what can there be that he does not know? But since he concealed this detail from his disciples for their benefit, he said that he ignored it, because by concealing it he made them ignorant of it. Following this figure of speech, the Lord also said that the day was known only to the Father, since He made it known to the Son Himself. *La Genesi Defended Against the Manichees*, I, 22,34 (Online text: www.augustinus.it).

[62] The last sentence of the passage quoted just above ("not however that he deserved, believing, to become good from not good") is explained by the fact that the text from which it is taken was written in controversy with a certain Maximinus, according to whom Jesus was son by grace, like us, and therefore needed to be justified, had passed from being unjust to being just. Saint Augustine retorted that the progress in age, wisdom and grace, of which the Gospel speaks, implied none of this.

soul was instructed in truth [63]. Sin, however, broke this condition of grace and introduced moral blindness into human consciousness. As the fruit of sin, therefore, ignorance, for Augustine, was inadmissible in Jesus. According to the Hippo's Bishop, moreover, the human intellect is capable of truly knowing reality because it is able to draw from the forms of things that are in God. The Word itself, which is Light from Light, imprints on the human mind an image of the eternal Ideas that are at the origin of creation. Thus enlightened, man can perceive the truth, understand something that goes beyond what is mutable, something definitive and true[64].

On the basis of these premises, it was logical for the African doctor to think of Christ's human intellect as immersed in the light of his divinity and capable of drawing from that light all knowledge about God and the right sense of things. Jesus, after all, was he himself the Truth. Although this cannot be considered entirely certain, according to some scholars Augustine attributed to the human intellect of Christ the same divine vision that the blessed have[65]. In any case, there is no doubt that he came close to the idea, which would later take root in the Middle Ages, that, already on earth, Jesus had the vision of the divine essence proper to the saints and the blessed. Reflecting on the Pauline conception of Christ and the disciples as respectively the "heir" of God and the "coheirs with Him", the Hipponian affirmed that, after death, the vision of God dispenses to man a perfect knowledge of the divinity, which on earth he did not yet have (we live in faith, not "in vision"). He therefore wondered whether this also applied to Jesus, that is, whether Jesus, after death, also obtained the vision of God, but, in a sense, left the question open:

> "If the pious intellect", he wrote, for example, in the *Eighty-three Different Matters* (75), "admits this also of the Lord Jesus Christ - not as the Word, who in the beginning was with God, but as a child, growing

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[63] "Before sin... God watered the soul through an inward spring, turning to its understanding in such a way that it did not have to gather words outwardly; but it was satisfied by its source, that is, by the truth that flowed from its inmost being." *La GenesiDefended Against the Manichees*, II, 4:5-5:6.

[64] Cf. A.A. Maurer , *Medieval Philosophy*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 1982, pp. 10-12.

[65] Cf. T.J. van Bavel , *Recherches*, pp. 161-169.

> in age and wisdom (...) - it is clear that he comes into possession of the inheritance through his death (...). If, on the other hand, faith does not admit this, that is, that the man assumed by the Lord first had a partial vision and then a total one, although it has been said that he progressed in wisdom, one must then understand the heir in his body, which is the la Chiesa, of which we are coheirs, as we say that we are children of that mother, although she is composed of ourselves".

In summary, having to express himself regarding Jesus' progress in knowledge, the Hipponian put forward two possibilities: (a) in passing from the state of viator to the state of blessed, Christ (like every human being) passed from an imperfect knowledge to a perfect vision of God (he is then "heir" in the sense that he attains the eternal goods which he did not possess before); (b) there was no further refinement because Christ had always had a perfect knowledge from God (he is then "heir" in that he represents the members of his Body, the disciples, who only after death attain the good of the divine vision).

Scholars generally believe that Augustine preferred this second hypothesis. Faced with biblical texts that he found difficult to understand, he often resorted to similar expedients. Commenting, for example, on Jn 5:20 [66], he wrote:

> "What then did he say? The Father *will show* me *greater works than these, so that you may marvel at them* (Jn 5:20). So it is to us that he will show these greater works, not to him (...). Why did he not say: the Father will show them to you, but said: he will show them to the Son? Because we too are members of the Son; and as members we learn: and he also, in some way, learns through his members"[67].

The action of learning, therefore, concerned the Son, not in an immediate and personal way, but only in a mystical and indirect sense: it was not He who "learned", but the members in whom He was present. Similarly Jesus "suffered" in His persecuted members (as He said to Paul: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"). The fact that Augustine often resorted to mystical interpretations attests to his reluctance to attribute any form of ignorance to Christ. If man reaches the truth through the influence of the

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[66] Jn 5:20: "For the Father loves the Son, and manifests to him all that he does, and *will manifest to him works greater than these*, that you may marvel at them."

[67] *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 21:7 (online text: www.augustinus.it).

divine light and by virtue of the imprint of the eternal Ideas in his mind, it was logical to think that Jesus, Truth in person, fully perceived in that Light all that is in the divine mind. It is evident that, in the last term, for Augustine there was no practical reason to distinguish between divine and human knowledge of Christ, because the latter drew from the former, and there was no reason to "limit" the fruit of such contact.

b) The Agnoeta crisis

From the fifth century onward, questions concerning Christ's human faculties (knowledge, freedom, passions) were further explored. It was now clear and unanimously acknowledged that Christ was one person, and that his unity was composed of a duality of elements, but it was not so clear how the union between them (the divine element and the human element) was to be understood. Those who followed the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon accepted the real distinction between the human and the divine in Jesus, and the possibility of tracing some of his acts to human nature and others to divine nature. On the other hand, those who did not accept the Council's doctrine remained for the most part attached to Cyril's theses on the one nature (*mía physis*) [68], and considered the distinction between human and divine to be only *conceptual*, thus admitting a human-divine unity from which all the operations of Christ flowed (theandric operations) [69].

It was in this context that the Agnoetic crisis arose. Some miaphysites affirmed that, once the union had taken place, the assumed humanity was in a condition of existence penetrated by divinity, by divine energies. On this basis, Julian of Halicarnassus

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[68] In the context of his Christology, Cyril of Alexandria had sometimes used the term "nature" (*physis*) to express the union of the person of the Word with the assumed nature. He had taken up the formula (which he thought dated back to Athanasius , but which was actually Apollinaris) of the one "nature" of God the Incarnate Word (*mia physis tou Logou Theou sesarkomene*), to convey the idea of a stronger and more substantial unity than that presupposed by the Nestorian "*prósopon* of conjunction". A few years later, the Council of Chalcedon would disassociate itself from this language and distinguish between nature and hypostasis (person). In the East, however, many theologians remained attached to the idea of the one nature.

[69] This was the position of the mitigated Monophysites or, as it is sometimes said, the Myophysites. Cf. A. Grillmeier , *Gesù il Cristo nella fede della Chiesa*, vol. 2/1: *La ricezione del Concilio di Calcedonia*, *451-518*, Paideia, Brescia 1996; C. Dell'Osso , *La cristologia nella teologia bizantina del secolo VI*, in V. Battaglia - G. Bof (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth.... Son of Adam, Son of God*, Paulines, Turin 2000, pp. 178-209.

and other monophysites claimed that the body of Jesus was naturally impassible and not subject to emotions (aftardocetism). Themistius, deacon of the diocese of Constantinople, refuted the aftardocet theses, and affirmed the corruptibility of Jesus' body, considering it subject to all the passions that did not imply sin[70], among which also ignorance, because, he remembered, if ignorance were a sin, angels and other creatures deprived of the fullness of divine knowledge would be sinners too[71]. The nescience attributed to Jesus by some Gospel passages was therefore to be understood, according to the Alexandrian deacon, as the natural consequence of the assumption by the Word of a passible humanity.

Themistius and his followers claimed that the activity and knowledge of Christ were "theandric"[72], but it is not easy to understand what they meant by this expression [73]. Other groups of miaphysites, on the other hand, held that the knowledge of Christ was divine, and did not admit of any kind of ignorance in Him. Be that as it may, it seems that the doctrine of Themistius exerted some influence on some groups of supporters of Chalcedon, and this led Pope Gregory I to intervene in the controversy.

Around the year 600, in fact, the patriarch of Alexandria Eulogius wrote a treatise against the Agnoetes (Themistius and his followers) in which he affirmed the

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[70] Among the Christian authors of the first centuries the idea that the passions (if not all, at least some) were a consequence of Adam's fall was widespread. It was common (Basil, Cyril of Alexandria, Leontius of Byzantium) to distinguish between the innocent passions (hunger, thirst, sleep...) and the guilty ones (all the emotions linked to procreation, which, according to many Fathers, had been thought differently in God's original plan, and was therefore the result of the animality of sin). Cf. J.J. Pelikan , *The Christian Tradition: a History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. I: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, 100-600*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago - London 1971, p. 87. Cf. also R. Moloney, *Approaches to Christ Knowledge*, p. 60.

[71] The connection between ignorance and sin, however, refers primarily to the area of knowledge of God or the moral life, within which ignorance is generally considered to be the fruit of sin. According to some authors, ignorance in "profane" things (sometimes referred to as *inutilia*) is not connected with sin, while for others it is. This is precisely one of the reasons that complicate the discourse on human knowledge (or ignorance) of Christ, because sometimes it is not clear what is meant or referred to by the word *ignorance*. The distinction between the two spheres is also made explicit by the expressions "privative or positive ignorance" (in something one ought to know) and "negative ignorance" (in something one has no reason to know).

[72] This term was also used by some of the leading thinkers of the sixth century, such as Pseudo-Dionysius , Severus of Antioch, etc.

[73] Did they mean to say that, when necessary, the human knowledge of Christ was occasionally enlarged by the divine, as was the case with power in miracles? We have not much data on this subject. Or did they mean to speak of a personal knowledge of the Word in the economy, distinct from, but somewhat supported by, his eternal knowledge?

omniscience of the Son both as God and as man[74]. In support of his thesis he expounded two arguments: a) the subject of knowledge is the unique person of the Word, and, if all that the Father possesses is of the Son, knowledge must also be so; the Son, therefore, has the same knowledge as the Father; b) to attribute ignorance to the Son would imply attributing it also to the Father. With this rather simplistic argument, Eulogius ascribed to Christ human and divine omniscience. He wished, however, to consult the Pope; he sent him his paper, and asked his opinion on the subject.

Gregory the Great realized that the ideas of the Alexandrian patriarch agreed with his own. In his reply he cited the teachings of St. Augustine and Chalcedonian doctrine, denied any ignorance in Jesus and proposed three possible explanations of Mk 13:32 (the *loghion* of the hour of judgment): (a) the Son said that he was ignorant of the day because he was ignorant of it in its members, as Augustine had asserted ; (b) Scripture sometimes expressed divine realities by human modes of expression, and not always, therefore, had to be understood literally[75] ; (c) the Son had the same knowledge as the Father, and therefore even as a man knew the day and hour of judgment. This last interpretation, the Pontiff explained, was not in contradiction with the passage in Mark, because Jesus "knew the day and hour of judgment, nevertheless He knew it, but not from the nature of humanity. What therefore he knew in it he did not know from it, for God made man knew the day and hour of judgment by the power of his divinity" [76]. On the basis of these

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[74] On this phase of Christological reflection cf. J. Rico Pavés , *"Christus, Sapientia Dei Incarnata". A propósito de Gregorio Magno y la crisis agnoeta en la carta del Papa al Patriarca de Alejandría Eulogio* , in P. Hofrichter - Y. de Andia (Hrsg.), *Christus bei den Vätern: Forscher aus dem Osten und Westen Europas an der Quelle des gemeinsamen Glaubens*. Pro-Oriente-Studientagung über Christus bei den Griechischen und Lateinischen Kirchenvätern im erste Jahrtausend in Wien, 7.-9. Juni 2001, Tyrolia, Innsbruck - Wien 2004, pp. 351-368 (especially 355-360).

[75] Gregory the Great recalled, for example, that after Abraham's acceptance of the sacrifice of his son Isaac, God said to the patriarch: "now I know that you fear God". Well, one cannot think, of course, that he did not know this before.

[76] *Letter Sicut Acqua to Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria* (August 600) [DH 475]. The idea, already expressed by Augustine and John Chrysostom, was later taken up by Maximus the Confessor (cf. *Questiones et Dubia* 66 [PG 90,840]). Recently it has also been accepted in the CCC n. 473. Chrysostom formulated it as follows: "Jesus did not know what he knew because he had heard or seen it; he found everything in his own nature, since he had come forth perfect from the bosom of the Father and needed no teacher." *Homilies on St. John the Evangelist*, 30,1 (in John Chrysostom, *The Homilies on St. John the Evangelist*, vol: II, SEI, Turin 1947, p. 156).

and other arguments Gregory concluded that "anyone who is not Nestorian cannot possibly be an agnoete" [77].

c) Concluding remarks

From what has been said it can be seen that patristics tended to pass from a rather heterogeneous view, in which, on the basis of Scripture, some admitted the possibility that a certain ignorance existed in Christ the man[78], which others, instead, denied[79], to a more homogeneous position (from the fifth century onwards), in which the denial of all ignorance in Christ became the norm and, if not in theory, at least in practice, a distinction was barely made between divine and human knowledge of Jesus, because it was held that, since He knew everything as God, Jesus must also know everything as man.

The factors that led to this change were many. First, those who claimed ignorance in Christ ended up being "defeated" because of their deficient and inadequate christology. This is primarily true of the Arians, who strongly insisted on the *loghion* of the hour of judgment and Jesus' progress in wisdom in order to deny the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. In order to refute the Arian theories, a large number of arguments were developed which eventually demolished their theses. It was observed, for example, that the Creator of the world, of time, and of judgment, could not but know what He Himself had established[80]. The anti-Aryans, therefore, asserted the omniscience of Christ, but in reality, what they spoke of was only the omniscience of the Word.

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[77] *Letter Sicut Acqua* [DH 476]. In the list of heretics drawn up by the Lateran Council of 649 (not ecumenical) Themistius also appears. In the next council, the III of Constantinople (681) a letter of Sophronius of Jerusalem was read in which the Agnoetes were condemned.

[78] Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret of Cyrrhus... The book *De Sectis*, by an anonymous sixth-century author, states that many or perhaps almost all of the Fathers who participated in the Council of Chalcedon believed that as a man Christ did not know everything. Cf. *De Sectis*, X,3 (PG 86,1262f), quoted in R. Moloney , *The Knowledge of Christ*, Continuum, London- New York 1999, p. 44.

[79] Athanasius (with the reservations set out above), Cyril of Alexandria , Leontius of Byzantium , Fulgentius of Ruspe , Gregory the Great, John Damascene . Augustine can also be counted among them.

[80] This argument is found, among others, in St. Jerome , *Tractatus in Marci Evangelium* (CCL 78: G. Morin, Brepols, Turnhout 1958, p. 496) and in St. Hilary of Poitiers , *De Trinitate* 9,59 (CCSL 62-62A: P. Smulders [ed.], Brepols, Turnhout 1979-1980, vol. II, pp. 438-439).

Like the Arians, the Antiochians admitted a certain ignorance in Jesus, but attributed it exclusively to his humanity[81] . The Word, on the other hand, as God, was held to be omniscient. The Antiochene arguments rested, however, on an unintentionally deficient christological ontology, which caused their ideas to disappear. Those who, like Cyril , opposed their christology and insisted on the unity of Christ, however, took little interest in the human faculties of the Saviour, because they believed that the hypostatic union made up for the limitations of the assumed humanity. On the contrary, the union was directed precisely to the transformation of the assumed flesh, to its divinization. From the incarnation, therefore, Jesus had to enjoy in all the levels of his humanity every perfection of grace and wisdom[82]. In this perspective, obviously, the distinction between divine and human knowledge in Jesus Christ lost all importance.

Chalcedonian christology, on the other hand, laid more solid foundations for distinguishing the two modes of knowledge, and made it possible to attribute to Christ apparently opposing qualities, such as eternity and mortality, immutability and change, etc., which could also have been attributed to Him omniscience and nescience. Both qualities could also have been attributed to him, but this was not done, partly because of the strong resistance to the Council formulations and partly because of the influences of Cyrillic miaphysism in the East[83] and Augustine in the West[84]. These and other factors

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[81] Contrary to the Arians, who attributed instead the ignorance of which the *loghion of* the hour speaks to the person of Christ, as a demonstration of his inferiority to the Father.

[82] From Cyril to John Damascene this line tends to be maintained. Cf. John Damascene, *De fide Orthodoxa*, 3, 22 (PG 94, 1088).

[83] The history of Christology in the following centuries shows how much the Eastern world was fascinated by Cyrillic Christology (Monophysitism, Myophysitism, Chalcedonism), thus demonstrating that the doctrine of Chalcedon had failed to convince. Cf. A. Grillmeier , *Jesus the Christ in the Faith of the Church*, vol. II/2: *La ChiesaConstantinople in the Sixth Century*, Paideia, Brescia 1999; W.H. C. Frend , *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement. Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979; I.R. Torrance , *Christology after Chalcedon: Severus Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite*, Canterbury Press, Norwich 1988; F. Carcione , *La ricezione ecclesiale del Concilio di Calcedonia in Oriente tra il V e il VI* secolo, in A. Ducay (ed.), *The Council of Chalcedon 1550 years later*, Libreria editrice vaticana, Vatican City 2003, pp. 59-90; AA.VV, *Debate on "miaphysism"*, "Christianity in History" 37 (2016), 5-55; M. Simonetti , *The Christological controversies of the sixth and seventh centuries*, in Accademia Tudertina - University of Perugia. Center for the Study of Medieval Spirituality (ed.), *Martin I pope (649-653) and his time*. Proceedings of the XXVIII International Historical Conference (Todi, 13-16 October 1991), Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 1992, pp. 85-102.

[84] "The idea of an omniscience of Christ the man was introduced by Augustine into medieval theological thought through a man named Fulgentius (468-533), totally imbued with Augustinian doctrine, whose writings on the knowledge

led to a somewhat divinized image of Christ's humanity, to which a complete and perfect human science was attributed[85]. The distinction between two different kinds of science in Jesus thus ended up being forgotten [86].

of Christ exerted considerable influence on Alcuin and, later, on Hugh of St. Victor." J.C. Murray, *The Infused Knowledge of Christ in the Theology of the 12th and 13th Centuries*, Pontificium Athenaeum Internationale Angelicum, Windsor 1963, p. 3.

[85] It was very present, for example, in the Christology of Maximus the Confessor (cf. B.E. Daley , *Nature and the 'Mode of Union': Late Patristic Models for the Personal Unity of Christ*, in S.T. Davis - D. Kendall - G. O'Collins [eds.], *The Incarnation. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002, pp. 164-196; P. M. Blowers , *Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus on Gnomic Will [γνώμη] in Christ: Clarity and Ambiguity*, "Union Seminary Quarterly Review" 63 [2012], 44-50) and in that of John Damascene (cf. K. Madigan , *The Passions of Christ in High-Medieval Thought. An Essay on Christological Development*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York 2007 pp. 28-29), and was expressed in the great pantocratic icons del first millennium. In these representations the manifestations of Jesus' full involvement in history (suffering, anguish, temptations, etc.) were accepted, but appeared, so to speak, transfigured by his "divine" condition.

[86] In *L'autocoscienza di Gesù: "in tutto simile a noi tranne il peccato"* (Città Nuova, Roma 2011, p. 83, note 112) Ivan Salvadori reports the opinion of Philipp Kaiser according to which in this period the testimonies of Scripture that presuppose or attest the need to ask or the lack of knowledge of something on the part of Jesus were for the most part traced to two interpretative schemes: "One attributed to these experiences a pedagogical value: Christ, for example, would have let it be understood that he was unaware of the hour and day of judgment in order to teach us vigilance. The other, found for example in Gregory the Great, resorted to the Augustinian distinction between 'Christ as head' and 'Christ as body', imputing nescience only to the latter". (cf. Ph. Kaiser, *Das Wissen Jesu Christi in der lateinischen (westlichen) Theologie*, Friedrich Pustet Verlag, Regensburg [DE] 1981, p. 61)