

Part One
One of Us

Christology: An Invitation To An Encounter

In every generation the good news of God's salvation needs to be proclaimed. It also needs to be reshaped for different periods of history, different cultures, and different generations. It includes the story of Jesus of Nazareth.

We can tell Jesus' story by beginning with the Eternal Word; or by beginning with Jesus of Nazareth, this same Word enfleshed in the history of Judaism, this Word as Incarnate; or by telling our own stories and how we have come to follow Jesus and be his disciples. Many ways of telling the story are possible, as long as they effectively proclaim the message of God's salvation. In taking up the task of proclaiming that message once again, in my own fashion, I begin with Jesus of Nazareth, the man Jesus who was one of us. Perhaps it is difficult for us at times to believe in Jesus' humanity and it takes faith to affirm it. Sometimes it is easier to focus solely on his divinity or not to believe in him at all. For many these appear to be the only choices: to picture him either as an Exalted One far removed from us or as one who has nothing to offer us. We must therefore first make some connection with him. This connection is our common humanity or common human condition.

An imaginative approach to Jesus as human is Nikos

Kazantzakis' *Last Temptation of Christ* (1951).¹ The book should not be read for accurate historical details; it is fiction. However, fiction has a great capacity to penetrate and present truth. While Kazantzakis' novel itself must be judged in terms of its art, its Christ must be evaluated in terms of the criterion Kazantzakis set for himself. "This book was written because I wanted to offer a supreme model to the person who struggles."² Who was Jesus of Nazareth for Kazantzakis? One who struggles. There may be more to Jesus' story than this, but this is essential to the story. Kazantzakis wrote, "We struggle, we see him struggle also, and we find strength. We see that we are not all alone in the world: he is fighting at our side."³ A Jesus who struggles as we do is not far removed from the biblical presentation in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

The Compassionate One

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* presents a sophisticated Christology centered on the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus is presented as priest according to the order of Melchizedek

¹Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, trans. P. A. Bien (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), written 1950-51. The central continuing struggle for Jesus in Kazantzakis' *Last Temptation* is that with the flesh, embodied for Jesus in Mary Magdalene. It is not the accuracy or inaccuracy of this particular struggle, however, which is important, but the fact of Jesus' human struggle in general. There were many and varied influences in Kazantzakis' own life: Christianity, Buddhism, communism, Nietzsche, Bergson, the struggle for the liberation of Crete, to name only a few. Kazantzakis was born in Herakleion, Crete, in 1883, at which time Crete was struggling for freedom from the Turks. He was later taught by Franciscans, studied law in Athens, and studied philosophy in Paris. He died of leukemia in 1957. For further reading on Kazantzakis, consider: Samuel C. Calian, "Kazantzakis: Prophet of Non-Hope," *Theology Today* 28 (1971), 37-49; Richard Chilson, "The Christ of Nikos Kazantzakis," *Thought* 47 (1972), 69-89; Helen Kazantzakis, *Nikos Kazantzakis, A Biography Based in His Letters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968); James Lea, *Kazantzakis - The Politics of Salvation* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1979), which also provides an up-to-date bibliography; Pandelis Prevelakis, *Nikos Kazantzakis and His Odyssey* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961).

²*The Last Temptation of Christ*, 4.

³*Ibid.*, 3.

(Ps 110), superseding the Levitical priesthood. The author prepares the way for Jesus' priesthood by showing that Jesus, as mediator, is higher than the angels and superior to Moses. The literary form of *Hebrews* is not so much that of a letter as it is that of a homily.⁴ We do not know to whom this homiletic exhortation is being given, but there is evidence to suggest a Jewish Christian community familiar with Jewish institutions and traditions. Although the present title, "To the Hebrews," was not included until the third or fourth centuries, it does reflect the content and context of the homily.

We do not know who the author is either. It is generally agreed today that it is not Paul. The attribution of authorship to Paul goes back to Clement of Alexandria, yet Origen later described the author as "only God knows." The date of *Hebrews* is also a problem. Although many have favored a post - 70 C. E. dating, there are more and more who argue convincingly for a date prior to 70 C.E.⁵ There is no reference in the homily to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., and this silence may suggest that it had not yet taken place.

We find our christological starting point in Hebrews 4:15 which points us to Jesus' compassion and mercy.

⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ⁵For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

¹For every high priest chosen from among us is appointed to act on our behalf in relation to God, to offer

⁴See George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 36 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co. 1972), esp. 246-68.

⁵See George Wesley Buchanan, H. W. Montefiore, J. A. T. Robinson, and C. Spicq.

gifts and sacrifices for sin. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

"Thou art my Son.

today I have begotten thee";

as he says also in another place,

"Thou art a priest for ever,

after the order of Melchizedek."

'In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 4:14-5:10)

The theology of *Hebrews* presents Jesus as a priest. What must be kept in mind, however, is that as priest Jesus feels sympathy with our weaknesses because he too was tempted, struggled, searched in every way that we do. The human condition and its struggle was not foreign to him. Yet in pointing to this full participation in our humanness, he still cannot be called a sinner in the way that we are sinners. Nevertheless, his identity with us is complete and we can be assured of his understanding.

While the assertion that Jesus is our high priest may seem to remove Jesus from our midst, the text attempts to prevent the implication that his priesthood separates him from us. The first verses of chapter five make this clear. What the author of *Hebrews* means by this declaration of Jesus as priest must be clarified. The theology of the homily quickly

points out that a priest is no different from the rest of us except by function. Every priest is "from among the people," "weak in many ways," and offers sacrifice "also for his own sins." Thus there is a solidarity between the priest and other human beings.

The priest is one of us, but one of us who acts on our behalf in our relations with God. One does not choose this function of one's own accord but is called by God. There are two emphases in the text: identity or sympathy with others and a divine calling. But the call does not make the one called any less one of us. *Hebrews* describes Jesus as supreme high priest, and also as Son of God. However, this does not remove Jesus from the world of human suffering. The author makes it quite clear: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8).

One can also make this point by reference to the priesthood of all believers from the *First Epistle of Peter*, 2:9-10.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

We are all priests. What is affirmed of Jesus is also affirmed in some way of all of us. The priesthood of Jesus does not make him different from us. Jesus is the supreme high priest, but we are all priests. Jesus is the supreme exemplification of a kind of priesthood which is manifest elsewhere as well.

The complete and utter humanness of Jesus is central to the message of *Hebrews* because it guarantees the mercy which will be shown us. How can we be sure, as we face judgment, that "there is grace," or that in time of need "we will receive mercy"? Because Jesus, God's own Son, knows what it is like, knows the human drama from the inside out, knows the immense difficulty of the human life and struggle.

Hence, he cannot but sympathize with us when we stand before him. As H. W. Montefiore says, "He sympathizes because he has, through common experience, a real kinship with those who suffer."⁶

The point can be well made if we stay close to the Greek text of 4:15. "For we do not have a high priest (*ou gar ekhomen arkhiera*) who is not able to feel sympathy (*me dunamenon sumpathesai*) with our weaknesses (*tais astheneiais hemon*), but rather one who has been put to the test (*pepeirasmemon de*) in all ways (*kata panta*), in a fashion similar to us except for sin (*kath homoioteta khoris hamartias*)." How can the heavenly priest, Jesus, sitting in the presence of God, be interested in our trials and sorrows? Because he has experienced them himself. "Well is he able to sympathize, just as a doctor who many times has been sick (*Bene potest compati, sicut medicus qui pluries fuit infirmus*)" (Hugh of St. Cher). *Pepeirasmemon* is in the perfect tense and thus indicates not simply a single event (Mt 4:1-11) but something continuing throughout Jesus' life (Lk 22:28). *Peirazo* means to tempt or test. But its meaning can best be brought out by a "put to the test" translation.⁷ This calls to mind the context of the Israelite experience of being put to the test in the wilderness. The author makes the identity between the struggle of Jesus and ours so strong, Ceslaus Spicq observes, that he quickly includes a qualification, namely the area of sin.⁸

Our discussion thus far helps us to delineate an important christological and methodological principle. A proper understanding of priesthood and of Jesus does not remove

⁶H. W. Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: A. and C. Black, 1964), 91.

⁷Cf., Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology, the Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 74-75.

⁸Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, *Études bibliques*, vol. 2 (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1953), 93. The "sinlessness" of Jesus is something to be discussed in volume four of this series.

either of them from human experience. But how do we come to a proper understanding of priesthood? The answer is -through a reflection on the life and death of Jesus and through an encounter with him. We come to a knowledge of priesthood by understanding Jesus, and not vice-versa. A pre-conceived theology or pre-understanding of priesthood does not help us to elucidate the mystery of Jesus. Rather Jesus helps us to elaborate a true understanding of priesthood. Jesus is our starting point, not any previous even if highly sophisticated prior conceptions. The failure to realize this methodological principle has grave consequences. It prevents Jesus from challenging our preconceived universe.

This then is how the author of *Hebrews* proceeds. We have a high priest who is in the very presence of God, namely Jesus. Hence, in the very presence of God, we have one who sympathizes with our weaknesses and who has been tried in every way that we are. Thus we can be confident that mercy will be ours. Yet, lest there be any confusion in speaking of Jesus as priest as if this might remove him in some way from an identity with us, the author quickly clarifies what an authentic understanding of priesthood is. A priest is from among the people, weak in many ways, gentle, one whose function is to serve God on behalf of the people and offer sacrifice for sin. This function does not make a priest less than one of us, but rather a mediator for us. So Jesus is like us in every way, yet one chosen from among us to act on our behalf in our relations with God, but still one of us. Hebrews 4:14-5:10 is simply an elaboration of the same point made earlier in 2:17-18 - "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted." This theology of Jesus as compassionate seems to re-present accurately the historical Jesus of Nazareth whose life was full of compassion (Mt 11:28-30; 14:14; 15:32; Lk 6:36).

A Strong "No" to Docetism

If our starting point in Christology includes the conscious affirmation of Jesus' real humanity and compassion, as so clearly stated in *Hebrews*, then we must also in the beginning clearly resist docetism, the tendency to deny full reality to the humanness of Jesus. Although heretical, docetism was never a specific heresy associated only with one individual, movement, or era in the life of the Church. Rather it manifested itself in various forms and in varied heresies and was especially prominent among Christian Gnostics of the second and third centuries. The docetic tendency seriously impairs any doctrine of Incarnation and denies the reality of Jesus' bodiliness as well as the reality of his sufferings. Jesus did not fully participate but only seemed to enter into the fleshly, historical and material realm. The word relates to the Greek *dokein*, which means "to appear" or "to seem." The docetists or "seemists" maintained that Jesus only appeared to have or seemed to have a bodily and earthly existence but was essentially a divine being. Some denied only the reality of his death which they say he miraculously escaped, Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene having taken his place. One cannot determine with certitude the roots of this view. Some point to the tendency in the Hellenistic world to view the material world itself as evil, as in Manicheism for example.

Serapion, the eighth bishop of Antioch (died c. 211 C. E.), was the first to use the word *docetists* to describe Christians of this perspective. Its early presence was manifest by the need to refute it on the part of an even earlier bishop of Antioch, Ignatius (c. 35-110 C.E.).

And so, be deaf when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, the Son of Mary, who was truly born and ate and drank, who was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate and was really crucified and died in the sight of those 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth' (Phil 1:10). Moreover he was truly raised from the dead by the power of His Father; in

like manner His Father, through Jesus Christ, will raise up those of us who believe in Him. Apart from Him we have no true life.

If, as some say who are godless in the sense that they are without faith, He merely seemed to suffer - it is they themselves who merely seem to exist - why am I in chains? And why do I pray that I may be thrown to the wild beasts? I die then, to no purpose. I do but bear false witness against the Lord.⁹

One of the more challenging and complex docetic threats to early Christianity was Gnosticism. The major sources for our knowledge of the Gnostics are patristic writings which refute them, such as those of Irenaeus,¹⁰ and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Coptic versions of some of the Gnostic writings themselves. In 1945 the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in Egypt gave us fifty-two Gnostic treatises, forty new ones if we subtract duplications and those which were previously extant.¹¹ This discovery has affected Gnostic studies to the same extent that the discovery of the Qumran scrolls affected Jewish studies.

The word *gnosis* itself means knowledge and refers to saving knowledge. As such there is a completely orthodox sense in which one can speak of Christian *gnosis*.¹² That such a distinction can be made is obvious from the title of Irenaeus' major work, usually called *Adversus Haereses*, but which bears the actual title, "The Detection and Over-

⁹Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Trallians," trans. G. Walsh, *The Fathers of the Church, vol. I* (New York: Christian Heritage, 1947), 104-5 (par. 9-10).

¹⁰Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1885), 309-578. Also see John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: Epworth Press, 1948).

¹¹For further reference to the Nag Hammadi materials, see James M. Robinson, "The Jung Codex: The Rise and Fall of a Monopoly," *Religious Studies Review* 3 (1977), 17-30; and James M. Robinson, editor, *The Nag Hammadi Library* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

¹²See Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, trans. Mary Ryan, *History of Christian Spirituality, vol. I* (New York: Desclée Co., 1963), 211-75.

throw of the So-Called False Knowledge." Gnosticism, in the strictest sense, refers to a heretical Christian movement of the second century. Yet, as a movement, it is difficult to confine. Although many attempts have been made to pinpoint the origins of Gnosticism, it is best to remain open to a variety of ingredients: apocalypticism, mystical and sectarian Judaism, late Hellenistic philosophy, heterodox Christianity, Zoroastrian and perhaps even Indian religion.

The simplest approach to understanding this milieu in which Christianity developed during the second and third centuries is to mention characteristics which many or most of the so-called Gnostics had in common.

The basic elements common to them all are (1) a distinction between the unknown and transcendent true God on the one hand and the Demiurge or creator of the world on the other, the latter being commonly identified with the God of the Old Testament; (2) the belief that man in his true nature is essentially akin to the divine, a spark of their heavenly light imprisoned in a material body and subjected in this world to the dominance of the Demiurge and his powers; (3) a myth narrating some kind of pre-mundane fall, to account for man's present state and his yearning for deliverance; and (4) the means, the saving gnosis, by which that deliverance is effected and man awakened to the consciousness of his own true nature and heavenly origin.¹³

Gnosticism incorporates a belief in a saving knowledge, often secret knowledge, or knowledge incomprehensible to those insufficiently spiritual. Many Gnostic systems speak of three classes of people: the spiritual people who are "by nature" or "by origin" saved; the "psychics" who have a latent capacity for gnosis and need to have the Gnostic gospel set before them; and the "earthly" or "material"

¹³R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 4.

people who will never be saved.¹⁴ Gnosticism as a movement was one of the carriers of docetism. Material creation was evaluated negatively and thus Jesus would not have fully partaken of it. Even though Gnosticism is understood as a Christian heresy and even though docetism has been explicitly rejected by the Church, neither tendency is easily uprooted from Christian life itself. Theologies of the Incarnation can manifest a docetic tendency, though rarely explicitly docetic.

The Christian faith eventually rejected, explicitly and definitively, any effort to compromise the humanity of Jesus. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. referred to Hebrews 4:15 in order to make its own assertion concerning Jesus' humanity and our own, that Jesus' humanity is essentially the same as ours, con-substantial with ours.

The rejection of docetism in Christology has been echoed strongly in recent times. One major characteristic of most twentieth century Christology is a renewed emphasis on the humanity of Christ. No doubt that modern humanism has contributed to this as well as all the motives which lay behind a return to the "Jesus of history." But a significant aspect of recent systematic Christology remains an explicit rejection of docetism.¹⁵ Two twentieth century theological representatives can suffice: Donald Baillie and Wolfhart Pannenberg.

Donald Baillie was a Scottish Presbyterian, an experienced parish minister as well as professor of systematic theology. In *God Was in Christ* (1948) he wrote:

It may be safely said that practically all schools of theological thought today take the full humanity of our Lord more seriously than has ever been done before by Christian theologians. It has always, indeed, been of the essence of Christian orthodoxy to make Jesus wholly

¹⁴Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 16.

¹⁵See D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 11-20.

human as well as wholly divine, and in the story of the controversies which issued in the decisions of the first four General Councils it is impressive to see the Church contending as resolutely for His full humanity as for His full deity. But the Church was building better than it knew, and its ecumenical decisions were wiser than its individual theologians in this matter. Or should we rather say that it did not fully realize the implications of declaring that in respect of His human nature Christ is consubstantial with ourselves? At any rate it was continually haunted by a docetism which made His human nature very different from ours and indeed largely explained it away as a matter of simulation or "seeming" rather than reality. Theologians shrank from admitting human growth, human ignorance, human mutability, human struggle and temptation, into their conception of the Incarnate Life, and treated it as simply a divine life lived in a human body (and sometimes even this was conceived as essentially different from our bodies) rather than a truly human life lived under the psychical conditions of humanity. The cruder forms of docetism were fairly soon left behind, but in its more subtle forms the danger continued in varying degrees to dog the steps of theology right through the ages until modern times. 16

Wolfhart Pannenberg has been another major figure in recent christological inquiry. A German Lutheran, his *Jesus-God and Man* (1964) explicitly delineated two methods: a Christology "from above" and a Christology "from below."¹⁷ Since the publication of his *Christology*, theologians have addressed themselves to one or other of these two methods. Pannenberg's rejection of Christology from above reflects the same need to do justice to the humanity of Jesus. For a Christology from above begins "from the divinity of Jesus," whereas a Christology from

16Ibid., II.

17Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, trans. Lewis Wilkins and Duane Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 33-37.

below goes "from the historical man Jesus to the recognition of his divinity."¹⁸ A Christology from above "presupposes the divinity of Jesus" and "takes the divinity of the Logos as its point of departure."¹⁹ A Christology from below begins with the humanity and the history of Jesus in contrast to the Eternal Word.

I, too, begin with the humanity of Jesus for several reasons. First, this is where the Church itself began. Disciples in the time of Jesus as well as the first believers after the resurrection knew the human Jesus. The story of the earthly Jesus was the point of continuity between the preresurrection and post-resurrection followers. Both had come to follow this Jesus whom they now professed to be still alive, raised from among the dead. Second, to begin where the first of our brothers and sisters in the faith began is to enable us to come to the faith from within, to reexperience their experience, to recognize (re-cognize) Jesus and encounter him again. Third, we need to avoid docetism. The humanity of Jesus is of ultimate significance for us. If Jesus is not "like me," or "one nature with us," then he has much less to say to me. Redemption is a different matter if he is not fully one of us - for then we have not yet been redeemed! Thus we cannot let go of Jesus' humanity. Later, in volumes three and four, we will speak of the divinity of Jesus more explicitly. To begin there, however, opens us to the possible danger of that divinity overshadowing the fact that Jesus was one of us.

The Humanness of Jesus

Both the testimony of the Scriptures and the historical effort to remain faithful to them point toward Jesus as human like us, even if the "like us" has to be nuanced. Yet this qualification presents a problem. In so far as it is

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 34.

qualified at all, how can we come to know or interpret the humanity of Jesus? For we must be methodologically careful. I point out that we bring pre-conceptions to our understanding of Jesus and we "use" him to confirm these rather than allow him to challenge them. The same applies to his humanity. We cannot assume that our preunderstanding of humanity is correct.

Although we all have a great deal of experience with what it means to be human, our experience is still wrapped up in what it means to be less than human as well. The word *human* itself admits a variety of connotations. Sometimes it means "fragile" or "weak"; something is only human; to err is human. Sometimes it conveys a degradation to which a human being can sink; Ivan Albright's painting "Into the World Came a Soul Named Ida," is a portrait of a pathetic human being. So is Oscar Wilde's "Dorian Gray." Sometimes the negative experience of the human becomes so intense that we judge an action to be inhuman although human beings were capable of it. The Holocaust affects us in this way. Contrasted with this, "human" can also connote dignity. Dorothy Day and Albert Schweitzer were outstanding examples of humanity. Given the variety of meanings of the word *human*, how are we using this word when we approach Jesus? Indeed, can we really use it at all?

This very problem is the reason we must be careful. Our prior conceptions of what it means to be human have been primarily learned. When we come to Jesus, perhaps they will have to be re-learned. We cannot force our previous conceptions, no matter how well founded in personal and collective human experience, to be applied to Jesus; otherwise, we "use" him and learn nothing from him, we use him to confirm what we already do.

Rather, when we approach Jesus we need to allow him to disclose or reveal to us what being human means. We must allow him to lead us to a deeper or newer understanding. Christology is not a deduction from prior conceptions as is the popular concept: Jesus is God; God knows all things; therefore, Jesus knows all things. Or: Jesus is human; to be human is to suffer; therefore, Jesus suffers. Christology is

not a deduction but an invitation to an encounter. Jesus does indeed suffer. We know that, however, not because we have deduced it from some concept of human nature, but because Jesus has revealed it to us. We can see the difficulty in finding an appropriate starting point for entry into the quest for Jesus. He is human, but we have to allow him to tell us what his humanity means.

Karl Barth's *Christ and Adam* and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's *Becoming Human Together* exemplify this methodological awareness.²⁰ Barth's essay on Romans 5 (1952) shows Barth moving closer to the "humanity of God," but still quite conscious that there is a dilemma concerning the relationship between Christology and theological anthropology. Barth's christocentric theology makes him acutely aware when he comes to anthropology that one cannot simply begin with "phenomena of the human," or our experience, or an abstract human nature. We must rather, begin with Christ.

For Barth, Paul does not leave it an open question "whether Adam or Christ tells us more about the true nature of man."²¹ For Barth, "Adam can therefore be interpreted only in the light of Christ and not the other way around."²² Methodologically, we must take Barth quite seriously on this point: "The *special* anthropology of Jesus Christ... is the *norm* of *all* anthropology."²³ Christology is normative for anthropology and not the other way around.

Murphy-O'Connor contrasts with Barth. Barth's speciality is dogmatics, Murphy-O'Connor's is exegesis.

²⁰Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam, Man and Humanity in Romans 5*, trans. T. A. Smail (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968). Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming Human Together, The Pastoral Anthropology of St. Paul*, revised edition (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982). For an awareness of this same methodological point, also see Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Christological Foundation of Christian Anthropology," *Humanism and Christianity*, Concilium, vol. 86 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 86-100; Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads, A Latin American Approach*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), 82.

²¹ *Christ and Adam*, 44.

²² *Ibid.*, 40.

²³ *Ibid.*, 36.

Murphy-O'Connor stresses historical critical scholarship while Barth remains skeptical. On the present question, however, they share a common insight. According to Murphy-O'Connor, "we are conditioned to think of Christ in terms of ourselves. He is human and we are human, and it is natural to move from the known (ourselves) to the unknown (Christ)." ²⁴ Yet this is false methodology. The "known" provides "data" derived from what we recognize as fallen or sinful humanity. But it is exactly here that qualifications start to be made. We cannot assume that our fallen, sinful human lives can be the basis for coming to a clearer understanding of what it means to be human in such a way that it helps us shed light on the humanity of Jesus. "Objective observation of contemporary humanity can never result in a portrait of humanity as such. The best it can produce is a portrait of fallen humanity which is inapplicable to Christ."²⁵ Once again, Christology leads to anthropology and not the other way around. "We cannot have an authentic understanding of humanity unless we first know Christ." ²⁶

Thus, we must set aside for the moment what being human really means. We must first look more closely at the humanity of Jesus. This does not mean, however, that we have no basis whatsoever with which to begin our study of the humanity of Jesus. There are in fact two bases upon which we can presently build. The first is Scripture; the second is a clarification of our pre-understanding which we leave vulnerable to challenge, and which may find confirmation in Scripture.

Thus, first, although we are not yet ready to say in a final way what the humanity of Jesus consists in (and thus our own humanity), we can say something in a preliminary way based upon Scripture. We have already explored the text of

²⁴*Becoming Human Together*, 33.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 40.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 36.

Hebrews 4:15. *Hebrews* speaks of Jesus being tempted in every way that we are. Thus the humanity of Jesus includes struggle, trial, being put to the test. Second, we can make clear our own pre-understanding. What is meant by humanness? I mean that Jesus participated in the physical, emotional, intellectual-moral, spiritual, and historico-socio-cultural dimensions of our lives.²⁷ This statement contains five assertions which need to be refined. Yet, for the present, our experiences, intuitions, reflections, philosophical anthropology, and Scripture seem to support such an understanding.

Jesus' humanness means that he had a human body. The details of this body we do not know - height, weight, presence or absence of certain "defects" - but Jesus was a physically embodied human being.

Jesus also felt the kinds of feelings you and I feel.²⁸ We need not overstate the implications of this. But his feelings certainly included, given biblical testimony, *pain* (the passion narratives), *anger* (the cleansing of the Temple, Mk 11:15-19), *grief* (the death of Lazarus, Jn 11:32-38), *sadness* (weeping for Jerusalem, Lk 19:41-44; Gethsemane, Mt 26:37-39), *compassion* (the little children, Mt 19:13-14; healing two blind men, Mt 20:19-34), *affection* (e.g., for Lazarus, Jn 11:3,5,11,33,35-36, 38), and *joy* (Lk 10:21). In all he possessed a capacity to love and to suffer. Jesus' humanity was emotional as well as physical.

²⁷There are other ways in which one might speak in a general fashion about "humanness." Cf., Russell F. Aldwinckle, *More Than Man, A Study in Christology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976), 112-14; John Macquarrie, *In Search of Humanity, A Theological and Philosophical Approach* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), esp. chap. I; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 731-43.

²⁸Cf., Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sexuality and the Christian Tradition*, (Dayton: Pflaum Press, 1969). Tom Driver, "Sexuality and Jesus," *New Theology*, no. 3 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966), 118-32. William Phipps, *The Sexuality of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). John A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), esp. 36-98.

One of the more difficult questions is that of the human knowledge of Jesus.²⁹ To be human is to be finite and to develop within limits. One's capacity often exceeds one's actual knowledge, but even our capacity is limited. I shall never know all there is to know. Likewise, Jesus' participation in human modes of knowing and human intellectual activity indicated that he too needed to learn what he knew, that he learned from experience and reflection.

This is also true in the area of self-knowledge. He grew in an understanding of his mission or vocation. He had to trust in God and live at times by faith. His future was not always clear. This does not mean that he did not have a profound knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, nor that he was not extremely sensitive and perceptive in human situations. He did speak with authority. We need not determine the limits or extent of Jesus' knowledge here. We only need affirm that in his intellectual life, as in his physical and emotional life, Jesus was like us.

The question of Jesus' self-understanding is an important topic in New Testament Christology.³⁰ Did Jesus know that he was God? Did he think of himself as the Messiah? How did he understand his mission? We shall return to such questions in future chapters. Raymond Brown has spoken of Jesus' knowledge as a combination of normal ignorance and more than ordinary knowledge and perception.³¹ We cannot psychoanalyze Jesus, yet some things can be deter-

²⁹Piet Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, trans. Della Couling (New York: The Seabury Press, 1971), 123-35, discusses contemporary developments in theology concerning Jesus' earthly knowledge in relationship to the Scholastic view in which Jesus possessed the beatific vision while on earth. Raymond Brown's *Jesus, God and Man* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1967) is a biblical, although on some points dated, presentation devoted to different aspects of the knowledge of Jesus. Also see the bibliographical essay by Engelbert Gutwenger, "The Problem of Christ's Knowledge," *Who Is Jesus of Nazareth?*, Concilium, vol. II (New York: Paulist Press, 1965), 91-105.

³⁰E.g., the early study of Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, revised edition, trans. Shirley Guthrie and Charles Hall (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959). Also Reginald Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965).

³¹Raymond Brown, *Jesus, God and Man*, 45-49.

mined on the basis of the records available to us. For example, he saw himself as a prophet to Israel.

We simply affirm here that Jesus' human knowledge was not without limits, even in areas of vital interest to him. If he did foretell the fall of Jerusalem, this would have been no more than Jeremiah had done and was a perceptive analysis of the times.³² Although he sensed the betrayal of Judas, this may have been acute perception. Although he knew that death was in store for him, the destinies of the prophets of old as well as of John the baptizer would have been clues. Like us, Jesus had to study, grow in understanding, make moral decisions, and put the puzzle of life together for himself without all the pieces being in place.

Jesus was also like us in his need for faith and prayer.³³ We may at times lack faith or are even without it. Or perhaps we are not willing or able to persevere in prayer. Faith and prayer are still capacities of the human spirit. The same is true of the spiritual life of Jesus. For many of us it is difficult to affirm that there is more to our interior lives than psychic life alone, that spirit cannot be reduced to psychism, *pneuma* to *psyche*. Yet there is more to us than our biological and psychological (emotional and intellectual) dimensions alone. We also are "embodied spirits." Jesus manifests this human spirit, this capacity for self-transcendence, this capacity for contact with the Spirit of God, in his faith, prayer and preaching. Jesus participated in the spiritual and intellectual as well as emotional and physical aspects of human existence. Jon Sobrino, a contemporary Latin American theologian, writes that faith is "the key Old Testa-

³²Ibid., 68-70.

³³Schoonenberg writes, "Jesus does not speak to us primarily on the basis of a distinct foreknowledge, but on that of a trusting certainty concerning the victory of God and of God's Kingdom" (*The Christ*, 130). This shows the close tie between Jesus' knowledge and spiritual life. Often what is interpreted as infused knowledge may indeed be his extraordinary trust in God. See *The Christ*, 136-52. Also see G. E. Howard, "Notes and Observations on the Faith of Christ," *Harvard Theological Review* 60 (1967), 459-65. Also Martin Bober, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).

ment concept in terms of which Jesus understood himself." ³⁴

The Scriptures confirm Jesus' embodiment, feelings, perceptiveness, lack of complete knowledge, and reliance on faith and prayer. We must now consider the meaning of the historico-socio-cultural dimension of Jesus' life. Each of us has a history and an environment of which we are a part and which is a part of us. This does not mean that we cannot transcend cultural and historical realities. However, they are never left completely behind. They exert a determinative influence on us even as we do on them. To know someone is to know something of that history and social milieu, something of the past and present situation of the person. In reference to Jesus this means that we must have some knowledge of Palestinian and especially Galilean Judaism in the first century C.E., of early Judaism, the Judaism of the times of Jesus. ³⁵ To know it requires some understanding of Israelite and Judean history, the Hebrew Scriptures and post-biblical Jewish literature. We must know something of the development within Judaism in the first century, the world into which Jesus was born and in which he was raised. For, from a historical and cultural perspective, Jesus was a Jew.

There was also a proximate temporal and social milieu; his family, Mary, Joseph, and Nazareth. They raised him. Even in setting oneself over against aspects of one's familial background one is being formed by its influence. As a relational being, Jesus was the center of a network of varied

³⁴Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 85, also 79-145.

³⁵The Judaism of the New Testament world, the Judaism between 200 B. C. E. and 100 C. E., was a very formative period for the Jewish religion. It is difficult to describe the Judaism of this period in a concise expression. It comprises both Palestine and Diaspora. For many years the expression "Late Judaism" was used. If we take into consideration the whole history of Judaism, however, the Judaism in the time of Jesus was not late. "Late" reflects a Christian perspective which is often uninterested in the history of Judaism after 70 C. E. Today, realizing that Judaism itself is a post-exilic development, and that Judaism as we know it had its roots in the rabbinic Judaism of the Tannaitic age, the expression "Early Judaism" seems to describe more accurately the period of the New Testament world. It is the time of late Second Temple Judaism, but early Judaism nevertheless.

relationships who were formative in his earthly life and from whom he cannot be abstracted. To uproot Jesus from his context is to approach him docetically.

In the end, the humanity of Jesus must speak for itself. Our statements about the various dimensions of this man remain open to being challenged. We can feel comfortable with our general observations, however. They are confirmed by Scripture and not simply derived from our experience of sin. Yet all of these statements are open to revision. They are pre-conceptions open to question.

The issues of the humanity of Jesus and his identity with us really come down to one question. We want to know whether it was really as tough for him as for us, whether his search and struggle were real, whether he really knew what it is like to be one of us. To paraphrase a statement from Jeremy Bentham, "The question is not, Can he *reason*? nor Can he *talk*? but, Can he *suffer*?"³⁶ To this question Scripture and Tradition give an unequivocal answer (Heb 5:8). The question is not whether his core human nature was like ours, but whether his existential condition was. And it is his identity with this condition, our condition, to which the Scriptures give witness.

³⁶Jeremy Bentham was speaking here of ethics and the rights of animals. His text reads, "The question is not, Can they *reason* nor Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*? See *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 311 (chap. 17, par. I, sect. 4, n.1).