

*O wisest love! that flesh and blood
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.*

...

*And in the garden secretly,
And on the cross on high,
Should teach His brethren, and inspire
To suffer and to die.*

Divine ignorance: a study of the human knowledge of Jesus

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The seventeenth century English Anglican divine Thomas Ken wrote a poem, *Sion or Philothea*, some stanzas from which are now used as a marian hymn.¹ The first of these is,

Her virgin eyes saw God incarnate born
when she to Bethlehem came that happy morn.
How high her raptures then began to swell
none but her own omniscient Son can tell.

What does Ken mean by describing Mary's Son as omniscient? There is an uncontroversial (relative to the credal orthodoxy to which Ken subscribed) claim that could be being made by the passage. Mary's Son is God. And so *as God* Jesus knew, *in the manner proper to God*, all things, including truths concerning his human mother. On this reading we have simply a poetic affirmation of divine omniscience.

But there is another reading of the attribution of omniscience to Jesus.² According to this way of looking at things, Jesus *as a human being* is omniscient. This might seem incredible enough if we consider Jesus as a grown man: did he know, with his human mind, the future in detail? Did he know scientific or mathematical truths the public discovery of which lay in the distant future? Was his knowledge of the mental states of others comprehensive? But things at least seem decidedly more counter-intuitive if we consider the claim that Jesus, as a babe in arms, was omniscient as a human being. What could it be for a pre-linguistic infant with little experience of the world nonetheless to know,

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²In making distinctions between Jesus *qua* God and Jesus *qua* human one avenue, which has brevity in its favour, would be to deploy the conciliar language of *natures*. As in my [11] I will generally avoid this here. My reason is that, whilst I certainly affirm all that the councils intended to teach, I think that there has been a tendency within analytic theology to develop a metaphysics of nature according to which divine and human natures have in common something describable as 'being a nature'. I think that this unacceptably collapses the distinction between creating and creaturely being, and accordingly think other ways of talking are presently called for.

with his human mind, the laws of physics underwriting that world?

In spite of the incredulous stare such exalted claims about Jesus' human knowledge attract, they have found considerable support over the course of two millennia of Christian theologising. Good and faithful Christians, including central figures in the tradition (including, importantly for what follows, Aquinas), have claimed that Jesus' human knowledge was far more expansive in its remit than we would naturally be led to suppose, even if some of these thinkers fell short of claiming omniscience for Jesus *qua* human. This view, which I will describe as asserting Jesus' *superknowledge* (and which I'll define more precisely below), has received renewed attention of late from philosophical theologians, most notably in Pawls' discussion of what he terms *extended conciliar christology* [16].³

The argument of this book is that, for all its undoubted heritage the claim that Jesus possessed superknowledge is false. There are good philosophical reasons, so I will argue, that no human being could possess, with their human epistemic faculties, knowledge of this sort. Since Christian orthodoxy insists on the genuine humanity of Jesus we ought therefore to deny his possession of this kind of knowledge. More positively, I will argue that the mission of Jesus, his solidarity with suffering humanity and his redemptive work, is more congruous with his not possessing superknowledge than with the alternative. My conclusion, that as he walked this earth Jesus was ignorant of many truths, is then not one which I accept reluctantly, as forced on the thoughtful believer by philosophical argumentation, but rather flows from and sits naturally with a core Christian truth: that, in Jesus, God, the eternal Word, has lived a human life. Concerning the early years of that life, the evangelist Luke writes,

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.⁴

Increasing in wisdom certainly seems to involve growing in knowledge, and growing in knowledge seems in turn to require a significant prior ignorance. Luke's picture of the child Jesus, if this is right, concurs with the first reading of Ken's stanza discussed above. This child is not humanly omniscient, indeed like all of us he goes about the world, learning about things, and in the process coming to realise how ignorant he once was. And in so doing, I wish to add, he saves us.

1 Laying out the territory

In order to make this case it's going to be necessary to get clear about some concepts. We'll start with *knowledge*.

³Oliver Crisp's work also deserves mention here REFS

⁴Lk 2:52. All scripture quotations are from the NRSV.

1.1 Knowledge

There are different kinds of human knowledge.⁵ I know *how* to drive. I *know* my next-door neighbour. I know *that* every natural number has a unique prime decomposition. Knowledge-how and, what we might call, acquaintance knowledge (knowledge of persons and things)⁶ are of crucial importance to human life, but are not the primary focuses of this book. Rather our concern is with knowledge *that*, which I will often just term *knowledge*, where no confusion is likely to arise.

Knowledge that is of propositions, which is to say it is of the content of a that-clause, such as ‘that Boris Johnson is ridiculous’ or ‘that ZFC proves the existence of a limit cardinal’. For the purposes of this book, I remain neutral on the question as to whether there are any such entities as propositions, or whether proposition-talk is just a convenient manner of speaking. Philosophical theology in general cannot ignore this question, since there are pressing questions about how abstract objects, as propositions are supposed to be, relate to the creator God.⁷ One thin book can only do so much, however, and this topic is not on our present syllabus.

Our concern is instead with human knowledge of a kind that is extraordinary in its range. One example of such knowledge would be a human knower being omniscient, where we may define omniscience,

Omniscience: An agent S is omniscient if and only if for all true propositions P , S knows that P .

Omniscience, if it is genuinely possible at all, is the highest epistemic state possible. Those who hold that God *as God* is a propositional knower will, if they wish to sustain the classic affirmation of divine omniscience, affirm that God is omniscient in the sense just defined.⁸ Omniscience isn’t, however, the only remarkable kind of knowledge we might want to consider. Let’s use the term *superknowledge* for knowledge extended considerably beyond bounds of what could be obtained by empirical investigation, testimony and rational reflection. In particular, superknowledge obtains for a subject S if and only if:

- For any proposition P concerning events that are future relative to S , S knows that P .

⁵Some thinkers, notably Williamson and Stanley, have argued that know-how can be reduced to propositional knowledge [20]. I deny this, preferring the old view of Ryle [18,], since I think that propositional knowledge requires linguistic aptitude and that linguistic aptitude is, or at least requires a form of know-how (see Dummett [5,]), so that the reductive view involves us in a vicious regress. Little that follows turns on this.

⁶Marked out in French, for instance, as *connaître*, distinct from *savoir*.

⁷See van Inwagen in [] and the replies by Craig in [4] and [3]. For hints towards my preferred view, albeit focused on mathematical objects, see my review of Criag at [10].

⁸See for example Swinburne [21,]. Mackie concurs to the extent that the God whose existence he denies is omniscient in the sense defined [13,].

- For any proposition P falling within the remit of the sciences, S knows that P .

Note that S being omniscient entails S having superknowledge, although of course the converse does not hold. To the extent that the extension of ‘the future’ or ‘the sciences’ are vague, these necessary and sufficient conditions for superknowledge are concomitantly vague. But vague concepts can still be the subject matter of useful investigation. Certainly the two conditions outlined above capture much of the extraordinary knowledge the attribution of which to Jesus as a human knower has been discussed over the centuries. Accordingly, superknowledge will be the focus of this book.

There is a strategic merit to discussing superknowledge rather than omniscience. Those who wish to attribute omniscience to Jesus as a human knower thereby attribute superknowledge, so any argument that shows that no human knower could possess superknowledge, or that it is soteriologically or pastorally important that Jesus did not have this kind of knowledge, thereby also undermine the view that Jesus as a human being was omniscient.

This then is the territory which will be contested in this book: the question of whether Jesus as a human being, on this earth, about two thousand years ago,⁹ possessed superknowledge, where this is understood as a collection of propositional-attitude states, of knowings-that. For the sake of readability I will often, in what follows, omit phrases such as ‘as a human being’ in sentences like the previous one. It can be taken as read most of the time that it is Jesus’ human knowledge which is under discussion. Where there is a danger of confusion, I will specify whether it is divine or human knowledge with which we are concerned. The subject of Jesus’ *divine* knowledge will concern us in the section after next, but first some distinctions need to be made within the main subject matter of this book, his *human* knowledge.

1.2 The knowledge of Christ

How did Jesus come to know things? The obvious answer, which has the virtue of appearing to take seriously his genuine humanity, is: in the same ways that all of us do – by perceiving the world, by rational reflection, by testimony, by memory, and so on. Such an answer sits comfortably with the natural reading of Luke 2:52, quoted above. Writing about Christ’s human knowledge, Aquinas agrees that Jesus possessed knowledge arrived at through these kinds of ways, which he terms *acquired knowledge*,

It is written: ‘Whereas... He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered’, i.e. ‘experienced’, says a

⁹Jesus is, of course, still human (contrary to the implication of the old school assembly hymn, ‘humbled for a season’!) The reasons for the focus on his earthly life will become clear later, when attention turns to his solidaristic and saving work.

gloss. Therefore there was in the soul of Christ an empiric knowledge, which is acquired knowledge.¹⁰

But Christ's knowledge was not limited to that arrived at in these ways, thinks Aquinas. On the contrary, it extends beyond ordinary acquired knowledge in two ways. First, according to Aquinas, Christ during his earthly life enjoyed the Beatific Vision – the vision of God bestowed on the saints in glory. He 'knew God fully, even as he was man'.¹¹ That Christ enjoyed the Beatific Vision was for a long time the standard view amongst, at least, Catholic theologians. It fell from favour in the 20th century, not least because theologians were keen to emphasise the genuine humanity of Jesus, and found it difficult to reconcile this with the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision *whilst still on this earth*.¹² This process has been astutely documented by Simon Gaine in his *Did the Saviour See The Father?*, which also presents an argument against the more recent consensus and in favour of Aquinas' position [8].

Let us allow Gaine's conclusion; I do not wish to contribute here to the debate about Christ's enjoying the Beatific Vision on earth.¹³ For present purposes what is important is whether if Christ did enjoy the Beatific Vision this had consequences for his propositional knowledge favourable to the affirmation of superknowledge. For Aquinas it most certainly did.¹⁴ Since 'no beatified intellect fails to know in the Word whatever pertains to itself', argues Thomas, and since all things belong (in some sense) to Christ, it follows that Christ's intellect knows all things. 'All things' here, thinks Thomas, demands a narrow reading, since there are some things which are only potential and are known to the divine intellect, yet are not known by the human intellect of Christ by virtue of the Beatific Vision. To put the point in a more contemporary idiom, Christ's enjoying the Beatific Vision does not secure knowledge of all modal truths, and so does not secure omniscience. Still the Aquinean view is that Christ knows 'all things existing, at whatever time', which suffices for superknowledge.

If one is satisfied that the knowledge acquired through participating in the Beatific Vision is, in the first instance,¹⁵ propositional knowledge then the argument is superknowledge is swift: the blessed know what God is, and in knowing thus the simple divine reality, know truths about creatures through knowing God's own knowledge of creatures. Yet this seems in tension with the sound apophatic instinct that we do not know what God is,¹⁶ and as such cannot be

¹⁰STh III, q9a4, sc. The scriptural quotation is Hebrews 5:8.

¹¹STh III, q9a2, sc.

¹²The qualification is important: it has to be the case, according to Christian faith, that possessing the Beatific Vision is compatible with humanity, since every human being is called to that Vision.

¹³Although I am sympathetic to the view that he did.

¹⁴What follows discusses STh III, q10a2

¹⁵The qualification is so as not to rule out derivative knowledge-that, for example gained through reflecting on the fact that one is enjoying the Beatific Vision. See my discussion in [11].

¹⁶STh I, q3, pr.

in cognitive contact with so as to contain under our concepts even creaturely realities recognised through the entirely simple mind of their creator. To the objection against this instinct, that we cannot know *in this life* what God is, but that we will in the next (and that Christ's human mind, as beatifically illuminated, already knew this in this life), I replied in *Only the Splendour of Light*,

The case made in [earlier in the book] that we cannot say (and inter alia cannot know) what God is did not turn on anything peculiar to human beings in the present mortal life. Rather it was an eternal truth about God, [the doctrine of divine simplicity], and a constitutive fact about ourselves as rational agents, that the social practice of language is foundational for our thought, that led us to an apophatic conclusion. Why should these considerations cease to be operative eschatologically?[11,]

I drew then on work by Efrid and Worsley proposing that the knowledge gained in the Beatific Vision is not propositional knowledge, but knowledge of a person, a form of what was above called *acquaintance* [6]. This position, I held, is not acceptable as it stands, since acceptance of it commits us to believing that God is a person, which we ought to reject.¹⁷ We can, however, and ought to hold that the knowledge gained in the Beatific Vision is *sui generis* and non-propositional.¹⁸ On this basis, I will set aside the question of Christ's beatific knowledge for the rest of the book as having no bearing on the question of superknowledge.

It does not follow that there is no way in which Christ's human knowledge could have been extended beyond its natural capacities by divine action. Christian and Jewish tradition have recognised that certain people, prophets being a prime example, have been brought to know things by divine action apart from their natural epistemic capacities.¹⁹ So we can ask whether this kind of divinely

¹⁷As well as Chapter Eight of [11] see also [9] and [], as well as the important distinction between God as *personal* and God as *a person* in [22].

¹⁸In the *prima secundae*, Aquinas argues that the speculative intellect ought to be engaged in the Beatific Vision since it belongs to our highest good for this faculty to be engaged. In [11] I show how the motivation of this argument can be honoured whilst maintaining that the knowledge gained in the Beatific Vision is non-propositional. This is done by appealing to the corporate nature of our eschatological destiny and the possibility of derivative knowledge arising from our shared experience of God. I do not see how these considerations could help the person who wants to argue from Christ's enjoying the Beatific Vision on earth to his possessing superknowledge.

¹⁹I note, to set aside beyond this footnote, a concern issuing from the view that internalist justification is a necessary condition for knowledge. Suppose that *S*'s (supposed) knowledge that *P* is divinely infused; how can *S* possess internalist justification for her belief that *P*? There are things that could be said here: reflection on the belief might bring *S* to suppose that divine origin is the best explanation for it, or the phenomenal quality of the (occurrent) belief state might indicate its origin; or it might be properly basic in the foundationalist sense, and thus either self-justifying or exempt from the justification requirement (depending on how the relationship between internalism and foundationalism is worked out). Dispensing with the

wrought extension of knowledge took place in the case of Christ.

Aquinas describes type of knowledge under consideration as *infused*, and not only holds that Christ possessed infused knowledge but that it was extensive in its remit. Addressing the question whether Christ knew all things in virtue of his infused knowledge, Thomas writes,

...by it the soul of Christ knew: First, whatever can be known by force of a man's active intellect, e.g. whatever pertains to human sciences; secondly, by this knowledge Christ knew all things made known to man by divine revelation, whether they belong to the gift of wisdom or the gift of prophecy, or any other gift of the Holy Ghost; since the soul of Christ knew these things more fully and completely than others.²⁰

On this view Christ has infused superknowledge. This then will be the view against which what follows is directed: that during his earthly life, by divine infusion, Christ possessed, in respect of his human mind, superknowledge. Jesus was significantly ignorant.²¹

1.3 Divine knowledge

Jesus was ignorant as a human being. And therefore, by the *communicatio idiomatum*, God the eternal Word, as a human being and in respect of his human mind, was ignorant. Thus the title of the present book. The salvific importance of this divine ignorance will be the topic of the latter chapters. Whilst Jesus is, so I claim, ignorant with respect to his human knowledge, he is omniscient with respect to his divine knowledge; *as God* Jesus knows all things in the manner proper to God. The situation just described can seem to give rise to philosophical difficulties. For it appears that we are claiming of a single subject, *S*, both that,

For all true propositions *P*, *S* knows that *P*.

And that,

It is not the case that, for all true propositions *P*, *S* knows that *P*.

position that every knowledge state is a belief state – as in [25] and [12] – would make things much easier here, but I do not find that view attractive.

²⁰STh III, q11a1, co.

²¹Authors have objected to using the word 'ignorant' of Christ, preferring instead FINISH. I do not follow that route here, partly because the shock value of 'ignorant' draws our attention to God's solidarity in Christ with humanity's epistemic suffering. There *is* a pejorative sense of 'ignorant', at least in British and Irish English, and that is not intended here. But we are familiar enough in theology with the concept of *inculpable ignorance*, so it doesn't seem as though the usage is bound to mislead.

This is a flat contradiction. So something must be wrong.²² Matters are not helped by adding qualifying clauses: ‘with *S*’s divine mind’ to the first, and ‘with *S*’s human mind’ to the second. It is persons who know things, not minds, and whilst there might be circumstances in which it might seem intelligible to see that one and the same subject both knows and does not know the same proposition – imagine the analyst’s patient who knows (unconsciously) that he desires his next door neighbour but does not know this (consciously) – these seem distant from the christological case.²³ Here we are supposed to have two minds, at least as christological doctrine is usually, although not helpfully, stated, but one knower. One and the same subject, it seems the christologist who rejects Jesus’ human omniscience is committed to saying, both knows and does not know the very same proposition (at the same time). What criterion for attributing knowledge to a subject could possibly bring us to this conclusion? Not only does talk of the subject having two minds not obviously help, it reinforces how philosophically problematic the territory has become – it is as though a metaphysical conjuring trick were required, somehow stuffing two minds into one person. But isn’t it constitutive of being a person, we might complain, that one only has one mind. Indeed what would it be for one to have two minds – as opposed to a single divided mind, or a mind beset with a dissociative disorder?

The mistake here is in thinking that the word ‘mind’ functions univocally when talking of Christ’s human and divine minds. The man Jesus possesses a human mind, a complex set of mental faculties capable of making judgements, willing and so on. God does not *have* a mind. For the classical, apophatic, theism which I take to be orthodox Christian belief, and for which I have argued elsewhere [11], to the extent that we may properly talk of a divine mind, God, being perfectly simple, just *is* the divine mind. God altogether lacks psychic (or any other) complexity, so God’s mind is not the same kind of thing as a human mind (or indeed any kind of thing, since by divine simplicity, the distinction between kind and instance is not applicable in the case of God). O’Collins emphasises the point,

[I]n the dyad divine-human mind, we are not faced with members that are equal and on the same level. The divine mind simply does not think in the propositional and discursive way a created, human mind does. The divine mind’s unlimited knowledge sets it quite apart from the limited knowledge of any human mind. There exists an infinite epistemological gap between the divine mind and any human mind, including that of Christ himself. His two minds exist at infinitely different levels, given the infinite qualitative difference between the uncreated mind and the created mind of the incarnate Word.[15, 258]

²²There have been moves of late to do christology in the light of dialetheism, the position that there are true contradictions [17]. I take it that dialetheism is false (and not also true!)

²³Even in this case, I myself am more moved to say that the patient *knows*, and there is no sense in which he doesn’t know; it’s just that he doesn’t know that he knows.

That divine knowledge is not propositional, a matter of forming a complex judgement about a distinct subject matter, provides the way out of our apparent dilemma. For whatever we are claiming when we say that God is omniscient, we cannot, if we are to be consistent with the classical theology, be claiming that God knows that P , for all true P .²⁴ So, in particular, whatever we are claiming when we claim that Jesus, as God, is omniscient, we are not saying something which leads us into the contradiction outlined above.

But what are we claiming then? We can say a very little. God is immediately present to God's self, and may in this sense be said to know himself, and all things as possible in respect of herself. God moreover knows all creatures as their creator; in this case God's knowledge of creatures is not distinct from God's creating them. It is not the case that first God creates a red rose and then, by a distinct act, comes to know that the rose is red. As Aquinas makes the point, 'the knowledge of God is to all creatures what the knowledge of the artificer is to things made by his art.'²⁵ He has, at this point, already quoted Augustine in his support, 'Not because they are, does God know all creatures spiritual and temporal, but because he knows them, therefore they are.'²⁶

In all cases, then, there is an immediacy and a non-discursiveness, about God's knowledge.²⁷ Of necessity there are severe limits to how we may truthfully speak of this knowledge, because we cannot know the simple divine reality. Still, it suffices for our needs that the divine knowledge is qualitatively different from creaturely knowledge, and so that there is no easy route from the denial of superknowledge of Jesus to a contradiction, given only the affirmation of divine omniscience.

2 Incarnation and Docetism

Why might anyone attribute superknowledge to Jesus? In some way the answer will flow from *who* the person holds Jesus to be, and so (in the usual course of things, at least) from the doctrine of the Incarnation. A tendency to associate an extraordinary level of human knowledge with Jesus' being the divine Word made flesh is already present in the Fourth Gospel.²⁸ We should, how-

²⁴This in spite of the fact that this is how omniscience is routinely presented, as part of something called 'classical theism'. A view which achieves prominence in the 20th century and excludes thinkers such as Aquinas and Maimonides seems to me a poor candidate for the description 'classical'.

²⁵STh Ia, q10a8, co. So Herbert McCabe writes, 'Jesus' knowledge of history, as Son of God, was no different from the existence of the world; it was not in the same ball game as what he learnt as man'[14, 59].

²⁶De Trin xv.

²⁷This goes *inter alia* for God's knowledge of propositions, if indeed there are such things. God knows propositions by creating them; his knowledge, even of propositions, is non-propositional.

²⁸Especially at Jn 1:47-8; 4:16-8; 4:39; 6:6; 6:61 (marginal, but nb 'knowing in himself'); 6:64; 6:71; 11:10-13; 12:33;13:3-4; 13:21-6; 13:38; 16:4.

ever, be on guard against reading the relevant texts naively: the gospel is not a modern-style biography, still less a psychological profile of Jesus, it is narrative theology.²⁹ We cannot infer from the impressive epistemic capacities of the Johannine Jesus that the pre-Easter, historical, Jesus had superknowledge. More generally, we cannot infer from the Incarnation that Jesus had superknowledge.

Herbert McCabe makes this last point point forcefully in his review of *The Myth of God Incarnate*, a 1977 collection of essays which sent shock waves through anglophone Christianity by taking aim at (what the essayists took to be) orthodox christology,³⁰

Somewhere in the back of the minds of these authors lurks the idea that the doctrine of the incarnation ought to tell us what Jesus was like, or what it was like to be Jesus. ('Orthodoxy has never been able to give this idea any content' – Hick; 'The empirical content of what is understood to be involved in the incarnation' – Wiles.) Of course it does not; it does not tell us of his life but of the *significance* of his life. It authorises us to say, for example, because of the life of Jesus, that our God was whipped and spat upon and that God has experienced total failure and death itself. [14, 58]

He goes on to say,

A prominent symptom of misunderstanding the doctrine of the incarnation as telling us what, empirically, Jesus was or is like is confusion about Jesus' human knowledge. I know that large claims have been made for Jesus' human knowledge, not only by Professor Mascall who is quoted here with proper disapproval by Wiles... but by many other Christians, including St Thomas Aquinas, but none of these claims have any logical connection with the incarnation. They seemed 'appropriate' to Mascall and to Aquinas; they do not seem appropriate to Maurice (or to me).³¹

Nor do they seem appropriate to me. But it does seem to me that many Christians are prone to think there is a logical connection between the Incarnation and Christ's possession of superknowledge. This is because there is a pull towards a docetist understanding of the Incarnation, according to which Christ's humanity is not genuine or is less than complete. In particular there is a live temptation towards Apollinarianism, the view that Christ lacks a human *psyche*.³² If the only mind Christ has is divine, then, with respect to the only

²⁹Of enduring usefulness here is the Pontifical Biblical Commission's *Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels* [2]. See also [7, §21].

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³¹Wiles quotes Mascall's FINISH

³²This temptation is, I think, especially pressing is one is a substance dualist about mind and body. If the normal state of human beings consists in a spiritual 'bit' inhabiting a material 'bit' (at least until death), then it is all too easy to suppose that what happens at the Incarnation is that the Word takes the place of the spiritual 'bit' in one human being.

epistemic faculty Christ possesses, he is omniscient. And if one is prone to think about the Incarnation in terms of the divine Word inhabiting a shell of human flesh, devoid of a distinctively human psychology, then to deny superknowledge of Christ is to deny the Incarnation.

Against this, Chalcedon's insistence that Jesus is truly God and truly human, with the integrity and fullness of both humanity and divinity preserved, has to be upheld.³³ To say that Jesus is God is as yet to say nothing about his humanity, except in the Pickwickian sense that one is saying *whose* human life it is that is lived in Jesus, namely the eternal Word's. God is not an item in the universe such that we can neatly circumscribe characteristically God-like effects or features and infer: well, *of course*, since Jesus is God, he *must* have been like this. Rowan Williams makes the point well, in the context of a discussion of Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard and christology,

[T]he divinity of Christ is not an item of information about him. Divinity is not a predicate that can be added to the sum total of what is true of Jesus as a human individual ('Jewish, male, brown-eyed, divine...'). His divinity is thus not something that can figure in any argument about how we should respond to him; and the theologian is not free to use the affirmation of divinity as any sort of explanation of either certain facts in Jesus' life or of the response of faith itself. [24, 87-8]

We cannot simply infer a good account of Christ's knowledge from the doctrine of the Incarnation. But that does not mean that as believers in the Incarnation, with our belief situated as it properly should be against the wider perspective of God's saving work in Christ, there is nothing that can be said to relate our affirmation that the Word was made flesh to claims about that enfleshed Word's human knowledge.³⁴ One aspect of Christ's work in revealing God's love for her fallen creation which received a renewed emphasis in the bloody twentieth century was its instancing *divine solidarity with suffering humanity*. In Jesus, so a succession of theologians from Bonhoeffer through to liberation, black, and feminist theologians have insisted, God is revealed as taking the side of the suffering and oppressed through being among us as one who suffers. Anastasia Scrutton, emphasising the pastoral importance of this insight, writes of Jesus as a 'fellow sufferer who understands', a term she takes over from Whitehead [19, 165] [23, 351].

After dealing with some conceptual and epistemological difficulties attaching to the proposal that any human being possesses superknowledge, I will draw on this revived emphasis on God's solidarity in Christ with suffering humanity, arguing that there is distinctively epistemic suffering, and that Christ cannot have undergone this if he possessed superknowledge, to the detriment of his

³³DS .

³⁴Jn 1:18

genuine identification with human pain. It is therefore, in a thomistic turn of phrase, not *fitting* that Christ enjoyed superknowledge. I will go on to suggest further that there is soteriological value in Christ's real ignorance, both in that he is an exemplar of a human being growing in knowledge, to the glory of God, and also because in assuming our diachronically-active epistemic faculties, and living as a human being a life in which these faculties functioned properly in relation to the world, the divine Word redeems our epistemic life. What is not assumed, after all, is not healed.³⁵

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