CHAPTER III
THE NATURE OF INCARNATION IN THE NT

Our chief concern in this chapter is to answer the question: what is incarnation? A fairly satisfactory answer to this question implies the treatment of topics like the fact of incarnation, the 'how' of incarnation and the nature of God-incarnate. Since the nature of a reality or an action is understood also in terms of its purpose, and since the purpose of incarnation will be treated in another chapter, the present chapter is bound to be incomplete.

As has been mentioned in the first part, Christfact is intimately bound up with Christ-value, and so we shall begin this chapter with a sort of biographical sketch of the life of Christ which will serve us as a background for our further inquiries into the nature of incarnation and of God-incarnate. The second section will be devoted to the study of some of the main texts from the NT which can give us some idea about the nature of incarnation. What are the experiences that led the writers of the NT affirm the doctrine of incarnation? The third section will try to answer this question. Some philosophical reflections will be made on the data provided by the NT on the nature of incarnation, in the final section of this chapter.

A. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE CHRIST-FACT

When the empiricist concept of history was considered as the last word on it, when the word 'historicity' meant the description
of events in chronological sequence with photographic accuracy without any subjective participation, when an accurate chronicler was taken for a historian, there were some scholars who affirmed that nothing "historically reliable" could be known about the life of Christ.¹ A philologist like J.M. Allegro could ruin his reputation by saying that Jesus' was the secret designation of a hallucinatory fungus, Fly-Agaric (Amanita Muscaria), supposedly used in the rites of the first Christians.² Today the picture has very much changed. It is not only because the names of persons and places described in the NT are reliably identified through other sources of inquiry, not only because of certain informations about Jesus Christ could be reliably learned from non-Christian historians like Pliny, Tacitus and Eusephus who were more or less contemporaries to Christ, but also because, or rather chiefly because of a more realistic and humanly rational understanding of history began to oust the empiricistic concept. Today practically all the great biblical scholars agree that we can know quite a lot of the Christ-fact from the NT itself.³ Our concern here is not to get involved in any of the historical questions which have been briefly dealt with in the first part, but rather to bring forward some information about the birth, childhood, public life, death and resurrection of Christ.

1) Birth and Childhood

Only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke furnish us with some information about the life of Christ before his public life. Their
descriptions too are very sketchy, symbolic and arranged to suit certain themes or doctrines. This ideological preoccupation and kerigmatic interest are especially obvious in Matthew. Both give the genealogies of Christ (Mt 1:1; 16; Lk 3:23-38) as in the biographies of other great men, showing that Christ was a descendant of King David. The Pseudo-Gospels, known as the Apocryphal Gospels, give very attractive and picturesque descriptions about the birth of Jesus and his childhood. For instance, according to the Gospel of Thomas (21:1) the child Jesus makes clay sparrows which fly away. But the canonical Gospels (i.e., the Gospels officially recognized as sacred) with which we are concerned, are very sober in describing the miraculous and try to avoid the sensational.

One of the scenes in the Gospel of Luke which has caused much devotion and inspired some great art-pieces is that of the annunciation by the divine messenger Gabriel to Mary about her virginal conception of the future Messiah. The angel said after saluting Mary:

Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the house of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end (Lk 1:31-33)

Of course Mary was betrothed to Joseph according to the Jewish custom. But both might have decided to remain without exercising their marital rights. When Mary asks the angel as to how this could
happen expressing her virgin-status, he tells her that there is nothing impossible to God (Lk 1:37). Matthew affirms Mary's virginal conception through another incident (Mt 1:18-21). When Joseph saw Mary pregnant he decides to divorce her informally. But an angel tells him in a dream: "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20).

Luke gives a rather brief description about the birth of Jesus, in Bethlehem, known as the town of David, in a manager (2:1-20). He starts by mentioning about the proclamation of a decree by Caesar Augustus who ruled over the Roman empire from 30 B.C. to 14 A.D. Everybody was supposed to go to their ancestral town for registering their names. Luke describes:

So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manager because there was no room for them at the inn (Lk 2:4-8).

About the time between his infancy and his public life at the age of thirty, there is no mention, in the Gospels except of a small incident (Lk 4:1-50). At the age of twelve Jesus got lost in the crowd in Jerusalem during the Paschal festival. After much searching Mary and Joseph find him discussing with the learned
religious man in Jerusalem. When he was asked why he stayed away from them he said: "Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?" (Lk 2:49). Here Jesus asserts that though they are his 'Parents' in truth he belongs to God, and his real Father is God, and the purpose of his life on earth is to do the will of his Father as he will be continually telling his disciples and others later on.

2) His Public Life

One of the persons connected with the life of Christ was John the Baptist, a cousin of Jesus. John lived a very ascetic life, and was preaching the message of repentance and was baptizing the people at the river Jordan as a sign of repentance and inner purification (Jn 1:19-51). John's function was to prepare the way for Christ. He said: "I baptize you with water, but someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Lk 3:16). On a particular day when Jesus too stood in the line with other people to be baptized, John said: "It is I who need baptism from you; he said, and yet you come to me!" But Jesus replied, "Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands!" (Mt 3:14-15). When Jesus came out of the water, the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove and voice was heard from heaven saying: "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him" (Mt 3:17). With this proclamation by the Father Jesus begins his public life to establish God's kingdom on earth.
Like the other Rabbis of Judaism Jesus too chooses some disciples. They were twelve, representing the twelve tribes of the Jews (Mk 3:13-19 and parallels). He moves from place to place town to town preaching the message of the "Kingdom of God" (Mk 1:14, 29, 39; 3:20; 5:1, 23, 38; 6:1, 53; 7:31; 8:10, 22; 9:23 and parallels). He often retires to the desert to pray (Mk 1:35, 45; 6:31). Usually he went about accompanied by his disciples (Mk 1:13, 28, 38; 2:15, 23; 3:7, 6:1, 45; etc.). He did not have a fixed house to dwell in permanently (Lk 9:58).

Jesus had a special love for the poor, the oppressed and the despised. His disciples were illiterate fishermen (Cf Jn 1:35-51). The Jews despised the tax-collectors known as the Publicans because they served the oppressive Roman regime. Christ did not mind to eat with these ostracized people (Mt 9:10-13) and to be called a friend of these outcasts (Mt 11:19). He had a special sympathy for the sinners, and was called also as the friend of sinners (Mt 11:19). When the Pharisees and the self-righteous elders asked Jesus to prescribe punishment for an adulterous woman Jesus said: "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (Jn 8:7). When he was accused of being friendly with the sinners by the self-righteous Pharisees his answer with certain amount of sarcasm was that. "It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick" (Mt 9:12). Most of his miracles like healing the lepers (Lk 5:12-14) giving sight to the blind (Jn 9:1-37; Mt 20:29-34) giving life to the only son of a widow
(Lk 7:11-17) and multiplying the loaves (Mt 14:13-21 and parallels) were the result of his love and compassion for the suffering people. He in fact washed the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:1-15) a service which the slaves used to do. When Jesus preached that there is only one commandment namely that of love, love for God and love for one's neighbour (Mt 22:34-40), when he time and again insisted on the need of brotherly love (Cf Mt 7:1-5; Jn 13:13-14) especially through brotherly correction (Mt 18:15-17) and through forgiveness (Mt 7:12-15; 18:21-35) he had lived this doctrine in his own life perfectly.

He was opposed to empty ritualism. When he was accused of breaking the law of the Sabbath for doing some acts of kindness he said that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27) showing thereby the importance of the spirit rather than the letter of the law (Cf Mt 15:1-9) and parallels. He insists on inner purification rather than outward show (Mt 15:10-20). Jesus strongly opposed the hypocrisy and outward show of the Pharisees (Mt 23:1-36) and called them "whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of corruption (Mt 23:27).

His insistence on the equality of all men before God, his attack on empty ritualism and pharisaic hypocrisy, his authoritative way of teaching even correcting the greatest of Jewish law-givers, Moses (Cf Mt 5:20-48), his claim of divine authority etc. lead him to a number of controversies with the representatives of the religious establishment (Mk 2:13-3:6; Mt 9:1-17; 12:1-14; Lk 5:12 -
6:11; Jn 7-9 etc.). They began to plot to do away with him.

3) Death and Resurrection

All the four Gospels describe at length (Mt 26-27; Mk 14-15; Lk 22-23; Jn 18-19) the arrest, condemnation, sufferings and death of Jesus. He had already foretold that he would be falsely accused and would be condemned to death (Mt 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 17-23). He was betrayed by one of his own disciples called Judas (Mt 26:47-50). When Jesus was arrested the disciples deserted him and ran away (Mt 26:56). He was condemned both by the Jewish religious authority (Mt 26:57-66) and by the political authority (Mt 27:11-26). The Roman governor Pontius Pilate publicly announced that Jesus was innocent, but for fear of being accused before the Roman emperor he condemns Jesus to be crucified, a punishment never given to the Roman citizens but only to exceptionally notorious criminals without the Roman citizenship. Throughout his sufferings Jesus remained silent except on such occasions as to console the women weeping on his behalf (Lk 23:28) or to entrust his mother to his disciple John (19:26-27). On the cross Jesus prayed: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46) he breathed his last. There were natural repercussions at the death of Jesus like earthquake and the splitting of rocks (Mt 27:51-54).

B.M.C Parekh in his A Hindu's Portrait of Jesus Christ considers Jesus' death as one of the most ignominious types pointing out such features as that it was a condemnation both by the religious and political authorities, and that it was the result of the betrayal of one of his disciples. How did this man who had such
a betrayal, such a condemnation and such a death come to be worshipped by millions of people for the centuries to come? Parekh contrasts Christ's utter failure in his death with the glory of being worshipped by the "entire White Race", by being recognized as "one of the greatest of prophets" by men of other religions, and by winning the wholehearted dedication of millions of men and women down the centuries. He also points out how the "spirit of Jesus" had been the cause of "many of the greatest philanthropic movements" including the abolition of slavery and polygamy. He gives the following explanation:

All this and much more can be cited as witness to the glory that surrounds the figure and spirit of Jesus to-day. We may contrast it with the shame and agony of his crucifixion, and ask ourselves again whether we do not see here the greatest miracle performed by God Himself on our globe. Here we find the true Resurrection of Jesus, and it has been so far the greatest instrument in the raising of Humanity to what may well be called Divine Humanity.

Without resurrection the life and death of Jesus and the Jesus-movement that followed his death would remain unintelligible. All the four writers of the Gospels (usually called Evangelists) affirm the resurrection of Christ and his various apparitions to his disciples in different places (Mt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24; Jn 20-21). The resurrection of Christ is the central theme also of most of the other books of the NT especially of the Pauline writings. Paul would say that "if Christ had not been raised, then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless" (1 Cor. 15:14). The
finding of the tomb empty on the third day was attested by the Evangelists without explaining the nature of the resurrection.

Bruce Valler rightly remarks:

As Matthew 28:11-15 shows clearly, an empty tomb of itself was an ambiguous fact that could be interpreted in various ways.... On the other hand, a tomb that was not empty would not be ambiguous at all: It would stand in irrefutable witness against those who held that resurrection faith. It would be difficult to imagine how Christianity with its belief in a resurrected Christ could have survived a single day in Jerusalem had there been a tomb there to which men might point as the occupied last place of Jesus of Nazareth.13

D. TEXTS INDICATIVE OF THE NATURE OF INCARNATION

Here we shall bring forward some of the texts which can give us some idea about the nature of incarnation without giving elaborate commentaries. Except for brief explanations and comparisons no serious reflections will be made on these texts. First we shall cite some texts which seem to speak of the 'how' of incarnation. Then a few texts will be given to get further light on the nature of God-incarnate.

1) Texts Indicative of the 'How' of Incarnation

We shall start with St. Luke's description of the annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel about the divine child to be born from her (Lk 1:26-38). When Mary asked the angel how it would be possible for her who was a virgin and who would like to remain a
virgin for the rest of her life. The angel quells her apprehensions saying: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow." (Lk 1:35). The conception would take place by the "coming upon" of the Holy Spirit (pneuma again, without the article) and by the "overshadowing" by the "Power" (dynamis) of the Most High. The "spirit" without the article can be translated as a divine dynamic force. In that case, the second subject "the power of the Most High" is practically the same as the Holy Spirit. According to WW D, dynamis (power) is used to signify the divine power in the ancient Greek literature. The rendering "the Holy Spirit which is the power of the Most High will come upon you and overshadow you" does not seem to be far wide off the mark.

What is obvious here is the presence of the power of God in the incarnation. Matthew too speaks of the conception by Mary which took place "by the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20).

This passage reminds us of BG 4:6 where the nature of avatāra is described. In the BG it is by the ātmamāya and in the NT by the overshadowing of the Power (dynamis) of God, the Spirit of God. Is there anything in the NT equivalent to the prakṛti of the Lord having sway over which the Lord takes his birth? Certainly the incarnation is a descent which is the result of a divine decision. It is not out of the necessity of the divine nature. In the BG the prakṛti functions as a regulative principle without however imposing any necessity on the Lord's freedom. Does incarnation in the NT imply any such regulative, archetypal
principle? Can the Johannine logos be compared with the Prakrti?

This leads us to the second text which can shed further light on the nature of incarnation.

In the beginning was the Word (logos); the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him...The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:1-2, 14).

According to this text, it is the logos of God who becomes flesh (sarx) who incarnates (in + caro(flesh) - incarnation - enfleshment) himself. In the first chapter of this part we have already dealt with the meaning of the term 'logos' in the NT, showing how it was influenced both by the Hebraic and by the Hellenistic thought.

R.E. Brown gives the various meanings of the 'logos' both in the Greek and in the Hebrew religio-philosophical tradition. A close study of this concept makes one see that the function of the Gita-Prakrti in creation and in avatara is very similar to that of the Johannine Logos in creation, Johannine logos understood as the pre-existing Christ. The BG does not say that it was the Prakrti of the Lord who became an avatarin; but on the basis of the Gita-Sankhya ontology we can say that the human body (manusim tanum) of the Lord is the external manifestation of his higher Prakrti. In the BG it is the Lord who becomes an avatarin and in the NT it is the logos who is God and who becomes incarnate. Since we have set
have not discussed the matter with greater length and depth, we shall keep the above statements on striking a similarity between Prakrti and logos as suggestive and tentative. What is to be noted in the above Johannine text is that apart from the Cynicism of the Most High here one more element is 'added', namely the logos of God which was "with God and which was God". Hence, this text further sheds light on the Lukan text 'with which we began.

Now we shall cite a few passages from St. Paul which can further clarify and deepen our idea of incarnation in the NT. The first passage that comes to our mind is the Christological hymn in Phil 2:6-11:

His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The new insight this text gives to us is that whereas the other texts spoke only of the descent aspect this text stresses both the descent and the ascent aspects of incarnation. This text also brings out the idea of truly becoming man by the expression of emptying himself (ekenosen). The JB in the foot-note comments on the expression 'emptying himself': "this is not so much a
reference to the fact of incarnation as to the way it took place. What Jesus freely gave up was not his divine nature, but the glory to which his divine nature entitled him, and which had been his before the incarnation, Jn 17:5, and which 'normally speaking would have been observable in his body (cf the transfiguration, Mt 17:1-8)." The ascent is expressed as the entry into the position of glory and power expressed in his new name which is 'lord' 'Kyrios' (Lord) is the Greek rendering of Adonai, the Hebrew name for God indicative of infinite power and majesty.

The following Pauline verse too expresses both the descent and ascent aspects of incarnation:

This news is about the Son of God who, according to the human nature he took (kata sarka = according to the flesh), was a descendent of David; it is about Jesus Christ our Lord who, in the order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness that was in him, was proclaimed Son of God in all his power through his resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:3-5).

Paul first speaks of the pre-incarnational nature of the Son, the second person of the Trinity. Then his birth in a normal human lineage is expressed. Then by his resurrection he ascends to be in the divine glory and power. In Gal 4:4 Paul stresses how the Divine Son was born as the son of a human mother and lived as a Jew under the Jewish law.

In all the texts cited above, the aspect of divine descent is fully brought out especially where the pre-incarnational state of the Logos or of the Son of God is emphasized. There is an
equally strong stress on the taking up fully the human conditions of man by the strong expressions of becoming flesh (Jn 1:14 and Rom 1:3) or of emptying himself of the divinity to take up the human condition (Phil 2:7) in its fullness. There is, however a text in the letter to the Hebrews where the human condition accepted by the Son of God is expressed in precise terms:"

Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must never let go of the faith that we have professed. For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin (4:14-15).

Leaving aside other doctrines of this text what is to be noted is that Jesus, the Son of God, was subject to all the human trials, tribulations and temptations. The only difference this passage gives is that he was not under the bondage of sin (Khoris hamartias)

2) How Do the NT Writers Designate Jesus?

The name 'God' is understood quite differently by a child, a moderately educated adult and by a specialist in philosophy in spite of certain common features in their understanding. The intensity of the understanding of the designation 'Prime Minister' by a university student in New Delhi and by an illiterate tribal from Madhya Pradesh would be very different. The attribute 'Mahatma' given to Gandhiji would 'mean' quite different to an educated
Indian and to an educated Russian. From these examples what we want to point out is that just by considering the attributes or name given by the writers of the NT to Jesus, we cannot fully understand as to what these names did mean for them. By knowing the religio-historical background of the writers themselves and the historical and linguistic or philological background of the names concerned we can know something more or less definitely as to what Jesus meant for them, what they thought about Jesus. But such a consideration is far beyond the scope of our study and of this chapter.

We have already seen as to what the designations of Son of Man, Messiah, Servant of Yahweh and Word meant for the NT writers. And through these designations we can have certain vague ideas as to what Jesus Christ meant for them, and some ideas, even vaguer still, as to what Jesus was in his 'ontological make up', in his 'nature'. Here three more designations 'Lord', 'Son of God' and 'God' will be dealt with. The more designations we study and consider cumulatively the nearer we will be to the person to whom such designations are given.

a) The God-incarnate as Lord

The Greek original for 'Lord' is 'Kyrios'. As we have pointed out earlier especially in connection with 'Word', here too we have the example of the communication of Semitic thought (Hebrew and Aramaic) through the Hellenistic categories and thought-patterns to the Graeco-Roman world. 'Kyrios' had a secular meaning in the
sense of 'master' 'owner' etc. In the context of emperor worship Roman emperor was designated in Greek by 'Kyrios Kaisar'. 'Kyrios' was used mostly in the religious sense as the Sanskrit term 'Prabhu'. Bruce Vawter points out an ancient Greek inscription where the goddess Isis is designated by the feminine form Kyria of kyrios.  

The Biblical scholars point out that 'kyrios' must be taken more in the Hebrew sense than in the Greek. In the Jewish tradition the name of Yahweh was not used in prayer assemblies out of reverence, and was replaced by the name Adonai which means 'lord'. In the Greek OT (LXX version) 'Adonai' was translated as 'Kyrios' 'Mar' is the Aramaic equivalent of 'Kyrios'. One of the oldest formulas used in the earliest Christian communities is still kept in its Aramaic form in the different translations of the NT, out of reverence for this formula. The formula is 'Maranatha' (1 Cor. 16:22; Apoc 22:20; of Rom 13:12; 1 Cor 11:26; Jm 5:8; 1 Pet 4:7) which could mean either in the indicative mood 'Our Lord comes' or in the imperative 'Come our Lord'. The Christian religious document known as the Didache, belonging to the first century, uses this expression. If anyone is holy, let him advance; if anyone is not let him be converted. Maranatha!  

This formula expressed the longing of the Christian communities for the second coming of Christ.

As in the Greek background, in the NT too there are occasions where Jesus is designated as 'Lord' as a title of authority or out of respect in the sense of 'Mister'. Cf. Mk 11:3; Mt 7:21; Jn 13:13).
But there are numerous other instances in the NT where this designation is given to Jesus to express his divinity. Jesus as Lord was one of the ways of confessing their faith in Jesus. St. Peter, on Pentecost Sunday, filled with the Holy Spirit, addressed the crowd quoting Ps. 110:1 where the Messiah-king is said to be seated at the "right hand of God", identifying Christ with this person. He then concludes: "For this reason the whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). In Rom 10:9 Paul says: "If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved". (Cf also 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9).

Jesus is directly addressed in prayer calling him 'Lord' (2 Cor 12:8; 1 Thes 3:12; 2 Thes 3:12 ff). About the extension of Christ's lordship Cullmann says:"

The realm of Christ's lordship is much larger than that of the Church. Literally no element of creation is excluded from it: 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Mt 28:19); all creatures 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth' must confess Christ as Lord (Phil 2:10); God was pleased (through him to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven' (Col 1:20).

The texts we have referred to are just samples among numerous other texts which speak of Christ's lordship. What is to be especially noted is that this title is such that according to St. Paul one cannot
confess it in faith unless one is enlightened by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). Hence, according to the NT the Lordship attributed to Christ is something preterhuman, something divine. Rightly B. Vawter remarks:

Lord thus survived as the most content-filled of the NT Christological titles and the most meaningful. When Paul utters his frequent greeting, 'grace and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ', there is no doubt that he invokes a single source of divine benison and that for him, God and Lord share a common sphere of being and activity. 22

b) The Son of God

This title has been partially dealt with in our treatment of the second person of the Trinity. There it has been pointed out how in the Hellenistic background emperors, miracle workers and the like were called 'sons of God'. But in the NT Jesus is presented as the 'Son of God' in a special way. When Jesus asked his disciples "Who do people say the Son of Man is? 'Various opinions of people were given, such as John the Baptist, Elija and one of the prophets. Then Christ asks for their opinion. "Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God' (Mt 16:16 -17). Then Jesus said "It was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven" (Mt 16:17). As in the case of confessing Christ's Lordship to confess his divine sonship too one needs special revelation, one should receive divine eye (divyam caksun).
There is sufficient ground to affirm that this designation as Son of God goes back to Christ himself. Cullmann says:

He was recognized as such by Peter to whom 'flesh and blood' had not revealed it (Mt 16:17), by Satan (Mt 4:3, 6) by demons (Mk 3:11; 5:7). Otherwise it is divine voice which addresses him as 'Son' (baptism, transfiguration). This compels us to ask whether the Synoptic writers did not in fact preserve the recollection here that is the Son of God concept more than any other understanding of Jesus which goes back to Jesus himself. 23

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen is given by all the three Synoptics (Mt 21:23-43; Mk 12:1-12, Lk 20:9-19). Such a biblical scholar like Joachim Jeremias would say that the parables go back to Jesus himself for their origin. 24 Now, in this parable Jesus contrasts himself with the servants in his relation with the master of the vineyard who is God himself. He presents himself as the Son of the master of the vineyard who is God the Father himself. No wonder then in one of the earliest formula used for the baptismal ritual includes the confession of Christ's divine sonship (AA 8:36-38). About the Pauline understanding of the Divine Sonship the Biblical dictionaries which we have been using in our study give briefly sufficient details.

Jesus as God?

The Jews have been and still are strict monotheists. To avoid any ambiguity in this matter it was strictly forbidden to have any images of God. They looked upon God with such reverence
and awe that they did not utter the holy name 'Yahweh'. In stead of that they used other names like 'Adonai'. At Jesus' time the religious leaders headed by the High Priest were the virtual rulers except in strictly political matters of the Jewish nation though under the suzerainty of Rome. In such a theocratic state, if somebody called himself Yahweh and went about proclaiming this, one could well imagine the fate of such an individual and of his followers. Well, something of this did happen to Jesus and to his followers.

R.E. Brown cites three passages (Heb 1:8-9; Jn 1:1; Jn 20:28) from the NT where Jesus is called 'God' unambiguously and indisputably. He does it after analysing a number of other texts which are somewhat doubtful in affirming unambiguously the divinity of Christ. Among these indisputable texts Jn 1:1 where Christ, the Word of God, is identified with God himself has been cited in describing the nature of incarnation. However, we did not emphasize how in Jn 1:1 the Logos which became flesh is identified with Theos (God). For our purpose it would be enough to cite the other two

But of the Son he says, "Thy throne, 0 God, is for ever and ever, the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee (Heb 1:8-9.RSU)

Here, the author of the letter to the Hebrews quotes Ps. 45:6-7 where the term 'God' applied hyperbolically to the king messiah. But the
author of this letter applies literally to Jesus, contrasting him with the angels who are far inferior to Jesus. Leaving aside other exegetical points, this much we can say that according to the author of this letter Jesus could very well be called God as he could be called Lord (Heb 1:10).

The following text is the confession by St. Thomas, the disciple of one of the twelve disciples of Christ, known as the doubting Thomas:

"My Lord and My God" (Jn 20:28)

After his resurrection Jesus had appeared to the disciples in the absence of Thomas. When Thomas came to them the disciples in great joy told him of the visit of the risen Christ. But Thomas said:

"Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe" (Jn 20:25). Eight days after this sceptical statement of Thomas, Jesus once again stood before them, and asked Thomas to put his finger into his wounds. Then Thomas with sorrow for his lack of faith made this profession of faith calling Christ Lord and God. According to Brown "This is the clearest example in the New Testament of the use of 'God' for Jesus."27

Here we leave aside other texts like 1 Jn 5:20; Jn 1:18; Jn 5:18; 7:53-59; 10:30-33 2 Pet 1:1 and Rom 9:5. What is important for us is to see how most of the NT writers consider him-dive by calling him God, Lord, Son of God or Word. For Paul Lord is
equivalent to 'God' as Cullmann points out. Yahweh says in Is 45:23: "...before me every knee shall bend, by me every tongue shall awaken, saying, 'From Yahweh alone come victory and strength!' Paul does not hesitate to make this demand for Jesus adapting this text to suit his purpose when he says that "all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord" (Phil 2:10).

C. THE EXPERIENCES BEHIND THIS AFFIRMATION

We are faced with the affirmation in the NT that at a particular point of time in history and in a particular place there occurred an event which came to be known as incarnation since it was an event of God's becoming man, or more precisely, it was an event in which the second person of the Trinity took up the human nature "emptying himself" of his divine status. How did the NT writers come to know that Jesus of Nazareth whom they followed as disciples was God-incarnate? They wrote down these accounts only after the Jesus movement had spread far and wide the Roman empire, and they themselves were among the chief participants and agents of this movement. Did they experience Christ as a true human being or as an elusive and illusory human appearance with no genuine humanness? Secondly, what extraordinariness did they find in him to follow him abandoning everything, to stick to him at least till his arrest and to propagate his ideology at the teeth of deadly opposition? Did they experience him as divine? Did Jesus himself make any such
claims? We shall attempt to answer these questions briefly within the very limited scope of this sub-section.

11. Jesus as Truly Human

This consideration seems to be superfluous from a certain point of view. For, he must have lived a very normal life working in the 'carpentry' of his 'father', until he begins his public life at the age of thirty. The NT writers do not write about any "supernatural fire work" during this period. It is interesting to note the reaction of his neighbours when at the beginning of his public life he began to explain the scriptures in the synagoge of his native village, Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30). After reading Is 61 when he said that the prophaseline which he had read referred to him, they were totally surprised. "They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?'" (Lk 4:23). Matthew brings out this astonishment of his fellow-villagers by referring to many more questions by them connecting his education, family and relatives (Mt 13:53-58). Luke had already mentioned about Jesus' childhood and growth in a crisp sentence indicating that he grew as any other child: "And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature and in favour with God and men" (Lk 3:52).

Jesus like any other human being gets tired and sleeps and sleeps even on a tossing boat (Mt 8:24). He eats and drinks as any other human being. In fact, he was contrasted with John the Baptist (Mt 11:18-19) who lived an ascetic life with meagre diet (Mt 3:3-4) of 9:14-17). He gets angry when he sees the temple
getting defiled by transacting business within it (Jn 2:13-17).

He had his own personal friends (Lk 10:38-42) and weeps at the
death of his friend Lazarus (Jn 11:32-33). Most of his miracles
were expressions of compassion for the suffering fellow-men. He
feels much for Jerusalem the capital city of his country (Mt 24:37-
39). He literally shudders at the thought of his future sufferings
and death by crucifixion (Mt 26:36-46, parallels). On the cross
he expresses his sense of loneliness and even of frustration by
repeating a verse from Ps 22, saying, "My God, my God why have
you deserted me?" (Mt 27:46).

The NT authors do not present him as an omniscient being. He
have seen how Luke speaks of him as growing in wisdom. When he
was an adult too he did not know many things. He did not know
who it was when a sick woman touched him and got healed (Mk 5:30-33).
Though the disciples might have felt that Jesus' interpretation
of the scriptures was perfect, from a modern scientific point of
view there are inaccuracies.

2) The Experience of Extraordinaryness in Jesus

If Jesus is truly a theanthropos, and not a split personality
consisting of divininess and humanness in two compartments, to look
for purely human element or purely divine element is fallacious.
For it suffers from the dualistic fallacy of making a theanthropos
God-and-man rather than God-Man. In him the divine expresses itself
in human terms and the human mysteriously and dynamically tends to
merge into the divine. Hence, the ambiguity and contradictions
implied when Jesus is looked upon dualistically. Our above conside-
ration of the human aspect of Jesus suffers from this fallacy. However, such a consideration with the awareness of this fallacy can bring out the idea that according to the NT writers in Jesus there was everything that constituted a man, that makes a man.

The disciples followed Jesus not because of his ordinariness but because of his extraordinariness. They followed him because they experienced an extraordinary magnetism in his personality (Mt 4:18-22; 9:9; Jn 1:35-51). One of the things which made him extraordinary in the eyes of his disciples was his ability to work miracles. The NT reports some thirty miracles worked by him of which 16 were healings, 7 exorcisms, 3 resuscitations and seven nature miracles. When he raised to life the dead son of a widow naturally people were struck with wonder as recorded by Luke: "Every one was filled with awe and praised God saying, 'A great prophet has appeared among us; God has visited his people! And this opinion of him spread throughout Judea and all over the countryside" (Lk 7:17).

True Jesus worked many miracles. But his attitude to working miracles was quite different from that of wonder workers of the period like Appollonius of Tyana or of Simon the Magician (AA 8:9-25), in the sense that he worked miracles always for the sake of others and that he avoided sensationalism (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:44; Lk 9:54-56; Jn 6:15). The miracles of Jesus which is often called "signs" (semeion) in the NT are really the signs of the arrival of God's Kingdom (basileia) where man will be liberated from all bondage especially the bondage to the devil (Mt 12:28). Rightly George Soares says about the miracles recounted in the
The miracles of Jesus in Mark are part of a great, polyfaceted process of liberation which Jesus comes to proclaim and achieve (cosmic, physical, psychic, social, religious) from Satan and all the adjuncts of his rule. For Jesus liberates not just from demonic possession (1:23-27) and sin (2:1-12) not only from sickness (1:29-31) and death (5:21-42), not merely from the destructive forces of nature which threaten us (4:35-41), but equally, and indeed specially from the ignominy of social ostracism (2:13-17) and from the crippling tyranny of a dead ritualism (7:1-6) and an oppressive law (2:23-27).

There were various other incidents which made the disciples consider Christ quite extraordinary. One of them is a sort of *Divya-rūpa-darsana*, known as transfiguration in the Christian tradition, which took place on a mountain believed to be mount Thabor in Palestine. This event is narrated by all the three Synoptics (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36) and is alluded by St. Peter (2 Pet 1:16-18) one of the three witnesses of this event, the others being John and James. "There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him." (Mt 17:2-3). This theophany has much in common with the one narrated in Ex 19 concerning the one on mount Sinai. In this theophany as well as those narrated in Mt 3:16-17 and in Jn 12:28-30 those present heard a voice from heaven declaring him as God's own son.
Experience of Jesus as Divine

His utter integrity of life, his sublime doctrines, his miracles and his divine revelations: none of these by themselves can make him divine. On the other hand, he is not just any sort of miracle worker. He could then be a great prophet a sort of avatara. But the NT writers seem to claim that he is the incarnation of the Divine Logos. What further grounds they had for this affirmation? Has he said something like that? Could he say such a thing in such a strictly and zealously monotheistic situation like that of the first century Palestine and then remain alive? Well, he said something like that and he was killed for it.

To affirm that Jesus is God-incarnate it is not enough that the writers experienced his miraculous powers or that they knew for certain that he had divine revelations. They should have known as to what he said of himself. Rightly therefore J. Quillet says:"

For if Jesus is truly Son of God, the only-begotten Son equal to the Father, God born of God, he is the only who can tell us so. No man on earth is capable of discovering this truth, of inferring or proving it. One must know from experience who God is in order to be able to say, 'This man is God'. Only God can say, 'I am the Son of God', in the sense in which Christians understand it.32

Another point is that if the writers of the NT were aware of such statements by Jesus, these statements should have been made
in an intelligible way, that is to say, in a way adapted to the understanding of the people concerned without at the same time losing its fundamental truth-value. If somebody were to say "I am the Ultimate Reality", it is not an ordinary "S is P" statement. The UR as the Absolute cannot be opposed to other beings, since the many imply the one and the one 'includes' the many. Guillet thus brings out this idea:

But what can the statement 'I am the Son of God' mean? In order to convey an intelligible meaning to us, it must designate a reality which men can experience or at least be able to imagine. Yet, if we imagine him, can we seriously believe that this Son of God who reveals himself thus is anything more than a man? God is the Wholly Other (sic), completely different from men; he cannot have sons as men have children.33

There is still another problem. Suppose that Jesus did say of his divine origin and he did so intelligibly. But how can we know that these statements presented in the NT as Jesus' statements are truly his own? The mere fact that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and what we have even in the Greek original is a translation, and so an interpretation, makes us give up the idea of finding the very same words of Christ. But our basic position as explained in the first part is that the NT writers were honest in their reporting on the one hand and on the other hand, the experience and the message they reported were such that they were very much alive in their lives, deeds and words. Therefore, our position is that the NT writers truthfully communicated the spirit of Christ's words.
We also hold that certain picturesque expressions about Jesus by himself, as in the case of parables, the authors of the NT could communicate Christ's words without much change in its meaning.

Having cleared the background for understanding Christ's expressions about his divine origin, we shall here refer to some of them without much comment. Only St. John gives direct statements by Christ about himself in the first person. The others mostly refer indirectly. For instance, when Peter said "You are the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:17), Jesus only approves of it. Of course, he commented saying that only through a divine revelation he could know his true nature. Similarly in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, though it is obvious that Jesus is the son of the parable, he does not say it directly (Mt 21:33-43). In one instance, Mark reports Jesus did make a positive affirmation of his divine sonship. It was after his arrest when the High Priest asked him whether he was truly the Son of God (Mk 14:61). Matthew adds that the High Priest asked the question putting Jesus on oath by the name of God (26:63). This question was put to Jesus, in the Supreme Court (Sanhedrin) of the Jews by the highest authority of Judaism in the presence of a large group of officials and people. Jesus said, "I am", and he described himself in the apocalyptic image of the 'Son of Man' (Mk 14:62). "The high priest tore his robes, 'What need of witnesses have we now?' he said. 'You heard the blasphemy'" (Mk 14:63). For the high priest the affirmation of Jesus was a great blasphemy which calls for the tearing of one's garments according to the Jewish custom. Unless Jesus
had communicated intelligibly the idea of his divine origin such a reaction would not have been there. In these instances, though Jesus did not affirm "I am the Son of God", the NT writers had enough ground to think of his divine origin.

In John's Gospel Jesus makes statements about his divine origin in particular contexts. The expression by itself independent of the context would lose much of its force. Since these texts are meant only as additional arguments for our purpose, and since space does not allow we shall satisfy ourselves by citing some of these statements without making any elaborate commentary on them. In a controversial situation Jesus said to the Jews "I tell you solemnly, before Abraham ever was, I am " (Jn 8:58). What a claim! Abraham had died hundreds of years earlier. Jesus made this affirmation precisely when the Jews said in so many words, John says that the Jews picked up stones to throw at him for blasphemy. For, the Jews understood the import of this claim. In another controversial situation when Jesus said, "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30) the Jews tried to stone him saying "You are only a man and you claim to be God " (Jn 10:33). We leave aside other direct statements made by Jesus about his divine origin especially in his discourse after the Last Supper (Jn 13-17) or the symbolic statements like "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12) or "I am the vine you are the branches" (Jn 15:1) which can be interpreted in terms of his divine origin.
What is to be noted is that for the NT writers to affirm the incarnation there were many and varied experiences as sufficient ground for it. Besides Christ did affirm it through parables, symbols and by direct statements which were striking and picturesque enough for them to recapture their spirit and communicate to posterity through preaching and writing.

If the disciples had all these experiences to affirm that Jesus was God-incarnate, why did they run away when Jesus was arrested? To whom did they run away leaving the helpless 'almighty God'? If they had not lost faith in his divine origin they would not have run away. On the other hand, a few days after this show of 'valour loyalty and faith' they begin to preach the message of Christ facing, arrest, torture and death. What experience had brought about this change? It is the experience of the Risen Christ and of the coming of the Holy Spirit. These two experiences were the most powerful ones which made the authors of the NT see the nature of Christ in a new light, and to affirm that the incarnation as a true divine descent and Jesus of Nazareth as a true Theanthropos.

D. SOME PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

Our dialogal method demands that our interpretation of the sacred books of different religions must take seriously into account the interpretations by the respective religions. That is why in the interpretation of the BG we concentrated so much on the views of the Acaryas and preferred the views of the Hindu
commentators to those of the Western. Since Christianity is a centralized religion with hierarchically placed authoritative persons, and with officially promulgated documents and formulas for professing the faith prescribed by the Ecumenical Councils, it is of special importance as far as this religion is concerned to refer to these official views in interpreting the NT doctrines. This however does not mean that the doctrines formulated centuries ago do not need updating, without of course losing their original spirit, in the light of greater insights and broader perspective in man's understanding of God, man, world, history and other connected subjects. In keeping with this view we shall first consider the official document concerning the nature of the Theanthropos in the NT, and then we shall make a few remarks in getting into the truth of the Word-Incarnate.

1) The Official Formulation in its Historical Setting

a) The Formula of the Ecumenical Council of Calcedon (A.D. 451)

Following therefore the holy fathers, we unanimously teach to confess and one and the same Son, \( \frac{\text{God}}{\text{man}} \) Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man composed of rational soul and body, the same one in being (\textit{homoousios}) with the Father as to the divinity and one in being with us as to the humanity, lie unto us in all things but sin (cf. Heb 4:15). The same was begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to His humanity from Mary the Virgin Mother of God. \(^{35}\)
In this formulation two things are stressed, viz that the Theanthropos is truly God and truly man. It also draws our attention to the fact that the Word-Incarnate was existing from all eternity as the 'Son' of the Father. This formulation seems to indicate that Jesus Christ is a split-personality with divinity and humanity in two compartments. Hence the second part of the formula:

We confess that one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation. The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (prosopon) and one hypostasis.

b) A Short Note on its Historical Setting

The formulation is the result of more than three centuries of philosophical reflection and controversies among different schools of thought. Here not even a sketchy historical survey is intended. We shall just point out some of the philosophic tendencies which can give a little more insight into the nature of this formulation. First we shall make a note of two general tendencies headed by two main schools of thought, the Alexandrian and the Antiochian. Then we shall make a note of the three extreme positions held by various schools, including the above two schools. The formulation of the above document tries to strike a balance among various schools and thus tries to bring out the central truth using chiefly the concepts provided by Greek philosophy.
The doctrine of incarnation has been approached since the earliest Christian tradition from two opposite directions namely the humanity of Christ and his divinity respectively. The Alexandrian and the Antiochian schools represented these two tendencies. Both had the burden of showing that Christ is truly God, truly man and that He is one. The Alexandrian trend followed a strict descent Christology starting from the 'Logos'; but they mutilated the humanity of Christ. The Antiochian trend started from the true human nature of Christ advocating a sort of ascent Christology; but it underpinned the divinity of Christ.

Another way of placing the official doctrine in the historical setting is to consider it in relation to the exaggerated views held in this regard by different schools who have been officially condemned in the Ecumenical Councils. The Docetists held the view that Jesus Christ did not have a true body but only an apparent human body, and he did not suffer the pains of crucifixion etc but only seemed to suffer. The various trends of Arianism denied full divinity to the "Word of God" (Logos) but made him an intermediary between God and man, giving him only a creaturely status. And consequently they denied the divinity of the Word-Incarnate. The third extreme position condemned is known as Nestorianism, after the name of its founder Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. This school denied real unity between the divine and human natures of Christ. The union between the two natures advocated by this school is what is known as "moral union" to contrast with physical or ontological union. If we look into
the officially defined formula we will realize that it is an effort
to keep balance between these exaggerated positions.

To-day Christian thinkers like Prof. P. Schoonenberg finds
with good reasons many defects in the Chalcedon formula we have
cited above. If we have a clear understanding of the historical
situation in which this doctrinal formula was promulgated
we cannot help but admire the Council. But it was done centuries
ago. It goes against the very incarnational principle defined by
the Council that the Christians should keep on repeating by rote
the same formula in a radically changed situation. It is not the
Council to be blamed but those who blame the Council without
getting into its spirit. We agree with what Peter de Rosa says
about the need of adapting theological doctrines, i.e. doctrines
enunciated after philosophical reflections on revealed truths, to
the changed situations. He says:

Theology is not an independent discipline but part of
the close-knit fabric - social, political, ideological,
scientific - of any particular age. If we do not feel
compelled to copy mediæval politics, mediæval
draingae-systems and mediæval means of locomotion, why
should we think it worthwhile even necessary to feed
our minds on mediæval theology and devotion? Theology
is not faith; it is the attempt to make faith contemporary.
Of its nature, the finest theology is ephemeral as the
generation that produced it.
2) Some General Reflections

a) The Importance of the Question

The controversies that raged in the Roman Empire with regard to the nature of Christ especially in the context of the Ecumenical Councils was so heated, so involving and so universal that it defies our understanding. It involved not only some religious leaders or specialists in religious philosophy, but also the political leaders including the Roman Emperors like Constantine and Theodosius, government officials and the country people, educated and the uneducated. Of course by that time Roman empire was in the process of becoming like a theocratic nation having Christianity as the National religion. At that time religion was at the centre of life, not on the periphery, and so touching the nature of Christ meant touching the very heart of the life of the people. Only after treating the question as to how Christ is presented as the liberator or saviour of humanity in the NT, we can understand in a fairly satisfactory way the import of the question concerning the nature of the Word-Incarnate.

Let us take the example of the controversy concerning the divinity of Christ. To put it in general terms, the Christian way of life means to grow into the image of Christ by sharing God's life by union with Christ thereby becoming truly God's children in the Son. Hence the Athanasian axiom at the time of the Council of Nicea, "Unless Christ is divine he cannot divinise us." Similarly the denial of full humanity to Christ too cuts at the very root of the
the specifically Christian way of life. The following axiom of Origin meant much for the Christians of the period: "Nothing that is assumed is saved". If Christ's human nature was a mere appearance as the Docetists held, his sufferings and the death on the Cross too would be appearances, and so man's liberation through Christ too would be an illusion. Brown rightly says:

Unless we understand that Jesus was truly human, we cannot comprehend the depth of God's love...A Jesus who walked through the world knowing exactly what the morrow would bring, knowing with certainty that three days after his death his Father would raise him up, is a Jesus who can arouse our admiration, but still a Jesus far from us...On the other hand, a Jesus for whom the future was as much a mystery, a dread, and a hope as it is for us and yet at the same time, a Jesus who would say, 'Not my will but yours' - this Jesus is a Jesus who would have gone through life's real trials.

If we admit a split-personality in Christ, with the Nestorians, it would have the negative effects of both of the other two extreme positions.

b) The Problem of a Dualistic Approach

The Biblical thought-patterns are quite different from the Greek ones. The NT writers themselves presented Christ in the Greek mould to a great extent, by the mere fact of accepting Greek as the medium of communication. But when the early Christian thinkers began to reflect on the Christ-event they Hellenised it much more.
Greek thinking, to a great extent, in spite of their concept of an Absolute Being, in terms of the Aristotelian Pure Act, is dualistic. The following two Aristotelian conceptions, explicitly or implicitly did come on the way of getting into the truth of the Theanthropos that Christ is: "Two completely constituted beings cannot be made to constitute one being", and "Individual is undivided in itself and divided from others". The early Christian controversialists thought of Christ as God and man, though they did use the term Theanthropos. Besides, they took seriously the concept of God as the "Absolutely Other" forgetting the other Biblical concept, though less emphatic, of God's immanence, something which in implied in the concept of total causality through creation. They conceived of an infinite chasm that separates the infinite God from the finite man. How can there be a God-man? Is it not more difficult than squaring a circle? Well, many of these thinkers began to take shelter under the concept of Mystery as they did with regard to the concept of Trinity. Even to-day there exists an overmystification around the concept of theanthropos, forgetting that it goes against the very concept of the incarnation according to the Christian understanding of the purpose of incarnation.

The fallacy implied in conceiving Jesus as God and man can be further elucidated by pointing out the problem of applying the Aristotelian doctrine of classification to philosophical concepts as a whole. According to this doctrine "when the concept representing a genus is subdivided into species, the species are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive."
An individual belonging to the genus will be present in only one of the alternative species. However, "The rule of philosophical method", says Dr. Javdekar, "is that there is 'a distinction without a difference', i.e., a distinction in the concepts without a difference in the instances." a truth which Aristotle himself was aware of. The Aristotelian doctrine of classification can be used only in mathematics and to some extent in exact sciences like chemistry and physics. After showing through various examples how overlap of species is characteristic of philosophical concepts unlike exact sciences where mutual exclusiveness is possible, the author concludes: "From the nature of this rule it follows that the object of philosophical thought cannot be a classificatory system nor yet an aggregate of separable parts. It would be to reach some sort of a gestalt or an organically interrelated configuration. The ultimate reason for this overlappingness of philosophical concepts on the reality level in spite of their distinctiveness in the conceptual level is that the Ultimate Reality is neither one nor many but many in one and one in many as our treatment of the Trinitarian a priori has pointed out.

This brief analysis of the nature of philosophical concepts can further enlighten us with regard to the fallacy implied in conceiving Christ as God and man. Suppose that we place the concepts 'God' and 'man' under the genus 'being'. Now the NT doctrine is that the UR contains within itself the total value of being, that it is being as such. If so nothing can be placed in opposition to it. This problem is implied in opposing the
divine nature and human nature in Christ. P. Schoonenberg thus draws our attention to this drawback in the formulation by the Council of Calcedon about the "two natures" of Christ:

But then there is a second objection, that here the divine and the human arise in equal relation and are grouped together under the expression "two" natures. ... Later theologians have pointed out the totally analogous way according to which the concept of "nature" is used both times in Christ; the fact that divine and human nature do not merge as parts to form one great whole, since the divine cannot be inserted into a greater whole; the fact also that the number 'two' does not then have the proper function of numbers, namely, to indicate the multiplicity of like quantities. 46

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

The first section of this chapter gave us a factual account of the life of Christ as presented by the NT. This account helped us to assess the value of certain events in the life of Christ like his resurrection in its right context. Then we tried to understand the NT texts which speak of the nature of incarnation and of the nature of the Word-Incarnate himself. We saw how the NT authors consider incarnation as a divine descent totally accepting the human situation. In the NT the Word-Incarnate, Jesus Christ, is truly a theanthropos.

On what ground did the authors of the NT make such a claim? Or on the basis of what experiences did they make this affirmation? The second section tried to answer this question. The disciples of Jesus including the NT authors took Jesus first as an extra-
ordinary man. His true human nature is a matter taken for granted in the NT. The amazement of the NT authors as well as those of the people who were in contact with him was centred on the nature of his extraordinariness. True, they saw him as a wonderworker. But not as a sensationalist one. His blameless life, his total dedication to do God's will, his power over the demons, diseases of all kinds and even over the sea and storms, and the sublimity of his teachings etc. made his claims credible. Indeed he claimed to be superior to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, to Moses the greatest of Jewish law-givers and mediators with Yahweh, to Solomon the wisest of all men according to the OT, to the great prophets like Elijah and Jonah. But this alone will not make him entitled to be called a theanthropos in a Jewish background.

Jesus also made the claim that he was the Son of God in a very special way contrasting himself to other divine messengers who are just servants of God. To the great scandal and exasperation of the Jews he made such claims which would make him equal to Yahweh. His claims of divine origin became fully intelligible to them only after the resurrection and after the enlightenment received from specially illumined by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Our philosophical reflections have been very brief and suggestive without developing the arguments suggested since it would have far outscoped this chapter. Our primary interest was to see the official position of Christianity in its historical context. We saw the difficulty of formulating this doctrine using the conceptual
tools provided by the Greek philosophy. By hinting at the similarity between the nature of avatara, as expressed in the BG, and incarnation as expressed in the NT, our aim was to suggest that the BG could provide a richer conceptual tool than the Greek philosophy in expressing the doctrine of incarnation.