CHAPTER IV
THE DOCTRINE OF INCARNATION IN CHRISTIANITY

4.1 The Christian Concept of God and Incarnation.

4.1.1 The Christian Creeds and Incarnation.

Christianity is a theistic religion, as such there is the belief in a transcendent and immanent personal God. According to John Hick, the essence of Christianity is "The way of life and salvation which has its origin in the Christ-event." That means the essence of Christianity is not the doctrine but the Christian experience (salvation) derived from incarnation. According to Nicol Macnicol, "If theism is the final and absolute form of religion, we must have the assurance that God and man can be fully, reconciled and made one in a fellowship which is love and peace. For that assurance it seems necessary that the eternal should be manifested in time, overcoming the hostility of sin and this earthly order, and exhibiting this reconciliation."

It seems to me that Macnicol here means that incarnation and theism are complementary. Without the idea of incarnation, theistic system or religion is incomplete. He emphasised that the God of grace must manifest in history and continue to work in the lives of individuals. Incarnation becomes a living reality and can be veri-
fied in the experience of men. Christian theism has accomplished this requirement. This is true in the case of Vaishnavism too.

Christian creeds are the statements of faith of Christians. It is the practice of the Christians to confess their faith publicly, whenever they gather for corporate worship by reciting the creed, Apostle's creed or Nicene creed. The concept of incarnation is expressed in the words of the Nicene creed as follows:

"...the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made ... for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man . . . ."

This is to be considered as the Church's way of stating the truth that the most high God who revealed to the Jews as Jehovah willed to become man for man's salvation, as held by the Christians.

The words of the creed states that the Son of God became incarnate. But the creed does not deny that God himself in the fulness of his eternal being became incarnate. According to Saint John Chapter 1:1,2,14, the Word that was in the beginning with God and was God, became flesh. According to the creed and John 3:16, "The only begotten Son of God was incarnate by the Holy Ghost."
Therefore the truth of the incarnation should be con­sidered along with the doctrine of Trinity, and not apart from it.

Historically the doctrine of Incarnation came before the acceptance of the doctrine of Trinity. The disciples of Jesus through believing in Christ and afterwards in His Spirit came to think of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as one divine unity. For them there was no intellectual difficulty in holding such a view. But later on when the Church was forced to explain the truth of incarnation it was necessary to formulate the doctrine of Trinity. Now we have to take it as the basis of the concept of incarnation in Christianity.

4.1.2. **Doctrine of Trinity.**

According to Christian theology, God's fuller revelation of himself is in the form of a Trinity of persons. But this revelation of God as Trinity is preceded by his unity. For many centuries God revealed himself as one God to his people in the Old Testament period. Therefore we have to consider the Christian doctrine of incarnation in the light of the belief in the oneness or unity of God and the doctrine of Trinity is only assisting us to understand better the concept of God in Christianity. The Jews were only taught that God is one
numerically and that there is no other God but He. For
the Christians in addition to his unity, he is three per-
sons in one God. In the words of E.L. Strong:

"He is not one as a separate person is, but
that His is the oneness of a nature which is
essentially love. His life is not a stagnant
one, but eternally flowing– an eternal act of
giving, pouring forth of personal love, so
that all the unions between persons, which
we know, or can imagine to be effected by the
flow of love between them... that God eternal
Trinity is."

Those who can reflect on the nature of love can under-
stand to some extent what the perfect unity or oneness
of love is.

When we examine the language of the New Testament
and creeds, it would be clear to us that it does not
mean that one part of God came down–and was incarnate
while the other two parts did not become incarnate.
But it does mean that God of love became man for love of
man. The whole being of God was concerned for the sal-
vation of man. He himself came to save man.

E.L. Strong explains the meaning of the expression
"Only begotten Son" in the following words.

"It is an integral part of the Christian faith
that God is the Eternal Father, who is so call-
ed because His whole life is by an eternal act
given to His Son and is eternally in His Son,
so that we may even dare to say He has no life
but that which His Son eternally gives back to
Him. Hence the Son is called, the only-begotten
Son of God! – that is, one who possesses the
whole life of the Father, so that there can be
no other Son in the God-head. Since this is so, the life of God is wholly and can only be manifested in and through His Son.\textsuperscript{4} For this reason, it is mentioned in the gospel of John that the Son is the 'Word of God', who himself is God. The Son expressed the whole God - that is, the whole God is manifested. This view is expressed in the Nicene creed saying - the Son is the 'Light of Light', very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being one substance with the Father.\textsuperscript{2} In this way the Apostle John tried to teach that the Son possesses the whole life of the Father, and therefore God can only be manifested in his Son. Christ himself said, "All things whatsoever the Father has are mine." (John 16:15) No one knows "... who the Father is but the Son,..." (Luke 10:22).

In the light of the Christian creed, the answer to the question, "Who became incarnate" is that, the eternal God himself became incarnate. The Father sent his Son or God sent or it means God came himself to be the saviour of the world. I am not going to discuss the problem of Trinity here. My concern is only to show that God himself, the triune God became incarnate.

4.1.3. How Did God Become Incarnate?

This question we ask to understand the problem of incarnation. We have already discussed to some extent
this question in the case of Vaishnavism: concept of incarnation. Unlike the Vaishnava concept of incarnation, the question of God became flesh or word became flesh is emphasised in the Christian concept of incarnation. The process of incarnation is stated in the Nicene creed as follows: "Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God ... God of God, very God of very God ... was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

The Apostle's creed says, "Jesus Christ ... was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." The following scripture verses support this view, -Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38- (supports the doctrine of Virgin birth).

The Christian Church tradition fully supports the truth of the Virgin birth though the modern theologians do not accept it. For the modern theologians, what is important is the belief in Jesus Christ, that can be achieved even without believing in Virgin birth theory. Many attempts have been made to disprove the claims of Virgin birth. There are many legendary stories telling about the miraculous birth of some heroes. To the modern theologians Virgin birth story is also one among them. But the writings of Saint Luke can be trusted because he had been a careful and accurate historical writer. The account of Virgin birth shows how God became man. But it cannot be verified.
Besides, there is an account given in Philippians 2:5-11 which states that the incarnation involved supreme self-sacrifice on the part of God who became man by a supreme act of self-emptying. This theory is known as Kenotic Theory. In Philippians 2:5-11 Apostle Paul has mentioned the fact about the self-emptying and self-humbling of Christ. The expression 'emptied himself' is the literal meaning of the Greek verb 'ekenosen' the noun form of which is 'Kenōsis'- This means self-emptying. Here the process of incarnation is taken place by God's being made in the 'likeness of men'. This kenotic theory will be discussed later on, along with other theories of incarnation.

Now we should know the background of incarnation or the relation of that historical episode to the pre-existent or eternally existent Son of God. What do the Christians really assert when they repeat the Nicene creed saying 'The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God ... came down from heaven and was made flesh'. Obviously they are trying to relate the historical Jesus with that of the eternal Son of God. What does it mean by saying, when the fullness of time came God sent his Son? That means the earthly life of Jesus was determined by the 'heavenly' life of the eternal Son of God who became man. Why did God send his Son so late and
not earlier? The answer to this question is difficult. Probably man was not fully prepared to receive the revelation of God. If Jesus was truly human, then incarnation of the Son of God was subject to the limitations of human life and also conditioned by the response or will of the man Jesus. Here from the human life of Jesus on earth we are led back to its divine origin and eternal background in heaven. In other words, the incarnation should be understood in relation to the pre-existent Son of God though it does not imply a conscious continuity of life and memory between Jesus and the pre-existent Son of God. Church has never thought that the humanity of Jesus was consubstantial with God, it is only consubstantial with ourselves. But they believe that it was the very God of very God, the eternal Word that was incarnate in Jesus. The following verses deal with the relation of the temporal and historical incarnation on earth to its eternal and heavenly antecedents: 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:6,7; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9.

4.1.4. What Do You Think of Christ?

This question is certainly the fundamental one for the doctrine of incarnation in Christianity. The faith and practice of Christianity depends upon this question. It was Peter who answered this question —
Matthew 16:16 - "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus Christ himself approved this answer by saying "Simon ... for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 16:17). That means Peter could realise the divinity in Jesus through revelation. This realization of Peter regarding the divinity of Jesus is accepted as the faith and belief of all Christians, i.e., Jesus is the Son of God. It was out of this primitive Christian faith that the doctrine of incarnation came to formal expression as a result of historical circumstances. We have already discussed in the second chapter how the doctrine of incarnation developed during the early centuries of the Christian Church.

Here in this context we shall limit our discussions dealing with the the views of the early Church regarding Jesus as 'Son of God' and the testimony of Jesus regarding himself as 'Son of man' before we discuss the philosophical implications of the doctrine of incarnation.

4.1.4.1. **Jesus as the Son of God.** One of the most exalted names applied to Jesus Christ is that of the title 'The Son of God'. The name 'Jesus' means 'Saviour' (Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:31). It is the Greek form of Hebrew name 'Joshua', meaning 'God is Salvation'. The
term 'Christ' means 'anointed'. It was official title of Jesus. This name is derived from the Greek 'Christos', which corresponds to the Hebrew name 'Messiah'. In the Old Testament the Hebrew Kings were sometimes called 'Jehovah's Anointed', (1 Samuel 24:61). Hence, the combined name Jesus Christ means the 'Anointed Saviour'. He is a King in the highest sense.

In order to understand the meaning of the title 'Son of God', which is attributed to Jesus Christ, we have to find out the origin of this concept in Hellenism and oriental religions.

Oscar Cullmann in his Christology of the New Testament refers to the view of Bultmann who holds that the application of the title the 'Son of God' to the earthly Jesus cannot be traced back to Jesus himself, or to the original Palestinian Church but only to Hellenistic Christianity which accepted the general meaning of the concept in Hellenistic environment.\(^5\)

The origin of the 'Son of God' concept lies in ancient oriental religions in which all kings and also anybody with divine powers were thought to be begotten of gods. The Hellenistic concept is rooted in polytheistic thought and therefore it is not appropriated to use it in the case of monotheistic religion, Christianity.
In the Old Testament it is used in three ways: The whole people of Israel is called Son of God (Exodus 4:22); Kings bear this title (2 Samuel 7:14); persons with a special commission from God (Job 1:6, Genesis 6:2). Now we are not sure in what sense the title 'Son of God' is used to call Jesus. Jesus did not use this title. He used the title 'Son of man'. Oscar Cullmann states:

"At present we can say only this much in any case, whether Jesus called himself 'Son of God' or not, according to the witness of the Gospel tradition, the Son of God title as applied to Jesus expresses the historical and qualitative uniqueness of His relation to His Father."6

Oscar refers to W. Grundmann who has suggested that Jesus thought himself to be the 'Son of God', in the very general sense in which we are all 'children of God'. Only later on, this general sense of being a child of God was made into a unique 'Sonship'.7

Jesus claims to be 'Son of God' in John's gospel (John 10:36, 9:35, 37, 11:4). Here he justifies his using this title telling that the scripture says, God called those people gods to whom his message (the word of God) was given. Here gods are the messengers of God. Of course, in this general sense Jesus is 'Son of God'. But he is 'Son of God' in the unique sense in the light of his claim recorded in John 10:38-(He is one with the Father).
From this discussion it is clear that the title 'Son of God' attributed to Jesus is not used in the sense it is used in the Hellenistic tradition where it is used in the polytheistic background. Jesus is 'Son of God' not because of his miracles but because of his absolute obedience as a Son in the execution of a divine commission. (John 10:37,38)

The faith of the early Christians emphasised the sonship of Jesus. The following references show that this concept 'Son of God' in the New Testament is not originated from Hellenism: Mark 1:11; Matthew 4:3,6; Luke 4:39; Matthew 14:33; 16:16; 11:27; 16:17; Mark 15:39; 9:7; 5:7; According to the synoptic gospels Jesus was recognised by others as 'Son of God' though he himself did not actually call himself accordingly. Nathaniel exclaimed, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!', (John 1:49). Peter's great confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God", in Matthew 16:16,17 shows that he recognised Jesus as Son of God. Other references are Matthew 4:3,6; 26:63; Mark 3:11, 5:7,14:61; Luke 9:20. It is probable to think that the New Testament concept of 'Son of God' is derived from the Messianic hope, which is fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

The faith of the early Christians in Jesus as the
'Son of God' is remarkable. This title is used by the early Church especially in the baptismal liturgy, Acts 8:36-38. John used this formula, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God." (1 John 4:15). John again declared specifically that his purpose in writing his gospel was, "That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Christ is the Son of God by nature and the believers become sons of God by grace (Romans 8:14).

Thus Christ is the Son of God in such a high sense that he himself could say, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30); "He that has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9); that Paul could say that he is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15); that, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19); "In him dwells all the fullness of the God-head bodily" (Colossians 2:9); and that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews could say that he is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). Many of the statements recorded in the New Testament make it clear that Jesus was conscious of his deity, that he was the Son of God in a unique sense—(John 5:17,18; 10:33; 19:7; Matthew 26:63-66; John 19:7).
Let us examine critically the claims of the early Christians including the Apostles concerning the nature of Christ's person. They claimed that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven ... and was made man." They confess that their Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man. They assert that God has revealed himself, not only in Nature, from which man can find him (This is called Natural Theology), but also incarnated in history. Many critics question the validity of this claim. Some even denied the historicity of Jesus Christ. Some critics have taken the story of Jesus at par with Greek mythology. Even if we can prove that the disciples really claimed that Jesus was the Son of God, the matter does not end here, because still we can doubt their claim. Though they made their claim based on their experience with Jesus before and after his death, there is room for the critics to argue that the disciples might have assumed him to be so. We have to ask again whether Jesus himself made this claim that he was the Son of God. Even if we have evidence to prove that Jesus made such a claim, still the critics can consider him as a mad man because there are many cases of men claiming to be God. We have to test this claim with the facts of his life. For no claim can be valid unless it is supported by facts. To
establish the credibility of the claim that Jesus was 'son of God' we have to gather facts from the reports of his close disciples—Peter, John, and Paul—and the New Testament records in general. Besides these we can collect facts from the lives of Christian saints and devotees throughout the history of the Church.

I shall mention few important facts from the lives of Peter, Paul and John to support their claim that Jesus was 'Son of God'. The great confession of Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16) was followed by the assurance of Jesus that "You are Peter (rock) and upon this rock I will build my Church!" (Matthew 16:18). Peter established the Church in Rome and other places. Jesus here means that the Church of Jesus will be built on this great faith of Peter. Saint Paul did not see the earthly Jesus Christ. Yet his vision of Christ was genuine to prove the Lordship of Jesus. Immediately after his conversion in Damascus he proclaimed 'Jesus as the Son of God' (Acts 9:20). Some critics denied the validity of Paul's vision of Christ. But the impact of that conversion experienced by Paul was tremendous in the life of the Apostle. He declared that Christ is the 'Image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15) and "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). Here he means that Christ is an incar-
carnation of the Godhead in all its fullness. He was full of Christ (Christ-consciousness). He remarked, "To me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). John was the closest disciple of Jesus. In the prologue of the gospel of John we have a clear and unmistakable assertion of the deity of Christ. John uses the term 'Word' (translation of the Greek word 'logos') to claim that Jesus is 'Son of God'. John had a mystical experience of Christ. Other disciples accepted martyrdom for Christ. John was banished to an island where he had the vision which is the basis of the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible.

The early Christians had to face terrible persecution for the sake of the new way of life—i.e., Christianity. Church history reveals the fact that the claims of the early Christians about Jesus is true. Saint Thomas, the Apostle of India was a sceptic. But the appearance of the resurrected Christ (John 20:28) made him to cry out "My Lord and my God". According to the tradition of the Church in India, he accepted martyrdom in India for Christ (in Mylapore, Madras). Many Christians can claim today that Jesus is the 'Son of God' from their experience.

Christ is called 'Son of god' in several passages in the New Testament. Some of the important passages
on this subject are - John 5:18; 20:36; Acts 4:36; Mark 3:17. According to Oliver Buswell, in John 10:36, when Christ says "I am the Son of God", it was understood by his contemporaries as identifying himself as God or equal with the Father, in an unqualified sense. 

The divine Sonship of Jesus was proclaimed from heaven according to the following passages - Matthew 3:16,17; Mark 1:10,11; Luke 3:21,22; John 1:32-34 (at his baptism), Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17,18 (on the occasion of his transfiguration).

The New Testament records make it clear that Jesus possessed a sense of unbroken fellowship with God and also he had a distinct consciousness that he himself was God. At the age of twelve, he told his mother,"Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Later on he claimed equality with God the Father, "I and the Father are one" (John 14:9). "He who sees me sees him who sent me" (John 12:44,45). Jews on one occasion took up stones to stone Jesus for blasphemy, because they said, "You being a man make yourself God" (John 10:32,33). In giving the great commission to the disciples he said, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18-20). Certainly on the basis of his own teaching Jesus claimed deity for himself.
4.1.4.2. Jesus as 'Son of Man'. This title is applied to the Lord Jesus in the New Testament only by himself, with the exception of Acts 7:56 and Revelation 1:13; 14:14. He uses this title Son of Man with reference to power and supremacy (Matthew 9:6; 13:41; 16:27; 19:28; 24:27; 30; 25:31, 32; 26:64; Mark 14:62). He also uses it to show weakness, humiliation and suffering (Matthew 8:20; 17:22; 26:24). The question why his followers avoided the use of this title is clear. They were more occupied with the thoughts of his divinity than his humanity.

Now let us enquire what meaning did Jesus give to this title and from what source did he derive it. We find this title used in the Old Testament in Daniel 7:13 and Ezekiel 1:26; 2:3. In the book of Daniel this title is used to indicate human form in contrast to brute forms. Jesus might have used this title in the sense it is used in the book of Ezekiel where it is used with the implication of two aspects of human nature—human weakness on the one side, power and glory on the other. The prophet himself is addressed as 'Son of man'. It is in this double relation, Jesus might have used this title. He is a man as any other human being with all the human limitations and is liable to suffer, at the same time, he holds a unique place with regards to the power to govern and judge. Moreover he is an ideal man, perfect man different from
Adam, the first man.

We are not sure whether this title has got any direct reference to the messiahship of Jesus. He was human, yet divine. It should be noted that Jesus uses this title in connection with his coming to earth or going or coming again. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) "The Son of man goes as it is written of him", (Matthew 26:24). "What then if you should see the Son of man ascend where he was before?" (John 6:62). "The Son of man is coming at an hour when you do not expect him", (Matthew 24:44). "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him...", (Matthew 25:31).

Hence it is clear that this title the 'Son of man' indicates not only his union with mankind but also his higher origin. The humanity of Jesus has a connection with the eternal humanity. He is eternal 'Son of man', different from mortal beings. The nature of the humanity of Jesus will be discussed later.

4.2. The Christian Doctrine of Incarnation.

4.2.1. Four Convictions that the Doctrine Carries with it.

We have examined so far the history of the concept of incarnation in Christianity. We have noted, how the
early Church was forced to formulate a doctrine of incarnation on the basis of their Christian experience. We have mentioned and examined already some of the important claims of early Christians and Jesus himself regarding the nature of Jesus Christ. Now in this section we shall examine the philosophical implications of the doctrine of incarnation in Christianity.

In this connection I shall mention the four convictions the doctrine of incarnation carries with it as discussed by J.K. Mozley in his book "The Doctrine of the Incarnation".

(a) First there is the affirmation of the transcendence of God. Philosophy rejects the transcendence of God on the ground that it leads to dualism. But the Christian concept of God emphasised both transcendence and immanence of God. The fourth gospel (Chapter 1) and Colossians (Chapter 1) mention about the immanence of God. "... all things were created through him and for him" Colossians 1:16). "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). These passages emphasise that God is not only transcendent but immanent also. This immanence gives room for incarnation.

(b) The second is the affirmation of Divine Personality. The doctrine of incarnation pre-supposes a personal God who became man. Though F.H. Bradley has no objection in
admitting the possibility to have personal God in his absolute idealism, his God is only one of the finite centres in which the Absolute appears. Thus the philosophical interpretation of personality in connection with God is only asserting God's finitude. Some philosophers have objected the anthropomorphic view of God as a person. Since God is a spirit in the words of Saint John, he must be treated as impersonal being. But Apostle John speaks about 'Logos' who is a personal divine Spirit who became flesh.

(c) Thirdly, the doctrine of incarnation carries with it the theory of Emergent Evolution. Philosophers may try to interpret the doctrine of incarnation in terms of evolutionary process. The evolutionary progress may be regarded as a manifestation and revelation of divine purpose. But the emergent evolution does not require the already existing God. Evolution is moving towards the emergence of deity. Some of the Evolutionists may consider Jesus Christ as the first emergence of a deity but not final. But this interpretation of incarnation is not consistent because incarnation is the manifestation of the eternal God not emergence of God.

(d) Fourthly, the doctrine of incarnation is the basis of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation. The purpose of incarnation is to save mankind. It is the reconciliation of God and man. The doctrine of incarnation thus explains
the unity of God and world but not affirming the pantheistic oneness. In the Christian concept of incarnation the emphasis is on reconciliation and fellowship with God.

Thus we find that the interpretation of incarnation has become a great problem in the light of philosophy. It has become paradoxical.

4.2.2. The Paradox of Incarnation.

D.M. Baillie in his book "God was in Christ" deals with the 'paradox of incarnation'. According to him the doctrine of incarnation is related to the doctrine of creation and doctrine of providence. The Christian idea of creation is 'creato exnihilo', that is creation out of nothing. But for the Greek as well as Indian philosophers 'out of nothing, nothing comes'; that means this view is inconsistent. If we accept the view that creation was out of pre-existent matter, then it leads to dualism. If we accept the view that it was out of God himself, then it is not creation but it is only emanation. Then we have to accept pantheism to avoid the problems. But in pantheism there is no room for incarnation. Christian doctrine of creation probably was formulated to avoid the erroneous views like pantheism, idealism, dualism, etc. But the Christian
The doctrine of creation is much more difficult to state and far less satisfactory than the other answers, which it is intended to exclude.

The doctrine of providence is also paradoxical. If we believe that everything that happens in history is by the providence of God, then we have to admit that the trouble caused by the evil intentions of fellowmen also must be considered as according to the will of God who is all loving and who makes all things work together for good to those who love him (Romans 8:28). This is highly paradoxical. Yet we cannot help but accept this view, otherwise it will lead to dualism. If we admit that everything is pre-ordained by God, then there is no room for evil and sin. If there is no sin there is no need for incarnation and salvation. Even though it is a paradox, it is a mystery that countless believers have accepted the doctrine of providence, by faith. The doctrine of providence explains the God of theism as transcendent and immanent at the same time. Though this doctrine of providence is a paradox, it gives us the clue to understand the paradox of incarnation itself.

Again we have been told that salvation is by grace. According to John 3:16, the purpose of incarnation is for the salvation of mankind and it is out of love, God
became man. The doctrine of grace is the central paradox that lies in the paradox of incarnation. Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am". This conviction makes Christian way of life which is by faith, distinct from mere morality. Christian life is not essentially practising moral principles, but a life based on faith in God. If salvation and good life comes from God by grace, then does it not make us morally irresponsible? If a Christian makes a wrong choice his conscience condemns him; but if he makes a right choice, it is not meritorious. This is paradoxical. This paradox of grace leads us to the mystery of incarnation. This paradox in its fragmentary form in the experience of a Christian reflects the union of God and man in the incarnation.

Hence we can say that even though the doctrine of incarnation in Christianity is a mystery, a paradox, it explains the doctrine of immanence and provides the picture of the God-centred universe. We mean that the operation of the love of God is revealed in incarnation reconciling the world to himself. We shall refer here to the opinion of Nicol Macnicol regarding the inconsistency of theism without the doctrine of incarnation. Christian doctrine of theism becomes final and absolute form of religion only in and through the
assurance that: "God and man can be fully reconciled and made in a fellowship which is love and peace".\(^9\)
This is done through the manifestation of God in Christ.

4.2.3. The Legacy of the Incarnation.

Christianity has to say not only about the pre-existence of Christ, but also about the continued existence of the risen and glorified Christ as the sequel to the incarnation. If God was incarnate in a real man, who lived on earth for thirty three years, where is that man now? Will it be possible to think Jesus is in heaven now living a human life? If not we have to believe that Jesus Christ the divine Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, who once assumed human nature for a brief period, left that behind.

Many Christians without much thinking would say that it is true that Christ took a human body only for a short period. Ordinary Vaishnavites also believe the account of the Lord's departure given in Srimad Bhagavatam. It says:

"The Lord who knows no birth discarded the body He had assumed for removing the burden of the earth ... He had assumed and discarded, as an actor does, the forms He had taken in the past, such as those of the Fish and the rest ..."\(^10\)

But to many thinkers it is not true, rather the humanity of Christ continued and is permanent. The two natures
of Christ, divine and human in the same person for ever
was insisted by the council of Chalcedon as against the
doctrine of the monophysites who said that Christ is
having only one nature because the human nature was lost
in the divine (absorbed into the divine nature). Mono-
physites really have misconceived the meaning of the in-
carnation, thinking of it as a mere theophany by which
the Son of God appeared for a short time on earth in the
guis of human body and then returned to heaven, no longer
human because he never was a man really except inhabited
in a human body. As a matter of fact the doctrine of in-
carnation insists that Christ did not cease to be human
when he departed from the world.

If Jesus is still existing in glory in his two natures,
divine and human, one may ask many questions about the con-
dition of his continued humanity and in the sense in which
he is still a man. It is very difficult to answer such
questions. The nature of Christ's life in glory may be
understood in terms of Christ's relation to his believers.
The early Church knew him in the flesh and continued to feel
his presence through memory. But how can we have the
presence of Christ through hearing stories about him? The
answer to this lies in the fact that we can have the pre-
sence of Christ through the Holy Spirit and neither
through memory nor through second hand stories. Therefore,
those who never knew Jesus in the flesh are not at a dis­
advantage because the divine presence of Christ continues
to be in the hearts of his people through the Holy Spirit.

Here is an answer to the effectiveness of myths and
religious rituals used as means of grace. Unless the Holy
Spirit works, outward religious observances are meaningless.
It was promised by Christ that he would send his Holy
Spirit to be in the world (John 14:16-18). In other words,
he would continue to be present in the world through the
Holy Spirit. New Testament practically does not make any
distinction between God's presence with devotees, having
Christ dwelling in them or being filled with the Holy
Spirit. It is a matter of fact that these are not three
experiences but the same experience. The secret of
Christian life or in general the religious life lies in
the fact that the God who was incarnate dwells in the de­
votees through the Spirit of God.

Again another problem arises in this case. If the
Holy Spirit is the medium through which God who became
man continued to be present in the world, how will we
make the distinction between God's presence in the world
and the presence of God-incarnate. In fact there is no
difference between God and God-incarnate. God is the same.
In that case, it must be true to say that the God-incar-
nate dwells in the hearts of all people who believe in God irrespective of their religious background. The only difference being that their understanding of the God-in-carnate may be different.

Jesus is God-incarnate. According to O.J. Boswell, the early disciples regarded Jesus as God in the most absolute sense of the word without limitation or subordination. Boswell says that the word for God in this text is "ho Theos". The Apostle Thomas cried out, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The following references show that the Apostles regarded Jesus as God: Titus 2:13; Romans 9:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 3:4,5,6.

To Boswell, the divine sonship attributed to Jesus was asserting absolute equality with God the Father. Even if any subordination is mentioned, it must be treated as only "functional subordination in the economy of the divine redemptive programme."12

4.2.4. Two Natures of Jesus Christ.

Another philosophical problem involved in the doctrine of incarnation is the question regarding the two natures of Jesus—human and divine. We have already discussed in the second chapter regarding the great Christological controversies that took place during the 3rd and 4th centuries in the Church. Nicene Council in A.D. 325 declared that Christ
is God—very God of very God, of one substance with the Father, as against Arius, who said that Christ was a kind of demi-god not God, yet he was to be worshipped though he was only a creature. The Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, asserted that Christ was really man, with a human consciousness, human sympathies; that he had all man's faculties and is as truly man as He is truly God. This statement made against that of Appollinarius, who believed that Christ cannot be very God, for God is unalterable and the human mind and will is liable to sin. To him Christ, though like man, was not man. This interpretation might be on the basis of Philippians 2:7—"... took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men." He accepted the humanity of Christ in one sense that he was eternally human, because man's nature pre-existed in the mind of God.

In the Council of Ephesus the question, how God could be both man and God, was discussed (A.D. 431). Nestorius was of the opinion that Jesus Christ was just a man born of Mary and not God at the time of his birth. But he became Son of God at the time of his baptism and at last one with God in glory.

But the Church council denied his theory and asserted that God himself was born of Mary, so that she can be
called mother of God in respect of his manhood. He is therefore not two persons but one. The Chalcedonian Council, A.D. 451, asserted that the humanity in Christ remains what it was, as against Eutyches who held the view that the humanity of Christ was absorbed into his divinity and as a result he was not human throughout his life. The Church Councils gradually formulated the Creed which asserted that Christ is

"perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One not by the conversion of the God-head into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of substance: but by the unity of person."\textsuperscript{13}

While discussing the title 'Son of God' and 'Son of man' attributed to Jesus, we discussed earlier the divinity and humanity of Jesus. Here our concern is to explain the union of these two natures in one person, Jesus Christ. Before attempting to prove the union of these two natures we have to prove first whether Jesus was truly God. We cannot just accept the fact blindly because the Church Councils formulated the creeds stating: "The only begotten Son of God ... very God of very God, came down from heaven, and was incarnate and was made man." It is the traditional belief of the Christians that Jesus is truly man and truly God. To prove the humanity and divinity of Jesus, Bible is our 'Source Book'.
4.2.4.1. The Humanity of Jesus. The following are some of the evidences to prove the reality of Christ's humanity:

(a) He expressly called himself and was called as man - John 8:40; Acts 2:22; Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 1 Timothy 2:5. The first promise of a Redeemer in Genesis 3:15 indicated clearly that God's plan for salvation included the use of a human agent. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews emphatically states that "in all things he had to be made like his brethren" (Hebrew 2:17). He called himself man; "You seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth" (John 8:40); "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God to you," (Acts 2:22).

(b) Secondly, he possessed the essential elements of human nature - body, soul, and spirit. He said, "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26); "My soul is exceeding sorrowful" (Matthew 26:38); when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, on the cross, he said, "Father, into your hands I commend My spirit" (Luke 23:46). Paul said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). His body had all the limitations of human body. It was limited to time and space. He could not be present in his body in different places at the same time. He could enter into a closed room only with his glorified body after resurrection.

(c) Thirdly, the New Testament gives evidences to several
other aspects of human nature in Jesus such as his birth
(Matthew 2:1), his growth (Luke 2:40), his fatigue (John
4:6), sleep (Matthew 8:24), hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst
(John 19:28), compassion (Matthew 9:36), love (Mark 10:21),
sorrow and anxiety (Matthew 26:37), temptation (Matthew
4:1), prayer (Matthew 14:23), suffering (Isaiah 53:5;
(d) Fourthly, the limitations of Jesus in the realm of
knowledge also show the humanity of Jesus. Though Jesus
advanced in wisdom, as a man he did not and never could
become omniscient because human souls by nature are finite.
He marvelled at the faith of the centurion (Luke 7:9).
He expressed his limitation in one of the discourses
given during his last week on earth, while mentioning the
time of the end of this world. He said, "But of that
day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor
the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:32).
This does not mean that Jesus did not have foreknowledge
or insight.

Rev. Emery H. Bancroft in his Christian Theology,
explains the integrity of Christ's humanity after discuss-
ing the reality of it. According to him, the
humanity of Jesus was complete and perfect. This is
what he means by integrity. He points out that the
virgin birth is the basis of such perfection, though the
rationalists deny the validity of it. Of course, this fact was unknown to others except Mary and Joseph. However, the virgin birth theory can be accepted on the basis of the asexual births common in the lower animals and plants. Virgin birth was initiated by the Holy Spirit which is not empirically verifiable. Bancroft believes that Jesus was free from the hereditary depravity. This is also not verifiable. Only on the basis of the following Bible references Bancroft asserts that Jesus was having an ideal human nature: 1 Corinthians 15:45; Psalms 8:4-8. The following Bible references show that Jesus was sinless—Luke 1:35; John 8:46; Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15, 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22; 1 John 3:5. Hence he opines that the human nature of Jesus was different from the ordinary human nature. In historical Jesus the divine ideal man is actualised.

In this sense we can agree with Bancroft that Jesus is an ideal perfect man, for, the purpose of incarnation is to make all men like him.

4.2.4.2. The Divinity of Christ. Our next task is to make an attempt to prove that Jesus is divine as well. We have already mentioned in this chapter the views of the early Christians, New Testament writers, and Jesus himself regarding the divinity of Christ.
A.H. Strong mentions in his 'Systematic Theology' some of the proofs for the divinity of Jesus Christ.¹

(a) He is expressly called God. John 1:1 states that the Logos was not only with God, but was God. Strong suggests that it should be read as "the only one begotten Son". When Saint Thomas addressed Jesus as 'My Lord and my God'—since it was unrebuked by Jesus, is equivalent to an assertion on his own part of his claim to deity. He is called God in Titus 2:13 and Hebrews 1:8.

(b) Old Testament descriptions of God are applied to him. Matthew 3:3 may be compared with Isaiah 40:3, John 12:41 with Isaiah 6:1, Ephesians 4:7,8 with Psalms 68:18, 1 Peter 3:15 with Isaiah 8:13.

(c) He possesses the attributes of God such as eternity (John 1:1), omnipresence (Matthew 28:20), omniscience (Matthew 9:40), omnipotence (Matthew 27:18).

(d) The works of God are ascribed to him—John 1:3, Colossians 1:17, John 5:27-29.


(f) His name is associated with that of God upon a footing of equality in the case of baptism formula—Matthew 28:29, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Corinthians 1:3.

(g) Equality with God is expressly claimed both by Christ
himself and by his Apostles - John 5:18, Philippians 2:6. (h) The application of the titles to him - 'Son of God' (Matthew 26:63), 'Image of God' (Colossians 1:15), and also the declaration of his oneness with God - John 10:30, 16:15.

All these proofs of Christ's deity from the New Testament are corroborated by the Christian experience of his followers. We shall accept Christian experience as the conclusive proof of Christ's deity. His disciples did not realise the divinity of their master fully during his earthly ministry, but only after his resurrection from the dead. Christ remains a living reality even today to his devotees. The early Church and the disciples claimed the divinity of Jesus on the basis of their practical Christian experience.

Surjit Singh suggests that the divinity of Jesus can be viewed from two stand points - metaphysical and historical.

Meraphysically, Christ is of the same nature of God - the image of the invisible God, co-eternal with God, the Son of God, the very God of very God, the creator of the universe, having attributes of God, the second person of the God-head, the mediator between God and man to reconcile the world with God.
Historically, he is the Son of God by doing the will of God. The book of Hebrews also emphasises this aspect of obedience. Historically, he grew in the knowledge of God. The voice from above declaring Jesus as 'Son of God' is also historical evidence. Another event in his life giving clear evidence to his divinity is his resurrection from the dead. It is a controversial issue whether the resurrection story is historical. The spiritual presence of Christ is not an evidence for his resurrection. But the Apostles claim that they are eye-witness to his empty tomb and his appearances.

If we accept the metaphysical view only, then we have to consider Jesus Christ as a Theophany only. On the other hand, the historical view will become a kind of deification of Jesus. Surjit Singh is right in holding the view that the Apostles and evangelists did not fall into the trap of either heresy because they did not look at the life of Christ from a balcony seat but rather from an existential standpoint. Their destinies were inseparably depended upon him. They said to Jesus "To whom shall we go! You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

One may ask a question at this point. How did the disciples come to think of Jesus Christ as the eternal, the image of the invisible and the logos, etc.? It is a very difficult question to answer. However, one thing is
clear that the disciples' belief in the divinity of Christ was based primarily on their faith. It does not mean that their belief was a type of assumption, and apriori type. It was their fellowship with the historical Jesus which made them to believe in his divinity. Surjit Singh states:

"Through their faith, which is the organ of experience by which they had experienced things temporal and eternal in relation with each other, they found in their master authority which could not be found anywhere else."  

He speaks with the authority of God. They have come to know the divinity of Jesus by encountering God in him and not by assumption or inference. If at all it is an inference it must be existential inference as Surjit Singh puts it.

42-43. The Union of the Two Natures in One Person. Now we have come to our greatest task. We have got plenty of evidences to prove the divinity and humanity of Jesus. But how to put them together into one unity in one person is a difficult problem. For the early Christians there was no such problem. But only later on when the Church had to formulate theories in the light of philosophy, problems arose. Jesus was not certainly God and man, but God-man. Nestorians claimed that Jesus had two distinct natures and almost divided Jesus into two persons. But later on Church councils accepted this view with modifications. Jesus is divine and human, yet one person. In
this sense, he appears as a monster like the 'lion-man' avatara of Vaishnavism. Because of this difficulty this question of union of two natures is considered as a mystery. We have no analogies in our experience to explain adequately the two natures of Christ. A.H. Strong has mentioned, however, the possibility of such a union.

"The possibility of Deity and humanity in one person is grounded in the original creation, of man in the divine image. Man's resemblance to God, his possession of a rational and spiritual nature, is the condition of incarnation. Brute-life is incapable of union with God. But human nature is capable of the Divine, in the sense not only that it lives, moves, and has its being in God, but that God may unite Himself indissolubly to it and endue it with Divine powers, while yet it remains all the more truly human. Since the moral image of God in human nature has been lost by sin, Christ, the perfect image of God after which man originally made, restores that lost image by uniting Himself to humanity and filling it with His Divine life and love."

This does not involve a double personality because Christ uniformly speaks of himself and is spoken of as a single person. The attributes and powers of both natures are ascribed to the one Christ. Only in such a union of two natures in one person to constitute Jesus Christ a proper mediator between man and God. Though the divine nature is unlimited, immutable, and incapable of ignorance, by virtue of being human, it could manifest ignorance, weakness, temptation, and suffering. As in the case of soul-body relation in which soul suffers pain from the union, so also Christ suffered because of the union with the body. Hence
his two natures in one person made it possible to have fellowship and reconciliation with man and God.

We have not settled this problem adequately. It will remain as a never ending christological problem. However, we shall examine some of the important theories of incarnation explaining the two natures of Christ.

4.3. The Theories of Incarnation.

4.3.1. The question of the unity of two natures—divine and human, has been regarded as a difficult theological problem and yet it is a fundamental principle of the Christian religion. Therefore, various attempts have been made and various theories have been formulated to explain the unity of the two natures in Christ. Certain theories exclude or modify the divine element in the nature of Christ, like the Divine Influence Theory and Kenosis Theory and certain theories exclude or modify the human element in Christ like the Apollinarian Theory. In addition to these theories I shall discuss a new theory suggested by John Hick. I just put it as Historisation theory.

4.3.2. Divine Influence Theory.

It has been noticed in our notions of divinity and humanity in Christ contain certain elements that are contradictory elements that we cannot combine them in the
conception of one and the same personality. Christ would cease to be divine without the attributes ascribed to God, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, eternity, immutability. Is it possible for such a divine being to exist in time and space under all the limiting conditions of man? To avoid this difficulty of uniting contradictory attributes in a single person, attempts have been made to separate the seemingly contradictory elements in such a way that certain acts and experiences of Christ are ascribed to his humanity and certain elements to his divinity only. For example, his growth, expanding knowledge, temptations and sufferings actually belong to Christ's humanity only. But his resurrection, ascension, miracles, transfiguration belong to his divinity. Even some believe that Jesus was God-man only in certain occasions; otherwise, he was only a man. That means Jesus acts as God-man or Son of God only when he was influenced by God. John Caird puts this divine influence theory in the following words:

"He was really and completely human, a Being subject to the progressive changes, the weakness, sorrows, sufferings, of ordinary human nature, the apparent impossibility of conceiving him as at the same time exalted above all imperfection and changes has been met by reposing the divine element in his person simply to a divine or superhuman influence analogous to that of prophetic inspiration perpetually operating of his human consciousness and bringing it into unbroken harmony with the mind and will of God." 19

This theory states that the religious value of the life of Christ arises from his perfect sympathy with human beings
and from the ideal of human excellence which he sets before
the world. Human beings in their pain and grief could
find consolation in Jesus the "man of sorrows". In his
life the essential human nature is revealed in its com­
pleteness and perfection including moral perfection to
console and encourage others. Supernatural Christ cannot
be an ideal for ordinary people. In other words half­
human and half-divine being cannot be an example to men.
A being who is sinless having power to overcome temptations
because of his omnipotence cannot give encouragement to
others. This theory therefore excludes the divine elements
in the person of Christ except allowing the intimate rela­
tion of the mind and will of Christ to the mind and will
of God.

This unitarian view of the person of Christ is not
a satisfactory theory. It is wrong to say that if we as­
cribe to Christ a super-human nature, he will be beyond
human compassion, sympathy, human sorrows and temptations.
God is love and not rigidly immutable. Moral excellence
does not find at the human level, it is by the partici­
pation in a divine and eternal life. Human nature is in
essential affinity with God and therefore it can be satis­
fied with nothing less than a divine perfection.

4.3.3. Humiliation Theory, or Kenosis Theory.

This is another theory which modifies the concept of
the divine element in the person of Christ. John Caird states that according to this theory,

"The higher principle in the person of Christ is, not absolute Deity, but Deity by an act of infinite condescension so devest in itself of its essential glory as to be capable of taking on itself the nature of man."  

This process has been expressed in theology as "Kenosis" or "humiliation". In order to effect incarnation, the eternal Logos or Son of God, by an act of self-limitation, denounced Himself so much of His absolute power and glory and took up human nature. Humanity being so limited, God had to limit himself to have union with human nature thereby he manifested his love to mankind. The actions and sufferings of Christ are truly, and not in appearance only, the actions and sufferings of human being, yet at the same time they are truly the actions and sufferings of a divine being, being the manifestation of divine love. In that sense the sacrifice of Christ was a divine sacrifice to manifest God's love and at the same time God being limited in human form, it was the human sacrifice because Absolute Deity is beyond change and suffering. It is the suffering of that Deity who voluntarily limited himself to the human nature. This theory is based on the Bible reference found in Philippians 2:5-8, where the process of self-emptying of Christ is mentioned.

This theory is objectionable. We notice a serious
contradiction here of having the notion of an omnipotent God limiting or emptying himself to become powerless, an omniscient God becoming ignorant of what he knows, and infinite God determined to be incapable of willing. If we examine this process of humiliation we notice that it is not real humiliation because the power used to limit himself remain in the process of humiliation. The power to humiliate himself cannot be less than infinite. So also in the case of omniscience, there is contradiction. Without having all knowledge how can this be limited.

Another side of the problem is, once the infinite God becomes man by self-imposed limitation, he becomes finite being and no more God. Such a finite being cannot retain its infinitude even in memory. If God limited himself to become man, who was in heaven during the earthly ministry of Christ. We must admit therefore, that God was still retaining his infinitude and divine power during the period of humiliation. Thus we have noticed the drawbacks of this humiliation theory on the ground that self imposed limitation is no limitation at all.

To avoid such difficulties involved in the doctrine of self humiliation of God, the upholders of this theory modified it telling that kenosis does not consist of the real and literal giving up of divine attributes but only hiding the divine attributes and presence under the form
of humanity. This view is also not satisfactory because it has reduced the phenomenon of incarnation to an illusion. Another objection to this theory is that if God limits himself to be less than God to identify himself with human experience, then it is not the revelation of God because he is less than God. The truth underlying the theory of humiliation of God is the love of God that manifested itself in suffering and sacrifice. It is inconsistent to say that God renounced all his attributes to manifest his love. We can think of his thoughts as God's thoughts, his feelings as God's feelings, and the love that breathed through his words and deeds as of the very essence of God's love. In this sense his statement, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9) indicates that Christ was possessing the divine nature of God. His suffering and sacrifice must be treated as the highest manifestation of God's divine love. We should understand that within the infinitude of God there is limitations because God is omnipotent yet cannot deny himself, he cannot sin, he cannot lie. His power is limited by the moral character. Similarly God's immutability is not the absence of change. It is the absolute spiritual perfection. In this sense Caird says:

"And if this be so, then surely what we must find in Christ as the God-man is, not a being stripped or emptied Himself of His essential divinity in order to share in the weakness and suffering of humanity, but a manifesta-
tion of God in all the plentitude of the divine nature ... "21

Let us think of God as absolute in whom all finite existences live and move and have their being. It should be considered that a love that was incapable of suffering would fall short of the highest expression of love. The manifestation of God's love implies the self-sacrifice.

These two theories are trying to exclude or modify divine nature in Jesus Christ. But there are some theories that try to exclude or modify the human nature in Jesus to explain the unity of humanity and divinity in the same person.

4.3.4. Theories that Exclude or Modify the Human Element in the Nature of Christ.

John Caird in his Gifford Lectures on Natural Theology has mentioned another theory of incarnation which is an attempt to solve the problem of incarnation by modifying in some way the human element in Christ's person. Is it possible to have the union of two individuals having independent consciousness and will? Even if it is possible in the case of two human beings, it is impossible to have the union of a divine being and a human being.

Apollinarious in the fourth century profounded a theory to solve the problem of two complete natures in
Christ. To him Christ was not having a human soul, but possessing only human body and spirit. He made Christ an incomplete human being.

Though this theory was condemned at the Council at Constantinople in A.D. 318, it still has got some value as pointing to a deeper solution of the Christological problem. It is true that the person of Christ cannot have two souls. In one way to solve this problem is to believe that the divine spirit took the place of human spirit. If it is so, Christ's humanity was different from ordinary human beings because his bodily organism is animated by the divine spirit.

This theory is important because it agrees with the New Testament statements especially the fourth gospel and Christ's own utterances. He was logos who was in the beginning with God and created the universe, as mentioned in John's gospel chapter 1. His consciousness goes beyond his earthly life, being the only begotten Son who was eternally in the bosom of the Father. The consciousness which could express itself through human lips was nothing but the self-consciousness of God.

The defect of this theory is that it does not give as any real union of the divine and human in Christ's person, but only the union of an incomplete humanity.
with the divine. Secondly, the whole redemptive works of Christ become insignificant if Christ was not truly human.

The true conception is that Christ was true man and true God. Though the union of divine and human transcends human understanding and all earthly parallel, still it is a union, we can say that this union is the perfect union of a perfect life of humanity. It is achieved when the individual life is surrendered to the universal and infinite life. This union does not involve the extinction of individuality, but it means the development and perfection of individuality.

4.3.5. The Inhistorisation Theory.

Now let us discuss a new theory of incarnation suggested by John Hick in his 'God and Universe of Faiths'. He states that the expression 'inhistorisation' may be used as a substitute for the word 'incarnation'. Therefore we shall call this view as inhistorisation theory.

The doctrine of incarnation has traditionally been expressed by means of the category of substance. But in the twentieth century, it can be expressed in many other ways. Moreover the substance thinking has become out of fashion. However, John Hick thinks that the central idea in the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds can be accepted in another sense. For the early Church, Christ was thought
of as one substance with the God-head and at the same time being man he was of one substance with mankind. But our knowledge of Jesus Christ is based on his life and works. God is Agape and that the Agape we see in Jesus in some sense is the eternal Agape of God. In this sense when we say God was in Christ, we mean that in Christ the divine Agape was at work dealing with humanity. In Jesus Christ, What Christian faith finds is not the divine substance, but divine action i.e., Agape in operation.

John Hick, therefore, uses the word 'divine inhistorisation' because he does not agree with the concept of word becoming flesh, rather he accepts the view that God's Agape operates in and through Jesus Christ. According to the Chalcedonian formulae, we can say that Jesus' Agape was not like God's Agape, nor reflection of God's Agape, but it actually and literally was God's Agape. Jesus Christ is both man and God. He is a member of human class and at the same time the Agape of Jesus is qualitatively and numerically identical with God's Agape. Here God became inhistorised in human life and in some sense, in that life, God and man were one.

From this standpoint, John Hick says that Jesus was having only one nature, (Human nature) but in that nature God's ἀγάπη was in operation towards humanity. He was having only one will, but that will was fully controlled
by the divine Agape. Though he was consciously human who could pray to God, he was at the same time conscious that in the Agape he was one with God himself. In this sense John Hick substituted the word 'homoagape' instead of the traditional Christological expression homoosia (same substance).

It seems that this theory is also another divine influence theory in so far as divine element in Jesus is taken as God's Agape in operation. Then how do we distinguish incarnation from saints? Unless we take God's Agape as God in his fullness present in Jesus, inhistorisation theory cannot be accepted as a satisfactory theory, though it tries to solve apparently the problem of the union of divine and human elements in Jesus. In the case of saints the distinction between God and saint is maintained. But in the case of Jesus Christ God and man are not two but one and the same, though it is realised differently from two different angles such as historical Jesus and escatological Christ.

4.4. Historical Jesus and Escatological Christ.

4.4.1. The Quest of Historical Jesus.

According to Albert Schweitzer the greatest achievement of German Theology is the critical investigation of the life of Jesus. He had the opinion that the early
Christians were indifferent with regard to the life of historical Jesus. They gave greater importance to the Christ who was to come, in consequence of this attitude they have handed down to us, no biographies of Jesus, but only Gospels. But afterwards, it was a great problem to bring together the supra-mundane Christ and the historical Jesus of Nazareth into a single personality. To some critics, the historical Jesus founded a community without making messianic claims, but his followers made such claims on the basis of their belief in His resurrection. (Matthew 21:10,11 give support to this view). While some critics were denying all eschatology to Jesus, others were doing just the opposite. It is true that we cannot totally exclude the eschatological element in the life of Jesus because without it we cannot explain the tradition concerning the words and works of Jesus.

No doubt, Jesus was a historical figure and the historical fact. Y. Masih mentions that the historical fact concerning Jesus, a Jew, has been recorded by Tacitus (a famous Roman historian), Josephus and also in the Jewish religious literature called Talmus.

But the theologians, later on, while attempting to ascertain the actual words of Jesus and even the sepulchre in which Jesus was laid found that the quest of historical Jesus was in vain for there is hardly any statement in the
gospels which can be ascribed to the historical Jesus.  

However, one thing is certain that Jesus is not a mythological figure or a character in a fiction. His teachings and his personality exerted tremendous influence on his followers in particular and world as a whole, in general. He is accepted by the believers as their personal Saviour and Lord. The words of the gospels are the 'word' or 'logos', a spiritual presence for every believer. Y:Masih states that, towards the end for the believer Jesus is not a historical figure who once walked on the earth and has now ceased to be. He is a reality to be found anywhere and at any time.  

St. Paul writes to the Romans that there is no need to search Christ among the dead to help us. For salvation that comes from trusting Christ, which is what we preach is already within easy reach of each of us, in fact, it is as near as our own hearts and mouths (Romans 10:6-8).

In this sense, what is more important for the believer is not the historical Jesus who was just a man born in Bethlehem, lived as a Galilean, preached the gospel of divine love, who was crucified and now is no longer in flesh with us; but the living spiritual presence of Christ who is ever present, never failing friend, redeemer and Lord, the resurrected Son of God. The
historical Jesus does not save, but only Christ does, because those who saw historical Jesus did not have more advantages over those who accepted him as their personal Saviour through the preaching of the gospel, through the influence of the service of evangelists and Christian workers. In fact most of the people who saw historical Jesus could not believe in him. Only few people of those days could realize Christ in Jesus of Nazareth, like St. Peter who said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Luke 9:20, Matthew 16:15,16, Mark 8:29) and one of the criminals who was crucified with Jesus saw in Jesus his Christ and saviour, for he said, "Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

The historical Jesus is thus Messiah (Christ) in the mythological language of the Bible. Bible is not a book of science nor a book of history. Its function is to communicate God's will to mankind and help them to experience the living presence of God. Myth is the language of the unconscious while facts and science are typical products of the conscious. The function of religion is to widen the intellectual and ethical horizon of man by giving spiritual experience. Therefore, the function of myth is to relate the worldly experience to the supernatural experience. The language of the unconscious is mythological.
4.4.2. De-mythologizing.

The modern tendency of the modern theologians is to de-mythologize and separate the historical Jesus from the mythological account of the gospel. Let us mention the contribution of Bultman to theology regarding de-mythologizing project. The scholars of his generation wanted to eliminate everything supernatural from the life of Jesus Christ to make him a man, to avoid the problem of verification of the metaphysical elements associated with the account of the life and works of Jesus. For example, in this modern scientific age it is difficult to accept the validity of miracles mentioned in the gospels. To some scholars a miracle is a violation of natural law. Of course, we may be able to give natural explanation to some of the miracles, but there are miracles for which there are no natural explanation. For example, the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead and the resurrection of Jesus Christ involved forces unknown to us; and they are outside the realm of so-called natural law. Many scholars therefore, deny the reality of such miracles. They cannot accept the virgin birth of Jesus nor his divinity.

Bultman also agreed to eliminate the mythological from the teachings of Jesus. He gives the reasons for de-mythologizing. First, Bultman claims that de-mythologizing is required so that the Christian message may be
heard by modern man. Secondly, he claims that the mythological expressions of the New Testament are not only obsolete and unacceptable to modern man, but also misleading. Bultman had already paved the way for different kinds of de-mythologizing. His concern was to interpret rather than to eliminate those teachings of Jesus which were set within a mythological framework. Hence, he is in favour of preserving the eschatological or mythological elements in the gospel. He wants only to reinterpret the gospel account such a way that the Christ event be understood as both historical and eschatological. This position of Bultman is expressed by Norman J. Young in the following words:

"He is able to affirm that the event of salvation is an act of God that is historical because it occurs in personal history and eschatological because it occurs again and again putting to end one's past historicity and opening the way to the new. It is inextricably linked to past historical event of Jesus of Nazareth, but the decisive nature of that event cannot be estab-
lished by objective historical research. It is known only in the present faithful encounter with the message that proclaims it as decisive."  

To Bultman the history in which God reveals himself is personal history. He insists, of course, the absoluteness of Christian revelation, yet he rejects the view that God's revelation is an objective entity in the world, an act accomplished once and for all. To him, God's revelation in history can be discerned only by the eyes of faith.
We may ask then, what relation does Bultman see between the eschatological act of God that occurs in present historicity and the past historical life of Jesus of Nazareth? No doubt he denied the view that Christian faith can be established on the basis of a past historical occurrence. But he does not mean by this that happenings in the past are irrelevant for faith, nor that Christian faith could exist now without Jesus of Nazareth then.

From the above discussion what we understand about the significance or validity of incarnation is that on one hand it must be both historical and eschatological and on the other hand, the past historical occurrence must be linked with the personal history. In this respect we shall agree with the view that what is more important to the believer is the living presence of Jesus Christ rather than the historicity of the gospel account.

Gerd Theissen stated in his "Critical Faith" that religion exists only as particular religious tradition and that tradition is conditioned by historical relativity. To him, historical research on religion can come to hypothetical conclusions only and not certainty. But faith on the other hand, looks for certainty about this historical Jesus; but here it is disappointed by scientific criticism, because critics cannot say with any degree of assurance which words and traditions of Jesus are historical.
and which are not. What historical research can offer is only a collection of hypotheses. If it is so, it would be stupid to base one's life on scientific hypotheses which keep changing so quickly. Religious truth, on the other hand, is self-evident regardless of the question of historicity.

The inadequacy of history to be the basis of religious belief can be shown on the basis of John Baillie's views. To him history, in its very essence, is a process of action and reaction between external circumstance and human response. He quotes the words of Dr. Dodd:

"History consists 'not merely of occurrences, but of events which are occurrences plus meaning and some events are such that the meaning of what happened is of greater importance, historically speaking, than what happened.'"31

The essential matter of history, in this sense, is not what happened but what people thought and said about it. Hence we can conclude here that the validity of the doctrine of incarnation in Christianity is based on the interpretation of the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth relevant to the presence of Christ in the Christian experience of believers. We can fully agree with Gerd Theissen that history gives us only hypothetical conclusions while faith gives us certainty.
## REFERENCES

1. Hick, J.  

2. Macnicol, Nicol.  

3. Strong, E.L.  

4. Ibid  
   P. 28

5. Cullmann, Oscar.  

6. Ibid  
   P. 275

7. Ibid  
   P. 276

8. Buswell, Oliver.  

   *Indian Theism*. op. cit. P. 261

10. Raghunathan, N. (Tr.)  

11. Buswell, O.J.  

12. Ibid  
    P. 106

13. Strong, A.H.  
    *Lectures on the Incarnation of God*. op. cit. P. 55

14. Bancroft, H.E.  
194

17. Ibid  P. 35
21. Ibid  P. 146.
24. Masih, Y.  Ibid  P. 10
27. Ibid  P. 64.
29. Ibid  P. 119