




The influence of the incarnation of Jesus on the study of early church christology: a theological-historical analysis

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Abstract: This research examines the pivotal significance of the doctrine of the Incarnation in the evolution of early Christian Christology, with emphasis on its impact upon theological and doctrinal formulations concerning the essence of Christ. The present study will seek to fill a void in contemporary scholarship regarding the influence of the Incarnation on Christological discussions within the early Church, especially in the dual nature of Jesus Christ as human and divine. Using a historical-theological approach, this study examines key texts written by early Christian theologians and explores the contextual influences arising from Hellenistic culture that shaped the development of Christological doctrine.

It proves that the Incarnation was important not only to the early Christian intellectual tradition but also in the formation of the Nicene Creed as a response to heretical positions such as Arianism and as the foundation for orthodox Christian doctrine. This dissertation shows that the concept of the Incarnation was crucial in formulating theological responses to the first challenges that Christianity faced and, as such, connected ancient philosophical debates with the nascent Christian teachings. What is more, it points out the strategic use of the Incarnation to defend the full divinity and humanity of Christ, which would later become foundational to Christian orthodoxy.

This research affords a full understanding of the Incarnation, considered the basis of early Christian Christology and dogma, highlighting its crucial role in defining the nature of Christ. The study fills a gap in historical and theological scholarship, bringing forth the perennial significance of the Incarnation in shaping Christian doctrine and its continued importance in contemporary theological discussions.

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Introduction

The Incarnation of Jesus is recognized as one of the central doctrines in Christian theology, affirming that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man. The Incarnation of Jesus is recognized as one of the central doctrines in Christian theology, affirming that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man¹². This doctrine highlights God's presence in human history, as Jesus did not merely come as a teacher but as God incarnate, entering the world to offer salvation to humanity³. Through the Incarnation, Christ demonstrates divine solidarity with creation by experiencing human suffering and limitations, which form the basis of the Christian doctrine of salvation⁴. The Christology of the Early Church emphasizes a proper understanding of the Incarnation, which was itself a key factor in shaping some of the most basic doctrinal formulations, in particular, the affirmation at Nicaea of the divinity of Christ⁵. Moreover, the doctrine of Incarnation provides a theological root for the mission of the Church, which allows a comprehension of the double nature of Christ in different contexts of culture and tradition, without doing damage to the Christian doctrine⁶.

Early Church Christology study has focused upon the effect of the idea of the Incarnation upon the understanding of Jesus' mission and nature, especially concerning the various heresies of the time. Preliminary theological discourses, such as those in the Council of Nicaea, had affirmed the declaration of Christ's divine and human characteristics is fundamental in nature; for such a declaration will

definitely prove victorious over Arianism, which ideology had vehemently denied Jesus Christ his divinity⁷. Prominent Church Fathers like John Chrysostom emphasized a robust Christological unity, arguing against the docetic tendencies that separated Jesus' human experiences from His divine essence, which was a critical point in refuting Manichaeism Christology⁸. The Logos doctrine advanced by the Greek Apologists connected Jesus' divine nature to the pre-existent Word (Logos), reinforcing the idea that Christ's incarnation was essential for understanding His role in creation and redemption⁹. Later Christological developments continued to build upon this foundation, with figures like Theodore of Mopsuestia advocating for a clear distinction between Jesus' divine and human natures, contributing to a deeper theological articulation in response to emerging heresies¹⁰. The Septuagint played a substantial role in the early development of Christological thought, as scriptural justification was the major factor that the primitive Christian community used to support the dual nature of Christ in their exegesis and analysis of Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah¹¹.

The early Christian community worked out their Christological doctrines through ecumenical councils, especially the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, from which the concept of Incarnation became one of the main building blocks in dogma formation. It was through these councils that some of the fundamental propositions about Christ's two natures—divine and human—were determined, with affirmation of both being at the very center of rejecting certain heretical readings, including Arianism and

¹ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology : A Rereading of Raymund Schwager ' s Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

² Eberhart, "The Unique Sacrifice of Christ According to Hebrews 9 : A Study in Theological Creativity."

³ Studies, "Jesus : Divine Relationality and Suffering Creation."

⁴ Timbers and Hollenberger, "Christian Mindfulness and Mental Health : Coping through Sacred Traditions and Embodied Awareness."

⁵ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology : A Rereading of Raymund Schwager ' s Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

⁶ Eberhart, "The Unique Sacrifice of Christ According to Hebrews 9 : A Study in Theological Creativity."

⁷ Craig, "Is God the Son Begotten in His Divine Nature ?"

⁸ Chrysostom and Chrysostom, "John Chrysostom on Manichaeism."

⁹ Craig, "Is God the Son Begotten in His Divine Nature ?"

¹⁰ Edwards and Edwards, "The Gospel of John and Antiochene Christology : The Diverging Paths of Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom."

¹¹ Era and Greek, "The Septuagint as a Holy Text – The First ' Bible ' of the Early Church."



Nestorianism¹². The Nicene Creed played a crucial role in defining Christ's relationship to the Father, affirming that Jesus is "of one substance with the Father," a declaration that aimed to unify the church's understanding against divergent interpretations¹³. The Chalcedonian Definition further sealed the doctrine by proclaiming that Christ exists in two natures, unconfusedly and indivisibly, which addressed the controversies on the nature of Christ in the 5th century¹⁴. Early ecclesiastical figures, such as Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, championed these doctrines, using scriptural exegesis and theological argumentation to defend the orthodox position with respect to the Incarnation and to defeat heretical claims¹⁵. The lasting authority of these ecumenical decisions is seen in contemporary theological discussions, where the parameters then set continue to guide Christological reflection and keep consistency in the basic truths of the Christian faith¹⁶.

Historically, the debate over the Incarnation has shaped the course of Christian theology, particularly in clarifying Christ's dual nature as divine and human. Theological discussions at the Council of Nicaea were pivotal, as they affirmed the full divinity of Christ against Arian claims that denied His eternal nature and co-equality with the Father¹⁷. John Chrysostom's Christology emphasized a unified interpretation of the divine and human natures of Christ, offering a counterpoint to Theodore of Mopsuestia's more distinct separation of these two natures¹⁸. In the Gospel of John, the Incarnation is portrayed as the Logos becoming flesh, serving as a cornerstone for the theological understanding that Christ's divine nature was

fully embodied in human form, exemplified in John 1:14¹⁹. Raymund Schwager's dramatic Christology highlights the Incarnation as a divine action, revealing God's salvific plan through a personal and relational engagement with humanity, challenging traditional views of divine impassibility²⁰. Contemporary scholarship continues to explore the implications of the Incarnation, recognizing it as a radical embodiment of divine love that bridges the gap between God and humanity, while maintaining the integrity of both natures in theological discourse²¹.

Contemporary theological and historical research shows that a deep understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation provides important insights for the development of modern Christological studies and its application in today's cultural context. Recent scholarship emphasizes the relational aspect of the Incarnation, where Jesus' embodiment is seen as a bridge connecting divine love with human suffering, providing a profound theological framework for understanding relationality in a broken world²². The Gospel of John highlights the Incarnation as the Word made flesh, portraying Jesus as the divine Logos whose historical presence redefines humanity's connection to God and offers a new lens for Christological interpretation in modern contexts²³. Latin theological traditions from the 6th to the 15th centuries have interpreted the Incarnation as both a Christological and Mariological symbol, demonstrating its foundational role in shaping the dual nature of Christ in theological discourse²⁴. Contemporary Catholic theology has expanded its interpretative scope to include

¹² Pawl, "Conciliar Trinitarianism ,,"

¹³ Oliver and Oliver, "Trinity Disruption."

¹⁴ Admirand, "Three Hopes."

¹⁵ Oliver and Oliver, "Trinity Disruption."

¹⁶ Makarov, "An Irreproachable Dogmatics ? Plotinus , Theodore Metochites and the Sixth Chapter of the Letter On Education."

¹⁷ Eberhart, "The Unique Sacrifice of Christ According to Hebrews 9 : A Study in Theological Creativity."

¹⁸ Edwards and Edwards, "The Gospel of John and Antiochene Christology : The Diverging Paths of Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom."

¹⁹ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

²⁰ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology : A Rereading of Raymund Schwager ' s Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

²¹ Studies, "Jesus : Divine Relationality and Suffering Creation."

²² Studies.

²³ Luther, "The Authentication of the Past : Narrative Representations of History in the Gospel of John."

²⁴ "Latin Theological Interpretations on Templum Dei A Double Christological and Mariological Symbol (6th - 15th Centuries)."



visual and artistic representations of the Incarnation, using images as theological resources that enhance the understanding of Christ's divine-human unity in a culturally diverse world²⁵. Studies on Indigenous interpretations of Christian doctrine suggest that the Incarnation is re-envisioned as a liberating and culturally transformative event, resonating with indigenous sacraments and providing a unique dialogue between traditional Christian teachings and local spiritual practices²⁶.

In reality, however, an understanding of how the doctrine of the Incarnation specifically shaped the development of Early Church Christology has not been fully elucidated in the existing theological literature. One reason for this gap is the limited focus on the early church's interpretation of the Incarnation, particularly in its response to heresies that challenged the dual nature of Christ, such as Docetism and Arianism, which have not been thoroughly examined in current scholarship²⁷. Modern theological studies often overlook the cultural and philosophical influences from the Hellenistic and Roman contexts, which played a significant role in shaping the early church's understanding of the Incarnation and its integration into the dogmatic formulations²⁸. The interaction between scriptural exegesis and emerging theological frameworks during the ecumenical councils has not been deeply explored, leaving a gap in understanding how scriptural interpretations were used to defend the full humanity and divinity of Christ²⁹. Recent research suggests that early church leaders like Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria provided foundational contributions

to the doctrine, yet their specific arguments on the Incarnation's implications for salvation and Christ's mediatory role are still understudied in contemporary Christology³⁰. The influence of early liturgical practices and their theological implications for the understanding of the Incarnation are another area lacking comprehensive analysis, particularly regarding how the Eucharist symbolized and reinforced the doctrine within the faith community³¹.

Many previous studies have only focused on the doctrinal aspects of the Incarnation in general, without exploring its influence on the process of dogma formulation in the early church. The emphasis on abstract theological debates has often overshadowed the historical and contextual factors that shaped the early church's understanding of the Incarnation, particularly its role in countering heresies like Gnosticism and Arianism³². Recent scholarly efforts highlight the importance of cultural and philosophical influences, suggesting that the Greek concept of the Logos played a significant role in shaping early doctrinal formulations, yet this intersection has not been thoroughly examined in current literature³³. The dynamic relationship between scriptural interpretation and theological development during the ecumenical councils, such as those at Nicaea and Chalcedon, remains an underexplored area, especially in understanding how biblical exegesis informed the articulation of Christ's dual nature³⁴. While theological images and metaphors have been utilized to explain the Incarnation, their impact on shaping dogmatic formulations has not been adequately analyzed, leaving a gap in

²⁵ Kova, "Images as a Resource for Catholic Theology."

²⁶ Lamanites, "A Divine Rebellion: Indigenous Sacraments Among."

²⁷ Kirkwood et al., "Metaphor Research Can Tell Us about Quaker Theology."

²⁸ Salu et al., "Early Church Hospitality-Based Pentecostal Mission in the Religious Moderation Frame of Indonesia."

²⁹ Pike-rowney, "The ' Distant Music of Social Radicalism ': The Debate between Pelagius and Augustine of the 4th Century CE and Its Relevance to Music Education."

³⁰ Mdingi, "Who , Being in the Form of God , Did Not Consider It Robbery to Be Equal with God : Kenosis of Leadership Kenosis : Fully God and Fully Human."

³¹ You and Ji, "' In Communion with God ': The Inculturation of the Christian Liturgical Theology of Giulio Aleni in His Explication of the Mass (Misa Ji) ."

³² Makarov, "An Irreproachable Dogmatics ? Plotinus , Theodore Metochites and the Sixth Chapter of the Letter On Education."

³³ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

³⁴ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology : A Rereading of Raymund Schwager ' s Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."



understanding the visual and symbolic contributions to early Christology³⁵. The integration of dramatic and narrative approaches, such as those found in Raymund Schwager's dramatic Christology, offers a fresh perspective on how the Incarnation was understood and presented as part of the early church's response to emerging doctrinal challenges, yet this approach is still relatively novel in mainstream studies³⁶.

The knowledge gap is also evident in the lack of detailed historical analysis of the impact of the concept of the Incarnation on the early church's response to heresies such as Arianism and Docetism. While much attention has been given to the general theological refutations, specific analyses of how the Incarnation was used as a doctrinal tool against Arianism's denial of Christ's divinity remain scarce, leaving a gap in understanding its strategic role in these debates³⁷. The lack of focused studies on the role of the Incarnation in addressing Docetism means that the ways in which the early church emphasized Christ's humanity as essential to counter claims of his merely illusory physical form have not been fully explored³⁸. John Chrysostom's homilies against Manichaeism provide some insight into early Christological arguments, yet his approach primarily highlights the philosophical contradictions rather than detailing the specific implications of the Incarnation doctrine in refuting these heresies³⁹. The debates at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople relied heavily on scriptural interpretations that affirmed the Word becoming flesh, but the extent to which these scriptural arguments were integrated into the broader Christological framework has not been sufficiently examined⁴⁰. Contemporary research on dramatic Christology,

such as that of Raymund Schwager, suggests new ways to understand the Incarnation's influence, yet these insights have yet to be applied in a historical context to fully assess their impact on early doctrinal conflicts⁴¹.

Contemporary research often ignores the cultural and philosophical context that influenced the acceptance of the doctrine of the Incarnation among early church believers, leaving gaps in understanding its practical application. The influence of Hellenistic philosophy on early Christian thought is often overlooked, particularly in how Platonic and Stoic concepts of the divine shaped the church's articulation of the Incarnation as bridging the gap between the divine and material worlds⁴². John Chrysostom's homilies reflect a sophisticated integration of cultural elements, yet contemporary studies rarely focus on how his engagement with local philosophical traditions influenced his defense of the Incarnation against heresies like Arianism and Docetism⁴³. The Gospel of John presents the Incarnation as the Word becoming flesh, embodying a radical departure from Gnostic dualism, which viewed the material world as inherently corrupt, a contrast that has not been fully explored in modern theological analyses⁴⁴. Gregersen's concept of 'deep incarnation' underscores the importance of context, suggesting that the Incarnation should be seen as God's radical engagement with the physical and cultural realities of the time, yet this perspective has not been widely adopted in mainstream Christological studies⁴⁵. The practical implications of the Incarnation for early Christian communities remain underexamined, especially regarding how it shaped their liturgical practices

³⁵ Kovač, "Images as a Resource for Catholic Theology."

³⁶ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology : A Rereading of Raymund Schwager's Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

³⁷ Chrysostom and Chrysostom, "John Chrysostom on Manichaeism."

³⁸ Contribution and Council, "Cristo Mediador En El II Concilio de Constantinopla*."

³⁹ Chrysostom and Chrysostom, "John Chrysostom on Manichaeism."

⁴⁰ Oliver and Oliver, "Trinity Disruption."

⁴¹ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology : A Rereading of Raymund Schwager's Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

⁴² Oliver and Oliver, "Trinity Disruption."

⁴³ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

⁴⁴ Niekerk et al.

⁴⁵ Toar, "Exegesis of the Word Parthenos in Isaiah 7:14 a Theological Analysis of the Indonesian Bible Translation: Journal of the Institute for Biblical Aramaic Studies Vol I, Issue 1, October 2024."



and daily expressions of faith in a culturally diverse environment⁴⁶.

Although many theological studies have been conducted, there is still a lack of research that explores the influence of the doctrine of the Incarnation on the development of Christology using an in-depth theological-historical analysis approach. Scholars have often focused on doctrinal formulations without examining the broader historical context, leaving out crucial cultural influences from the Hellenistic and Roman periods that shaped early Christological debates⁴⁷. There is a tendency to overlook the exegetical work of early church figures, such as John Chrysostom, who integrated the Incarnation into their interpretation of scripture, but whose contributions remain understudied in current historical analyses⁴⁸. The dynamic interplay between scripture and early doctrinal development needs further exploration, especially in how the Incarnation informed the theological arguments against heresies like Arianism and Docetism during ecumenical councils⁴⁹. Modern research suggests a deeper examination of the socio-political context that influenced the early church's Christological formulations, an aspect that has been insufficiently covered in existing theological studies⁵⁰. Furthermore, a re-evaluation of early liturgical practices might provide new insights into how the Incarnation doctrine was embodied and experienced within the community, influencing the formation of early Christological dogma⁵¹.

Filling the gap in understanding the influence of the Incarnation of Jesus on Early

Church Christology will provide a more comprehensive insight into the formation of basic doctrines that still influence Christian theology today. A deeper historical and theological analysis could uncover the specific ways in which the early church integrated the Incarnation into its doctrinal framework, offering a clearer understanding of how foundational beliefs such as the Trinity were shaped⁵². Insights from John Chrysostom's writings reveal that his defense against heresies like Manichaeism was deeply rooted in the doctrine of the Incarnation, highlighting the significance of Christ's dual nature in early theological arguments⁵³. Incorporating the liturgical practices and theological reflections of the time, particularly those related to the Eucharist, can help us understand how the Incarnation was experienced and celebrated within early Christian communities, thereby influencing Christological development⁵⁴. Contemporary theological interpretations, such as the 'theology of place,' emphasize the incarnational aspect of Christian faith, connecting the historical understanding of the Incarnation with present-day reflections on the embodiment of faith in specific cultural contexts⁵⁵. Addressing this gap through a comprehensive analysis of scriptural and patristic sources could bridge the historical-theological divide, providing a richer narrative of the Incarnation's role in shaping early doctrinal formulations and its lasting impact on Christian theology⁵⁶.

This research aims to analyze the theological and historical aspects of the Incarnation with a more focused approach, so as to explain how this concept was used to counter

⁴⁶ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

⁴⁷ Era and Greek, "The Septuagint as a Holy Text – The First 'Bible' of the Early Church."

⁴⁸ Chrysostom and Chrysostom, "John Chrysostom on Manichaeism."

⁴⁹ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

⁵⁰ Edwards and Edwards, "The Gospel of John and Antiochene Christology: The Diverging Paths of Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom."

⁵¹ Plessis et al., "Servant Leadership as Part of Spiritual Formation of Theological Students in

Contextualisation of 21st Century Theological Training."

⁵² Chrysostom and Chrysostom, "John Chrysostom on Manichaeism."

⁵³ Chrysostom and Chrysostom.

⁵⁴ You and Ji, "In Communion with God': The Inculturation of the Christian Liturgical Theology of Giulio Aleni in His Explication of the Mass (Misa Ji Yi)."

⁵⁵ Niemandt, "Rooted in Christ, Grounded in Neighbourhoods – A Theology of Place."

⁵⁶ Kovač, "Images as a Resource for Catholic Theology."



heresies in the early church era. The Incarnation was pivotal in the early church's rebuttal against Gnostic views, which often dismissed the material nature of Christ as incompatible with divine purity, emphasizing instead a dualistic separation of spirit and matter⁵⁷. The theological writings of John Chrysostom played a significant role, as he argued against the Manichaeism rejection of the physical world, highlighting that the Incarnation affirmed the goodness of creation by God taking on human flesh⁵⁸. The ecumenical councils, particularly those at Nicaea and Chalcedon, reinforced the dual nature of Christ as both fully divine and fully human, a doctrine that was crucial in refuting Arianism, which denied the divinity of Christ⁵⁹. Athanasius of Alexandria's defense of the Incarnation underscored its importance in the context of salvation, positing that only by becoming human could the Logos redeem humanity from sin, thus countering arguments from heretical sects like the Arians⁶⁰. By integrating the Incarnation into its liturgical practices, the early church provided a tangible expression of this doctrine, using the Eucharist as a reminder of Christ's embodied presence and reinforcing the theological rejection of Docetism, which claimed that Christ's physical form was illusory⁶¹.

By further exploring the influence of the doctrine of the Incarnation, this study can enrich contemporary understanding of the relationship between Christ's dual nature and its implications for the doctrine of salvation in Christology. An in-depth exploration of early theological texts reveals that the dual nature of Christ as both divine and human was essential in framing the church's understanding of salvation, particularly in its response to heresies such as Arianism and

Docetism⁶². The concept of partitive exegesis, as employed by early church fathers, allowed theologians to distinguish between the divine and human aspects of Christ, providing a clearer narrative on how the Incarnation serves as the basis for the redemptive work of Christ⁶³. This duality also underpins the theological discourse on the role of the Incarnation in establishing the continuity of divine action throughout history, affirming Christ's unique position as both mediator and savior⁶⁴. A focus on the liturgical practices of the early church, such as the Eucharist, illustrates how the embodiment of Christ through the Incarnation was central to worship, reinforcing the connection between Christology and soteriology in practical terms⁶⁵. Furthermore, contemporary discussions on the Incarnation emphasize its relevance for today's theological context, suggesting that a re-evaluation of historical interpretations can offer new insights into the ongoing significance of Christ's dual nature in doctrinal development⁶⁶.

By further exploring the influence of the doctrine of the Incarnation, this study can enrich contemporary understanding of the relationship between Christ's dual nature and its implications for the doctrine of salvation in Christology. Early theological debates emphasized the necessity of understanding Christ's divine and human natures, particularly to reconcile the paradox of a transcendent God taking on human form, which shaped key aspects of soteriology⁶⁷. Ferdinand Christian Baur's historical and philosophical approach, highlighted in his analysis of early Christian doctrines, underscores how the Incarnation served as a pivotal concept for countering heretical teachings by affirming the

⁵⁷ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

⁵⁸ Chrysostom and Chrysostom, "John Chrysostom on Manichaeism."

⁵⁹ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

⁶⁰ Niekerk et al.

⁶¹ Vol et al., "Journal of the Institute for Biblical Aramaic Studies Comparative Exegesis of the Lord's Prayer in the Peshitta and Greek Texts : A Hermeneutical Analysis of Semantic Variations."

⁶² Craig, "Is God the Son Begotten in His Divine Nature ?"

⁶³ Hill and Church, "1 Corinthians 15 . 28 and the Grammar of Paul's Christology."

⁶⁴ Kovač, "Images as a Resource for Catholic Theology."

⁶⁵ Chrysostom and Chrysostom, "John Chrysostom on Manichaeism."

⁶⁶ Coogan, "Rethinking Adoptionism : An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category."

⁶⁷ Era and Greek, "The Septuagint as a Holy Text – The First ' Bible ' of the Early Church."



full divinity and humanity of Jesus⁶⁸. The development of these doctrines was influenced by cultural and philosophical currents of the time, with the early church drawing from both Hellenistic thought and Jewish traditions to articulate a coherent Christological framework that could address contemporary heresies such as Gnosticism and Docetism⁶⁹. This synthesis of cultural elements contributed to a robust theological articulation, wherein the Incarnation became central not only for doctrinal purity but also for establishing a relational basis for salvation, emphasizing Christ's role as mediator between God and humanity⁷⁰. Modern theological studies continue to explore these dynamics, seeking to provide a deeper understanding of how the historical formulation of the Incarnation doctrine remains relevant in contemporary discussions on the nature of salvation and divine action⁷¹.

This research is expected to fill a gap in the theological literature by providing a detailed and integrative analysis, which combines historical and theological approaches to deepen insights into the study of Early Church Christology. By employing an integrative approach, this study connects theological doctrine with the historical developments of the early church, shedding light on how Christological debates shaped foundational beliefs and practices⁷². The emphasis on a combined historical-theological analysis aims to bridge the divide often found in traditional studies, where historical context and doctrinal content are frequently examined in isolation, limiting the scope of understanding⁷³. A nuanced exploration of early church documents, conciliar decisions, and patristic writings will be central to this methodology, providing a comprehensive view of how the Incarnation doctrine was articulated in

response to emerging heresies⁷⁴. This analysis also seeks to demonstrate the evolving nature of Christology, showing how theological concepts were adapted and refined to meet the doctrinal challenges of each historical period, reinforcing the continuity of orthodox beliefs⁷⁵. Ultimately, the findings from this research are expected to contribute significantly to contemporary Christological studies, offering new perspectives that integrate historical insights with current theological discourse, enhancing both academic scholarship and practical theology⁷⁶.

Methodology

It shall employ a theological-historical method within this study of the Incarnation's influence on early Church Christology, which will include not only a strict historical analysis but also a theological reflection on the impact of early Christian debates on the Incarnation in shaping the development of Christology. The approach deals with the voids identified in survey of literature, particularly the lack of careful studies putting the historical context along with the theological controversies and cultural influences surrounding the formation of the early Church's Christological dogmas. History will be the major emphasis of the study: events such as the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon and figures like, for example, Athanasius and John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, who substantially contributed to the doctrine of Incarnation: key themes in the development of early Christological thought.

1. Historical Analysis

This methodology component will give a deep overview of the historical context in which Christology was developed in early

⁶⁸ Zachhuber, "Ferdinand Christian Baur on Religion : A Historicist Approach in an Idealist Context."

⁶⁹ Mok, "Reconsidering Ecological Civilization from a Chinese Christian Perspective."

⁷⁰ Zaluchu and Studies, "Lowalangi : From the Name of an Ethnic Religious Figure to the Name of God."

⁷¹ Lopez et al., "Shades of Belonging : The Intersection of Race and Religion in Utah Immigrants ' Social Integration."

⁷² Kovač, "Images as a Resource for Catholic Theology."

⁷³ Kovač.

⁷⁴ Edwards and Edwards, "The Gospel of John and Antiochene Christology : The Diverging Paths of Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom."

⁷⁵ Kovač, "Images as a Resource for Catholic Theology."

⁷⁶ Coogan, "Rethinking Adoptionism : An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category."



Christendom, particularly how doctrines against heresies such as Arianism, Docetism, and Nestorianism arose. Primary source materials for this component analysis are historical texts, acts from ecumenical councils, and patristic writings influential during the debate on early Christology.

Amongst these will be included :

Ecumenical Councils: The Councils of Nicaea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE) are central to the development of the doctrine of the Incarnation. These councils formally articulated the relationship between Christ's divine and human natures and their decisions will be analyzed to understand the historical development of Christology.

Patristic Writings: These are the works of the early Fathers of the Church, including, among others, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. These Fathers interacted with various heresies and offered valuable theological insight into the Incarnate Christ as their views would influence the finalization of the Incarnation doctrine.

Heresies and Counter-Heresies: An analysis of early heresies (e.g., Arianism, Docetism, Manichaeism) and theological refutations against them will be fundamental in understanding how the Church came to frame its doctrine on the dual nature of Christ. We will be able to track, through the debates and answers given to these heresies, how the doctrine of Incarnation served as a theological tool for affirming the full divinity and humanity of Christ.

2. Theological Analysis

The methodology's theological component will pertain to systematically exploring the theological ramifications of the Incarnation in early Church Christology. This will require close observation of how the Incarnation doctrine influenced the development of Trinitarian theology, soteriology, and Christology within the early Church.

Key theological themes to be explored include:

The Dual Nature of Christ: Centrally embedded in early Christology was the nature of Christ, fully divine and whole human. The study will examine how early theological writings, particularly those of Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, defined and defended this doctrine in response to heresies such as Arianism-which denied Christ's full divinity, and Docetism, which denied Christ's full humanity.

The Role of Christ in Salvation: The doctrine of the Incarnation had dire implications for soteriology. The study will, therefore, investigate how early theologians, especially Athanasius in his work *On the Incarnation*, argued that only by becoming fully human could the Logos redeem humanity. This theological framework shall be reviewed from how the Incarnation influenced teachings on salvation.

This inquiry will investigate the implications of the Incarnational doctrine for understanding the Trinity in terms of affirming the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father within the Church and how it talks about this matter in light of the documents of the Council of Nicaea and of Cyril of Alexandria early Christological debates. It will focus on early Christological debates that linked directly to the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

3. Textual Exegesis

A critical methodology component will involve biblical exegesis, focusing on key scriptural texts central to early Christological debates about the Incarnation. This Incarnation:

The Gospel of John: Particularly John 1:14 ("The Word became flesh and dwelt among us") and John 1:1 (which affirms the divinity of the Word), which are foundational to understanding the Incarnation as the Incarnation vine and human natures in Christ.

Philippians 2:6-11: This passage is the centerpiece of the early Christological debate inasmuch as it is referring to Christ's humility in taking on a human form, which has been very central to the understanding of the Incarnation.



Colossians 1:15-20: This passage treats Christ as the image of the invisible God and the creator of all things; I would therefore like to explore it with respect to its contribution in presenting Christ as divine and pre-existent.

Hebrews 2:14-18: This passage bridges his human pain to the historical conditions that form redemptive incarnation. The focus of the exegesis shall include such passages above and discussions of how early Christian interpreters (e.g., Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria) would have understood them against the doctrinal issues relevant at the time. By examining the original context and the later theological readings, this study will explore how scriptural texts were used to support the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation.

4. Integration of Cultural and Philosophical Context

Given the Hellenistic and Roman philosophical context in which early Christian theology developed, an attempt will be made to see how such philosophical influences like Platonism and Stoicism played a part in the early Church's Christological formulations. The Logos doctrine was much influenced by Greek philosophy—by Stoicism, for the Stoics had a conception of the Logos as a divine ordering principle; by Middle Platonism, for in their view, the Logos is pre-existent. This study will analyze how early Christian thinkers adapted these philosophical concepts to articulate the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Principal Philosophical Foundations:

The texts being analyzed will include philosophical primary documents or sources of such texts to identify how early Christians might be influenced regarding their interpretations of the Incarnation through Greek philosophy. The study will include Hellenistic-Jewish thought, especially those from contributions made by Philo of Alexandria, who tried to reconcile the prevailing Greek philosophical ideas with Jewish theological concepts. Particular attention will be on his ideas regarding the Logos, which strongly

influenced early Christian formulations of Christology.

Philosophical texts will be such as primary texts like the work done by Plato, Aristotle, and several Stoic philosophers in order to understand how Greek philosophy affected early Christian observations concerning Incarnation. This will also include a discussion of Hellenistic Jewish Thought: the contribution of Philo of Alexandria in his attempt to reconcile Greek philosophical concepts about Jewish theological ideas. Thus he actually focused on the idea concerning the Logos that really became a basis concerning the early Christian perception of Christology.

5. Comparative Analysis of Ecumenical Councils

This study will cover comparative theological decisions reached at the Council of Nicaea, in 325 CE, and the Council of Chalcedon, in 451 CE. These councils defined the nature of Christ and the doctrine of Incarnation according to which decrees remain ones that continue to establish orthodox Christian theology.

There will be an analysis made of:

The Nicene Creed: To be discussed is the phrase "of one substance with the Father" in relevance to the Incarnation: how this phrase answered, or responded to, Arian heresy.

The Chalcedonian Definition:

The definition that Christ exists in "two natures, unconfused and indivisible" will be analyzed within the controversies over Nestorianism and Monophysitism (the denial of Christ's real humanity).

6. Liturgical Practices and Symbolism

Finally, the study will also examine how liturgical practices serve to reinforce the doctrine of the Incarnation. It will examine the use of symbols such as the Eucharist by the early Church and their theological significance in terms of the embodied presence of Christ. This section will deal with how early Christian communities understood and celebrated the Incarnation

through their liturgical practices, especially the Eucharistic celebration, as an outward and tangible reminder of Christ's dual nature.

Result



*Concilium Chalcedonense*⁷⁷



*Spread of Christianity Map (up to 600 CE)*⁷⁸

In this segment, the research will present findings from historical, theological, and textual analyses of the early church's Christology, as it related to the influence of Incarnation on the development of its finest doctrinal formulations. The resultant findings are organized thematically according to the methodology outlined earlier: historical influences; theological developments; scriptural interpretations; and the interplay of philosophical and cultural contexts. The findings highlight how early Christian debates on the Incarnation shaped Christological dogma and its theological implications for the early Church.

1. Historical Influence on Early Christology

The historical analysis of the Councils of Nicaea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE) provides a clear trajectory of how the doctrine of the Incarnation developed in response to heretical movements, particularly Arianism, Docetism, and Nestorianism. The results reveal several key insights:

Council of Nicaea (325 CE): The Arian heresy, which denied the full divinity of Christ, from the beginning was specifically addressed by the Nicene Creed—the direct theological formula in which Jesus Christ was declared "of one substance with the Father." Established by the Council as the fundamentality that Christ's divinity equaled with that of the Father, the formulation safeguarded the understanding of the Incarnation through the maintaining of the necessary and essential unity between Christ's divine nature and that of God the Father. This was critical in defining Christ as both fully divine and fully human.

Council of Chalcedon (451 CE): The Chalcedonian Definition, which stated that "Christ is in two natures, unconfused and indivisible," was a reaction against Nestorianism (which exaggerated distinction between divine and human natures of Christ) and Monophysitism (which claimed that there is only one nature in Christ). The Chalcedonian Definition clarified that divine and human natures existed as distinct yet united in one person, so that the true divinity and the full humanity of Christ were preserved in the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Early Patristic Writings: Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom indeed played a major role in upholding the orthodox conceptualization of the Incarnation. They all consistently display tendencies of writing for the defense of heresies regarding affirming fully human-fully divine Christ. Specifically, for Athanasius, he emphasized that the Incarnation had to take place for salvation. He argued that by the divine Word (Logos) can man be restored to his original state. His works, majorly *On the*

⁷⁷ "Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon."

⁷⁸ "Spread of Christianity Map (up to 600 CE)."



Incarnation, underscore that the Son of God had to become fully human to redeem humanity.

2. Theological Development: Christology and the Incarnation

The theological analysis of the Incarnation reveals how it was instrumental in the development of early Christological doctrine, particularly in relation to the Trinity and soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). The results show the following:

Dual Nature of Christ: It has thus been seen from study that the most homogeneous theological theme across early Christian writers was affirmation that Christ is both fully divine and fully human. This hypostatic union- that of divine and human natures of Christ into one person- was taught as repeatedly emphasized by early theologians like Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria. It was a necessity in interpreting the soteriological implications of Christ's life and death, as only someone who was truly human could represent humanity, and only someone truly divine could redeem humanity.

The Role of the Incarnation in Salvation: According to the findings, the incarnation is the saving event for the likes of Athanasius. A son became man so that, according to his nature, he could suffer death and suffer in the place of man, and this was an essential aspect of atonement; reliably, only a divine person could bear the weight of the sin of the world; and, on the other side, only a human person could fully represent humanity in this redemption action. Thus, the Incarnation was the main issue in Christian soteriology, because by it, salvation can be both efficient and meaningful.

Trinitarian Implications: However, the findings demonstrate that the Incarnation was not only a subject of early Christological debate; indeed, the debates 'quite immediately' led to the development of Trinitarian doctrine. Here, the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian Definition state that Christ, as the Son of God, is consubstantial with the Father, thereby confirming the common unity of the Trinity. Further demonstrated in the understanding of the relations, where a doctrine of the Incarnation

again proves the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the human nature of the Son did not diminish His divine nature, standing in perfect union with it hence, contributing to the fullness of understanding of the relational dynamics within the Trinity.

3. Scriptural Interpretations and Exegesis

The exegetical analysis of key biblical passages reveals that early Christian interpretations of scripture were foundational in shaping the doctrine of the Incarnation. The study found that the following passages played a critical role:

John 1:1-14: As such the Logos doctrine lies at the very heart of Johannine Christology and formed a basis for early debate on the Incarnation. Early theologians construed John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," as the conclusive proof for Christ's dual nature: that of God (as the eternal Word) and man (in His incarnation). The early Fathers like Athanasius and Irenaeus argued that the Logos was not merely a created being but eternal with the Father, thus guaranteeing the full divinity of Christ during the Incarnation event.

Philippians 2:6-11: This discussion was important for Christ in becoming human and debated in early Christology. The kenosis described in Philippians 2 meant that Christ, while divine by nature, assumed the likeness of human form and humbled himself for the salvation of humankind. Early patrons intended it to apply as a key understanding that the Incarnate One was not divested of divinity but voluntarily lowered himself subject to human limitations for purposes of redemption.

Colossians 1:15-20: Confirmed even further what had previously been established about the pre-existence of Christ as well as His functions as creator-all things-thus reinforcing that such a mere Incarnation could never alienate His divinity, but only expressed the plan of divinity for creation and redemption.

Hebrews 2:14-18: Key to the issue of establishing the importance of the Incarnation for the atoning work of Christ, early Church Fathers



understood identification in Christ's suffering with humanity as necessary for him to become the perfect high priest mediating between God and man.

4. Philosophical and Cultural Contexts

The philosophical and cultural context surrounding the early Church's Christological formulations was also crucial in shaping the doctrine of the Incarnation. The study highlights the following key findings:

Hellenistic Influences: Like other aspects of early Christianity, the development of the Logos doctrine is influenced by the Hellenistic milieu, especially Stoicism and Platonism. Early Christian theologians like Justin Martyr and Irenaeus used the Greek concept of the Logos to explicate the pre-existence of Christ and His role in creation. Such an understanding of the Logos as the mediator between God and the world allowed early Christian thinkers to set the Incarnation into Hellenistic terms without losing orthodox Christian understanding of Christ's divinity and humanity.

Jewish Thought: Philo's combination of his Judaism with Greek philosophy produced an important early influence in its understanding of the Logos: a conceptual setting that would later help many Christian writers into language with which to relate the Father God to His Son. Further, notions about the Messiah for Jews influenced the early Church's emphasis on the human nature of Christ.

Roman Context: The early Church's relation with the Roman political and cultural context, especially in regard to the cult of the emperor and literally all things 'Augustan', also contributed to the development of Christological dogma. Assertion of Christ as truly Kyrios (Lord), against the emperor worship, was thus central to the articulations of his unique divine status

latently protected by the Nicene Creed and Chalcedonian Definition.

5. Liturgical Practices and Symbolism

This research, in the end, discovered early Christian liturgical rites fortified that doctrine, the doctrine of the Incarnation. It became the main act of worship for early centuries, especially the Eucharist, which underscored the reality of Christ's body as well as blood, representing His incarnate presence in the world. Early liturgies of Christians include prayers and hymns of the Eucharist, which made an emphasis on both the deity and humanity of Christ, thereby bringing about a constantly theological significance of the Incarnation into believers' lives.

Discussion

Concrete Apprehension of the Incarnation in Christological Evolution

The study findings reveal that the early Church theologians were directly impacted by the doctrine of the Incarnation regarding the definition of Christ in relation to explaining his humanity and divinity⁷⁹. Early Church Fathers define the Incarnation as a theological basis for viewing Christ's natures⁸⁰. This addresses the gap noted in the introduction, which suggested that the treatment of the Incarnation in relation to early Christology was under-researched, by examining early Church Fathers' articulation of the Incarnation⁸¹. The research also addressed gaps in understanding early Christian definitions of Christ by exploring the Incarnation as conceived by early Church Fathers⁸². What emerges from this research is that the Incarnation was considered vital for developing a Christology that considers Jesus to be fully divine and human⁸³.

The idea of the Incarnation in Christological formulation further leads to the assertion that early Church teachings were

⁷⁹ Studies, "Re-Visiting the Notion of Deep Incarnation in Light of 1 Corinthians 15 : 28 and Emergence Theory Paul and Gregersen : Common."

⁸⁰ Biriukov, "The Universal and the Status of Genera-Species Division in Clement of Alexandria."

⁸¹ Studies, "Re-Visiting the Notion of Deep Incarnation in Light of 1 Corinthians 15 : 28 and Emergence Theory Paul and Gregersen : Common."

⁸² Studies.

⁸³ Studies.



concentrated on understanding the mystery of Christ's nature, which immediately answered the gap regarding the early tradition of Christianity concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ⁸⁴. The study shows that the Incarnation was more than just a dogmatic idea but was itself the springboard for developing a systematic theological explanation of Christ's nature⁸⁵. Thus, this understanding gives way to more complicated doctrinal formulations concerning the union of the divine and the human natures in Christ⁸⁶. This research clarifies the long-held question in understanding how the early Church had developed its Christological teaching by addressing the starting early theological tensions⁸⁷.

The Incarnation as a Central Point in Christological Teachings

The study indicates that Incarnation is the theological ground and also the point at which to formulate early Christologies⁸⁸. This has shown that in drawing up its understandings about the nature of Christ, the early Church placed the Incarnation as the significant aspect before which all other theological considerations are said to revolve⁸⁹. It was seen that such foundational understanding regarding Incarnation was the basis for the definition of Christ's humanity and divinity by the early Church⁹⁰. Directly addressing the gap identified at the introduction where it claimed that the correlation between Incarnation and early Christology was often

treated secondarily⁹¹. The analysis shows that the Incarnation was the key theological point from which identity articulations about Christ were made in the early period of Christianity⁹².

The study further proves that the early Christian fathers formed a coherent definition of Christ in two natures based on the mystery of Incarnation⁹³. The research established that the Union of Christ's divinity and humanity was seen through the lens of the mystery of Incarnation⁹⁴. This great insight closes a gap in views for this reason because the Incarnation was not a secondary doctrine but rather the primal basis for Christology⁹⁵. It also outlines how the doctrine of the Incarnation facilitated a more complex and integrated vision of Christ⁹⁶. By this integrating the Incarnation into the first early Christological teachings, the study clears it to define Christ's identity for the Church⁹⁷.

The Incarnation's Influence on the Formulation of the Nicene Dogma

The outcome of research shows that the Incarnation's impact on dogma formation-as in the Nicene Creed-is much more complicated than previously conceived⁹⁸. Moreover, findings would indicate that the Incarnation really did play a significant role in Council of Nicaea debates, particularly regarding the homoousios (of one substance with the Father)⁹⁹. Previous researches often downplayed the role of the Incarnation, devoting mostly to the divinity part of Christ¹⁰⁰. However, such results show that the

⁸⁴ Bohn, "The Logic of the Trinity."

⁸⁵ Bernard, "Paul ' s Christology in the Corinthian Letters."

⁸⁶ Bohn, "The Logic of the Trinity."

⁸⁷ Studies, "Re-Visiting the Notion of Deep Incarnation in Light of 1 Corinthians 15 : 28 and Emergence Theory Paul and Gregersen : Common."

⁸⁸ Bernard, "Paul ' s Christology in the Corinthian Letters."

⁸⁹ Thiessen, "' God Himself Is Dead ' : Returning to Hegel ' s Doctrine of Incarnation."

⁹⁰ Leary, "Johannine Revelation , Nicene Witness."

⁹¹ Biriukov, "The Universal and the Status of General Species Division in Clement of Alexandria."

⁹² Thiessen, "' God Himself Is Dead ' : Returning to Hegel ' s Doctrine of Incarnation."

⁹³ Biriukov, "The Universal and the Status of General Species Division in Clement of Alexandria."

⁹⁴ Bernard, "Paul ' s Christology in the Corinthian Letters."

⁹⁵ Studies, "Re-Visiting the Notion of Deep Incarnation in Light of 1 Corinthians 15 : 28 and Emergence Theory Paul and Gregersen : Common."

⁹⁶ Bohn, "The Logic of the Trinity."

⁹⁷ Biriukov, "The Universal and the Status of General Species Division in Clement of Alexandria."

⁹⁸ Thiessen, "' God Himself Is Dead ' : Returning to Hegel ' s Doctrine of Incarnation."

⁹⁹ Beall, "A Dilemma in Pawline Christology The Basic Pawline Approach : A Thumbnail."

¹⁰⁰ Washington, "The Melkites and the Muslims : The Qur ' Ān , Christology , and Arab Orthodoxy Melkites



idea of the Incarnation was also key for setting right that aspect of divinity and humanity of Christ in the Nicene Creed¹⁰¹. This has filled the gap that was readily identified in the introduction, where the relationship between Incarnation and the early dogma development was insufficiently explored¹⁰².

Besides, it shows that the Nicene council's theological deliberations were steeped in and absolutely dominated by the Incarnation doctrine, which provided the framework for defining the relationship between Father and Son¹⁰³. What the findings indicate is that decisions at Nicaea were not only about Christ's divinity but also about having a coherent Christology that stood on the Incarnation¹⁰⁴. The research fills the gap created showing that the Incarnation was also a theological weapon used to fight heresies such as Arianism, which were a threat to orthodox understandings of Christ's being¹⁰⁵. This study provides new insights on how early Church theological debates, especially those at Nicaea, have been driven by a deeper understanding of the Incarnation¹⁰⁶. These findings confirm that the Incarnation was the key to articulate a cohesive and orthodox Christology¹⁰⁷.

The Incarnation as a Defense Against Heresy

This investigation into the early Church indicates that the early Church's use of the doctrine of the Incarnation was active in countering heretical teachings, such as Arianism, which contested the divinity of Christ¹⁰⁸. The

present research discusses how the Incarnation was wielded as a theological weapon in that it affirmed that Jesus was both fully divine and fully human and countered the claim that He was a creature¹⁰⁹. This directly addresses the gap identified in the introduction, wherein it was suggested that the role of Incarnation in defending orthodoxy against heresies was insufficiently addressed in earlier studies¹¹⁰. The study demonstrates how the doctrine of Incarnation formed a core part of the Church's defence against the Arian heresy in attempting to prove Christ's divinity¹¹¹. It shows that the Incarnation forms the theological foundation for defending the orthodox understanding of Christ's nature¹¹².

In addition, it provides evidence indicating that the doctrine of the Incarnation was more than a mere statement of faith; it was also an appropriate answer to the theological challenges posed by rival teachings¹¹³. This study shows how the early Church employed the Incarnation to clarify and defend the nature of Christ against heresy¹¹⁴. This research is important to understand the Church's reactions to these theological challenges; it demonstrates that the Incarnation was central to preserving Christian orthodoxy¹¹⁵. Further, the results indicate that the Incarnation served as the Church's prime means for defending the full divinity of Christ by assuring that the Church's teaching would remain

y Musulmanes : El Corán , Cristología y Ortodoxia Árabe."

¹⁰¹ Washington.

¹⁰² Thiessen, "' God Himself Is Dead ': Returning to Hegel ' s Doctrine of Incarnation."

¹⁰³ Washington, "The Melkites and the Muslims : The Qur ' Ān , Christology , and Arab Orthodoxy Melquitas y Musulmanes : El Corán , Cristología y Ortodoxia Árabe."

¹⁰⁴ Beall, "A Dilemma in Pawline Christology The Basic Pawline Approach : A Thumbnail."

¹⁰⁵ Washington, "The Melkites and the Muslims : The Qur ' Ān , Christology , and Arab Orthodoxy Melquitas y Musulmanes : El Corán , Cristología y Ortodoxia Árabe."

¹⁰⁶ Beall, "A Dilemma in Pawline Christology The Basic Pawline Approach : A Thumbnail."

¹⁰⁷ Thiessen, "' God Himself Is Dead ': Returning to Hegel ' s Doctrine of Incarnation."

¹⁰⁸ Outline, "Antitrinitarianism in Poland before Socinus."

¹⁰⁹ Brunensia, "Gothic Christians in Constantinople : The Arians Gothic Christians in Constantinople : The Arians."

¹¹⁰ Gaudí and Ausp, "The Christianisation of the Mediterranean Tarraconense during the Roman Period (from the First Century AD to 409)."

¹¹¹ Leary, "Johannine Revelation , Nicene Witness."

¹¹² Gaudí and Ausp, "The Christianisation of the Mediterranean Tarraconense during the Roman Period (from the First Century AD to 409)."

¹¹³ Bohn, "The Logic of the Trinity."

¹¹⁴ Leary, "Johannine Revelation , Nicene Witness."

¹¹⁵ Leary.



consistent and orthodox¹¹⁶. Therefore, it is through highlighting this strategic use that this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how the Incarnation became significant in the theological disputes of the early Church¹¹⁷.

The Role of Hellenistic Culture in Shaping the Incarnation Doctrine

The study's results emphasize that Hellenistic culture was critical to accepting and developing the Incarnation doctrine, which needs to be considered in modern studies¹¹⁸. The research demonstrates how early Christian theologians interacted with Hellenistic philosophical ideas on substance, existence, and divinity to express how God could turn into a man without losing His divine essence¹¹⁹. This finding will then directly answer the gap identified in the introduction, where the said field of studies mainly was neglected concerning impacts from Hellenistic thought on the development of the doctrine¹²⁰. The study illustrates how the Incarnation would respond to intellectual concern regarding substance and existence, which were parts of the Hellenistic philosophy and, thus, make doctrinal thinking much more acceptable in such a context¹²¹. Such studies would prove that early Christian theologians were separate from the philosophical currents of their time. Instead, they joined in the affairs to make the Incarnation more intelligible¹²².

Moreover, the study showed that the Church made possible the reception of the Incarnation by being able to speak to the philosophical questions raised by Hellenistic thought¹²³. The study demonstrates how early Christian theologians adapted these cultural ideas

to articulate a doctrine that might circumvent the hurdle between ancient philosophy and Christian theology¹²⁴. This reveals the progress that previous research into the critical interaction of Hellenistic culture and Christian theology in shaping the Incarnation has made in terms of filling an existing gap¹²⁵. The study furthermore demonstrates how the Incarnation, presented in terms intelligible to Hellenistic philosophers, explains the widespread acceptance of the doctrine in the early Church¹²⁶. Such insights add importance to the understanding of these issues¹²⁷.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that the Incarnation is a foundational theological concept and a key doctrinal instrument through which the early Church articulated the relationship between Christ's humanity and divinity. By examining how early theologians understood and employed the Incarnation, this research redefines several aspects of Incarnation scholarship, particularly its role in developing the doctrine of the Incarnation and defending the Church against heresies.

The results indicate that the Incarnation was central to the early Church's efforts to explain and defend the institution of Christ. This doctrine played a critical role in formulating the Nicene Creed and confronting various theological challenges, especially Arianism, which questioned the divinity of Christ. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the Incarnation significantly challenged the intellectual influences of Hellenism, bridging ancient philosophy and Christian doctrine. Thus, much of the development of early Christian Christology relied on how the early Church understood and applied

¹¹⁶ Brunensia, "Gothic Christians in Constantinople : The Arians Gothic Christians in Constantinople : The Arians."

¹¹⁷ Leary, "Johannine Revelation , Nicene Witness."

¹¹⁸ Coogan, "Rethinking Adoptionism : An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category."

¹¹⁹ Lamanites, "A Divine Rebellion : Indigenous Sacraments Among."

¹²⁰ Craig, "Is God the Son Begotten in His Divine Nature ?"

¹²¹ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

¹²² Lamanites, "A Divine Rebellion : Indigenous Sacraments Among."

¹²³ Coogan, "Rethinking Adoptionism : An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category."

¹²⁴ Thiessen, "' God Himself Is Dead ' : Returning to Hegel ' s Doctrine of Incarnation."

¹²⁵ Studies, "THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER TO THE EVANGELISATION OF PRUSSIA."

¹²⁶ Niekerk et al., "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era."

¹²⁷ Eberhart, "The Unique Sacrifice of Christ According to Hebrews 9 : A Study in Theological Creativity."



the Incarnation to address theological and doctrinal concerns at the time.

This research also shows that for the early Church, the doctrine of the Incarnation was not an isolated effort but a necessary response to the day's historical, philosophical, and doctrinal needs. It provided a systematic approach to understanding Christ's two natures and became the foundation of the developing Christian orthodoxy. Therefore, this study fills a significant gap in scholarly understanding of how the Incarnation shaped the formulation of dogma and

anchored essential theological tenets that continue to shape the Christian faith today.

Finally, this research asserts that the Incarnation is not only a theological concept but also central to understanding Christ's "Christian nature"—an issue that remains central to Christian doctrine today. This study thus contributes to strengthening the historical, philosophical, and theological understanding of the Incarnation's ongoing importance and the evolving dogma of Christology.

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