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St. Irenaeus on the Purpose of the Incarnation

We're sometimes asked "Are you sure the adoption of humanity is the gospel? I've never heard it before." In this light we find it helpful to look at the writings of other Christians who have expressed the gospel clearly.

Irenaeus of Lyons, writing in the late 2nd and early 3rd Century, pointed out that when the Son becomes human he makes us into children of God. A full reading of Irenaeus shows that he does not imagine that we become God, but rather that the Son makes us participants in the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The Son shares our humanity so that we can share in his relationship with the Father and be children of the Father like him.

Here's what Irenaeus had to say. The emphasis is ours:

For who else is there who can reign uninterruptedly over the house of Jacob for ever, except Jesus Christ our Lord, the Son of the Most High God, who promised by the law and the prophets that He would make His salvation visible to all flesh; so that *He would become the Son of man for this purpose, that man also might become the son of God?* . . . For all things had entered upon a new phase, the Word arranging after a new manner the advent in the flesh, that He might win back to God that human nature (hominem) which had departed from God . . . *Against All Heresies, Book 3, Chap. 10, Para. 2.*