

The Inalienable Rights of the Incarnation

Kenneth Tanner

This idea that humans are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights is beautiful, and that humans alone in all of creation bear the image of God is a mystery beyond description, but that God is human—this is nothing less than a revolution in human existence.

We often despise ourselves, our bodies, our limitations, our weaknesses. Humans are good at hating other humans, at loathing ourselves.

In the face of every human and demonic rejection of the image of God in human flesh, God sides with humanity against all that hates us, even our own hatred of ourselves, and becomes one of us (Bonhoeffer).

God becomes what he loves from all eternity. God becomes what they in the beginning of time made very good.

And God becomes not just one of us but a helpless, speechless, fragile baby born without privilege to a working family, a family under a cloud because of the circumstances of his conception, who when he was very little became refugees from political tyranny.

He assumes the one human nature all humans share. He is not a special brand of human but merely human. His purpose is to lend all of us—we who have fallen from the community of Love, we who have descended into hell and the grave, we who are infected with death—his divine permanence.

What it is to be human is now forever bound up in what it is for one particular human to be God. And our common humanity can never again sink lower than the throne in which he sits, still bearing the flesh Mary gave him. □

Kenneth Tanner is pastor of Church of the Holy Redeemer in Rochester Hills, MI.

THE GOD-MAN

by Jim Fowler

At the heart of Christian thought is the understanding that Jesus was, and is, the God-man. Early in Christian theological thought, the Greek word *theoanthropos* was used to describe how deity and humanity were combined in the person of Jesus Christ. The word is a Greek compound; *theos* = God, *anthropos* = *man*.

The assertion of Jesus Christ as the God-man has been the core of Christian thought throughout the centuries of the Church. There have been aberrations wherein some emphasized the humanity of Jesus to the neglect of his deity, and others have emphasized his deity to the neglect of his humanity. They must be held together—JESUS was, and is, fully God and fully man.

In remembering the advent and birth of Jesus Christ at the Christmas holiday, we are recalling the historical incarnation of the Savior of mankind embodied in an individual person. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), in John’s words.

Paul explained, “Although He existed in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7).

Excerpted from The Issue Is Jesus by Jim Fowler.