

The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened

An Abridgement with
Introduction and Response

Edward Irving

Edited by Alexander J.D. Irving

*With an Introduction by Graham McFarlane
and a Response by Daniel Jordan Cameron*



The Lutterworth Press

THE LUTTERWORTH PRESS
P.O. Box 60
Cambridge
CB1 2NT
United Kingdom

www.lutterworth.com
publishing@lutterworth.com

Paperback ISBN: 978 0 7188 9665 2
PDF ISBN: 978 0 7188 9666 9

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A record is available from the British Library

First published by Pickwick Publications, 2021

This edition published by The Lutterworth Press, 2023,
by arrangement with Wipf and Stock Publishers

Copyright © Alex Irving, 2021

All rights reserved. No part of this edition may be reproduced, stored electronically or in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the Publisher (permissions@jamesclarke.co).

Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	vii
<i>Editor's Preface</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
<i>Author's Preface</i>	xxix
Dedicatory Epistle	1
1 The Origin of the Incarnation	
Introduction to the Text	2
Text	4
2 The End of the Mystery of the Incarnation Is the Glory of God	
Introduction to the Text	28
Text	31
3 The Method Is by Taking up the Fallen Humanity	
Introduction to the Text	52
Text	55
Part 1: The Composition of the Person of Christ	56
Part 2: Universal Reconciliation and Particular Election	82
Part 3: The Removal of the Law	106
Part 4: Conclusions	136
4 The Preparation For, and Act of, the Incarnation	
Introduction to the Text	152
Text	154

vi CONTENTS

5	Synopsis of “The Fruits of the Incarnation”	161
6	Conclusions Concerning Divine Being and Created Being	164
	<i>The Fallen Humanity of Christ and the Work of the Spirit in the Thought of Edward Irving</i> —Daniel Jordan Cameron	205
	<i>Recommended Resources</i>	221

SAMPLE

Contributors

Editor	A. J. D. Irving
Introduction	G. McFarlane
Sermon Specific Introductions	A. J. D. Irving and Christopher G. Woznicki
Critical Response	D. J. Cameron
Transcribers	Jacob Hussain Calvin Edwards Neulsaem “Sam” Ha Craig Devereaux Bryce Dunn Ben Evans D. J. Cameron Ben Hammond

SAMPLE

Editor's Preface

A number of people have been instrumental in the production of this volume. A team of transcribers have generously devoted their time to the laborious task of reproducing the text. Some of this team were already known to me, and others have become new friends. I am very grateful to each of them for their hard work and cheerful efficiency.

Alongside this transcription work, a team has also made a variety of creative contributions. Christopher Woznicki has made the valuable creative contribution of introducing specific sermons and providing a summary of the abridged content. Daniel Cameron, author of *Flesh and Blood: A Dogmatic Sketch Concerning the Fallen Nature View of Christ's Human Nature*, has written a critical reception of Irving's Christology. Graham McFarlane, author of *Christ and the Spirit: The Doctrine of the Incarnation According to Edward Irving*, introduces the volume with an essay that presents the cultural and theological context of Irving's Christological sermons.

Irving's original publication covered some 450 pages and is inaccessible to a modern reader for a variety of reasons. In an effort to manage the cost of this volume and to make Irving's distinctive Christological and trinitarian ideas more accessible, sections of the original text have been omitted. These omissions are indicated in the text and summaries of abridged content can be found in the sermon specific introductions. Moreover, a note of where to find the full text in the original volumes is indicated in the footnotes.

Irving's text has, for the most part, been left unaltered. However, to aid the reader, some minor editorial decisions have been taken. First, the text has been divided into sections. To limit the imposition of alien categories of thought and expression, so far as is possible, the headings of these sections take their wording from Irving's text itself. Second, the occasions

where Irving quotes long sections of Scripture are formatted according to the contemporary conventions. In addition to this, the lengthy way in which Irving introduces these texts (“in the seventh verse of the second chapter of Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians”) has been replaced by placing the reference in brackets at the end of the quotation (2 Corinthians 2:7). Third, paragraph breaks have, on occasion, been added. Finally, while Irving’s spelling and punctuation have been retained, his use of capitalization has been modified to more closely conform to contemporary norms.

The sermons, which is how the following chapters were first delivered, follow a clear logical progression: the origin of the incarnation; the goal of the incarnation; the method of the incarnation; the events of the incarnate life and death of Christ and the effects of the incarnation. The aspect of Irving’s thought that has garnered most attention is the method of the incarnation, which is to say, God the Son’s assumption of a fallen human nature. It is in this doctrine that the trinitarian character of Irving’s soteriology is cast in greatest relief, as it is in the power of the Spirit that the incarnate Son overcomes the distorted and alienated will of human nature and offers it in obedience to the Father as a sacrifice of praise. It is this aspect that this abridgment focuses on most directly. Given the contentious nature of Irving’s Christology, some suggestions for further reading, both critical and in favour of Irving’s view, are provided at the end of this volume to supplement Graham’s introduction and Daniel’s response so to provide further perspective.

Whether he was right or wrong regarding his conviction that the Son, by the will of the Father, assumed fallen human nature, twisting distorted human will back into accord with the will of the Father by the power of the same Spirit, Edward Irving’s singular focus was to direct our attention off ourselves and onto the purpose of God manifested and accomplished in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. For Irving, an understanding of the redemptive death of Christ that was *exclusively* framed within extrinsic, forensic, and penal categories is grossly unsatisfactory. In this connection, Irving’s description of the Christian doctrine of salvation suggests the influence of Athanasius. The saving act is one that digs deep into the human condition, overturning it from its fallen core and liberating it from the power of sin. The Saviour, who has life in himself, enters creation (that, as made from nothing, always has nothingness on the borders of its existence), which has turned in will from the ground of its existence, and is disintegrating into non-existence so to actualize a will and a life orientated to the Father. The one who is eternally begotten from the Father shares life with that which is created from nothing so to include us—who are contingent and

temporal—in his relation to the Father, which is one of necessary mutuality and eternal delight.

The distinctive way in which Irving understood the divine purpose to be actualized in the person and work of Christ—specifically, the status of the human nature Christ assumed, the role of the Spirit in relation to sanctifying the human nature of the incarnate Son, and the implications for Christian discipleship—are and will remain contentious areas of his doctrine. However, the publication of this volume is intended to facilitate an estimation of Irving in which his more controversial doctrines are held in correlation with his broader theological vision.

The reproduction of this collection of sermons has been undertaken with Irving's singular focus in mind: to point believers beyond ourselves with our vacillating mood and devotion to the certainty of the divine will to be *for us*. This is in the prayer that our assurance of salvation might be anchored not on our interior states, our moral attainment or sacramental activity, but on the eternal purpose of the Father, covenanted with the Son, to draw all things together under Christ in the power of the Spirit. This is the Gospel of which Edward Irving was a servant: there is no depravity so deep, no suffering so dreadful, no death so complete that it is beyond the reach of God in Christ, who penetrated into the depths of human sin, suffering and death and lived the life of the faithful Son by the power of the Spirit. The crucified Jesus has been resurrected, inaugurating a new humanity to which we are joined, and he has returned to the Father's right hand, pouring out his Spirit on us that we too might (even today!) know freedom from the power of sin and the rule of death.

A. J. D. IRVING

The Feast of the Cross, 2020