

# Was Christ's Body Different?

By: Edward Irving

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**Editor's comments:** These thoughts from Edward Irving are more of a theological discourse, than a Bible study. He discusses what are the consequences of the erroneous teaching that Christ's human nature was different than ours. Fifty years before A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner were to emphasize this cornerstone of the "mystery of God," Edward Irving, an English contemporary of William Miller, was sounding it forth in trumpet tones.

CHRIST'S death, of itself apart, would have taught this erroneous lesson, and this only, that sin had somehow or other lodged itself in Godhead also; and that God himself had been mastered by the potentate of death, which is the devil.

Had Christ only died, God's subjection to sin would have been proved, and creation's misery and thralldom forever sealed; the guilt of the guilty made irrevocable, grace and mercy made impossible. So needful is resurrection to the subsistence of hope in the breast of man, and to the proclamation of good news from the throne of God.

These consequences, which are inevitable, if Christ rose not, come with equal force, though not with such strong appearance, if it be said, that the body which died and rose, and the soul which descended into hell, (the place of separate spirits,) and brought thence the keys of hell and death, were a different body and soul in any respect whatsoever, from those which mankind in common possess.

For upon every principle of sound reason, and by an invariable rule of logic, if in any number of individuals there be one, who, in one respect only, differs from all the rest, and he have a different action or passion from all the rest, that action or passion must, and ever is and will be, ascribed to the influence of this his particular and distinguishing property.

So, if Christ's body and soul have any distinction of natural being, from bodies and souls in general, to that distinction must, in reason and logic, be ascribed the peculiar specific phenomenon of His resurrection.

If the Spirit changed His body in its conception, then to that extraordinary work of the Spirit is necessarily to be ascribed the extraordinary effect of His resurrection from the dead; and we who have had no such extraordinary generation, can on such a wretched (but prevailing, as I understand,) hypothesis have no resurrection, and creation is as dark of hope as if Christ had not risen.

Oh! to what men's unbelief or partial belief drives them in the hidings of God's countenance, and the withholding of His prevenient grace!

If again it be held that Christ arose with a different body, NUMERICALLY different, (that is, which can be numbered as another,) from that which was laid in the grave, the same fatal conclusions necessarily follow; for in that case, it is not redemption of the created thing, but the creation of another thing; and resurrection is by the annihilation of the old thing created, and by the creation of a different thing. Creation is defeated, and the Creator is defeated. He tried His hand the first time and failed; but the second time He succeeded: false, fatal conclusion, changing God, deifying the devil!

And this conclusion comes as necessarily from supposing a change of the virgin's substance in the womb, as a change of the Lord's substance in the grave; I mean, change into another, numerically another, so as that it may be said of Christ's body,

"This is of another substance from mine."

There is no point on which the Church labored so long and so successfully to establish as this, That Christ took His human nature of the substance of the virgin, in the same sense

in which He took His Divine nature of the substance of the Godhead: and in all the Creeds of the Catholic Church,<sup>1</sup> and in all the Confessions of the same Church, after it had protested against the Roman Apostasy, this point is most carefully and scrupulously worded.

Nor had I supposed that it would have ever come into doubt in any branch of the Catholic Church. At this moment, however, I perceive a strong temptation of the devil to work upon what is called the Evangelical party, to deny this great head of faith, and to enunciate something contrary to it; as, that He took substance of Adam before He fell, or that He took it in a different state from what it is in one of us.

As to what an individual, or any two or three individuals, may say, it is of little comparative consequence; but if any Church, by word or deed, should sanction error here, that Church proves itself not to be upon the foundation; which foundation is not, that there is a Christ, but that Jesus is the Christ; that He who was of the virgin's substance is the Christ.

How one of fallen sinful substance could become the holy Christ of God; or, to speak more accurately, how the Christ of God could, without sin, take up unto himself a sinful substance, and preserve it ever sinless; is another question which must be gone into and made good, otherwise all is lost.

But that it was the sinful substance which He took, and, taking, preserved holy throughout all its ills and temptations, tendencies, propensities, and inclinations; all the hidings of God's countenance, and smitings of God's wrath, sufferings, sorrows, death, and corruption, and everything else to which such a substance is liable, and must ever encounter;—this is

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: Irving uses the word "Catholic" in the sense of "the universal body of believing Christians," and *not* in the sense of "the Roman Catholic Church." This is clear from the words following in which he speaks of "the Roman Apostasy."

the root of the matter, the elements of the problem, the nodus of the question, without which there is neither question, problem, nor matter of reality in the Incarnation.

Of denying this, of doubting this, O my brother! whoever you are, be you wary, be you awfully wary. For, thus denied:

- Christ in His nature has no union with your nature;
- There is an element in every one of your temptations which is not in His;
- His victory over any temptation is no assurance of yours;
- He cannot be your High Priest, for He has not fellowship with you in your trials; which is laid down by the apostle<sup>2</sup> as the very condition to anyone's being a high priest.

In your sinful actions, truly, He has not sympathy as having so acted, for His actions were always sinless and holy: but even here, though He has it not by real impartation, He has it by imputation; for all along, and in all respects, He was treated as a sinner by the Father, He was made sin, He was made a curse: and so here also He can sympathize with us: although sinner He was not, yet as sinner was He treated, and herein stands the vicariousness of His work: in the other stands the real personality of it.

But of this last there is no dispute among us. Luther made it good against the Romanists. Must some second Luther make the other good against the Evangelical? I hope not, I pray not.

The erroneousness of all opinions which make a difference between Christ's body born and ours born, or Christ's body risen and His body interred, consists in this, that whatsoever was done in Him and for Him by Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has no necessary connection with us; proves no love, grace, or holiness of God towards us; holds forth no re-

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<sup>2</sup> *Hebrews* 4:14-16; 5:1-2, 7-9.

demption, salvation, resurrection, nor glory for us, but only for one who had an essential difference from us; not an accidental but an essential difference, a difference of God's own making, and which God did first make before He set His love upon Him or would have any communion with Him.

This proves that He cannot set His love on us as we now are; that He cannot have communion with us, nor any grace towards us, nor any compassion of us. Christ's incarnation becomes thereby the seal of our condemnation, instead of being the gospel of God's forgiveness. And for our souls, there can be no hope in God until they shall have been regenerated by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's soul became regenerated; and then the question is,

“What should move God to regenerate any soul?”

Hatred cannot, wrath cannot: love only can; but then there is no love to move Him to it.

And as for the resurrection of the body, it becomes a mere figment and falsehood upon this scheme which they are blazing forth, to destroy the Church withal; for Christ's body to be beloved of God, and helped with Godhead power, had first to be changed by extraordinary generation, which ours cannot be, and therefore must it be hated, and have no hope of Godhead power. And so resurrection is the property only of a body changed by extraordinary generation, and therefore is no property of ours, and so man's hope lies flat.

Where is your boasted metaphysics, your intellectual acumen, O you Scottish divines, that you cannot see these fell conclusions with which you would sweep out the stars of heaven?