

044
EDWARD IRVING

AN INTERPRETATION

of his

LIFE AND THEOLOGICAL TEACHING

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF Ph.D.

by

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P R E F A C E

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CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF HIS LIFE

"In Irving you had a man of prophetic calibre."

R. A. Knox, "Enthusiasm", p. 557.

In 1792 there was a revolution raging in France, and a second son born to the tanner in Annan. Irving the tanner had married well, and his wife was remarkable for comeliness, friendliness and activity. Her home-coming as a bride, in scarlet riding-skirt and leghorn hat, was remembered for years, and her children, all handsome, adored her. In the little grey parish kirk the baby was christened Edward, and he grew up running the braes with village lads who afterwards went to the ends of the earth. He went with them to "Peggy Paine's" village school, and afterwards to Annan Academy, where the Classics were inculcated with a stick. Another unpromising pupil, Thomas Carlyle, followed him a few years later to that place of wrath and tears. Edward showed no signs of brilliance and ability, but he was popular. It was remembered that he once got his mother out of a late party with a "very urgent" message; which was, that he wanted to give some of his clothes to a tinker boy, to which she cheerfully agreed, and this seems typical of them both.

The boy did not worship every Sunday in the parish kirk of Annan; but preferred to walk the five miles, there and back, to the little kirk of the True Seceders in Ecclefechan. Perhaps he thought them nearer in spirit to the Covenanters, and this was a covenanting country, still alive with their tales: or perhaps even as a boy he found something lacking

in the parish church. This was a thriving corner of Scotland, notable through history for originality in religious outlook. Among the Irving forebears were a family of French Huguenots, one of whom was himself parish minister in Annan, and famous for his wit. There is no record of whether Edward saw small Thomas Carlyle on those pilgrimages, but Carlyle vividly remembered him coming back to visit Annan Academy as a student from Edinburgh while he was still a pupil. He was very tall, over six feet, very dark and handsome, with a slight cast in one eye. Carlyle, with lifelong jealousy, calls it a glaring squint. There are personalities, not so much drawn together throughout life by sympathy as by the magnetism of opposites. Irving and Carlyle are two such. All their lives they jostle together, and spark.

There was nothing soft about Scots education in these days. Edward went up to Edinburgh University at thirteen, with his elder brother who studied medicine. They set up house together in a room near the college, managing their classes, their lives and their household cares themselves. Sometimes they would get a box by carrier, with cheese or meal or some homebaking among the clean clothes. When term ended, the boxes went back the same way, and the two boys set off on foot "as the crow flies" for home, Edward jumping the gates all the way. He loved to declaim aloud as they

went, particularly from Ossian: and once, at one of the farmsteads where they got a bite and shelter for the night, he found an old copy of Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" which influenced him all his life.

At seventeen Edward had finished his Arts, and was ready to support himself through his divinity course. A friend got him appointed to start and run the Mathematical School in Haddington, and there he did well for two years. A local doctor, Dr. Welsh, heard good reports of his work, and engaged him as tutor to his only child: a disappointment in that it was a girl, but an unusually intelligent, attractive one. Lessons took place before and after school hours, and if Edward arrived on a dark winter morning to find the child not yet fully dressed, he would snatch her up in a blanket and carry her out to show her the stars. He had a natural bent for teaching, and made his pupils as keen as himself. But he also kept strict discipline, and was dominated by a sense of duty. He loved to take his boys out on field work, measuring the heights of different objects, and then organising games at the end; but within the schoolroom walls he was a near tyrant. Even the doctor's little girl knew that. "Pessime" meant punishment, and he hesitated long before putting it down, but duty won. On one occasion Jane Welsh discovered his strictness and his

gentleness. "Jane, my heart is broken, but I must tell the truth."¹ Another father who was pleased with the progress of his boys under Irving was Gilbert Burns, the poet's brother.

Once when at Haddington, Edward heard that Dr. Chalmers, already rising to fame, was to preach at St. George's, Edinburgh. Off he set with a band of his scholars to walk to Edinburgh. Arrived at St. George's, the hot and dusty little band found their entry to an empty pew barred by an officious elder who was guarding it for one of the nobility. "Remove your arm or I'll shatter it," cried Irving. They got in, and Irving and Chalmers were in the same church for the first time.

At nineteen, Irving was promoted to be head and for some years only teacher of the newly established Kirkcaldy Academy. This was in fact but one large and one small room. It had been started by the minister, the Rev. John Martin, and some of the better off tradesfolk, who were ambitious to get some higher schooling for their children. This suited Irving splendidly. His towering figure in a red tartan tail-coat was soon kenspeckle in the town, and his original methods the occasion of much discussion and criticism. One day his scholars would be learning passages of "Paradise Lost" off

1. Life of Edward Irving - Mrs. Oliphant - p. 23.

by heart, the next they would have a whole holiday on condition they wrote a full essay on how they spent it. French and Italian were attempted along with Latin, fieldwork continued in Mathematics, and in summer he taught them all to swim with the aid of a rope and an oar. He even taught them manners, and no one dared snowball "an Academy lassie". No wonder his "Irvingites", as his pupils called themselves, worshipped him, and this despite the townsfolk's complaint that they could not tell if the squeals came from his classroom or the pig slaughterhouse. By night he sometimes took them out to learn astronomy, but this stopped after two occasions when showers of falling stars were seen. The ignorant chased them, declaring that Irving "drew down the stars". He was that kind of man.

But he was a young man - a very young man - and perhaps occasionally lonely. It was in Kirkcaldy he got engaged to a former pupil, a daughter of Mr. Martin, and it was in Kirkcaldy he preached his "trials" for licence to preach the Gospel. In these days they took six months, and they consisted of five different preachments: one an exegesis in Latin, another an exercise in Greek New Testament criticism, a third a homily, a fourth addressed to the clergy to show gifts of expounding scripture, and a fifth addressed to the people to show gifts of dividing the Word to them. Irving

had now finished his "partial" studies in Divinity at Edinburgh, and in June 1815 he was licensed by the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy to preach the Gospel.

There must have been a great stir in Annan, the Sunday he came back to preach his first sermon in the parish kirk. The whole town was there to hear him. Old schoolteachers, family and elders were out in force, with knitted brows and critical ears. The young preacher began, and was soon in full tide of his discourse, when suddenly a sweeping gesture of his arm swept his sermon notes clean off the Bible, over the edge of the pulpit down on to the precentor's desk below. In awed silence the congregation held its breath, but Irving, stooping his great length over the pulpit, grasped his papers, crumpled them and thrust them into his pocket, his preaching continuing with unabated flow and energy. The congregation relaxed, completely captured.

In Kirkcaldy, however, the little preaching he did was not well received. The congregation were used through long years to a more placid style, and found he had "ower muckle grandeur"¹ for their liking. The baker, in particular, made a point of kicking the pew door open and bouncing out whenever he saw the young schoolmaster enter the pulpit. So Irving was relegated to further long hours of critical

1. *ibid*, p. 37.

consideration in the pew.

Every ruler who lasts, outlasts his first popularity. Critics of Irving's unorthodox teaching methods had grown up and eventually they formed another school, with a new master. They chose Thomas Carlyle. It is completely typical of Irving that he welcomed him eagerly as an old friend, advised him and encouraged him, introduced him all round and lent him his books. Throughout all their life Irving seems to have been giving to and helping Carlyle, and Carlyle grumbling about it, as if aware the very attitude made the other the greater man.

After seven years of teaching in Kirkcaldy, Irving at the age of twenty-five threw it up and strode off with his savings to Edinburgh. Carlyle encouraged by this boldness went too. They took different lodgings. Irving continued to befriend Carlyle. He exhorted him out of depressions and spiritual struggles, found him friends, sent him means of employment, at which he either took or gave offence. It was Irving who found him his first lift in the world, a well-paid tutor's job; Irving who got him his first good literary commission with the London Magazine; Irving who found him his first lodgings in London, and did him many a good turn there; Irving who introduced him to Jane Welsh.¹

1. Carlyle's Early Life. J. A. Froude, Vcl. 1, p. 98.

When Irving, after long, lonely pacings on the sands of Kirkcaldy, decided to cut loose and seek his fortune in Edinburgh, he met more than he looked for. He met, as one of the brightest ornaments of the city, the little girl he had taught in Haddington years before. She was now a beautiful and brilliant young woman. Much dignified silence has covered the story, but the fact stands, that she and Irving fell in love, as two people wholly made for each other. But there was Isabella Martin waiting in the Manse of Kirkcaldy. In those days, before any possible careers for women, to jilt a girl, especially after some years, was a virtual death-blow. The young man who had taught chivalry to his Irvingite lads in Kirkcaldy could not hesitate over it. Once more, although his heart in truth be broken, duty won. Only this time Jane's heart was broken too. This is the answer to her enigma. For the rest, they played the game and fairly. After some years she married Thomas Carlyle, but not before she had told him all about the Irving incident. Neither Jane Welsh Carlyle nor Edward Irving were the type that can easily endure a second best, but they did do their best with it. Irving lavished his generosity of heart on Isabella, his kindness and affection and consideration. No doubt she too did her best, but it was not an easy place to fill. She gave him children he loved, but she did not have a thriving

hand with them, and four died in infancy, to his great grief. At his darkest hour she was not with him, and she failed to influence him at a time when restraint might have saved him from his later tragic mistakes.

After a year in Edinburgh, Irving seemed no nearer his life-work. But in 1819 Dr. Chalmers came through to Edinburgh to look for an assistant, and Irving was asked to preach in St. George's before him. In his discouragement, Irving had been studying Eastern languages with a view to going off as a missionary. It was an idea that recurred to him in moments of depression throughout his life. But now his spirits bounded up again. He was full of enthusiasm and hope. He waited eagerly for tidings from Glasgow. When they did not come, he threw up everything, leapt on the first boat he saw at Greenock, landed in Belfast instead of Galloway, and proceeded to walk the country, sharing the bite and sup in any cabin as he came to it. Then, when he at last got in touch with the post again, it was to find Dr. Chalmers' letter of invitation waiting for him.

So it was in Glasgow at last that he got started in the work of his heart. Dr. Chalmers' position in the city, as in the Church, was unique. He had made of his parish an actual Papal State within the city, where he alone ruled in benevolent autocracy. Within its bounds he sought to abolish

pauperism, and that by substituting simply the kirk plate for all the machinery of Poor Relief. All schools, of course, were in his power. Chalmers' conception of a parish economy was a magnificent one, with all the elements of a small welfare state. No wonder he was a national figure. Once again Irving was thrown in repeated contrast against one of the greatest Scotsmen of his day, for his whole conception of the Church, its destiny and its policy, was fundamentally and completely different from Chalmers. At the time of course, he was only an obscure "helper" to the great man: and although in his day he was greatly to out-top him in fame, as he did in power of vision, yet it was Chalmers' influence that was to prevail in the future of the Church of Scotland.

"Your new helper looks like a brigand chief," Chalmers' young ladies told him. The tall dark figure went swinging, early and late, in and out of the evil-smelling closes and lanes. Into every house he entered, he went with the blessing "Peace be to this house". Children were his immediate care, and he was always remembered for his habit of taking them, however filthy or ragged, on his knee. He would talk to them and before he left, lay his hands on their heads in special blessing. All his life he had a special gift with children, who recognized the sincerity of his affection.

And he believed, with an immense simplicity, in following the example of his Lord.

While Chalmers carried out his benevolent autocracy, perfectly practicable in the old parish system, which he himself was to destroy so completely by the Disruption, Irving could come and go among the people on a freer footing. With the unfailing charm of his simplicity, he soon had their confidence and friendship. Although lack of work and lack of food at this time had made the weavers so savage that troops were always on call, he found them sensible and kindly, and moved among them unafraid. Of all revolution and rebellion, he disapproved in principle - they were contrary to Duty. But in practice, when a small windfall came his way in the shape of an unexpected legacy, he proceeded to convert it into £1 notes, which he put in a drawer of his desk, and every morning when he went out to visit he put one in his pocket. The legacy, instead of being thriftily laid by in the bank, lasted just so many days as there were notes. But he seems to have thought he got his money's worth for it.

After over two years as Dr. Chalmers' helper, Irving was again thinking of the heathen in the East. But at this juncture a timid call came, perhaps one of the least encouraging that ever a minister received. The Caledonian Church in London, which was little more than a chapel to the

Caledonian Orphanage, was in desperate plight. Its congregation had dwindled to a bare 50 people. They had heard of the energetic Irving, and appealed to him as something of a last resort. Perhaps it seems odd that this should have been his only call. But then, as now, calls came most frequently through influence and "the word in season", and were pursued chiefly where the subject was most blameless and reckoned safe. Irving was incapable of stooping either to policy or ingratiating, and his manner no doubt alarmed the middle-class mind. Probably only a desperate church would have come to him in the first place. He accepted the offer. There remained a few obstacles. Gaelic was supposed to be essential for one, and there was the problem of whether so tiny a congregation could support him. But with so much determined goodwill on both sides, these were overcome, and the call sustained.

Now at long last his feet were on the way. He spent a week-end with his old friend Story of Rosneath. His friends thought he should have been preparing his farewell sermon for St. John's, but he was far too uplifted to settle, and jumped gates with all his old abandon. "Dear me, Irving," said Story mildly, "I did not know you had been so agile." Irving turned on him with glee. "Once I read you an essay of mine, and you said, 'Dear me, Irving, I did not know you

had been so classical!' Another time you heard me preach, and said, 'Dear me, Irving, I did not know you had so much imagination!' Ah, but wait you, Story, till you see what great things I shall do!"¹.

In the late spring of that year Irving went home to Annan, keeping a quiet time in the green countryside before his solemn ordination in the little kirk that was his mother-church. To his future father-in-law he wrote about this time the words which are a clue to his whole life. "There are a few things which bind me to the world, and but a very few; one is to make a demonstration for a higher style of Christianity, something more magnanimous than this age affects." He was in truth tired of all the dull sermons to slumbering pews, or to quote Mrs. Oliphant, "the common stock of dry theology, the certified soundness of dull men."².

Irving preached his first sermon to his congregation of scarcely 50 people in July 1822. His text was "Therefore I came unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore for what intent you have sent for me?" (Acts 10, 29). His fame as a preacher spread rapidly. Within a few months Canning had been to hear him, and had made his veiled allusion to his striking eloquence in the House of Commons.³ Before the year was out crowds besieged

1. Mrs. Oliphant, p. 73.

2. *ibid* p. 74.

3. Encyclopaedia Britannica (9th Ed.) Vol. 13, p. 371.

the little church, and the office-bearers had their hands full regulating the throng and directing the many fashionable carriages that jostled each other in this shabby corner of London. In one quarter applications for sittings rose to 1,500. His fame seemed now secure.

What was the extraordinary force that could hold the best minds of the day rivetted throughout sermons of astonishing length. Mrs. Oliphant says:

"It was not genius or eloquence alone, but something infinitely greater - a man all visible in those hours of revelation, striving mightily with every man he met, in an entire personal unity which is possible to very few."¹

There was nothing whatsoever of the stunt about him, but a through and through sincerity for anyone who cared to put it to the proof. First, his own life was tirelessly built and centred on Christ's truth. Some hours every day, however broken, were given to his study. His own wrestling was accomplished before he went into the pulpit. Yet his door was always open, his most pressing preparation laid aside for every call on him. His was not the easy charity of alms, but of the shared meal and brotherly sympathy, the most

1. Mrs. Oliphant, p. 81.

difficult and demanding. In fact Dr. Chalmers, when he went down to preach him in was a little irritated at the characters he found sharing the roof-tree: a consequence he points out, of Irving's parting indiscriminate invitation to the whole of St. John's.

To Chalmers, Irving dedicated his published "Orations".

"While I laboured as your assistant, my labours were never weary, they were never enough to express my thankfulness to God for having associated me with such a man."¹

It was a significant volume in that it was addressed not to the usual church attenders, but boldly and then quite originally, to all outsiders. "It hath appeared to the author of this book," he begins, "that the chief obstacle to the progress of divine truth over the minds of men, is the want of its being sufficiently presented to them." This suggestion did not add to Irving's popularity with his brother clerics. But it does show how hard and ceaselessly he worked.

In the autumn of that year he went to Scotland. On October 13th Irving carried out his early promise and married Isabella Martin in the Kirkcaldy manse. The Sunday before he had preached at Haddington. But after, he allowed himself

1. Life of Irving, W. Jones p. 31.

a holiday. They went to Glasgow to hear Dr. Chalmers' farewell sermon on retiring from St. John's, and they went to Annan to be kirked in his family pew. Thereafter they returned to London.

Two years to the month after Irving's first arrival in London, the foundation stone was laid for a church big enough to accommodate his new congregation. He dedicated it with three special sermons on the foundations of the Church of Scotland. That same summer his first baby, Edward, was born. Never was a prouder father. He carried it out in his own arms for all its airings, to the amusement of passers-by, who recognised the famous Scottish preacher. Charles Lamb, by now a friend, had with characteristic aptness nick-named him. To Leigh Hunt he writes:

"I have got acquainted with Mr. Irving, the Scotch preacher whose fame must have reached you. Judge how his own sectarists must stare when I tell you he had dedicated a book to S.T.C. acknowledging to have learnt more from him than from all the men he ever conversed with. He is a most sincere modest man in a room, this Boanerges in the temple."¹

The friendship with Coleridge was one of deep and lasting

1. Leigh Hunt's Letters quoted as footnote by Mrs. Oliphant, p. 98.

understanding though it puzzled not a few. When Dr. Chalmers came down to preach at the opening of the new church, he described three hours spent with Coleridge, whose conversation

"flowed in a mighty unremitting stream. You know Irving sits at his feet and drinks in every syllable this is a secret, and to me unintelligible, communion of spirit between them, on the ground of a certain German mysticism and transcendental lake poetry which I am not yet up to."¹

Irving's dedication of this new book of sermons to Coleridge ended up, "they are the offering of a heart which loves your heart, and of a mind which looks up with reverence to your mind."² The volume was received with double indignation by the Church as a whole.

Misfortune now began to dog Irving's heels. Fifteen months after birth the infant Edward fell ill and died at Kirkcaldy. It was a terrible personal agony to the father. No David grieved more bitterly over Absalom. To the end of his life the pain was there. The 12th of the month he kept as a fast in his memory. Mrs. Irving was still weak after the birth of a little girl, so he went home alone, to fight out his agony, often on his knees. Quite a while after, at

1. Dr. Chalmers' Letters, quoted by Mrs. Oliphant.
2. Irving's Collected Writings, Vol. 1, p. 427.

the death-bed of a young man, when someone closed the boy's eyes he writes, "I wish they did not do so. I so loved to see Edward's eyes." Yet he fought through to a rock-hard faith, and would not let even the Angel of Death go till he blessed him. He wrote to his Church,

"The Lord hath made his pace to be known unto us
by His grace I shall be a more faithful minister unto
you and unto all the flock. Now is my heart broken -
now is its hardness melted: and my pride is humbled
and my strength is renewed."

To his wife at this time he was most loving and consoling. He wrote her every day, at length if humanly possible. He wrote,

"If the fruit of our marriage had been but to give birth
and being to so sweet a spirit, I would bless the Lord,
that He had ever given you to my arms."

The Journal¹ that he wrote to his wife from London is in extraordinary vivid contrast. Each day is examined. All sorts and conditions of people come to him. He gives advice and he gives comfort and help. His studies are interrupted by a scrounger "coming in with soft and canny foot".

(1) Mrs. Oliphant, p. 120-195.

Irving will give him his own charity, but refused to recommend him to others. Now he is demolishing to tears a young woman who had persistently afflicted him with her doubts - "she would intellectualize everything, and listen to none". Now he is standing firm with his Kirk Session on some vexed question. The amount of work he managed to crowd into a day is prodigious.

After his wife and daughter returned, Irving found time for Spanish lessons. It was at this time that he discovered a strange book in Spanish by one Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra which he translated into English. The chief importance of the translation lies not in the book itself, "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty", but in the remarkable preface which Irving wrote for it. It contains some of his best and most mature thought.

The year 1826 saw the first of the fateful conferences at Albury, the residence of Mr. Henry Drummond, M.P. If there is one single answer as to why Irving's genius ended in the desert, it is in that name. The egotism of this religious enthusiast, with wealth, power and wit and yet no responsibility, outweighed commonsense. Yet that first conference seemed harmless enough: a mixed gathering of good religious brains met to consider by earnest study and discussion all that was prophesied in the Scriptures on the

Second Coming of our Lord. It was a subject that increasingly took hold of Irving from now on.

✓ In 1827 the new Church was opened in Regent Square. In the same year Irving's second baby daughter died, and renewed his grief, and his twice-tried faith. He dedicated his new book "Lectures on Baptism" to his wife "mother of my two departed children". For he said that it was his love and meditation over them that inspired much of it. He also gave an "Ordination Charge" to the new minister of the Scots Church, London Wall. It is a magnificent piece of oratory and deservedly praised.

Meanwhile the new church, that was to deliver them from crowds, had done so indeed. Without the excitement of scrambling for seats, the interest of the floating population waned. If, as Carlyle sourly suggested, he had "hopes of a new moral reformation watching to see the sons of mammon become sons of God and the green-flowers of Almack's to be made living roses in a new Eden", then there was no such thing for "fashion went her idle way".¹ Yet religion remained. 1,000 sittings were at once taken and regularly filled and Irving was content with them.

Then for the first time there was a whisper against Irving's doctrine. It came from an obscure clerical busy-body, who pursued Irving into his vestry one Sunday evening

1. Reminiscences by Thomas Carlyle, Vol. I, p. 280

and fired questions at him, which he afterwards published without permission or consultation. This started the great controversy on the Nature of Christ, which Irving held was of the self-same stuff as human nature, transformed by the Spirit, not different in essence. Irving withheld publication of a further Book of Sermons till he had fully considered every implication of this: then, when he felt sure the Church was in error in so shortening its teaching, he brought them out with additional sermons on the full significance of the Incarnation.

In spring his wife went home to Kirkcaldy and he followed on a new apostolic journey. His Albury conferences and his own studies had convinced him that the Second Coming was the only valid vantage-ground for consideration of the whole purpose of God: and on he went through Scotland to preach with all his great power and passion that the Kingdom of God was at hand. He gathered great multitudes wherever he went. In Annan, the little kirk could not contain them all, nor even the graveyard, and they had to go into a field.

He reached Edinburgh in Assembly week in May. So as not to interfere with meetings he arranged to preach in St. Andrew's Church at 6 a.m. By that hour the whole of George Street was packed. This continued when the next day he moved to the West Kirk (St. Guthberts), and hundreds could

not gain admission. Dr. Chalmers meantime is pontificating happily in the Assembly, the Supreme Court of the National Church, where Irving is never sent or invited or even allowed to speak, except once in a vain plea for admission which Sir Walter Scott records in his journal. In Edinburgh a young minister comes, and finds Irving playing with the children in the house where he was staying. He is MacLeod Campbell of Rhu, who also is dissatisfied with the "certified soundness of dull men", and became a disciple. When Irving goes down the coast from Glasgow he now has another pulpit besides Story's at Rosneath. The men tramp over the hills and all the loch is alive with boats as they throng to hear him.

In Carnwath and Bathgate the same tale is repeated. When he comes to Kirkcaldy the crowd pushed in to the Church gallery till there is not foot-room. Then, with a terrible crash, it falls on the people beneath. Thirty-five are killed outright, not by the falling but the stupid panic for the doors. Many more are injured. Irving, who had not reached the church, ran in and helped to save many. But someone turned on him in bitterness and accused him of being the cause of it all, and giving him the blame. It is even said they remembered the falling stars and repeated that he had a devil. He was cut to the heart by it. The rest of his time there he visited every bereaved house and all help

that man could give, from prayers to money, he gave.

Another baby, Samuel, was born to him in Kirkcaldy, and again it meant a long separation, for his wife clung obstinately to her own folk. He had once again to go away in sorrow and alone, to lodgings.

It was scarcely surprising he should be glad of the welcome of Henry Drummond, and the hospitality of Albury. The latter, along with Lord Mandeville, had bought a defunct newspaper. It was to be brought out as a prophetic quarterly. Though they would not give him the honour and regard of these amateurs, his own Church did occasionally use him, and then he gladly gave of his best whether in preaching a Fast-day sermon for the Presbytery (apology for the ancient Purity and Fulness of the doctrine of the Church of Scotland, in which he preferred the ancient Confessions of faith before that of Westminster), or in writing for them a pastoral letter to all lapsed Scots in London. But to them still he was a mere presbyter: to the quarterly he was the Prophet.

In the spring of 1829 Irving wished to go again into Scotland, but found his brother clerics already taking alarm at such invidious popularity, and ready to resist the message. He could not get a pulpit in Edinburgh. He had a most "fraternal" letter from Dr. Dickson refusing St. Cuthbert's. To give him a voice in his own church, Annan had this year

sent him as an elder to the Assembly, but after a stiff fight, his commission was disallowed, and once more he was firmly shown to the door. Still, he was honoured by the High Commissioner, and enjoyed a dinner party with him and Sir Walter Scott.¹ After this rejection in the Church of his own land, one cannot blame Irving for turning thankfully to the Albury circle again.

In 1830 the storm broke with the impeaching of Irving's disciple, Campbell of Rhu. He was the first to appear before a presbytery, with all the humiliation of its conflicting witnesses from his own congregation. Then MacLean of Dreghorn who had been won for life by Irving's Ordination Charge, and also Scott of Woolwich, the man who had constantly urged to Irving that the apostolic gifts of healing, prophecy and speaking with tongues - were for all time, not once only, but only temporarily lost through lack of faith. Irving himself brought out a new book on the doctrine of our Lord's human nature.

"I believe," he cries in it, "that my Lord did come down and toil and sweat and travail, in exceeding great sorrow, in this mass of temptation, with which I and all men are oppressed: did bring His Divine presence and death-possessed humanity, and in that very state which God had put it after Adam had sinned, did

1. Sir Walter Scott's Journals, p. 531.

suffer its sorrows and pains, its anguish, its darkness, wasteness, disconsolateness and hiddenness from the countenance of God: and by His faith and patience did win for Himself the name of the Man of Sorrows and the Author and Finisher of our faith."¹

He was to discover with amazement, that not only did many in the Church not believe that, but that they found it heresy. Even the mass of folk who did not pretend to follow the argument could find blasphemy in the juxta-position of sinfulness with the name of Christ. And all the many envious had their chance at last.

Out of his deep distress, Irving wrote twice to Chalmers. He asked for advice and judgment. It does not appear as if Chalmers ever replied. At this acute juncture, with so much ferment of faith in the Church, with so many different cases before the presbyteries, one expects the great man of the Church to have some guidance to offer, but he guards his safety and his silence. The cases drag on, with all their undercurrents of personal feeling. And now the Presbytery of London challenges Irving himself.

The Presbytery of London consisted of six men, one of them at least personally hostile, and the others at least

1. The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature - 1830, p. 2.

liable to envy and resentment. Not one of them could stand up to Irving personally, as they had discovered, but banded together they constituted a Presbytery to which he was due to answer as to a Bishop. They intend to try him for his Doctrine of the Incarnation, which they do not know how to refute: so they have Irving in a cleft stick, for to be involved in such a trial would in itself be the end of any parish minister. Irving instead denies their authority to charge him, claiming that by the trust deed of the National Scotch Church he is responsible to a Scottish Presbytery alone. So "I arose and went forth from them, appealing my cause to the Church of Scotland, who alone have rightful authority over me and my flock."¹ But Scotland continued to ignore, and this wilful separation was a fatal step: the first step into the disastrous freedom of the desert.

Up till now his elders and deacons had stood unswervingly by him: signing a joint statement they issued at this time: but the scandal of Rhu and Roseneath had not yet fully come to a head. About now, his baby son, never strong, began to sink. Everything that care and thought, two doctors and the father's unceasing prayers could do, was done. But late on a Saturday he died. Irving went through the Sunday fasting and tearless, preaching from the words of David "I shall go

1. Mrs. Oliphant, p. 305.

to him, but he will not return to me", only to break down utterly at its conclusion. Yet despite this blow he firmly held that at this time the gifts of healing, prophecy and tongues were being restored to the Church.

Story had innocently written a memoir of a saintly girl in his parish, Isabella Campbell of Ternicarry. She had been beloved and revered as a saint in her short life, and the place where she loved to pray, beside the burn, became something of a shrine. After her death her sister Mary, also beautiful, pious and consumptive, was seized with the gift of tongues: speaking at great length and with great power in an unknown tongue. Across the water in Port Glasgow two brothers Macdonald came home from the shipyard for dinner, and found their sick sister apparently on her death-bed. She poured out an impassioned prayer that one brother might then and there be endowed with the Holy Ghost. After a minute or two he said calmly, "I have got it." He stood at the window, and when he turned again the others were half afraid of his transformed face. He took his sister by the hand, saying, "Arise and stand upright." This she did, strong and well, and sat down to dinner with them. In a short time they had all become supporters of Irving.

In May, instead of going North, Irving held special prayers at 6.30 a.m. for guidance and wisdom to the General

Assembly. But there are times when prayer is turned back. The Assembly deposed Campbell of Rhu, and put him out of the Church: deprived Scott, who had not been ordained, of his license to preach: and sent Maclean of Dreghorn back to be baited by his own Presbytery. It launched a threat of proceedings against Irving if he ever again tried to preach in Scotland.

The 6.30 prayer-meeting had continued, with fully 100 people, and their constant prayer had been that the ancient gifts of the Spirit might be restored to them. Two of the congregation had already been seized with an experience and spoke first in an unknown tongue and then breaking into English ejaculations and exhortations. For some time Irving made trial of the "spirits", and would not allow them in the service. Those who were seized had to rush to the vestry, there to cry out. But Irving had gone too far. If this was the answer, how could he refuse to have it in his church. He soon invited the people to come and witness for themselves, which they did with terrifying consequences.

A crowd of 1,000 would assemble in the dark November mornings, and on Sunday perhaps 2,000. The sensation and excitement when the "tongues" broke out, reached fever-pitch. At one point it took all Irving's personality and force of prayer to keep down a riot. Presently he made room for the

voice of the Spirit, first in the early service, then in the ordinary ones, pausing at set points for the "testimony".

The outcry was fearful. The "Times" roundly condemned the whole proceedings. Carlyle came and ranted about "bedlam and chaos" while Irving sat, humble but unyielding, his face in his hands. All his Deacons and Session left him as protest, save one. He wrote to them from his heart, "My dear Brethren, There is nothing I would not surrender to you, even my life, except to hinder what I most clearly discern to be the work of God's Holy Spirit."¹ The Trustees, having remonstrated early and late, now took Counsel's opinion as to how they could get rid of him.

It was at this time, with cholera raging, chiefly in Clydeside, but in every densely populated place, that Irving took ill, and his doctors thought it was the plague. But he prepared to preach as usual, "very sick with a wringing pain through my body and a most deathly chill. I tottered to the Church and stretched on three chairs before the vestry fire, barely able to keep in heat, and by perfect stillness a little to abate the pain. Nevertheless I attired for the pulpit and gained it, where I began to read, expecting the power of spiritual exposition as usual; but to my astonishment, I had no thought of word, and it was as much as I could do to keep on reading. About the 6th

1. Case of Edward Irving - Papers in New College Library.

verse the words began to be indistinct in sound. I could not strike them full out. My eye became dim, the words of the book looked hazy. Then my head began to swim, and my heart to become faint. I laid hold of the pulpit sides and looked wistfully about: the most painful symptom of all was, I felt it a great effort to draw breath. At this moment of crisis I had only one feeling, for the honour of Jesus Christ, Lord and Master, that He should be put to shame through my unbelief - and that I should fall before the enemy, in the place of testimony and in the sight of all the people. One thought, one prayer, shot across my spirit, 'Surely Thou, Jesus, are stronger in my spirit than satan in my flesh'. That instant a cold sweat, chill as death, broke out over my body and my face and hands. I was strengthened and went on to preach for about an hour."¹ He still could not eat and was very weak, but he was out again preaching in the evening.

The Trustees now summoned him before the Presbytery, to answer their charges. They boiled down to one, that he had allowed public services to be interrupted by persons not members or licentiates of the Church of Scotland. A paltry charge it seems to-day, but the real danger of Irving was the reality and infectious power of his passionate belief.

1. Morning Watch - letter to editor June, 1832.

Nothing could stop it but its own failure. The tragedy was that already the two chief "Voices" had discovered their error, and were publicly recanting. Had a wise head given Irving time, these strange outbursts would surely have died. Only now he was persecuted for his belief he could not stop. It was his Gethsemane. He wrote a last moving appeal to the Trustees but it made no impression. After a long and wearying trial before the small London Presbytery, he was found unfit, and deposed from his charge. Next morning as they gathered for their early prayers the congregation found the gates of the church locked against Irving and themselves. The communion tokens he had given them were worthless, they had to turn into the streets.

From now on it is twilight. He preaches in parks and squares, leading the Londoners in singing the psalms of the Covenanters. He still keeps open house, but now his very liberty is a frustration.

There are gleams of the old magic. Once when preaching to a great open-air crowd, a ragged dirty child got lost, and was handed up, sobbing bitterly, to Irving. He tucked the child into the crook of his arm as he used to carry his own babies, where it nestled down comforted against the broad shoulder. Irving went on preaching, making the child the text of the next part of his sermon: and then at the end

handed it over to the parents who had easily seen it on its high perch. And again, when they went to book a hall for Holy Communion, the caretaker apologised for delay because he had a child "deathly ill" upstairs. "Then the first thing to do is to go and pray for it," said Irving, and up he went to the cot of the little patient to offer prayer. When they came back later in the week his first question was for the child. The father told him with joy that it was better. "Then the first thing to do is to go and give thanks," said the priest who was no longer a pastor.

A new church was in the making, eventually to be widely known as the Catholic Apostolic Church, but Irving was doomed to play a brief and unhappy part in it. Now the Presbytery of Annan at long last summoned him to their bar.

He arrived in Annan in the mirk of a wild March evening. The whole town as before and for the last time, turned out to hear him. They pressed into the kirk until there was barely room to breathe. The Presbytery proceeded by the light of one candle. First an obscure minister rose, with mock modesty, claiming to be only a David to attack such a Goliath, but believing he could prove Irving at fault. With a stupidity verging on the wilfully malicious, he accused Irving of having called our Lord sinful. Irving's defence is most passionate.

"As to my maintaining that Christ is other than most holy, I do protest it is not true. It is not true! before the living God, I do declare it is not true. I would give my life to maintain the contrary. I never wrote, never preached such damnable doctrine I dare you to say that the Lord your Saviour had an easier passage through life than you had. I dare you to say that His work was holiday work but show me the Psalm where it is written that He does not call our sins His own. He suffered because He loved you this broke His heart."¹

Dr. Duncan the Moderator now rose to say it was evident Mr. Irving imagined he was in London, preaching to his people there. Irving answered,

"Oh no, no - it is not so! I know well where I now stand. I stand in the place where I was born, in the church wherein I was first baptized and then ordained."

He goes on to cry,

"Can a soldier who is sick, wounded or dead be expected to follow a leader who is filled with the omnipotence of God? Nay! But if his captain be sick, wounded

1. Trial of Edward Irving (Dumfries) 1833, pp. 24, 25.

and dead too, may he not ask the soldier to do the like?" Mock me not by speaking of popularity. The reproaches of a brother are hard to bear. Ye know not what I have suffered: you know not what it is to be severed from a flock you love; to be banished from your house; to be driven from a place of worship in which ye have been honoured as God's servant....."¹

Irving might have saved himself both preaching and appeal. They had met to find him guilty, and so they did. As the Moderator rose to depose him, in that church so crammed with silence and with shadows, a loud and terrible voice suddenly rang out: "Depart, flee! Depart! Ye cannot pray! How can ye pray to Christ whom ye deny?" For a moment Moderator and Presbytery were aghast. Then they find that it is the voice of Dow, one of Irving's friends who had accompanied him. Irving and his two friends obey the voice: the Presbytery are left to cast him out, blow out their solitary candle and depart into the night.

He lingered in Scotland, pouring out a swan-song of preaching on the sands of Dumfries. He returned to the "new church". He was driven to accept reordination, or something very like it, and was once again free to administer

1. Ibid pp. 28, 29.

the sacraments. Something of the unhappiness and lostness of Irving in this tragic period can be gathered from the sermons which he preached. Gone is the glow and fire, the striking word and passionate phrase. He is burning out.

In 1834 he set off to go to Glasgow, wandering at length through England, by foot and horse: sometimes going by guidance, sometimes by guess, writing the while charming fairy-tale letters to his little daughter. There is only one word for him now. He is fey. In Wales he realises he is very fevered and no amount of hard riding and buckets of cold water throw it off. He writes urgently to his wife to meet him at Liverpool, and when she comes they set off in a packet through the wild November gales for Glasgow. There they arrive at last, Irving now near his end. Gradually he sinks, till a day comes when he can but repeat bits of the 23rd Psalm in Hebrew. He died on Sunday, December 7th, and the last words he murmured were, "If I die, I die unto the Lord."

He was buried in the Crypt of Glasgow Cathedral and the window over his tomb is of John the Baptist. It is said that at his funeral all Glasgow came flocking in great crowds to witness his passing. That night superstitious crowds stood around the Cathedral half expecting some last, great miracle out of the grave. For he was that kind of man.

Carlyle, free of envy at last, said of him,

"But for him I had never known what the communion of man with man means. His was the freest, brotherliest, bravest human soul mine ever came in contact with. I call him on the whole the best man I have ever, after trial enough, found in this world or now hope to find."

Jones who never was sympathetic says in his "Life of Irving",

"The death of Mr. Irving, occurring as it did in the meridian of life has been to produce a deeper sensation among the religious public than that of any other minister since the days of Luther and Knox."

In the sermon preached at the Scotch Church, Covent Garden, on the 14th December, 1834, the Rev. J. Canning said,

"No man ever possessed a mind of higher range, and a greater power of fervent and impressive oratory. None with the exception of his illustrious father in Christ, Dr. Chalmers, was so able to arrest the attention, and gain the hearts, and mould the doings of his audience. But it was his calamity that he knew and felt too well the greatness of his genius, and this made him fancy he could penetrate the arena of eternity in virtue of his intellectual prowess, and gather to his bosom flowers that bloomed not for man upon earth, and make

known a geography which is to be known hereafter only."

P. E. Shaw in his valuable contribution to an understanding of Edward Irving and his relations with the Catholic Apostolic Church gives this as his summing up.

"Though Joan of Arc suffered under the condemnation of a section of the Church, she has had justice done to her spirit as well as to her memory after the lapse of centuries, by the Roman Catholic Church as a whole, granting finally canonization. The brand of heresy and excommunication rests no less upon Irving, and the well meaning Presbytery inflicting it, is not free from blame. It is now felt that, even if in error, he was a great Christian. In time to come the condemnation will surely be withdrawn, for the vindication of Irving, as well as of his judges." p. 242.

More recently, the opinion of R. A. Knox adds weight to all that has been said and can be said.

"In Irving you had a man of prophetic calibre whose fall from nature was worthy to be lamented by a Thomas Carlyle. He had much in common with another great contemporary John Henry Newman. Either had the same reactions to the Age of Reform: either foresaw and

branded as apostasy^{s/} our modern preoccupation with politics. Could Irving, if he had been less sure of himself, less credulous, have counteracted the swing away from the charismatic to the institutional which came in with the Oxford Movement? Or would he too have been carried away? His voice is lost to us, shouted down by the importunacy of his own catechumens."¹

Nearly thirty years after Irving's death Carlyle was visited by an American and in course of conversation, Irving's name was mentioned. "My poor friend Irving," he exclaimed, bursting into sublime monologue, "men thought him daft: but he was dazed. I have heard that the eagle becomes blind in gazing with unveiled eyes upon the sun. Thus Irving tried to do what no man may do and live - to gaze full into the brightness of the Deity, and so blindness fell upon him."²

1. R. A. Knox "Enthusiasm", pp. 557-558.
 2. Footnote of P. E. Shaw, p. 56.

CHAPTER TWO

" L O N D O N I N F L U E N C E S "

"He received the germ, he gave back the blossom
and the fruit"

(Edward Irving - A Review p. 44)

Few men in the Church of Scotland can have evoked such divided opinions about their worth and work as Edward Irving. As a preacher he has been placed with St. Martin of Tours, St. Augustine, Butler. He has been likened to St. Francis of Assisi, and S. T. Coleridge placed him with Martin Luther. The father of G. F. Andrews said that next to the Holy Scripture the greatest writings he had ever read were the sermons of Edward Irving. In his lifetime he was widely praised and just as widely criticised.

There can be little doubt that his qualities of mind and intellect were outstanding. But while the attacks made on him during his lifetime were on matters of belief and doctrine, there have been few serious attempts made since his death to examine his theology, and the fundamentals of his teaching. Both roused widespread controversy.

The numerous massive volumes which bear his name will be examined in due course, for they are indeed the measure of his greatness as a theologian, and the mark of his achievement as a thinker. At this stage, however, we propose to make some examination of the influences which helped to mould his thought, and direct his genius into the stormy waters of theological debate .

When he arrived in London, aflame with a Gospel which he

wanted to preach, he came well equipped for his task. His years as student, teacher, and then as assistant to Dr. Chalmers formed not only his character and outlook, but gave him ample opportunity to examine the prevailing teaching and preaching of his mother church. What he heard and saw left him dissatisfied and disturbed. His letters throughout this period reveal something of his disappointment and restlessness. He gives credit to Dr. Chalmers for all that he had learned from him, but it is a curious fact that no other teacher either in College or Pulpit appears to have left any lasting impression on him.

It would be wrong to infer that he arrived in London without any formed opinions or ideas. One description of his early preaching would correct such an impression.

"But defective as his preaching was during the first year or two of his ministry, great ends were doubtless answered by it. It was bold, and honest and searching; and Christian doctrine, though not made prominent, nor set forth in theological forms, lay at the foundation. It was not heretical, nor merely moral and sentimental; but a manly and powerful exhibition of the practical side of religion; too intellectual and imaginative, no doubt, for the simplicity of the Gospel, but better fitted perhaps on that very account,

to gain the ear of those highly-cultured and refined classes to whom Christianity had become a worn-out thing, and who were too seldom plainly and faithfully dealt with from the pulpit. It took them on their own ground, and overcame them with their own weapons. Their intellects were confronted by a mightier intellect, their eloquence over-matched by a loftier and more burning eloquence."¹

Almost as soon as he was settled in his charge influences, unexpected and strange, began to stimulate his thinking and agitate his mind. Berdyaev writes:

"Sometimes I felt that the fate of the world might hang on the outcome of some single meeting, or conversation, or argument. Many people have been surprised that I could attach such importance to an informal talk; but this was due to my conviction that every single occurrence has literally universal implications. Sometimes an apparently insignificant conversation, a film or an unimportant novel provided an occasion for new insights."²

Irving appears to have been receptive in the same way and ready to find new insights in the most unexpected places.

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1. Edward Irving - A Review p. 38.
 2. Dream and Reality - Berdyaev p. 88.

A Book, a Meeting, a Conference, none of them remarkable in themselves, were to play a significant part in Irving's life and thought in these first years in London. One was to stimulate him to write a remarkable exposition of his own fundamental beliefs, another was to be an unending source of inspiration, and the third gave a turn to his thinking at perhaps the most crucial period of his life.

The Book. "The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty". Ben Ezra.

It is an insignificant work by almost any standard of judgment, but it was the occasion of a new insight, or perhaps more accurately the needed stimulus to bring into order, thoughts and ideas which were crowding in his mind. He welcomed the book as an important contribution to the study of the "Last Things". Concerning the author of the book, P. E. Shaw writes:

"It is supposed to be by a converted Jew, Juan Josephat Ben-Ezra, but this is really an assumed name of a Spanish Jesuit, Father Manuel Lacunza. It was written during a brief spell of liberty in that country, yet clearly in fear of the Inquisition."¹

Irving, however, is full of gratitude for the inspiration that he claims to have derived from the Spaniard's work.

1. The Catholic Apostolic Church. P. E. Shaw, p. 19.

For some time he had been preoccupied with thoughts of the Second Coming of Christ. He felt that here was an aspect of the Church's teaching which for long had been neglected or ignored. The condition of the world and the weakness of the Church demanded some understanding of this important clause in the Apostles Creed.

In such a frame of mind "Ben Ezra" fell on ground well prepared.

"Four months previous to this it would have been a sealed book to me, by reason of my ignorance of the language, but during that short time, having taken a few lessons, and practised a little the reading of the Scriptures and some other books, I durst venture upon the perusal of it, and permitted it to lie upon my table. For several days I suffered it to lie untouched, little dreaming of the treasure and edification to my mind which was contained in these lines."¹

The truth is, however, that it gave him the occasion to write a long preface, by way of introducing his translation of the book. In this preface was crystallised and focussed much that was afflicting his mind and his soul. These two hundred pages are not only a masterly exposition of a doctrine, but they constitute a most revealing and illuminating document.

1. Ben Ezra, p. 19.

Here we have in very vivid if sometimes archaic language a statement of fundamental conviction. Seldom was he to veer from this standing ground, and one would feel that if this document had been read by those who condemned him in Annan for his heretical teaching, the case against him could not have been upheld.

The Meeting - Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

As we have noted Irving entered on his London ministry well prepared by education and training, but he had too a background of costly experience. He was prepared by disappointment and distrust, fully awake to the evils of his time, the weakness of the Church, and the deadness of its ministry. The mould of this thought, however, was still setting, and influences were to colour that mould, and firm its shape.

One of his earliest friends in the society in which he now found himself was a Mr. Basil Montague. It was in his house that he met S. T. Coleridge, one of the really great thinkers of the day. He has been described as one of the two "great seminal minds of England in their age" (J. S. Mill "Dissertations and Discussions Vol. 1 p. 330). This assessment is quoted by Professor Basil Willey in his "Nineteenth Century Studies". Some words of Professor Willey are worth quoting for they set Coleridge in relation to his influence

as a religious teacher.

"I would now remind my readers of the remarks of F. D. Maurice about the debt of nineteenth century Christianity to Coleridge. He claimed that his generation had learnt from Coleridge to apply to theology the principles that "the highest truths are those which lie beyond the limits of experience," and that "the essential principles of Reason are those which cannot be proved by syllogisms" Coleridge helped to teach his century wherein the genuine superhumanness of Christianity really lay. Moreover, he taught this before the main attacks of the higher criticism and of science were launched, so that when the crisis came (in the middle of the century in England), the defensive positions were already laid down. If, throughout the century of biblical criticism and scientific agnosticism, Christianity held its ground, contrary to the expectations of many; if it did this by discarding its pseudo-foundations in historical, prophetic, natural or miraculous 'evidences', and by discovering a firmer foundation in the specific religious experience, in man's need for a God who comes to meet and to redeem him; if this is so (and I believe that it is), then the

debt of modern theology to Coleridge is very considerable."¹

The years 1824-1831 have been described as the "Doctrinal Period" in Irving's ministry. During these years the subjects he preached on and wrote about extensively were the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Human Nature of Christ, the Ordinances of God, the Family, the Church, the Apostasy of Christendom, the Coming and Kingdom of Christ, and the Office of the Holy Ghost. How far he was influenced by Coleridge it is difficult to measure. Some would maintain that Irving gained little from the great philosopher, and went his own determined way, others again claim that throughout this period, Irving was ever drawing from the riches of this remarkable mind. Perhaps the fairest balance is that given by the writer of "Edward Irving, a Review".

"What Irving learned from him (Coleridge) respected living truths and organic forces. He acquired the power of distinguishing between the essential and the accidental, and of detecting the fundamental laws which lie underneath phenomena, and bind them into unity From this time forward his preaching took a wider range, and penetrated more deeply to the

1. Nineteenth Century Studies - Basil Willey, p. 31 & 32.

roots of truth..... Some reviewers have denied that Irving learned anything from Coleridge, because he did not reproduce his philosophy in its technical phraseology. But he was not an imitator - what he received from others came forth from his own mind in new, often nobler forms. He received the germ, he gave back the blossom and the fruit."¹

There can be no doubt that a strong and warm friendship grew up between the two. The letter of dedication with which Irving prefaced the printed version of his remarkable sermon to the London Missionary Society, certainly speaks of the admiration and affection.

"My dear and Honoured Friend,

"Unknown as you are, in the true character, either of your mind or of your heart, to the greater part of your countrymen, and misrepresented as your works have been by those who have the ear of the vulgar, it will seem wonderful to many that I should make choice of you from the circle of my friends, to dedicate to you these beginnings of my thoughts upon the most important subject of these or any times. And when I state the reason to be, that you have been more profitable to

1. Edward Irving. A Review p. 44.

my faith in orthodox doctrine, and to my right conception of the Christian Church, than any or all the men with whom I have entertained friendship and conversation, it will, perhaps, still more astonish the mind, and stagger the belief, of those who have adopted, as once I did myself, the misrepresentations which are purchased for a hire and vended for a price, concerning your character and works

"I have partaken so much high intellectual enjoyment from being admitted into the close and familiar intercourse with which you have honoured me, and your many conversations concerning the revelations of the Christian Faith have been so profitable to me in every sense, as a student and preacher of the Gospel, as a spiritual man and a Christian pastor; and your high intelligence and great learning have at all times so kindly stooped to my ignorance and inexperience, that not merely with the affection of friend to friend, and the honour due from youth to experienced age, but with the gratitude of a disciple to a wise and generous teacher, of an anxious inquirer to the good man who hath helped him in the way of truth, I do now presume to offer you the first fruits of my mind, since it received a new impulse towards truth, and a new in-

sight into its depths, from listening to your discourse. Accept them in good part, and be assured, that however insignificant in themselves they are the offering of a heart that loves your heart, and of a mind which looks up with reverence to your mind.

"EDWARD IRVING."

But it was not a one-sided friendship or purely a relation of master and disciple. Coleridge had a wholesome respect for Irving's mind and a genuine admiration for his friend's gifts. In his "Aids to Reflection" he describes Irving as "a mighty wrestler in the cause of spiritual religion and gospel morality, in whom, more than in any other contemporary, I seem to see the spirit of Luther revived." Coleridge differed from Irving in many things but his deliberate estimate of him in his "Church and State" has comparison only with Carlyle's moving appreciation of his compatriot. Coleridge writes,

"But I hold withal, and not the less firmly for these discrepancies in our moods and judgments, that Edward Irving possesses more of the spirit and purposes of the first Reformers, that he has more of the head and heart, the life and the genial power of Martin Luther, than any man now alive; yea, than any man of this and the last century."



Mrs. Oliphant has most beautifully described this odd friendship.

"It would not be difficult to picture those two figures, so wonderfully different, looking down from the soft Highgate slopes upon the uneasy world beneath, which, to one of them, was but a great field of study, proving, as never any collection of human creatures proved before, all the grievous but great conclusions of philosophy; while to the other, it raged with all the incessant conflict of a field of battle, dread agony of life and death, through which his own cry 'to the rescue!' was continually ringing, and his own hand snatching forth from under trampling feet the wounded and the fallen."¹

The Conference - Albury.

One day perhaps the full story of Albury will be written. It played an important part in Irving's life, and it was to play an even more far-reaching part in the development of the body of Christians known as the Catholic Apostolic Church. Here its great Liturgy (see Appendix I) was prepared, its distinctive doctrines formulated, its great problems resolved and its government largely exercised.

1. Mrs. Oliphant p. 92.

Irving's introduction to it was by way of an invitation to a kind of summer school of prophecy. But let Irving tell us in his own words:

"One of our number well known for his princely munificence, thought well to invite by special letter all the men, both ministers and laymen, of any orthodox communion whom he knew or could ascertain to be interested in prophetic studies that they should assemble at his house of Albury Park in Surrey, on the first day of Advent, that we might deliberate for a full week upon the great prophetic questions which do at present most intimately concern Christendom. In answer to this honourable summons, there assembled about twenty-men of every rank and church, and orthodox communion in these realms."¹

The host and inspirer of this conference was one Henry Drummond. He was born in 1786, six years before Irving. He was educated at Harrow, and after spending two years at Oxford, he made a tour in Russia, and before coming of age, married Lady Harriet Hay, eldest daughter of the Earl of Kinnoul. He entered the family banking firm of Drummond & Co. His great wealth allowed him to be a benefactor to

1. Mrs. Oliphant, p. 204.

religious and charitable causes in a big way. He founded the chair of political economy at Oxford, and for a number of years he was a Member of Parliament. His friendship with Irving was to influence strangely the course of both men's lives (as we shall see). The country residence of Drummond at Albury, near Guildford, was an ideal spot for conference and quiet seclusion, situated amid lovely country.

This first conference took place in 1826. Irving describes the form the conference took.

"We spent six full days in close and laborious examination of the Scriptures, upon these six heads of doctrine, (1) the doctrine of Holy Scripture concerning the times of the Gentiles, (2) the duties of Christian ministers and people, growing out thereof, towards the Gentile Churches, (3) the doctrine concerning the present and future conditions of the Jews, (4) the duties growing out of the same towards the Jews, (5) the system of prophetic visions and numbers of Daniel and the Apocalypse, (6) the Scripture doctrine concerning the future advent of the Lord, (7) and lastly the duties of the Church and the world arising out of the same."¹

1. The History and Doctrines of Irvingism p. 37-38.

These meetings at Albury were continued annually for five years. The second meeting in 1827 was attended by a larger number than the first. Among these was Robert Story of Roseneath. Story's reactions to this gathering are to be found in a letter of his to Alan Ker.

"This meeting was numerous, consisting of a variety of talent and accomplishment, and, upon the whole, of singular unity of spirit and feeling. Its prominent character was at once devotional and rational. Freedom of judgment, earnestness of inquiry, willingness of persuasion, enthusiasm without rashness, zeal without intolerance, speculation without levity, prediction without bold presumption, unravelling without the destroying of mystery, examination without irreverence of the divine decrees - are so many attributes expressive of the proceedings of these memorable days. I saw and heard so much, that I cannot rest till fairly immersed in the study. Nor do I see how we can explain Scripture in many places, without a closer consideration of its prophetic character. You are aware that Irving and Maclean are regularly preaching of the Advent as at hand, and preparing the minds of their people for the coming judgment."¹

1. Robert Story of Roseneath by his son R.H. Story p. 103-104.

There was a falling off the third year, and there were signs that the conference was venturing upon unsafe ground. Story has by now become openly critical of developments. There is a record of the proceedings of the fourth year. Drummond published a book under the title "Dialogues on Prophecy". He lays down the conclusions reached -

1. "That the present Christian dispensation is not to pass insensibly into the millennial state by gradual increase of the preaching of the Gospel: but that it is to be terminated by judgments, ending in the destruction of this visible Church and polity, in the same manner as the Jewish dispensation has been terminated."
2. "That during the time that these judgments are falling upon Christendom, the Jews will be restored to their own land."
3. "That the judgments will fall principally, if not exclusively, upon Christendom, and begin with that part of the Church of God which has been most highly favoured, and is therefore most deeply responsible."
4. "That the termination of these judgments is to be

succeeded by that period of universal blessedness to all mankind, and even to the beasts, which is commonly called the millennium."

5. "That a great period of 1260 years commenced in the reign of Justinian, and terminated at the French Revolution, and that the vials of the Apocalypse began then to be poured out; that our blessed Lord will shortly appear, and that therefore it is the duty of all who so believe to press these considerations on the attention of all men."¹

There appears to be no record of the last meeting. It was a short one and did not last more than three days. It seems clear, however, that those present felt that they were on the eve of great happenings. Their duty now was to pray for the revival of the gifts manifested in the Early Church and await the march of events.

These then were the major influences on the mind of Irving during his London ministry. They were not so much to mould and colour his thought, as to be the background forces which firmed up, and directed the lines of his preaching and teaching. A fair and reasonable description is given of him at this stage in his life.

1. The History and Doctrines of Irvingism, p. 44-45.

"He united in himself without being able perfectly to reconcile them, the most varied religious elements. He was a Protestant in his strong individuality (the 'personal' being as strongly developed in him as in Martin Luther); in his abhorrence of Romish superstitions and errors and tyranny; in his appreciation of the fulness of the Gospel, and of the power of the Cross of Christ; and in his strong assertion of the Will of the Father, and of His eternal, all-embracing purpose in His Son. He had recovered also, the great truth of patristic Theology, the Incarnation, the basis of all sound Christian doctrine, which the Reformers, and their successors still more, had too much lost sight of in contending for one of its fruits, the Atonement. And in addition to the noblest features of the Reformation, and of the age of the Fathers, he was holding up with great power the hope of the primitive Church, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of the resurrection to rule the earth in righteousness. Such was Edward Irving."¹

1. Edward Irving - A Review p. 89-90.

CHAPTER THREE" A P R O L I F I C P E N "

"He opened anew many old wells of doctrine which the Protestant declension had abandoned, or filled with rubbish."

"EDWARD IRVING - A REVIEW", p. 66.

It has already been stated that Irving managed somehow, throughout his short and busy ministry, to turn out a substantial volume of his writings almost every year. These various writings caused violent controversy, ran into many editions, and started discussions in press and periodical throughout the length and breadth of the land. Before proceeding to a closer examination of his main works, it is important for our purpose to indicate some chronological order and offer some general comment on each book as it appeared. There is an element of drama in the appearance of some of these books. Few, if any, of his publications avoided the searchlight of criticism, certainly much of it undeserved and unwarranted.

Within a year of his Induction, the press had reacted to his preaching and writing. A pamphlet running to a hundred pages appeared out of the blue. It carried the prophetic title "Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. - A Cento of Criticism". It was a lampoon in bad taste and of astringent humour. The frontispiece gave five caricatures of Irving in action while preaching. These are by no means flattering to the young preacher. The book quickly ran into four editions, an indication of the interest and disturbance Irving had begun to create. There is no author's name to shed light on the origin and reason for the attack. The Preface

consists of comments on Irving by the leading newspapers and periodicals - these constitute themselves a Board of Censors. An account of the imaginary Trial then follows.

HIGH COURT OF COMMON SENSE

SPECIAL JURY CASE

TRINITY SESSIONS 1823

"The King at the Instance of Jacob Oldstyle, Clerk v the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A."

The Report continues. "From the extraordinary interest which this case excited, the doors of the Court were no sooner opened than it was filled in every part to excess by an assemblage of persons of the first rank and distinction in the Country."

The indictment was laid on seven different counts:

First - For being ugly.

Second - For being a merry-andrew.

Third - For being a common quack.

Fourth - For being a common brawler.

Fifth - For being a common swearer.

Sixth - For being of very common understanding.

and Seventh - For following divisive courses, subversive of the discipline of the order to which he belongs, and contrary to the principles of Christian fellowship and charity.

The Trial proceeds with a succession of witnesses for the

prosecution, an appearance by the accused in the witness stand, and a number of witnesses for the defence.

That a young minister in the first complete year of his ministry should be so publicly pilloried, is itself a reason for astonishment. What is perhaps even more surprising is that the closing scene should so completely vindicate him on all counts except the seventh. The defence through its witnesses appears to have the last word, and through the fun and coarse humour there runs an attempt at serious appraisal. The following is an example well worth quoting, for it contains much that was later to be the express opinion of those who knew him best and admired him most.

Witness: (on cross-examination):

"Considers Mr. Irving as no inferior man. Has heard him charged as deficient in Evangelical sentiment, but denies it. Thinks that he has many admirable qualities. His language often obsolete and uncouth, with a strange mixture of that which is inflated; but it has a strength and an originality which calls forth admiration. His thoughts too are novel, and his arguments have power. Believes that Providence has raised up Irving for much good - has read his book, and blushes for the boldness of those who have levelled such unguarded charges against an estimable minister. Admires

him as a man endowed with the spirit of Elijah - has read passages of his, more pointed than ever were delivered by the undaunted Knox, and not less bold - No mimic of Dr. Chalmers - Resembles him about as much as a lily resembles a rose: the resemblance consisting in both shedding an agreeable fragrance around, and both being flowers."¹

The book referred to, was Irving's first. Mrs. Oliphant briefly describes its appearance.

"The second year of Irving's residence in London was one of the deepest importance both to himself personally and to his reputation. It opened with the publication of his first book, the "ORATIONS" and the "ARGUMENT FOR JUDGEMENT TO COME", both of which had been partly preached in the form of sermons, and were now in an altered shape presented not to any special religious body, but to the world which had gathered together to hear them, and to those who lead the crowd, the higher intellects and imaginations, whom neither religious books nor discourses usually address."²

Within three months the book had run into as many editions.

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1. Trial of Edward Irving - A Cento of Criticism p. 85.
 2. Mrs. Oliphant's Life of Irving - p. 83.

In the Preface, Irving stated two propositions: (a) the chief obstacle to the progress of divine truth over the minds of men is the want of its being sufficiently presented to them. (b) in this country nine-tenths of the people know nothing at all of the advantages and applications of revelation, and this ignorance is due to the want of sedulous and skilful ministry on the part of those to whom it is entrusted. New vehicles for conveying the truth of the Gospel as it is in Jesus Christ must be found if the Word of God would reach the ears of men. The problem of PRESENTATION and COMMUNICATION we would call it to-day. Irving at least was starting in the right way and was asking the important questions.

But let him speak for himself -

"There was a time when each revelation of the Word of God had an introduction into this earth which neither permitted men to doubt whence it came, nor wherefore it was sent. If, at the giving of each successive truth, a star was not lighted up in heaven, as at the birth of the Prince of Truth, there was done upon the earth a wonder to make her children listen to the message of their Maker. The Almighty made bare his arm; and through mighty acts shown by his holy servants, gave demonstration of his truth; and found for

it a sure place among the other matters of human knowledge and belief. But now the miracles of God have ceased; and Nature secure and unmolested, is no longer called on for testimonies to her Creator's voice. No burning bush draws the footsteps to his presence-chamber; no invisible voice holds the ear awake, no hand cometh forth from the obscure to write his purpose in letters of flame. The vision is shut up, and the testimony is sealed, and the Word of the Lord is ended; and this solitary volume (the Bible), with its chapters and verses, is the sum total of all for which the chariot of heaven made so many visits to the earth, and the Son of God Himself tabernacled and dwelt among us."¹

Irving's clear purpose was to make the Word of God speak in contemporary terms and conditions, a Word relevant to his day. No book merely to be discussed and divided, but a Living Word to challenge men and to compel them by its very immediacy. He is wholly orthodox and in many regards modern in all that he is seeking to convey in the "Orations".

The design of the "Argument" (the second and longer part of the volume) is described in the dedication as that of recovering "the great subject of Judgement to Come, from

1. Quoted by Washington Wilks in his Life of Irving, p. 65.

poetical visionaries on the one hand, and from religious Rhapsodists on the other; and to place it upon the foundation of divine revelation, of human understanding, and of common good." The orator now becomes the apologist, aiming to defend and convince. There are many vivid passages to be found, and it is difficult to understand why the comments of press and periodical should be so adverse. No doubt the style was out of the ordinary, sometimes pompous and on occasion obscure. Certainly the method of presentation was striking, but the general line was in accord with Scripture and expressive of evangelical fervour. In all the criticism however there was no attempt to question the basic truths which Irving sought to underline.

In 1824 Irving was asked by the directors of the London Missionary Society to give the oration at the Annual Meeting. The hall was crowded to overflowing an hour before the proceedings were due to commence. It was an extraordinary address which they received to say the least of it, and apparently, in spite of its inordinate length, it rivetted attention to the very end. The reaction, however, was anything but favourable. Some months later it appeared in print. Irving had meantime expanded it considerably, and it now ran to a hundred and sixty pages. The title under which it was published was "For Missionaries after the Apostolic School, a

Series of Orations, in Four Parts". The expansion was an attempt to answer the critics of the oration when it was delivered. One passage might well explain the cool reception it received.

"This is an age of expediency, both in the Church and out of the Church; and all institutions are modelled upon the principles of expediency, and carried into effect by the rules of prudence. I remember, in this great metropolis, to have heard it uttered with great applause in a public meeting, where the heads and leaders of the religious world were present. 'If I were asked, what are the first qualifications for a missionary? I would say Prudence; and what second? Prudence; and what third? Still, I would answer Prudence.' I trembled while I heard, not with indignation, but with terror and apprehension, what the end would be of a spirit, which I have since found to be the presiding genius of our activity..... This expediency has banished the soul of patriotic energy from our senate; the spirit of high equity from our legislation; self-denying wisdom from our philosophy; and of our poetry, it has clipped the angel wing, and forced it to creep along the earth. And if we look not to it, it will

strangle faith, and make void the reality of the things which are not seen, which are the only things that are real, and cannot be moved. Money, money, money, is the universal cry. Mammon hath gotten the victory, and may say triumphantly 'Without me ye can do nothing'.¹

Mrs. Oliphant has vividly described the reaction of the assembled gathering to whom the sermon was preached.

"It had no connection with the London Missionary Society. It was the ideal missionary - the apostle lost behind the veil of the centuries - the evangelist commissioned of God, who had risen out of Scripture and the primeval ages, upon the gaze of the preacher. He discoursed to the startled throng, met there to be asked for subscriptions - to have their interest stimulated in the regulations of the committee, and their eyes directed towards its worthy and respectable representatives, each drawing about him in some corner of the earth his little congregation - of a man without staff or scrip, without banker or provision, abiding with whomsoever would receive him, speaking in haste his burning message, pressing on without pause or rest through the world that lay in wickedness - an apostle responsible to no man -

1. Collected Writings of Edward Irving Vol. I, p. 431.

a messenger of the Cross."¹

Annoyance and anger was naturally roused, but no murmur was raised against the preacher as to his integrity or sincerity, except by those who had no place for him anyway in their scheme of things. Accusations, that he was a seeker after popular fame, are made to look foolish in the light of this experience. It was in the character of the man to view every aspect of the Church's work from the heights of inspired faith, and to see her representatives as first and always ambassadors for Christ.

In 1825 there appeared the first of his so-called Prophetic Works. As we have already seen, it was in this year that his friendship with Henry Drummond and Hartley Frere began to ripen. This book entitled "Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed", had its origin in a sermon preached before the Continental Evangelisation Society. It proved the beginning of much preaching and writing on the subject, and the beginning too of a new conflict and controversy. This book together with the Lectures on the Book of Revelation which he delivered in Edinburgh in 1829, will always hold a peculiar interest for those anxious to interpret the past and predict the future in terms of the Millennium. I believe that it

(1) Mrs. Oliphant's Life of Irving, p. 96.

was this strand of Irving's thinking which was to lead him most astray and overbalance his judgment. The Albany Conferences were to add fuel to this fire. Dr. Chalmers is recorded as having expressed the fear that Irving's prophetic fervour would in the end unship him. Washington Wilks adds his comment.

"From the period of these Albany Conferences, the doctor's apprehensions seem to have proved not, alas, ungrounded. The seers of Chaldaeia and Patmos, or rather his own interpretation of their visions, now become to Edward Irving a rule of life, instead of a guide to hope."¹

The Review summed up "Babylon and Infidelity" in these terms.

"..... much of sound religious principle, and of deep spiritual truth lay at the basis of his interpretations, which, however, chronologically and historically erroneous they might be, were theologically and morally true. He may have looked at Church History too exclusively from the Protestant standpoint It matters little if he erred in respect to times and seasons He is essentially in the right, who sees that the ship

1. Washington Wilks' Irving, p. 187.

is struggling in the rapids, and nearing the gulf, although he may err as to the hour when she will take the fatal plunge."¹

"What Mr. Irving taught from this time forth upon Prophecy, with ever-increasing clearness and power, was, that the Christian Dispensation was to be speedily terminated by the Coming of the Lord in glory and majesty, at which time He would raise the dead and change the living saints, and reign with them upon the earth; that the Jews would be gathered out of their dispersion, re-constituted as a nation in the land, which God gave to their fathers, where they would have a metropolitan dignity, and be made a blessing to all the families of the earth."²

There is a story told of Irving in his last days after preaching to a great multitude at Dumfries. Two local worthies had been to hear him. The one enquired of his friend, "Well, Willie, what do you think of Mr. Irving?" "Oh," replied the worthy, "the man's crackit." "Ah," rejoined the first, patting his fellow-townsmen quietly on the shoulder, "but ye'll often see a bright licht shinin' through a crack."

1. Irving - A Review, pp. 58/59.
2. Irving - A Review, pp. 61/62.

Irving had no one track mind, and his writings show no narrowness of range. While puzzling over the ancient prophecies of Scripture, and wrestling to find their meaning and value for his own day and generation, he was at the same time dipping into the great doctrines of the Faith. He had entered upon what has with point been described as the doctrinal period of his preaching and writing, his aim the while being to apply the great truths there enshrined, to the ordinary lives and problems of men.

It was in this same year that he published "An Introductory Essay" to Dr. Horne's Commentary on the Book of Psalms. It is a singular mark of his versatility that he could so easily turn his hand to this type of study. The Publishers no doubt had an eye to using the popular name of Irving to sell an older book. But Edward Irving had been nurtured on the psalms and there are many fine passages in this Essay. In the second last letter which he wrote to his wife on that fateful and painful journey home to his native land, already a sick and doomed man, he speaks of the solace he finds in the Psalms. It is dated 12th October 1834, a few weeks before his death.

"My God is sufficient for me, I know; and He hath been my sufficiency during these three days and nights of

the sharpest fiery trial, both of flesh and heart, which I have ever proved. I believe that upon my saddle, and by the strength of faith, I have fought against the most severe bilious fever. How in the night seasons the Psalms have been my consolations against the faintings of flesh and heart! And I believe God hath guided me to do things which were the very means of dispelling those fears and troubles. Last night I slept well from half-past nine till two, then I counted the hours as they chimed out from the clock on the staircase; and so I lay, parched with thirst and inward heat, and yet chilly, my head full of pain, my heart of fainting, but my faith steadfast."¹

1827 saw the publication of his long Introduction to Ben Ezra, and also his fine Ordination Charge to the Minister of the Scots Church, London Wall. This Charge is possibly the best known of all Irving's published writings. Certainly it has been quoted in many Ordination Sermons since. At the Induction to my present charge the Moderator addressed me in words which somehow sounded familiar to my ears. Afterwards I thanked him for his words. At this he answered, "Don't thank me, thank Edward Irving, for these words were his, spoken in the finest Ordination Charge ever delivered in the English

1. Mrs Oliphant's "Irving", p. 420.

tongue." There is a grandeur of thought and language in the message which Irving gave to his young friend Maclean, and the ring of utmost sincerity and passionate faith.

Early in 1828 "Ten Homilies on Baptism with an Introductory Statement of the Doctrine from Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, and Confirmation from the Fathers and the Protestant Churches" appeared in print. The dedication is to "Isabella Irving, my Wife and the Mother of my two departed Children". The letter addressed to his wife which acts as a preface, sheds some light on the occasion and purpose of the Homilies.

"I believe in my heart, that the doctrine of the Holy Sacraments, which is contained in these two little volumes, was made known to my mind, first of all, for the purpose of preparing us for the loss of our eldest boy; because, on that very week you went with him to Scotland, whence he never returned, my mind was directed to meditate and preach those discourses upon the standing of the baptized in the Church, which form the sixth and seventh of the Homilies on Baptism I believe it, furthermore, because the thought contained in these two Homilies remained in my mind, like an unsprung seed, until it was watered by the common tears which we shed

over our dying Mary."

The Review which always is fair in its comment has this to say:

"These incidents of his personal history are interesting as showing how vital was his growth in doctrine. It was not an intellectual process merely, but his whole spiritual being had part in it. All his powers and affections strove to act together in harmony. No truth that did not touch his heart as well as his understanding, could take deep root within him. The whole man must be appealed to; the moral sympathies and spiritual intuitions, as truly as the logical understanding. His faculty of reasoning was of the strongest, but his vision was still more piercing, and his religious instincts more sure."¹

In my opinion, Irving was pioneering new ground in these Homilies, and when we come to examine in some detail his teaching on the Sacraments, we shall discover insights which are worthy of comparison with the writings of Barth, Brunner and Cullman on the subject of Baptism. His language without doubt is difficult and sometimes involved, but through his

1. Edward Irving - A Review, p. 67.

own experience he was hammering out an interpretation of a doctrine, which had come to mean a great deal to him.

1828 was the crucial year. Up to this point his output of writings while remarkable in volume and diversity, and inevitably the cause of much controversy and discussion, had not brought upon him any serious challenge to his orthodoxy. His views might conflict with the general outlook of his religious contemporaries, but he based his arguments upon solid foundations of Scripture, and the basic doctrines of the Faith. Consistent quarrel could only be made with his interpretations. Now charges of heretical teaching began to be brought against him. The story of the first signs of storm has been told at considerable length by Mrs. Oliphant, who has been at pains to collect the facts, and some account of the events must be given at this stage. In doing so, I follow closely the details given in her Life of Irving.

In the early part of this year he had prepared for publication three volumes of his collected sermons. The first was an exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity; the second his conception of the manner of applying Divine truth as symbolised in the Parable of the Sower: and the third, his considered views on national and public questions. When these were all but ready for the press, the storm burst. A clergyman, of the name of Cole, of whom little seems to be

known, started off on his heresy hunt full of glee and self-righteousness. He wrote to Irving:

"On Sunday evening the 28th October last I was returning home rather early, about eight o'clock; and it occurred to me, that, if I went to your chapel, I might find your oration not quite concluded..... When I entered I found your oration not quite concluded. I therefore sat down and heard you for about twenty minutes. I had not been seated above a minute or two when I found that you were dwelling much upon the person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and I had hardly arrived at a perception of the train of that part of your discourse, when you made me tremble from head to foot by thundering out the expression, 'that sinful substance', meaning the human body of the adorable Son of God! What I felt at hearing such awful blasphemy against the person of the Son of God, declaimed with accompanying vehement gesticulations, before upwards of two thousand persons, I cannot describe."¹

He goes on to tell of his appearance in the vestry after the service and the conversation which took place. Irving as always, courteous and generous, answered the man's questions,

1. Mrs. Oliphant's Life of Irving, p. 221.

and Cole departed assured that he had discovered a heretic in the person of the Scottish preacher. The whole incident smells to high heaven, and the self-appointed judge of doctrine is seen in the most unpleasant light. The whisper of accusation was soon to become full cry but Irving stood firm on his ground. Instead of immediately countering this attack, he waited until nearly the end of the year, in order to add to the plain statement of his belief its fuller defence and support. Thus appeared "The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened". In the Preface dated 10th November 1828 Irving makes clear his object.

"These Sermons on the Incarnation were intended to open that mystery after a dogmatical, and not a controversial method; as being designed for the instruction of the Church committed to my ministerial and pastoral care, of whom I knew not that any one entertained a doubt upon that great head of Christian faith. To open the subject in all its bearings, and to connect it with the other great heads of Divine doctrine, specially with the doctrine of the Trinity, and to shew the several offices of the Divine persons, in the great work of making the Word flesh; this truly was the good purpose with which I undertook and completed the four sermons

upon the Origin, the End, the Act, and the Fruit of the Incarnation. When I had completed this office of my ministry, and by the request of my flock, had consented to the publication of these discourses; and when the printing of them had all but, or altogether, concluded, there arose a great cry against the doctrine which, with all orthodox churches, I hold and maintain concerning the Person of Christ; the doctrine I mean, of His human nature, that it was manhood fallen, which He took up into His Divine Person, in order to prove the grace and the might of Godhead in redeeming it; or, to use the words of our Scottish Confession, that His flesh was, in its proper nature, mortal and corruptible, but received immortality and incorruption from the Holy Ghost. The stir which was made in divers quarters, both of this and my native land, about this matter, as if it were neither the orthodox doctrine of the Church, nor a doctrine according to godliness, showed me, who am convinced of both, that it was necessary to take controversial weapons in my hand, and contend earnestly for the faith as it was once delivered to the saints."

This is the reason which he gives to account for the addition of two further sermons; the one upon the Method of

the Incarnation, and the other upon the relations of the Creator and the creature, as these are shown forth in the light of the Incarnation. Now indeed the written word could be studied by those who were already resolved on his condemnation. This year also saw in print the "Last Days". The ceaseless occupation of this year is something wonderful to contemplate. He had already controversies enough on hand, and the number of his enemies was growing, but none of these could touch his life or his honour. In no uncertain terms he had proclaimed the fundamentals of his rich faith, and he was ready to fight for them with his life.

In the early spring of 1829, the first number of the "Morning Watch", a quarterly journal on prophecy, saw the light of day. It was a natural fruit of the Albury Conference. Irving took advantage of the journal to explain and open up the assailed doctrine, already designated "the doctrine of the Humanity", reasserting all his former statements with renewed force and earnestness. These articles were later to be produced as evidence against him when the final show-down was to be staged. Meantime it gave him a new platform and he used it with a will.

"He takes occasion again and yet again to enter into that doctrine of our Lord's entire union with us in the flesh, which, the more he considered and meditated on

it, opened up to him ever new and tenderer lights; and articles treating exclusively of the same subject, some from his own pen, some inspired by him - authorities, arguments, eloquent expositions of this distinctive crown of his belief. In defence of this he stood forth before all the world, fervently convinced of its supreme importance; taking infinite comfort in his own splendid but troubled career - in his contentions with the world, in those still, domestic sorrows, unperceived by the world, which penetrated the depths of his heart with ever-returning accesses of exquisite sadness - from the thought that this very throbbing flesh, this very troubled soul, was the same nature to which the Lord, by conquering all things in these selfsame garments, had secured the victory. It was no dogma to Irving; the reality of the consolation and strength which he himself found in it is apparent in every word he writes on the subject: he fights for it as a man fights for something dearer than life."¹

In January 1830 "The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature", developed his thesis yet another stage. The following year this was followed by a small volume "Christ's Holiness in the Flesh". In some respects it

1. Mrs. Oliphant's Life of Irving, p. 272.

was his last written word on the subject. When we come to discuss these volumes in greater length, we shall see how prophetic were the words in its Preface. "I am willing that every sentence which I have written should be tried." Already he had sensed where the path, which he had chosen, would lead. He could not escape the fate of his friends Maclean, Scott and Campbell, who were already in the wilderness, cast out from their respective churches. From now on he had to battle alone. It is difficult to understand how he still managed to pen articles and sermons redolent of power and vision, but the fire had begun to burn low.

New books still arrived in 1831; his treatise on "Baptism with the Holy Ghost", and the lectures which he had delivered in Edinburgh in 1829. They were both the product of much earlier thought and experience, and thus carry undimmed the glow of his burning faith and passion. He continued to contribute articles to magazines and periodicals, but his major works had been completed, the whole wide expanse of his thought lay revealed for all men to see - there was nothing now that he could add. Recently some of his unpublished sermons came into my hands. They date from the last months of his life. Strangely painful productions they are, and give no clue to the grandeur of the mind, and the felicity of the pen which had so recently disturbed the nation.

Thomas Carlyle might have the last word to this chapter.

"Edward Irving's warfare has closed, if not in victory, yet in invincibility, and faithful endurance to the end. The spirit of the time, which could not enlist him as its soldier, must needs fight against him as its enemy. One of the noblest natures - a man of antique, heroic nature, in questionable, modern garniture which he could not wear. Around him a distracted society, vacant, prurient, heat and darkness, and what these two may breed; mad extremes of flattery, followed by madder contumely by indifference and neglect. The voice of our 'son of thunder' with its deep tone of wisdom..... has gone silent so soon. The large heart, with its large bounty, where wretchedness found solacement, and they that were wandering in darkness the light of a home, has paused.

"Think (if thou be one of a thousand, and worthy to do it), that here once more was a genuine man sent into this, our ungenue phantasmagory of a world, which would go to ruin without such; that here once more under thy own eyes, in this last decade, was enacted the Old Tragedy (and has had its fifth act now), of the Messenger of Truth in the Age of Shams."¹

CHAPTER FOURTOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM

"I have no faith in his prophesyings; small sympathy with his fulminations; and in certain peculiarities of his theological system as distinct from his religious principles, I cannot see my way.

"But I hold withal, and not less firmly for these discrepancies in our moods and judgements, that Edward Irving possesses more of the spirit and purposes of the first Reformers, that he has more of the Head and Heart, the Life, the Uction, and the genial Powers of Martin Luther, than any man now alive; yea than any man of this and the last Century."
S. T. Coleridge.

("Inquiring Spirit" - a new presentation
of Coleridge - Edited by Kathleen
Coburn)

"There are a few things which bind me to the world, and but a very few; one is to make a demonstration for a higher style of Christianity, something more magnanimous than this age affects."¹

How far did Irving succeed in fulfilling that early ambition? True thousands flocked to hear him, but it comes as something of a surprise to read his published sermons, and to discover how much there is in them of the teacher and the theologian rather than of the popular or spectacular preacher. In fact it is hard to believe that he was ever the popular preacher. No doubt the attractiveness and persuasion of his personality would have drawing power, but these alone would not account for the astonishing influence which he was able to exert upon his hearers. There was something at once compelling and disturbing in the message which he delivered. Some facet of the faith had grasped him, and it flashed through all that he said and wrote. At the height of his fame he recorded,

"My soul is greatly afflicted because of the present unawakened and even dead condition of all the churches, with respect to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, which draws nigh, and which, as I believe, is close at hand."²

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1. Letter to Dr. Martin, his father-in-law.
 2. Dedication to Ben Ezra, p. 1.

Was this the fresh insight which coloured his thought, and drew fire from his utterances?

Oscar Cullman has written:

"If the later Church has lost so much in vitality, if the workings of the Spirit, measured by those of the Primitive Church, are so very few, this is connected with the fact that this consciousness of standing as a Church in redemptive history's quite definite plan, and of being in the way from the resurrection to the Parousia, has been lost or in any case greatly weakened."¹

Irving perceived in his day that preaching had become flaccid and spiritless because this dynamic of the Gospel had been left out. It had become more a matter of philosophy and ethics than a power to raise men from the dead.

"Death is no encouragement to the Christian soldier to fight bravely," he writes. "It is the Resurrection of the saints at Christ's coming which keeps us from shirking danger, and sends us out careless and indifferent, with flaming zeal of missionaries."²

Irving in his long Introduction to his translation of the Spanish work "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty"

1. Christ and Time - Cullman p. 144.
2. Ben Ezra p. 56.

attempts to crystallize his thought into a theological system. In the present writer's opinion, we have here the key to an understanding of the numerous volumes which bear Irving's name, and the most vivid account of the insights which coloured so much of his most effective preaching.

After some preliminary remarks pointing to the weakness inherent in much contemporary religious thought he sweeps into his main argument.

"Here" (in the doctrine of the Coming of Christ) "is an object worthy of the hope of the church, to which the eye of hope turns with delight, which is full of application to all the present infirmities of our condition, and is the proper recompense of all our sufferings."¹

Under six heads he outlines the positive truths of this doctrine, which has been so long neglected, and for so long seen out of perspective. There is here presented to us:

1. All that is to be loved and desired in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we shall see all the glorious attributes of God made manifest in manhood, the Son of Mary glorified into the Son of God, and clothed with all the sustaining power of the Word of God.

2. Ben Ezra p. 54.

2. The defeat of the powers of evil. Satan cast out of the earth, and with him all his evil angels which dwell in the natural man, and rule the world. The prison doors of death unbarred, and the grave yield up her dead. Death swallowed up in victory.
3. The gathering together of all the saints of God.
4. The exchange of our sinful body of death for Christ's glorious body.
5. Victory achieved. We shall be for ever with the Lord, partakers of his throne, partakers of his crown and partakers of his government.
6. The Fruits of Victory. We shall behold the earth living in peace and blessedness under the government of the Lord Jesus Christ: nature repossessed of all her original beauty, and society of all its proper blessedness, peace, gentleness, and meekness restored on every hand, all men blessed in Jesus, and calling Him blessed.

"Such, in few words, is that which is comprehended under the term 'the Coming of the Lord', to which we invite the hope of the church, instead of that which you desire them to look to, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of life, and the uncertain intermediate state between death and judgment."¹

"And when the Church shall once more be invested with her privilege in this hope, and be filled with the gladness thereof, and have it continually portrayed by her ministers, as the primitive church had it set forth in the preaching of the apostles, then and not till then,

1. Ben Ezra, p. 61.

will she recover the apostles' strength and primitive separation from the world; then, and not till then, will Christ's account of the missionary come to be regarded as something better than a dream."¹

Irving then makes clear that all he intends to say is concerned with:

- A. The Person and Offices of Christ.
- B. The Doctrine and Work of the Spirit.
- C. The Spiritual Life and personal holiness of every man.

The second chapter of his Introduction begins by stating that there is no more ancient head of orthodox doctrine; nor pregnant form of spiritual truth than the threefold office of Christ as the Prophet, Priest and King of His Church. He proposes then to deal with them under three heads, and in relation to the presuppositions already underlined.

CHRIST'S PROPHETIC OFFICE.

He uses as a starting point the definition in the Scottish Catechism "his revealing to us, by his word and Spirit the will of God for our salvation". The revealed Word of God consists of two essential parts, (1) the purpose, promise or prophecy of God with respect to our salvation and (2) the history of the execution of this purpose - the former the

1. Ibid p. 63.

intimation of what is to be, the latter the fact of its having come and coming to pass. He maintains that there is no period of the Church's life which has not had these two necessary parts of every revelation - a prophecy and a record, an object for memory and an object for hope. It is here that the Word of God transcends the word of man.

"Man can be historical and antiquarian, he can be observant and speculative concerning the present: he can also disconnect himself from space and time, and become metaphysical, but he cannot by any means be prophetic; he cannot lay down a purpose concerning events far distant, and constrain all things to bring it to pass. For his own short lifetime, the intractable will of every other man, the profound darkness of the future, all things hinder him from knowing, much less from causing, what a day or what an hour may bring forth."¹

Irving illustrates his idea of divine revelation by two "similitudes". (1) The Word of God is as a seed, it may be of the oak or of any other plant, in which the whole majestic form and various parts of the future tree lie undisclosed, ready to reveal themselves when the times and seasons have taken their course. There is no break, nor leap, nor start

1. Ben Ezra, pp. 66/67.

in its growth but steady progression. (2) The Word of God is as the growth of human life from childhood onwards to maturity.

"Whoever studies as I have done and reflected as I have sought to reflect upon the first twelve months of a child will rather wonder that such a puny, heartless, feeble thing as manhood should be the abortive fruit of the rich bud of childhood, than think that childhood is an imperfect promise and opening of the future man."¹

He states his indebtedness to Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection" from which "I received the first idea of the prophetic growth of God's Word."² In his argument here he forestalls Kierkegaard and the Existentialists. Prophetic truth must be conveyed to the whole man, reason, bodily sense and natural understanding, and is made known in whatever period of the succession his lot is cast. He agrees with Coleridge that what is needed most at this stage in history is a book entitled "Christianity defended from its defenders". His criticism of prevailing methods of interpretation makes the more definite his own position.

1. Ben Ezra, p. 72.

2. Ibid p. 75

"For while they (Biblical critics) have removed the question into a dark corner of time, and narrowed to the events of one particular spot of the earth that evidence which rests upon the events of all time and the ever changing aspect of the church and the world, they have withdrawn the mind of the Church from looking forward to the future, and fixed it upon an unproductive inspection of far distant and long past events: and these not as the fulfilment of a series of purposes revealed from the beginning of the world, but as isolated events conveyed and brought down to us by means of extrinsical testimony. The fools have cut a brick out of the wall, and said, Look at this and believe in the divine architecture of the palace from which it came: they have taken the mainspring out of the watch, and presenting it to you said 'Go to, there's a chronometer of exquisite workmanship'."¹

Irving explains the infidelity of the people to be the direct result of the Church's poverty in the knowledge and preaching of Christ's prophetic office and the prophetic character of his word. There is no object in the future to carry the mind of the Church forward. "She has been

1. Ben Ezra p. 76.

turned into the unnatural position of looking backward."¹

"But if the Church had an object in the future, to carry her eye forward with longing desire and diligent observation, everything would naturally come into its true place again, and the lines of prophetic revelation would be observed all converging to a certain great event in the future history of the world, called the advent of the Lord, of which such glorious things have been spoken since the beginning of time. And the Spirit, whose office it is 'to show us things to come', would begin to ripen in the soul of the Church those seeds of future things, which are buried under the rank growth of antiquarian evidence and our Lord's coming, of which the apostles make such constant use, is always a coming to the earth, an earthly event, an event the most grand in the history of this world, and the beginning of all its blessedness."²

THE OFFICE OF CHRIST AS PROPHET IS TO REDEEM THE INTELLECT. The office of Christ as our prophet is the means used by the Holy Spirit for working the redemption of the understanding of man "that faculty by which we acquire the

1. Ben Ezra p. 76.
2. Ibid p. 77.

knowledge on which proceed both our inward principles of conduct and our outward acts of power".¹ Irving's argument at this stage becomes somewhat diffuse but he returns to his main point with considerable force, and drives home the truth which he is concerned to underline.

"It is Christ the prophet, it is not Christ the metaphysician, nor Christ the scholar, nor Christ the doer of miracles, but Christ the prophet, by which the Holy Spirit takes hold of the human intellect, to shake it out of its own vain self-sufficiency, and bring down its proud imaginations, and find admission for those infinite holy truths which are revealed in the word. Then when you have humbled the rebel intellect by mightier power, and trained the cruel savage by greater wisdom, the Holy Spirit deals with him, and brings him into the subjection of faith, and so works upon him the image of Christ."²

For Irving the real aim of preaching is the presentation of Christ and he has boldly condemned much that passed in his day for preaching.

"Oh when will the foolishness of preaching reduce the

1. Ben Ezra p. 79.
2. Ibid p. 84.

rebel to subjection again: when again shall we have those Spirit-taught preachers, who did draw the substance of their discourses from the whole providence and word of God, presenting Christ everywhere! and labouring to show the glory of his person everywhere. I would not despair of the times, if I saw preaching beginning to resume the character which it had at the Reformation, and adding whatever other weapons out of the armoury the Lord may give us for the fearful odds that are now against us. But I do despair when I behold ingenious reasonings, loose declamations, subtle school exercises, and other forms of man's wayward mind, substituted in place of the royal ordinance of preaching, and the plentiful demonstration of Christ's glorious person."¹

He compares three methods of setting forth Christ - the popular, the philosophical and the prophetic. The first employs illustrations and figures from the objects of daily observation - pictures with which the people are familiar - using the current language of common life, expressions which ordinary men use in daily converse - in a word the language and thought of the man in the street. Irving describes the

1. Ben Ezra p. 84.

evils of this method and its dangers too. In connecting spiritual things too much with sensible images, the spiritual insights and values are degraded and misunderstood, and the visible world becomes the norm of truth and reality. Illustrations are culled from this and that magazine, topics recorded in this or that newspaper, the sermon of this or that man, the storehouse of the preachers rough and ready memory. This method tends to look at things seen and temporal, not at things unseen and eternal. But a far more serious criticism is that the people are left totally ignorant of the Scriptures.

"All this they call preaching simply, preaching to the heart, setting forth plain truths to simple people; as if the Lord had not given the people a mind, or would not be served and loved with all the mind; or had not revealed light for the understanding; or as if the mind could be rank and unweeded, and the heart pure; the head unfurnished with the knowledge of truth, yet the heart filled with the love of it."¹

The second method is grossly limited in its application. The main body of the average congregation is overlooked. It is aimed solely at the intellectual elite and fails

1. Ben Ezra p. 87.

completely to discharge the proper office of the ministry. These pearls of learning are not meant for the common rut of men. Irving gives a most vivid description of this method as he has heard it employed in Scotland.

"Every point of doctrine is reduced to an argument or expostulation. It is engaged with, as if it were an intellectual question to be demonstrated before the intellect of the people whereby they erect a judgement seat, and constitute a court within the person of the fallen sinner, and they do constitute into a judge the guilty arraigned criminal, whom God doth not plead before, but presents to him an accusation proved, a reprieve purchased, and if not accepted, a judgement and second death sure and everlasting as the word of him who spoke it. Whereby they mangle the productive unity of divine truth, and present it in a dead stage, cut into small pieces, to be served up to the taste of man."¹

He turns then to the third method-prophetic preaching. Without this the church perishes, and its works are vain. The word to be preached is a prophetic word and Christ's priestly office cannot now be preached by us but through the

1. Ben Ezra p. 89.

knowledge of his prophetic office. There follows then a magnificent passage which bears comparison with much that Wilhelm Vischer has written in "The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ", particularly in his Introduction. Irving lets go in majestic style.

"The things written aforetime for our learning must be known; the things written for types must be used as types of spiritual things; the foreshowing providence of God to his servants and to his church must be opened; the shadows of the priestly office of Christ contained in the Levitical institution, which Paul called the perfection of Christian doctrine, must be known and interpreted; the fasts and solemn feasts, the offices of the temple, the temple itself, and all its service which was only the mystery of Christ's holy humanity; the sacrifices daily and annual, the offerings voluntary and required, the ablutions, and every other appointed method of remission, which is only the mystery of Christ's sacrifice for our sins, the announcements of the prophets, who were but his ambassadors and forerunners, to warn the world of his coming; all the various furniture of the church of God; all the emblematical imagery and language of the

Sanctuary ought to be the materials with which the preacher declares the mystery of the work of redemption, and the mystery of its application to the souls of believers. This is the preaching of faith, this is simple preaching, and preaching to the simple, this is enlightened preaching, this is practical preaching, this is the prophesying which the Holy Ghost will bless."¹

CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE.

The Priestly Office of Christ is concerned with the conscience of man, as the prophetic office was concerned with his intellect. The conscience is a law unto itself as the intellect is a light, and it is the office of Christ as Priest to purge the conscience from dead works that man may serve the living God.

"For as the office of Christ the Prophet knows no bounds nor limitations save the complete expulsion of darkness and error from the mind of man, so the priestly office of Christ knows no bounds nor limitations save the complete expulsion of sin from the being and habitation of man, and the restoration of all things to that spotless purity and sinless perfection which they had at their first creation, with whatever accession of

1. Ben Ezra pp. 89/90.

power and glory they may have acquired in the work of regeneration and restitution. Of this restitution we have the first stage in the gift of the Holy Ghost, by which we are born anew and prepared for the kingdom of heaven. This is commonly regarded as done upon the soul, and not in any respect upon the body, which all agree to defer until the resurrection, and as the resurrection is supposed to concern the body only, so it is inferred, that the regeneration concerns the soul only; a deduction, as we conceive, more simple than true, and repugnant both to reason and experience, as it is inconsistent with all the Scriptures."¹

For Irving, redemption implies redemption of soul, body and earth and he has some comments to make on each in relation to his general thesis. We to-day in the light of modern theological writings can see more clearly what Irving was searching after. It is however to his credit that he dared to go beyond accepted ideas of redemption and to pioneer in a new world of experience and thought. The office of Christ is to sanctify our whole fallen humanity. Romans 8, 23.

"I hold it, therefore, to be a point of sound theology,

1. Ben Ezra p. 104.

that our royal High Priest when he baptizes with the Holy Ghost, has a respect to the body as well as to the soul, to the whole undivided humanity of man, and that their purification proceeds *pari passu*, and not separately - the spirit now, the body hereafter. So that the life of the Son of Man, and His experience of agony, both inward and outward - horrors of darkness and clouds of grief within, as well as pains and afflictions and torments without, is the pattern to his children of the sufferings both of soul and body, in the spirit and in the flesh, which they have to endure in following his steps."¹

Irving holds quite firmly that the sanctification of the body is a benefit of our Lord's priesthood no less than the sanctification of the spirit and that the whole process is not completed at death, but in the final resurrection. He draws attention to the fact that Christ in his office as Prophet points us to His Resurrection. It is in fact the main theme in the preaching of Primitive Christianity. It was to the resurrection of Christ that the Apostles gave testimony after Pentecost, and it was the resurrection which Paul preached at Athens. The power of Christ's Resurrection is given a higher place than the power of His Death. "That

I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the

1. Ben Ezra p. 117.

fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Phil. 3; 10, 11. The attainment of the resurrection is made the climax and consummation of all.

He passes then to consider the priestly work of our Lord in the redemption and purification of the earth. He sees it as a constituent part of the mystery of Christ's work from the beginning.

"The first sacrifice consisted not only of blood, in token of our holding present life and receiving future life, by virtue of the sacrifice offered before the foundation of the world; but it consisted of the fruits of the earth also, in token that the vegetable life which the earth held and the prospective purification which it was to receive, were both in virtue of the same great sacrifice. Abraham had not only the promise of a seed, but also a land for them to inherit. To the Son was promised not only the heathen for his inheritance, but the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And to the righteous is continually promised the inheritance of the earth. Moreover, under the law, the first fruits of beasts and the first fruits of the ground were holy, as well as the first

fruits of man."¹

As the liberation of the creation is interwoven in all the Levitical ordinances, so also is it in the prophetic writings. "The wilderness, and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." (Isaiah 35; 1,2). Throughout the Old Testament there appears this mystery of the renovation of all things, and over against it the stout rebelliousness of Mother Earth. Dust bowls, soil erosion, the destruction of forests, are no new phenomena, although vastly accelerated in our day. They have their origin in man's evil influence. The Fall of Man involved the whole of created life. Christ as the Second Adam, recovers man's soul, restores his body, and gives back to the earth its blessed fruitfulness. Irving asserts,

"I see all this pledged and assured to me in the entombing of Christ in the bowels of the rock, which yet was not able to retain him, but yielded him up. Then not only the dead flesh, but also the wall of rock, were

1. Ben Ezra p. 124.

yielded to his almighty power, when at the moment of his resurrection he was quickened by the Holy Ghost."¹

This indeed is the foretaste of the glorious victory yet to be celebrated which St. Paul describes in 1 Cor. 15: 24-28. A comparison with Cullman's analogy in "Christ and Time", of the decisive battle which decides the outcome of the war, be victory celebrated soon or late, is of considerable interest here.

Irving concludes this section by describing the final work of Christ as Priest, in the offering of man redeemed in body and soul, and the whole earth cleansed and purified. This is the pure offering, the end of all offerings, the purchase or the offering of Christ himself, the completion of the redemptive purpose and plan. It is indeed the Second Advent and the Kingdom of our Lord.

CHRIST AS KING.

Here Irving departs from the form of the previous two sections and combines the idea of Prophet and Priest with that of King in order to show that while the Kingship of Christ includes the prophetic and priestly office, a completely new conception is to be understood. He was and is Prophet and Priest but he will be King. We see clearly what

1. Ben Ezra p. 126.

his intention was, as the argument develops.

The three offices of Prophet, Priest and King under which the work of Christ is understood in the Scriptures, are the mark of his perfect humanity, not that of his essential divinity. They are the function of the Son of Man, of the Word made flesh - they are the essential form of perfect humanity. In this way Irving begins his final analysis and proceeds to draw a comparison with the first man Adam who was created a prophet, a priest and a king - a prophet in understanding of the Creation; a priest in worship of the Creator; a king in his dominion over the creatures. By the Fall, Adam lost these, and the story of man ever since, has been his attempts to recover his essential nature and true function.

All Science is an attempt at prophecy, a groping after that knowledge which Adam possessed by intuition and instinct.

"This hunting after the knowledge of natural science and political economy, I hold to be nothing else than the instinct of man putting forth its prophetic gift within its bounded sphere, moving over the ruins of his greatness, and putting forth desperate but ineffectual struggles to recover the first and lowest of his bright-
rights."¹

1. Ben Ezra p. 134.

Justice, which is the first object of men to establish in their relations one with another, testifies to the efforts of man in his thralldom to repossess himself of the office of priest.

"Justice is an essential part of religion - morality also, which is the inward form of justice; as also do the gropings of the spirit after God, with all the traditions of a primitive religion, institutions of temples, sacrifices and religious rites. Man is ever characterized by something of this kind, which is a continual effort to regain the primeval dignity of the priest."¹

Power, the desire for power dominates the life of every man, testifies to the king in man.

"My own, is the dearest word of all languages, and one chief end of all restraints and punishments is to prevent it from being the only word. This noble instinct of power testifies the king, as the former instincts of knowledge and righteousness do testify the prophet and the priest in man."²

The purpose then of redemption is to rescue man from

1. Ben Ezra, p. 134.
2. Ibid p. 134.

ignorance, unrighteousness and oppression and this is accomplished in the threefold office of Christ. He is a prophet like Moses, a priest like Melchisedek, and a king of David's loins. He reveals himself as Prophet in his Teaching Ministry; then as Priest by his Cross and intercession in the presence of God; and by sending the Holy Spirit on the apostles, he showed he already possessed the office of a Priestly King.

Irving then places the Church in relation to her true office. The Church is prophetic, inasmuch as it is given unto her by the Spirit, to understand and explain the prophetic word of God. The Church intercedes as priest for the world before the mercy seat of God, not only by her prayers and intercessions, but by her sufferings and labours and agonies of soul. The Church is kingly by her power to forgive and excommunicate, by binding and loosing. But in all these the Church only shadows forth the three offices, with none of them is she completely invested. Moreover she has fallen continually from her high office, yet sunk and degraded as the Church has become she is the only visible Prophet, Priest and King of the earth. The true purpose then of the Church is to point man to the true Prophet, Priest and King, and paradoxically to seek to reproduce that threefold dignity in sinful and apostate man. The Church

continues imperfect, incomplete and struggling because Christ has not begun to exercise his office of King. In mystery Christ is Prophet, Priest and King from all eternity, but in manifestation he became prophet only in the days of his flesh, though he spoke in all the prophets; he became priest only when he ascended on high with his wounded and slain body to the Holy Presence; he shall be King when he comes in his glorious body to take possession of the earth.

Irving's writing in this section is inspired and powerful and merits the praise some of his critics have accorded him. He illustrates each step of his argument from Holy Scripture, ever and again digressing to illumine some familiar passage with fresh light and meaning. The progression and fullness of Christ's Kingly office is presented to us. He is above all the Prince of Peace.

"This is the last syllable of his name it adds the awful attribute to sovereignty, the singular majesty of royal power to become the Prince of Peace was the great end and purpose for which he became incarnate of the virgin."¹

The world however prefers to wrestle in agony and death rather than submit to such a King and to accept such a Peace. We

1. Ben Ezra p. 153.

have a prophet and a priest, but we look for a King, who presently rules at the right hand of God, and will rule also in the sight of the world.

Christ through the threefold gradation of Prophet, Priest, King, rises into the perfection of the Man-God, and brings to the world its complete redemption. He chose to suffer humiliation and affliction, but his resurrection is the assurance of His coming again, not in suffering flesh, but in power and glory to rule. All this is in line with the Scottish Catechism. "Christ exerciseth the offices of a prophet, and a priest, and a king, both in the estate of humiliation and exaltation." Irving breaks off here to discuss the necessity of the humiliation. It is an essential part of the total plan of redemption, without it there could be no redeemed body, no redeemed church, no redeemed world.

He points towards a whole doctrine of the Incarnation. It is however but a mere summary of a larger volume,^x which we shall consider at a later stage. Irving here wants to underline that the true humanity of Christ has been lost sight of, and the result has been an abstract conception of atonement, redemption and judgment, and a failure to see Jesus as Man-God. Christ lived in human form and will be glorified in human form. If we believe the Incarnation was

^xThe Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened - Edward Irving.

manifested as a child in a manger, surely it may be manifested again as a king upon a throne.

"If it was once manifested a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, surely it may be again manifested as the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; if once manifested to die, surely it may be again manifested never to die..... The substance of them both is the same; they only differ in their circumstances; the circumstances of the former are most unlike to God; the circumstances of the latter most like to God."¹

And what place is so entitled to be the place of his reign, as the Earth which he came to redeem? Was not Christ's humanity derived from the dust of the ground for Mary was of the stuff of other women? To deny this is to deny the true humanity of Christ.

In his Divine nature Christ is everywhere, hence when He shall come again with the same body with which He ascended, He shall not cease to be in heaven, beholding the face of the Father. He will say as He did in the days of his flesh "I and the Father are one," "no man hath ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of

1. Ben Ezra - p. 174.

Man which is in heaven." When this is accomplished and he wields upon the earth his sceptre of regal power, bringing all things into subjection, he will give up his sceptre and become as the God-Man the same obedient Son which he was in the days of his flesh as the Man-God.

FINAL SECTION.

The final section of his lengthy Introduction, Irving heads as Conclusion and Summary. It takes the form of a meditation on what he has already written. It is the fruit of the solitary and sorrowful hours which he spent after the death of his child Edward.

"The subject of the meditation is, the great achievements of Christ who by death destroyed him that hath the power of death, which is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."¹

Death is only the outward manifestation to the eye of man of an evil more terrible in the sight of God - sin. Paul Tillich writes echoing the same thought.

"We are slaves of fear, not because we have to die, but because we deserve to die."²

1. Ben Ezra p. 180.

2. The Shaking of the Foundations - Paul Tillich, p. 171.

"Sin is terrible only because God is terrible in His righteousness, and death is destructive because the hand of the Lord is stretched out against iniquity, and the grave is consumptive of beauty and life because our God is a consuming fire."¹

God's way with evil is to follow the steps of the destroyer into the earth dismantled of its beauty, and into the souls of men stripped of their holiness, wherein stands the image of God, and by His hidden love binds the universe again to His allegiance. Till Christ's Second Coming, all Satan's strength is against us, and on his side is our sinful flesh, and the world, and the unchangeable law of God ('the soul that sinneth it shall die'). The drama and meaning of history is the work of our recovery.

The work of Man's Redemption is the work of the Father. "God so loved the world that He gave;" it is the work of the Son, who manifests the law of love; it is the work of the Holy Spirit, who anointed the man Christ Jesus with power from on high, who raised him from the dead and who brings forth the new heaven and the new earth.

A new ordinance has come,

"The ordinance of love, of which death and the grave

1. Ben Ezra, p. 181.

had but heard the rumour from afar, which had been slowly unfolding its most meek and radiant form, and now being perfected, has come in and destroyed and spoiled their realm, to bring in upon sin righteousness, and upon death life, and upon the grave resurrection. And now love, which had been in swaddling bands, is grown to stature; and sin, which had been a giant, is weakened in his strength."¹

The decisive battle has been fought and won, in the distance lie the fruits of victory, but now we can say in confidence and truth "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15; 55-57).

However we may assess this attempt at a Theological System, we must grant that as a work of original thought it merits the most generous examination and comment. It was not the product of careful study of current theological writing, but the spontaneous flowering of seeds long germinating in his restless and intense mind. His insights may seem partial and blurred in the light of much modern theological thought, but they were true insights. His writing may not have the even flow of the experienced theologian, but it is afire with passion. Strangely he would have found a ready understanding and sympathy among not a few seekers after

1. Ben Ezra p. 192.

truth to-day. If poets of the calibre of Coleridge could be moved and inspired by him, and led into fresh avenues of thought and experience, there are poets to-day who have travelled the same hard road to discovery and conviction, and who would give assent to much that he wrote.

"To renovate nature, to fill her with a divine nature - to make men, whatever their condition, the companions of God, and the members of Jesus Christ; objects of angel visits; the honoured ministers of God upon the earth; kings and priests to God - nothing less than this is the design of the Holy Scriptures, and the fruit to those who obey them."¹

1. Edward Irving (quoted by Washington Wilks "Edward Irving" p. 77)

CHAPTER FIVE"HERESY OR INSIGHT"

"The recovery of the grand truth of the Incarnation with its marvellous detail and amazing features is perhaps the great characteristic of the onward movement made in Theology during the present century. It is the glory of Irving and his friends, Campbell, Story, Scott and others, that they were the pioneers of the advancing march."

"The History and Doctrines of Irvingism" -

Miller, Vol. II, p. 11.

Two great themes underlie and pervade the thought and teaching of Irving - his doctrine of the Incarnation and his expectations of the Second Coming of our Lord. Irving was a pioneer in both, and as is so often the case with leaders in exploration, he fell into errors which a maturer experience would have avoided. In this section we purpose to give an outline of his teaching on the Incarnation.

In 1828 Irving published a volume containing six long sermons running to 450 pages to which he gave the title "The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened". In the Preface he makes clear his objective.

"These Sermons on the Incarnation were intended to open that mystery after a dogmatical and not a controversial method: as being designed for the instruction of the Church committed to my ministerial and pastoral care, of whom I knew not that any one entertained a doubt upon that great head of Christian faith."

The first four Sermons are arranged under these heads:

- I. The Origin.
- II. The End.
- III. The Act.
- IV. The Fruit of the Incarnation.

The attacks which were made on these prompted him to add two

more sermons.

"The stir which was made in divers quarters, both of this and my native land about this matter, as if it was neither the orthodox doctrine of the Church, nor a doctrine according to godliness, showed me, who am convinced of both, that it was necessary to take controversial weapons in my hand, and contend earnestly for the faith as it was delivered to the saints." (Preface)

These two additional Sermons were described as:

1. The Method of the Incarnation.
2. The Relation of the Creator and the creatures, as they are shown out in the light of the Incarnation.

Irving gives this account of the reason of the controversy.

"The point at issue is simply this: whether Christ's flesh had the grace of sinlessness and incorruption from its proper nature, or from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. I say the latter. I assert, that in its proper nature it was as the flesh of His Mother, but, by virtue of the Holy Ghost's quickening and inhabiting of it, it was preserved sinless and incorruptible. This work of

the Holy Ghost, I further assert, was done in consequence of the Son's humbling Himself to be made flesh. The Son said "I come": the Father said "I prepare thee a body to come in"! and the Holy Ghost prepared that body out of the Virgin's substance. And so, by the threefold acting of the Trinity, was the Christ constituted a Divine and a human nature, joined in personal union for ever. This I hold to have been the orthodox faith of the Christian Church in all ages; it is the doctrine of the Scottish Church, expressed in these words of the twenty-first article: 'As the eternal Godhead hath given to the flesh of Christ Jesus, which of its own nature was mortal and corruptible, life and immortality' And moreover, I assert, that the opposite of this doctrine, which affirms Christ's flesh to have been in itself immortal and incorruptible, or in any way diverse from this flesh of mine, without respect had to the Holy Ghost, is a pestilent heresy, which coming in will root out atonement, redemption, regeneration, the work of the Spirit, and the human nature of Christ altogether" (Preface p. 4).

SERMON ONE.

"That the beginning or origin of the mystery, that the eternal word should take upon himself a body, is the

Holy Will and good pleasure of God."

The immediate cause of the Incarnation, Irving explains,

"was the fall of man and the consequent invasion of sin, and subjection of all earthly things to the prince of darkness. I say that this was the immediate cause or, as we may say, the occasion of it: for if man had not fallen, there would never have been upon this earth any such event as the Incarnation, whereof the first fruit is to recover that which Adam lost, and, at the least, to reinstate mankind and their habitation in that condition wherein they were created."¹

He calls this the FORMAL cause, but adds that there was a FIRST cause,

"it is written concerning this mystery of the Incarnation, in various parts of Scripture, that it came not within the coasts of time, but had its origin before the foundation of the world."²

He quotes 2 Tim. 1, 8, and the point he wants to make is that we do not date the origin of our redemption in the fall of man, but in the eternal counsel of God. The first cause lies away back in the plan and purpose of God before the world

1. The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened, p. 10.

2. " " " " " " p. 11.

began, although the formal cause was clearly the fall and continuing sin of man.

"The doctrine, therefore, concerning the Incarnation, upon which the primitive Church was founded by the apostles, and to which the Reformers brought us back, and from which we are fast swerving again is this that the Incarnation of the Son is the way by which God reveals that most tender aspect of His Being called GRACE - that part of the Divine substance which could not otherwise have been made known. And therefore the Gospel is called a mystery, because it was long hid to all, and is yet in a great measure hid unto all, being still only in the act and progress of unfolding itself. Abraham had a distant prospect of it, and Moses had a material model of it, the psalmist a royal foretaste of it, and the prophets a national manifestation of it, which yet themselves understood not, though they believed: and our Lord verifieth Abraham's distant view, substantiated Moses' shadow, answered part of the predictions of the psalms and the prophets, prepared the way of the Spirit to open the mystery more perfectly to the apostles, and promised that He would come again to manifest, clear up, and accomplish what still lay shrouded in the mystery:

and this we look for him to accomplish against the dispensation of the fullness of the times."¹

This was by way of general introduction, and he draws two conclusions, which seem to flow naturally from what he has been saying:

- (a) "It would ill answer either the end of the Creator or the well-being of his creatures, that he should make known that new and tenderer aspect of his character, which is GRACE, at the expense and obliteration of that other which is RIGHTEOUSNESS. This would make the Father of light to be a changing and revolving light: whereas he is the 'Father of lights in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Besides it is in virtue of his holiness that sin is sin: for if you take away the holiness of God, all distinction is for ever confounded; and seeing the sinning creature is the evidence and token of his holiness, if that sinning creature were to be pardoned by a single act of love, love would have strangled holiness; or there would be a reign now of holiness, then of love, and no one could say when there might be another shift from love to holiness: and therefore such an arbitrary redemption, even

1. The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened, p. 14.

if possible, will be no redemption to be depended on. Wherefore in the love, the holiness must shine forth, as the light of the sun shineth forth in company with his heat. The new manifestation of God's being must illustrate the old, not cast it into the shade. The new knowledge must be the old waxed more clear and manifest; no extinction nor obliteration thereof."¹

- (b) "The Incarnation of the Eternal Word hath for its only beginning and origin the purpose of God to make known unto angels, and principalities, and men the grace and mercy and love which there is in His own eternal essence: which, to bring into manifestation, He must forego for a while the love which He beareth to His own Son, and His own Son submit to become flesh, and to tabernacle upon earth, to do the will of His Father, and keep the law, and make it honourable, and render an atonement for sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. Whereby the eternal harmony between the Father and the Son, and the essential holiness of the Divinity, became manifest, to the delight of all intelligent creatures: and the grace and mercy of the Godhead, which yet had not been seen, but only His unrelenting severity against the rebellions,

1. Ibid, p. 17.

became wondrously set forth and magnified."¹

Between these two conclusions, Irving pursued a long argument, often difficult to keep in focus, because while denying the power of reason to comprehend the mystery of the Incarnation, he persists in trying to make reasonable the orthodox explanations of incarnation and atonement. He, however, comes right back into position towards the end of this first sermon, as if in preparation for his next step forward.

SERMON TWO.

"The end of the Mystery of the Incarnation is the Glory of God".

The Incarnation is a Mystery but it is the greatest mystery into which the mind of man may probe, and there are signposts to guide him towards understanding in faith, so that he can enter into the fruits of salvation. "The Incarnation stands before us as one of the original projects of the Creator's mind."

(A) "In order to the completion of that mighty work of creation which He was about to undertake; not an expedient to meet an accident, but an original intention, more ancient

1. Ibid p. 56.

than creation itself, and to which the creation of being and the permission of sin were but as it were the necessary preparations."¹

- (B) "In whatever respect you consider the work of the incarnation, in its purpose, in its manifestation, or in its completion, it is, without all controversy, the mighty power and work of God; undertaken and undergone for far higher ends than are commonly discoursed of: for far higher ends than the redemption of the elect church, who, I may say, are but the lively stones with which God builds up his work; but the work itself is no less than the manifestation of His own glory, and the eternal blessedness of all his obedient and dutiful creatures."²

Irving then proceeds to underline his intention in this discourse. It is to show how the life, sufferings and death of Christ add to the Glory of God, how in some remarkable way the eternal Godhead received increase and enlargement from the Work of Christ.

"To this great subject of the glory which was brought into the invisible God from the incarnation of the Eternal Word, we would make our way by reverently inquiring from

1. Ibid p. 59.
2. Ibid p. 60.

the Scriptures, in order to find in how far, and in what manner, the Holy Spirit connects these two things, the incarnation and the glory of God, with one another."¹
 The examples which he gives from Scripture are these:-

1. The song of the Heavenly Host at the Birth of the Child in Bethlehem. "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to the children of men."
2. The Entry into Jerusalem before the Passion. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."
3. The Raising of Lazarus - "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."
4. The Greeks coming to Jesus. "Sir, we would see Jesus." "The time is come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

He does not claim this to be a comprehensive list, but has chosen them to illustrate his general thesis.

"It cannot be meant that the eternal and unchangeable Majesty of heaven received any right or property in anything which before He had not possessed: but that by the peril and travail of that same great enterprise of His Son against the powers and potentates of evil, there did come forth into manifestation, that is, into the region of creation and of knowledge, some form of the

1. Ibid p. 61.

Divine nature and feature of the Divine excellency, some secret of the Divine counsels and everlasting monument of the Divine power, which hitherto was undiscovered and undiscoverable."¹

Under three heads he declares:-

1. In Christ all the glories of the Trinity were first manifested, with all their various offices.
2. The holiness of God was justified and for the first time manifested, in heaven and in earth by the Son of Man.

"This holiness of God is His true glory, as the white light is the true glory of the sun. The holiness of God is the unbroken beam of His glory, whereof mercy and justice, and sovereignty and goodness, are but, as it were, the refracted or broken parts; and as the green and the violet, and the orange and the red, and the other colours into which the rays of the sun are refracted in the rainbow, when mixed in their just proportions, do produce the colourless white: so reckon I that the glory of His goodness and mercy, and justice and sovereignty, do as the soul clears from the mist and clouds, pass into one pure unbroken radiance of His holiness: so that when I say the holiness of God was

1. Ibid, p. 74.

first manifested in the Christ, it is all the same as to say, that the glory of His mercy, and of His justice, and of His goodness, and all His attributes, were then first displayed. For if there were no unbroken light of holiness, how could there be any varieties of that light."¹

3. The glory of God's almighty power was first manifested in Christ.

"The tide of sin was never turned until the Lord did come and stem and roll it back For the Christ is raised above every dignity, power and authority which is named in the Universe of God: and so shall every member of Christ be for ever raised, whence is made the most stupendous manifestation and monument of the eternal power of the Godhead."²

In these three: the constitution of the Godhead, the holiness of the Godhead, and the power of the Godhead, is revealed the glory brought to the Father by the Son.

"This was the glory in the Highest, which the angels sung over His birth. This was the glory of God which moved the Father to yield Him up, which moved the Son to offer Himself, which moved the Holy Spirit to realize

1. Ibid p. 89.

(2) Ibid p. 90.

and substantiate His outward and visible existence."¹

All this to Irving came from the simple act, or rather from the design and purpose and nature of the Incarnation.

His next section enlarges upon the glory which Christ brought by His work upon earth.

"I have glorified Thy name upon the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me do."

This work was mainly:

A. To bring into existence the complete and perfect form of being which is the God-man, and for which all other beings whether in heaven or in earth were but the preparation.

"He shewed forth the glory of God, in putting the headstone upon that fabric of creation, of which heretofore he had created the several parts."²

B. To open the decree of election and publish to sinful men the gospel of the grace of God.

"And thus did He open the glory of God, which had lain hidden in the eternal and inscrutable decree and make it the basis of all preaching unto this day."³

1. Ibid p. 91.

2. Ibid p. 91.

3. Ibid p. 92.

C. To wrestle with the enemies of God and overthrow them and show the glory of his power and holiness in their weakness and discomfiture.

After these clear cut divisions which he has made, Irving continues with further commentary. Creation was without a head, and to appearance without a plan until Christ was born. He states that there are only two ways in which a creature can exist: it must either exist in its own creature-strength or it must stand in the decree of election - that is, in the will of God for the ends of that glory which creation is working out - the grand plan which has ever been in the mind of God. By being created a living soul, there was another condition of being still left for man to come into, the region of the spiritual. The first Adam was but the type of the Second Adam. The first man was a living soul, but the second would become a quickening Spirit. These truths and facts he proposes to deal with in subsequent discourses.

SERMON THREE.

Having explained the origin of the Incarnation in the will of God, and the end of it for the glory of God, Irving now attempts to show forth the scheme or method of it in the purpose of God.

A. Christ assumes the flesh of fallen humanity.

"..... the Son of God, by and for whom all things were created and do consist, should join Himself unto the fallen creation, and take up into His own eternal personality the human nature, after it had fallen, and become obnoxious to all the powers of sin and infirmity and rebellion; in order that God might be shewn to be greater and mightier far than the creatures combined in the confederacy of sin against the Creator; and that the state of fallen sinful creation, which God had permitted to come to pass, might yield forth from its impure and unholy womb the most perfect, the most holy, the most wonderful Son of God, to be the head and support, the life, the mover, and the guide of all creation, redeemed in the redemption of that creature substance which He assumed unto Himself. That Christ took our fallen nature is most manifest, because there was no other in existence to take."¹

The whole of this section is important as a guide to the understanding of the charges of heresy which were to be brought against Irving. He has stated his main thesis and the inevitable conclusions follow.

1. Ibid pp. 115/116.

"I believe..... that the flesh of Christ, like my flesh, was in its proper nature mortal and corruptible; that He was of the seed of David: that He was of the seed of Abraham, as well as of the seed of woman; yea, that He was of the seed of woman after she fell, not before she fell."¹

"I say, and fearlessly assert, and undertake to prove, that this great result and consummation of the Divine scheme could not otherwise be attained than by the fall of the creature, in order to reveal its non-divinity, or prove its creatureship; so that when the Son of God should come to take it unto Himself, it might by the very act of dying, show itself, though of Him, not to be the very God; and when, taken up into that surpassing glory with which it is now crowned, it might be for ever known to be not human nature deified, but human nature uplifted and upheld by God. The fall of all creation, spiritual and material, was but a step unto the death of the body of Christ; even as the creation of all things visible and invisible was only a step to the creation of that body. It was because the Lamb slain, as well as the God manifested, was a

1. Ibid p. 116.

part of the Divine purpose, that death came into the world. Death knew not what death meant, until Christ died; then the mystery of death was unfolded unto itself. If the meaning of a fall is ever to be understood, it must be studied in the Cross and tomb of Christ."¹

If "He were not a man, but only the apparition of a man, a superior being who for a certain end and purpose had clothed himself with human form: if He had not a reasonable soul, the consequences cannot be denied. His human feelings and affections were but an assumed fiction to carry the end which His mission had in view; and His sufferings and His death were a phantasmagoria played off before the eyes of men, but by no means entering into the vitals of human sympathy, nor proceeding from the communion and love of human kind, nor answering any end of comforting human suffering, and interceding for human weakness..... moreover, and most of all, if Christ had not possessed a reasonable soul, as well as a mortal and corruptible body (which yet saw not corruption, by the Father's special grace) the Divine nature of Christ must have been separated and divorced from His human nature during the time it

1. Ibid p. 117.

hung dead upon the Cross and lay buried in the tomb. If there had been but two principles, a body, and the eternal person of the Son, united in Jesus of Nazareth, then when the body of Christ lay in the tomb, the Divinity must have been separated from the humanity; and this, though only for an instant suffered, would upset the whole constitution of God in Christ. For if once the Creator and the creature part of Christ, if once the Divine and human natures, have been parted, they may be parted again; and where then were the assurance of creation's stability."¹

Irving goes on at some length to discuss the time and manner of our Lord's receiving a reasonable soul. His argument is not always clear and some of his categories become dangerously involved, but he keeps to his main point that from the time he was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary he was both body and soul of man. He was not soul of man before He was body of man, but He was soul and body of man from the same moment of His conception.

The argument Irving then pursues is intended to demonstrate the successive actions of the Holy Spirit in uniting Himself for ever in the human soul of Jesus. He was not

1. Ibid p. 118.

merely filled with the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost was the author of His bodily life, the quickener of the substance which He took from fallen humanity. It all leads up to statement which Irving underlines as his main position from which nothing will deflect him.

"I wish it to be clearly understood that I believe it to be necessary unto salvation that a man should believe that Christ's soul was so held in possession by the Holy Ghost, and so supported by the Divine nature, as that it never assented unto an evil suggestion, and never originated an evil suggestion; while, upon the other hand, His flesh was of that mortal and corruptible kind which is liable to all forms of evil suggestion and temptation through its participation in a fallen nature and a fallen world; and that thus, though at all points assailable through His flesh, He was in all respects holy: seeing wickedness consists not in being tempted, but in yielding to the temptation."¹

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make this same flesh immortal and incorruptible, and this is achieved by the Resurrection from dead.

No doubt in the mind of Irving all this ground had to be

1. Ibid p. 126/127.

covered to prove to his satisfaction that Christ assumed the flesh of fallen humanity. Assured that every line of thought has been examined and followed through, he now feels free to proceed to the next heading.

B. By Universal Reconciliation.

There could be neither reconciliation nor atonement between God and man without the Incarnation of the Son of God in the fallen and not the unfallen creature. It is in the flesh of Christ that the controversy between God and man is waged. Irving deals with most of the ancient heresies in this long and arid section. He does not keep clearly before him, what he is seeking to prove and illustrate. The doctrine of the atonement in his hands does not break forth in fresh light and grandeur though that is his avowed intention. He brings us to his conclusion more bewildered than satisfied. The facet of truth which has gripped his imagination thus far, somehow has become obscured. He has asked,

"What is the preaching of Christ?" and in answer states,
"Is it not even the forth-setting of Him unto all men; as having wrought for all men this unspeakable redemption; as having delivered flesh from the power of sin, and from the power of death; as having purchased for us the good-will and favour of God, which we had lost

and forfeited; as having attained unto the undisputed lordship over us; as having the keys of hell and of death. This is the glad tidings, this is the good news, this is the gospel of the grace of God, this is the ministry of reconciliation through the faith of Christ."¹

To the mind of the present writer, this section gives a clue to the flaw in Irving's teaching at this stage in his life. His thinking on atonement had not come level with his vivid awareness of the meaning of the Incarnation.

C. By Particular Election.

Irving begins by giving his definition of election. It is the acting of the unrevealed, unknown, unconditional will of God upon an individual.

"Redemption is the acting of God's will unto all: but election is the choosing of some one, or some ones from the all."²

"This is what makes every stone of the temple a living stone; this is what makes every member of Christ alive; this is what constitutes the vitality of the Church.... In one word wherever this doctrine of election has been duly prized by any church, it has stirred up the might

1. Ibid p. 176.

2. Ibid p. 179.

of men as individuals, and delivered them from the lethargic corruption of aggregate masses."¹

Redemption and election are the two poles upon which the goodness and beauty and solidity of the Divine purpose revolve. He holds them together to make this point.

"These two great doctrines - the commonness of the redemption, the personality of the election, do stand and prop each other up; they can only stand together, and where they are not maintained with equal foot, evil betideth both. The former without the latter degenerates into universal salvation; the latter without the former degenerates into blind and absolute fate, partiality or favouritism."²

There are many good things in the pages which follow - rich ore for the mining. His distinction between reconciliation and election is quite masterly.

"This is the distinction between the principle of reconciliation and the principle of election: that all which the Lord Jesus did, up to the resurrection, He doth in order to make a difference, not to establish a common right, but to make the difference between the election

1. Ibid p. 181.

2. Ibid p. 182.

and the reprobation: the election baptizing with the Holy Ghost, the reprobation suffering to remain under the penalty, not indeed of a broken law which he has removed from all alike, but under the penalty of a rejected gospel."¹

To Irving the Church is the symbol of the election. Those who deny election can understand nothing of the mystery of the Church. He has something to say about Baptism and Holy Communion in their relation to election, but these do not enter into the main substance of his exposition.

D. By removal of the Law.

The Law is the great sign and standing monument of God's unreconciled mind towards men. The coming of Christ was to deliver men from the dominance of law and place them under grace.

"The Law is the voice of God, telling us of the evil. When man fell, he came to know both good and evil, whereas formerly he had known only good; this goodness, being all departed out of the physical world, had its visible object only in hope of seeing Christ, and being goodness unto the undeserving, it has the name of grace."²

1. Ibid p. 187.

2. Ibid p. 205.

Thirty pages of argument follow this statement on fairly traditional lines. There is little original or controversial in them to claim our attention. The conclusions which constitute the end of this sermon are largely a recapitulation of what has already been said, and an attempt to earth in practical ways the great themes with which he has been dealing.

SERMON FOUR.

"The Preparation for, and the very Act of, the Incarnation of Christ."

Irving begins,

"..... the humiliation of Christ in the flesh is only a part of the revelation of the Word of God; and as it were, one scene in the great act of the Son, who devoted himself from everlasting to the work of manifesting the grace of God, by taking upon him the nature of fallen sinners."¹

Christ in flesh embodied in Himself, and personified, every rite and ordinance, type and symbol of former dispensations.

"His human soul was the living law, His body was the living temple, His flesh was the living sacrifice, which when he offered upon the Cross the law was fulfilled, the sacredness of the temple was profaned, the

1. Ibid p. 258.

sin-offering was made to cease and the former dispensation had attained its end of righteousness, and was finished, as having completed the purpose of God in its construction."¹

His conclusion that the living body of Christ was the temple, and His dead body the sacrifice leads him on to deal with:

1. The Temple Sacrifices.
2. The Levitical Priesthood.
3. The Prophetic Vocation.

These were all intimations and introductions to the Incarnation. His method is at once theological and anagogical.² The ground he covers under these three heads is such as we would expect in giving an account of the stages in the preparation for the act of Incarnation. He then devotes another considerable section to explaining:

1. All that Jesus passed through till death, in the face of men.
2. All that He went through between death and the resurrection, in what Irving calls the "disembodied soul", by His descent unto hell. There is little if any new material in it, and is largely recapitulation.

SERMON FIVE.

The Fruits of the Incarnation.

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1. Ibid p. 259.
 2. See "The Authority of the Old Testament - A. G. Hebert, Chapter - The Spiritual Interpretation of the Old Testament."

The purpose of this discourse is to endeavour to estimate how much mankind are the better for this act of God. The fruits according to Irving are twofold.

- A. The one respecting our knowledge of the grace of God.
- B. The other respecting our enjoyment of peace within ourselves.

The Sermon runs to close on a hundred pages and has in it many striking Irving phrases. His definitions are sharp and arresting, and throughout he maintains a clear line of reasoning. Here then must lie the crux of his interpretation of the Incarnation. If he fails to drive home his argument now, the massive scheme which he has developed at such great length becomes abortive and useless. The entire chapter ought to be read to catch and hold the sweep of his adventurous thought.

A. Of Grace. Grace is more than goodness - it is forgiveness and favour to those who stand under the judgment of God. Sin therefore is a pre-requisite to grace, and only a sinner can be the subject of grace; others may know goodness but sinners alone can know grace.

"Grace is not goodness, nor is it harmony, nor is it wisdom, nor any other attribute of God which is exhibited in creation; but it is that power and liberty which

remains in God after all these have done their work, and seen that work frustrated by sin, to come in the second time, and out of the ruins build a more glorious temple than the first, so framed and fashioned as to reveal hidden treasures of the Godhead which the first could never bring to light..... The act of grace is therefore like the act of creation and has its similitude in nothing else. It is another mood, if I may so express it, in the Divine mind; another act in the great act of manifesting Himself. Grace is not mercy, but mercy is to be seen in grace; it is not holiness, but holiness is to be seen in grace; and so in every other attribute of the Godhead. It is a new act of the Divine will, in which all the features of the Divinity will manifest themselves."¹

Irving maintains that intimations of grace cannot be found in the work of creation, nor can they be discovered in the Old Testament except by the interpretations and fulfillments of the New.

"I may call creation a pastime, if I call grace a work; or if you will call creation a work, then I must call grace His strange work, His peerless and surpassing

1. The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened, pp. 314/315.

work. The one is but as the formless chaos, upon whose heaving disorder and restless strife the glorious attributes of grace are to be engraven for ever, in the order and beauty and blessedness of an eternal and unchangeable world."¹

The act of grace was for the essential Godhead to take a body, and this is what we see in the Incarnation. But the very act was a self-emptying and man-fulfilling.

"The Godhead was quiescent, that the humanity might be wholly active; the Divinity suspending itself, that the humanity, supported by the Holy Spirit, might endure the weight of the offended holiness and justice of God."²

There were present in the earthly life of Christ both the divine and human natures, but the divine nature restrained its power and might and glory, that the man might in everything act and suffer and endure. "His Divinity was the passive golden altar whereon His humanity was sacrificed for sin."³

Throughout his argument Irving conforms to his Doctrine of the Trinity. At every stage he is determined to show the relation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The monument of grace is the union of the Father and the Son, the manifesta-

1. Ibid p. 317.

2. Ibid p. 319.

3. Ibid p. 319

tion of it is the sustaining power and activity of the Holy Spirit, the demonstration of it the life of Jesus.

"All sins, infirmities, and diseases had free access to Him by the way of His humanity; they nestled in it; they begirt it on every side, but could not dismay it; they straightened, tortured, and slew it, but could not bring it under the dominion of sin for one instant; and did but slay themselves, in slaying that body into which they had entered to make war upon the spirit which dwelt therein..... All this He did by the power of the Holy Ghost, because God was with Him: because the Father was in Him by the Holy Spirit; because the humanity sustained of the Spirit as by the Spirit it was formed, was able to receive and unite itself to the Divinity, through all the perilous voyage, from the nativity to the resurrection or rather to the ascension and installation in glory; when the Holy Spirit, having accomplished this most momentous and perilous act of incarnate grace, did descend to the earth on the day of Pentecost, in order to do for the rest of the elect that which He had done for the first-born of the family, the first-begotten from the dead."¹

1. Ibid p. 320, 321.

B. Of Peace.

"Now, the incarnation of the Son of God, being the eternal and consubstantial union of the two natures, human and Divine, in one person; as it is the embodying of the grace of the Godhead, and the presentation of it to the acceptance of man, so it is also the exemplification and the assurance of that reconciliation and peace which we have, and can have only, through the faith of this very doctrine, that the Son of God is come in the flesh."¹

1. Christ made peace between Jew and Gentile, between the holy and the unholy, between God and man.

"This body of His flesh, which was instinct with every form of sin (yet Himself sinless), which was weakened with every infirmity (yet Himself mightier than the mightiest), which was oppressed with every obligation (yet Himself under no obligation, but having obligation over all things) He took and offered on the cross and with it all the ordinances and beggarly elements and rudiments of the world: and death passed upon them and they were carried to the grave along with Him."²

1. Ibid p. 327.

2. Ibid p. 331.

But He rose from the dead free of all this sinful wrapping. He arose with the body of His glory. Here Irving makes his decisive contrast. The Christ whom we worship is the Risen Christ, and the body which we are of, is not the body that was crucified, but the body that is risen, that is so far as we are of His Church. This Church is no longer a fleshly church, but it is a resurrection Church. The point Irving is making is, that in this Church there can be no distinction of Jew or Gentile, Scythian, bond or free, male or female, circumcised or uncircumcised, for all these distinctions and divisions were abolished and destroyed in the tomb of the dead body of the Lord. We are baptized into the Lord's death and burial and have the gift of the Spirit sealed upon us. We become as it were like Christ after His baptism, when He was filled with the Holy Ghost. We can now live the life of Christ according to the flesh, conditioned as He was conditioned, from our baptism to our resurrection by the activity of the Holy Spirit.

2. Christ delivered us from all that stood in the way of God's favour and blessedness.

The Levitical institution condemned not the Jews only, but men in general, for no man could enter into covenant with God otherwise than by conforming to it. It was in fact a

token to the whole world of its inherent wickedness and depravity in the sight of God. It demonstrated the variance and hatred between the creature and the Creator, between nature and the Spirit, between the law of the visible creation and the will of the invisible Creator.

"To talk of peace to any man, upon any grounds whatever, other than the incarnation of the Son of God, is the greatest of all falsehoods, the denial of all which God has said or done since the fall of man. In the words of the apostle 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.' Now it is to be understood from all the Scripture, and indeed is of the very essence of the incarnation, that Christ took upon himself the burden of this fallen nature and bore it during his life, and carried it to His death: that it was a part of Him which died with Him, but rose not with Him again. Sin that slays all things, He slew; by dying, He did destroy him that has the power of death. He carried the disabilities both of Jew and Gentile with Him to the Cross, but by the Cross He slew the enmity. There died, not a man,

but there died the Son of man. As in Adam was created, not a man, but man; so in Christ died not a man, but human nature underwent in His death, the penalty of the curse; Adam being made the representative of all mankind in his probation. Christ was made their representative in the redemption."¹

Irving quoted Eph. 2, 16-18, to sum up his conclusion.

"Christ reconciled us both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to them which were afar off, and to them which were nigh; for through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Here lies the beginning of all spiritual life and all good works, and the foundation of all peace.

3. Christ by faith in His resurrection quickens us in the life of faith and godliness, and in the midst of conflict gives us peace.

Irving says,

"I doubt no more that we are heirs of Christ's peace in the conflict with the powers of darkness, than that we

1. Ibid p. 339.

are heirs of the conflict, and of the victory over it. The peace which we have in Christ Jesus is a derived peace, and yet an inwrought peace; it is derived from the fountain of Christ's peace, and it is wrought into us by the same Spirit which maintained it in Him."¹

Irving having developed these themes extensively, devotes a section "to speak of the manner of its declaration unto lost and ruined sinners".² He deals with Baptism; a further explanation of the Doctrine of the Trinity in refutation of ancient and modern heresies; and explains at greater length his conception of election. His ideas in Baptism, and the action and relation of the Trinity, do not concern us immediately at this stage. The development of his earlier statement on election is of considerable interest, but should not delay us here. The final part of Sermon V is introduced,

"Having thus discoursed of grace and peace, the substantial fruits of the Incarnation; and justified the full and free preaching thereof unto the Church; I would say a word, before concluding: upon the saving application of them to the heart of every believer."³

He writes with fervour and evangelical conviction, mounting

1. Ibid p. 341.

2. Ibid p. 344.

3. Ibid p. 378.

to his appeal and climax. The word he preaches is an offer of grace.

"I offer it without price; otherwise grace were not free. I offer it without work; otherwise grace were no more grace. I present it as God's gift unto His elect children, which they will lay up in their hearts. I present it unto all; and woe to him who heaps infinite wrath upon himself by rejecting this infinite gift of God by Christ Jesus our Lord!"¹

It is not out of place to put over against this sermon the strong words of Luther.

"He sacrifices Himself on the Cross, becomes a sinner and a curse: and yet He alone is the blessed seed through whom all the world shall be blessed, that is, redeemed from sin and death. And that He hangs on the Cross between two malefactors, being counted equal to them, and that He dies there a shameful death, all this He does for the benefit of the whole human race, to redeem it from the eternal curse. Thus He is both the greatest and the only sinner on earth, for He bears all the world's sin, and the only righteous and holy One;

1. Ibid p. 396.

for no man can be made righteous and holy before God save through Him alone.

"And whosoever believes that his sin and the sin of the world is laid on our dear Lord, who was baptized and nailed to the cross for it, and shed His precious blood in order that He, the only sin-bearer, should thus cleanse us from sin, and make us holy and blessed, that man receives forgiveness of sins, and eternal life; and Christ's baptism, cross and blood become his own."¹

SERMON SIX.

Irving states the position he has reached as a result of this prolonged study.

"I have been led to perceive distinctly how the incarnation of the Son of God is the ground and basis of all real knowledge with respect to the Godhead, is the ground and basis of all worship of the Godhead by the creature, and of the creature's own eternal being and blessedness. I perceive, moreover, through the light cast upon these subjects by the incarnation, how a creation out of God, and yet worshipping God, is not possible without the knowledge of God in three persons

1. Sermons from the year 1540 (W.A.49. 121)

subsisting, which, if it can be speculatively attained by the reason, is a truth only realised by the incarnation."¹

He states his theme:

"Conclusions concerning the subsistence of God, and the subsistence of the creature, derived from reflecting upon the Incarnation"

and makes the heads under which he intends to develop it.

First. The coming of the Godhead into action to create, and to manifest itself unto the creatures whom it hath made, and to receive their worship and homage. This will open insight into the manner of the Divine existence in three personalities.

Secondly. We should endeavour to shew how the creature shall subsist in an infallible and indestructible state, distinct from the Godhead, with, and by means of Christ a form of existence between the two, which is of both, and, being of both, distinct from each. This will open insight into the three great distinctions, between the incomprehensible Godhead, the Christhead, and the infallible creature, inhabited by the

1. Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened p. 398.

Holy Ghost; which three things may never be mingled together, so as to be confused with one another.

Thirdly. We shall endeavour to open the connexions and communions, not the less subsisting among these three existences, the incomprehensible Godhead, the Godmanhood, and the Spirit-inhabited creature, in such wise as secures worship unto the first, lordship unto the second, and infallibility unto the third.

And if we shall be able to open these great heads of doctrine, we shall have comprehended and resolved the great problem of creation, and seen clean through unto the ultimate end of God, which is to manifest and communicate Himself unto the creature; for I consider creation to be no more than the indelible, indestructible expression of that truth, God of one substance in three persons subsisting.¹

In fairness to Irving it has to be said that he only claims to "open" this magnificent conception, which is none other than a sound explanation of the Athanasian Creed in terms of what he believes to be the meaning and cause of the Incarnation. Professor Tindal makes what seems to me a fair comment on this section.

1. Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened p. 399.

"I have the impression of a poet who ought to have been writing poetry, and instead kept juggling with the terms of Greek and Latin philosophy."

Irving sets himself to do the impossible - to penetrate into the deep mystery of the being of God, to explain reasonably what is beyond reason, to express in words the inexpressible. Certainly he is aware that he is dealing with profound and perplexing questions, questions which arise inevitably from any attempt to earth the high doctrine of the Incarnation. The meaning of the Trinity, the place of the Fall, redemption, salvation, the life everlasting, all are examined with the eye of a visionary. He recognizes the extent of his daring.

"The doctrine of the Trinity ought ever to be held as the great fountainhead of all doctrine whatever, which flows from it like the crystalline streams from the secret recesses of the pure mountain snow. And however much men, and orthodox men, may cavil with us, who would thus seek the stream of life in its fountainhead - which I confess is a perilous and dangerous undertaking, not by every head to be attempted, yet when Satan has found his way thither, and poisoned the streams of all the valleys - it is most needful, and

cannot be dispensed with, that some of those who dwell in the fertilised, but now poisoned valleys, should, for the sake of all the families, their flocks and their herds, venture forth, though it were alone, in order to clear out the poisoned fountainheads."¹

He does not succeed in helping us forward to a new clarity and understanding, instead he leaves us baffled and mystified. What he has seen he cannot focus, and what he has heard he cannot interpret. We cannot doubt, however, the reality of the vision which he sought to capture and hold.

Whether we agree or disagree with the statements, divisions and conclusions of the whole volume, we have to admit to the greatness of its conception and the massive grandeur of its penetrating and lofty thought. It runs and grows like a great symphony, with an ever recurring motif. To isolate this motif is to hold the new thing which Irving is trying all through to bring to our understanding.

"The Christ form of being, God and man in one person, was only an idea and a purpose until the incarnation, when it became a fact. The person of the eternal Son, I mean, did not become the Christ in very deed, until He took human substance of the virgin."²

1. Ibid p. 430.

2. Ibid p. 400.

Of the book itself this has been said.

"There are many passages of great beauty and exquisite tenderness in which he sets forth the work of Jesus in our nature, and the ties of love which do thereby bind Him to all men, but especially to His Church. No theologian or preacher has more magnified the humiliation and the victory of the Son of God, or portrayed in more lofty strains the glory into which he has lifted the company of the redeemed."¹

and of the doctrine therein contained. Far from being unorthodox Irving went back to the older, sounder orthodoxy, that of the Fathers and the Councils, and one from which later thinking had departed. That he believed he was in the true evangelical succession may be seen in his description of his teaching as 'orthodox and catholic doctrine'.²

1. Edward Irving - A Review p. 75.

2. The Catholic Apostolic Church - P. E. Shaw, p. 23.

CHAPTER SIXI N T O T H E O P E N

"Sir, the things you have said, and published to the church, and the world, of the Mediator, are altogether new under the sun. For I believe, no mortal man ever dared to express such a sentiment as, that every variety of human passion, every variety of human affection, every variety of human error, every variety of human wickedness which hath ever been realised, was inherent in his humanity." Letter to the Rev. Edward Irving by the Rev. Joseph Duncan, Trinity College, Dublin.

The storm which broke about Irving's head as a result of his "Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened" was at first borne in silence. In the end, however, he was driven to defend his position and in 1830 he brought out his considered reply "The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature". In the Preface he states that in defining the qualities of our Lord's human nature his object is to show that that nature was the very same in substance with that which we possess.

"To understand the work which he did, you must understand the materials with which he did it. The work which he did was to reconcile, sanctify, quicken, and glorify this nature of ours, which is full of sin, and death and rebellion and dishonour unto God. The most part of those who are opposed to the truth agree in this; but differ from us in maintaining that the substance of human nature underwent a change in the miraculous Conception. We maintain that it underwent no change, but was full of fellowship and community with us all his life long, and was not changed but by the resurrection. We hold that it received a Holy-Ghost life, a regenerate life, in the Conception; in kind the same which we receive in regeneration, but in

measure greater, because of His perfect faith, which perfect faith he was enabled to give by being a Divine Person, one of substance with the Father. The theory therefore which we maintain is, that as Adam was the perfect man of creation, Jesus was the perfect man of regeneration: perfect in holiness, by being perfect in faith; perfect in faith though all the created universe strove to alienate him from God..... This is the substance of our argument - that his human nature was holy in the only way in which holiness under the Fall exists or can exist, is spoken of or can be spoken of in Scripture, namely, through inworking or energizing of the Holy Ghost."

The book is divided into four parts.

PART ONE.

1. The Nature of Christ's Flesh derived from Scripture.
2. His being made under the Law.
3. The Conclusions derived from Scripture.

PART TWO.

1. The Apostolical, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.
2. The Confession first adopted by the Church of Scotland.
3. Our own proper Confession.

4. The Westminster Confession.
5. Bourignonism.

PART THREE.

1. The Miraculous Conception considered.
2. The true Nature of Atonement.
3. The Value of Christ's Sufferings.

PART FOUR.

1. The Bearing upon the Work of the Father.
2. Upon the Work of the Son.
3. Upon the Work of the Holy Ghost.
4. Upon the Scriptures.
5. Upon Faith and Union with Christ.
6. Upon Regeneration and Holiness.

CONCLUSION.

It roused the most violent controversy. The Edinburgh Review contained what must be about the longest book review on record. Letters poured into the national press and a heresy hunt had begun. Although Irving lays himself open to the criticism of obscurity and even contradiction, his main thesis was clear beyond doubt. Jesus entered the creation by taking our flesh, and in that flesh overcame sin

and death and He will lead Creation in a final subjection to the Father. Then the great end will have been reached, and God will again be all in all - God, not the Father alone, but in the fulness of the Divine Name - Father, Son and Holy Spirit; His Name hallowed, His Kingdom come, His will done, as in heaven so on earth.

One is perhaps tempted to echo the generous and fair criticism of H. R. Macintosh and leave it there.

"..... Edward Irving whose life was one of the greatest and saddest of the century. He was charged in ecclesiastical courts with holding 'the sinfulness of Christ's humanity'; but the expression is really unjust, and no reader of the history of the case will deny that more than one argument on which his ecclesiastical condemnation rested was gravely docetic in its implications. Irving clung with his whole soul to Christ's sympathy with the tempted, His veritable brotherhood with man: and to secure this he felt it his duty to affirm that the Son of God in incarnation took upon Him fallen human nature, with the possibility of sin, though, by the indwelling omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, sin never for one moment touched Him actually. In his own words 'The point at issue is simply this, whether Christ's flesh

had the grace of sinlessness and incorruption from its own nature, or from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost: I say the latter.' Elsewhere he inveighs against two main errors: the belief that Christ's nature was intrinsically better than ours, or that it underwent a physical change before the assumption into the person of the Son. 'It was manhood fallen which He took up into His Divine person, in order to prove the grace and the might of the Godhead in redeeming it.' So the humanity was without guilt, but with everything else that belongs to man and was 'held like a fortress in immaculate purity by the Godhead within.' 'Christ was holy in spite of the law of the flesh working in Him as in another man: but never in Him prevailing.' And on these premises Irving built up a theory of salvation according to which our Lord, thus maintaining His personal sinlessness, and enduring to the uttermost the penalty due to His sinful human nature, achieved the reconciliation of God and man in His own person, the thing done in one portion being done, virtually in the whole.

Of this eccentric though touching view it may be said, briefly, that the oneness of our Lord with us in the moral conflict which was for Irving the heart of

all things, is indeed a great fact: yet a theory of it is not to be purchased at the price of asserting that His humanity was corrupt, with a corruptness which only the Holy Spirit could hold in check. Misled probably by the patristic habit of using 'flesh' as a synonym of 'manhood', Irving confused the idea of 'corrupt' with that of 'corruptible' (in the sense of liable to corruption or decay), and hence from the fact that Christ was liable to decay and death, as being capable of dying, deduced the rash conclusion that His humanity was fallen. Certainly he held strongly that only a fallen nature could be tempted, and that to deny this is to deny Christ's manhood. There can be no doubt that Irving passionately repudiated the idea of Christ having actually sinned: but it is after all only a loose idea of sinlessness which takes it as compatible with the existence in Christ of a potential fault and strong efficacious germ of evil, divergent even as undeveloped from the Divine standard of perfect righteousness; which is the connotation of 'fallen human nature' and 'original sin' in all other cases."¹

But is there not more to it than this?

1. The Person of Jesus Christ, H. R. Macintosh, p. 206/208.

It was not simply that Irving had made a mistake in emphasis or that he had revealed one facet of truth only to obscure it by wholly wrong and unreasonable conclusions. He was contending for a faith that burned and consumed him, rather than blindly battling for the refinements and niceties of theological argument. His faith was leading him to a recovery of truth. Its import and impact he could glimpse, but not fully comprehend. Therein lies the importance of the many pages which he wrote throughout this bitter controversy. His belief about the Person of our Lord was something that mattered vitally for his life, and the lives of those committed to his pastoral charge. While he was to cover again and again the same ground of argument, it was in order to set forth yet more clearly the vision which had taken such complete possession of his mind.

His critics might impugn him while he lived, but the avenues of thought which he opened up have been followed by scholars and thinkers with greater advantages than he had, and with the light of modern research to make clear what to him had been obscure.

When Irving came to write the Preface to yet a third volume "Christ's Holiness in Flesh" he outlined the main objections which had been levelled against his treatment of the Person of Christ in "The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of

our Lord's Human Nature". He is well aware of the forces that have begun to gather and will in the end cast him out of the Church which he loved and sought to serve.

"I am not ignorant that many members, especially of the evangelical name in Scotland and elsewhere, had denounced me as a holder of heresies, and public intention from month to month had been given by the leading journal of that sort, of a purpose to crush me under a load of charges, but still I felt that I had other duties than to publish books."¹

The summary which he gives in this same Preface pin points the main arguments against him. It is itself a critique of the previous book. He writes "to the statement of the doctrine have been objected

1. The use of the expression sinful flesh, as if we would thereby assent that his flesh sinned. Our reason for using this word we have given in these words 'Yea, though Christ's flesh was by the upholding power of the Divine nature ever preserved most holy, it is a thing most necessary to assert of it, that in itself it was sinful; for these ends. (a) Of continually suggesting the question whence had

1. "Christ's Holiness in Flesh", Preface p. XI.

it its holiness? (b) Of teaching the fellowship of our temptations, whereof flesh is one principal source and (c) Of resisting that host of heresies which are now overspreading us.'

2. That under the head of his being under the law, we have spoken unadvisedly in these words, 'If then Christ was made under the law, he must have been made by his human nature liable to, yea, and inclined to, all those things which the law interdicted.' The charge was just, if these words did not immediately follow, 'When I say inclined to, I speak of his human nature in itself, as contemplated apart from that Divine nature which upheld it; from that person of the Son of God who wrought in it, and by it, the victory over all sin.'

Besides these and the like accusations, made up by the same method of garbling (to which a book is liable just in proportion as it is honest and reasonable, and none so much so as the Bible), an objection has been brought that I make the Lord guilty of original sin: I did wonder when I read of this, seeing that eight pages of my Tract¹ are expressly devoted to the work of shewing, that the supernatural generation did take him out from the list of human persons, and so clear him altogether of original sin. In answer to this

(1) The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature.

charge, I do merely refer to my Tract, pp. 80-88.

Another objection they take against me is, that I have made void the atonement. To maintain and explain the atonement twelve pages of the Tract are devoted, (88-100). And so also of the merit of his sufferings, (100-103).

Another objection was brought against that little Tract, that it asserted our Lord to have been regenerated, which they said, was as much as to say that He had been generated first, and afterwards regenerated. My reason for using that expression was in order to show, that his generation of the Holy Ghost is as truly the form and fountain-head of all generation, as Adam's creation was of all creation: that regeneration, as a form of divine working, takes its beginning from the generation of Christ by the Holy Ghost, as truly as incarnation doth from the flesh of the virgin. Both being hoped for and waited for by the saints who went before. Incarnation and divine generation began together, and are the two sides of this one truth. "The word was made (generated) flesh". Human nature was created in Adam, and by him generated unholy, human nature was hypostatically united to Godhead in Christ, by being generated of God holy. Holding of the former it can only be unholy, holding of the latter it can be, and ought only to be, holy, even as in Christ it ever was. How anyone should

mistake this great head of orthodox faith, for the abominable proposition that Christ was first generated and then re-generated, is what can be explained in no other way than by the charitable supposition that they have never read my book, and made up their judgement of it from slanderers.

My accusers may, if they please, indite me of being a bad reasoner and an inaccurate writer: but it is too much to accuse me of holding Christ for a sinner, of denying atonement, satisfaction, and imputation of righteousness, when my whole Tract is to establish Christ's holiness, his satisfaction of the law, and his only righteousness for all men.

..... when I found such an outcry against this Tract, I felt it my duty to read it carefully over and to weigh its words, as well as its thoughts in the balance of truth; and when I had finished the scrutiny, I was compelled to fall upon my knees and thank the God of truth, who had enabled me to put forth such a bold and uncompromising statement of the true faith of our Lord's human nature.¹

This was in a sense the nailing of his colours to the mast. It was an open declaration of faith and he was prepared to stand firm and meet the consequences. Events had begun to move rapidly as he himself describes in subsequent

1. Preface to "Christ's Holiness in Flesh", pp. XII-XV.

pages. Hugh Maclean had been brought before the General Assembly. Irving broke a lance on his behalf and wrote a Tract "The Opinions Circulating Concerning our Lord's Human Nature tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith", but the mass of evidence had so accumulated that his had become a voice crying in the wilderness.

The Edinburgh Review a year previously had already prejudged all issues. The hundred pages of alleged sober criticism, which must have found their way into most studies in the land, purported to be the voice of orthodoxy. It is a curiously inept document, and Irving has some right to complain that attacks were made upon his teaching by those who had not troubled to give it careful and serious thought. Of course his reasoning led him into many unchartered regions of thought, and that is at once his glory and his tragedy. He dared to try and capture the unknowable and to describe mystery within the limits of word and speech. The half-comic appraisal of his deepest thoughts and strivings, would have silenced a lesser man and made him careful of his statements, but not Irving. Even the Review must begin with condescending appreciation of the grandeur of his mind and life, but it has not the ring of sincerity, and the man is attacked more violently than his doctrines.

"Of Mr. Irving it is written 'Lord Wellesley once said

finely of Buonaparte, that he was of a class of minds to make to himself great reverses'; the same may be said of Mr. Irving: he never handles a subject upon which the stamp of a great mind is not impressed, nor in a manner not to furnish the theological babes of the present generation with abundant ground of petty attacks. This estimate we think upon the whole tolerably correct. We consider Mr. Irving as a man of honest zeal, of staunch integrity, of the most open frankness and sincerity of character - in short as 'an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile' Of Mr. Irving's theological acquirements we shall here say nothing, as we shall probably have occasion afterwards to subject them to a pretty minute examination; but let us not be supposed to undervalue his talents. He is an independent thinker, and occasionally strikes out brilliant trains of thought. But to arrange his ideas into any regular form or order, to assign to each its proper limits, and to ascertain its place in, and its bearing upon, his whole system, form no part of his powers. Hence he contradicts himself more frequently than any other writer probably ever did, and his ideas, even when finest, are like moonbeams on broken water, brightness without shape or form. His imagination

flies away with his judgement, or, to use a familiar but expressive phrase, he carries much more sail than ballast, so that while going before a prosperous wind to-day, he reflects not that he may be running right athwart the course, which, with an equally favouring breeze, he was steering yesterday."¹

What follows is a hotch potch of personal abuse and second hand theological argument, more involved than anything Irving ever wrote. There is no straightforward attempt at criticism. It was, however, to be widely quoted and no doubt firmed up the growing opposition to Irving and his friends.

When he published in 1831 "Christ's Holiness in Flesh", he must have known that the forces of opposition were closing in upon him. MacLean had been condemned by the General Assembly and he himself had been summoned to the bar of the London Presbytery whose judgement he had refused to accept. Whether he hoped that this last work would allay suspicion and vindicate his teaching, or whether he considered it as his "apologia" we have no ground for knowing. It is divided into three Parts.

PART I

The Fact and Form of our Lord's Holiness.

1. The Edinburgh Christian Instructor. No. CCXXXIV Jan. 1830, Vol. XXIX No. 1 pp. 1-2.

- (1) The Original Holiness of Christ, or His Freedom from Original Sin.
- (2) His Constitutional Holiness in Flesh of our Flesh.
- (3) His Actual Holiness.
- (4) The Testimony of God to his Perfect Holiness.
- (5) The Fruit of these to all Men.

PART II

Illustrations from Scripture

- (1) The VI, VII, VIII Chapters of Romans examined in proof and illustration of this subject.
- (2) 2 Corinthians Ch. III, V. 3 - Ch. IV.
- (3) 2 Corinthians Ch. V, v. 16 - end.
- (4) 1 Peter Ch. II, V. 21; and Ch. III, V. 18; Ch. IV, V. 12.
- (5) The First Epistle of John.

PART III

Conclusions of Doctrinal Truth and Practical Holiness

There are many fine passages in this volume particularly in Part II where in exposition of Scripture Irving is ever at his best. His exposition of the words "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree" is a typically striking example.

"In that body of flesh and blood in which he lived and died, our sins were borne, that is the sin of the world, and yet he was sinless. How so? His perfect

righteousness, that is, his being ever such a man as God would have all men to be, made him love men and all mankind, as he loved himself. Our sins went thrilling up into his soul, as if they had been all his own; from the ends of the earth, and the two extremes of mankind, the beginning and the ending, the sins of all flesh came up in a dark cloud to cover his soul with distrust and dismay: and this gathering blackness is called in Scripture 'the hour and the power of darkness'. Great was his terror and agony, and forsakenness: there was no star in the heaven of his soul; the depths were opened upon him from beneath, and the water-spouts from above came roaring down, and all the billows of God passed over him. He stood among fierce lions, upon the horns of unicorns and among the roaring bulls of Bashan. This is the nature of sin-bearing. It is not as if sins were laid upon, and lapped about him like a physical covering. The sting of sin is not outward and physical, but inward in the conscience, in the darkness, distance, and alienation from God, in the waste desolation of soul, and dismal forsakenness of God, which it worketh; in the wounded spirit; in the vials of God's wrath, which consume man like a moth, but they consumed not Christ; they astonished

him; the sinew of his faith shrank but failed not; he sought escape from them but all within his Father's will. There was one evil greater and only one, the evil of sinning against his Father's will. That he could not, because he would not do, because he was God, whose oneness with God could not be broken."¹

There is something prophetic in these words, for within a matter of months he was to know the hour and power of darkness. He was himself to stand alone "among fierce lions, upon the horns of unicorns, and among the roaring bulls of Bashan". Maybe he already foresaw the path that lay before him, for he took infinite pains with this last book, re-reading and checking almost every line, and proving its statements on his own pulses.

John Baillie has written "Our generation is more perplexed than any other generation has ever been over the gospel tale of our Lord's Person and Work, yet, first, we are deeply conscious that somehow in this tale is enclosed, the only balm for our soul's woe, and second, the spirit of our Lord's life, and of His cross, have laid hold on us in a way that is strangely new. What are we to do?"²

Irving might well have echoed these sentiments in his own day. He certainly had no doubts about what to do, it

1. Christ's Holiness in Flesh, p. 61

2. The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Theology, p. 21.

was to proclaim a whole gospel based on Scripture, the accepted doctrines of his church, and all lit up by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If it concentrated on a proposition which was in the end to condemn him in the eyes of his church, it was one to which his brethren in London had subscribed. He writes "It is remarkable that, in looking about for a general proposition, wherein to express the whole of the truth which we have contended for, through good report and through ill report, I should be able to find none so good as the authoritative and published deliverance of that body¹ of ministers and elders, with whom, for many years, I did live in loving brotherhood, and who have now held me up to execration as a heresiarch, and excommunicated me in all their churches. Yet true it is, and of verity, that the following proposition adopted by all these ministers and elders who have so dealt with me, at a conference for that purpose appointed, and finally published by their authority, as evidence how far I differed from them and from the truth, is that which I now write down, as a fair and full statement of all which in this, and in all my writings, I have advocated, and know to be the truth of God:-

"THAT THE SON OF GOD TOOK HUMAN NATURE OF THE SUBSTANCE
OF HIS MOTHER, WHICH (HUMAN NATURE) WAS WHOLLY AND

1. The London Presbytery Manifesto - A Pastoral Letter 1828.

PERFECTLY SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY GHOST IN THE ACT OF CONCEPTION, AND WAS UPHOLDEN IN THE SAME STATE BY THE SAME POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST; AND UNDERWENT NO PROCESS OR PROGRESS OF SANCTIFICATION, AS IT NEEDED NONE."

This now is the doctrinal proposition which contains, as it seems to me, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: so that my former brethren have really put me out of their synagogue for believing that which they believe, and maintaining and defending that which they hold forth as the declaration of their own faith."¹

Irving could never believe that he had strayed from the straight path of orthodoxy and grimly to the very end he defended himself. In 1830 a young man had listened to his preaching and wrote to his sister,

"After all you have heard of Mr. Irving, you would have been surprised at the extreme sincerity, and as it seemed to me, simplicity of his sermon, which expounded one part of Scripture by another in a way that I never remember to have heard before. An assertion of his - that the Old Testament is the dictionary of the New - throw a light upon some things which had been puzzling me very much, and I think is quite a guiding light in all Biblical studies. The principle itself

1. Christ's Holiness in Flesh pp. 75-76.

may be an old one, but the force and reality which he gave it made it have the effect of novelty to me"¹

The young man was Frederick Denison Maurice and in later years he was to acknowledge his indebtedness to Irving. Maurice has I believe succeeded better than any in grasping and understanding the burden of Irving's teaching on the Incarnation. Let him then have the last word on this bitter and tragic controversy.

"Irving found that he could not maintain the Incarnation in its reality and power if he shrank from the assertion that evil in all its ghastliness, in all its attractiveness, offered itself to the mind and will of Christ. That it was rejected by the mind and will no one could affirm more vehemently than he did. But to adopt any shift for the sake of making the conflict a less tremendous one than it is in the case of any son of Adam, seemed to him to be dishonouring Christ under pretence of asserting his purity, and to be depriving human creatures of the blessings and victory which He took flesh to give them. He therefore used language, which inevitably startled and staggered those who knew, what the suggestions of evil were to them, how much they

1. Life of Frederick Denison Maurice Vol. I, p. 107.

seemed to involve a participation in it. I could not evade the force of their appeals to the testimony of our consciences as well as of Scripture. I could as little evade the force of his. It seemed to me that if there was not a way out of the difficulty the Gospel meant nothing. The old theology which Irving had grafted upon his Scotch confession showed me this way. According to that confession the race stood in Adam, and had fallen in Adam: then a scheme of salvation of which the Incarnation formed a step was necessary to rescue certain persons from the consequences of the fall. Mr. Irving had begun to regard the Incarnation not merely as a means to a certain end, in which some men were interested, but, as the very manifestation of God to men, as the link between the creature and the Creator. But what could the Incarnation, on his previous hypothesis, be but the descent into a radically EVIL nature? Some of Mr. Irving's Scotch opponents perceived the difficulty, and resorted to the hypothesis of our Lord taking the unfallen nature of Adam. He regarded the suggestion as a miserable subterfuge, which made the relation between Christ and actual men an utterly unreal one. It led me to ask myself 'what does that unfallen nature of Adam mean? Did not Adam

stand by God's grace, by trust in Him? Did he not fall by trying to be something in himself? Could he have had a nature which was good independent of God more than me? Is not such a notion a subversion of Christian belief? But did the race ever stand in him? Old theology taught quite a different doctrine. Our own articles set forth Christ very God and very man - not Adam - as now and always the Head of the race. They teach us of an infection of nature which exists in every son of Adam. They call that a departure from original righteousness. This original righteousness stands, and has always stood, in Christ the Son of God, and in Him only. Here it seems to me, was the true practical solution of the difficulty. I could believe that the Head of man had entered fully into the condition of every man, had suffered the temptations of every man, had wrestled with the enemy of every man; and that He had brought our humanity untainted and perfect through that struggle and this because He had never lost His trust in His Father, His obedience to His Father - had never asserted independence as Adam did, as each one of us is continually doing. His temptations became then, real in the most tremendous sense. They were more fierce than any mere individual can ever undergo. He

did in truth feel the sins - bear the sins - of the whole world. And every man may turn to Him as knowing his own special danger, his easily besetting sins, as having felt the power of them and no man has a right to say 'My race is a sinful fallen race,' even when he confesses the greatness of his own sin and fall: because he is bound to contemplate his race in the Son of God, and to claim by faith in Him his share of its redemption and glory. I can therefore do justice to the Unitarian protest against the language in which many who call themselves orthodox describe the condition of mankind, just because I adopt the belief in the perfect divinity and the perfect manhood of the Son of God. I can, with the most inmost conviction, assert that in me - that is, in my flesh - dwelleth no good thing, just because I feel that all good which is in me, or in any one, is derived from the perfect humanity of Christ, and that, apart from that, I am merely evil. Just so far as I have been able to grasp this belief in a Head of humanity - just so far the greatest problems of ethics seem to me to find a solution; just so far do I see a light in the midst of the deepest darkness, a hope rising out of the depths of despair, a unity which is mightier than all sects and divisions."¹

1. The Life of F. D. Maurice, Vol. II, pp. 406/408.

CHAPTER SEVENFUNDAMENTALS

"I entreat you to set up the Holy Scriptures, as the only basis of faith and practice, to look as minister, and to look as people to them alone! and I know this, that if you throw the Bible aside, you will not look to much else that is good. You may talk about standards as you please; but I know there will be little reading of standards or other good books, if there be not much reading of the Scriptures."

Edward Irving - Speech at his trial before
the London Presbytery.

It was perhaps inevitable that the main interest in Irving after his death should centre on the doctrines which were most violently assailed during his life, that of the Incarnation and Human Nature of our Lord. The result has been that much that Irving wrote, which was not apparently controversial, has passed into obscurity. Yet he made interesting and on occasion valuable contributions to many fields of religious thought. In this and in the following chapter we propose to examine the more important of these works, for they reveal quite remarkable catholicity of outlook.

1. HOMILIES ON BAPTISM AND HOLY COMMUNION.

F. D. Maurice has finely written,

"Infant Baptism has been a witness for the Son of Man and the universality of His Kingdom. It has taught parents that to bring children into the world is not a horrible crime. It has led them to see Christ and His redemption of humanity through all the mists of our teachings and our qualifications. It has explained the nature of His kingdom to the hearts of the poorest. Christ has preached at the fonts,

when we have been darkening counsel in pulpits."¹

That Irving should be profoundly concerned about the practice and meaning of Baptism can be readily understood. He was fiercely devoted to his children and the succession of bereavements which he suffered, made him examine this head of doctrine with considerable care. In the Preface to the Homilies on the Sacraments, which he published in 1828, he writes,

"I believe in my heart, that the doctrine of the holy Sacraments which is contained in these two little volumes, was made known to my mind, first of all, for the purpose of preparing us for the loss of our eldest boy; because on that very week you went with him to Scotland, whence he never returned, my mind was directed to meditate and preach those discourses upon the standing of the baptised in the church, which form the sixth and seventh of the Homilies on Baptism. I believe it also, because, long before our little Edward was stricken by the hand of God in Scotland, I was led to open these views to you in letters, which, by God's grace, were made efficacious to convince your mind. I believe it, furthermore, because the thought contained in these two Homilies remained in

1. F. D. Maurice "Kingdom of Heaven", p. 282.

my mind, like an unsprung seed, until it was watered by the common tears which we shed over our dying Mary. From that time forth, I felt that the truth concerning Baptism which had been revealed for our special consolation, was not for that end given, nor for that end to be retained: and therefore I resolved, at every risk, to open to all the fathers and mothers of the Christian Church, the thoughts which had ministered to us so much consolation."¹

As a student Irving had made an exciting discovery in Richard Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity". It apparently made a deep impression on him at the time, and he now openly confesses that much that is contained in this exposition is influenced by Hooker. He moreover includes the relevant sections from Book V of the Polity as an introduction to the Ten Homilies on Baptism. I find myself wondering indeed if Hooker did not plant the seed in Irving's mind which was to produce his belief about the Human Nature of our Lord, especially if we compare Section II of Book V with the matter which we considered in the last Chapter. Hooker writes,

"Wherefore, taking to himself our flesh, and by His incarnation making it His own flesh, He had now of His

1. Irving on Baptism, pp. V, VI.

own, although from us, what to offer unto God for us. And as Christ took manhood, that by it He might be capable of death, whereunto He humbled Himself; so because manhood is the proper subject of compassion and feeling pity, which maketh the sceptre of Christ's regency even in the kingdom of heaven amiable, He, which without our nature could not on earth suffer for the sins of the world, doth now also, by means thereof, both 'make intercession to God for sinners', and exercise dominion over all men with a true, a natural, and a sensible touch of mercy."¹

I have been astonished to find in the various libraries in which I have searched, how little there has been written about Richard Hooker as a theologian. The Professor of English Literature in one of our Scottish Universities has the custom at the end of each session to give a list of three books which he considers should be the constant companions of every cultured man. One of them is the "Ecclesiastical Polity", and concerning it he adds, "Gentlemen, here indeed you will find the heart of the matter." Of course Hooker holds a conspicuous place in the history of English literature, but he also ranks high as a theologian, from whom many might learn both as to style and clarity. Francis

1. Richard Hooker - Ecclesiastical Polity. Section II, Book V.

Paget writes in his Introduction to Book V,

"He never handles truths like chessmen with which his adversary's pieces may be got into a corner, or like weapons with which an assailant may be driven in discredit from the field. There is in him a reverent chivalry towards the teaching for which he contends; and so he makes his readers think far more of the truth than of its champion; far more of its greatness than of his skill, and the truth is only gaining vividness and splendour and authority while he is fighting for it; - he shows its beauty as he proves its strength."¹

Had Irving modelled his style a little more closely on Hooker, there is some ground for believing that his ideas would have found more ready acceptance among his brethren, who were repeatedly to question the magnificence of his language with its pontifical style. Certainly on occasion Irving did follow this gentler example in wealth and stateliness and strength of diction and the result always makes easier reading. His Homilies on Baptism are among such.

If on the one hand there is to be traced the influence of Hooker, there is on the other, the grateful acknowledgment

1. Introduction to Book V of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity - Francis Paget, p. 4.

on the part of the writer to the fathers of his own Church and its Confessions of Faith. It is a quotation from what he describes as "Confession of Scotch Reformers" that he places on the first page of his volume. "We utterly condemn the vanity of those who affirm Sacraments to be nothing but naked and bare signs."

The subject heads under which Irving works out his views and convictions about Baptism are most interesting:

- I. The Significance of this Ordinance.
- II. The Sealing Virtue of Baptism.
- III. The Doctrine taught in Baptism.
- IV. The New Standing into which Baptism brings the Church and the Engaging Parent or Sponsor towards the child.
- V. The Duties of the Church and the Engaging Parent or Sponsor.
- VI. The Standing of the Baptised in the Church.
- VII. The Standing of the Baptised with respect to the Lord's Supper.
- VIII. Conclusions of Doctrine flowing from Baptism.
- IX. Practical Conclusions flowing from Baptism.
- X. Justification and Recapitulation of the whole Doctrine contained in the above Homilies.

There is also an Appendix which summarises the relevant parts bearing on Baptism in the main Confessions of Faith.

Irving spares no effort to set his teaching in the traditions of orthodoxy and sound faith. In view of what has been written in recent years, and the diversity of opinions expressed on the nature and meaning of Baptism, this book of Irving's has some claim to careful examination. The Catholic Apostolic Church of which P. E. Shaw has written so fully, took over Irving's teaching for its own, in this regard. Its "Order for the Administration of holy Baptism" reflects his doctrinal position. An account and explanation of this particular service has appeared in *Baptism on Didaché* (described in the *Expository Times*, March 1907, "there has never before been written so full an account of what Baptism is and what it leads to"). (See Appendix II)

Irving all through his ministry was perplexed about the life of the Church, and even though he saw first hand the attempts of one like Dr. Chalmers to remedy the weakness and failure of organised religion, he was bound to be influenced by the prevailing conditions of his day, and he perceived the first shattering results of the Industrial Revolution and the consequent distortion and destruction of the old pattern of Scottish Church life. He describes what he sees.

"If, I observe, first, the relaxation on the part of the rulers of the Church, and their indifference to the

spiritual charge of their children, their ignorance of the state of families for which they are responsible, and the abuse, I had almost said profanation, of the sacrament itself, the profaneness, the privacy, the indecent haste of its administration; the ignorance of its bonds and obligations, and the practical, if not open denial, that it involves any; if I observe next, the discipline of families, how little system and order, how little instruction and discipline, how little worship, how the father has ceased from the priesthood of his house, and the children from the devout honour of their father; how the mother has ceased from the gentle office of kindly carrying into effect the details of a father's plan! and how the servants are kept without the family circle which our mild and gracious discipline bringeth into one; if I observe again, the state of the schools, in which these defects are intended to be supplemented, and witness the secularity and ostentation which run through them, in so much that I regard the Sunday School, as it is ordinarily conducted, to be no Sabbath work and likely to be of no advantage to the Church, having in truth little or no relation to the Church, and no reference whatever to the ordinances of Baptism, as the origin out of which

it grows, or to the Communion, as the end to which it aims, or to the spiritual seed, as the material upon which it works, but being in truth little holier than on week-day parish schools; if next I observe the outward and visible machinery of the present religious world, as it well names itself; their endless and often prayerless committees, their multitudinous and often unhallowed meetings, their hustings and hustings-like harangues, their numerous travellers upon commission, their flaming and often fallacious Reports, with all the hurry, haste and bustle of the evangelical machinery; can I but be grieved at the fall and declension of the Church's glory and the common weal. Can I be but desirous to restore the spiritual meaning and the spiritual power of the ordinances of the Church, and especially of this the Sacrament of Baptism, which I may call the 'primum mobile', the moving power of the whole."¹

Irving believed firmly in 'making Christians by sacraments' and for him Baptism mostly meant 'infant baptism'. In his Second Homily he says decisively,

"The promise being made unto the parents and their

1. Irving "On Baptism", pp. 267-269.

children, every parent, who has faith in Christ for his own salvation, may and ought to have his child baptized for he is born under the covenant..... that is, our children inherit a fellowship in the righteousness of Christ, which nothing but their own voluntary act of rejection and apostasy can deprive them of; and as a seal of this righteousness, which they possess in virtue of their parents' faith, they are sealed with the outward sign of Baptism, in order that it may be known and understood of all men that this is one of God's sealed ones."¹

Baptism is to him a most solemn covenant,

"everyone should believe that God has entered into covenant with him, in the most awful name of the ever-blessed Trinity, and that he is a person entered into the most solemn covenant with God: which covenant God will not abrogate, and man cannot."²

It applies to everyone, whether for himself alone, or those for whom he is responsible. It has its authority and meaning in an act of faith, and it bestows forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. For Irving there are three parties to the ordinance, (1) the beholder, (2) the child,

1. Ibid, p. 170.

2. Ibid, p. 134.

(3) the parent. To the beholder, i.e., the congregation, there is proclaimed the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, Christ is preached at the first; to the child is given its true status as a child of God, and the seed of the spiritual life is given -

"here, then, is the mystery of Baptism - and a most glorious mystery it is - that no sooner is a child born into this world of sinfulness and sorrow by natural birth than, by a spiritual birth, it is born into a spiritual world of grace and blessedness;"¹

to the parent,

"in the very act of presenting his child to be buried with Christ in Baptism, he declares unto the Church that his child derives nothing from him but sin and death; and in the act of Baptism he does, like Abraham, offer up his Isaac so that the relationship of nature exists no longer, and a relationship of grace is constituted in its stead."²

The father must exercise his function as priest in the house, and the Church must through discipline, oversight,

1. Ibid p. 152.

2. Ibid p. 158.

and instruction guide the parent and care for the child. The parent is responsible to the Church, the Church to Christ, and Christ to God; and the end,

"The end of that instruction which the parent, under the watchful eye of the Church, should impart, is the fitting of the baptized for sitting down at the Lord's table, which may never be permitted save to those who are of sufficient knowledge of the faith that is within them. When they have attained unto this degree in the church, they are no longer under sponsorship, but free to become sponsors or catechists in their turn; and therefore every parent should long for the time when he can thus deliver up his burden into the hands of the Church; and the rulers of the Church should be most ready on their part to receive the burden from the shoulders of the parents, and to advance another child to the freedom of Christ's house."¹

Irving has much to say about instruction especially in Homily V where he not only paints a picture of the ideal church and congregation, but describes most vividly the root causes of weakness in his own church, and for that matter in ours to-day. His account of life within the Church after

1. Ibid p. 269.

Baptism as "resurrection life" leads him to discuss at length the inner meaning of the sacrament in relation to Christ's Work and Death and Resurrection. A great deal of what he says is pure expository preaching of the very best.

His Second Homily "The Sealing Virtue of Baptism" is of particular interest to those who have examined the practice of "Sealing" in the Catholic Apostolic Church. How far this body of Christians were influenced directly by Irving here is not easy to discover. Irving's application appears to be a limited one, although he goes on to relate Baptism to the Lord's Supper. If Baptism is the seal of justification, the Lord's Supper is the seal of sanctification.

"The sealing is the last act of every covenant, and maketh it fast and sure. Now there are these two seals connected with our salvation, 'Baptism and the Lord's Supper', and therefore there must be two distinct things which they seal up, conclude and determine. These two things are our justification and our sanctification, the former of which we come to in right of our father's faith; the latter of which is a work accomplished in and upon ourselves; in virtue of which we may transmit the holy seed to our children also."¹

1. Ibid p. 187.

Certainly the Church which is so closely connected with Irving's name has built up its life on these fundamentals. I can remember something of the pattern of it in my own childhood and youth. On the great Feasts of Easter, Christmas and Pentecost we children received Holy Communion with our parents; the worthiness of our reception depended not on our faith but that of our parents. When it was decided that our knowledge of the faith was such as to warrant our acceptance of communion in our own right, (after many months of instruction at home and in church classes), we received the "Laying on of Hands". The Candidates were addressed in this manner.

"Dearly beloved children in the Lord, the day approaches wherein, having been baptized into Christ, ye should receive the seal of your faith, the confirmation of grace, the heavenly unction from the Spirit of Christ which shall make you perfect and entire, wanting nothing; if so be that ye continue steadfast unto the end. Ye have been brought up in the Church of God, as children of His family; and the time hath come when ye should be fed no longer with milk only, but also with that meat which is proper to those who are of fuller age, and have larger capacity of discernment.

.....

"..... And we are now assembled in the name of God, that ye may renew and record the solemn vows, on your part, made at the holy font; and that all Christian men may take note, that ye abide steadfast in the faith and profession of your baptism, and in the principles of the doctrine of Christ. I call upon you, therefore, that in the first place, openly and before the Church, ye do ratify and confirm those things, which at your baptism were declared and promised on your part."¹

It all follows in a natural sequence. A recent study of "Readings on the Liturgy", a most useful commentary on the Liturgy of the Catholic Apostolic Church, reveals that here there is material which appears to echo the teaching of the Ten Homilies on Baptism. Altogether Irving has left us a valuable contribution on the doctrine and practice of Baptism. In his "Conclusions of Doctrine flowing from Baptism" (Irving's Chapter headings are always worth consideration) he writes,

"The first and most obvious conclusion of doctrine which we derive from the sacrament of Baptism, is, that the Holy Ghost, who proceeded from the Father and the Son,

(1) The Liturgy of the Catholic Apostolic Church.

is to be expected at any age of life, and by no means to be limited to the years of reason and thought. This follows clearly from Baptism being, like circumcision, the privilege of the infants of believing parents, before intelligence and reason, and the capacity of knowledge or reflection, almost before distinct sensation, and any human function of speech, sight, or hearing had begun to dawn into existence, the unconscious babe was admitted to that covenant of righteousness by faith, whereof circumcision was the seal..... and Baptism being confined to no stage of our being, but permissible at the very moment of our birth, does carry, if it were possible, this point to a higher degree of evidence and conclusiveness. Now if Christ, by so appointing it that the seal of the covenant should be dependent upon no condition but the life of a human creature and the faith of its parent or (in his incapacity) of a sponsor, it is most clear, that all the gifts, privileges and immunities which the sacrament brings, no less than the remission of sins and the receiving of the Holy Ghost, are proper to be given and warranted by God to the unconscious babe; yea, to any seed of man in which there is life. Otherwise, if the Holy Spirit were not free to be

communicated to all ages of the living human creature, but only after life had put forth the functions of thought, of intelligence, of reason, the sacramental sign and seal of his communication would not have been permitted to be given till that function was become manifest. And those who refuse Baptism to infants, do in fact bring themselves to this awful conclusion, that the Holy Spirit is not given, and may not be expected, till a human being is capable of faith, which implieth knowledge and thought and reflection, and the other functions of reason."¹

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Irving also published seven long homilies on the meaning and doctrine of the Lord's Supper. His purpose was twofold: (A) to relate the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. "Baptism is the seal of righteousness imputed to us: the Supper is the seal of a union into Christ, wrought in us since our baptism."² (B) to correct a movement in the Church which sought to deny the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

"The real presence is confounded with transubstantiation: the highest prerogative of faith, to feed upon

1. Irving "On Baptism", p. 343/344.
 2. Irving's Collected Writings, Vol. V, p. 500.

the body of Christ always, and to discern the same in the bread and wine of the Supper, is denied, or most imperfectly declared; and in consequence thereof, the whole fruitfulness of faith, to dwell in Christ, and to bring Christ to dwell in us - to suffer, to rise with Christ, to partake with Him in heavenly blessings, and sit with Him in heavenly places - this, this, the true character, and, I may say, very definition of saving faith, is now lost, or imperfectly uttered in the Churches."¹

These homilies are rooted and grounded in Holy Scripture, and little in them would give us a clue to unorthodox teaching. The style is easy and restrained, and he tilts at fewer windmills than usual. Many years after their publication, Dr. John Macleod of Govan preached a series of sermons on Holy Communion, and I find myself tracing reflections of Irving's thought in not a few of them. MacLeod had been greatly influenced by the Catholic Apostolic Church and frequently attended the services of this Church in Edinburgh. It is interesting to recall that on one occasion the Glasgow Presbytery tried to put a stop to these visits in Edinburgh, but MacLeod paid scant attention to such questionings of his orthodoxy. He was attracted by the character and teaching

1. Ibid p. 639.

of Irving and much impressed by the movement which had been described as Irvingism. A useful study awaits someone, to show, how far, what has become known as the Govan tradition, and the Church Service Society were directly inspired by Irving through the Catholic Apostolic Church.

To Irving the Lord's Supper was central to the life and worship of the Church. He describes it as "the most precious jewel and the most fragrant mystery which the Church has in all her storehouses."¹ If in Baptism, as he maintained, you are brought from the standing of nature into the standing of grace, then in Holy Communion you receive the nourishment necessary for the life of grace. He gives a description of the Lord's Supper as Commemoration, Sacrament, Communion and Thanksgiving.

1. A great open commemoration and confession of Christ's death.
2. A solemn sacrament, or oath of fealty and service, into which we enter with the Lord.
3. An act of Close Communion, wherein the members of the Church do most charitably embrace and unite as one.
4. An act of thanksgiving, so singular in its kind, and exalted in its degree as to have obtained for it in the primitive Church the common name of Eucharist.

As a useful handbook on the teaching of the Lord's

1. Ibid p. 501.

Supper this work of Irving merits praise and study. The singular freshness of his mind is nowhere better illustrated. His threefold division of the faith which we bring to the Lord's Table - the faith of seeing, the faith of hearing, and the faith of eating and drinking - is clearly worked out and echoes of it are to be found in not a few communion addresses. Like his homilies on Baptism, this series has the quiet meditative style which we saw was due to the influence of Hooker.

At one point you can trace the way his thought on the Human Nature of Christ was taking shape.

"It is not enough to say, in answer to the great doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body unto faith in the supper, that faith realises Christ as everywhere present; for though it is true that in his divine nature He is omnipotent, yet is He not so in His human nature; or His body and blood with which, and with which only, this sacrament has to do, and His human nature which was crucified for us, and which is now divided into parts, and delivered for the nourishment of His Church, is a substance which is nowhere present but in the consecrated elements of the Lord's Supper. His glorious body is, indeed, far removed in the heavens,

at the right hand of God, but His humbled, bruised and broken body abides still with the Church, and is to the Church presented, and by the Church received, in the sacrament of the supper; so that by faith feeding thereon, and being incorporated therewith, we do perform the same offices in the world which, during His flesh, He performed. I mean to say, that it is not the glorious subsistence of Christ's body, now in the heavens, but it is the humiliated subsistence of His body, while on the earth, into the fellowship of which we eat and drink. And this, I say again, is not to sight revealed anywhere, but to faith presented in the supper of the Lord: and nowhere but there only, where it is presented, can faith realise its presence."¹

These Homilies on the Sacraments show forth a high view of the Church, and they were bound to strike sharply on the minds of his hearers. It is perhaps a pity that he did not devote the same space to the working out of a doctrine of the Church. He did, however, produce one short work pointing to a doctrine of the Church.

THE CHURCH.

It is something of an irony that Irving, so devoted to

1. Ibid p. 641.

his Mother Church, the Church of Scotland, and so convinced that it was part of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, should himself be the means whereby a new sect should arise to break its unity still more. He saw the Church always as the organ of communication between the invisible Christ and the visible world, and the witness in the world of the present lordship and future action of Christ.

"The Church under Christ its head, and with the Spirit for its inspiration, is the great instrument of God in which and by which to carry on all His operations; a temple for the eternal God to dwell in; a sufficient body for expressing all His mind, and doing all His will."¹

The Church of his time seemed to him a poor dead thing, without power and without attraction. It had become almost indistinguishable from the world. In spite of his first-hand experience of Dr. Chalmers' "papal state", he saw the masses of the people largely untouched by the Church, and the intellectuals in open conflict. He was driven to examine at close quarters, the activities of the Church, and what he found did not impress him. The section of his Collected Works (Vol. 5) which deals with the Church and Her Endowment,

1. Ibid p. 469.

gives us a first clue to his preoccupation with "tongues", as a necessary mark of the Church's returning vitality. He lists the various endowments of the Church given when Christ ascended - gifts of prophecy, healing, working miracles and speaking with tongues. He argues that these endowments were not just given for a season and then taken away, but permanent gifts given to the Church for use in every generation. He has something to say about the exaltation of the doctrine of the Book which has squeezed out any full doctrine of the Church. But he proclaims that a change is taking place.

"The gifts have ceased just as the verdure and leaves and flowers and fruits of the spring and summer and autumn cease in winter, because, by the chill and wintry blasts which have blown over the Church, her power to put forth her glorious beauty has been prevented. But because the winter is without a green leaf or beautiful flower, do men argue that there shall be flowers and fruits no more."¹

"The Church is in the condition of a man faint and sick and apparently dead, who puts forth neither manly voice nor vigorous action, and is even incapable of thought

1. Ibid p. 501.

and almost beyond feeling, but let that man revive again (and we know the Church never dies), and he will both hear and see and feel and act the man. So if the Church revives, she must act as the Church; which is not in the way of holiness merely, but in the way of power, for the manifestation of the completeness of Christ's work in flesh, and the first fruits of the same work in glory."¹

Irving as he writes is convinced that a new day is at hand, that a Church resplendent in the clean robes of holiness, with the words of her Head upon her lips, with the demonstration of his power in her life, will be shown forth. The Church is about to receive a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. You cannot doubt Irving's sincerity nor his real concern to see a revived Church. He begins to go wrong with his over-preoccupation with tongues and prophecy. He believes the Church to be living between the times, between the coming of Christ in the flesh and His coming again in glory. The Church is in the world to exercise Christ's earthly powers in this time.

Dr. Andrew L. Drummond has very fully documented and told in fascinating manner how Irving was drawn into the sad

1. Ibid p. 502.

controversy of the "Tongues".¹ There were so many directions in which his inspiration could have led him, and proved the fundamental rightness of what he believed to be the Church's mission in the world. Irving's step by step account of the place of "Tongues" in the Church, based on a most careful examination of Scripture, gives no indication of the way events would develop, nor explain the unbalanced movement which grew around him.

To-day the Catholic Apostolic Church which embodied so much that was good in Irving's thought as well as so much that was strange and unreal, and which sought to express his grand conception of a Church in which the gifts of the Spirit had been poured out in rich abundance to stem the tide of unbelief, has dwindled in this country to a very small body of prayerful people, without prophets, priests or evangelists waiting in unashamed patience for the Second Coming of Christ.

 1. Edward Irving and His Circle.

CHAPTER EIGHTFUNDAMENTALS I I

"Henceforward the gorgeous and cloudy vistas of the Apocalypse became a legible chart of the future to his fervent eyes."

The Life of Edward Irving -
Mrs. Oliphant, p. 105.

Irving's writings cover a vast field of thought. They could be classified under headings Ethical, Practical, Social, Historical and Prophetical as well as Doctrinal. We have examined the essential works which might be termed Doctrinal and from these have sifted the main emphasis of his theology. Although it would also be true to say that in almost everything he published there was a theological bias. One class, however, we have barely touched upon - his volumes which carry the title "Prophetical" - and these must now be looked at more closely.

Reference has already been made to what Irving himself calls his first work on prophetic subjects, "Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed". It claims to be an exposition of the Book of Daniel and of the Apocalypse as these presently refer to the Church and the nations of the world. This volume is an enlarged version of a sermon which he preached before "The Continental Missionary Association". Dr. A. L. Drummond has given it as his opinion that there is little original in the book, and that it is largely a rehash of Millenarian tenets concerned with:

- (1) A final impending battle with God's enemies.
- (2) The speedy return of Christ.
- (3) Christ will judge all men.
- (4) He will establish His kingdom on earth,
which will last 1,000 years.

(See Edward Irving and his Circle, A. L. Drummond, p.129/130).

The sermon had had a rough reception and Irving was accused of a variety of crimes and blunders, mainly that of dabbling in politics and that not very wisely. He denied that he was a "political partisan in ministerial garb" and maintained that his purpose was neither to involve himself in political theory nor to challenge law and order. He did not suggest that he had produced anything very original. He did, however, hazard dates and years when certain historic events prefigured in Daniel would occur, and he did have a pretty good go all round. The French Revolution, the Papacy, Democracy, the Nations of Europe all come in for their share of criticism and attack. To-day these predictions and explosions appear crazy and irrelevant, but they have a reasonable explanation for they were the product of a theology of crisis, and they were to a degree the logical result of the position which Irving found himself driven more and more to take up, as he followed the dangerous and unchartered path which had its starting point at Albury.

Five years after the publication of this his first so-called prophetic work, he delivered a series of Twelve Lectures in Edinburgh on the Book of Revelation. These lectures were published in pamphlet form as they were delivered, and later, when brought together in book form, three further

lectures were added, making the total fifteen and in all covering more than thirteen hundred closely printed pages. In the preface he tells us something of their origin and intention.

"We seem at present standing on the brink of a great crisis both in Church and State, which all men now begin to apprehend. This day, when I write, the Parliament of Great Britain is dissolved, in order to make way for another which may be more obsequious to the passions of the people; for it is an idle thing to talk now of any ruler in this nation but the popular voice, of which the reformed Parliament will be the appropriate organ. A very short while will unfold very great events. The time is indeed at hand. In foreign nations we behold the popular voice expressing itself in revolutions and organising itself into governments. And one thing is remarkable, that everywhere it prefers the monarchical form - the citizen king instead of the Christian king."

It is important to bear in mind that Irving like others of his time took a poor view of the French Revolution and saw in it the beginning of anarchy, mob rule and the complete rejection of Christian virtues and values. He was apprehensive

of all that was happening in Europe and was filled with foreboding about the future. R. A. Knox perceives this when he writes:

"You might criticize him as a man too wedded to his own opinion, with an overdeveloped sense of the dramatic, but of his natural gifts there was no question. It was, however, supernatural gifts that he craved. He had been engaged with a little group of friends, in studying the prophecies, and like so many others, had fallen under the spell of Chiliasm. Was he unconsciously influenced by the fact that an anniversary of the Crucifixion was approaching? We can only offer it as a guess; on the other hand it is fairly clear that the times in which he lived had something to do with it Irving, like many enthusiasts, was politically of the extreme right, he identified the newly founded University of London as the Synagogue of Satan and the passing of the Reform Bill must have confirmed his fears and hopes."¹

Knox has moreover indicated very clearly part at least of the dilemma in which Irving found himself - driven to urge reform in church and nation he was wholly opposed to

1. Enthusiasm - R. A. Knox, p. 552.

methods which seemed at variance with his religious beliefs. P. E. Shaw has also seen this apparent flaw, and has listed in his summary of the history of the Catholic Apostolic Church the ideas which this Church seems to have taken over from Irving.

"In practical matters, there is an unfavourable attitude toward the present, toward secular education, and toward co-operative activities for the betterment of the world in Christ's name, such as Foreign Missionary, Temperance and other societies; its theocratic idea with its consequent support of State Churches and its dislike of Dissent and Dissenters; its anti-liberalism and its dislike of democracy. These ideas are found in Irving's teachings long before there were prophesyings and 'tongues' in London."¹

My own conclusion is that Irving's attitude was not that of ultra conservatism so much as open opposition to man-made efforts at solutions in the political arena. He saw the bankruptcy of political thought in face of world-shaking events. In fact it was part of his picture of impending disaster.

We must keep clearly before us, however, if we would

1. The Catholic Apostolic Church - P. E. Shaw, p. 56.

value these prophetic writings, Irving's avowed intent.

"The work of which I now present the first portion is one of a larger scope than any which I have yet undertaken; being an endeavour to unfold the whole mystery of God, as it is expressed in this great revelation of Jesus Christ, which is the concentration of all the names, actions, and purposes of God into one. It is not to set forth my scheme, or to gainsay the schemes of others, but to open the deep things of God revealed in this portion of His Word - the historical applications in these volumes do not amount to the twentieth part of the whole; it is not to prognosticate concerning time and place; but to apprehend and set forth the wisdom of God that I have undertaken, and so far completed, this labour. The substance of the web is Eternal Truth, however fanciful some of the figures embroidered upon it may seem to be."¹

I believe that in spite of the fanciful figures and predictions which on occasion find a place, and it is always a relatively small place in these two considerable volumes, the substance of Eternal Truth is there for the finding.

From beginning to end of this series of lectures Irving

1. Preface to Vol. I, Prophetic Writings of Edward Irving.

is trying to reach a philosophy of history as well as attempting prediction of future events. There is much potted Church History and the predictions are generally well off the mark. They are, however, bound to be of interest to those who dabble in such realms, and there seems to be a growing school of such in our modern world under various guises or disguises. But the fact remains that he has something to say of considerable importance under the heading "Escatology".

He stated in his first lecture his main purpose.

"It is not from any conceit of supernatural wisdom or spiritual gifts beyond what any other minister of Christ may aspire to and ought to possess; nor is it in the proud ambition of making all mysteries plain, although we believe that this, and this only, is the province of the evangelical teacher; still less is it out of any curiosity about, or speculative research into, future things, but because we have experienced in our own souls the blessedness promised unto 'him that readeth the words of the prophecy of this book'; and because we think we have received some further insight into the object of God in giving it, the method of its structure, and the application of its prediction,

and would fain communicate of our good things unto others, that they may partake of our comfort and joy."¹

It is easy to draw out from these many pages, rash and erroneous statements, and give a totally wrong impression of Irving's intention. Jones' life of Irving illustrates this. He quotes passage after passage, completely out of context, and the accumulative effect is to give an utterly biased assessment of what these lectures really contain. A clue to the underlying motive in them is found in these words,

"We have no doubt in laying it down as certain that the substance of this book is the second coming of Christ, an event in which the primitive Church took the deepest interest; whose very intensity was apt to pass over into painfulness and astonishment and consternation."²

It is difficult to explain just why Irving ventured to date coming events with such dogmatism when he wrote so forcibly and assuredly of his own conviction.

"The coming of Christ was at the distance of many ages, and it is the purpose of God to keep it in the

1. The Prophetical Works of Edward Irving, Vol. 1, p. 1.
2. Ibid, p. 38.

expectation of every Christian of every age. And how is this to be done? how is attention to be kept alive? how is long delayed hope and desire to be kept from fainting? The chief means to this great end, and what God would have all to use, is the uncertainty, the impenetrable cloud of uncertainty, which is expressly hung over this event - the only event into the time of which we may not curiously pry, nor even presume to say that we have discovered it; for it is written, 'Of that day, and of that hour, knoweth no man'. The perfect certainty of the event, the entire uncertainty when, is God's own device for keeping His church in a continual state of expectation, looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. But besides this, it is accordant with the frailties of man's faith, and with God's kind accommodation thereto, that He should not suspend it upon one promise of the coming event, but add thereto signs of its coming, in a series of revelations, which, as they occur, might fill the Church's heart with more and more assurance, and produce an ever accumulating mass of evidence even unto the end."¹

Irving was erratic as we are bound to admit, but he was

1. The Prophetical Works of Edward Irving Vol. I, p. 41.

dealing with a subject which for years had been sedulously ignored or carefully circumvented, and he did not always avoid dangerous generalisations and off the record hazards. He gives over many pages to an account of the SUBSTANCE of Revelation and has this to say by way of summing up.

"So that upon the whole, without going into further particulars, we may say that the Apocalypse is the key of the Old Testament; the revelation of things which, though revealed, were hidden, until this book should be given to open them, and which therefore, is commanded not to be sealed. And besides this, there are all the predictions of the New Testament concerning Christ's coming and the signs of it, the harvest and the vintage, the mystery of iniquity and Antichrist, the bruising of Satan under our feet, the acts of Michael and his angels, and many more hints of things, which receive their full development in this book. Then to all this must be added a regular succession of events within the bounds of Christendom down to the present time, which give veracity to the prophecy and prevent its being rejected as a visionary set of conjectures, or treated as a grand mystical poem for the embodying of sublime ideas."¹

1. Prophetical Writings, Vol. I, p. 44.

And of its transcendent VALUE he writes,

"It sets out our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; it takes the veil from off the invisible to man, and draws us up into heaven, and shows us how the Son of Man hath been rewarded by the Father, and what work and what offices under the Father and for the Father, the Lamb slain is able to discharge. And not only does it show us the history of Christ's amazing person, all-glorious in heaven, but also what offices He is discharging for the Father throughout all creation, especially in the Church, and in the apostacy, and in the world, until His coming again; and not only so but likewise His coming from the presence and in the power of the Father, attended with all His Church and all His saints and all His angels; and finally when He doth come, what condition He finds the earth in, and how He establishes it for ever. In one word, it is to disclose to us what Christ is, what He is doing, and what He hath done, all that He is to do, from the time He ascended up on high, until the time that He comes to plant His glorious throne in visible majesty, and exercise His kingly power over the thrones, not of His world alone, but of all the redeemed universe."¹

1. Ibid p. 45.

There is terrific power in this writing and there is nothing fanatical or fantastic in the section which He describes as the SANCTIONS of Revelation.

THE SANCTION OF BLESSING

THE SANCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

THE SANCTION OF FEAR

These are discussed with insight and with real understanding. It is the last clearing of the ground before the systematic study verse by verse of the first six chapters of Revelation which is as much as he covers in the fifteen lectures. Here is his sure conviction.

"This, in one word, is my view of the Apocalypse: that it was intended to be at once the chart, and the polestar, and the light of the Christian Church, over the stormy waves of time, until the Great Pilot, Who walks upon the waters, and stills the waves, should again give Himself to the sinking ship, and make her His abode, His ark, His glory for ever and ever."¹

In my sober judgment there is much rare and fine material in these lectures. Of course there is extravagance and misinterpretation, but there is a solid core of sound exegesis

1. Ibid, p. 85.

and exposition, and of his threefold purpose:

1. To proclaim the Sovereignty of Christ over all worlds.
2. To define a Christian Philosophy of History.
3. To interpret events of crisis in terms of ancient prophecy.

I believe he succeeded to a quite remarkable degree with 1 and 2. He foundered on 3. The trouble is, however, that critics and biographers have looked at 3 and failed to see and understand 1 and 2.

It is important to remember the background of Irving's prophetic writings.

1. The Albury Circle.
2. His Fear of the French Revolution.
3. His suspicion of man-made attempts at salvation.
4. His sense of the failure of the Church.
5. His Distrust of political theory and programme.
6. His Hope for the Second Coming.
7. His Theory of Christ's Coming Rule on Earth.

They were all to add up to a rejection of the role of social reformer, which Irving might well have most adequately filled. The way was then open to an increasingly rapid advance towards a world denying transcendental position,

and in gathering height he lost communication with the earth. Carlyle has added his comment.

"It must be said Irving nobly expiates whatever errors he has fallen into. Like an antique evangelist he walks his stony way, the fixed thought of his heart at all times, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him'."¹

In faith he would risk everything to enter into the deep secrets of God. When at last he stood with the remnant of his once large following, listening to their quaint attempts at prophecy, he still trusted, even though his heart was breaking. There are among the documents in the library of the Catholic Apostolic Church in Edinburgh, copies of two letters which Irving wrote in the last months of his life. They describe in fact the beginnings of this Church, the creation of its ministry and the development of its services. He writes, "I sit down to record, for your praise and thanksgiving, the doings of the Lord in the midst of us during these days past." All the distinctive features of the movement which was the result of his prophetic impulse, are there in tentative outline. The new offices and ordinations, the place for prophecy in the services, the first

1. Reminiscences by Thomas Carlyle - Vol. I pp. 335, 336.

indications of laws and regulations take shape.

"Such is the simple and true account of the Spirit through the apostle of the Lord. I have sought much to enter into it since; and so far as I have been taught it amounts to this: 1st. A casting off, so far as London is concerned (for the Lord hath repeatedly said, that the burden of the whole city is laid on us) of the old ordinances, which they have polluted, and a giving of them anew from His own hand from heaven. 2nd. A purging out of the old leaven of the flesh, and the requirement of a purely spiritual service, which we must grow up into from childhood into manhood, beginning from that day, by the forgetting of the former things, and the never bringing them into mind. 3rd. A constituting of the church in the angel, by the taking of him bound in all the words spoken by the Lord to the Churches, that we might henceforth cease altogether from the canons and laws of man."

There are those who have said that Irving was now completely mad, the feeble, accepting slave of a body of cranks and religious fanatics; that his judgment was gone and his vision become a meglomaniac's nightmare. Nothing could be

more at variance with the true facts. The Albury School of Prophecy had convinced him of the need to recover for Holy Scripture its prophetic value both as forthtelling and foretelling truth, to restore to the Holy Ministry its prophetic function, and to set the purposes of God within time as well as in eternity. Driven out of the Church with its discipline and order, he was at the mercy of unrestrained forces, and compelled to fashion a vessel which would hold the heady wine of spiritual dynamism. His preaching had started a movement of the Spirit which had to find expression in new forms. Within the Church it could have worked miracles of transformation and recreation: outside it lost direction but not meaning. For more than a hundred years the body of Christians known as the Catholic Apostolic Church has endured and its last chapter has not yet been written. The prophetic voice of Irving still speaks in and through the services of the Churches using the Liturgy which was the work of his closest associates.

Even the magnificent ritual of the Holy Eucharist harks back to the first beginnings. The place in the Service usually given over to "prophetic" utterance comes after the congregation has received the elements of bread and wine and while the priests and elders collect the fragments and consume them. These peculiarities were brought back to my

remembrance when reading this passage in Irving's letter:

"When we had sung the Psalm, I proceeded to administer the ordinance after our customary form, expounding the word of the institution, and fencing the table at the same time, confirmed at times by the Spirit: then singing some verses, to permit those who were conscientiously unclean to remove to the end of the gallery of the church. After I had given the bread to the elders and the helps one by one, and was proceeding to desire them to carry it to the people, the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the prophet, directed me to give it also to the deacons: after which the elders and their helps carried it round to the people, and so also of the cup; and then was a wonderful presence of our God in the midst of us, which also He testified by many precious streams of living waters. Perceiving, from what had taken place at my own ordination, that it was the mind of the Lord that all the bread and wine should be consumed by the Church, and there being not a little left, I desired it to be carried round; and the Lord confirmed it by His own word, saying it was the eating of the offering in the holy place, the leaving nothing of the sacrifice till the

morning. I felt a special presence of the Lord with us in this part of the action, as it were breaking up the formality of one bite and one sip, and giving the true feeling of eating the Lord's Supper."

When at the end broken in health he turns his face towards his beloved Scotland, he has something of the grandeur of an ancient prophet. He has been commissioned to do a great work in his native land and has been authoritatively commanded to go forth and do it.

"So he left London and the battle-field, never more to enter those painful lists, nor to be lost amidst the smoke of that conflict - and went forth, in simple dignity, to a work less hard than he dreamed of, unwitting to himself, leaving his passion and anguish behind him, and turning his fated steps towards the hills with no harder thing on hand than to die."¹

1. Mrs. Oliphant, p. 410.

CHAPTER NINEA S U M M I N G U P

"Irving was utterly and purely a theologian: God was all in all to him. From God he must begin, and how to establish a relation between God and mankind on the Calvinistic hypothesis was the problem in trying to solve which he gave up his fame and his life. From what I have read of Mrs. Oliphant I cannot believe that she has succeeded in presenting this struggle clearly to her readers."

F. D. MAURICE.

(HIS LIFE, Vol. II, p. 405).

Irving once wrote of John the Baptist,

"He ought to encourage for ever the lonely possessor of any truth, to give it forth to the world, in the assured hope that the Father of truth will sooner or later find for it acceptance."¹

Perhaps he had in mind his earlier days when there was no Church willing to call him, and he knew the torture of his own convictions and frustrations. He had a word to preach but no opportunity for preaching it. Had Irving never left Scotland, had the Church been ready to recognize his outstanding gifts and ability and use him, the whole story of subsequent Church history in Scotland might have been different. Dr. H. J. Wotherspoon held the view which he expressed to me on one occasion with considerable force,

"that had the Church of his day understood Irving and found a place for him, there would have been a revival comparable to the Oxford Movement in Scotland before ever Newman and his friends had exercised their influence."

Indeed Ronald Knox in his recent massive work "Enthusiasm"

1. Sermons and Lectures - Edward Irving, Vol. II, p. 23.

has suggested that an interesting comparison can be made between Newman and Irving. The Church is always slow to recognize her brightest sons and fearful always of her strongest, and most cruel to those who are somehow different. Here lies part at least of the explanation for Irving's condemnation and rejection.

Irving was almost at the end of his tether when the call came from the impoverished Caledonian Chapel in London. Only amazing faith and boundless hope could have made him see in this a call and an opportunity. It meant leaving behind the Kirk and Scotland, and for Irving Scotland meant the Kirk, and the Kirk Scotland. He was never to be a member of the General Assembly and in a day before the Committee Church, his chances of leading any reformation from the far distance of London seemed well nigh impossible. In retrospect it is astonishing to remember just how great an influence he managed to exercise from London upon his native land. Even this modern age of television, radio, quick transport and daily press, has not been able to shorten appreciably the distance between Scotland and London, and yet for four exciting years Irving succeeded in doing this.

He began his ministry with certain strong convictions which experience and the years strengthened and confirmed. The Church for him had lost the place. In a day of crisis,

mediocrity reigned supreme, the people looked up and were not fed. There were a few outstanding ministries, notably that of Dr. Chalmers, but for the rest the poor were un-shepherded (cf. Thomas Johnston's "Life of the Working Classes"), and the nation largely uninfluenced. I don't think Irving ever fully trusted Chalmers. He admired his strength of character and fierce activity, but they had nothing in common. He dedicated his first volume of sermons to Chalmers, "while I laboured as your assistant my labours were never weary, they were never enough....." But the book has the tactless conclusion, after ten years of sermon-tasting, that "the chief obstacle to the progress of divine truth over the minds of men is the want of its being sufficiently presented to them". Irving still believed in the Kirk as the soul of the whole nation: he could only be disgusted by "the certified soundness of dull men". He asked,

"Why are there no saints in Scotland now? It is because their wine is mingled with water, their food debased. It will nourish men no longer, but dwarf-lings. Oh Scotland! How I groan over thee, and thy children and thy poverty-stricken Church! As for Dr. Chalmers, he is immersed in civil polity and

political economy, a kind of purse-keeper to the Church Apostolic."

Twice Irving appealed to Chalmers for advice as his "Dear Master". Chalmers apparently thought it safer not to reply. Irving by now was a dangerous man, and the leaders of the Church were careful to avoid his company.

Irving suspected activity which was not grounded in sound theology. He would have agreed that faith without works was dead, but he would have added that works without faith were dangerous. He had first hand knowledge of the social problems of his day, and many of his miscellaneous writings reveal the extent of that knowledge. But for him activity flowed from the new style of Christian life which it was his earnest desire to see restored to the Church. He was more sharply aware than most of his brethren of the sins and afflictions of the poor and needy, nevertheless it is noteworthy that he saw his gifts being used not to start a new movement of social reform such as was Chalmers' great achievement, but quite literally to make real the faith by which men were to be transformed, and new life flow into a sick nation. Irving's mission was to rend the tomb of dead theology.

He believed himself called of God to reveal truths

which had been neglected or forgotten. His task was to revitalise a Church which had become flaccid and fushionless. No words better describe his all consuming passion than those of F. D. Maurice quoted at the heading of this Chapter,

"God was all in all to him. From God he must begin. And how to establish a relation between God and mankind..... was the problem in trying to solve which he gave up his fame and his life."

He was cast in a prophetic mould, and part of the enigma of his life is explained by the conflict of prophetic inspiration with clear philosophic thought which yet was ready to overleap the limits of reason and cool calculation. He had the romantic heart of a St. Francis, and the incisive mind of a Thomas Aquinas. G. K. Chesterton in his own way said that Francis could speak better than he could write, and do things better than he could speak or write. Irving was superlatively gifted in all three directions. He quickly revealed his powers as a preacher, with almost frantic speed he turned out volume after volume, and in the midst of it all could act with such Christian charity that Maurice, one of many, could say "In spite of enormous prejudice against him, I was forced and am now more than ever forced to reverence and love him."

Evelyn Underhill has given this account of the early experience of Karl Barth.

"He paused to examine his own spiritual stock in trade: and found to his horror that it was useless to him. He seemed to have nothing to feed on, nothing to depend on, nothing to give. It looked imposing: but much of the food was stale and unnourishing, some of the tins seemed empty, and some were so tightly sealed that he could not reach their contents..... Karl Barth went away into solitude to open some of his least promising packages: and found with amazement within them the inexhaustible nourishment of eternal life."¹

Irving went through a not dissimilar experience while he wearily awaited a call to a charge. He even thought of giving up the ministry. In loneliness and frustration he wrestled until the dawn of light flooded upon him, and he was assured of God's will for him. Only once in later years was he to falter and lose his way, when the drama of the "Tongues" promised him disaster in his own church. Carlyle tells us how he came to see him, sat upon the floor and discussed with him his perplexity and then his final resolve to accept his destiny believing that it was of God's designing. It

1. "The School of Charity", Evelyn Underhill, pp. 2-3.

was during his wilderness experience, however, that he began to test his beliefs. What did he believe about Jesus Christ, and could he claim to be sharing in His Spirit? Neither the intellectual arguments of the ethical humanist nor the emotional appeals of the intense evangelicals seemed to be right. He began where we all must begin, with the question "What think ye of Christ?"

Jesus Christ had become a figure, remote and speculative, to many minds in the early Nineteenth Century. Christianity was either a code of ethics or a quasi-political creed of human achievement, and the Church the refuge of respectability and material success. For Irving the existing expression of religious truth was a shattering rebuke. All his efforts, thinking and writing became an attempt to break through to reality and yet not depart from foundation beliefs and doctrines. Like all reformers he looked back as well as forward. The faith once delivered to the saints was real enough. It was a new and fresh understanding and interpretation which was of urgent moment. His recurring claim to orthodoxy was not a smoke screen to cover erratic and esoteric thought, but an honest proclamation of essential truth.

To-day we may find it difficult to sympathise with the extremes of opinion which beat about his brief life, and we

may puzzle at the arguments which sometimes he developed at such length, but his instinct was right if his conclusions were on occasion wrong. An ethereal Christ just as much as a human Jesus was no answer to man's need, and no answer to man's essential problem. It is to Irving's credit that he sought to do for his generation, what still remains to be done for ours: to preach a Christ who will satisfy man's longing, inspire his devotion, and make whole his life. No Theology can square with present problems and bring alive religious belief which does not humanize the Christ of God and make Divine the Jesus of History. Irving was a lot nearer truth than his judges were. It remains the task of this generation to clarify the issues which he raised, and to make vivid and strong the doctrines which he drew out of the shades of unbelief and obscurity.

There is a spot near Haddington which was once known as Irving's leap. Irving was always leaping further than he could see, and higher than it was safe. That was at once his glory and his undoing. He does, however, point to the place from whence we must leap, and he has described as nearly as is humanly possible the place of our arrival. Dr. George MacLeod has recently asked,

"When will all of us in the Church recover again the

faith that God came in a body and rose in a body to give body to holiness? When we do multitudes who to-day are careless, will want to crucify us, but other multitudes will want to join us, just because at last both multitudes will know we really care, as a Man cares."¹

Irving would have denied that at any stage in his life, he was a rebel against the Church, but he was always a sharp critic of its ways and manners. He did, however, believe that the STRUCTURE of its life required change. He brought to sharp focus the question which faces us just as urgently to-day - how to reform the Church from within. He failed to keep a foothold within orthodoxy, and it remains to be seen whether reformation is possible without the forced or chosen excommunication of the individual reformer. What Irving meant by the Church's structure, was its ministry, its government and its economy. Within a few years of his death the Disruption of the Church in Scotland was proof enough of his right instinct. He was moved to challenge the prevailing conception of the Ministry, not primarily because it was inadequate for its work, but because it did not conform to Biblical Teaching. While he held a high

1. British Weekly - Christmas 1952.

view of the Holy Ministry as his famous Ordination Charge declares, he was already seeing new forms of ministry in line with the unchanging gifts to the Church, healing, prophecy and speaking with tongues. It has taken the Church of Scotland another hundred years to appreciate what he was at, and already we speak of new forms of Ministry and are ready to challenge the efficiency of present Church government, and are being driven to examine in urgency its economy, both parochial and national. It would be wrong to infer that the ministry and government of the Catholic Apostolic Church was Irving's creation, but these were in some measure an attempt at expressing practically the kind of things which he was feeling after. My own opinion is that he was not and would not have been at home, had he lived, in the organisation which grew from his teaching and those of his disciples. The transformation which he had hoped to see was in the Kirk of Scotland, and not in the creation of another church sect. Before many years pass it seems possible that the remnants of the Church which he was instrumental in founding may find a home in the Church which cast him out.

In the previous chapter we briefly considered Irving's many writings which come under the heading "Prophecy". Signs are not wanting of a revival of interest in these, as indeed in Irving himself as a theologian. Modern preoccupation

with a Christian Philosophy of History must lead to a closer examination of what Irving was searching after in the many pages which he wrote under this heading. It is possible that Irving's claim to a place among Scotland's great theologians may yet be upheld when these comparatively unknown works are tested and more clearly understood. What stands out as a beacon in all his preaching and teaching, is that Theology is no intellectual exercise governed solely by reason and a scrutiny of Holy Scripture and amplified by the ancient Creeds, but something deeply rooted in life, always in transition, and afire with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - the expression of the Mind of Christ in this period of the time between the times - between the time of Christ's coming in flesh and His coming again in glory.

There is on record a conversation between Carlyle and Irving when they were young men unknown and untried. Irving says,

"One day we two will shake hands across the brook, you as first in literature, I as first in Divinity: and people will say 'both these fellows are from Annandale: where the devil is Annandale?'"¹

It remains for the Church of Scotland to give a place of

1. "Necessary Evil", Laurence and Elisabeth Hanson, p. 34.

honour to this strange son whom she cast out but who in his day was famed far beyond the limits of Annandale.

APPENDIX ONE

THE ALBURY PRAYER BOOK

Dr. David Hislop writes in his Kerr Lectures (Our Heritage in Public Worship),

"One Liturgy there is in modern times which contains all the virtues and escapes almost all the blemishes of the Prayer Book, I refer to the liturgy of the Catholic Apostolic Church..... this book has an intimacy and a horizon not restrained by racial reticence nor limited by national outlook."

The story of the preparation and growth of this remarkable production has a touch of romance and excitement about it. Edward Irving was for a considerable period the pro- duct of a tradition which had laid little or no stress on set forms of prayer and worship. The conduct of worship, while governed by the Westminster Confession of Faith, was largely in the hands of individual ministers. It would have been difficult to discern any shape or pattern of liturgical worship. The description of services leaves the curious wondering if the ordinary Sunday Service and the celebration of the Sacraments alike followed any recognisable form or generally accepted principles. Be that as it may, when the body of Christians known as the Catholic Apostolic Church found themselves outside the main stream

of Church life they also found themselves without creeds or confessions, without set forms of service and without days of observance. They were literally bare and naked of everything. A congregation of more than 500 communicants were turned out into the streets of London, following only the dictates of the Holy Spirit and speaking with stammering lips and another tongue.

It would be interesting to record the varying stages which followed the first tentative beginnings of a congregation partially moulded in the ways of Presbyterian Scotland to discover a form of worship expressive of its belief and conviction. What does become clear from the material that is available is the quite remarkable awareness of the need for common expressions of worship. If we may accept the opinion of one writer, there were two basic principles which governed their approach to worship "That it should be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and that it should gather up into itself every pure and precious thing which has been developed in the Church in all past ages through the guidance of the Spirit of Christ." Two facts are assumed as fundamental - the paramount authority of the Bible and the continued existence of the Church as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Ghost. No system of worship can be at once pure and catholic in which these are not reconciled.

Looking back, that ideal may well have been achieved; but for the first few years, there were no liturgical forms in use and the ministers offered prayers in their own words and built up their own services largely in the tradition of Scottish Presbyterianism. Gradually a Liturgy began to take shape. In 1842, seven years after the death of Edward Irving, there appeared the Albury Prayer Book. The preparation of this book was for the most part the work of a Mr. Cardale, who was specially qualified for this by his great learning, his knowledge of the ancient languages, his profound acquaintance with the writings of the early Fathers, which had been his favourite study from his youth, his knowledge of the ancient liturgies of the Church, and his sound judgment and spiritual discernment in the selection, preparation and arrangement of the materials. He was, however, assisted by the other leaders of the movement, some of whom had travelled far in such varied countries as Russia, Sweden, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Canada, and the United States, and in process observed the various forms of worship, their creeds, liturgies and hymns. While the guiding hand was Mr. Cardale's the rich experience of the others, many from various denominations, enriched and influenced the final work. It was entitled "The Order for the Daily Services of the Church

and for Administration of Sacraments as the same are to be conducted at Albury". Its Table of Contents are revealing and interesting:-

- The Order for Morning Service
- for Evening Service
- for Forenoon Service
- for Forenoon Service on Wednesday and Friday
- for Afternoon Service
- Additional Prayers
- Occasional Prayers
- Services for All Saints' Day
- The Order for the Administration of the Holy Communion
- Table of Epistles and Gospels
- The Churching of Women
- The Order for the Administration of Holy Baptism

The Morning Service, timed to be held at 6 o'clock a.m., follows largely the pattern of a normal service of matins. There are some interesting departures however. The Exhortation, which immediately follows the Invocation, reads:-

We, and all men, are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; but God hath pitied us, and given His only begotten Son to die for us.

God hath redeemed us; but we have lightly esteemed this redemption.

We and all men have neglected this great salvation,
and have provoked God to cast us off.

He has called us to serve and to obey Him, but men did
not like Him to reign over them.

He has given to all baptised persons His own Spirit,
but we have all resisted His motions within us.

He gave to his Church precepts and ordinances, by which
she might be nourished up to the perfect stature
of Jesus Christ; but we and our Fathers have
despised them, and followed our own imaginations;
wherefore confusion has been wrought in the House
of God.

He commanded all Christians to live as brethern, but we
have lived in contention; in unity, but we have
separated ourselves into many sects, and no unity
is to be seen on the earth. These evils have
been wrought even by those who have thought to do
God service, and to benefit the souls of men.

God is grieved and displeased at the state of his
Church, and has preserved us unto this day that
we may repent and confess our sin, and turn unto
Him, that our sin may be blotted out, and that
He may still bless us.

For God for Christ's sake will forgive the sins of all
who repent and turn to Him, confessing their sins.

In these ecumenical days few Exhortations can better
this one. Its emphasis seems to be laid on all the right
places. We notice too that in the Confession which follows
the emphasis is laid on the broken unity of the body of
Christ:-

Almighty and most merciful Father; we have erred and
strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have
followed too much the devices and desires of our
own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy

laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done.

We have been unmindful of the Unity of the Body of Christ; We are guilty of the sin of schism, we, and our fathers, and our forefathers, and we have glorified in the same; We have lived in strife and contention; We have judged one another, and despised one another, saying each to the other, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou". We have forgotten, and lightly esteemed, the ordinances which Thou didst give at the beginning for the perfecting of the saints: And the hope of the coming again of Thy dear Son into the World is lost from amongst the baptised, and we are not purified thereby as He is pure.

And there is no health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare us, good Lord; spare Thou them which confess their faults. Restore Thou them that are penitent; according to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake; that we may hereafter live a Godly, righteous and sober life, to the glory of Thy holy name.

Thereafter the Service follows normal lines:

Absolution
 The Versicles
 The Chapter out of Scripture
 The Apostles' Creed
 The Prose Psalm and the Gloria
 Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions and Thanksgiving
 The Lord's Prayer
 The Benedictus
 Benediction

The Evening Service or Vespers is held at 5 o'clock and it follows the same pattern. Again the Exhortation is not the one we know in the English Prayer Book and it is

interesting to read it in full:

We, and all men, have sinned against God by actual transgression of His laws, and doing things contrary to His known will.

We have just cause to fear lest He take vengeance on our sins.

All baptised men have taken vows at their baptism, which they have broken.

God made His Church one; but throughout the same nothing is now visible but division. Brethern, not living together in unity and speaking the same thing, but biting and devouring one another. In this division His presence cannot be manifested.

The ordinances, which He did ordain for bringing the Catholic Church unto perfection, are set at nought.

There are no means of recovery but in returning to His ways.

The baptised are not longing for Jesus Christ to come again into the world, to set up His kingdom, and righteousness, and peace.

All the institutions God did give for the blessing of men have been abused, and have failed to produce the end for which He gave them. Power has been abused; the poor and weak oppressed, and not protected; and we are unable to help ourselves; rule and authority have been despised, and men everywhere are rising against kings, and priests, and all those things which God has established for the guidance of mankind.

Wherefor let us confess our miserable condition to Almighty God, and beseech His mercy: for He is merciful and gracious, and ready to forgive for Christ's sake the sins of all the penitent.

The Forenoon Service, held at 9 o'clock, commenced with the Collect, (from Anglican Matins),

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; Defend us Thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in Thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then -

Chapter of Scripture
Prayer of Intercession
The Gloria
Benediction

There is some slight alteration in the Forenoon Service on Wednesday and Friday. The introductory Collect, also from the R.C.P. - a post-communion collect there - is:-

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy Name, and finally by Thy mercy attain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

After the Scripture follow the Psalm and the Litany, and the Benediction concludes the Service.

The Afternoon Service, at 3 o'clock, is similar to the Forenoon Service. Additional Prayers and Occasional Prayers are normal and such as we would expect.

Perhaps the most interesting Service of all in the Albury Prayer Book are the Services for All Saints' Day.

Remember that in this Liturgy no provision had as yet been

made for Christmas, Easter or Pentecost, and remember also that in no other branch of the Church had there ever been such a Service as now suddenly made its appearance.

It shows quite clearly "how the leaders of this movement had grasped the significance of the relationship between the condition of the departed and their fellowship with the living. Indeed, so full were they of this revelation that without waiting for anything else they felt impelled to come, so to speak, to the aid of the faithful departed and storm heaven with prayers for our common perfecting in the day of the Lord's return.

The Exhortation and the Confession are both worthy of study but reveal nothing outstanding.

The Order of Service for Holy Communion is a composite work. The fact that it is called the Holy Communion instead of the Eucharist, and that it is not at the beginning of the book, shows that the compilers of the Liturgy had not yet reached the truth that the Eucharist is the main service of worship, from which all others spring.

The Table of Epistles and Gospels is followed by the Service "The Churching of Women". Here is a service rich in meaning which has no place whatsoever in the traditional worship of the Church of Scotland. Mothering Sunday is a poor substitute. The service follows a very simple pattern,

and is fundamentally a Service of Thanksgiving. Its very simplicity adds to its note of sincerity and joy.

The final service in the Albury Prayer Book is the order for Administration of Holy Baptism. A strong note of Calvinism runs through this service. The questions are so relentless and demanding that there could have been no misunderstanding in the minds of parents or sponsors as to the meaning of the rite of Baptism. Newark Parish Church Service of Baptism (which follows the custom in the Church of Scotland to-day) has this departure - After the child has been baptised the minister takes the child from the font and carries him up the steps into the chancel, followed by the parents or sponsors, and there, laying his hand on the child's head he says, "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock and do bless him in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". This follows almost to the letter the practice as laid down in the Albury Prayer Book.

This then was the beginning of the work which was later to become widely known, was translated into eleven different languages, and to-day is called the Catholic Apostolic Liturgy though its compilers entitled it "The Liturgy and other Divine Offices of the Church".

APPENDIX TWO.

BAPTISM

The first special point in the Service that calls for remark, is where the Priest rises and extends his right hand over the Candidate, and says "The Lord Jesus Christ our God, who with His fingers did cast out devils, preserve thee from Satan, and from all his works, and from all his evil power, and cause him to depart from thee, both now and for ever." This is an exorcism, and claims attention.

We notice that while this act is recognized in the Greek and Roman Churches, it is ignored in the Anglican and in all Nonconformist Offices. Perhaps the feeling existed that such exorcism involved coming into too close contact with the spiritual world and with the acknowledged action of evil spirits, and, taking this high ground, it was therefore expunged by the English Reformers. The next significant act is the signing the Candidate on the forehead with the sign of the Cross, after the exorcism has been pronounced.

Another symbolic action then takes place: the Priest, having received the Candidate from the Sponsors, turns towards the altar, and with the child in his arms repeats the Apostles Creed and the Lord's Prayer. This signifies the solemn committing to the child of those holy formulae, or symbols of the faith once delivered to the saints - the Creed embodying the principal objects of our faith connected

with the Incarnation and the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the Lord's Prayer, which our Lord gave to his disciples, as the model and pattern of all prayer.

The next portion of the Service answers to the bringing up of a sin-offering under the Law, which was always necessary in the sinner's approach to a holy God. The Priest having restored the Candidate to the Sponsors, all present are reminded in the exhortation of their sinful condition by nature, and are bidden to humble themselves before God, and to confess their sins, original and actual; after which the Priest pronounces the reassuring word of absolution, declaring God's forgiveness through the sacrifice and merits of His Son Jesus Christ. This takes place in the lower choir, where also the Priest reads the appointed Gospel, or Lesson. This is "the washing of water by the word" even as our Lord said to his disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The Gospel ended, the Minister proceeds to the Baptistry (where the Candidate has been waiting), when another important act in the service takes place. The Sponsors are addressed, and, in the child's name, are asked if they believe in the sinful condition of man by nature, in the mercy of God, and in the efficacy of the Sacrament of Baptism. Then follows the questions to, and answers by, the Sponsors in the name of the child - as

in the Anglican Office. The Sponsors then, as proxies for the child, are called upon to worship and adore the living and true God.

After this, prayers are offered on behalf of the Candidate, that the grace of Baptism may be fully manifested in him, even unto life and glory everlasting.

The Priest now turns to the Font to bless the water therein contained, by the Word of God and prayer; it thus becomes holy water, i.e. water separated to the use of God and of His Church, and which should not henceforth be put to any profane or common uses. The Baptism of the child immediately follows, whereupon the Priest carries the child through the chancel or Sanctuary up to the altar, where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated. Having through Baptism been made a child of God, by adoption and grace, the child is there received into the Church and the Priest lays his right hand on the head of the child saying "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flocks, and do bless him in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And be thou blessed and kept unto everlasting life.

The formal reception of the child into the Church, and this emphatic blessing are worthy of notice among the varied features of the Service. After these benefits, which God has vouchsafed, thanks may well be rendered to Him, and this

is the character of the prayer that concludes the service before the final benediction.

The act of Oblation - of presenting the child before God, of laying him as it were upon the Altar, like Isaac - is an act that symbolises consecration, devotion and self-sacrifice. A company of Baptized persons, represents those who have had the Name of Christ put upon their brow, and who have been brought to the Altar of God, in the arms of God's minister, in token of their dedication, to do the will of God, even unto their life's end.

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