

Scottish Revival

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SECTION ONE

Edward Irving (1792 – 1834) was a Scottish pastor and Reformed theologian who was put into a position by the circumstances of his day that required him to prove to his own satisfaction that one could be both Reformed and Charismatic or Pentecostal. He produced much in a short time and was apparently subsequently driven to poor health and an early death by the controversy that he did so much to fuel. Irving wrote as a theologian defending experience. He was deposed from the Kirk in 1833 for heresy regarding the humanity of Christ and died of pneumonia in 1834.

Irving's followers formed the Catholic Apostolic Church, but Irving died shortly thereafter. The continuation of that denomination was a work of Irving's followers not of Irving himself. Ultimately, Edward Irving is not remembered for his pneumatology but for his Christological position on the true humanity of Jesus. Irving hoped to see revival in Scotland and he believed that a recognition of Christ's true human nature and of his dependence on the Holy Spirit during his 33 years on earth would contribute to this revival.

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1. Irving's Life

Edward Irving was a Scotsman of his time. Irving was born in Annan, Scotland on 4 August 1792. He graduated from Edinburgh University 1809 at the age of 17. He became Master of Haddington School 1810 and then Master of the Kirkcaldy Academy in 1812. He was licensed to preach in June 1815. In 1818 he resigned and went to Edinburgh for more study. In August 1819 Chalmers heard him preach and invited him to be his assistant Minister in Glasgow where he settled in October of that year. For a short time two of the most noted Scottish preachers of the nineteenth century were at the same church. However, Irving was much different as a man and as a preacher than Chalmers. He felt overshadowed by Chalmers and very much wanted his own charge.

In July of 1822 he received a call from the little Scottish Caledonian chapel in London. From here he leapt to fame and they rebuilt as the Regent Square Church. Irving married Isabella Martin in October of 1823. The unknown tongues were first heard on 28 March 1830 which started a whole new phase of Irving's life and ministry. The first action against him for heresy failed in December 1830. Irving was removed from the pulpit of Regent Square on 26 April 1832.

In the Autumn of 1832 his followers formed the Catholic Apostolic Church. He was deposed by the Presbytery of Annan on 13 March 1833 primarily because of his teachings on the humanity of Christ and died on 7 December 1834 after a short illness.¹ As much has been written on the life and ministry of Irving this brief summary should suffice for the purposes of this paper. The outward factors which shaped Irving and his beliefs were the people around him and the

¹ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, Sidney Lee, Ed., (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1892), 52-55.

context of his times. Because of this some understanding of these people and times are important in understanding Edward Irving.

2. Irving And His Contemporaries

The times of Irving were ripe for change. Irving and his followers brought significant change within their own sphere of influence in these times. A major upheaval in the Church of Scotland was only ten years away when Irving first undertook his London charge. Many of those who would come to his great services in London were not theologically trained but were merely seeking a new sensation. Irving got the attention of London society and with this the press was not far behind. Nevertheless, change would come to the Church of Scotland although for different reasons than those which would embroil Irving and his followers in conflict.²

There were many factors which led to the changes of these times. There had been much lukewarmness in the church in the eighteenth century. Irving despised this and for him it was time for it to go from the church. The events of the French Revolution had profoundly influenced Europe and even gave rise to an apocalyptic expectation. This, as usual, brought a revival in “enthusiastic religious feeling.” Edward Irving was the kind of man who would join in and when Irving joined in, he did not do so halfheartedly.³

His entire absorption in the subject may be dated from the beginning of 1826, when he became acquainted with the work of a Spanish Jesuit Lacunza, published under the pseudonym of Aben Ezra, ‘The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty.’ . . . The translation was published in

² *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 53.

³ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 53-54.

1827, with a long preface, which has been reprinted separately.⁴

Irving's preface to Ben Ezra's work was his first significant publication. He continued to teach and to publish on the theme of the return of Christ and was very influential in this area. By 1827 Irving held premillennial views about the second coming. "These he popularized, fervently and profusely, both in preaching and writing. Iain Murray attributes to Irving the turning of the tide in British evangelical circles to premillennialism from a previously postmillennial consensus."⁵

It is reasonable to assume that all of his ensuing theology was flavored by his expectation of the second coming. But there were other influences to be considered as well. The influence of the Enlightenment was strong and was in sharp contrast to the beliefs of most Protestants with a Confessional background. They harked back to their confessions for comfort and for answers. For some, including Irving, this was to return to the tenets of Reformed doctrine. Irving did not trust the motives and the methods of evangelicalism. He began by preaching on the sacraments, especially Baptism. And in Baptism he stressed the power of the Holy Spirit.⁶ In Irving's early London ministry his appeal is attributed to the fact that "he was essentially the Romantic in the pulpit at a time when Evangelicalism was losing influence because it was unimaginative and prosaic."

⁴ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 54.

⁵ *Dictionary Of Scottish Church History And Theology*, Nigel M. De S. Cameron, Ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1993), 436.

⁶ I. S. Rennie, "Irving", from *The Evangelical Dictionary Of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, Ed., The New Bible Library, CDROM, (Oklahoma City: Ellis Enterprises Incorporated, 1993).

⁷ It was also said that Edward Irving was the type of Scottish genius of “a more popular type, partaking of the metaphysical tendency or not, but drawing their essential inspiration from the sentimental depths of the national character. . . . Irving is a great representative Scotsman, not merely a great divine.”⁸

Irving’s association with Chalmers and the influence of both men has led to much comparison and discussion. During Irving’s lifetime and thereafter he was seen by most churchmen at best as a unique failure. Chalmers, on the other hand, was the great Scottish leader of the day. Their personalities were very different. Chalmers was intent on the practical; he was impatient with idealism. Irving seemed to care little for the opinions of other leaders or even the opinions of his own friends. Chalmers’ conversion experience had left him with definite views.

Irving was always on a quest for the truth but he did not follow conventional reasoning nor was he confined to simple experience. Chalmers and Irving were even different in their conception of the grace of God. “Chalmers conceived of grace, like Paul, as an emancipation of the heart and conscience from the bondage of self . . . Unfortunately for Irving, he [Irving] was disposed to regard grace as flowing to the faithful rather through the ordinances and ministers of the Church.”⁹ And perhaps most importantly, Irving believed that Christ should be understood through our own humanness.

Mr. John Hair, who spent many years in patient, scholarly thought on Irving and his environment, came to this conclusion: -- ‘If Irvingism is to be traced to its original germ, so far as any system can be traced to an individual, it

⁷ Andrew Landale Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle* (London: James Clarke And Co., Ltd., n.d.), 53.

⁸ Drummond, vii.

⁹ Drummond, 55.

may be found in Irving's religious experience, and in his consequent mode of apprehending divine truth not by open spiritual vision, but through a human medium.' ¹⁰

Although comparisons of Irving with Chalmers accentuate their differences, there was another well known preacher who was more like Irving in several ways, John McLeod Campbell.

Early in 1828 he [Irving] published his 'Lectures On Baptism,' evincing a decided approximation to the views of the sacramental party in the church of England. In May of that year . . . he contacted a friendship with Campbell of Row, soon about to be tried for heresy, which gave support to the suspicions of heterodoxy which were beginning to be entertained against himself. ¹¹

Thus the taint of association with Campbell came off on those around him. Irving not only did not fear that taint but agreed enthusiastically. In Irving's own words:

In the west of Scotland the thick and dark veil which men have cast over the truth had been taken away, chiefly by the preaching of that faithful man of God, John Campbell, late minister of Row, who was deposed by the last General Assembly for teaching that God loves every man, and that Christ died to redeem all mankind. His word leavened all that land . . . he had prepared them for every thing by teaching them the boundless love of God, and the full and free gift of Jesus with all the riches of glory which he contained. ¹²

¹⁰ Drummond, 55.

¹¹ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 54.

¹² Edward Irving, "Facts Connected With Recent Manifestations Of Spiritual Gifts," Extracted from Fraser's

Campbell and Irving were so close in their convictions concerning the purpose of the Incarnation that it was inevitable that they become friends. Torrance says,

McLeod Campbell found that in preaching the gospel of saving grace he had to correct people's basic conception of the character of God and align it again with Christ: God and Christ, the Father and the Son, are one in their being and nature – there is no God behind the back of Jesus Christ. . . Christ coming among us in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the likeness of flesh as it is in us sinners, in order to condemn sin in the flesh and reconcile us to God, is the very movement and expression of the love of God. The 'mind of God' and the 'mind of Christ . . . are completely one.¹³

Campbell's entire concept of saving grace was rooted in the oneness of the nature of the Father and the Son as God and in the Son's coming in the same flesh as all mankind. Campbell believed that this was not only scriptural but that it was also the position of the true church throughout the ages as well as the position of the Reformers.

McLeod Campbell unquestionably held firmly to 'the Catholic and Reformed' doctrine of the atonement. In Jesus Christ his incarnate Son God himself has come among us as the one Mediator between God and man, to be one with us and one of us in such a way as to appropriate our actual human nature, and make our life and death under divine

Magazine for January, March, and April, 1832, (London: Privately printed for James Fraser, 215 Regent Street, 1832), 3.

¹³ Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology From John Knox To John McLeod Campbell*, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1996.), 294.

judgment his own, in order to pay our debt and make restitution which we are unable to do, to substitute himself for us (on our behalf, as well as in our place) in such a way as to bear upon and in himself the righteous wrath of God against our sin. ¹⁴

With this most important of points, Irving is in complete agreement in countless places in his teachings of which one must suffice.

Whether this be new doctrine or not, I appeal to the Epistles of Paul; whether it be new in the Reformed church, I appeal to the writings of Martin Luther. I know how far wide of the mark these views of Christ's act in the flesh will be viewed by those who are working with the stock-jobbing theology of the religious world, - that God wanted punishment, and an infinite amount of it; which Christ gave for so many; and so he is satisfied, and they escape from his anger, which flames as hot as ever against all beyond this pale. ¹⁵

Irving's entire structure and thrust of his most central work, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* is relational and not legal. The activities of all three members of the Trinity are considered to be essential to our understanding of both the Incarnation and the atonement. Campbell's thoughts were in the same framework and this framework requires that forgiveness precede the atonement. Again Torrance with a quote from Campbell,

It must be noted right away, however, that he expounded the nature of the atonement not in abstract legal terms, as though it were the acting out of a plan, but in *personal* terms, and in

¹⁴ Thomas F. Torrance, 295.

¹⁵ Edward Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, (London: Printed by Ellerton and Henderson for Baldwin and Cradock, 1830), 95.

particular in terms of the *filial* relation between the Father and the Son. . . . “if God provides the atonement, then forgiveness must precede the atonement; and the atonement must be the form of the manifestation of the forgiving love of God, not its cause.” (McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, 15.)¹⁶

Irving and Campbell became friends and even worked together. Like Irving, Campbell was disturbed with the state of the church in his day. In April, 1828, he writes, “I am daily more impressed with the awful state of our Church. The prophets speak words of false peace, and the people wish to have it so . . . I am in truth of opinion that the Protestantism of our day is as much in need of reformation as the Catholicism of the days of Luther.”¹⁷ Campbell wanted reform and Irving was of the same inclination only from a different perspective. Donald Campbell, the son of John McLeod Campbell, says,

It was in the summer of this year that my father became acquainted with Edward Irving. Mrs. Oliphant quotes a letter dated June 10th, in which Irving speaks of preaching at Row on the preceding Sunday: “I was much delighted,” he says, “with Campbell and Sandy Scott, whom I have invited to come to London.” On the same day my father writes: “I have the prospect of preaching the glad tidings of free pardon in London . . . Mr. Irving has been with me and is away. I have had much pleasure in his short visit. His peculiar views are new to me, as to others, and too important to be suddenly

¹⁶ Thomas F. Torrance, 295.

¹⁷ John McLeod Campbell, *Reminiscences And Reflections, Referring To His Early Ministry In The Parish Of Row, 1825-31.*, Edited With An Introductory Narrative By His Son Donald Campbell (London: Macmillan And Co., 1873), 28.

taken up, but I feel much cause of thankfulness to be given me in the possession of his most Christian friendship.¹⁸

Campbell admitted that Irving's views were peculiar to him but obviously important and showed the wisdom of not attempting to take them up suddenly but rather wanting to wait until a later time so that they could be considered at length. Like many others who did not understand or perhaps even agree with Irving, Campbell valued Irving's friendship. This is reported repeatedly

as a characteristic of Irving's relationships. Irving was open in his attitude to those whom he admired and invited Campbell to preach in his pulpit. Campbell later quoted Irving as saying, "I remember when first we met our parting was in Glasgow; and after we had prayed together, in separating he said to me, 'Dear Campbell, may your bosom be a pillow for me to rest upon, and my arm a staff for you to lean upon.'" The visit to London was accomplished; and Irving wrote that his Kirk-session "were loud in their acknowledgments to Mr. Campbell."¹⁹ In connection with Campbell's teachings it was said that Irving taught faith without fear when he said, "I do not wish to leave one soul, believer or unbeliever, without a witness in his breast of God's good title to the name of 'Father'. It is to no chartered few, but to all mankind that he makes the overtures."²⁰

There is a distinctive similarity in the teachings of Irving, Campbell and Chalmers. But each man dealt with his convictions differently and for different reasons and each met different fates. Chalmers said in more than one instance that "there is nothing in the doctrine of predestination which should at all limit the universality of the gospel offer."²¹ Chalmers refused to take part in the proceedings against

¹⁸ Campbell, 28.

¹⁹ Campbell, 28-29.

²⁰ Drummond, 56, Irving's Sermon on Matthew, vi, 9.

²¹ Thomas F. Torrance, 285.

Campbell at the General Assembly; he remained silent, and refused to vote. He wrote later regarding the Kirks attitude to “the universality of the Gospel” that “there must be a sad misunderstanding somewhere.”²² Campbell positioned himself somewhere between Chalmers and Irving. Both Campbell and Irving were put out. Irving even believed that certain further developments lay on the foundations of Campbell which he, Irving, also shared. Irving speaks of the young missionary from his church who was traveling in Scotland in 1829 “in the heart of that district of Scotland upon which the light of Mr. Campbell’s ministry had arisen.” This missionary “was led to open his mind to some of the godly people in those parts, and, among others, to a young woman who was at that time lying ill of a consumption, from which afterwards, when brought to the very door of death, she was raised up instantaneously by the mighty hand of God.”²³ This ultimately led to the Pentecostal outbreak of 1830 and all of the events that followed. Irving was criticized for not only failing to repress the manifestations but for even encouraging them. “The ‘unknown tongues’ . . . were first heard on 28 March 1830. . . .On Irving’s theories of the second advent, this and the miraculous cure of Miss Campbell . . . were events to be expected, and he can scarcely be excused of excessive credulity for having rather encouraged than repressed the manifestations which rapidly multiplied.”²⁴ Irving had chosen an entirely different way. There were other charges concerning Irving represented by such statements as, “Intellectually he was weak, to say nothing of his deficiency in judgment and common sense.”²⁵ But such statements have been counterbalanced by ones

²² Thomas F. Torrance, 289.

²³ Irving, “Facts Connected With Recent Manifestations Of Spiritual Gifts,” 3.

²⁴ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 54.

²⁵ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 56.

such as, “This poverty of matter is in part redeemed by the dignity of the manner, for which Irving has never received sufficient credit.”²⁶ and “Irving was one of the most striking figures in ecclesiastical history, and as exempt from every taint of charlatanism as a man can be. . . .Morally his character was most excellent.”²⁷

Some might say that Campbell was rejected earlier for what Chalmers would lead in later. For them perhaps timing was the issue. Some may not agree. But for Irving his path was too different to be attributed to timing alone.

3. The Objections

The objections of the London Presbytery formed the basis of all the establishment resistance against Irving and their original publication of the charges of their committee is most important. These charges were essentially four-fold. Quoting nine different passages from Irving’s *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature* the Presbytery concluded that “by these and similar expressions, it appears to your committee, that the author of this pamphlet is chargeable with the error of imputing to Christ that corruption of nature which is commonly called ‘Original Sin.’ They held to this even while acknowledging such statements by Irving as, “original sin was avoided in the constitution of his person” and “that the miraculous conception depriveth him of original sin and guilt, needing to be atoned for.” They said that Irving either contradicted himself too often in this matter or that he held a view of original sin that was different from the view expressed in the standards of the church. On this matter they concluded that “the unscriptural doctrine is taught that he who came to save sinners was himself a sinner.”²⁸

²⁶ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 56.

²⁷ *Dictionary Of National Biography*, 55.

²⁸ “A Brief Statement Of The Proceedings Of The London Presbytery, In Communion With The Established

At the time others could read the same book, such as one of Irving's listeners who published under the name of "A Layman", and see it differently. This author says that a school child could tell us that Jesus was both God and man and that the clergy agreed with Irving as to the "perfect immaculacy of Jesus Christ, God and man in one person. . . . I have heard him in the pulpit say it hundreds of times." But "the whole point at issue, therefore, is *how* was the *man*, the *creature*, which the Son of God assumed into union with himself, immaculate?"²⁹ The only question remaining is whether this immaculate state is innate or is it preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the creature. This issue resurfaces often in the study of Irving's works. This "Layman" makes an observation which provides some much needed wisdom in the entire matter when he says, "We had supposed that he must have known, that the difficulty of giving accurate utterance to the deep things of God, increased in a rapidly accelerating ratio, as we approached the point in which all contrarities centre, the Deity with the creature . . ." ³⁰ This layman understood that in such profound matters as the Incarnation words have limited value and that the entire case needs restating in many different ways if a position is to be clearly understood.

Church Of Scotland In The Case Of The Rev. Edward Irving, And Of A Book, Written By Him, And Entitled

The 'Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature', Published by Authority of the

Presbytery. (London: Published By Basil Steuart, 139 Cheapside; Hamilton & Adams, Paternoster Row:

Edinburgh: W. Whyte & Co.; Glasgow: Maurice Ogle; Aberdeen: Brown & Co., 1831), 23-25.

²⁹ "Candid Examination Of The Controversy Between Messrs. Irving, A. Thomson, And J. Haldane Respecting

The Human Nature Of The Lord Jesus Christ, By A Layman. (London: James Nisbet, Berners Street, 1829), 13.

³⁰ "Candid Examination Of The Controversy Between Messrs. Irving, A. Thomson, And J. Haldane," 11.

Apparently, the presbytery did not proceed under this presumption.

The London Presbytery committee disagreed with Irving's method of referring to the Lord's human nature "as considered apart from him, in itself," and his assertion that it is by his Person that redemption comes into the human nature. Irving asserts that it is the power of the Person of Christ, which is that of the Son of God, that causes strength and change to come into his human nature. This is not enough for the presbytery as their position was set on the standards of the Scottish Church as they understand them. Irving does not understand either the scriptures or the standards in the same manner.

The committee believed that "several of the most vital doctrines of Christianity" were "either entirely controverted, or so greatly impoverished, that they can yield to the Christian but little either of comfort for the present or of hope for the future."³¹ They object to Irving's understanding of "at-one-ment" as the key to atonement. In this they understand correctly that Irving is saying that it is by the union of fallen human nature and divinity that the human nature is overcome and restored. However, they point out that scripture says that it is the "blood that makes atonement for the soul."³² Irving did not deny this.

Regarding the doctrine of Satisfaction the committee was most offended by Irving's perspective which opposes "that God loveth suffering, will have it out of some one or other, without abatement."³³ Concerning the doctrine of Redemption the committee understands that, according to

³¹ "A Brief Statement Of The Proceedings Of The London Presbytery," 26.

³² "A Brief Statement Of The Proceedings Of The London Presbytery," 26-27.

³³ "A Brief Statement Of The Proceedings Of The London Presbytery," 27-28. They Opposed With *W.C.F* viii, 5 and *W.L.C.* Q. 70.

Irving, Christ himself was in need of redemption and, therefore, not capable of being the Redeemer. They refer here to Irving's concern that mankind must not become the worshipper

of unfallen human nature. This concept has no place in the thinking of the committee. Regarding the doctrines of Imputation and Substitution, the committee counters Irving's position that if God treated Jesus as if he were in the "position of a sinner" when he had not sinful flesh, then the traditional meanings of imputation and substitution were unacceptable.³⁴

The committee said that there were also many more less important errors in the book in that they have "forborne to notice many inferior errors" and, "alas! but too true, that there are many things in this book, which are contrary to the mind of the Spirit revealed in the Scriptures, and such as are calculated to lead men from the truth as it is in Jesus."³⁵ This is by no means the end of the debate as Irving was to follow with the publication of his book *Christ's Holiness In Flesh* in which he refutes the charges put against him here.

4. Irving And Coleridge

H. C. Whitley says that three things, a book, a meeting, and a conference, were to play an all important part in Irving's life. The book was *The Coming Of The Messiah In Glory And Majesty* by Ben Ezra which Irving translated from the Spanish and, for which he wrote a long preface. The meeting was with S. T. Coleridge which quickly grew into a loyal and lasting friendship. The conference was the Albury

³⁴ "A Brief Statement Of The Proceedings Of The London Presbytery," 31.

³⁵ "A Brief Statement Of The Proceedings Of The London Presbytery," 31-32.

conference which started out as a conference on prophecy and went on to design the Catholic Apostolic Church with its liturgy, doctrine, planning and government.³⁶

During Irving's early days in London he met Mr. Basil Montague and through him also met Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was a mutual friendship drawn together by both respect and curiosity. Irving respected Coleridge as an adventurous thinker and Coleridge admired Irving's ability as well as his gifts and character. As Coleridge was not known as a man to tolerate mere

eccentrics, his opinion of Irving recommends Irving's contributions. Coleridge said of Irving, "I hold withal, and not the less firmly for these discrepancies in our minds 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, that any man now alive; yea than any man of this and the last century."³⁷ Irving did not spare the compliments either when he said, "you have been more profitable to my faith in orthodox doctrine, and to my right conception of the Christian church, than any or all of the men with whom I have entertained friendship and conversation," and, "the first fruits of my mind . . . are the offering of a heart that loves your heart, and of a mind which looks up with reverence to your mind."³⁸ Perhaps this friendship was the strangest of all to many who understood that Irving and Coleridge held widely different views on many things including Christian doctrine.³⁹

³⁶ H. C. Whitley, *Blinded Eagle: An Introduction To The Life And Teaching Of Edward Irving* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1955), 36-41.

³⁷ Whitley, 39.

³⁸ Whitley, 40.

³⁹ In discussing the concept of "person" in the Godhead, Colin E. Gunton says that Coleridge was concerned about the "fashionable mechanical philosophy" of his day. He wanted a theology of the Trinity because the members

5. Irving's Writings

This was the order of Irving's publications. Irving arrived in London in 1822. In 1823, Irving's second year in London, he published his first book, the *Orations and the Arguments For Judgment To Come*. In 1824 there was *For Missionaries After The Apostolic School, A Series Of Orations*. In 1825 came *Babylon And Infidelity Foredoomed*. In 1827 his *Introduction To Ben Ezra* and the *Ordination Charge* to the Minister of the Scots Church, London Wall were published. In 1828 *Ten Homilies On Baptism* was published of which H. C. Whitley says it was Irving at his best. And in the same year *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*⁴⁰ which was

of that Trinity are Persons in relation who take their being and particularities from each other. Coleridge did not want an impersonal, mechanical God because the nature of God is reflected in creation and especially in the actions and affairs of mankind. For Coleridge "the question of the three in one is also the question of the kind of world we live in." However, Gunton believes that Coleridge is weak in his thinking because he is deficient in the incarnational dimensions of his theology. This weakness is brought to a strength by Coleridge's friend Irving. Gunton says, "Irving held that the concrete link between the one and the many, the eternal God and his erring creation, is Jesus Christ, who is both the one and the many: the historic *hypostasis*, Jesus Christ, utterly human, tempted as we are; and yet through the Holy Spirit the basis from all eternity of a personal and communal relationship with God. Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise Of Trinitarian Theology*, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991), 99 - 100.

⁴⁰ Edward Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened, The Collected Writings Of Edward Irving In Five Volumes*, Edited By Rev. G. Carlyle, Vol. 5 (London: Alexander Strahan, 1865), Chapters: (1) That The Beginning Or Origin Of The Mystery, That The Eternal Word Should Take Unto Himself A Body, Is The Holy

the beginning of Irving's publications on the subject and was presented in a didactic manner. This publication began the controversy which was to bring forth two other works. In 1828 *Last Days* also appeared in print. In 1829 the periodical, *The Morning Watch*, began and Irving wrote long and often for it. In 1830 *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* and *Christ's Holiness In Flesh* appeared.⁴¹ By then Irving was on the defensive. However, this did not cloud his judgment or his clarity of thinking. *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* is not only an adequate summary of the first work, but it is clearer in some respects as the subject had by then been more carefully considered, while the treatment was more carefully written due to the severe polemics of Irving's critics. In addition, it is also an accurate preview of *Christ's Holiness In Flesh* which was a logical sequel to the middle work. Although these three works do not comprise half of the total printed works of this prodigious man, who had a large and busy pastorate and a family and who died at the age of forty-two, they are the core of his writings and all that is necessary to understand his position on the Incarnation.

The *Orations* and the *Arguments For Judgment To Come* went into three editions in three months. In it Irving stated two propositions. The first one declared that the chief obstacle to the progress of divine truth was that it was not

Will And Good Pleasure Of God, (2) The End Of The Mystery Of The Incarnation Is The Glory Of God, (3)

The Method Is By Taking Up The Fallen Humanity, (4) The Preparation For, And The Very Act Of, The

Incarnation Of Christ, (5) The Fruits Of The Incarnation, (6) Conclusions Concerning The Subsistence Of God,

And The Subsistence Of The Creature, Derived From Reflections Upon The Incarnation. There Was Also An

Appendix Published To This Treatise.

⁴¹ Whitley, 43-49.

being presented sufficiently to the minds of men. The second proposition stated that 90% of people know nothing of the power of God because they do not hear it or because they do not see it incarnate in the life of the church. His purpose became to

make the word of God speak to the people of his day. He did not believe that the Bible was a book to be discussed and divided but one to challenge and compel men to action.⁴² Irving's philosophy formed here would mold all his future activities.

Therefore, in 1830, Irving's major works were completed although some other minor writing followed.⁴³ Just four years later after Irving's death his friend Carlyle said, "Edward Irving's warfare was 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 . . .this Messenger of Truth in the Age of Shams."⁴⁴

Since Irving's rejection is often attributed to his zeal and his language rather than his theology, the perception of a man of words such as S. T. Coleridge is pertinent. Coleridge said, "Irving's expressions upon this subject were ill-judged, inconvenient, in bad taste, and in terms false . . . It is Irving's error to use declamation, high and passionate rhetoric, not introduced by calm and clear logic."⁴⁵ Another more modern commentator adds, "Irving's intention was undoubtedly to remind the Church of the reality and relevance of Jesus' human brotherhood; his tragedy was to shipwreck such a noble enterprise by pushing language beyond the limits of catholic Christological reflection on the sinlessness of the Saviour."⁴⁶

⁴² Whitley, 43.

⁴³ Whitley, 48-49.

⁴⁴ Whitley, 49.

⁴⁵ *Dictionary Of Scottish Church History And Theology*, 436.

⁴⁶ *Dictionary Of Scottish Church History And Theology*, 436.

“The reality and relevance of Jesus’ human brotherhood” is indeed important and still a message that is widely misunderstood in the church. Perhaps the present atmosphere will forbear more regarding the pushing of language to the limits.

6. The Manifestations Issue

The manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Irving’s day did not appear to occur in the same manner as they had occurred before or have occurred since. Regarding these manifestations Gordon Strachan says,

Unlike any previous manifestations of the Spirit, they were occasioned not by the overflow of powerful religious feeling but by faithful response to the systematic study and preaching of the Word of God. Theological understanding was central to all that happened and preceded all forms of experience of spiritual gifts. It is the centrality of a coherent theological system which makes the Pentecost of 1830-32 unique and quite distinct from all previous revivals.⁴⁷

Comparing what happened with Irving’s people, Strachan refers to speaking in tongues as this occurred among the Huguenots and Jansenists in the past. Then, this came amidst great enthusiasm and most unexpectedly. Conversely, what happened in London and in the West of Scotland, and that which followed in the Catholic Apostolic Church which arose after Irving’s expulsion from the Church of Scotland, was based on the understanding that the people had as to

⁴⁷ C. Gordon Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving* (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 14 - 15.

what to expect of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸ This is believable even though Irving had somewhat of a reputation as a romantic as he was firmly committed to his understanding of the Reformed position. And it must be remembered that he himself never experienced any of the manifestations that his followers experienced, although he said that he taught the scriptures by the power of the Holy Spirit by what he called the “power of spiritual exposition.”⁴⁹ The outbreaks in both the Pentecostal movement just after the turn of the twentieth century and the charismatic movement which begin in the late 1950’s were once again, for the most part, spontaneous eruptions. Although these eruptions fuel the fires of enthusiasm, they do little to promote stability among the participants. The almost numberless ensuing splits in both movements are testimony to their instability. The followers of Irving in the Catholic Apostolic Church, although not without turmoil, began their proceedings in an orderly manner.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Strachan, 14.

⁴⁹ M.O.W. Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving* (London: Hurst And Blackett, 1864), 375.

⁵⁰ Oliphant, 381- 82.

7. What Can Irving Contribute?

We cannot deny the importance of each component that influenced Irving such as the return of Christ, the humanity of Christ, and the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus and of believers. But there is more than one reason to focus on his Christology. Primarily, Christian theologians broadly agree that Christology is foundational. Furthermore, Irving's doctrines of salvation and of the Holy Spirit are absolutely governed by his beliefs on the Divinity and humanity of Christ; his Christology is logically at the center of his whole approach.

Also, because of this Irving, knowingly or unknowingly, anticipated and provided some constructive answers for the present day Charismatic and Pentecostal element in the Church. Knowingly, because he was aware of what he was dealing with and through searching the scriptures and decided action attempted to provide an orderly yet free environment for Charismatic activity. Also, knowingly because he linked Holy Spirit manifestations to his doctrine of Christ. Unknowingly perhaps, because although he believed whole-heartedly that he was right, his small group was insignificant and outcast in Irving's own day. To date they have not yet been given a proper place in theological history even within Pentecostal and Charismatic circles.

Today Pentecostals and Charismatics outstrip all other orthodox Christian groups in growth. But they have never found a theological system which they can call their own. Their beliefs are often a combination of old theologies and new amendments which encourage or allow certain manifestations of the Holy Spirit. How can Irving contribute to a coherent and authentic charismatic theology for today? In the first place, all of Irving's theology centers around his Christology. Also, he deals with the humanity of Christ in a unique and insightful manner. And finally, Irving's

affirmation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are set in the context of the humanity of Christ and his oneness with us. By way of context it is not possible to understand Irving's soteriology, anthropology, pneumatology, ecclesiology or theology proper apart from his Christology. In his soteriology Irving challenges, and even condemns, what he calls a "sanctified selfishness" which makes the benefits received by believers the center of salvation. Atonement and redemption have to do with Christ's work for the sinner and have no bearing upon God. Therefore, atonement and redemption should be in third place in our thinking, behind the glory of God and Christ. He maintains that God's glory should be the focus of our thinking. If "God and Christ are postponed to my own personal safety . . . a system of sanctified selfishness is the result." His Christology asserts that it was nothing less than the condescension of the Son in becoming flesh that shows forth this glory.⁵¹

In his anthropology Irving insists that our humanity is alone and unredeemed if the Son took a form or flesh that was in any way different than our own. In his pneumatology he asserts

that we can have no oneness with Christ in the Spirit unless we have a oneness with him in the flesh. Furthermore, any ministry that we have in the Spirit is only a copy of the selfsame ministry that Jesus had in the Holy Spirit. The work of the church as the Body of Christ is no more than the corporate extension of individual ministry.

Even in theology proper Irving's Christology dominates. He staunchly affirms the divinity of the Son with claims that he is more orthodox than his Reformed contemporaries. In addition, he sees that act of the Father in fostering the descent of the Son as the very act of love of the redemption. He stresses the Father's loss as well as the Son's

⁵¹ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 99.

obedience. He affirms that the Son does not change Father God, but rather reveals him. God's motive of love is above all.

In Irving's Christology the orthodox doctrine of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Word is foundational. He will not sacrifice the divine for the human or the human for the divine. Why then all the controversy over his teachings? He chose to call the human nature of Jesus "sinful human nature". This nature Jesus derived totally from his mother. It must be identical. Consequently, no matter how often and how strenuously he affirmed that he believed that Jesus was without sin he was never believed.

8. The Flesh Of Christ

Of all the writing for which Irving received criticism the most vehement concerned the way that he understood Christ's sinless life in "sinful flesh." The preface of *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* provides a key phrase which is astutely commented on by the eminent biographer of the nineteenth century, Mrs. Oliphant. In her words a "deeply disingenuous guise" was used in putting the matter of Irving's position on Christ's flesh before the public. Irving had said, "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 later." By Mrs. Oliphant's estimation this should not have shocked the public. But when, on the other hand, it is stated as an heretical maintenance of the "sinfulness of Christ's human nature," the matter changes its aspect entirely, and involves something abhorrent to the most superficial of Christians."

And she quickly adds, “But in this way it was stated by every one of Irving’s opponents.”⁵²

Irving held that the immediate and the formal cause of the Incarnation was the fall. By immediate he meant that the fall was the occasion or the reason for the Incarnation and by formal he meant that the Incarnation took the form that was necessary to compensate for the results of the fall.⁵³ He does not, however, hold that God was merely reacting to man’s act but holds that

although man’s will is free, God foresaw man’s need from the foundation of the world; its origin is solely in the will of God.⁵⁴ This position shapes all the development of Irving’s Christology. The fact that Irving held to the free will of man as a Reformed minister is significant. This affirmation did not negate his belief in election but rather affirmed it.⁵⁵ This is a subject which he develops more fully later by differentiating between the universality of reconciliation and the particularity of election.⁵⁶ Irving believed in one covenant of grace throughout the Bible which was only completed and understood in Christ Jesus.⁵⁷ He sees in John’s prologue the understanding of the One who was with God and who was God who became incarnate and revealed grace and truth to mankind.⁵⁸ It is God’s will and pleasure to send the Son incarnate. From here he begins to build his case for the necessity of the true humanity of Christ.

Irving considered the Incarnation to be the greatest and most wonderful mystery of God. The Incarnation was not an expedient to meet an accident. In it the “uncreated Substance of the eternal Essence” formed an “eternal union”

⁵² Oliphant, 257.

⁵³ In the Aristotelian sense as having intelligible content.

⁵⁴ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 10.

⁵⁵ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 56.

⁵⁶ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 153.

⁵⁷ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 13.

⁵⁸ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 19.

with “the very substance of the fallen earth.” The humiliation and endurance of Jesus is beyond comprehension. The exaltation of the Son of man resulting from the Incarnation is the salvation of the church.⁵⁹ In it Satan is defeated.⁶⁰ The end of the Incarnation is the glory of God. This glory is not in Christ as the Son of God, but as the Son of man. Irving affirms the immutability of God and affirms that divinity indeed does not change. “The divinity had of its own accord suspended itself, and by its own power kept itself continually suspended. He was man and God in one person; and during His humility the God-head was employed in humbling or restraining itself, -- which, I may say, is the highest act of a self-existent being to suspend His own activity, as it is also the highest act of grace.”⁶¹ God is manifested in all three persons in the Incarnation; the Son reveals the Father and manifests the Spirit. The holiness of God is justified in the manifestation of the Son. The glory of God is manifested in the Incarnation.⁶²

Irving insisted that the flesh or human nature that Christ took to himself is none other than fallen human nature, since he maintained that there was no other nature in existence to take.⁶³ This flesh was not the flesh before the fall but the flesh after the fall. It was a true body and a reasonable soul. If Christ did not have a reasonable soul, then his human feelings would be only an “assumed fiction.” It was most important to Irving that we understand that it was not this nature which was directly glorified. It had to die and be raised, or transformed first; otherwise, fallen humanity would have cause to worship its own being. Graham McFarlane, writing recently on Irving, is not correct in assuming that Irving wrote these things to develop the

⁵⁹ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 59 - 60.

⁶⁰ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 62.

⁶¹ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 87.

⁶² Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 88 - 97.

⁶³ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 115 - 116.

doctrine of the Trinity as would a teacher of theology. As McFarlane himself says, “Irving’s thoughts on the doctrine of God as Trinity were given shape and form in 1825 in a series of sermons on the Trinity.”⁶⁴ Irving was first and foremost a pastor. These were published sermons. The topic was the Incarnation. The development of the doctrine of the Trinity was an unavoidable by-product from the mind of Irving. But, to see it as a doctrinal thesis rather than a pastoral teaching puts the entire work in an unfair and perhaps even a deceptive light. It is not that Irving can not stand up to inspection; he can. But his motive in these sermons was to strengthen the faith of his flock and not to prove his position theologically. There is far less interest in the pew in orthodox Trinitarian theology than there is in making it through the week without giving in to sin or discouragement or despair. To make these sermons, although published as a book, a treatise on Trinitarian theology is to remove them from their proper context, and in missing the intent some meaning is also lost.

McFarlane is more accurate when he says, “Therefore, his is not an explicit analysis of God’s being. Rather, it is a theological concern aimed at a specifically soteriological end.”⁶⁵

One reason that it is particularly difficult to separate Irving’s Christology from his soteriology is because his entire concept of the truly human Christ exists for our salvation. In insisting that Jesus received Mary’s true flesh at conception Irving quickly adds that from the same moment the Holy Spirit “abode in Him and sanctified Him.”⁶⁶ And as Irving follows this line of reasoning, he necessarily develops his Trinitarian position. In the third

⁶⁴ Graham McFarlane, *Christ And The Spirit; The Doctrine Of The Incarnation According To Edward Irving* (Carlisle, Cumbria, Paternoster Press, 1996), 14.

⁶⁵ McFarlane, 15.

⁶⁶ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 121.

sermon Irving explains that the method of salvation is by God the Son taking up the fallen humanity. This is the heart of his Christology. He then discusses the Covenant.

This was the covenant between the Father and the Son: this was the purpose in the Christ: the Father willing it out of very goodness . . . the Son consenting to it out of a very dutifulness unto his Father . . . thus the covenant between the Father and the Son being willed and worded, the Holy Ghost, of very delight in the communion of the Father and the Son, to execute what their pleasure is, and likewise of very goodness to the creature, consented to prepare that body, so willed and so worded by the Godhead.⁶⁷

In this way the entire Trinity is involved in the action of salvation; the Father willing, the Son consenting, and the Spirit executing. And even though this is a convincing Trinitarian formula, Irving's motive is not to construct a neat Theology but to provide the necessary elements in his Christology. For Irving there must be a form of kenosis in the Incarnation. If this is to be so and if all the power and purpose of the Godhead is to be expressed, then the Holy Spirit's activity becomes more important and the Father's initiating is required.

Irving says that if Christ's flesh is not the same as ours, "it deprives us of all knowledge of God's inclinations and affections towards us, and defeats us of all heavenly influences whatsoever. . . . Christ stands in the room of sinful men, and that God's dealings with him shew us how he will deal with those who believe on him."⁶⁸ How God deals with believers is Irving's pastoral concern. This is his approach and no other. The first step is necessarily the fact that for Irving the human nature of Christ is identical with ours

⁶⁷ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 122.

⁶⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 112.

except without sin. The next step is to understand how the Father deals with the man Jesus and then to project how he will deal with all those who have the same human nature. Christ stands in our place and by understanding God's inclinations and affections towards Christ in the scripture, we can know God's inclinations and affections towards us. Our triumph, our belovedness, our resurrection, our reigning all depend on Christ's. Irving is strong and consistent in examining the opposite. "If Christ, when he became man, did take manhood altered and specially prepared for him, and not manhood as every man hath it . . . therefore the work done in and for Christ is no signification of any work which God intendeth to do in and for any other man."⁶⁹ The flesh of Christ must not be altered or our inheritance is nullified. This rings of Calvin's doctrine of the Wondrous Exchange.
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Irving's concept of substitution is unique and requires examination. Irving says,

It is substitution, that Christ from being the Son of God should instead thereof become the Son of man. It is

⁶⁹ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 113.

⁷⁰ "This is the wondrous exchange made by his boundless goodness. Having become with us the Son of Man, he has made us with himself sons of God. By his own descent to the earth he has prepared our ascent to heaven. Having received our mortality, he has bestowed on us his immortality. Having undertaken our weakness, he has made us strong in his strength. Having submitted to our poverty, he has transferred to us his riches. Having taken upon himself the burden of unrighteousness with which we were oppressed, he has clothed us with his righteousness." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, trans. by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 558, (IV, XVII, 2-3).

substitution, that instead of the sinner proving the extremes of God's being, whereof he could as little sustain the holiness as he could receive the love, God's own Son should come into his place and bear them all, and enable us through substitution in his person to bear them also.⁷¹

Irving's contemporaries thought of substitution in the legal and penal sense. Irving thought of substitution as being representative which included the penal aspect. David Dorries says, "Irving's opponents rejected this doctrine of the atonement because their legal, contractual understanding of God and his covenant drawn from Federal Theology caused their Christology to be controlled solely by the penal substitutionary doctrine of atonement."⁷² For Irving Jesus is not only "a man" but he is most definitely "the second Adam." All that we have from God is "in him."

Irving considers Jesus' life and the acceptance of it by the Father to be the end of the matter of the flesh.⁷³ He says that the representative or substitute principle of the reformers was "certainly too narrow" and that only ignorance or unbelief in the Trinity or in redemption could cause a person to withstand his position.⁷⁴ This reveals a distinctive of Irving's Christology which was vital to his argument, and

⁷¹ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 117.

⁷² David William Dorries, "Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy, Centering Upon Edward

Irving's Doctrine Of Christ's Human Nature," A Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

The University of Aberdeen, 1987, 532.

⁷³ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 114.

⁷⁴ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 116.

which he believed most strongly, and which was at variance with many of his day.⁷⁵

9. Pneumatology And Christology In Irving

The relation between Pneumatology and Christology in Irving's theology is of great significance.

Now the office of the Spirit they do in a still more remarkable manner subvert by their inventions. As the office of the Father is from his secret concealments, the unsearchable abode of his Godhead, to manifest himself unto sinful creatures; and as it is the office of the Son coming out of his bosom to sustain the fulness of the Father's Godhead, and render it into the comprehensible language of human thought, feeling, suffering, and action; so is it the part of the Holy Ghost to furnish him for such an undertaking.⁷⁶

The furnishing power and function of the Spirit in the life of the Son is vital to Irving's Christology. His is no mean pneumatology. The Holy Spirit is not a necessary but

⁷⁵ Unlike the Lutherans, the Reformed theologians applied the category of exinanition to the divine nature of

Christ. It was the Son of God who emptied Himself, and He did this in becoming man. The Incarnation itself, in

the actual form in which it took place, was a kenosis for Him who was in the form of God before he took the

form of a servant. But the kenosis or *exinanitio* was only a *quasi*, an emptying as to use and manifestation, not

as to possession, a hiding of divine glory and of divine attributes, not a *self-denudation* with respect to these.

The standing phrase for the kenosis was *occultatio*, and the favorite illustration the obscuration of the sun by a

dense cloud. A.B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1895), 125.

⁷⁶ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 118. Emphasis mine.

uncomfortable addition. The Spirit is integral to the entire plan of God in the Incarnation and in salvation. This links his soteriology and his Christology. It also integrates his acceptance of the manifestations of the Spirit to the core of his theology. In modern terms it makes Irving's theology uniquely charismatic. It is unique in that most modern charismatic thinking consists of a core of thought from one tradition or another with an emphatic add-on affirming the acceptableness of the gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit for today. For Irving a supernatural and present Holy Spirit is basic to his entire Christology. It is central; it is vital; it is necessary. If the Holy Spirit furnished Jesus with not only the power to minister but also to live the perfect life - although the idea of his perfect faith by virtue of his divine nature is also important - and we have the same flesh as Christ possessed, then the need for the power of the Spirit in all Christian experience is assumed.

Irving considers it just as great an error to mix the divine nature of the Holy Spirit with the human nature of Christ as to mix the divine nature of the Son with his own human nature.⁷⁷ He believes that in this he is following the wisdom of Chalcedon. He sees the entire function of the Holy Spirit as totally equal in importance with that of the Father and the Son. Regarding the perfect faith of Christ, even though we do not have perfect faith we do have the opportunity to grow in faith throughout our lives and we have the same Holy Spirit as our helper that was essential to the victorious life of Christ. His pneumatology is high.

Now behold what a wonder-working person is this Holy Ghost . . . This office of the Holy Ghost, first to unite the invisible Godhead with the visible Son; and secondly, to furnish the Son for the work of bringing human nature into

⁷⁷ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 119.

perfect reconciliation with, and obedience of, God: this, which is the essence of all sanctification of wicked men.⁷⁸

It is the Holy Spirit who converts the creature out of its state of rebellion into a state of holiness and love. And this work is first in the life of the human nature of the Son and then in the lives of all believers. This is linked to Irving's doctrine of "at-one-ment" which describes the relationship between God and his people and does not rest on the amount of punishment necessary to appease God's sense of justice.

Even though Irving holds to the necessity of mystery in the Incarnation he does have his own understanding of this mystery which is consistent with his overall concept when he says:

And the instant that act of the Holy Ghost began, in the very beginning of it, in the instant of life quickened before the sight of God, did the Son, in His independent personality, once and forever join himself to the holy thing, which by that conjunction became properly named the Son of God. And such I conceive to be the mystery of this conception of the Child.⁷⁹

Three things are inextricably linked in Irving's thought. They are the true humanity of the Son, the separation of Chalcedon, and the activity of the Holy Spirit. He insists that "It is the substance of the Godhead in the person of the Son, and the substance of the creature in the state of fallen manhood, united, yet not mixed, but most distinct forever."

⁸⁰ But this in itself is not enough. There must be a "thorough communication, inhabitation, and empowering of a Divine

⁷⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 120.

⁷⁹ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 123.

⁸⁰ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 123.

substance” by the Holy Spirit as well. ⁸¹ He says that without an absolute dependency on the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus there is a sort of deifying of human nature. This leads to all sorts of heresy. But when the Holy Spirit has his proper place, then “in the manhood of Christ was exhibited all of the Godhead that shall ever be exhibited, Father, Son and Spirit; according as it is written, ‘In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,’ or in a body.” This refers only to Christ's life before the resurrection as the time was not yet come to see a glorious body while Jesus was still overcoming sin in the flesh. ⁸²

10. The Doctrine Of “Sinful Flesh”

In the preface to *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* Irving explained his use of the words “sinful flesh”. He also makes it clear that he is referring to the Lord's human nature and that he is “speaking of it considered as apart from Him.”⁸³ He is not speaking of the Lord's person. In this way Irving defines his words and qualifies his concepts.

On this issue Hugh Ross Mackintosh said of Edward Irving, “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.” ⁸⁴

⁸¹ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 123-4.

⁸² Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 123-4.

⁸³ Edward Irving, *Christ's Holiness In The Flesh* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1831), xiii.

⁸⁴ Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *The Doctrine Of The Person Of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T. And T. Clark, 1951), 277-8.

The emphasis on “His sinful human nature” is inaccurate taken out of context with the balance of Irving’s writings. Irving repeatedly reiterates that Jesus had no sin of His own for which to atone. He is only affirming that Jesus’ flesh was exactly the same as the flesh of all men; both the visible flesh, or body, and the invisible flesh, human nature. It was the flesh of his mother. However, in going on Mackintosh shows a still greater misunderstanding of Irving’s position.

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 the 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.
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The key words here are “eccentric” and “a great fact” and “only the Holy Spirit”. Most importantly, Mackintosh missed Irving’s concept of the perfect faith of Jesus. The perfect faith of Jesus and its source is not an insignificant theme in Irving. He says, “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.”⁸⁶ He notes that there is no disagreement here with other teachers, except that others maintain that the human nature of Christ underwent a change in the miraculous conception. Irving holds that there was no change. Christ’s human nature was “full of fellowship and community with us all his life long” and was only changed at the resurrection. The change Irving does hold to is that the human nature of Christ was regenerate at

⁸⁵ Mackintosh, 277-8.

⁸⁶ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

conception by the Holy Spirit. By regenerate he means that it was cleansed and made righteous from the exact moment of conception and was therefore never in need of continuing sanctification. But it was still post-fall flesh. The regenerate life was however “in measure greater because of his perfect faith.” The reason for this perfect faith was because Jesus was a Divine Person of one substance with the Father. ⁸⁷ A key statement is,

The thing, 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; and prevailing to believe in the Father, against the universe, through the Divinity of his person; which was thereby proved to be uncreated, and above creation, by prevailing against a rebellious creation, with which he clothed himself, and under whose load he came. ⁸⁸

In this Christ's holiness is the result of his perfect faith. His Person is divine. He had a human nature identical with ours. He prevailed against the rebellion in creation by being a Divine person with a perfect faith. He came under the load brought about by this rebellion. Therefore, Christ's perfect faith is the key to Irving's understanding of Christ and his redemptive work. Irving held “that there is no other way of seeing his Divinity in action save by this only, That his union with the Father by faith stood good against the whole

⁸⁷ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, vii.

⁸⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, vii - viii.

creation, and prevailed to draw creation out of the hands of its oppressors back again, and to reconcile it unto God.”⁸⁹

It is clear from this that Irving believed that Jesus’ perfect faith derived from his Divine nature and this produced his life-long unbroken holiness. Irving understands this divine nature as having the power to have life in himself.

This, again, will receive its explanation from another passage of Scripture (John v. 26): “For, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” This shews us whence he derived that power of having life in himself, even from the Father. And that his life was supported from the same fountain, take this testimony (John vi. 57): “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” These two passages teach me that the power of holding his life in his own hands, which Christ speaketh of in the passage in question, is one given to him in virtue of his perfect faith; just as in virtue of our faith we derive from him the gift of everlasting life. Take this passage, in the same discourse, where it is as strongly affirmed of a believer (John viii. 51):
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This perfect faith proves that Jesus is Divine in his person; it is not the faith that makes him divine. And we cannot forget that Irving believed that he was entirely in accord with the Chalcedonian definition of the person and natures of Christ. He sees, “something increate, for all creation is rushing the other way; something superhuman, for all human persons have been withdrawn from their confidence. And thus Christ’s perfect faith . . . doth prove

⁸⁹ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, viii.

⁹⁰ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 94.

him to be not a creature, doth prove him to be inseparable from God, doth prove him to be one with God.”⁹¹

He makes this even clearer by comparing it with our regeneration as our nature after regeneration is the same as before. Therefore, Christ’s substance after his conception in Mary is the same, unaltered and “without addition to any creature part; a perfect or complete humanity, a true body and a reasonable soul; a personable substance, though not a human person; the person being the person of the Son of God.”⁹² Irving maintains the Chalcedonian definition of the two natures without mixing. For him the Person of Christ is not a human being merely but the Son of God.

Therefore, in this context Mackintosh falls short of a complete comprehension of Irving when he says that Jesus’ humanity was kept from corruptness by “only the Holy Spirit”. Who is the Holy Spirit? Would He be capable of preserving the flesh of Jesus without sin even without the perfect faith of the Son of God? Further, coupled with this concept of perfect faith as a result of being a divine person, Irving maintains that the Holy Spirit is certainly more than sufficient for maintaining the sinless life of Christ. But this does

not exhaust Irving’s position. He sees the entire Incarnation as the saving process which is performed jointly by all members of the Godhead working in perfect harmony to bring about the benefits for mankind. Mackintosh agrees with this “great fact.” How then is Irving’s position eccentric? For Irving the Holy Spirit is not an addendum but an integral part with the Father of divine action in salvation. This is a concept almost wholly missing from Mackintosh’s theology. It is difficult to understand how Macintosh can

⁹¹ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 128-9.

⁹² Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 3.

interface with Irving without properly dealing with his pneumatology.

A charge against Irving of confusing the natures is erroneous. A charge of docetism is absurd. The hypostatic union is stated, “In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man.”⁹³ Where, or Who, then is the Person? First of all, in this definition it is the human nature which is inseparably united forever with the divine nature. It has to be so for the divine nature is eternal and the human nature is created. C. A. Blaising says that several important Christological issues are highlighted by Chalcedon. The continuity of the Savior’s identity is maintained in the sense that Jesus Christ is the same person who was the preexistent Logos, the Son of God. The complexity of the Savior’s nature is maintained; it is no longer the Divine nature alone which is expressed in his person. The distinction of the natures is maintained, and Eutychianism is excluded along with monophysitism. And the perfection of the natures is maintained; Jesus Christ is truly God, and truly man.⁹⁴ In Irving all of these are affirmed. Irving did nothing, when his central writings are studied in context, to contradict them. There is one person, both natures are real, the natures are distinct, and both natures are perfected and complete. At the same time, the reality of the human nature is sharply affirmed. There remains only what has been called the “metaphysical” question. But the doctrine of Chalcedon was not produced as a purely philosophic statement on the

⁹³ C. A. Blaising, “Hypostatic Union”, from *The Evangelical Dictionary Of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, Ed., The New Bible Library, CDROM, (Oklahoma City: Ellis Enterprises Incorporated, 1993).

⁹⁴ Blaising.

subsistence of the finite and the infinite. It was offered as a description and explanation of what was found in scripture and made use of language that would help in this task.⁹⁵

11. Kenosis As An Issue

In considering Irving's position on the humanity of Christ the issue with and without kenotic theory needs to be considered. Some theologians will see Christ's humanity hand in hand with kenotic thought and some will not. H.R. Mackintosh is representative of the kenotic school and will be considered here. Irving's "kenoticism" consists of his "self-contracting God" and his emphasis on the "sinful flesh" of Christ. Irving stresses the true humanity of Christ which he obtains from his mother while at the same time defending the formula of Chalcedon and the holiness of Christ in the flesh.

John A. T. Robinson says that the defect of kenoticism was that it stripped Christ of the qualities of transcendence which make him the revelation of God. It assumed that the superhuman attributes had to be removed in order for Jesus to live in a human form. He does allow that although the theory has received damaging criticism, it does contain "vital truth" and there will no doubt be attempts to revive it. According to Robinson, the strength of kenoticism is that it shows that a humiliated man can not only be an expression of the power and love that moves the sun and the stars but can be the "fullest expression" of that love.⁹⁶ He thinks that this is the New Testament approach and that "The Christian indeed cannot look into man without seeing Jesus, and

⁹⁵ Blaising.

⁹⁶ John A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face Of God* (London: Xpress Reprints, 1994), 207-8.

cannot look into Jesus without seeing God.”⁹⁷ In Robinson, also, there seems to be a pneumatological weakness. In the kenotic school so often the lack of power in the man Jesus is the most vulnerable point. And yet they say they are presenting the Jesus of the New Testament. Their critics quickly seize upon the fact that this Jesus is too powerless. Yet neither side seems willing or able to attribute the needed power to the Holy Spirit. Irving does not have this problem. Whatever else his critics may say, pneumatology is not a weak point for him. Again the difference between the pastoral approach and the professorial approach may be the reason for this emphasis. For the academic it needs to make sense or at least be a well developed argument. For the pastor it needs to work in the lives of his people. For both, starting with the man Jesus of the New Testament and finding God in him is the best approach. The opposite will invariably lead to docetism.

In critiquing the doctrine of the two natures Mackintosh says that it brings into the life of Christ an “incredible and thoroughgoing dualism”. One concern is that the mystery will be lost. He says, “For tradition the unity of the person is always a problem, and to the last a mystery; for the New Testament it is the first reality we touch.”⁹⁸

Does Irving speak to these problems? In a large measure, yes. And the answers lie in Irving’s understanding of the Person and the natures coupled with his pneumatology. Irving, like Mackintosh, acknowledges the mystery. There will always be an aspect, and a not insignificant one at that, that we will not be capable of understanding about the Incarnation. But Mackintosh’s primary concern seems to be in perceiving a Jesus that lacks the personal impact of the New Testament Jesus. He blames Chalcedonian Christology for the “dissection” which

⁹⁷ Robinson, 243.

⁹⁸ Mackintosh, 297.

depersonalizes Jesus. And yet Irving's human Jesus is more real than tradition's, much more. The human traits that Irving's Christology allows make Jesus more one of us than tradition would allow. Mackintosh says, "He is still holding Himself at a distance from its experience and conditions. There is no saving descent."⁹⁹ This is not true of the Jesus portrayed by Irving's teaching. Mackintosh's reason for this aloofness lies in the fact that Deity is impassible; Christ executed one act as God and suffered another as man. In this he finds duplicity. And left in traditional hands duplicity it would be, for Christ is "not a single consciousness after all."¹⁰⁰ Mackintosh can not abide the understanding of "nature" as it was traditionally held.

In the second place, there is a difficulty concerned with the person in which the two natures are held to be "inseparably joined together." Once more we are obliged to report unfavorably on the term "nature", . . . The ancient dogma proceeds on the definite assumption that, in both God and man, there exists a complex whole of attributes and qualities, which can be understood and spoken about as a "nature" enjoying some kind of real being apart from the unifying or focal Ego; . . . To put it frankly, when we abstract from personality . . . what we vaguely call "human nature" is not human nature in the least. . . . A twofold personality, however, is not merely something that we fail to understand; it is something we see quite well to be impossible.¹⁰¹

But Irving does not see nature apart from personality. He sees the Person of Jesus to be the Son of God although he can refer to the "sinful human nature" of Jesus as "considered" apart from the person. There is no duplicity in the person of Jesus as he walks around in Israel, perhaps

⁹⁹ Mackintosh, 294.

¹⁰⁰ Mackintosh, 295.

¹⁰¹ Mackintosh, 295-96.

because of something that Mackintosh himself would affirm, that Jesus' awareness of his divinity and his call was something that he understood progressively. If Jesus had been fully aware of his mission and fully prepared to accomplish it from the cradle, then there would have been an ongoing division in his person throughout his life and ministry. But because of his progressive development he could truly function appropriately as a human being at every place and time. In the New Testament picture Jesus was first the Son of man and then, unavoidably, the Son of God. Irving while supporting the Chalcedonian doctrine interprets it with more humanity. As far as considering different attributes of Jesus separately is concerned, there is no way to conduct a Christology aside from a solitary reading of the Gospels without such devices. Devices which Mackintosh himself and Irving and others have to resort to in normal human reasoning.

Although Irving did not discuss kenosis in the technical manner characteristic of later nineteenth century theology, he did make use of Philippians 2:8, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."¹⁰² Irving's understanding of what he terms the "self-contracting power" of God is very similar to kenosis as understood by the kenotic school in general. First of all, he affirms that the person of Christ as the Son of God does not change as a result of becoming a man. In this he does, as ever, maintain the distinction between person and nature. Next, he understands that this Person's motive for becoming incarnate is for the purpose of manifesting God's love, grace,

¹⁰² Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 148.

mercy and power to fallen mankind. He acknowledges that the sheer ability to become man, this “self-contracting”, is one that can only be possessed by God and not by any creature, “by that power of self-contraction - which belongeth not to a finite, but to an Infinite Being; not to a creature, that hath a law and bound of its being, but to the Creator, who is not restricted, but may take unto himself what form he pleaseth - in virtue of this self-contracting power.” This is consistent with kenotic thought. He affirms that the purpose of this condescending is to overcome sin in the flesh and to destroy the “potentate of death”. He insists that the Person of the Son, “In parting with his glory, he doth not surely do an evil thing, but the best of all things; for shewing God’s goodness, for working man’s well-being.”

The results of this act are good and fruitful in, “that he, then, who hath contracted no stain from this act, but covered himself with infinite grace and love, should be assailed with all the infirmities and temptations incident to the nature which he hath taken; this surely is not sin, unless they prevail against him: if they do not prevail, but he prevaieth over them, surely that is righteousness, and not sin.”¹⁰³

In discussing Christ’s actions he says, “every action was a true man’s action, [in this] consists the merit of it; - the merit that He should have humbled His Divinity, or emptied it out, or suspended it, (express it as you will,) in order to be found in fashion as a man, and do a man’s action.” This shows a certain flexibility in Irving’s wording of what has been termed kenotic. This language approaches kenosis proper.¹⁰⁴ As to what kind or what extent measured by subsequent kenotic development, that is a topic for further discussion.

¹⁰³ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 29.

¹⁰⁴ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 361.

Among adherents the difficulties concerning kenotic theory revolve around the method of kenosis rather than the actual reality of kenosis. Something had to happen in the incarnation of the Son. There was some form of self-limitation on the part of the Son; but what of the extent or definition of the limitation, or the way in which the limitation was accomplished.

Mackintosh says that if a person believes that a reasoned Christology is possible, then kenoticism in some form or some sort of a “real surrender of the glory and prerogatives of deity” is necessary. Four positions must be held simultaneously which include the fact of Christ's divinity in time and out of time, his localized life on earth and the fact that he can not be attributed two consciousness' or wills.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, according to Mackintosh, “We are faced with a Divine self-reduction which entailed obedience, temptation and death.”¹⁰⁶

One of the great critics of kenotic theory, D. M. Baillie, does not deny that the “emptying” of Philippians has a place in Christian thought. But he disagrees with kenotic theory on the grounds that during the incarnation Christ would not be able to continue his sovereignty over the universe and that the entire kenosis seems like a temporary theophany with no logical end at the resurrection.¹⁰⁷ The weakness of this criticism is that it minimizes the power and impact of the resurrection which glorifies Christ thus returning to him all that was his and also adds Christ's humanity to the Godhead. It also overlooks the patristic concept which affirms that the operations of the Godhead cannot be divided.

Vincent Taylor has some penetrating views on the entire issue. He says that the views of Mackintosh are more

¹⁰⁵ Mackintosh, 469-70.

¹⁰⁶ Mackintosh, 470.

¹⁰⁷ D. M. Baillie, *God Was In Christ* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948), 95-97.

closely reasoned than those of others and he affirms Mackintosh's four conditions. This then must "infer a real surrender of the glory and prerogatives of deity." And that Mackintosh "will not allow that the idea of the divine immutability rules out such an act of sacrifice."¹⁰⁸ Taylor continues in his analysis of Mackintosh by saying that he rejects the distinction of Thomasius between the relative and essential attributes of God. In its place he talks of the qualities of Godhead in the form of "concentrated potency" rather than "full actuality." It is because of this concentrated potency that the awareness of his relationship with the Father came gradually to Jesus as he developed. This "concentrated potency" of the Godhead seems closer to Irving's "self-contracting" God than most other concepts used in describing the incarnation.

Mackintosh attempts no psychological theory and is silent about the "Word" or "Son" apart from the incarnation on the grounds that the New Testament does not provide the necessary data and that traditional arguments often tend to go in the direction of ditheism. Mackintosh counters objections such as Baillie's regarding cosmic chaos during the incarnation by referring to Augustine's emphasis on the theory of the inseparability of the operations of the Trinity. Irving says little on the issue. Mackintosh responds to objections from Ritschl and others that the Christ of kenoticism had no "Godhead at all" as "simply essential to the personal advent of God in time."¹⁰⁹

Taylor observes that, if we take seriously the human conditions of the life of Jesus and His personal identity and continuity with the Eternal Word, 'then a Kenotic Christology appears to be indispensable'.¹¹⁰ He goes on to say that some form of a kenotic hypothesis is unavoidable

¹⁰⁸ Vincent Taylor, *The Person Of Christ In New Testament Teaching* (London: Macmillian, 1959), 263.

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, 264.

¹¹⁰ Taylor, 269.

because the Son would had to have accepted some form of self-limitation in order to appear on the earth. “Christology, in short, is incurably kenotic.”¹¹¹

The truth is that we cannot get rid of kenoticism. If we dismiss it at the door, it comes back through the window. If we deny it in word, we affirm it in principle, however much theologically we may be upon our guard. The reason must be that self-limitation is an essential form of the divine manifestation. God is God when He stoops no less than when He reigns. He is a God who in revelation hides Himself.¹¹²

Irving’s Christology is inherently kenotic yet without denying the precepts of Chalcedon. The true humanity in the nature and the Son of God as the Person are his mainstays. All of which supports the claims of Irving’s followers that he was, indeed, a pioneer. But his approach was so unique that it still remains to be appreciated just how much of a pioneer Irving was.

In one book Irving uses the word combination “sinful flesh” no less than 35 times and the word “flesh” even more often.¹¹³ He distinguishes between the flesh that is seen which is the human body and the flesh that is unseen which is human nature. Built upon this Irving attributes all instances of holiness as found in the scriptures to the activity of the Holy Spirit when he says, “what is alleged from the expression, “the holy thing born of thee shall be called the Son of God,” has nothing to do with the question; for we assert him to be holy in the same sense in which holiness is used in all the

¹¹¹ Taylor, 272.

¹¹² Taylor, 276.

¹¹³ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*.

Scriptures; -- namely, through the energizing of the Holy Ghost.”¹¹⁴

Therefore, all human flesh, particularly in regard to the inner man, as found in the scriptures must be the same.

And, on the other hand, I say, that every passage of Scripture which declares Christ to have come in the flesh, which declareth the Word to be made flesh, which declareth God to be manifested in the flesh, is a proof total and complete that he came in sinful flesh. For what is the meaning of flesh in Scripture ? Is it not the sinful, mortal, corruptible, fleeting thing, of which it is said, “all flesh is grass;” of which it is said, “the flesh warreth against the Spirit;” of which it is said, “in it (in the flesh) dwelleth no good thing?” If, then, it be said that Christ came in flesh, who shall dare to interpret that word, “flesh,” otherwise than all Scripture doth interpret it?
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And not only is all flesh the same flesh but all flesh since the fall must be considered to be “sinful flesh” when he says, “who shall interpret it otherwise than sinful flesh? that is, flesh of that kind and property which betrayeth and tempteth all other persons unto sin, and with equal force wrought against the Person of the Son of God.” But the flesh “never prevailed by reason of the Holy unction with which the Father continually supplied his believing Son, and which the obedient Son ever used to restrain and constrain the creature-substance unto the will of the Godhead.”¹¹⁶ Jesus came to

¹¹⁴ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 19.

¹¹⁵ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 19-20.

¹¹⁶ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 20.

overcome sin in the flesh. In this Irving has an apparent sympathizer in Karl Barth. According to James Torrance,

He [Jesus] assumes the very humanity which is in need of redemption, and by being anointed by the Spirit in our humanity, by a life of perfect obedience, by dying and rising again, for us, our humanity is healed *in him*. We are not just healed “through Christ” because of the work of Christ but “in and through Christ.” That was why these fathers did not hesitate to say, as Edward Irving the Scottish theologian in the early nineteenth century and Karl Barth in our own day have said, that Christ assumed “fallen humanity” that our humanity might be turned back to God in him by his sinless life in the Spirit, and, through him, in us. ¹¹⁷

12. Irving and Barth

In speaking of the obedience of Christ Barth says that “flesh” as it is used in both testaments means that man stands “under the divine verdict and judgment, man who is a sinner and whose existence therefore must perish before God, whose existence has already become nothing, and hastens to nothingness and is a victim of death” and that flesh is “the concrete form of human nature and the being of man in this world under the sign of the fall of Adam – the being of man as corrupted and therefore destroyed, as unreconciled with God and therefore lost.” ¹¹⁸ Barth undoubtedly employs the same hermeneutic

¹¹⁷ James. B. Torrance, “The Vicarious Humanity Of Christ”, in *The Incarnation*, Thomas F. Torrance, Ed., (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1981), 141.

¹¹⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume IV, Part One, Editors: G.W. Bromiley, and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. And T. Clark, 1956), Chapter XIV Jesus Christ, The Lord As Servant, Section 59. The

as Irving is seeing that there is indeed only one reality in this life which corresponds to the use of the word “flesh” in scripture.

In another striking similarity to Irving Barth links his understanding of flesh to the doctrine of election when he says that “the Old Testament alone attests the election of God, and it is only in the light of God’s election that we see who and what is man – his unfaithfulness, his disobedience, his fall, his sin, his enmity with God.”¹¹⁹ As a Reformed pastor and theologian Irving strenuously affirms election and holds that universal redemption in no way reduces the sovereignty of God’s election.

In affirming universal reconciliation Irving comes against what he calls “debtor-and-creditor theology”. He believes in what he call “at-one-ment”, or the healing of our relationship with God in the life and victory of Christ and not a vengeful God who gets all the punishment that he can get in order to balance the books. After universal reconciliation he believes in particular election. He makes a convincing case that the true humanity and the atoning life and sacrifice of Christ is the basis for both doctrines.¹²⁰ He calls universalism “a most damnable heresy” and says that election is no hindrance to the “freeness of our door of entrance.”¹²¹ Redemption is comprehensible and visible to us and election is invisible and incomprehensible and is revealed individually.¹²² In other words, it is a mystery that can not be fully understood but he must maintain both in his understanding of scripture.

Barth agrees in principle with Irving regarding the sufferings of Christ. Christ suffers as “a man” under “the wrath and

Obedience Of The Son Of God, 1. The Way Of The Son Of God Into The Far Country 157 - 211, 165.

¹¹⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume IV, Part One, 171.

¹²⁰ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 177-203.

¹²¹ Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 248.

¹²² Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 251.

judgment of the electing and loving God. To be flesh is to be in a state of perishing before this God. . . . *He* stands under the wrath and judgment of God, *He* is broken and destroyed on God. It cannot be otherwise. It has to be like this. His history must be a history of suffering. For God is in the right against Him. He concedes that the Father is right in the will and action which leads Him to the cross.”¹²³

Regarding Christ's flesh Barth says, “The Word is not only the eternal Word of God but “flesh” as well, i.e., all that we are and exactly like us even in our opposition to Him. . . . And He would not be man if He were not “flesh” in this definite sense.”¹²⁴ In regard to this Barth cites H.R. Mackintosh's citation of Irving.

Gottfried Menken . . . concluded from Rom. 8.3 that “the Son of God when He came into the world did not then assume a human nature such as this nature was when it came forth from God's hand, before the fall, before it had in Adam . . . become sinful and mortal. On the contrary, it was a human nature such as was in Adam after the Fall and is in all his successors.” . . . The same doctrine was delivered about 1827 by the Scottish Theologian Edward Irving and it led to his excommunication: “The point of issue is simply this, whether Christ's flesh had the grace of sinlessness and incorruption by its own nature or from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; I say the latter. . . . 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.” (H.R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine Of The Person of Jesus Christ.*)¹²⁵

¹²³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part One, 175.

¹²⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. I, 2, sec.15, 151 - 52.

¹²⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. I, 2, sec.15, 154.

From this it would appear that Barth is more in agreement with Irving than is Mackintosh and it is Mackintosh that has passed Irving's words to Barth.

Like Barth Irving's view regarding the suffering of Jesus Christ stresses the immutability of God and the suffering in the limited aspect of manhood.

Now I utterly deny that any thing suffered but the human nature of Christ; and that could only suffer according to the measure of a man. . . . If more, whence came it? from the Divine nature? But this is contrary to all sound doctrine, that the Godhead should be capable of passions . . . it is but the sufferings of a perfectly holy man, treated by God and by men as if he were a transgressor.¹²⁶

Irving follows the suffering of Christ through to the death of Christ when he says, "Now it hath been made a question how he who never sinned could die. But the question, if a question is to be made of it, is far larger; how he that never sinned could suffer. The answer to both questions is, Because his human nature was held of sinful Adam."¹²⁷ And here is where he goes on to say that Christ's flesh is from the same "lump" as all human flesh. "And the part which he took was subject to the same laws, as the lump of which he took it: and so he became dead by becoming flesh." He goes on to berate those who claim that Christ's flesh was different than ours but "do indeed talk long and loud about its being vicarious and sacrificial, to cleanse away our sins, which no orthodox man ever denied."¹²⁸ Contrary to the charges set

¹²⁶ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 95-96.

¹²⁷ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, Conclusion, 151.

¹²⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, Conclusion, 151.

against him by the presbytery Irving never denied the vicarious and sacrificial nature of Christ's passion. And yet as a Person Jesus is unique. Here Barth is clear.

The New Testament tradition . . . is self-consistent in one great truth. There can be no doubt about the full and genuine and individual humanity of the man Jesus of Nazareth, but in that man there has entered in and there must be recognised and respected One who is qualitatively different from all other men. He is not simply a better man, a more gifted, a more wise or noble or pious, in short a greater man. But as against all other men and their differences we have in the person of this man One who is their Lord and Lawgiver and Judge. He has full power to condemn them or to pardon. He has full power to call them and bind them to Himself. . . . He is the Saviour before whom there was none other, neither shall be after. ¹²⁹

And Irving very much anticipates this view for the heart of his argument is that the Person of the Son of God was born into human nature in order to conquer that human nature and win it back to

God. This is his "great theme" about which he says, "What was holy, was his Person; and from that came redemption into the nature. . . . The Person of the Son of God was born into it; he restrained, withstood, overcame this co-operation of a sinful creation, conquered the conqueror, and won it back to God; obtained power over all flesh. This is the great theme which we maintain. ¹³⁰

Barth echoes this great theme when he says, "The world is not abandoned and left to its own devices. God takes it to Himself, entering into the sphere of it as the true God,

¹²⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part One, 159-60.

¹³⁰ Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, x.

causing His kingdom to come on earth as in heaven, becoming Himself truly ours, man, flesh, in order to overcome sin where it has its dominion, in the flesh, to take away in His own person the ensuing curse where it is operative.”¹³¹

Furthermore, Irving maintains that the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit empowered the man but did not change his nature beyond that of regeneration as it is found in all men.

It is of the essence of the truth, it is all that the truth is worth, to maintain that regeneration, or impartation of the Holy Ghost addeth nothing, withdraweth nothing, changeth nothing of our created substance, but by an invisible person of Godhead controlleth and overcometh it: so necessary is it to believe likewise of Christ's human nature, that its generation of the Holy Ghost added and altered nothing of its creature-substance, but ever operated by Godhead-power to restrain and subdue, and sanctify and uphold all its motions and actions.¹³²

The references to this theme in Irving's work are too numerous to consider them individually.

But does this theme always mean a kenosis? Apparently not for Barth. Paraphrasing Barth on kenosis Bromiley says,

Whatever *kenosis* (self-emptying) may mean, it does not mean Christ ceasing to be himself. . . While Jesus Christ as God enters into the human contradiction, he is not God against God in absolute paradox. He is Lord of the contradiction, for there is not paradox in God, nor is he

¹³¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part One, 198.

¹³² Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 3-4.

properly defined by such abstractions as the Wholly Other.¹³³

Barth says that the deity of Christ cannot have any “subtraction or weakening” or the atonement could then be in doubt. In humbling himself Christ did not cease to be who he is. Even in a strange land Christ did not become a stranger to himself. Barth goes on to deal with the history of the subject of kenosis in an excursus. In discussing the history of kenotic development from the 17th century on and in the Lutheran school including Thomasius and then Gess and through to Ritschl and modern kenotics Barth concludes,

There are many things we can try to say in understanding the christological mystery. But we cannot possibly understand or estimate it if we try to explain it by a self-limitation or de-divinisation of God in the uniting of the Son of God with the man Jesus. If in Christ . . . God is not unchanged and wholly God, then everything that we may say about the reconciliation of the world made by God in this humiliated One is left hanging in the air.¹³⁴

In this statement we find Barth set against self-limitation in any form. Kenoticism in almost any form requires a self-limitation of Christ in the incarnation. In the end Barth seems to agree with Irving on the flesh and the humanity of Christ. Irving does not speak in specific kenotic terms and Barth comes out against kenotic thought as he understood it. There is, however, a similarity in the approach utilized by both Barth and Irving. They both respect the mystery of God especially in the incarnation. Barth, or course, developed the dialectical method with its crisis and tension especially as

¹³³ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *An Introduction To The Theology Of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. And T. Clark, 1979),

181.

¹³⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part I, Sec. 59, I, 180-183.

seen in the Word and the God-man.¹³⁵ Barth's approach is also hostile to certain forms of Protestant Scholasticism. In this Barth and Irving are similar.

13. A Matter Of Perspective

H. C. Whitley, in the section entitled "Samson Agonistes" from his book *Blinded Eagle*, gives a view on what Irving was trying to do which provides a good perspective.

Irving believed with all his heart that no faith could stand up to the demands of ordinary life and the trend of world events which had not a basic acceptance of the real humanity of Christ. While he did set 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, he never forgot the extent and danger of his daring. Yet always there was the flash of insight and the deeper awareness.¹³⁶

Several things are apparent from Whitley's remarks. Firstly, Irving's eschatology was responsible for the pressing urgency of his Christology. Secondly, Irving's primary concern was for the well being of his flock; his pastoral motive dominated. He wanted the faith of his people to be able to stand up to the demands of life; and he believed that things were taking place in the world that heralded the return of Jesus Christ to the visible sphere. Thirdly, Irving did set himself to do the impossible, which was not to explain some ancillary doctrine, but to plumb the depths of the great mystery of God himself and especially regarding the

¹³⁵ R. V. Schnucker, "Karl Barth", from *The Evangelical Dictionary Of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, Ed., The New Bible Library, CDROM, (Oklahoma City: Ellis Enterprises Incorporated, 1993).

¹³⁶ Whitley, 91.

Incarnation and to go on to explain to the human reason what is essentially beyond explanation. Irving knew that this was a dangerous undertaking, but he considered his reasons for doing so to be important. Fourthly, Whitley affirms as Irving students have done for some time, that regardless of the impossibility of the task, Irving had some extraordinary insights into the mystery. Irving was dealing with deep truths and he actually managed to mine some gold, but at a great price. It cost him many friends, much peace of mind, his beloved Church of Scotland, and an early death.

There was also the factor of the activities of the Holy Spirit. Whitley says, “The libel when boiled down only referred to the supposed heretical doctrine of the sinfulness of our Lord’s human nature, and did not touch upon the ‘gifts’. The sad reflection however is that, but for the notoriety of the ‘gifts’, it is doubtful whether this would have been any libel.”¹³⁷ As today, much of it was tried in the press because the manifestations of the Holy Spirit had drawn their attention.

14. Irving’s Place In Historical Theology

Tom Smail, in discussing the Father’s gift to the Son, presents a pneumatology for today which integrates a theology of the Trinity, the activity of the Holy Spirit and a unity of the flesh of Christ with the flesh of believers. First of all, he sees the Holy Spirit as a gift that is given in both directions. “The Spirit comes down from the Father to the Son, but he also ascends from the Son to the Father when, in obedience and sacrifice, the Spirit-filled Son gives himself to the Father. Thus the Spirit who is first the Father’s gift to the Son is then the Son’s responsive gift to the Father.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Whitley, 92.

¹³⁸ Tom Smail, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994.), 113.

Then he sees what was accomplished in the humanity of Christ as something that is now available to be worked out in our humanity. “Not only does the Father give the Spirit to the incarnate Son, but through that Son the Spirit is also given to us whose humanity the Son shares. . . . We receive from him the regeneration, the messianic anointing and the sanctifying transformation that were wrought by the Spirit in his humanity and are now to be worked out in ours.”¹³⁹

Irving would agree with this so long as it is clear that the regeneration and sanctification were accomplished at the moment of conception although we definitely share the messianic anointing in our flesh with the man Jesus Christ in his flesh. The church is the fruitfulness of Christ, “In what happens to us what happened to him bears fruit.”¹⁴⁰

In the conclusions to his thesis¹⁴¹ David Dorries examines Irving’s theology and his opposition under five categories. Regarding redemptive love Dorries concentrates on Irving’s Christology which centers on the revelation of the Incarnation as the proof of God’s love in His innermost being. As noted earlier, Irving’s opponents rejected this doctrine of the atonement because their legal, contractual understanding of God and his covenant drawn from Federal Theology caused their Christology to be controlled solely by the penal substitutionary doctrine of atonement.

In considering Christ as Very God and Very Man Dorries says that Irving’s position is that the Son who is eternally God became consubstantial with mankind by taking man’s nature in the Incarnation. And even though Irving’s opponents subscribed to the orthodox doctrine of Christ’s person, the dominant place given to their view of atonement served to undermine their professions of orthodox Christology.

¹³⁹ Smail, 113.

¹⁴⁰ Smail, 114.

¹⁴¹ See footnote 72.

Dorries points out that Irving declared that the Son in becoming consubstantial with mankind assumed our nature under the conditions of the fall. However, for Irving's opponents it was unthinkable for Christ to have assumed fallen nature. For them Christ's human nature had to be immune to the conditions common to fallen humanity. However, Dorries contends that the Fathers and the Reformers held to the doctrine of Christ's fallen human nature. The well known saying of Gregory of Nazianzus, "that which he has not assumed he has not healed,"¹⁴² is put forth for the Fathers. And Calvin said Christ, "suffered in his soul the tortures of condemned and ruined man."¹⁴³

Christ's quiescent Deity is of primary importance to Irving according to Dorries. He says that Irving's opponents misrepresented his doctrine of quiescence as a full kenosis, or abdication of the deity of Christ. Irving's opponents rejected any form of kenosis, yet a kenotic veiling or quiescence of the Son's deity is a common theme of the Fathers and the Reformers.

According to Dorries the testimony of the Fathers and the Reformers favors the view of Irving regarding Christ as the receiver of the Spirit. Irenaeus spoke of the Spirit first coming to Christ that He might become accustomed to dwelling in other men. Calvin also recognized the necessity of the Spirit's continuing operation in assisting Christ in the weakness of his humanity.

Dorries contends that Irving and his party were in agreement that their opponents were in the error of Eutyches, they mixed and confused the two natures in Christ in their attempt to defend the holiness of Christ. Eutychianism was carried forward to the sixteenth century group of Monophysites called Aphthartodocetists. Another form of the ancient heresy was called the Incorruptibles who contended that

¹⁴² Dorries, 537.

¹⁴³ Dorries, 538.

Christ's human nature was transformed into incorruptibility in the Incarnation. In conclusion Dorries says, "Irving's works should be elevated to their long-overdue status as some of the finest Christological expressions in the post-Reformation era."¹⁴⁴

As a modern scholar Dorries has accurately assessed Irving's value to the present day Christian community and has clearly identified where and why Irving's opponents of his own day differed in their views. Essentially, Irving's position, although sometimes expressed unwisely, is consistent with that of the Eastern Fathers as well as Barth and other modern theologians. And the emphasis of Irving's teaching is still much needed to combat docetism in the Church today.

Why does Irving's Christology provide a sounder foundation for modern day Charismatics and Pentecostals? Irving's Christology gives the present day charismatic more to stand on in identification with the man Jesus than does a more Federal type of Christology which still leans, it might be argued, toward the docetic. It is also firmer than the kenoticism of Mackintosh or the whole person image of Mackintosh and his followers. This is because Christ's humanity is more real in Irving when properly understood. The predominant teaching in Charismatic and Pentecostal circles is often not based on the Person of Christ but upon an understanding of spiritual manifestations built upon some foundation which stresses the evangelical necessity to become a Christian in order to escape the wrath of an angry God. Most Charismatic teaching is neither Christological nor Reformed whereas Irving insists that his teaching is both. Irving's Christology intrinsically includes a strong pneumatology. This fact is of primary importance, for it is surely such an emphasis on the Person of Jesus Christ which might do most to overcome much of the divisions among

¹⁴⁴ Dorries, 532-49.

Charismatics and Pentecostals today, as they are above everything else “Jesus people.” An emphasis on the Person of Jesus Christ as not just the emissary of the Father and the very sacrifice provided by the Father but also as the Mediator who embodies and deals with human nature where it lives, in “the flesh”, will not only unite people but will also unite their understanding of the Incarnation, the atonement and the Holy Spirit. God is properly represented, man is properly represented and the solution to their dividedness is properly represented in this Christology which is not only biblical but Reformed. The activity and manifestations of the Holy Spirit are not only allowed in the church but they are seen as necessary if believers are to function as human beings with an effectiveness which reflects the ministry of Jesus himself when he was in the same flesh. The gifts of the Spirit are no longer an add-on to the Christian faith. If our oneness with Christ in the flesh is the key to our oneness with him in the Spirit, then the Incarnation and the Spirit-filled life are inseparably bound together.

However, we cannot see Irving as a stepping stone for modern Christology. Irving was not understood by the theological mainstream which produced Mackintosh and Baillie. Furthermore, Irving’s entire construct is founded on different strengths than the ones we find in Mackintosh and his disciples. And for this reason alone Irving must be considered on his own. His Christology is unique and has never fully come into its own. This is mainly due to a misunderstanding of his position. This misunderstanding arises either from a hasty judgment of what he is saying because his principal works are not studied in detail, or from approaching his Christology with a preconceived Christological structure. Irving must be approached with no more of an opinion than would be supplied by a cursory understanding of Nicea and Chalcedon. Irving was first a pastor although he was no mean theologian. He developed his Christology from the ground up. Nevertheless, he firmly

believed that it was totally true to Chalcedon and to the confessions.

Irving preferred to be known as Reformed rather than Evangelical.¹⁴⁵ He is more on the side of tradition as he understands it. Irving would consider himself true to the concepts of “without conversion, composition or confusion” of the *Westminster Confession*. We could even go so far as to say that Irving’s self-contracting Divinity in the Son joined to his true human nature is more true to the “without conversion” phrase than the position of some kenoticists. Irving would be more in agreement with Thomasius’ absolute and relative divine attributes than with Gess’ complete metamorphic view which seems to pave the way in thinking to Mackintosh’s “whole person” concept carried forward by D.M. Baillie and others. But perhaps Irving’s position could be more satisfying, complete with his loyalty to Chalcedon, than what is presented by others as a palatable substitute.

In considering what Edward Irving can contribute to modern Charismatic thought, the diversity among those groups needs to be considered. The classical Pentecostals are established denominations which have existed since the beginning of this century and are in their fourth or fifth generation of membership. In America they derived mostly from the Methodist and Holiness churches and are strongly

¹⁴⁵ Irving associated Evangelicalism with other Dissenters especially those who followed the teachings of Marcion teaching that even though the flesh of Christ came through the virgin it was not effected by this transmission. He also associated it with the Bourignon heresy which repudiated that Christ took his substance from the virgin. He understood evangelicals to be teaching that the suffering of Christ had to be infinite in order to atone for the number and greatness of mankind’s sins. To this he answered that as God Christ could not suffer and as man his suffering must be finite. Irving considered Evangelicals in Scotland and England to be lethargic and in error. *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 49,58,78,100-101,141-142.

Arminian in doctrine by background. The Charismatics which date from the late 1950's are of three primary types; those still in historic denominations of every kind, independent congregations of every variation, and the newer Charismatic denominations which have worked out their own government and doctrine since the 1970s. The teachings of Edward Irving will be a comfort to some, irrelevant to some, and a challenge to others. Therefore, the movement as such has no central theology or Christology. It is essentially experience oriented and experience centered and those people within it have only an experience in common and not a theology or Christological structure. The gathering points within the movements are generally around doctrines which are less central to the Christian faith than Christology, usually pneumatological or eschatological in nature. In many situations the result is a form of Arminianism with the gifts of the Spirit added because people want them or have experienced them. Sometimes there is a type of Calvinism with the gifts of the Spirit awkwardly added because of the silence of the Reformers on the subject coupled with a premillennial position which explains the gifts of the Spirit as a "sign of the times." Or sometimes there is an amillennial position which either adds the gifts on without a reason or cannot justify the gifts or the ministries of the Spirit in any way and becomes by default cessationist in doctrine in spite of the presence of charismata amongst them.

Irving's Christology provides not only a foundation around which to gather which affirms Charismatic activity but it is centered firmly on no less than the person of Jesus Christ himself. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:10 AV) Irving's link between the humanity of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ and of the church is unique and profoundly important. A truly human Christ needed the power of the Holy Spirit in his own life not only to perform his ministry but to live the holy life that was necessary if he was to redeem mankind. If

Jesus himself needed the power of the Holy Spirit, then surely his followers of every age have an even greater need for the same Spirit. And, as Irving said, this Spirit of Christ, now so named, has been “with human sympathies invested” as a result of his work in the man Jesus who was the Word made flesh.¹⁴⁶

Irving bases all of this on his understanding of the orthodoxy of the Fathers and the teachings of the Reformers thus illustrating that the beliefs of his contemporaries had strayed from both. If doctrine without experience can lead to legalism and experience without doctrine can lead to fanaticism, then Irving’s combination of orthodox and Reformed doctrine and Pentecostal experience can avoid both.

As a Reformed thinker Irving brings several strengths to the Charismatic camp. The best of these strengths is the belief in the sovereignty of God. Charismatics are experience oriented because it is an experience that brings them to where they are and this experience is their common bond. However, a strong dependency on experience can draw people away from their belief in a sovereign God if, indeed, there ever was such a belief among them. Most classical Pentecostals come from a strongly Arminian background and in the early days of the Charismatic movement in the 1960s many Charismatics looked for and found friends among their Pentecostal brethren after they were made to feel unwelcome in their own denominations. Often it was many years before these new Charismatics realized that they did not have to acquire all the theological baggage of their Pentecostal brethren. The conviction that God is sovereign is a cornerstone of Reformed theology. Irving expresses it throughout his teaching and especially in his discussion of the doctrine of election.¹⁴⁷ Experience will not necessarily

¹⁴⁶ *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 145.

¹⁴⁷ See page 41.

consistently affirm the belief in the sovereignty of God; many things happen that people cannot understand. Belief in God's sovereignty must often be maintained along with or in spite of experience. As a friend of the experience of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, Irving can contribute the conviction of the sovereignty of God.

Irving's emphasis on the unified action of the Trinity can also provide a counter-balance to the "Jesus only" faction in the Charismatic community. Irving cannot express the actions of one member of the Godhead without including the actions of the others. For him the Son could only have come in obedience to the Father's will and the Spirit always provided the power for the Son's obedience. Because of the heavy emphasis on the person of the Son which is produced by the self-effacing activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Charismatics, there is often an over reaction in the human realm which puts Jesus in the forefront, reduces the Holy Spirit to a servant to the church and forgets the Father. It is understood that Jesus said, "He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify me" (Jn. 16:14). And this the Holy Spirit does indeed do. But error lies often in extremism, and this is certainly true of the "Jesus only" element which teaches salvation and baptism in the Name of Jesus only. Irving's understanding of the actions of the Trinity as a friend of experience corrects this error.

As a friend of the premillennial faction within the Charismatic camp, Irving also brings a corrective influence which is more implicit than explicit. It is the tendency of those holding to the premillennial position to separate from the present evil world and await the parousia. The result of this, however, is factionalism and the religious ghetto. Irving's position points to an alternate possibility. He was involved where he lived and embraced such popular worldly figures as S. T. Coleridge.

Most of all, there is a place for Irving's "self-contracting God" in the church today. Even a revival of a proper kenoticism is possible. To the Charismatic the Jesus of the

Gospels is not often seen as truly human. Therefore, our identity with him is often lost. An awareness of a self-limitation of the Word in becoming flesh would help the modern Christian to understand their relationship to God and to each other. They can relate to the Father as Jesus related to him. They can relate to each other as Jesus and the disciples related to each other. When taken to the extent of Irving's "sinful human flesh", the point is driven home although it then needs explanation and clarification which Irving supplies in abundance. The "self-contracting God" is the beginning of an understanding of Christ as a true man. A kenosis of the type of Thomasius which distinguishes between the absolute and relative attributes of God is the next possible step which provides a useful way of conceiving of this self-contraction. A Gessian kenosis of complete metamorphosis is somewhat more severe. Irving's concept of a "sinful human flesh" seems to skip over kenotic thought to bring Christ's life and experience into an area which provides a means of identification for the modern day believer. His Christology is kenotic in kind although he uses different terms which pre-date the kenotic school. Irving maintains that self-contracting is something that only a God can do and that it is an act of love rather than an act of weakness. Both of these insights are kenotic in nature.

In soteriology Irving, while holding to the ransom and satisfaction theories which are so prevalent in the Charismatic milieu, has an insight as to what it means to be "in Christ." Not only is the death and resurrection of Jesus important but his life is important as well. For Irving, the entire incarnation has the effect of redeeming all of the human life of the believer. It is a recapitulation; Jesus is the "last Adam." All the benefits won by Jesus are bestowed on the believer by the same Holy Spirit which supplied Jesus with the ability to overcome sin, the flesh and evil. "We have his work in flesh for all in flesh, his work in glory as the

second Adam for the children of the regeneration only.”¹⁴⁸ This makes it easier for the believer to seek God’s help in his or her own walk as well and therefore to produce some of the fruits of the Spirit which are often lacking among “gifted” believers, or those who have considered manifestations to be most important.

Irving’s greatest strength is in an absolute commitment to the true humanity of Jesus Christ. He is unique in his handling of the sin issue. Christ had no original sin but his flesh is that of fallen Adam. Christ is vulnerable to sin but he never succumbed. He defeated sin in the flesh. The over sensitivity to the sin issue by some moderns only obscures the issue with unnecessary emotion as a thorough understanding of Irving makes it clear that he did not see Jesus as having any sin of his own for which to atone.

¹⁴⁸ *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 140.

Like Barth Irving maintains the mystery and the tension involved in understanding something as momentous as the Incarnation. Perhaps because of the advances of science the modern day believer wants and expects rational and clear answers about his or her faith which even when possible can misrepresent the kinds of truth contained within the entire context of the Christian faith. More and more some tension or mystery must be maintained if the many facets of our faith are to be maintained simultaneously. All of this makes the theology of the nineteenth century Scot, Edward Irving, highly relevant to the church today.

SECTION TWO

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The Revival Begins

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Conclusions

I have been an admirer of Pastor Edward Irving (August 4, 1792 – December 7, 1834) since my studies in Edinburgh and St. Andrews in Scotland from 1998 through 2002. Irving has been called the father of Modern Pentecostalism because he preached what was then called the “two step” plan of God for his people; personal salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In 1829 the “Irvingite” revival broke loose and many received the baptism of the Spirit in the West coast of Scotland and in Irving’s Scottish church in London. Many young adults were healed; most of them of “consumption” which was most likely tuberculosis. But it was not the miraculous that got Irving in trouble with the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian.) It was his widely preached and published belief in the humanity of Jesus Christ. This in no way diminished his belief in Christ’s divinity. But this is difficult for many to understand. Another man, a layman, named Thomas Erskine was a friend of Irving. I also studied his writings of the period. I was looking for similarities between the Irvingite movement and the charismatic movement of the last 45 years. I found that there were many more similarities than there were differences.

The Revival Begins

The West Coast Revival in Scotland and the accompanying manifestations in London were of considerable interest to Thomas Erskine even though he first endorsed these manifestations and later repudiated them.

An important preview to the outbreak of manifestations in the West Country and in London was the life and witness of a young woman named Isabella Campbell. Isabella had tuberculosis and was confined most of the time to her bed. She was very devout and during her

confinement she had many extraordinary experiences of God. "In these experiences her countenance became radiant and her speech flowed forth at length in a spontaneous ecstasy of communion with God."¹⁴⁹ She died in 1827 at the age of twenty. Isabella's minister was Robert Story and he wrote a tract about her life and devotion which soon became widely spread in the West country. This small book caused many people to seek ecstatic experiences of God. It also caused many people to visit the Campbell home, a small farm at Fernicarry, which was inhabited by the widow Campbell and her two sons and remaining two daughters. The many visitors had the attitude of pilgrims visiting a shrine. One of Isabella's sisters was named Mary and she was in her late teens when Isabella died.¹⁵⁰ Mrs. Oliphant, the popular biographer of the nineteenth century, says of Mary,

When Isabella died, a portion of her fame—her pilgrim visitors—her position as one of the most remarkable persons in the countryside, a pious and tender oracle—descended to her sister Mary. This was the young woman "of a very fixed and constant spirit," as Irving describes, whom Mr. Scott, a few months before, had vainly attempted to convince that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was distinct from the work of regeneration, but was as much to be looked and prayed for as the ordinary influences of the Spirit. Mary Campbell

¹⁴⁹ Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving: The Fore-runner Of The Charismatic*

Movement, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983, 99.

¹⁵⁰ Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 99-100.

seems to have been possessed of gifts of mind and temperament scarcely inferior to genius, and, with all the personal fascination of beauty added to the singular position in which her sister's fame had left her—visited on terms of admiring friendship by people much superior to her in external rank, and doubtless influenced by the subtle arguments of one of the ablest men of the day,— it is impossible to imagine a situation more dangerous to a young, fervid, and impressionable imagination.¹⁵¹

Mary's fiancé died and she had grieved very heavily. Subsequently, Mary developed a form of tuberculosis which was worse than the strain that had killed her sister, Isabella. Her disease would form abscesses in her lungs which would burst and cause her much misery. Her brother, Samuel, was also very ill and not expected to live. Among the many visitors at the Campbell home was a group of aspiring missionaries. Irving's teachings about the afflictions of Satan which could be overcome by intensive prayer were known to them and when A .J. Scott, Irving's assistant, visited the area he spoke on the restoration of the gifts from Apostolic times. Scott preached in the pulpits of Row and Rosneath. Scott introduced Mary Campbell to the "Irvingite two-step concept of the Christian life," regeneration followed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. She received this concept willingly.¹⁵² Before long the manifestations began.

Edward Irving reports these manifestations which he believed were the outcome of his two-step teaching.

¹⁵¹ Oliphant, M. O. W., *The Life Of Edward Irving*, London: Hurst And Blackett, 1864, 286.

¹⁵² Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 100-102.

There was no manifestation of the Holy Ghost until the end of March [1830], that is . . . but how surely the sound doctrines stated above had struck their roots into the heart of this young woman is made manifest from another letter, bearing date the 23d of March, of which the original is still preserved, and lies now before me. Along with some others, she had conceived the purpose of a mission to the heathen, and so was brought into the very condition in which the apostles were anterior to the day of Pentecost, when they had received their commission to go forth into all nations and preach the Gospel, but were commanded to tarry in Jerusalem until they should receive power from on high.¹⁵³

Mrs. Oliphant comments on Irving's first contacts regarding the beginning of these manifestations when she says, "when these extraordinary events became known, they reached the ear of Irving by many means. One of his deacons belonged to a family in the district, who sent full and frequent accounts. Others of his closest friends, . . . looked on with wistful scrutiny, eagerly hopeful, yet not fully convinced of the reality of what they saw."¹⁵⁴ Oliphant also includes the early participation of Thomas Erskine and Chalmers. "Mr. Erskine of Linlathen went upon a mission of personal inquiry, which persuaded his tender Christian soul of the unspeakable comforts of a new revelation. Almost every notable Christian man of the time took the matter into devout and anxious consideration. Even Chalmers, always cautious,

¹⁵³ Irving, Edward, "Facts Connected With Recent Manifestations Of Spiritual Gifts,"

Extracted from *Fraser's Magazine* for January, March, and April, 1832, London:

Privately printed for James Fraser, 215 Regent Street, 1832, 4.

¹⁵⁴ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 290.

inquired eagerly, and would not condemn.¹⁵⁵ However, according to Oliphant, Chalmers was strangely silent on the subject.

Nothing can be more remarkable than the contrast between Irving's repeated appeals to his friend's standing as professor of theology, and the conduct of Dr Chalmers during the eventful and momentous period which had just commenced. During the following year several men, of the highest character and standing, were ejected from the Church of Scotland on theological grounds—grounds which Dr Chalmers, occupying the position of *Doctor, par excellence*, in the Scottish Church of the time, should have been the foremost; to examine, and the most influential in pronouncing upon. Dr Chalmers quietly withdrew from the requirements of his position in this respect. . . . Dr Chalmers preserved unbroken silence.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, in Oliphant's opinion, Chalmers should not have been so silent.

It seems exactly the course of procedure which Dr Chalmers ought *not* to have adopted; and this becomes all the more apparent; in the light of Irving's frank appeals to the professor of theology—he whose business it was to discriminate most closely, and set forth most authoritatively, the difference between truth and error. . . . the chief representative of what is called in Scotland the theological faculty, sat apart and preserved unbroken silence, leaving the ship at a crisis of its fate, the army at the most critical point of the battle, to the guidance of accident or the crowd. It is impossible not to feel that this abandonment of his position, at so important a moment, was such an act of cowardice as

¹⁵⁵ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 290.

¹⁵⁶ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 282-283.

must leave a lasting stain upon the reputation of one of the greatest of modern Scotsmen.¹⁵⁷

Even as these manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the West Country were being reported, the Scots Presbytery at London was charging Edward Irving with heresy. Irving was being charged on allegations that he taught that Jesus Christ was a sinner because of his teaching that Christ assumed fallen humanity in order to redeem it.¹⁵⁸

Gordon Strachan says, "On Sunday, 28th March, 1830, Miss Mary Campbell spoke in tongues and some days later was miraculously healed of consumption at her home at Fernicarry on the Gareloch in the parish of Roseneath, Dunbartonshire."¹⁵⁹

In Irving's own words in a veiled reference to Mary Campbell he says,

Sometime between the 23d of March 1830 . . . and the end of that month, on the evening of the Lord's day, the gift of speaking with tongues was restored to the Church. . . . It was on the Lord's day; and one of her sisters, along with a female friend, who had come to the house for that end, had been spending the whole day in humiliation, and fasting, and prayer before God, with a special respect to the restoration of the gifts. . . . When, in the midst of their devotion, the Holy Ghost came with mighty power upon the sick woman as she lay in her weakness, and constrained her to speak at great length, and with superhuman strength, in an unknown tongue to the astonishment of all who heard, and to her own great

¹⁵⁷ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 283.

¹⁵⁸ Strachan, C. Gordon, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, Peabody,

Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1973, 13.

¹⁵⁹ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

edification and enjoyment in God; “for he that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself.” She has told me that this first seizure of the Spirit was the strongest she ever had; and that it was in some degree necessary it should have been so, otherwise she would not have dared to give way to it. ¹⁶⁰

In just over a year these manifestations would also be occurring at Irving’s church in London. “On 30th April, 1831 Mrs. Cardale spoke in tongues and prophesied at her home in London. ¹⁶¹ Mrs. Cardale uttered three separate phrases which were interpreted by her as, ‘The Lord will speak to His people – the Lord hasteneth His coming – the Lord cometh.’ ” ¹⁶² On the morning of Sunday, 30th October, 1831, Miss Hall spoke in tongues in the vestry of Regent Square Church. Outbursts of tongues and prophecy interrupted the worship services on the following Sundays.” ¹⁶³

Not far away from Fernicarry down the Loch was the town of Port Glasgow. There was a family here named McDonald which was composed of two brothers, James and George, and three sisters, Jane, Mary and Margaret. They all had been under the teaching of McLeod Campbell, A. J. Scott and Edward Irving. The sister Margaret was an invalid in her late teens. After Mary Campbell’s experience was noised about Margaret McDonald received what she said was “the gift of prophecy and in just a few weeks both of the

¹⁶⁰ Irving, *Facts*, 6-7.

¹⁶¹ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

¹⁶² Drummond, Andrew Landale, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, London: James

Clarke And Co., Ltd., n.d., 153.

¹⁶³ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

McDonald brothers also “spoke with tongues.”¹⁶⁴ James McDonald was inspired to command his sister Margaret to be healed and she arose and declared herself to be healed. James then wrote a letter to Mary Campbell commanding her to be healed and she declared herself to be healed and came to visit the McDonalds. McLeod Campbell as minister of Row visited them and upon hearing James speak in tongues demanded an interpretation and George came forth with the words, “ Behold He cometh – Jesus cometh.” Back at Margaret Campbell’s home many meetings were held with much rejoicing and many prayers for the blessings of the Holy Spirit. However, Samuel Campbell was not healed; he died. Mary Campbell moved to Helensburgh for a short time to share her experiences and then she moved to London to become a part of Irving’s church there. ¹⁶⁵ James and George McDonald refused to go to Irving’s church in London for fear of the gifts being abused there. They were fearless in the cholera epidemic at Port Glasgow entering the houses of the sick to pray for them. They both died in 1835, James on February 2nd and George on September 14th, both of tuberculosis, the disease from which Mary Campbell had been healed. They were both known for their “genuine religious passion.” ¹⁶⁶

It is the opinion of Arnold Dallimore that the manifestation of tongues in the West Country which began with the Campbells and the McDonalds did not come as an unexpected outpouring from heaven, but was something that was expected and came gradually as the frequent ecstatic speech “gave way to incomprehensible sounds.” Furthermore, Dallimore insists that these manifestations did not arise as a result of systematic expository preaching and

¹⁶⁴ Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 105.

¹⁶⁵ Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 105-107.

¹⁶⁶ Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 151.

teaching but as a result of the ministry of McLeod Campbell, A. J. Scott and Edward Irving. Dallimore says that Campbell's ministry was notable for its fervour and Scott's for its emphasis on the gifts.¹⁶⁷ Mrs. Oliphant affirms Scott's conviction that "the supernatural powers once bestowed upon the church were not merely the phenomena of one miraculous age, but an inheritance "for the church of their day."¹⁶⁸ Irving's ministry was notable for its emphasis on the soon return of Christ. Dallimore insists that the condition among these young adults who were involved was not one of "strong biblical learning" but of "high religious emotion."¹⁶⁹

At first Irving's parishioners in London, including the elders and trustees, stood with him against the presbytery. But a year later after pleading with him to stop these occurrences, they evoked the authority of the Trust Deed in March of 1832.¹⁷⁰ Irving's response to this was as gracious as it could be under the circumstances. In a letter to the trustees he said, "But if it be so that you, the trustees, must act to prevent me and my flock from assembling to worship God, according to the Word of God, in the house committed into your trust, we will look unto God for preservation and safe keeping. Farewell! May the Lord have you in His holy keeping! Your faithful and affectionate friend, Edward Irving."¹⁷¹ "Irving's trial began on 26th April, 1832. On 2nd May, after three days' hearing, the court decided against him and he was ordered to be removed from his charge. On Friday 4th May,

¹⁶⁷ Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 106.

¹⁶⁸ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 275.

¹⁶⁹ Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 106.

¹⁷⁰ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

¹⁷¹ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 349.

he found himself locked out of his church.”¹⁷² Pursuant to this the Presbytery of Annan under instructions from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland deposed him on 13 March 1833.¹⁷³ McLeod Campbell had been deposed at the General Assembly of 1831 when Irving’s teachings on the humanity of Christ had first been condemned.¹⁷⁴ Edward Irving began developing his theology on these matters early as some debate concerning the manner of the bestowal of the gifts had already surfaced.

And having thus brought my narrative down to the great event of the Holy Spirit's again making his voice to be heard, I shall stay here a little; and, before proceeding further, make one or two observations, which could not be so well introduced into the narrative. The first is concerning the manner of its bestowal, without any outward sign or demonstration, as on the day of Pentecost, and without the laying on of the hands of an apostle; but in the exercise of faith and prayer. That the Holy Ghost was commonly bestowed in the exercise of faith and prayer, without a visible sign, is not only manifest from the express promise of the Lord (Luke 9:5-14); but also from the example of the Samaritan church (Acts 8.15). And because faith and prayer come by preaching, the Holy Ghost descended upon the Gentiles at the conclusion of Peter's sermon to them (Acts 10.45); and in the case of the Ephesian church it attended upon baptism. In two of these cases the laying on of the hands of the apostles did intervene, but in the other it intervened not, which proveth that it is not necessary. When any one will shew me a passage of Scripture expressly

¹⁷² Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

¹⁷³ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

¹⁷⁴ Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 153.

declaring that the laying on of the hands of the apostles is necessary to the receiving of spiritual gifts, I will give heed to him; but till then I will believe the Lord, who declares that nothing is necessary but to ask and to seek. ¹⁷⁵

The majority of the members of the church at Regent Square had departed with Edward Irving and formed a new church which they named the Catholic Apostolic Church. In November of 1832 they named the first of their “twelve Apostles” and also named Irving as the “Angel” or Pastor of the new congregation on 5 April 1834. Irving died only eight months later on December 7, 1834 at the age of 42. The diagnosis was consumption. ¹⁷⁶

Among religious revivals over the centuries since the New Testament day of Pentecost few have been accompanied with the manifestation of tongues. In most cases, with or without tongues, the revival has been a spontaneous overflow of intense religious feelings. ¹⁷⁷ According the Gordon Strachan, in Irving’s day this was not the case. “For unlike any previous manifestations of the Spirit,” these manifestations “were occasioned not by the overflow of powerful religious feeling but by faithful response to the systematic study and preaching of the Word of God. Theological understanding was central to all that happened and preceded all forms of experience of spiritual gifts. It is the centrality of a coherent theological system which makes the Pentecost of 1830-32 unique and quite distinct from all previous revivals.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Strachan

¹⁷⁵ Irving, *Facts*, 7.

¹⁷⁶ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

¹⁷⁷ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

¹⁷⁸ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14 -15.

and Dallimore take positions as to the origins of this revival which differ.

Beginning with a series of sermons on the sacrament of baptism in 1827 Irving had gradually come to the conclusion that since the spiritual gifts were equally as supernatural as the sanctification process then it must have been a lack of teaching and of faith in the church that had deprived the church of the spiritual gifts throughout church history. He could find no scriptural justification for the absence of these gifts within the church.¹⁷⁹ He says, “Four years ago, about the time of the opening of the National Scotch Church, when teaching to my people the orthodox and Catholic doctrine of the holy sacraments, I shewed from the constitution of Christian baptism (Acts 2: 38, 39), that the baptised Church is still held by God to be responsible for the full and perfect gift of the Holy Ghost, as the same had been, received by our blessed Lord upon his ascension unto glory, and by Him shed down upon his church on the day of Pentecost, and by them exercised in all the ways recorded in the book of Acts and the epistles of the holy apostles.”¹⁸⁰ It was important to Irving that the origins of the revival be carefully researched. Irving believed that the people who had come into the experience of tongues and other spiritual gifts, had been influenced by John McLeod Campbell who was in the process of being deposed from his pulpit in Row (Rhu) on the Gareloch for teaching the love of God for all men.¹⁸¹ Before long Irving was teaching on these manifestations and urging his congregation in London to seek similar experiences. “It was nearly a year later that Mrs. Cardale became the first person to speak in tongues in a house prayer meeting, and six months after that that Miss Hall became the

¹⁷⁹ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*,

15.

¹⁸⁰ Irving, *Facts*, 1.

¹⁸¹ Irving, *Facts*, 3.

first person to speak in tongues during Sunday worship in Regent Square Church.”¹⁸²

In the summer of 1830 Irving sought all possible confirmations regarding the manifestations and events. He hunted “eye and ear witnesses, men of reputation, elders of the church” from the Port Glasgow and the Gareloch area. Irving was determined to leave no “stone unturned in order to come at the truth.”¹⁸³ The manifestations had been continuing in meetings in the MacDonald’s house and in larger gatherings in Helensburgh. On one occasion Mary Campbell actually wrote in tongues and prophesied. There was beginning to be national recognition and publications regarding the revival. Crowds were gathering from all over Scotland and England. One of the MacDonald sisters wrote that “ever since Margaret was raised and the gift of tongues given, the house has been filled every day with people from all parts of England, Scotland and Ireland.” In Helensburgh “it was recorded that Mary Campbell had attracted 'merchants, divinity students, writers to the Signet, advocates' and 'gentlemen who rank high in society come from Edinburgh’.”¹⁸⁴ The people wanted to make their own judgments regarding these events. They were divided. Some thought that they were genuine and some were convinced that they were counterfeits. The Rev. Robert Story, parish minister at Roseneath, knew the Campbell family very well and he visited Mary Campbell to form his own conclusions. He reported to Thomas Chalmers then Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh. Chalmers was waiting for a first hand opinion. Story reported to Chalmers “I am persuaded you will be prepared to conclude that these things are of God and not of

¹⁸² Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 16.

¹⁸³ Irving, *Facts*, 2-3.

¹⁸⁴ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 70.

men.”¹⁸⁵ Irving received reports from his friends in the surrounding area.¹⁸⁶ Irving says that he also received information from “many of the most spiritual members of my flock, who went down to see and hear.”¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, “Towards the end of August a party of six of his members led by Mr. John Bate Cardale, a solicitor, travelled North from London and spent three weeks in Port Glasgow to see and hear for themselves.”¹⁸⁸ Cardale and his party met many of those who had received spiritual gifts and went to many meetings where the gifts were exercised. Irving found that Cardale and two others, Mr. Henderson and Dr. Thompson, were fully convinced of “the reality of the hand of God” in the West Country manifestations.¹⁸⁹ Their report was united and sure in two aspects: the work was supernatural, and the tongues were languages. Since Cardale was a lawyer and Thompson was a physician, the report was received by many.¹⁹⁰ This was reported in the December issue of *The Morning Watch*, a periodical that they had instituted to, among other things, report on the revival. In *The Morning Watch*, they said,

These persons, while uttering the unknown sounds; as also while speaking in the Spirit in their own language, have every appearance of being under supernatural direction. The manner and voice are (speaking generally) different from

¹⁸⁵ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 70.

¹⁸⁶ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 70-71.

¹⁸⁷ Irving, *Facts*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71.

¹⁸⁹ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71.

¹⁹⁰ Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 111-112.

what they are at other times, and on ordinary occasions. This difference does not consist merely in the peculiar solemnity and fervour of manner (which they possess), but their whole deportment gives an impression, not to be conveyed in words, that their organs are made use of by supernatural power. In addition to the outward appearances, their own declarations, as the declarations of honest, pious, and sober individuals, may with propriety be taken in evidence. They declare that their organs of speech are made use of by the Spirit of God; and that they utter that which is given to them, and not the expressions of their own conceptions, or their own intention. ¹⁹¹

The personalities of those involved were also examined.

They are totally devoid of anything like fanaticism or enthusiasm; but, on the contrary, are persons of great simplicity of character, and of sound common sense. They have no fanciful theology of their own: they make no pretensions to deep knowledge: they are the very opposite of sectarians, both in conduct and principle: they do not assume to be teachers: they are not deeply read; but they seek to be taught of God, in the perusal of, and meditation on, his revealed word, and to live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. ¹⁹²

Throughout the Autumn of 1830 various prayer meetings were held around London in private homes. At these meetings they prayed for “an outpouring of the Holy Ghost.” Some meetings were held at Mr. Cardale’s house. These

¹⁹¹ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71.

¹⁹² Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71-72.

meetings were not confined to the homes of the members of Irving's church alone. People from many churches were involved. It is not apparent that Irving took part in any of these meetings. A Miss Fancourt in England was healed on October 20th of 1830. This healing was entirely independent of the healings of the McDonalds and Mary Campbell in Scotland and was taken as a sign of the movement of the Spirit by those in London.¹⁹³

It was shortly after Cardale's return to London with his party that Thomas Erskine visited Port Glasgow and spent six weeks in the Macdonald's home. In his two publications which followed his visit, *On The Gifts Of The Spirit* and *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine heartedly affirmed the manifestations.¹⁹⁴ By this time Irving had already decided on the genuineness of the manifestations. Cardale's report, Erskine's publications and a meeting with Mary Campbell served only as confirmations. Irving also took these manifestations as confirmation of his position on the human nature of Christ. He affirmed that the power in Christ's ministry which had been provided by the Holy Spirit and not His divinity was available to the church as well. The manifestations also confirmed to Irving that the return of Christ was immanent. They were also eschatological events.¹⁹⁵

Irving believed that the manifestations themselves could only have come after his preaching on the true humanity of Christ which prepared the church for them. Irving said that the Holy Spirit "doth not witness to any system of man, Calvinistic or Arminian, or to any ordinance of man,

¹⁹³ Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 152.

¹⁹⁴ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 72.

¹⁹⁵ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 72-74.

Episcopalian or Presbyterian; but to Jesus, who suffered for us in the flesh, who shareth with us his life and power, and cometh with us in glory.”¹⁹⁶

Drummond says, “Irving’s faith was simple and absolute: he had neither historic sense nor knowledge of the mass of motives and cross-currents which are found in men’s minds and hearts. He was unable to control the current of prophecy he had set in motion.”¹⁹⁷ In his simplicity Irving had a way with people, especially the crowds. One summer Sunday afternoon shortly after their ejection from the Regent Square Church Irving was preaching to a large band of followers out-of-doors. A lost child was held up for the parents to claim. No one came forth. Irving said, “Give me the child” and promptly held it to his chest as he continued his preaching. He wove into his message the importance of every believer being childlike and at the end of the service the parents who had seen the child in Irving’s arms in the make shift pulpit came forward to claim it. Actions like these endeared him to the people.¹⁹⁸

Oliphant’s final analysis is most interesting.

It was thus that the agitating and extraordinary chapter in the history of the modern Church, which we have hereafter to deal with, began. It is not in my province, happily, to attempt any decision *as to* what was the real character of these marvelous phenomena. But the human circumstances surrounding these earliest appearances are remarkable enough to claim the fullest exposition. The first speaker with tongues was precisely the individual whom, under the supposition that they were no more supernatural than other elevated utterances of passion or fervour, one would

¹⁹⁶ Irving, *Facts*, 2.

¹⁹⁷ Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 156.

¹⁹⁸ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 370-371.

naturally fix upon as the probable initiator of such a system. An amount of genius and singular adaptability which seems to have fitted her for taking a place in society far above that to which she had been accustomed; a faculty of representing her own proceedings so as, whether wrong or right, to exculpate herself, and interest even those who were opposed to her; a conviction, founded perhaps upon her sister's well-known character, and the prominent position she herself was consequently placed in, that something notable was expected from her; and the joint stimulus of admiration and scoffing—all mingled with a sincere desire to serve God and advance His glory, were powerful agencies in one young, enthusiastic, and inexperienced spirit. And when to all these kindling elements came that fire of suggestion, at first rejected, afterwards warmly received, and blazing forth at last in so wonderfully literal an answer, it is impossible not to feel how many earthly predisposing causes there were which corresponded with, even if they did not actually produce, the results. In saying so much, I leave the truth or falsehood of the “tongues” entirely out of the question. I do not judge Mary Campbell, much less numerous others who, without the excitement of Miss Campbell’s special surroundings, afterwards exhibited the same power.¹⁹⁹

Irving’s faith was indeed simple. But his unawareness of men’s motives was his weakness. In seeking to understand the entire sequence of events involved both in the West Country of Scotland and in London a critical examination should be applied to each side. Many then and now believe that the entire collection of phenomena was no more than a sort of mass hysteria. Others side with Irving in affirming all the manifestations as genuine and liken them to the precursor of the more recent pentecostal and charismatic movements. If the second opinion is closer to the truth, this writer would

¹⁹⁹ Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 287-288.

add a strong caveat. Drummond's judgement of Irving as having "neither historic sense nor knowledge of the mass of motives and cross-currents which are found in men's minds and hearts" ²⁰⁰ is very astute and equally applicable to present day movements. Any genuine manifestation of the Spirit of God among post modern Westerners will be accompanied by bogus manifestations which are the result of these "motives and cross-currents." It is nearly impossible to separate the genuine from the counterfeit. The aversion to "enthusiasm" in the nineteenth century complicated this task. This is particularly true concerning the gifts of utterance which are so susceptible to subjective beliefs and opinions. The healings can be genuine, but there is no record in Erskine's day that there was any valid medical confirmation unless we presume that Dr. Thompson's silence regarding specific healings, as he was sent to investigate, is in itself a medical confirmation of supernatural healings.

Erskine's Endorsement Of The Manifestations

In his tract on *The Gifts Of The Spirit* and in *The Brazen Serpent* which followed immediately thereafter Erskine had boldly supported the manifestations of the West Country revival as valid expressions of the power of the Holy Spirit for his own day. He opens *The Gifts Of The Spirit* with these words.

IT is very awful and very wonderful to see with what ease and undisturbedness of mind, a man professing to believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, declaring God's judgment concerning all things, can, whilst he reads the

²⁰⁰ Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 156.

descriptions given of Christianity and of the church of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolic Epistles, make the full admission that these descriptions would not apply to the Christianity or the church of the present day. This ease is just the opposite of the peace of God—it is a peace away from God.²⁰¹

The *Gifts Of The Spirit* treatise is not just a defense of the charismatic gifts by Erskine but a full account of his own thinking on the continuance of the supernatural and the Headship of Christ. However, first he affirms what he himself had witnessed among the people of the West Country in Scotland.

After witnessing what I have witnessed among these people, I cannot think of any person decidedly condemning them as impostors, without a feeling of great alarm. I believe that it is of God—and therefore that those who lightly scorn them are contending against God. It certainly is not a thing to be lightly or rashly believed, but neither is it a thing to be lightly or rashly rejected. I say again, that I cannot but hail it, as a blessed prospect, that our God, who has so long refrained himself and held His peace, and kept himself concealed—and who has been as it were shut out of His own world for so many centuries, should again shew Himself, and claim the place that is due to him—and discover to man his utter emptiness, and insignificance.²⁰²

The statement “I believe that it is of God” is definitive and his commentary regarding rejecting the phenomena is clear

²⁰¹ Erskine, Thomas, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, Edinburgh: J. Lindsay & Co., and J.

Nisbet, London, 1830, 3.

²⁰² Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 20.

and extensive. He then goes on to support “a jealous scrutiny into any particular pretension to miraculous gifts,” but adds that “a jealousy or unbelief of their existence altogether, or of their re-appearance, is quite contrary to the law and the testimony—being nothing less than a form of atheism.”²⁰³ Then Erskine links the manifestations to his eschatology. He says that “these things which are now taking place, are just signs of the times.” He notes that most of the interpretation of tongues that had been given, some of which he also witnessed, “tells of the near coming of Christ,” and that “the first word of interpretation that was given, the first word that broke the long and deathlike silence, was, “Behold he cometh with clouds.” He says, “it is a true thing, however strange it may appear to man. The God who made the world is again making His own voice heard in it. And is it not a thing to be desired?”²⁰⁴

Erskine discusses the meaning of tongues and interpretation at some length in this tract and refutes arguments against them. He says by way of personal observation of the unknown tongues,

For the languages are distinct, well inflected, well compacted languages, they are not random collections of sounds, they are composed of words of various lengths with the natural variety, and yet possessing that commonness of character, which marks them to be one distinct language. I have heard many people speak gibberish, but this is not gibberish, it is decidedly well compacted language.²⁰⁵

Erskine even takes great pains in *Gifts* to link his endorsement of these gifts to his central concept of Christ as the Head of the body thus showing that he is not intending

²⁰³ Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 21.

²⁰⁴ Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 23.

²⁰⁵ Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 16.

to merely report his observations of the phenomena but that he has worked them into his overall theological views. He sees the manifestations as an extension of the ministry of the Head of the Body through the then present Body of Christ. “Christ hath become one flesh with you, that you might become one spirit with Him. He hath tabernacled in your nature,—He is in you as the root is in the branch.”²⁰⁶

Similarly, in *The Brazen Serpent*, Erskine affirmed present day manifestations of tongues and interpretation as a sign from God to his generation. Erskine is adamant in his position against empty religion. “Men have *a religion*, instead of *a God*,” he writes, and for this reason “every thing supernatural is rejected.” The people of his own day, he suggests, do not want a relationship with the living God. This causes them to not only “shrink from the thought of the voice of God being again heard on the earth” but also to shrink from the “thought of the personal advent of Christ.”²⁰⁷

Erskine sees this attitude as also affecting one of his favorite issues, the necessity for personal assurance which springs from the sacrificial death of Christ. Personal assurance “calls on them to meet God’s eye.” And “they would have no objection to the doctrine of God’s universal love if that love were the benevolence of the philosophers—but they cannot bear the mention of a love of God unto death for every man, that looks every man intensely in the face, and demands from him a continual response.”²⁰⁸ All in all this inappropriate attitude among Erskine’s fellowmen causes them, in Erskine’s opinion, to dislike “the recurrence of miracles.” Manifestations make God seem too “living” to

²⁰⁶ Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 21.

²⁰⁷ Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2nd

edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 202-203.

²⁰⁸ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 203.

be comfortable. But he affirms in *Serpent* just as he did in *Gifts*, “it is true that miracles have recurred. I cannot but tell what I have seen and heard. I have heard persons, both men and women, speak with tongues and prophesy, that is, speak in the spirit to edification and exhortation, and comfort.” And again Erskine links these manifestations to the Second Coming.²⁰⁹

Erskine’s understanding of the tongues manifestation includes two other aspects. Even though he sees it as the “lowest of the spiritual gifts,” he also sees it as the most permanent in “the present outpouring.” Also, he sees the tongues manifestation as a “sign to unbelievers” and affirms again that he is living in an “age of unbelievers” and links it to Old Testament prophecy: “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.” (Is.28:11) For Erskine it is a sign of the age and “it is a sign to those who have mistaken a system of theology, the precept of man, for the spirit of God.”²¹⁰

Erskine’s Recantation Of His Endorsement

The earliest record of Erskine’s reversal on the matter of these manifestations is in a letter to his cousin, Miss Rachel Erskine, written from Linlathen on 21 December 1833. This is three years after he so enthusiastically embraced the phenomena as valid expressions of the Holy Spirit as shown above. In this letter Erskine says,

“My mind has undergone a considerable change since I last interchanged thoughts with you. I have seen reason to disbelieve that it is the Spirit of God which is in Mr._, and I

²⁰⁹ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 203.

²¹⁰ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 204.

do not feel that I have a stronger reason to believe that it is in others.”²¹¹

There is little reason to doubt that the reference here is to Edward Irving. Erskine goes on in this same letter to say, “You know that Mr. Scott is entirely separated from Mr. Irving and his church, believing it, as I understand, to be a delusion partly, and partly a spiritual work not of God.”²¹² Sandy Scott had been Irving’s assistant. There was a lot of turmoil following the West Country manifestations. Much of this turmoil and disunity centered around Edward Irving and the new Catholic Apostolic Church formed by Irving’s followers. In a letter to Mrs. MacNabb in January of 1834, Erskine wrote:

We have had great trial about the spiritual gifts. The spirit which has been manifested has not been a spirit of union, but of discord. I do not believe that the introduction of these gifts, whatever they may be, has been to draw men simply to God. I think the effect has rather been to lead men to take God, as it were, on trust from others; to be satisfied with God having declared something to another, and not to expect the true fulfillment of the promise, "They shall all be taught of the Lord" . . . I am very much shaken, indeed, as to the whole matter of the gifts. The many definite predictions that have been given and that have entirely failed when tried.²¹³

Erskine could not abide any mediator between the believer and Christ Himself and for him a prophecy left unfulfilled

²¹¹ Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen From 1800-1840*,

William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 204.

²¹² Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 205.

²¹³ Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, 206-7.

was enough reason to doubt the gift of prophecy. For Erskine, Christology is far more important than pneumatology. Anything, even a manifestation, which can experientially weaken the place of Christ in our relationship with God in Erskine's mind, is unacceptable. Therefore, pneumatology is displaced by Christology. The disunity was amplified in Erskine's mind by the issue of Sandy Scott. Erskine did not hold the expulsion from the Kirk of Scott or Irving against them. As a matter of fact, that would have been more of a recommendation to Erskine considering his estimate of the condition of the Church of Scotland at the time. He considered this condition to be "torpid."²¹⁴ William Hanna comments,

The ten years from 1828 to 1838, from his fortieth to his fiftieth year—intervening betwixt two lengthened visits to the Continent,—formed the most memorable period in Mr. Erskine's life. This period witnessed the rise and progress of what was commonly called the Row or Gairloch Heresy; the springing up in alarm and indignation of the Calvinism of the Church of Scotland, to put its foot upon this movement, and stamp it out; the alleged miraculous manifestations, the healings, the speaking with tongues, the prophesyings at Port-Glasgow; the shooting up into the heavens ecclesiastical of that most brilliant meteor, Edward Irving, and the sad and sudden quenching of the great light in a great darkness, out of that darkness the strange form emerging of a Church, in its order and offices novel, elaborate, ornate, complete. Of all these Mr. Erskine was not only a highly interested spectator; in most of them he was deeply and personally concerned.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, Letter to Dr. Chalmers of 10 Nov. 1827, 124.

²¹⁵ Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, Remarks by the editor, 126.

In addition to the turmoil there was the issue of inspiration versus organization. Erskine was very close to Sandy Scott and his wife. The new organization of the Catholic Apostolic Church was formed around the personality of Irving himself. The Scotts had come to consider Irving's charisma as what they referred to as "animal magnetism."²¹⁶ They also believed that Irving had given in to the "strength of the ecclesiastical" as a result of the influence of the High Church clergy in London who had sympathized with Irving's "prophetical views." On top of this was the issue of whether "organisation produces life" or whether "life alone can organise." As a result the Scotts had totally separated themselves from Irving and even a last attempt to reconcile failed when Irving told Mrs. Scott, "Mr. Scott or I am in dangerous error. The end will show."²¹⁷ Erskine's confidence in the movement and in the leaders was quickly eroding.

Erskine's confidence in the movement was not, however, directly linked to his beliefs about what should be the conditions within the church regarding manifestations. He goes on to affirm,

This does not change my mind as to what the endowment of the Church is, if she had faith, but it changes me as to the present estimate that I form of her condition. God is our all, and having God, we have lost nothing. These gifts are but signs and means of grace; they are not grounds of confidence; they are not necessarily intercourse with God; they are not holiness, nor love, nor patience ; they are not

²¹⁶ Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, Letter to Rachel Erskine of 21 Dec. 1833, 205.

²¹⁷ Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, 205.

Jesus. But surely they shall yet appear, when God has prepared men to receive them.²¹⁸

This is Erskine's affirmation that the charismatic New Testament manifestations should be a normal part of church life. Erskine does stand with Irving in his reason for the continuation or non-continuation of these gifts: the faith of the church. He insists that such gifts are not "grounds for confidence." When he says that they are "not necessarily intercourse with God,"²¹⁹ this is a statement greatly different in zeal from his initial affirmations of them. He sees the fruits of the Spirit as a firmer proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit within the church. However, he continues to believe that these gifts will manifest when the church is properly prepared to receive them. There is no evidence that Erskine ever recanted his belief in the place of these gifts in the church or his confidence that they would one day be restored.

Nor does his rejection of these gifts amount to a total rejection of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the West Country revival. He continues in the same letter to Rachel Erskine,

I cannot believe that there has been no pouring out of the Spirit at Port-Glasgow and in London; but I feel that I have to wait in every case upon the Lord, to receive in my heart directly from Himself my warrant to acknowledge anything to be of His supernatural acting, and I have erred in not waiting for this.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 205.

²¹⁹ Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 205.

²²⁰ Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 206.

He continues to believe that the Holy Spirit was poured out in the West Country. His only regret is that he was carried away with his endorsement of the gifts at that time.

Four years later Erskine published the retraction of his endorsement of these manifestations in a special note at the end of the Conclusions to *The Doctrine Of Election*. Here he says that he believed that those who had been involved were most sincere and had a “marked native simplicity and truth of character.” His reference here was particularly regarding the McDonald brothers who were prominent in that West Country revival. He makes it clear that he is referring to “the remarkable manifestations” which he had formerly supposed to be “miraculous.” For Erskine to remain steadfast to such an affirmation after the manifestations had slowed or ceased or had been in some way disgraced by turmoil and self interest would have been difficult. Erskine does, however, affirm his ultimate position when he says, “ But I still continue to think, that to any one whose expectations are formed by, and founded on, the declarations of the New Testament, the disappearance of those gifts from the church must be a greater difficulty than their re-appearance could possibly be.”²²¹

There was a part of Erskine that hungered for the appearance of such things but could no longer endorse what he had witnessed as genuine. Erskine’s disappointment over the divisions and turmoil in the movement that he had witnessed was taking its toll. Erskine’s continued belief in some type of overall genuineness in the West Country revival can be seen in a letter to Vinet written in December of 1844, seven years after his published denial of the gifts in 1837 and

²²¹ Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General Tenor of*

Christianity, London: Printed for James Duncan, Edinburgh: W. Innes, Glasgow: J.

A. Begg, 1837, 571.

eleven years after his recantation to his cousin Rachel in 1833. He writes,

I am very thankful that you have got any good out of the "Brazen Serpent." During the time, that I wrote it I was conscious of communion with God in my own spirit; and whether the view which I take of the history be just or not, I believe that it contains much of the meaning of Christianity.

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It should be noted here that by 1844 Erskine still acknowledged a profound personal spiritual experience during the time of the revival and of being "conscious of communion with God in [his] own spirit." In fact, by 1844 he also seems in doubt as to whether his view of that history was "just." He still affirmed that *The Brazen Serpent* contained "much of the meaning of Christianity." This could indicate that it was most likely the turmoil and the resulting disunity which immediately followed that revival that turned Erskine against the authenticity of the manifestations.

²²² Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen From 1840-1870*,

William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 48.

Conclusions On The Impact Of The West Coast Revival

In the end Erskine could not accept the validity of any manifestation which was not accompanied by the fruits of the Spirit, especially Christian love. It was equally difficult for him to see how God could allow such extremes and errors of practice. It was all or nothing. And for Erskine, as far as the manifestations were concerned, in the end it had to be nothing. But his conviction concerning the presence of the Spirit continued not only in his own confession as found in these letters and notes but also in his continued emphasis in his writings throughout his life on an active and dynamic Holy Spirit. The statistical research in chapter six and the appendix of this thesis clearly reflects Erskine's continuing emphasis in his writings and letters after this period on a Holy Spirit who is the subject of many powerful verbs. There is a pronounced increase in this dynamism of the Holy Spirit in his writings after the revival which does not diminish even after Erskine's recantation of his endorsement of the manifestations. It seems clear that overall Erskine always attributed a powerful dynamic presence to the Holy Spirit after the West Country revival regardless of his opinion of the then present-day manifestations during the revival.

Erskine's Christology Contrasted With Irving's

In this chapter we shall examine the Christology and resulting pneumatology of Thomas Erskine compared to that of Edward Irving as taken from their own writings. Erskine and Irving along with John McLeod Campbell comprised the "influential triumvirate" in nineteenth century Scottish

theology.²²³ Christology effects pneumatology. A particularly high Christology, perhaps even bordering on the docetic, can produce a low pneumatology. If it is affirmed that Christ did what he did during his earthly ministry by the power of his own divinity, then the need for the power of the Holy Spirit in his ministry is diminished. However, if it is affirmed that Christ accomplished his entire ministry as a man by the power of the Holy Spirit, then it can be said that the corresponding Christology is lower.

Three Men

Edward Irving (1792 – 1834) was a Scottish pastor and Reformed theologian who was put into a position by the circumstances of his day that required him to prove to his own satisfaction that one could be both Reformed and Charismatic or Pentecostal. His writings are clear although antiquated in wording, often using Elizabethan phrasing sounding very much like the King James version of the Bible. He produced much in a short time and was apparently subsequently driven to poor health and an early death by the controversy that he did so much to fuel. Irving wrote as a theologian defending experience. He was deposed from the Kirk in 1833 for heresy regarding the humanity of Christ and died of pneumonia in 1834.²²⁴

Since Irving died in disrepute, much about him was soon forgotten. Carlyle reports in the autumn of 1866, “He was scornfully forgotten at the time of his death; having indeed sunk a good while before out of the notice of the more intelligent classes. There has since been and now is, in the

²²³ Cheyne, A. C., *The Transforming of the Kirk; Victorian Scotland's Religious*

Revolution, Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1983, 88-9.

²²⁴ Strachan, C. Gordon, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, Peabody:

Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, 200-201.

new theological generation, a kind of revival of him, on rather weak and questionable terms, sentimental mainly, and grounded on no really correct knowledge or insight; which, however, seems to bespeak some continuance of vague remembrance, for a good while yet, by that class of people and many that hang by them.”²²⁵ It would be a long time before there was any significant interest in Irving again. Irving’s followers formed the Catholic Apostolic Church, but Irving died shortly thereafter. The continuation of that denomination was a work of Irving’s followers not of Irving himself. Ultimately, Edward Irving is not remembered for his pneumatology but for his Christological position on the true humanity of Jesus. Karl Barth picks up on the theme after reading *The Doctrine Of The Person of Jesus Christ* by Scottish professor H. R. Mackintosh. Barth says that it had been concluded by some that “the Son of God when He came into the world did not then assume a human nature such as this nature was when it came forth from God’s hand, before the fall, before it had in Adam . . . become sinful and mortal. On the contrary, it was a human nature such as was in Adam after the Fall and is in all his successors. . . . The same doctrine was delivered about 1827 by the Scottish Theologian Edward Irving and it led to his excommunication.”²²⁶ In 1988 Gordon Strachan, published his *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving* which sparked a present day revival of interest in Irving and his writings.

Irving, like Erskine, hoped to see revival in Scotland and he believed that a recognition of Christ’s true human nature and

²²⁵ Carlyle, Thomas, *Reminiscences*, Vol. II, London: Macmillan and Co., 1887, 1-2.

²²⁶ Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1956, Vol. I, 151.

of his dependence on the Holy Spirit would contribute to this revival. He sees evidences of revival when he says,

At length, O God, the church hath awaked; but let it not be to the mental impotence of the lunatic, or to the frenzied madness of the maniac. It seems more like the madness of the maniac among the schismatics; but, oh! suffer it not to be impotence of thought and paralysis of feeling in thy church. The Church of Scotland is awaking; her chains of sleep are breaking: O God! may it not be to destroy those her sons who have aroused her out of the sleep of death, in which she might have lain till the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.²²⁷

Irving's hope for revival in the Kirk is not linked merely to the appearance of manifestations. It is also linked to an understanding of the Person and holiness of the Son manifested in human flesh. Out of this flows the manifestations and the revival that they so desired.

We have the Father ever active in supporting and glorifying his Son, and reducing all things to his dominion; we have the Son ever active in supporting the fallen creature; we must also have the Holy Ghost ever active in some equally continuous and necessary way of action. And this we exhibit from the first in his generation, which put Holy-Ghost life into the human substance; then in his holy life, which was the life of a regenerate man a continual Holy-Ghost life

²²⁷ Irving, Edward, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human*

Nature, London: Printed by Ellerton and Henderson For Baldwin and Cradock, 1830, 121.

(Luke i.); in his miracles, and knowledge, and wisdom, which was by the anointing of the same Holy Ghost. ²²⁸

John McLeod Campbell (1800 – 1872) was also a Scottish pastor who was deposed in 1831 for his position on the universal free offer of the Gospel. He labored patiently at his little chapel in Glasgow for many years until he was finally recognized as a theologian with an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow primarily due to his book *The Nature Of The Atonement* which had been published in 1856. ²²⁹ We include Campbell here as he was both a contemporary and a friend of both Irving and Erskine. Campbell communicated with both Irving and Erskine. However, the comparisons in this chapter are primarily between Erskine and Irving.

The statistics in this thesis indicate that Thomas Erskine (1788 – 1870) does indeed have a strong pneumatology. This is not, however, a traditional Trinitarian pneumatology which is developed by defining and contrasting the persons within the Godhead. Erskine was not interested in this. “The distinction of persons in the Divine nature we cannot comprehend.” ²³⁰ Erskine’s massive references to the

²²⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 121-122.

²²⁹ Campbell, John McLeod, *The Nature of the Atonement and Its Relation to Remission of Sins and Eternal Life*, London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1959. (1st edition published by Macmillan & Co. in 1856.)

²³⁰ Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion*, 9th edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 74.

actions of the Holy Spirit, especially in his post-revival works, display a decidedly dynamic pneumatology as defined in John McIntyre's taxonomy of pneumatologies. This is further discussed in the following chapter ten. It is possible that Erskine's friend, Edward Irving, can provide a more traditional pneumatology as well as some dynamic pneumatology which is a companion to Erskine's.

Erskine's biographical information and his intellectual, cultural and theological context is presented in chapters one through four of this thesis. Erskine hungered for the supernatural and for revival in Scotland. Erskine says that the world dislikes the recurrence of miracles, but that it is true that miracles have recurred. "I cannot but tell what I have seen and heard. I have heard persons, both men and women, speak with tongues and prophesy." He believed that the appearance of such signs was confirming a "great approaching crisis" which was actually the "reappearing of the Son of man upon the earth."²³¹ He defends the gifts as he had seen them himself no doubt in the West Country phenomena. "And I would entreat my reader not to throw this averment from him as the raving of an enthusiast, but to compare it with the word of God." He goes on to say that the gift of tongues, when not accompanied with interpretation, is the lowest of the spiritual gifts but that it was also the only permanent gift possessed by those who were experiencing the "present outpouring" of the Holy Spirit. As the gift of tongues is also given as a sign to unbelievers, Erskine asserts that since the age in which he lives is an age of unbelief that this gift has been given as a sign to the people of his own age. "The gift bestowed is a sign to the age. 'For with

²³¹ Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*,

Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 203.

stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.’ This is a sign to our age.”²³²

Erskine was not adverse to human feelings, but not for the sake of the feelings themselves. In his *Essay On Faith* Erskine talks about “feelings” 56 times. Here he says, “We cannot believe that tidings are joyful to ourselves, unless we see that in them which excites our joy. The matter of joy lay in the birth of the Deliverer. . . .Behold these feelings, and then contemplate the glorious character of God; and let us join in praise to Him who hath condescended, through such obscure avenues, to introduce the light of that character into the soul of man.”²³³ For Erskine the object that excites the feeling is the important thing. He did not endorse the “metaphysical labyrinth” which an emphasis merely on feelings produces.²³⁴ Erskine is particularly clear when differentiating between feelings and revelation.

From this metaphysical habit of considering and attending to the mind itself, and the mode in which it is impressed, rather than to the objects which make the impression, arose the division of faith into different kinds; and thus the feelings of men were substituted in the place of the tangible word of revelation. A true faith does not properly refer to the mode of believing, but to the object believed. It means the belief of a true thing. As a correct memory does not refer to the process by which the impression is made, but to the accurate representation of the fact remembered. It means the remembrance of a thing as it happened.²³⁵

Erskine spends much time in his writings developing his Christology with Christ as the federal Head of a new

²³² Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 204.

²³³ Erskine, Thomas, *An Essay on Faith*, 2nd edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes,

London: Ogle, Duncan & Co., 1822, 52-53.

²³⁴ Erskine, *Essay on Faith*, 11.

²³⁵ Erskine, *Essay on Faith*, 19.

human nature. He refers to the actions of the Holy Spirit on many occasions. Erskine sometimes sees the living Word as partially filling the role of the Spirit. This can blur the distinction between the Second and Third persons of the Godhead or it can be an expression of emperichoretic pneumatology.

Thomas Erskine's regard for the greatness and influence of the human conscience is also very high. This could produce some confusion as to the role of the Holy Spirit if not properly understood. This was discussed in detail in chapter eight of this thesis. Erskine's concept of the place of the conscience is the result of his understanding of the "First Bond" of the flesh which Christ has in common with all men. This was covered in chapter seven.

Erskine's progressive conviction throughout his life in a type of universalism also influences his theology. From both God's side and from man's side he can finally find no reason for any eternal separation between God and man. Even though he continually stresses the offensiveness of sin and depravity in the sight of God, his confidence in the inevitable accepting love of God overshadows his concerns about sin and depravity.²³⁶

Comparison Of Erskine And Irving

When we compare Thomas Erskine's Christology and pneumatology to that of Edward Irving several things stand out. Edward Irving began his popular publishing career with the release of his book entitled *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*. This book was composed of a series of sermons which were published at the request of Irving's parishioners as they had been inspired and helped by his

²³⁶ Erskine, Thomas, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, Edinburgh:

Edmonston and Douglas, 1870. 14.

messages on the subject. At the time of their publication there was no expectation of the turmoil that they would produce.²³⁷ When the objections to Irving's teaching on the true humanity of Christ started to grow, Irving felt it necessary to write two defenses. The first defense was *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* in which Irving defended the true human nature of Christ and, therefore, the necessity for the power of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus.²³⁸ This led to charges against Irving that he was teaching that Jesus was in some way tainted by sin. As a result Irving published his second defense, *Christ's Holiness In Flesh*.²³⁹ In both of these works there is a high pneumatology which is expressed both dynamically and traditionally. Irving refers to the Spirit 183 times in *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* and 283 times in *Christ's Holiness In Flesh*. The passages in these works where there are long clusters of references to the Holy Spirit are particularly rich in pneumatological content.

In *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* Irving argues for the true human nature of Christ from Scripture, the Creeds of the primitive church and of the Church of Scotland, and from the standpoint of objections to the true doctrine being considered. He then considers what other doctrines might stand or fall by a lack of understanding of the true humanity of Christ. These include the bearing upon the work of the Father, the work of the Son, the work of the Holy Ghost, the scriptures, faith and union with Christ and regeneration and holiness.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Strachan, *Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 26.

²³⁸ Strachan, *Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 35.

²³⁹ Strachan, *Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 46.

²⁴⁰ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, vi.

In laying down the essentials of his Christology Edward Irving first deals with his references to the “sinful properties and dispositions and inclinations to our Lord’s human nature.” He says that when he speaks of this he is speaking “of it considered as apart from Him, in itself.” He is “defining the qualities of that nature which he took upon him, and demonstrating it to be the very same in substance with that which we possess.”²⁴¹ This is at the heart of Irving’s Christology and the entire purpose of *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature* is to confirm the true humanity of Christ. Irving affirms that the work of Christ was to “reconcile, sanctify, quicken, and glorify this nature of ours, which is full of sin, and death, and rebellion, and dishonour unto God.”²⁴² His chief argument with his detractors is that they believe, according to Irving, that the human nature of Christ underwent a change in the miraculous conception. For Irving this is unacceptable and, in fact, nullifies our salvation. “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.”²⁴³ Only the resurrection changed the human nature of Christ. Irving sees no difference in the nature or quality of regeneration wherever it appears in the New Testament. It is only that Christ received a regenerate “Holy-Ghost life” in his human nature at the moment of conception. This is the same “in kind” as all regenerate persons receive. However, the “measure” of Christ’s regeneration is greater because He had perfect faith as a result of being a Divine Person. Irving holds to the orthodox

²⁴¹ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

²⁴² Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

²⁴³ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

definition that the personhood of the Son is in His Divine nature and not in his human nature and that the Son is of one substance with the Father.²⁴⁴ Irving maintains that the only way to see the Divinity of Christ in action is to accept this position and to realize that the Divine person of Christ prevailed against the rebellious human nature “with which he clothed himself, and under whose load he came.”²⁴⁵ This is how salvation was accomplished for humankind. All Christology and soteriology is “a dead letter of fiction, a folly” if this position is not maintained.²⁴⁶ Irving says,

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: not from the Holy Ghost’s mixed up with either the substance of body or soul - which is to confound Godhead and manhood - but by the Holy Ghost, under the direction of the Son, enforcing his human nature, inclining it, uniting it to God; even as the devil, likewise a spirit, without mixing in it, did enforce it away from God. And this doth Christ in the salvation of every sinner resist, overcome, and destroy the devil’s power and work.²⁴⁷

This is the very heart of Irving’s position. We see a great deal of similarity to Erskine’s Christology here especially in the image of the devil working as the antagonist

²⁴⁴ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

²⁴⁵ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, viii.

²⁴⁶ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, viii.

²⁴⁷ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, viii.

of the Holy Spirit. However, Irving is more precise in his Trinitarian views. The Holy Spirit works under the direction of the Son in Jesus' own life and struggle against the fallen nature. The Holy Spirit is never "mixed up" with the human nature, even that of Jesus. Throughout his argument in this pivotal work, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, Irving examines how any departure from his position effects the work of each member of the Godhead. "Let it be believed concerning Christ's human nature otherwise than hath been taught above . . . that it owed any of its most holy actions and passions, thoughts and purposes, to any other cause whatever than the personality of the Son, and the Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost . . . I will shew the fatal consequences, the subversion of all foundations to which it leads."²⁴⁸ He approaches his entire argument in a structured Trinitarian manner.

Regarding the work of the Father Irving says that if we depart from the position that he teaches regarding the true humanity of Christ, "first, it deprives us of all knowledge of God's inclinations and affections towards us, and defeats us of all heavenly influences whatsoever."²⁴⁹ He continues,

If Christ, when he became man, did take manhood altered and specially prepared for him, and not manhood as every man hath it; then are God's affections which were shewn forth to him, no affections shewn forth to us, but the contrary, - they are affections shewn forth to something different from us; and therefore the work done in and for Christ is no signification of any work which God intendeth to do in and for any other man, elect or not elect. . . . It is not

²⁴⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 111-112.

²⁴⁹ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 112.

the nature offending which is thus and thus entreated, but another different and distinct from it. He is no more the representative of man to teach mankind what is God's good will towards them. He is no more the *publicus homo*, the substitute standing in the stead of a race; he is no more the first begotten whose experiences are to be the experiences of all the regenerate people.²⁵⁰

The very nature and motives of the Father are at stake. Furthermore, the work of the Son is similarly effected for the same reason. In order to redeem us our nature must be assumed. The work of the Father and the Son is tied together in the Godhead. He says, "If Godhead in the person of the Son did not embrace our nature, as I and all men possess it, that nature, which I and all men possess, is not yet embraced by God. It is not stooped unto; it is not lifted up; it is not redeemed; it is not regenerated; it is not raised from the dead; it is not seated on the throne of God."²⁵¹ Furthermore he affirms that the Father must have a human although unique person to whom he can express his fullness.

But he must have a person towards whom to manifest the ocean-fulness of his being, and this person he found in his own God-head – the person of his own Son; one who would not fail under the severity of his holiness, nor be buried in despair under the hidings of his countenance; one who would not be intoxicated with pride by the beams of his love, nor transported into extasy by the full unction of his Spirit; one whom temptation could not carry from the firmness of his purpose, nor cruelty force from the complacency of mercy.

²⁵⁰ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 112-113.

²⁵¹ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 114.

That Person who could thus bear to have emptied out upon him the fulness of Godhead's various affections, could be no less than God, the Son of the Father.²⁵²

Then Irving moves on to the integrated involvement of the Holy Spirit in his Christology and soteriology.

It is in the section regarding the impact of the true humanity of Christ on the work of the Holy Spirit where Irving's pneumatology shines forth. Here in slightly more than four short pages he refers to the Holy Ghost 23 times and to the Holy Spirit once. In a thoroughly Trinitarian statement Irving says, "As the office of the Father is from his secret concealments, the unsearchable abode of his Godhead, to manifest himself unto sinful creatures; and as it is the office of the Son coming out of his bosom to sustain the fulness of the Father's Godhead, and render it into the comprehensible language of human thought, feeling, suffering, and action; so is it the part of the Holy Ghost to furnish him for such an undertaking."²⁵³ Irving sees the origination of all things with the Father and the revelation of the Father as the function of the Son. It is the function of the Holy Spirit to furnish the Son with the supernatural ability to manifest the Father to the world. Irving goes on to make it clear that the two natures of the Son must not be mingled or confused when he says, "The person of the Son in coming into manhood must not bring with him Godhead properties, though he bring with him a Godhead person: that is, no action which he doth in the manhood must be ascribed to Godhead properties, or else Godhead and manhood are mixed and confused together; which were it allowed would

²⁵² Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 115-116.

²⁵³ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 118.

introduce man-worship, creature-worship, and all forms of idolatry.”²⁵⁴ For Irving, not only is such a confusion of natures inconsistent with orthodoxy, but it also yields idolatry in that it endues the human nature with more than human abilities. In this he make a distinction between the properties of Godhead and the Person of Godhead. According to Irving the abilities of the Son during his humiliation are supplied by the Holy Spirit. Irving says, “With what then doth the Person of the Son serve himself in fulfilling this great work of bringing the fulness of the Godhead into a body, of manifesting God in the Flesh? He serveth himself with Holy-Ghost power which the Father bestows upon him.”²⁵⁵

Irving believes that in this we see true Divinity and true humanity in Christ. In this humanity all of the intellectual and emotional abilities of mankind are seen. In all of this the integrity and importance of the Holy Spirit is maintained in an overall Trinitarian theology as expressed in:

And thus, while all the power to redeem is proved to be from God in the person of the Father, and all the activity from God in the person of the Son, all the ability is proved to be from God in the person of the Holy Ghost; and yet no property of the Godhead is mingled with the properties of the manhood: they are kept as far distant as the orb of the invisible is from the orb of the visible, as the orb of the incomprehensible from the orb of the comprehensible, the orb of the uncreated from the orb of the created.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 118.

²⁵⁵ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 118-119.

²⁵⁶ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 119.

For Irving those who deny the true humanity of Christ necessarily, by their own scheme of thinking, routinely mix the two natures of Christ or they mix the human nature of Christ with the divine nature of the Holy Spirit himself. It is easy to understand why Irving would say that they mix the two natures of Christ as this is an age old problem. However, his understanding about mixing the human nature of Christ with the divine nature of the Holy Spirit is more unique. In this Irving is saying that according to this form of the error it is said that in the incarnation the Holy Spirit so changed the flesh of Jesus so that it was not the flesh of his mother but an entirely different human flesh which was not subject to temptation or human weakness. In this Irving sees the divine nature of the Holy Spirit as being infused into the incarnated Son which is just as great an error as mixing the two natures of Christ himself when he says, “One of two things the opposers of our Lord’s true humanity do necessarily: either they mix the Divine nature of the Son with the human, or they mix the Divine nature of the Holy Ghost with the human nature of Christ. . . they effectually mix the divine and the human substances. They confuse Godhead and manhood.”²⁵⁷

Throughout his argument Irving is careful to maintain three concepts. The two natures of Christ must not be mixed. The human nature of Christ must be exactly the same as human nature found in the entire race. Christ’s dependency on the Holy Spirit must be the same as our own. Irving says that he is simply maintaining that “the Son, actuateth his human nature pure and unmixed” by the “life or energy of the Holy

²⁵⁷ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 119.

Ghost.”²⁵⁸ Or that he is arguing for “a human nature such as we find it every where else; and a Holy Ghost life in it, which the Son continually useth, and acteth unto the regeneration of it after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.”²⁵⁹ And, “I am arguing for the human nature of a completely and thoroughly regenerated man; for creature substance sustained by a divine person, and of him informed with the power of a new life, which he receiveth out of the invisible Godhead; and useth as God's gift for the purpose of doing his will.”²⁶⁰

In comparing Erskine to Irving we cannot say that Erskine is not Trinitarian in practice. He makes many references to the persons of the Godhead. He affirms the Trinity while proclaiming the true human flesh of Christ.

He [Jesus] had always access to his Father in the Spirit, that is, in the eternal life, because that life was not under the condemnation; but whilst he bore about with him the natural life, the man Christ Jesus could not appear in the holy of holies. In all this the holiness of God was unspeakably declared and glorified. The holy One of God become flesh, could not stand in the pure presence of God, because the flesh was tainted. And that holy One, by accepting this punishment of sin, testified to the righteousness of the punisher. And he knew what he testified, for he was God, and he was man. He saw the Father's love in its fulness²⁶¹

Erskine affirms the Trinity in speaking of the life of God in every man when he says, “The life became light; and, as light, it shines on every man,—and thus the life of God is

²⁵⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 119.

²⁵⁹ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 120.

²⁶⁰ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 120.

²⁶¹ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 64-65.

really given *to* every man. But it is not life *in* the man until he sees the light. Then the light returns into its original character, and becomes *life* again in his soul,—and he becomes a habitation of God through the Spirit,—he has fellowship with the Father and the Son.”²⁶² Erskine affirms the Trinity in his outbursts of admiration for God, “Oh, what a God! What a Father! And this Spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus, having been given to him as the reward of his work, and is now laid up in him for us, still bears our griefs and carries our sorrows.”²⁶³ He affirms the Trinity when he speaks of knowing God in the Eucharist.

It is only in the Spirit of the Son that we can know the Father.

...

If we follow the inward word, whilst yet we know it only as the word of God, and not as the word of a Father, he will lead us by it unto the Son, and into the Spirit of sonship—and then shall we know the Father, and find the flesh of Jesus meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; then shall we discern the Lord’s body, and the Father’s dealing with his body, in all the Father’s dealings with us—and his commandment will be no more grievous.²⁶⁴

Erskine affirms the Trinity in the sanctification process.

Why this—the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, wherever it is received, will do in the members according to what it has done in the Head; it is the Spirit of the Father’s “own Son,” which trusts the Father, and which sheds out the life of the flesh in Paul, and accepts the punishment in him, even as it did in Jesus himself, and thus makes him also a co-operator

²⁶² Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 90.

²⁶³ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 172.

²⁶⁴ Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General*

Tenor of Christianity Illustrated Especially from the Epistle To The Romans, 2nd

edition, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 65-66.

with the Father, in condemning sin in the flesh, and a partaker in Christ's righteousness.²⁶⁵

Whereas Erskine affirms the Trinity by his references to the members of the Godhead, he only uses the word "Trinity" once in all of his writings.²⁶⁶

Irving and Erskine are essentially in agreement regarding the functions of the members of the Godhead and in the Holy Spirit's transforming effect upon believers. The differences between them are primarily in the area of their *approach* to the subject and not in their actual content. Erskine is aware of the actions of the Godhead and reflects them in his discussions of other subjects. Irving bases his discussions on a theological Trinitarian approach. Irving says,

Now behold what a wonder-working person is this Holy Ghost, who doth convey the infinite Godhead into the Son, acting with the limitations of manhood; and in his hands becomes a power capable of converting the creature from its state of rebelliousness and alienation and wickedness, into the state of holiness and love, and being at one with God (at-one-ment)! This office of the Holy Ghost, first to unite the invisible Godhead with the visible Son; and secondly, to furnish the Son for the work of bringing human nature into perfect reconciliation with, and obedience of, God: this, which is the essence of all sanctification of wicked men, is utterly undone upon their ruinous schemes of giving to Christ another substance than that of the virgin.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 228.

²⁶⁶ This reference is used in a negative sense. Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 94.

²⁶⁷ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 120.

Irving's argument rests on his belief that the human nature of Christ was identical to his mother's. In this Irving maintains that this nature was rebellious and prone to sin in Christ and that the perfect obedience of the Son aided by the Holy Spirit subjugated the human nature to the Divinity of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit working in Christ the man. Although Irving was always careful to maintain that Jesus had no original sin and that he never sinned himself – the subject of his next book, *Christ's Holiness In Flesh* – he steadfastly refused to allow any doctrine that taught that the human nature of Jesus was in any way different than our own. Irving rails against those who would teach a different human nature in Christ when he says, “They bring into existence their amalgam of human and divine natures; and say, Behold it, behold it, how wonderful it is, how unintelligible it is! This redeems us, this reveals God to us. This darkness is the light of God. - Oh it is a most strange delusion, it is a strong delusion.”²⁶⁸

Erskine preferred to speak of “fallen nature” instead of “sinful flesh” as Irving so often did. Erskine's choice, although sometimes still offensive, was a wiser choice because Irving received much criticism for his use of the phrase “sinful flesh” as applied to Christ. Erskine understands Christ as taking our fallen nature especially in regard to his sufferings.

But why was this suffering of our nature in the person of Jesus needful? It was a *fallen nature*; a nature which had fallen by sin, and which, in consequence of this, lay under condemnation. He came into it as a new head, that he might take it out of the fall, and redeem it from sin, and lift it up to God; and this could be effected only by his bearing the condemnation . . . So this spectacle of agony and ignominy

²⁶⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 120.

is just an exhibition of a righteous love of God passing knowledge, manifesting itself to the human nature, in the only way by which that human nature, fallen as it is, can be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and fitted for communion with God, and for participation in his glorious blessedness,—namely, in a way of suffering.²⁶⁹

Trevor Hart says of Erskine’s position on the atonement,

His [Erskine’s] doctrine of atonement is one which, whilst it differs significantly from the traditional penal theories of Evangelicalism, cannot be accused of treating the divine justice lightly. Where it differs is in its understanding of just how that justice is satisfied in the work of Christ, and this stems in turn from a basic difference in understanding concerning who God is. Thus, justice is defined precisely as *the justice of the Father*, a justice which is the very expression of his love for all his creatures, and not, therefore, to be misconstrued as some equal and opposite force held in uneasy balance with it, or (worse still) some more ultimate principle of Godhead than love itself.²⁷⁰

Erskine sees a loving Father sending the Son to take on our fallen nature and by way of suffering redeem all human flesh. Barth also agrees in principle with Irving and Erskine regarding the sufferings of Christ. Christ suffers as “a man” under “the wrath and judgment of the electing and loving God. To be flesh is to be in a state of perishing before this God. . . . *He* stands under the wrath and judgment of God, *He* is broken and destroyed on God. It cannot be otherwise.

²⁶⁹ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 33-34.

²⁷⁰ Hart, Trevor, *The Teaching Father: An Introduction to the Theology of Thomas*

Erskine of Linlathen, Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1993. 21-22.

It has to be like this. His history must be a history of suffering. For God is in the right against Him. He concedes that the Father is right in the will and action which leads Him to the cross.”²⁷¹ Erskine was a pioneer who, like Irving, has come to be appreciated. Erskine and Irving are in basic agreement in this key area of Christology; the flesh of Christ was one and the same with all human flesh.

When Irving was forced to further defend himself against charges that he taught that Christ was tainted by sin he further developed his Christology and pneumatology in *Christ's Holiness In Flesh*. The heart of *Christ's Holiness In Flesh* consists in what Irving calls Four Propositions which he enumerates clearly.

“Proposition first; the human nature which the son of God took was of the virgin's substance.” ²⁷²

“Proposition second; the human nature which the Son of God took unto himself, was wholly and perfectly sanctified by the Holy Ghost in the act of conception.” ²⁷³

“Proposition third; the human nature thus wholly and perfectly sanctified of the Holy Ghost in the conception, was upholden in the same state, by the same power of the Holy Ghost.”²⁷⁴

“Fourth and last proposition; that our Lord's human nature, being wholly and perfectly sanctified in the conception,

²⁷¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part One, 175.

²⁷² Irving, Edward, *Christ's Holiness in the Flesh*, Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1831, 76.

²⁷³ Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 78.

²⁷⁴ Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 86.

underwent no process or progress of sanctification, as it needed none.”²⁷⁵

This is the essence of Irving’s Christology as restated in the sequel to the earlier work. The Second Proposition is of particular importance following on Irving’s opening statement that Christ took human nature as he found it but was not responsible for the condition in which he found it. The human nature of Jesus was sanctified at the moment of conception. This distinction alone separates Jesus as the spotless sacrifice from the rest of human nature. Irving maintains that this sanctification is of the same type as found everywhere else among God’s people with the single exception that it was effective from the moment of conception in Jesus.

Furthermore, as expressed in the third proposition, this sanctification was maintained throughout the life of Jesus by the power of the same Holy Spirit who originally brought it about. This puts Irving’s pneumatology squarely in the center of his Christology.²⁷⁶

According to the fourth proposition Jesus therefore required no growth in sanctification in his life on earth even though his sanctification was of the same sort as that which we are required to grow in throughout our lives.²⁷⁷

The key to our salvation is in Christ’s overcoming work. “This, which is the natural idea of atonement, or reconciliation, hath not only no reality, but even not so much as a meaning, upon any other supposition than that Christ took our fallen nature, with all its natural and inherent propensities; and overcame these, and brought it into union

²⁷⁵ Irving, *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh*, 91.

²⁷⁶ Irving, *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh*, 86.

²⁷⁷ Irving, *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh*, 91.

with Godhead, and hath fixed it there for ever by the resurrection.”²⁷⁸

This, however, does not exhaust Irving’s understanding of atonement. He also develops his understanding of his concept of redemption. “Again: if by atonement they understand redemption, which is the word commonly used in Scripture . . . , then, as the word means purchase from bondage, three subjects are involved in it: first, Who is the captive? secondly, What is the bondage? and, thirdly, How is the redemption effected? The answer to the first of these questions is, The will of man is the bondsman. The bondage is the oppression of the devil, the world, and the flesh; and the redemption consisteth in delivering the human will out of this bondage.”²⁷⁹ The human will is delivered from bondage by the redemption of Christ. This indicates agreement with Erskine’s position when he says,

We are continually in contact both with the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the Devil; these are the two seeds in us, the one leading us to God, the other leading us from him—and every act of our being, inward as well as outward, according as it is done under the influence of the one or the other of these spirits, gives strength and predominance in us to that spirit; thus the work of *assimilation* is continually going forward; one or the other is continually gaining ground, and when the process is concluded, we shall be found to be wheat or tares, children of the kingdom, or children of the wicked one.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 88.

²⁷⁹ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 89.

²⁸⁰ Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 48.

Additionally, Irving takes to task any who base their theology or Christology on words and not the Person of Christ saying, “theology is not the knowledge of the word, but of GOD: or if it be of the Word, it is of THE WORD MADE FLESH. They speak now-a-days as if truth were still merely in a book, and not realized in a Person.”²⁸¹ Irving in no way denigrates the price of atonement when he says, “It only remains that we speak of the atonement with relation to the price, the ransom, or sacrifice, by which it was purchased. And this I say, with all orthodox divines, standeth in the death of the Son of God: by which I believe that sin was abolished and an everlasting righteousness brought in; as it is written: ‘By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Christ once for all.’ This act of dying, and in death offering a spotless body, I believe to be the great and principal act of Christ's work in the flesh.”²⁸²

Some Insights From Campbell

McLeod Campbell is not unique among the three in seeing very personal applications of the effects of the Incarnation in the lives of Christians. He sees what he calls “hidden capacities of humanity revealed in Christ.” He asserts that the long concentration on legal righteousness in Protestantism has obscured the real dynamic effects of the life of Christ as it effects Christians and that “they were turned away from seeing God in Christ, so have also been turned away from seeing man in Christ, seeing themselves in Christ, seeing the capacities of their own being in Christ.” For it was “not for his own sake but for our sakes did the Son

²⁸¹ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 90.

²⁸² Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 90.

of God reveal the hidden capacity of good that is in man by putting forth in humanity the power of the law of the Spirit of His own life – the life of sonship.” Campbell quotes Romans 8:3-4 in this regard: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”²⁸³ If the preoccupation with legal righteousness causes people to forget about the person of Christ, then they are just as likely to lose his humanity as his divinity. Without this it is then not possible to see how the same power of the Spirit which Jesus used to enforce his divine will on his own human nature can be used to enforce that same divine will on any human nature. This power of the Spirit over human nature is exactly in Campbell’s mind the life of sonship. Preacher-like he urges all to apply themselves to learn to see in the revelation of Jesus’ humanity what we all are capable of and that the twofold discovery of God and man in Christ will enable us to function at a new and higher level of truth and morality.²⁸⁴ This is Campbell the preacher and pastor at his applied best and at the heart of the issues that he believed needed clearing up in his day. Irving’s motives were very much the same. Although Erskine was not a part of the established ordinate, his insights and motives resonated with his two companions.

In agreeing with Campbell’s understanding of the hidden capacities of humanity as developed by Christ, Erskine develops it still a little further. As Erskine sees Christ as the federal head of all flesh accepting the punishment that that flesh is entitled to, he quotes Christ, “The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” as being of one mind with God, in hating and condemning sin, and longing for its

²⁸³ Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 168.

²⁸⁴ Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 168.

destruction. He urges “submitting ourselves to the process of its destruction, and setting our seals to the righteousness of God in the process.” He recognizes what he calls “the death-pang of the crucified head thrilling through the member, and accomplishing in it what it did in the head.” It should be an actual taking pleasure in the mortification of the desires of the flesh. This is an actual sharing with Christ by the believer in the process that brings about this mortification. And he makes it clear that without sharing in the death pang of the flesh Jesus’ followers can not share in the exaltation of the federal head. For Erskine, this removes the entire concept from the usual meaning of substitution when he says,

This is no substitution. It is a great substance—a great reality. No creature that has sinned against God can have fellowship with Him again, except by accepting the punishment of sin” and “Christ suffered then for a purpose directly opposed to the purpose which is implied in the doctrine of substitution, he suffered not to dispense with our suffering, but to enable us to suffer, *as* he did. . . . The atonement consisted in Christ's accepting the punishment of sin as the head of the nature; and the sanctification of his members consists in their accepting it also in the power of his Spirit dwelling in them.”²⁸⁵

This reference to the Spirit illustrates that Erskine believed in the influences of the indwelling spirit but his concept of this “great reality” rests primarily on his understanding of the established fact of what is already accomplished for all humanity and not so much on the changing power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of depraved humanity. Regarding the sufferings of Christ

²⁸⁵ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 48-49.

Erskine stands somewhat apart from both Irving and Campbell. Erskine's "death pang" emphasizes a total identifying with Christ by members of his body, the church. For Erskine the suffering is one suffering and it forever puts away the sin of the flesh. Irving sees the atonement as what he calls "at-one-ment" and presents his federal Christology.

'At-one-ment, or reconciliation, is a mere notion, figure of speech, or similitude, until it be seen effected in the constitution of the person of Christ, under these two wills or operations. I object not to the similitude taken from paying debts, nor to the similitude taken from redeeming captives, not to the similitude taken from one man's dying in the room of another, . . . but the similitudes are, to my mind, only poor helps for expressing the largeness, fulness, and completeness of the thing which is done by the Word's being made flesh, and which is exhibited as done, by the placing of the Godman on the right hand of the Majesty on high, visible Head, effective Ruler of the created worlds, and of the intelligent creatures which possess them. ²⁸⁶

Irving reinforces his federal position saying, "He was the great Head of the regenerate race, the great Base of the regenerate world." ²⁸⁷

A Unique Discussion From Erskine

There is another place in Erskine's writings where his Christology helps define his pneumatology. In a minor later work of Erskine's entitled *The Divine Son* which is a part of those writings published posthumously as *The Spiritual*

²⁸⁶ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 48.

²⁸⁷ Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 110.

Order And Other Papers, Erskine does speak of relationships within the Godhead. This is not done with the intent to develop a pneumatology, but to better define the second person of the Trinity as the title implies. Erskine begins with “What, then, is Jesus Christ ? We have been taught to answer, He is the eternal Son of the Father, But what do these words mean? What is the meaning of the *eternal Son of the Father* ? We ought surely to ask this question, for we must be sure that if Christianity is a revelation of God, every part of it, especially so marked a feature in it as this, must have a meaning most important for us to understand, because it is connected with the character of God and our relation, to Him”²⁸⁸ Erskine continues by seeing the Son as being the font of all goodness and says, “The only goodness and the only intelligence that we can conceive of are human goodness and intelligence, and we are obliged just to expand these into infinity when we would form to ourselves an idea of God. And seeing that we are constrained by reason to acknowledge that all goodness must be in God.” He continues with a sort of a definition of the relationship between the Father and the Son, “we ought not to refuse the suggestion that there must be, as it were, two hemispheres in the Divine nature,—upper and under, active and passive, Giver and Receiver, Father and Son. Unity is not singleness but rather completeness, and love can only, by minds like ours, be considered complete when it has sympathy.”²⁸⁹ This would seem to be an ideal place to consider the relationships within the Trinity as a whole. However, Erskine continues with, “This idea of God as

²⁸⁸ Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, Selected From The Manuscripts Of The Late Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen, 2nd Edition, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876, 32-33.

²⁸⁹ Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 36.

comprehending both the active and the passive of all goodness, distinguished by the personalities of Father and Son but united in one common Spirit, seems to me to give the perfect conception of love and of blessedness in love; and when we add the idea that the spiritual creation stands in the Son, we have the assurance that it also is intended to be included in that fellowship of love.”²⁹⁰ What is evident here, even though “Spirit” is capitalized, is a diminishing of the personhood of the Holy Spirit Himself. This is an example of how Erskine, unlike Irving, does not quite present the Spirit on equal terms with the Father and the Son in any formal or theological sense.

The only other reference to the Spirit of God in *The Divine Son* reads thus: “And as he [Jesus] is himself essentially the Truster, the Believer, the Receiver from his Father, so he is on that account the fit channel of the life and Spirit of God to the whole spiritual order; his presence in each individual of that order giving it its filial relation to the Father, and its consequent capacity of receiving out of the fulness of God.”

²⁹¹ Here Jesus is the channel for the Spirit of God to enter the entire spiritual order; the Spirit is the presence of Jesus in each person in the order. For Erskine this is no doubt another reference to the “First Bond” discussed in chapter seven of this thesis. Since the Spirit of God is already in each person as a presence, then each person has the capacity to receive the fullness of God which is the establishment of the “Second Bond,” the spiritual bond. Such reasonings do not deny the usefulness or the divinity of the Spirit of God. Erskine’s abundance of references to the Spirit of God and his actions throughout his writings certainly affirm his

²⁹⁰ Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 37.

²⁹¹ Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 44.

usefulness and no where does he deny his divinity. However, from all of this there comes forth an overall impression that since Erskine has not approached the Spirit of God in a Trinitarian manner, there is a certain weakness in understanding the Spirit as an co-equal member of the Godhead. Erskine's dynamic pneumatology shines through because he knows from scripture and experience that the workings of the Spirit are the vitality of the church. But his formal pneumatology is weakened because of his non-Trinitarian approach to the Spirit and because of his belief in the place of the "First Bond" and conscience in man's relationship with God.

4. Final Conclusions

Erskine and Irving are in agreement regarding Christ as the Federal head of the church. In his federal theology Erskine sees a change in the distribution of eternal life after the resurrection when Jesus becomes the Fountain of life. Erskine says, "He was born of the Spirit, and he lived *personally* by the Spirit, but it was not till his resurrection that the Spirit dwelt in him *federally*. He was raised by the Spirit, and then the Spirit dwelt in him as the Head of the body. And so to know the power of his resurrection, is just to receive that Spirit, which raised him from the dead and dwelt in him as the common Head after the resurrection."²⁹² When Erskine makes Trinitarian statements, they are usually typically dynamic. Erskine believes in the believer being filled with the Holy Spirit. He urges all to "come with all boldness and child-like confidence unto God your Father, praying him that he would glorify his Son in you, by filling you with the Spirit and the life of his Son." Consistently Erskine reminds us that believing in the "First Bond" of the flesh is what enables us to receive the Spirit. "For it is but a

²⁹² Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 159-160.

fibre of Christ that is in you until you have his spirit, and you cannot have his spirit until you know the love that gave him into your flesh, and unto death for you.”²⁹³ This is not a particularly high pneumatology because for Erskine the ability to choose the bond of the Spirit is resident in the bond of the flesh. Irving sees a stronger place for the Holy Spirit as reflected in his Trinitarian statements as found above.

Erskine and Irving are not in agreement on one vital non Christological issue, that of universalism. Irving believes in “universal reconciliation” or a free “door of entrance” to salvation. However, after universal reconciliation he believes in particular election. He makes a convincing case that the true humanity and the atoning life and sacrifice of Christ is the basis for both doctrines.²⁹⁴ He calls universalism “a most damnable heresy” and says that election is no hindrance to the “freeness of our door of entrance.”²⁹⁵ Redemption is comprehensible and visible to us and election is invisible and incomprehensible and is revealed individually.²⁹⁶ In other words, it is a mystery that can not be fully understood but he must maintain both in his understanding of scripture.

Erskine died believing in a chance to receive the gospel after death. In *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man* Erskine says, “Is it a correct description of man's state in this world to call it ‘a state of probation?’”²⁹⁷ He follows with “I am constrained to adopt the assurance that this purpose follows man out from his present life through all stages of being that lie before him unto its full accomplishment. And, indeed, unless we accept this hope,

²⁹³ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 106.

²⁹⁴ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 177-203.

²⁹⁵ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 248.

²⁹⁶ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 251.

²⁹⁷ Erskine, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, 5.

we must give up the idea that the purpose of God in creating man was to educate him, as it can not otherwise be maintained. . . . There can be no real gospel, no real good news for man, which does not hold out this assurance.”²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ Erskine, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, 14.

Irving and Campbell departed from the Calvinism of their day along with Erskine. However, Irving and Campbell could not go as far as universalism with Erskine.

Therefore, overall we can see a basic agreement between Erskine and Irving regarding a Federal theology in which Christ is the federal head of the new race. They both affirm the true humanity of Christ in the same flesh as all mankind. They both affirm a salvation wrought by Christ in which the sufferings of Christ hold a central position. Erskine's "death pang" that resonates through out the entire body is somewhat more extreme than Irving's acceptance of penal theory. Both Irving and Erskine see an important role for the Holy Spirit in the person and work of Christ. However, Erskine's belief in the "First Bond" of the flesh somewhat diminishes the Spirit's role in salvation. Only Erskine followed the way of universalism in his theology; a position to which Irving was strongly opposed. We can say that Irving was more structurally Trinitarian than Erskine although Erskine has a strong dynamic pneumatology. Irving was always convinced that he was totally reformed and, as a minister, sought to prove this position in all of his writings. While Erskine, not an ordained minister and with considerable Episcopal leanings, had a wider freedom in developing his theology and his pneumatology. It is only fair to say that Irving died at the age of 42 in the midst of great turmoil while Erskine lived to the age of 82 and had many years to consider and reconsider his theological positions. It would have been interesting to see if Irving would have changed or mellowed with more years.

SECTION THREE

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I. Introduction

What would you say Christian if I were to tell you that within a short time you could be confident that you were operating in the power of the Holy Spirit most of the time very much like Jesus operated in this power? Impossible? Not according to anything found in scripture. How then? Well, you may have to adjust your thinking, and your beliefs, particularly in one thing; Jesus was like you in his life in the flesh. If you believe that, really understand and believe it, then you will also be able to believe that you are like Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It takes a while for this to be established in a person. You do not have to be particularly studious or intelligent to understand. God does not want things to be that way. But you do have to commit yourself to study and be willing to change your beliefs to agree with God as He reveals truth in His written word. Most probably this will challenge your personal “orthodoxy”. You may think that I am trying to get you to believe something about Jesus that is not good. You have to be willing to “try it on”. If, in the end, you decide that you can not believe this, then you can forget it and throw this little book away. If, however, you decide to press on and are actually convinced that what I am saying is true, then in the end you will have a whole new way of life.

After a while, you will settle down again inside and the short time of relative discomfort will be worth it. No wondering why the New Testament Christians seemed to operate so far above the way believers operate today. No more hopeless feeling of failure in you relationship to God or to His call on your life. Would it be worth it? Are you ready to go on?

Let me assure you that no where in this book am I saying or implying that Jesus was not God or that He ever sinned. Let me say that again. Jesus was God. Jesus is God. Jesus never sinned. When he became flesh, (John 1:14) he

volunteered to be subject to the same limits and conditions that you are subject to; the Father and Jesus Himself allowed no way out of this agreement in his mortal life.

When you finish this book - read it as slowly as you want and as many times as you want - you will be assured of Jesus' unity with you in flesh. And you will be assured of your unity with Jesus in the Holy Spirit. This is not a new teaching. It is New Testament teaching which has been lost and hidden from Christians for generations. Now it has returned.

You will know this because you will be established in the truth at the very foundational level. Yes, established, permanently at the deepest level within you. No more wondering when the Holy Spirit might surprise you to bless you or to use you, although He can still do this if He wants. You will know who you are and what you can do from an abiding faith within you. This faith will be based not on feelings, or circumstances, or teeth grinding effort, or mere knowledge, but on a solid understanding of who Jesus was and is and who you are and will be. This knowing is from a firm foundation.

The Gathering Of The People

The largest and most zealous portion of orthodox Christianity today is the Spirit-filled, or Pentecostal, or Charismatic Church. All other groups are either standing still or losing members as each year passes. There will probably never be what you could call an organizational unity among these churches. If this were even possible, it would most likely be the work of men and women and not of God. There will probably arise new associations of churches which will help mold these churches, fellowships and groups together. But in the final analysis the unity is, after all, a unity of the Spirit in the universal Body of Christ on earth. This used to be called the Catholic Church, in the sense of being world-

wide, which should not be confused with the Roman Catholic Church headed by the Pope in Rome. Spiritual unity is really all that is necessary for the Body of Christ to accomplish the task that God expects of it. However, there is so much inconsistency of belief and biblical ignorance in this Spirit-filled church that there is little spiritual unity. Some will say that we need stronger teachings and beliefs in this area or in that. We should know the Bible and we should understand about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and many other things. But our real unity across all denominational lines, denominations old and new, is after all, the unity we have in Jesus Himself. This unity already exists in the Spirit and we are aware of it every time we find fellowship with someone from another group, or church or country who loves Jesus and we encourage one another. But this unity is not strong in what we believe. Granted there are many things about Jesus and God that our minds can not grasp. But God has given us a book called the Bible so that we can understand the things of God which will strengthen us in our faith as individuals and as the Body of Christ. This understanding and unity must be around the person of Jesus Himself. Nothing else will do. Jacob, renamed Israel by God, said “the scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” (Gen. 49:10) And Jesus Himself said, “and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”(Jn. 12:32) No one and no thing but Jesus can unite the church. He is our standard and our rallying point. His own person is our unity and the Holy Spirit honors any effort that puts Jesus in the center of our understanding and teaching. This is what this book is about, Jesus.

The Offense Of The Incarnation

Long ago in a very important meeting of church leaders it was proclaimed that in Jesus Christ there was a union of two distinct and separate natures united in one

Person forever. These two natures are his divine nature, He is God, and his human nature, He is also a man, a human being. A wise man has said that the idea of a God has never offended anyone. All societies recognize some sort of a God, be it a good god or a bad god. What is offensive to the human mind is the idea of a man who claims to be God.²⁹⁹ Jesus is exactly that. And this Person with two natures is at the same time difficult to understand and the most wonderful thing that there is to know. As Christians we are not excused from considering who He is. In this lies all of our salvation.

If we wish to avoid offense and still retain a belief in God, the easiest thing to do, and this is in fact what has been done widely in the church for centuries, is to affirm His divine nature loudly and forget his human nature. When we do this, however, the entire wonderful mystery of “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”(Jn. 1: 14) is forgotten.

Believers will easily accept His divinity and even fight vigorously to defend it. But if you try to “flesh out” a true understanding of Christ’s humanity, a humanity that was just like our own, the sparks begin to fly. This is because the humanity of Jesus offends people. And it offends precisely because of his divinity. The idea of a man who claims to be God is offensive. He is then no longer remote. He is no longer apart from us. He is no longer far away. He is not avoidable. This offended religious people in Jesus’ day. It still offends religious people. They can not keep him at bay. It should not be offensive, however, to anyone who really wants to know Jesus and walk with him as a way of life. To that person his humanity is good news indeed.

It is good news because he has walked in our shoes. He has felt our limitations, lived with them, felt the helplessness, the helplessness that we feel when a beloved relative or friend dies, like Lazarus. If not for the shortest

²⁹⁹ Emil Brunner, *The Mediator, A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1934), 340.

verse in the New Testament, we might be tempted to think that Jesus was clinically detached from Lazarus' death because he intentionally let him die so that he could raise him back to mortal life. But, "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) How many times have we been told that he was weeping because of the unbelief of Mary and Martha and the other Jews. Or that he was weeping because he knew that this miracle would target him for eventual crucifixion by the leaders of the Jews. But what is wrong with the most obvious meaning? Does God indeed give us the scriptures to confuse us? Or are they a revelation? Jesus wept because his good friend went through the pain and suffering of being sick and dying. And Jesus was helpless to stop it because the Holy Spirit hindered him from doing anything. Now, he would raise Lazarus but Lazarus would have to die yet again to wait the final resurrection into a glorious body.

Jesus identified with us so that we could identify with him. So that he could represent us before the Father as a faithful high priest. So that we could have what he has. The man Jesus is an eternal part of the life of Almighty God. And he is our big brother. We are related by blood, natural and redeeming blood.

It is my intention in this book to explain this mystery in a simple and logical way. With the help of the Holy Spirit I will use the right words and you will understand them as they need to be understood. Once you understand with your mind and with your heart, you will never be the same again.

A Certain Mystery

In considering the humanity of Christ while not forgetting His divinity, the mystery of it all should always be appreciated. Even though we strive to understand, there will always be a part of it that we can not grasp. Spiritual things always have a certain mystery about them. This is not a bad mystery, like a crime, but a good mystery that exists because

the ways of God are so far above the ways of people. (Is.55.8) If you think that you totally understand, then you do not. After all, “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.”(Deut. 29:29) We do not expect to know everything in this life or even in the life to come. We will never be gods. During life in eternity in the resurrection it will seem like we are gods compared to the life we have here, but we do not have the ability to have life in ourselves; we always draw life from God. God has life in himself (Jn. 5:26), that is why he is God.

Things That Do Not Change

“It is common to find Jesus’ identity with us in manhood either denied or in various ways curtailed, under the erroneous impression that a deeper reverence is thereby paid to his higher being.”³⁰⁰

When discussing such wonderful things as we will be considering in this book, it is necessary to put down a few things as absolutes. When talking about such things, sometimes we can become confused and think that someone is teaching something that is bad for believers. Part of this is because of something which has been called “the poverty of language”. This means that no matter how many words we use, there never seem to be enough of them or exactly the right words because what we are trying to explain goes so far beyond what we are able to understand. But because we love God and do want to understand the things of God better, we have to use what we have, which is words or language. Also, because the kind of things that we will consider together in this book can sometimes be controversial, it is

³⁰⁰ Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1912), 384.

important to mark out the important things and make them clear. So here are a few things which do not change. Remember that whatever I may seem to be saying in this book, the following are always true. These are not the only things that are true but they are the most important ones. So here goes:

1. There is only one God.
2. This one God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. This God made the world which can be seen and also all that can not be seen.
4. Jesus Christ is the Son. He is fully God and, since he was conceived in Mary's womb, is fully man as well.
5. Jesus never sinned.
6. Jesus lived the perfect life which was pleasing before the Father and defeated Satan, sin and the world in the flesh.
7. Jesus died on the cross to take away the judgment and guilt of the sins of mankind.
8. Jesus rose bodily from the dead and lives in a place called heaven with God the Father.
9. Jesus and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to live inside Christians.
10. There is one family of God upon the earth and this family can be called the church, the body of Christ, the family of God, or Christians.
11. There are and always have been people on the earth we are not a part of the family of God.
12. To become a part of the family of God a person has to believe in Jesus Christ.
13. When a person does believe in Jesus Christ, his or her sins are forgiven, he or she receives eternal life, and he or she will receive a new resurrected body when Jesus returns bodily and literally to the earth.
14. There is one book called the Bible which has 66 smaller books in it which is the Word of God. This book is the last

word on what we believe although often people interpret various parts of it differently.

These truths never change no matter what else happens. They are the most important because all other truths about the Christian faith rotate, as it were, around them. Many Christians who believe differently about other things in the faith still agree on these few beliefs that I have listed here. If at any time you suspect that I do not believe the right things, just refer back to this list to be sure of what I consider to be the most important.

Jesus Was Like You And Me

“If the manhood of Christ is unreal, at any remotest point, God has not quite stooped to unity with man. He has not come so low as we require; there has been reservation and refusal; some part of our burden, after all, has been left untouched.”³⁰¹

The one thing that is hardest to hold in our minds is the fact that Jesus was, always was, and is really God, and also that he became a man. He was no less God for becoming a man and he was no less or more of a man because he was God. When he was on earth for those 33 years, he was both the revelation of God and the concealment of God. He was the revelation of God because He still had the character of God. No one else had that. He was the concealment of God because he left his power behind voluntarily. Because he left his power behind, his glory was concealed. His glory could be seen in his character but not in his power. So his glory was at the same time both revealed and concealed. In other words, people of a childlike faith could see his glory in his character, in his love and understanding and lowliness;

³⁰¹ Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 404.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.” (Mt. 11:29) But no one could see his glory in his power because he left it in heaven. Sure, he did miracles among them, or rather, God the Father did as Peter said, but these were done by the Holy Spirit which came upon him as a man at his baptism. We can do similar things by the power of the Holy Spirit just as he did. So you can not say that Jesus was half God and half man because he was all God and all man; only he emptied himself of his power and the glory associated with his power before he came. Only once did the Father allow men to see a glimpse of this power and glory and that was when he was transfigured before Peter and James and John (Mt.17:2). When he was restored to his glory after the ascension, he was restored to all that he had as God before he emptied himself, plus his manhood was also glorified as the “firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:28). Now we can look forward to sharing this glory with him in the resurrection.

Orthodoxy - which has been defined as those beliefs that have been held by most of the church most of the time - holds to both the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. However, his humanity has often been neglected. In order for the church to have the vitality and stability that it needs, both the divine nature and the human nature of Jesus have to be understood well by all. It is not my intention here to prove or discuss the divinity of Jesus to any great extent. In the first place, this is a matter of faith and can not be proven to anyone who is determined not to believe it. In the second place belief in His divine nature is much less often unclear in the minds of believers. Suffice it to say that Jesus Christ was and is God Almighty just as surely as His Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit are also God. Most Christians believe this.

However, when it comes to the true humanity of Jesus, that is often another story. This is not well believed

and it is to our detriment. If we do not see the true humanity of Jesus, we do not understand our relationship to Him. As a matter of fact, once we have accepted God as our heavenly Father, as Jesus teaches us to do in the gospels, we have more need of a human Jesus than a divine one. We have a loving Father who is God Almighty and not a man. We need a brother who is not only God but fully human. We can identify with a big brother who knows what it is like to walk in our shoes. The only way to get into trouble here is to say that Jesus sinned because He did not. In every other way He was as human as we are. His mother Mary was no different than any other wholesome teen-age virgin. Jesus gets his humanity honestly from her. But this does not fully cover the subject. If we are to understand just how human Jesus was, (I say “was” for now. We shall look at the “is” later on.) a better and bigger explanation is necessary.

It says in Philippians chapter two, verse seven in the New American Standard Version that Jesus “emptied himself” when he became a human being. He grew for nine months in Mary’s womb and was born into our world. An understanding of this “emptying” is the only sensible way to understand how Jesus was truly a man with the limitations of a man while He lived and ministered for over 33 years among us. Once we understand this, the actions of Jesus in the gospels will make sense to us more than they ever have before. We will then be able to see Him as a man of faith operating by the power of the Holy Spirit just as He expects us to do. We will no longer say when we sense that a certain thing is expected of us, “Well, that was Jesus!” But before launching into this you need to be ready to be stretched a little. You need to be willing to re-think some things that you may have always believed. It may seem threatening or even disrespectful at first until you begin to understand and “balance up” again.

II. What Jesus Left Behind

Most every Christian knows that the Son of God changed a lot when he came to earth. We know that “the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us”. (Jn 1:14) What is not often clear is everything that was involved in this change. In order to come and be one of us Jesus had to leave much behind. In this chapter we will consider what he gave up to become one of us. This was not some kind of an act that he put on while he was with us. He actually changed to become one of us. When we begin to understand how much he left behind in heaven with the Father, we become even more overcome with the greatness of his love and of the Father’s love for us and we begin to realize our own possibilities as believers.

The Three Omnies

In order to become one of us Jesus gave up three of the most important characteristics of God. I call these The Three Omnies; Omni-presence, Omni-potence, and Omni-science. When these words are divided in this way, it is easier to understand them. The prefix “Omni” simply means “All” or “Completely”. God is All-present, or everywhere at the same time. In order for Jesus to become one of us he had to give this up for 33 years to live in time and space with human beings. This is obvious because he took a localized body like every human being has. He could only be in the place where that body was located. He got this body from his mother Mary. It was a body like her body, a human body. When Jesus gave up one Omni, he also had to give up the other two. Omni-potence means to be all powerful. Jesus gave up his all powerful ability to become a man. His heavenly Father retained his power and the Holy Spirit kept his also, but Jesus gave his up for those 33 years. Omni-science means to know all things. Jesus also gave this up to become

a man and the gospels are full of examples of things that he did not know. For instance, the time of his return (Matt. 24:36), who touched him when he was in the crowd (Luke 8:45), and the location of Lazarus' body (John 11:34).

Some may ask, "How is this possible? What you are and what you have are yours, unless you become disabled in some way." Jesus did not become disabled in the sense of getting sick or old or infirm. God the Son in agreement with the Father and the Holy Spirit has the ability to give up anything he wants by a simple act of his will. This is not a pretend giving up but a real parting with these abilities. Exactly because he is God, he can do things that we can not do. Why did he do this? His reason for doing this, giving all this up for a time, is his great love for his people. It is not because he failed or became weak but because he loves us so much. "But," someone might also ask, "what about the things Jesus did and knew that were supernatural? After all, he was able to do and to know things that must have needed the very powers that you are saying that he left behind in order to become a man." Those things which Jesus did which were obviously supernatural, he did by the power of the Holy Spirit. These days we call such things the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit which are given to the body of Christ on earth, the believers. Jesus did these wonderful things as a man by the power of the Holy Spirit just as he expects us to do them today.

God's Will Is The Most Powerful Part Of His Nature

Christians are often fond of the verse that says, "Your sins I will remember no more." (Heb. 8, Jer. 31) This is good for the believer because he knows that he is completely free from condemnation or personal judgment before God. But how does God do this? The only way humans can forget is when their brain powers deteriorate. But God can decide to forget. His will is stronger than his memory. So when we are

brought into the New Covenant, he decides to forget our sins and iniquities. That in itself is a wonderful subject to consider.

Not only is God's memory subject to his will but Jesus' very power as the eternal pre-existent Son is also subject to his will. So is his consciousness of his state in glory. So when he and the Father made their private agreement about what he would do, he decided to put aside his power and his conscious awareness of his glorious state to become a man. When he was born of Mary, only his spirit knew. Here is where it is important to understand the difference between the spirit and the soul or mind. As he grew, he became more and more consciously aware of what he had been. By twelve years of age he knew whose son he was. After he received the Holy Spirit without measure, his human spirit knew all that the Father wanted him to know.

His Glory

Jesus left the three Omnies behind for 33 years. He had them again after his death on the cross and the resurrection. We will get to that also. Another important thing that Jesus left behind in order to become a man was his glory. One way we know this is because he talked to the Father about when he would get his glory back (Jn.17:5). Another obvious way that we know he left his glory behind is in the gospel record. Jesus appeared very much like other men. When the soldiers went to arrest him, they waited for Judas to identify him (Mt.26:48). There was no halo around his head like we see in the old paintings. At the transfiguration (Mt. 17) his glory was seen by a special act of the Father and the Holy Spirit by the three: Peter, James and John. But this was a one time happening. Jesus left his glory behind to become a man. This, like the three Omnies, was not a hiding or a veiling but an actual leaving behind. Consider, if Jesus had not left his glory behind, it would not have been possible for people to

even look at him for the brightness of his glory. All would have known immediately that he was God. Faith would not have been necessary. It would have been like the children of Israel in the wilderness when they asked not to be exposed to God but rather that Moses should speak to God for them (Heb.12:19-20). Jesus left his glory behind to become a man.

There was the covenant between the Father and the Son ³⁰²

Before Jesus came, he and the Father made a covenant between themselves. This has been called the Covenant of Redemption. What has been called the Covenant of Salvation is the one that God makes with us as believers. A covenant is an agreement between two persons which promises to be concerned foremost for the needs of a person or persons other than yourself. It is based on trust. A contract, which is usually a legal agreement, is not based on trust. God always keeps his covenants even if we do not. God considers a covenant breaker to be the worst sort of person. When it says in I John 1:9 that God is ‘faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,’ it is referring to the Covenant of Redemption between the Father and the Son. This covenant can not be broken because both persons involved are God and they never fail to keep a covenant. The Father always forgives and cleanses us because of this covenant and what the Son did to establish it. He established it with his own blood. In this covenant Jesus agreed to live a perfect life for you. He did this and defeated sin in the flesh. He had to deal with temptation and weakness just like we do because his human nature, or flesh, and his body was the same as ours. The Holy Spirit gave him the power to do this. The Holy

³⁰² Edward Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, From The Collected Writings of Edward Irving in five volumes, edited by Rev. G. Carlyle, Vol. 5 (London: Alexander Strahan, 1865), 122.

Spirit gives us the very same power. Our victory is based on Jesus' victory.

*The Flesh Of Jesus Was Mortal And Corruptible*³⁰³

The flesh that Jesus got from Mary was mortal; it would die eventually. And it was corruptible; it would decompose in the grave if something was not done to change this. This is the part which is shocking to many people. No, Jesus was pure, Jesus was holy, so he could not have been like us, or even like his own mother. There is no contradiction here. We are not saying that Jesus sinned, or that Jesus was not holy. But we are saying that his human nature, his physical body and his inner human nature, was the same as his mother's. Only the Roman Catholics wrongly believe that her flesh was not sinful like ours. She was like every person descended from Adam and Eve. Jesus' flesh, outer and inner, was like hers; it was hers. Jesus could die physically and he did. If he had not gone to the cross, he would still have had mortal flesh. The Father promised him that he would not see corruption or decay after death (Ac.13:35). This promise would not have been necessary if decay was not possible. Jesus was temptable. If he was not temptable, then the temptations (Luke 4) were yet another show put on for our benefit. But it is not a sin to be tempted. It is a sin to give in to it. Jesus did not give in.

But that does not mean that it was easy. He had a job to do which was to defeat sin in the flesh. He had to win where Adam and Eve lost. He had to win where we lose. If he did

³⁰³ Edward Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* (London: Printed by Ellerton and Henderson For Baldwin and Cradock, 1830), 108-116.
Edward Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 135.

not win, then all was lost. No one could win. And the battle had to be real, not make believe. (Ro. 8:3) When he won, he won for you. He won for you in two ways. He won for you so that he could go to the cross for you and be the perfect sacrifice. So then by your taking his sacrifice by faith, God no longer sees your sins - ever! But also by winning for you he defeated the flesh in his own life and he can enable you to do the same. Your flesh never improves. It never gets better. Don't let anyone tell you that you can be changed or "sanctified" in your flesh in this life so that it no longer wants to sin, no longer wants to descend into bad things. If you believe that, you will lose a lot and you will be discouraged all your life in your Christian walk. Flesh has to be conquered. It has to be crucified. But Jesus makes that possible for you. You just identify with Jesus. His cross will work for you. You do not have to try to crucify yourself. That will not work.

So now you may say, "I have sent my flesh to the cross for today - we do live one day at a time - now I am going to be holy; but it seems like my life is empty. I am ashamed that I am not content with the Holy Spirit in my life. There seems to be something missing. How can I live? How can I love? How can I relate to people around me? They might pull me away from God. They might cause me to stumble. People are even beginning to say that I act like I am too good for them. What is going on? What has happened to me?" If you have ever had these feelings, you are normal. If you are a sincere Christian, you probably will have these feelings. You are designed to live as a person, as a human being. Human beings have flesh - bodies, minds, feelings. You are not designed to live without them. What you need is flesh that has been fixed, made subject to the will of the Spirit and to the will of the new person that you are in Christ. You want to live to please God. When you are pleasing God, you are pleasing yourself. You want to be free to be human. Jesus has done what was needed for you to be free like this.

He will give you his flesh. It has been fixed. That is what the next chapter is about. Get a hold on it and you will never be the same.

Christ Is Fallen Manhood Redeemed ³⁰⁴

You see, Jesus had to be fallen manhood redeemed. If he had another flesh, then he redeemed another race. But we believe that he redeemed our race, the human race. So his flesh, both the outward body and the inward soul, had to be like ours; not just similar to ours but exactly like ours. Jesus had no original sin at any time but he did have the ability to sin. When Jesus was tempted, he could have chosen to give in. Sometimes he even wanted to give in. But he did not. He did not because the Holy Spirit helped him just like he helps us. He did not because he had perfect faith because of the encouragement of his Divine nature. He did not because he stayed in close fellowship with the Father; he prayed a lot. Now we do not have perfect faith, but our faith is growing and Jesus is always willing to let us use his. (“I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” Gal.2:20) We have grace to recover us when we fail. We will consider this more later. And we can spend time with the Father also, although we often do not take full advantage of this privilege. We have to be constantly reminded, and I say it more than once in this book, that temptation is not sin. It is the giving in to temptation that is sin. Jesus was often and sorely tempted; but he did not sin. He suffered more in his temptation than we do because he never gave in. He had to resist it constantly and in doing so he changed his flesh even before the resurrection. He defeated sin in the flesh.

³⁰⁴ Edward Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 125-27.

What Was God's Motive?

The reason that the Son came in this manner was purely for love. It was not out of weakness. It was not for any other reason than the love of God for people. It is most important to remember that love alone is the reason that he gave up so much for us. It will help you to remember and to understand that Jesus is both truly God and truly a genuine man. It will also help you to keep from going too far in the wrong direction. Not only did Jesus give up much in heaven when he became flesh, he also gave up many things that we can have as humans in this life. He gave up a permanent home (Mt.8:20). Some will want to say that Jesus was married or sexually active. When Jesus said that some keep themselves from sex for the sake of the Kingdom of God, he was speaking of himself (Mt.19:12). He gave up many human things during those 33 years for the sake of his people.

III. Some Important Questions

Now let's look at some examples from the gospels of how Jesus operated as a man.

Did baby Jesus know that he was God?

Did he cry?

How much did Jesus learn about his calling by the time he was twelve years old?

Did Jesus eat a lot as a teenager?

Did he notice girls?

What did Jesus have to learn as he grew up?

What was it like for Jesus when he was baptized and the Holy Spirit came upon him?

Was Jesus caught off guard when he fell asleep in the back of the boat and the storm came upon them? How did he rebuke the storm?

Why didn't Jesus know the day or the hour of his own second coming?

Was Jesus really surprised at the faith of the Roman centurion?

Why did Jesus ask, "Who touched me?" (Lk. 8:45)

Did Jesus expect to find fruit on that fig tree or did he curse it just to teach the disciples a lesson?

Why did Jesus have to ask where Lazarus was buried?

Did Jesus want to get out of going to the cross when he asked the Father to let 'this cup pass from me'?

Was Jesus a better, or a stronger, or a smarter man at age 33 than at 18?

Why did Jesus say that Christians would do the same things that he did and even greater things?

Was Jesus' position in heaven better after his resurrection than it had been before he came to earth?

Some Answers

"In any case, it is only by degrees that the full meaning of his relationship to the Father . . . can have broken on Jesus' mind. The self-sacrifice in which his earthly life originated drew a veil over these ultimate realities. . . we are lead to believe that the veil must gradually have worn thinner and more translucent, until . . . he knew himself the Son conditioned in and by humanity."³⁰⁵

What do the answers to all these questions mean to you and to your walk as a Christian believer? Whether or not your life was greatly changed when you became a believer, it will be after you understand the answers to questions like these? After we have discussed them all, you can then draw your own conclusions.

³⁰⁵ Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 391 and 481.

No, baby Jesus did not know in his mind that he was God anymore than another infant knows his last name or what his father's occupation is.

Yes, baby Jesus cried. Since infants make their needs known by crying, and Mary and Joseph were not perfect parents, baby Jesus would have had to cry to get their attention. Just because "Away In A Manger" says that he did not cry does not make it so. The Bible never says that he never cried.

By the age of twelve years Jesus was beginning to understand who he was and why he was here. This is the age when most people begin to think about "what they will be when they grow up." Jesus was becoming aware of the Father's will for his earthly life.

Teenagers eat a lot. We have no reason to believe that Jesus was any different. Teenagers eat a lot because they are hungry. They are hungry because of the amount of energy they consume to grow and live their very active life. We have no reason to believe that Jesus was any different.

Most all teenage boys notice girls. It is possible for them to notice girls without sinning. Insofar as it is possible to notice girls without sinning, Jesus noticed.

Jesus had to learn what all the other children in Nazareth had to learn while growing up. He helped around the house and learned the carpenter's trade from Joseph. He probably even had to take out the garbage.

It was a wonderful day for Jesus when the Holy Spirit came upon him. He had similar feelings about receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to those of other people. It was also a very serious time because it was the beginning of his public ministry.

Jesus was truly asleep in the boat when the storm came up. He awoke to the wind and the waves and the panic of the disciples. He was not upset and he rebuked the storm. Jesus rebuked the storm by faith, not because he was God. This is an important point because it determines what you will believe about your faith and actions.

Jesus did not know the exact time of his return because the Father by the Holy Spirit had not yet told him.

Yes, Jesus was pleasantly surprised at the faith of the Roman centurion. He was surprised because the centurion was a gentile and a soldier. He was not a Jew. But Jesus was happy to see this faith and held the centurion up as an example to the Jews. Perhaps this even made Jesus realize more fully that gentiles would become promising believers.

Jesus had to ask, “Who touched me?”(Lk 8:45) because he didn’t know who it was that touched him. He felt healing power leave his body, but did not know where it went. The Holy Spirit, who was Jesus’ anointing, saw the woman and power was released. But the Holy Spirit did not tell Jesus who it was that drew the power.

Jesus expected to find fruit on the fig tree. He was disappointed and angry so he cursed the tree and it died. This was true human emotional involvement. Jesus was looking for another kind of fruitfulness among the Jews and he did not find it. He had a taste for a juicy fig and did not find it. The fig tree took the brunt of his wrath. Have you ever broken a pencil because you were angry at the way someone had treated you?

Jesus had to ask where Lazarus was buried because he did not know where the grave was. Even though he knew that the entire situation was to be to the glory of God and he came to raise Lazarus from the dead, the Holy Spirit had not told him where the grave was. So just like any man, he had to ask.

Yes, Jesus was really asking the Father if the cross had to happen. The pain and the darkness of the cross was horrifying to Jesus and that was why he asked the Father if it had to happen.

Jesus was more mature with all the attributes that come with maturity at 33 than he was at 18 because he grew and changed just like any other human being both in his personal life and in his calling.

Jesus said that Christians would do the same things that he did and greater things because he came as a man to show us the way, and there are more of us than there was of him.

Jesus' position in heaven after the resurrection is even greater than it was before he came to earth. Because after the resurrection Jesus' manhood is fully developed and, what is more important, also glorified. He has a glorified manhood. This humanity is eternal. Jesus is eternally human and has a resurrected body of "flesh and bone" (Lk. 24:39) just as we will have. It is possible for us to have this resurrected body because Jesus has one himself. Before Jesus came to earth in the incarnation, he was God and full of glory as God in heaven, but he was not yet a man. So now he is glorified both as God and as man in eternity. This is a great difference. And it is never ending.

Here is a question that we have not considered so far. Why did Jesus treat the Syro-phoenician woman like he did? Why did he reward her perseverance? "Even the dogs eat the crumbs." (Mt. 15:27) Like everything else that Jesus did, this was not an act put on for our benefit. Jesus believed that the gospel was sent for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This woman was not of the house of Israel. She was a half breed, part Phoenician which was of Greek extraction and part Syrian which was one of the ancient enemies of the Jews. When she displayed a truly humble attitude, it touched his heart and he was moved to help her. This is the act of a true and loving human being.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ Alfred E. Garvie, *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 273-4.

IV. A Man Approved of God

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: (Acts 2.22 AV)

Here Peter makes it absolutely clear on the day of Pentecost that Jesus was a man. Furthermore, he says that Jesus was a man approved of God. Then he goes on to say that the miracles and wonders and signs that were worked were done by God. The primitive church started with the man and went on to recognize that Jesus was also God. This was natural to them. They would not have thought of approaching it any other way. After all, Jesus came to them as a man, they lived with him and touched him and knew who he was. It was only centuries later when the councils of bishops were meeting to combat various heresies that they started with God and also gave assent to his humanity. This stress on his humanity is what gave the early disciples the zeal and confidence they needed to “turn the world upside down.”(Acts 17:6) They were of the same humanity as Jesus. He did what he did by the Holy Spirit. So they believed that they, as possessors of this Spirit, could do the same things and even greater things. By the time the church councils were meeting and starting with Jesus the God and admitting to Jesus the man, the power was gone from the church. In their efforts to put down the heresies which denied that Jesus was God, they forgot about his humanity. It was a long hard battle that they had to win and they won it only to find that they had gone off the road on the other side. The Reformation addressed the problem but not fully enough. In the eighteen hundreds the Scottish minister Edward Irving stressed it and a true Pentecostal revival broke out. But the Church of Scotland put him out. Later some other theologians tried to restore the truth of the humanity of Jesus to the church but they were considered to be liberals to Bible believing folk and the word never got out

to the membership. Now is the time for all to understand. Jesus was a man. He was a man approved of God which God the Father used to work miracles and signs and wonders among the Jews. He was dependent on his Father to do this through the power of the Holy Spirit because he had left his own divine prerogatives behind for a while.

Basically there are three possibilities

In considering all this basically there are three possibilities. Sometimes it helps to think about the possible alternatives. Either Jesus had two minds or consciousness' in one body, or he was God in disguise, or he emptied himself of his divine powers before he came. Let's consider each of these possibilities.³⁰⁷

The First Possibility: God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, came to our world to inhabit a human body. In doing this he was actually two persons in one body, God and a man. He had two consciousness', two intellects and two wills in one body. He was continually torn between acting as the Almighty and acting as a man. His divine self and his human self lived together inside of him and if there was a conflict, the divine side which was stronger would win.

The Second Possibility: God came to earth in a human body disguised as a man. So it was really simply God in a human body. He would purposely act human in the appropriate manner at every stage of his human life. When his body was an infant, he acted like an infant. When his body was twelve years old, he acted as if he were twelve years old. Even when he became grown he would act like he did not know things so that he would fit in better. Essentially, he was putting on a act for our benefit and having the

³⁰⁷ A.B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ in its Physical, Ethical, and Official Aspects*, Fourth Edition (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1895), 138

experience of living in a human body. Strangely enough this belief is the one that has dominated the church for centuries.

The Third Possibility: He emptied himself. This is true humanity. He is no less God for doing it. As a matter of fact, he is proven to be even more loving and merciful because he voluntarily laid aside his Godly powers in order to become one of us. His character is still the character of God. He is love and goodness and without sin. But he is subject to our weaknesses and has to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to perform supernatural acts. He exercises faith in order to do these things. The Son agreed with the Father to become a man and to submit to the limitations of a man. He did not change his character. He was still goodness, holiness and truth. But he did give up his powers; he did not know everything, he did not have all power and he could only be in one place at one time in his human body. Since Jesus in this self-limited state was completely dependent on the Holy Spirit to have supernatural knowledge and power, he functioned as he expects us to function. In things not told to Jesus by the Holy Spirit he had to learn and grow just as we do. He matured as a person. Also, due to the agreement that he had with the Father before coming in the flesh, he could not change the rules once his human life started. He was locked in until after he died when he got it all back and more. Yes, more, because he has special honor as a man which he did not have as God before he came. Resurrected he is Lord both as God and as a man. This third view is definitely the best one. Not only because it sees God as more honest, but it enables Jesus to truly understand us and to show us how to function.

So now that we have an idea of what Jesus left behind lets look at what he brought with him.

Jesus Brought His Personality With Him

Even though Jesus left much behind to come and live among us, he did bring something with him. We do not lose sight of the fact that although he chose to leave the three Omnies and his glory behind, he still had a divine nature while he was here. Some teachers believe in two kinds of characteristics concerning God: those which he can leave behind if he wills to and those which he can not because they are part of his personality as opposed to being part of his powers. Jesus in his divine nature had to bring those things that make up the personality of the divine nature. We can state these things as life, truth, holiness and goodness.

If we think of these things like we do the fruits of the Spirit and if we think of the powers like we do the gifts of the Spirit, perhaps it will help us to understand better. The fruits of the Spirit (Ga.5:22-23) have been called the personality of Jesus and the gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12) have been called the abilities of Jesus. If you ask a Christian to choose between the fruits of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, he will choose the fruits. The fruits are better because Jesus said that we would be known by our fruits: love, joy, peace, faith, gentleness, goodness, patience, teachableness, and self-control. And fruit is something that grows in us and requires our cooperation to produce them even though we must depend on the Holy Spirit to provide the seed and the nourishment and the light to grow them. We also have to be “pruned” by the Father and that is a painful process, letting all the weaker branches be removed. The fruits of the Spirit are actually just as supernatural as the gifts. If you try to fake the fruits, they will be exposed sooner or later as false fruits. It is wonderful that we do not have to choose between the fruits and the gifts as they are both available to believers today.

Jesus brought his godly characteristics with him - life, truth, holiness and goodness - from which all the fruits of the Spirit are taken. Jesus said that the Father had given the Son the ability to have life in himself. (Jn. 5:26) This

means that the Son also was God. Only God has the power to have life in himself. All other beings who are called creatures draw their life from God both in earth and in heaven. This Jesus could not leave behind. Jesus said that he is the Truth. This is part of his being God. All others may have parts of the truth, but only God is the Truth. We can get holiness from God, but he is in himself Holiness. The same with goodness. Jesus said, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good.” (Mt. 19:17) He did not say this because he also had a human nature. He still has a human nature, only now it is glorified. He said this because some Jews were willing to call him good but were not willing to call him God. He wanted them to make up their minds. Jesus could say in all honesty, even though he left some things behind when he “emptied himself” to become a man, “he who has seen me has seen the Father.”

What Do We See?

When Jesus said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father,” (Jn.14:9) what did he mean? In another place it says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (Jn 1:18). If a person were to look right at God in all his power and glory, he could not stand it. God would not allow His “friend” Moses to see His face. And yet Jesus, who appeared to be just like other men said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” What was there about Jesus while he was here which could enable him to say that to see him was to see the Father? It was his personality, his character, his goodness and love and truth. This is the essence of God. His glory and his power are things that he carries with him. He can lay these things aside if he wants to. He even laid them aside at certain times in the Old Testament and appeared as “the Angel of the LORD” on several occasions;

for instance, to Abraham and to Joshua. But there is still more meaning in these words.

We are made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27) Now this image is not in hands or feet or ears or any other physical characteristic. The image of God is inside in our ability to think and to speak and to love. But this image has become marred; it has been changed by sin and the results of sin. Jesus was, and is, the “express image of his person,” the person of the Father. (Heb.1:3) There are two reasons that he is this “express image” or exact image. One is because when he became flesh, his personality did not change. He was still God the Son. His flesh was real, external and internal, but his person did not change. He actually “became flesh”; he did not take it on as a disguise or some clothing. But his person was the same. Two, Jesus as a man was also made in the image of God. Only for him the image was not marred. In him the image was without sin. He was still vulnerable to sin, but there was no original sin, no bondage of sin. In such a person and in such a man the image of God can be clearly seen. This is what people are supposed to be like. He is the first-born of a new race of human beings. When you see the human Jesus, you see the Father’s exact reflection not just because of his divine personality but also because of his humanness.

When we say that there is a humanness in God, we are saying that we see that the perfect man, the good man, is the image of his Father. And the greatest thing is that it is the plan of the Father and of Jesus that we should be remade, recast into that same image. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Ro 8:29) That is why we can call Jesus “Our Brother”; he is the firstborn, our big brother. In the Southern part of the United States it was the custom for many generations to refer to the oldest child simply as “Brother” or “Sister”. Those around always knew what this meant. If there were four boys

and three girls of a certain couple, when someone said “ask brother” or “get sister” it always meant ask the firstborn or go get the firstborn. This firstborn was always responsible to help the parents in a special way, to be the example and a care giver and a protector. The Christian can always “ask Brother”. Now God wants lots of other children who are like “Brother”.

There Is No Reason For You To Be Ashamed

“For, is it not a thing clear as noonday, that if you are ashamed to think the holy soul of Jesus should inhabit mortal and corruptible flesh, which must first be a little purified before the Divine glory will consent to tabernacle in it, then you will be also ashamed, after you have been sanctified of the Holy Ghost, to confess the sinfulness of your own flesh.”

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Many Christians try to tell themselves that their flesh is not as bad as the Bible says it is. They do this because they do not know of any way out of the dilemma. They want to do the right thing and they want to please God. Actually, we are much happier when we do please God. But, like Paul expressed in Romans 7, we fail to do this. There is a way out. Paul and John both knew about it as well as the other disciples. (Ro. 8: 1-3 and I John 3:20 -21) Contrary to what some teach there is not instant purification in the way we live. We try and continue to fail. The right answer is always the best answer. The right answer is to admit that we can not do it and discover the secret of success in God. What you are reading in this book will enable you to do just that. Once you are established in this you will not have to be concerned about being contaminated by contact with others. Jesus did not worry about this and he was susceptible to temptation

³⁰⁸ Edward Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 127.

and weakness. You have been provided for. Here you are learning how.

What This Can Do For You

But we should not stop here. By living in the flesh he conquered the flesh and made it a friend again of God. We can not only afford to be human; God wants us to be human. God's love is contained in human love now in Christians. For a long time Christians have acted like their loving was something imposed upon them by God because "in my flesh dwells no good thing".(Rom. 7:18) There is old flesh and there is new flesh. Jesus lived in flesh to give us new flesh. At the resurrection there will be a new body, even Martha believed this (Jn.11:24). But now, in life, there are new emotions, new truth and a new will to serve God. If it is hard, if it is a teeth grinding effort, something is wrong. It hasn't really happened for you yet. You may be a believer but you are still trying to do it the hard way. You didn't know. His body is food indeed. You are, after all, what you eat. If you eat a lot of sugar, it becomes a part of you. If you eat a lot of cholesterol, it becomes a part of you, clogs up your blood vessels. If you eat healthy food, your body is healthy. If you eat of Jesus, you become like him. Self-improvement is in style these days. Jesus has a better way. The will is most important. Your mind and your emotions follow your will. Jesus had some trouble with his will. At the last he said, "Not my will but yours be done."(Lk. 22:42) He gives us a new will. He causes us to will and to do what pleases him. (Ph.2:13) Paul tells us this just after he tells us that Jesus emptied himself to become a man. We do not have to presume that God's will must always be unpleasant to us. If it is, we are not changing. We do not have to always presume that what we want is wrong. If it is sin, it is wrong. But if we are changing, we will want what he wants.

People often want answers from God. And they can not hear because somewhere back in their mind they have become convinced that God's will must be unpleasant and hard. If you hear something pleasing, then it can not be an answer from God. It is only hard if you are not changing. I delayed giving my life to God because I was afraid I would have to go to Africa if I did. Finally, someone told me that I would not have to go to Africa. Many years after I became a Christian and a minister, I started to want to go to Africa. I finally went and I loved it. I love Africa. It is beautiful and it is fun. I have seen more there working with missionaries than any tourist will ever see. I have been many times and it is always wonderful. The zebra, the giraffe, the antelope, the elephant, sunset on the Serengeti, the sight of Mount Kilimanjaro in the distance, the friendliness of the people of different tribes, the birds in so many colors, the sunlight itself, getting sunburned on a mountain when you feel cold, heat waves around a water hole, wow!

We can be changed. It is no wonder that people do not want to become Christians when they watch Christians who are always straining under the yoke of their faith. Jesus said that his yoke is easy, his burden is light. (Mt. 11:30) Why? Because he came to live perfectly in the flesh so that we can also live in his new flesh. It's all right to be human. God wants it that way. If we have seen him, we have seen the Father. Because he came and we have the gospels, we have the Holy Spirit. We can see. We also have each other. Communion and community are both important. We partake of the flesh of Jesus and we fellowship with the members of his body. If we believe in his plan, we can see him there too. Sometimes maybe not quite in focus, but there all the same.

His Perfect Faith

One man saw it this way. "We hold that [Christ's human nature] 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.”³⁰⁹

What is perfect faith, after all, except the ability to believe totally. Jesus encourages us all through the Gospels to believe and not to doubt. Doubt is the absence of faith; fear is the destroyer of faith. Jesus’ human nature was just like ours. He had to resist sin. Temptation was real to him. Weakness was real to him. But he had perfect faith because of his Divine nature which is just like the Father’s. He did better than we do, he did everything perfectly. He fulfilled the law. He still had that link with us in his humanity. His humanity was not even like Adam’s before the fall. It was just like ours, only he was born-again at the moment of conception and never needed to improve. Some may say that it was unfair for him to tell us to have faith because he had a Divine nature that gave him perfect faith. But neither Jesus or the Father are ever unfair; what they require, they provide a way to perform. What they say, they do. We can grow in faith more and more. The new birth, and the Holy Spirit enable us to do this. We do not have perfect faith but we do have the opportunity to work towards that goal. It is a real possibility for us to have faith that is 80 percent or even 90 percent perfect. And when we need a boost, there is always grace.

The Holy Spirit

“The Holy Ghost sanctifying and empowering the manhood of Christ even from His mother’s womb, is the manifestation both of the Father and of the Son in His manhood . . .so that in the manhood of Christ was exhibited all of the Godhead

³⁰⁹ Edward Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

that shall ever be exhibited, Father, Son and Spirit; according as it is written, ‘In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,’ or in a body.”³¹⁰

Just as the Holy Spirit did it for Jesus, he will do it for you. Your sameness with Jesus in flesh is the key to your sameness with Jesus in the Holy Spirit. Next, we will want to see how Jesus changed what he got here, what he got back, and what we can have now and later by the Holy Spirit. Then you will need some extra help because your faith is not perfect like Jesus’ was, but that is provided for you with what we call Outrageous Grace. You also need to know how to hear God’s voice.

The Spirit Of Anti-Christ?

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. 1Jo 4:2-3. AV

Sometimes I read a verse for many years thinking I understand what it means and then, one day, it suddenly becomes clear to me that I did not really understand it until that moment. This is not because I am ignorant of scripture but because scripture has a depth of meaning that we can not comprehend all at once. The Bible is not a book like any other book. It is special.

It is so important to believe that Jesus came in our flesh. There is no other kind of human flesh. The apostle John says that if anyone denies that he came in the flesh then that person is antichrist. This is how John felt about it. Few Christians have ever felt this strongly about it. But John was Jesus’ best friend. He was always with him during his

³¹⁰ Edward Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 124.

ministry. He walked with him and sweated with him. He was tired with him. He talked late into the night with him. John laid his head on Jesus' chest at the last supper. Jesus gave his mother into the keeping of John from the cross instead of to his natural half-brothers, the other sons of Mary by Joseph. And Jesus appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos and gave him the Revelation. John outlived all the other apostles and died when he was past 100 years old. John was the grand old man of the New Testament church. So John knew how important this was. And this is the proper interpretation of the verse. Jesus came in our flesh. He was tempted like we are. He never gave in. He changed that flesh into a flesh that serves God. He took it to the cross and he raised it from the dead.(Jn.10:18) Yes, after death Jesus was restored to full power and raised his body up glorified just like he said he would. This truth will revolutionize your life. Once inside you there will be no reason for you to be ashamed to admit the failings of your flesh ever again.

John says that anyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is anti-Christ. It is obvious that John is very serious about this. Does he say that God came in the flesh? Not exactly. Does he say that Christ came in the flesh? Not exactly this either. He says that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Does this mean merely that the Son made an appearance on earth to be seen by people and accomplished his work? Not exactly. What does John mean when he says that they are anti-Christ? Does this mean that any non-believer is anti-Christ? A heathen, a Buddhist, a Hindu? The best word for them is unbeliever or non-Christian. When John says to try the spirits, he does not mean just ask a demon when he manifests himself. He means to test the truth of any teaching by this concept. Even "friends of Christendom" like the Roman centurion knew that a man named Jesus, who was considered by many to be the Messiah or Christ, walked around in the land of Israel.

This does not just refer to the mere fact that he was here. It refers to the fact that as God, and John makes it plain that he was God in many places, Jesus came in the flesh, in flesh like the flesh of every person. The spirit of anti-Christ is not a spirit or a belief that does not recognize the Christ. This is an unbeliever. The spirit of anti-Christ is one that seems to be Christian but is really against the truth; an insider who is really not inside but a betrayer of the truth. Not one that denies that God was here, but one that denies that he came as a real man. This is anti-Christ and John hates this with a terrible and a holy passion. Who knew the real humanity of Jesus better than John? No one. Did Paul? He never met the unglorified Jesus as far as we know. Did Peter? Even he was not as close as John. Did Mary his mother? Yes, but she left no records. John knew it all. And even in his lifetime some were starting to deny it. That is what he says. Already they are here. They deny that Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, was really a man in real flesh, body and soul, like we are. This is deception and this is anti-Christ.

If John felt so strongly about this and if it was already at work during his lifetime, what should be our attitude about this? It has had centuries to dig into the church by now. And we should not be passive about this. Granted we do not persecute people about this because we do not “fight against flesh and blood” but against “spiritual wickedness.” And we also “strive to convince every man.” But we should be convinced, we should speak up. Why is it important? It is important to the life of every believer because Jesus came to be just like we are so that he would be one of us. He knows that he is one of us and we know that he is one of us. He has it all back now, but he went without a lot of it for 33 years. And we have a lot more to get as his inheritors. He came to be one of us so that we could do the same things that he did in the same way that he did them. We can even “do greater things.” He did them by faith and he tells us to do them by faith as well. That is how important this is.

V. God was in Christ

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. II
Cor 5:19a

How He Changed It

Here it is. This is what will make the difference. This short part of a verse has usually been understood like this. God sent Jesus into the world. Jesus was part man and part God. He did all the right things and said all the right words. Then he went to the cross to take the punishment that sinners deserve so that they could claim his free gift of salvation. This would mean that God would accept the sacrifice of Jesus to pay for their sins. Then God would love the sinner and grant him forgiveness of sins and eternal life. After physical death he will go to heaven to be with Jesus and God the Father.

Much of this is correct. But not all of it. God did send Jesus, but Jesus also agreed to come. Jesus was not part man and part God. He was entirely man and entirely God. This is important because it is not a 50/50 split; he is 100% God and 100% man. He did say all the right words and do all the right things. He did make the sacrifice so that we could claim the gift by faith. But this did not make God love us. God loved us from the start. (John 3:16) We are forgiven and we do have eternal life. However, this life starts now. It starts now in the inner life, the feelings and the thoughts and the will, and even spills over into the body for healthier living. Later we will get a new body that will not grow old or get sick or ever die. But this is still not all.

Jesus said that his body was food indeed and his blood was drink indeed. When he tells us to eat and to remember, he wants us to remember that he has fixed his flesh. His flesh, his thoughts, his feelings, his will are in agreement with God.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Ro 8:3)

You are free to be as human as he was. The thing is, how human was he? He was really human as we have seen in our previous discussions. You live in His flesh. He says to you, “Are you having trouble with your flesh? Here, have some of mine. I have fixed mine. And I did it so that I could give it to you.” This is the real meaning of communion with Jesus. You should take communion frequently with an honest heart.

Here is an illustration. When a person has leukemia, which is a blood disease, the doctors often give them a bone marrow transplant to combat the disease. The blood cells are made inside the bones of the body, in the marrow. With leukemia a person has unhealthy blood cells. This will kill them physically if something is not done. God can and does heal people by prayer and the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. But often he uses the doctors. To give a bone marrow transplant they take some healthy marrow from a compatible person with a large needle that they push clear into a bone, into the marrow. They usually use the pelvis for this. Then they put this marrow into the person with the leukemia and a lot of the time the healthy marrow dominates the unhealthy marrow and healthy blood cells are produced. Spiritually, this is what Jesus does when he gives us his flesh. His flesh, which is healthy because he has subdued it, takes over in us. When we partake of his flesh in faith, we receive it by the Holy Spirit. Another thing that is interesting about the bone marrow is this. When they put the marrow into the person who is receiving it, they do not inject it into the bone like they got it out. They just inject it into the flesh and it knows where to go. It goes straight to the marrow and does its work. Now if God can design a physical procedure that works like this, can he not also design a spiritual

procedure to get the changed flesh of Jesus into our inner lives?

Jesus' flesh is changed because he changed it. He wrestled it to the ground over a period of 33 years so that he could say at the end, "the prince of this world comes, but he has nothing in me." (Jn 14:30) There was nothing left in his flesh that the devil could use. Jesus had won. Now we can win. But he got back even more. This was at his resurrection and when he ascended back into heaven. And that is what we will talk about next.

What He Got Back: The Holy Spirit

As the Spirit of God the Father, the Holy Spirit is sent to us as Someone who is really different than we are. When He expresses himself, it is majestic and somehow strange. But we know that it is the Spirit of God and we are thrilled with His operations. The differentness itself is both startling and refreshing. This is how the people of the Old Testament understood God and they were a unique people set apart among the people of the earth.

As the Spirit of Christ the Holy Spirit comes to us and operates within us and through us as One that is familiar. It is good that the church decided after long consideration of the scripture that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The reason that His presence and His gifts and ministries seem familiar to us is because He is the Spirit of Christ who is not only fully God but also fully a man. The Old Testament people of God did not know the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. In order for this to happen the Son had to become a man and live and minister as a man by the power of the Holy Spirit here among us. When the Holy Spirit comes to us and works through us as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, He is fully "at home" in us. Therefore, when He suggests something to us or wants to act through our minds and hearts and bodies, He does not do it as a foreigner.

This emphasizes the fact that the humanity of Jesus is also a key factor in the ministry of the Holy Spirit through people under the new covenant. The feelings and actions of the Holy Spirit in and through us are spiritual and also fully human at the same time. They are so friendly that often we do not realize that they come from Him, and as a result we suppress them since we humans are the ones that are in control of their release. “For the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.” (I Cor 14:32) For instance, the Holy Spirit, who lives within us as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, quietly whispers to us something about a person that could not be naturally known. We speak it out as a Word of Knowledge and it is received with wonder and thankfulness and the person who spoke it is praised as a prophet or the like. But we may say, “It was so easy.” We need not expect it to come in a trance or other unnatural event. He interfaces with people naturally because He is the Spirit of Christ. There is no strangeness about Him. So when we are not sure if a thought is ours or His, it is because He participates in our thought processes naturally. We should not expect there to be a strangeness in His tone or attitude. He works in cooperation with us.

Only occult experiences which are satanic operate unnaturally in people; this is because evil spirits come uninvited. Evil spirits come to tempt us and they try to sound inconspicuous and they even have a familiarity with human minds and bodies. But their presence is not ever gentle; they have no respect for human kind. The Old Testament talks about “familiar spirits” which specialize in interfacing with the human understanding. They try to imitate the voice of the Spirit of Christ. Sometimes we must ask for discernment to recognize these spirits and we must “test the spirits”.(I Jn 4:1) In matters of doctrine evil spirits will not call Jesus Lord or admit that He has come in the flesh. Just because it is possible to be misled by evil spirits, we still can not expect the Spirit of Christ to impress us unnaturally in order for us

to take heed because we are the Body of Christ. If an individual is unsure where some knowledge or leading is coming from, the other members of the Body are there to help.

Also, it is important that we learn to function in the Spirit on a continual basis. If we are functioning in a carnal manner, the voice of the Holy Spirit will be difficult or even impossible for us to hear. That is a major part of the entire relationship which is our responsibility, the desire to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh “For the carnal mind is enmity against God.” (Rom. 8:7)

Take another example. Often the Spirit of Christ leads believers through what they see or hear externally. Some sight or words may make a particular impression on our minds. We wonder why some simple everyday things seem to be highlighted to us. It is the Spirit of Christ within showing us something. I know a man who went to Africa as an evangelist and people started bringing orphans to him. He looked for a place to get rid of the orphans. Then one day he saw a dump truck with many men in the back. He knew that they were being transported to work because that is how they often transport workers there. But he was impressed that it would be a terrible waste to throw away so many good men. He understood why he had that impression and kept the orphans and became well known as an orphanage founder and director in that African country.

The Spirit of Christ speaks in simple ways. When a person is first filled with the Holy Spirit, every movement of that Spirit within him seems magnified. It is all startling. After a while things quiet down inside. Sometimes, they wonder if they are still filled. Refillings are, of course, good and necessary. Sometimes, they wonder if they have sinned and the Spirit of Christ has deserted them. This too is possible. But many times they do not understand that we are designed by God to host this gentle Spirit. Jesus said that he was “meek and lowly in heart” and that we would “find rest for

our souls.”(Matt. 11:29) The Spirit of Christ is just like Christ. We must walk with Him in peace. When He empowers us or guides us or speaks through us, it happens easily and naturally.

What We Get Now

First and foremost, we can have the inner nature of Jesus. And this is something that we can grow in. We grow in our awareness of what we have. We grow in allowing the Holy Spirit to put our flesh on the cross of Christ. We grow as we partake of his flesh which is food indeed. We partake at communion and we also partake of the “hidden manna” as we live an overcoming life. But there is more.

The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit

The gifts of the Holy Spirit have been available throughout the Christian era. Some historians will say, “why weren’t they more in evidence down through the centuries?” They have been more plentiful during times of the movement of the Holy Spirit. But they have always been available. True, there are times when He moves and times when He does not. There may be many theories as to why this is so. Many would say that prayer is an important factor. When God’s people pray, then the Spirit moves. This is generally true. But at other times He surprises everyone when He moves. But this does not change the fact that the gifts have never been withdrawn from the church.

When God’s people are taught that they can have the gifts, then someone will no doubt take a step of faith and receive them and begin to walk in them. The question, “How shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14) holds true for the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well. Instances where the Spirit is not moving and people are taught to receive His gifts prove that they have never been withdrawn. Edward Irving

and his followers in the eighteen hundreds in England and Scotland are a case in point. Here, instead of being surprised by an experience and turning back to the scriptures to see what was happening to them, Irving's followers proceeded on an organized teaching from the Bible and received as they had been taught. And, as is often the case, one strong truth teamed with another intensified their experience. They learned not only about the availability of the gifts but also about the humanity of their Saviour and older Brother. They were taught that the only reason that the gifts had not been exercised over the years was because the faith of the church was so low that they did not expect the gifts.³¹¹ This condition existed because no one had preached the gifts to them.

“When speaking in tongues did occur in earlier times and among the Huguenots and the Jansenists, it was always one of many phenomena generated by religious enthusiasm and intense evangelical feeling. . . . It has been thought by many from 1830 to the present day that this was also the case in the west of Scotland, at Regent Square, and among the members of the Catholic Apostolic Church. Nothing could be further from the truth. For unlike any previous manifestations of the Spirit, they were occasioned not by the overflow of powerful religious feeling but by faithful response to the systematic study and preaching of the Word of God. Theological understanding was central to all that happened and preceded all forms of experience of spiritual gifts. It is the centrality of a coherent theological system which makes the Pentecost of 1830-32 unique and quite distinct from all previous revivals.”³¹²

The Holy Spirit only imposes gifts on the church when that is the only way He can give them. It would be much more

³¹¹ C. Gordon Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson, 1973), 15.

³¹² C. Gordon Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 14.

pleasing to God if His people would “covet earnestly the best gifts.” (I Cor. 12:31)

Divine Miracles Or Works of Faith?

Although the results would be the same either way, there is a difference between a Divine miracle wrought by God Himself and the miraculous result of the faith of a man. If Jesus performed these things as acts of his faith as a man, then we can and should follow him in them. It is important that we understand this for the sake of our present faithfulness and the continuing work of the Body of Christ today.

It is not an insult to attribute an act of faith to the human Jesus. If he loved us enough to limit himself with our limitations and the Father loved us enough to agree, what tribute is it on our part to refuse his gift and just say that he did these things because he was God. The self-limitation of Jesus was an act of love. What he did while subject to these limits was not just to demonstrate to us that such things could be done by a human being, although that in itself is a good lesson, but also to completely share our lot and condition. He has been everywhere we could go. He has taken a flesh like our own to the heights thus making human flesh honorable again. Honorable because without sin he took human flesh through a complete life cycle and even after death raised flesh and bone back to life again. This was not an act of weakness or confusion on his part but an act of love and compassion from the deepest wisdom of God.

If the Bible is true, then it should be taken at face value. Jesus did not perform an act or a pantomime for our benefit. He actually lived it.

VI. How You Function

It is not possible to count the number of times Christians have said, “Well, that was Jesus!” This is said when someone challenges another’s faith. “You can do that if Jesus did.” “Well, that was Jesus!” The point is exactly that it is Jesus because it is Jesus in you. This is not, of course, what we will call an across-the-board grant. We should especially say that Jesus did not do whatever he wanted to do. Jesus did the will of the Father. You can also do the will of the Father. Let’s take an example. The day that Jesus healed the man at the pool Bethesda (John 5) we are told that there was a great multitude of sick people there waiting for the troubling of the waters. But Jesus, so far as we know, only healed one person there. We do not know why he did not heal them all. In another place we are told that he healed all the sick. Perhaps he was just waiting to be asked. Very often we do not have because we do not ask. But we do know that He always did the will of his Father. This we also can do. How? How do we do the will of the Father? We do it in exactly the same way as he did. The Bible says “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (I Cor 6:17) When we become a Christian, our human spirit merges with the Holy Spirit himself. We will represent this from now on with the word S/spirit. We listen to our S/spirit and act accordingly. You might ask, “If this is true why doesn’t every Christian do it? Why don’t the Christians that I know do it? Why don’t they do miraculous things? Why don’t I? There are several obstacles which get in our way.

For one thing we do not know the secret of the S/spirit. We do not know this because we have not been taught it. And behind that we do not understand the humanity of Jesus so we can not identify with him as we should. For another thing we do not understand about the giftings given to Christ and the church. We think to have a gifting means that we can do

anything at any time. Jesus had every gifting but he did only what the Father told him to do. We are to do like he did.

If we understand the humanity of Jesus, we will know several things. We will know that he did not act independently but only as the Father told him. We will know that the things that he knew and the things that he did he knew and did by the power of the Holy Spirit which was in him as a man and not because he was and is God. This is sometimes hard to grasp but it is very important. Jesus did not have an “edge” on you because he was God. He functioned by the same Holy Spirit that you do. He came to show us how to function as his larger body. Now, he did have an edge on you because he was without sin. But he has provided a way for you to recover from this which we call Outrageous Grace. Jesus also had to be without sin in order to be Savior. He is the only one who can be Savior. But we can act in his place.

So, after we understand how he was just like us, operating by the leading and power of the same Holy Spirit, we also understand that even if we are not yet sinless, not yet fully grown spiritually, we can still operate like Jesus because he and the Father knew all this long before we came along and they made provision that we should not have to live under a cloud of guilt and ineffectiveness just because we are still “in process”. If God had to wait until we were really ready, he could never use anyone and the work of the church, the body of Christ, would never get done.

Then, all that is left is to learn about your S/spirit. You are like Jesus; he was like you. The “wall” of guilt is removed. You no longer have to hide from God. But in order to function as Jesus did, you must know how to hear your S/spirit. The Holy Spirit will train your mind to be able to listen. Start by asking questions of your S/spirit. You can do this at any time because he is always with you. Ask questions that can be answered simply, with a “yes” or a “no”. Often the answer is not a verbal one; it is just an impression. Start

asking about things that are not important. That way you will not be anxious about the answers. Anxiety will cause a lot of inner “noise” and make you unable to understand the answers. A “yes” might just be a nod, as when a parent is training a child. All the child has to do is look at the parent or listen for her and the slightest sound or look or gesture will communicate the needed guidance or, sometimes discipline. After you can understand yes and no, you can go on to other things. On days when you are having a hard time hearing, you can go back to the yes and no method. As you learn to hear the unimportant things, you can then learn to know more important things because your confidence will be strong.

Your S/spirit is a wonderful guide because it is really a part of you and it is really God also. Since God’s Spirit is so big, he will dominate. Therefore your S/spirit will not be wrong. You can understand it in a wrong way with your mind because your mind is still growing, but your S/spirit will not be wrong.

What We Get Later

What we get later is based on what Jesus has now. He is the first person of a brand new race of people, a super race. Not a super race like any of the twisted claims of the past. This race will be composed of people from every country and race in the world. These people will have eternal bodies. There will be no sin. There will be no sickness. No one will grow old. These bodies will have flesh and bone just as Jesus’ does. (Luke 24:39) We will live on a new earth and walk also in a new heaven.

Things That Help

The True Humanity Of Jesus Christ, Outrageous Grace and the Three-Part Nature of Human Beings have all been lost or

partially lost for generations. In this time of Holy Spirit renewal and restoration they are much needed treasures that need to be returned to the church. We have been considering the True Humanity of Jesus so far in this book. Now on to the subject of Outrageous Grace.

Our Biggest Problem Is Solved

The second secret is what I call “outrageous grace.” Now this is really nothing more than the plain old grace that Paul talks about in the New Testament. But it is necessary to call it “outrageous grace” because most believers think of it as a doctrinal position. Many can even define it as “the unmerited favor of God” but it does not have an effect on their daily lives. They do not understand how unmerited it is, or how much favor there is, or how God really feels about it all. This too may be somewhat of a stretch at first but it is well worth the effort to really get a hold of it. For one thing it goes a long way toward putting you, as a believer, on a near-equal footing with the human Jesus as a person can get.

How They Are Related To Each Other

Outrageous Grace, Supernatural Manifestations, and the Glorious Return have usually been symptoms of heightened religious fervor. They are very much bound together and have usually been so bound. The Humanity of our Lord has not been so common. It was a hallmark of the Irvingite movement in the late 1820’s and early 1830’s. That movement, as has already been discussed, was, however, unique in that it came into existence not as a divine surprise but as the result of the systematic teaching of Edward Irving. And, even though he felt defeated by the events that followed, he never yielded his conviction that he had taught the right thing. The renewed interest in Irving as the “father of 20th century Pentecostal and charismatic movements”

shows that there is also a significance to his teaching. The modern movements were not born of teaching. They had to construct their teachings as they went along, hopefully at the leading of the Holy Spirit but sometimes, regretfully so, not at His leading.

What is needed today in the church at large is a thorough understanding of these concepts which are all born of God. The Reformation began to get a hold on grace and faith, but this has only survived in a very narrow portion of the church at large. It needs to be brought back with zeal; grace, outrageous and glorious, and the faith which only it can inspire.

Interest in a Supernatural God is born out of a move of the Holy Spirit. But millions today are interested in any thing which exhibits the supernatural. Many are searching blindly and in ignorance and if the church will again present a supernatural God, it will draw people to God and to His people no matter what name they gather under.

An expectancy of the Glorious Return will often flow from an awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was true for Tertullian and the Montanists; it was true for Irving and his followers; it has been true for the Pentecostals and the charismatics; and it will be true again. One thing will amplify another again and again. Like an audio feedback loop.

Most of us at one time or another have been in a room where a microphone squeals horribly. What is happening there is an audio feedback loop. The microphone is set at too sensitive a setting so that it takes any noise that it hears and amplifies it until it hears it again and then amplifies it again and so on and so on. By the time we hear that horrible squeal it has looped around hundreds of times to produce what we are hearing. These understandings about the things of God will amplify each other. The heat will increase like logs together in a fire.

The teaching of the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ will add much fuel to the spiritual fire. Now is the time. His humanity will speak to hearts. His divinity will not be sacrificed. We need to be willing to think the unthinkable. Jesus is strong; he will not break. Never will we give up our belief in his divinity or his total lack of sin. But we have not realized yet exactly how much he became like us. Therefore, we will always say things like, “Well, He was Jesus. He was God. I have to live ‘down here’ after all.” Such sayings reveal that we cannot identify with him. If we understand the other concepts, they can not burn as bright without this understanding of His humanity. I believe that we absolutely can not understand the others without at least beginning to understand His humanity as he lived it almost 2,000 years ago and as it exists today.

However, we will not be able to “think the unthinkable” without some grasp on Outrageous Grace. Do you kill your children for testing limits? You may discipline them; so does God. But what if they never tested limits? Would they ever grow up to be functioning adults on their own? Does God want his children to always take the ‘safe road’. All you have to do is look at King David and Moses and Abraham and Peter and Augustine to see that it is the heart that matters to God. Push grace in everything. God is big enough to rein you in. Especially push grace in regard to considering the humanity of our Lord.

Push Grace

What does it mean to “push grace?” Sometimes, we think that the grace of God is fragile. We think that if we disappoint him too often, he will give up on us. The better we get to know God, the more we realize that this is not true. You see, God has an attitude. We often talk about a person

having “an attitude”. But almost always this is a bad attitude that we are talking about. God does not have bad attitudes. His attitude is this: if He loved you before you even knew about him, before you cared anything about him, then He is not going to stop loving you no matter how many times you let him down.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” (Ro. 5: 8-10)

God’s attitude is that now we are children instead of strangers. He will always take us back and help us. But more than this, God wants you to take chances with Grace and Faith. Now some may say that this is presumption; and it can be. We do not want to be presumptuous. But more often than not we are too careful. We do not believe that God will back us in a pinch. How many earthly fathers will back a child in front of people even if he punishes him later. We need to push grace. We need to expect more. Sometimes, it is the only way to escape the bondage of legalism. God is big enough to keep us in check. We have no foundation of righteousness to offer God. If your heart is set on him, you will improve. If every time you stumble you resolve to try harder next time, you are doomed to failure. You have to count on the Holy Spirit to change you and cause you to improve and to grow. You need to agree, but he needs something to agree with. Agree with the Holy Spirit. Push grace.

“Sin, therefore, is a pre-requisite of 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 remaineth in God after all these have done their work,

and seen that work frustrated by sin, to come in a 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.”³¹³

That is what grace is. You have to be a sinner to use grace. Grace is a power of God and a liberty of God Himself. He builds better things out of ruins than anyone else can build with new materials. As a matter of fact, he builds so good with ruins that what you see after he is done is better than what was there in the first place. How about that? What a wonderful thing the Grace of God is. That is why I call it Outrageous Grace. If anyone but God invented grace or used grace, it would have to be wrong. But God did it. And it is right and good. And even better, we can use it too, for ourselves and towards others. Go ahead and forgive him, it will do him good. Go ahead and accept her back, it will do her good. And you too!

There is a part of you that knows. It is important to understand that every believer is composed of three parts even before they become a Christian. These parts are body, soul and spirit. (I Thess. 5.23) Many have been taught that the words “soul” and “spirit” are merely two different ways of saying the same thing. This is not true and it is stupid when you really stop to think about it. Why would the Bible, which those who hold that soul and spirit are the same thing and will fight to protect the accuracy of the Bible, use two words for the same thing unnecessarily? No, they are indeed very different parts, both internal and invisible, but very definitely not the same thing. Those who hold that they are the same, effectively rule out or cancel entirely, the whole function of the human spirit. The human spirit is not the Holy Spirit. It is that created part of us which is most like God for

³¹³ Edward Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*, 1828, 313-314.

“God is a Spirit” (John 4.24). And because it is most like God, it can communicate with God and understand Him better than the soul. Of course, the soul is important and it is with the soul that we think and feel and make decisions. But the spirit can hear from God after a person becomes a believer and the Holy Spirit moves in and is joined with the human spirit forever.

These Three Work Together

It is important to know that these three wonderful secrets work together in the life of the believer to make her or him wonderfully effective as a Christian. You can not separate them from each other. If you do not understand the True Humanity of Jesus, you can not identify with Him as you need to. If you leave out Outrageous Grace, you will be crippled in your spiritual walk. If you do not know the difference between your soul and your spirit, you can not hear from God. In this little book we have explored all three of these wonderful secrets. After you learn them and study them, your Christian walk will never be the same again.

You will need to know the difference between your S/spirit and your mind. There are several guidelines for this. Ultimately, you will just learn by experience because God is a good teacher. And you always have him with you. But some guidelines can help.

First and foremost, your S/spirit will not try to tear you down in any way. Isn't that wonderful? Your mind might try to discourage you. Often it does. This is because your mind is opened to suggestions from the sensory world around you, from other people and from the devil. But your S/spirit is totally renewed and is joined to the Holy Spirit. Because God is a God of grace your S/spirit will always hear the Grace Message. Even if God is correcting you, the grace message will still be there to provide the “way of escape” and the forgiveness and restoration that you need. You are

responsible to repent. God will always forgive. And your S/spirit will constantly hear this message. This message is always consistent with the written Word of God. This Word has the effect of dividing your soul from your S/spirit so that the Grace Message can predominate in your life. When the Word divides your soul from your S/spirit, it is sometimes through conviction and sometimes through comfort and sometimes it is through both. Sometimes, you do not even know how it happened because you were not reading the Word on a subject that you understood to be related to your current problem or blockage in your spiritual walk. But you were reading the Word and it did its job just like it says that it will. (Heb. 4:12) Then you not only hear the Grace Message from your S/spirit but you can hear any leading that God has for you as well. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14)

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