

A Critical Analysis Of The Pneumatology Of  
Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen

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For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy

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## A Critical Analysis Of The Pneumatology Of Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen

### Abstract

In performing an analysis of the pneumatology of Thomas Erskine it is first necessary to look for the presence of a traditional Trinitarian Pneumatology which is based on the historical findings of the church and which deals with the subject of hypostasis and the relationships between the Persons within the Godhead. This kind of pneumatology is found to be lacking in Erskine's writings. The next step is to proceed to look for anything that could replace it. Erskine's concept of the "first bond" of the flesh, the role of the human conscience, and the place of the living Word are three things that partially take the place of a formal pneumatology in Erskine's thinking.

Erskine was very interested in the West Country revival which began in Scotland in 1829. He visited the area and wrote about his observations and experiences there. This increased his interest in the actions of the Holy Spirit both in experience and the scriptures. Even though he later recanted his endorsement of these manifestations in his own day, he held to his belief that such phenomena should appear in a healthy church which follows a New Testament pattern.

In this thesis Erskine's writings are analyzed by scanning all of them into a computer database and searching for references to the actions of the Holy Spirit. From this a dynamic pneumatology emerges. A dynamic pneumatology is not concerned with historic creeds or the relationships within the Godhead. John McIntyre defines a dynamic pneumatology as one that speaks of what the Holy Spirit

*does.* McIntyre's taxonomy sets forth eleven patterns of pneumatology with many sub-patterns. This examination of the writings of Erskine reveals a strong dynamic pneumatology which is both relational and ecclesial.

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## A Critical Analysis Of The Pneumatology Of Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen

### Introduction

Thomas Erskine (1788 – 1870) wrote theology as a well informed layman; he was by profession a lawyer. He was also a Scottish landowner with significant responsibilities. Erskine observed the Scottish West Country revival that began in late 1829. It was a revival in the Pentecostal or Charismatic sense. Erskine was an intensely religious man, an acute observer and a prolific writer. He read about this revival and spent considerable time with some of those who were involved. Yet in all of his writings in which he talks much about the actions of the Holy Spirit, there appears to be no developed traditional Trinitarian Pneumatology and a pronounced silence at many points in his writings that seem to call for a doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

There is a difference between a developed traditional pneumatology on the one hand and someone having things to say about the Holy Spirit in his writings, albeit many things, on the other hand. A pneumatology developed along traditional lines would follow the teachings of the church fathers and deal with the subject of the relationship between the persons of the Godhead. Thomas Erskine did indeed talk much about the Spirit and the actions of the Spirit in his writings without references to relationships within the Godhead. In the final analysis this language can be considered to be another kind of pneumatology, a dynamic one.

The purpose of the thesis is, first, to document through a detailed analysis of his written works that Thomas Erskine did not have a developed traditional Pneumatology. Erskine watched for and welcomed manifestations of the Holy Spirit. He read and quoted manifold references to the Holy Spirit in Scriptures. He commented on these references and manifestations in his writings. Second, therefore, we shall attempt to account for the relative lack of any clear doctrine of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in Erskine's corpus. Erskine admitted that he was not interested in the relationships within the Godhead which traditionally define a Pneumatology. "The distinction of persons in the Divine nature," he wrote, "we cannot comprehend; but we can easily comprehend the high and engaging morality of that character of God which is developed in the history of the New Testament."<sup>1</sup>

Erskine and his works will be examined in this thesis in several ways. In part I we shall consider whether there are other factors, intrinsic to the substance of his theology, which account for his relative silence concerning the Spirit at key junctures. We shall set him in his context. Like any thinker Erskine was effected by his familial, educational and social experiences. These considerations shall be examined in Part I. In Chapter One we shall reflect briefly on Erskine's biography. In Chapter Two we shall consider the wider intellectual and cultural currents of his age. Erskine was born late in the eighteenth century and lived well into the nineteenth. Thus his

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<sup>1</sup>Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 74.

writings need to be read against the background of such influences as Romanticism and the Great Disruption in Scotland as considered in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three will consider the impact of an event instead of a theme: namely, the “West Coast revival” which began in late 1829 in Scotland and involved certain manifestations among the followers of Edward Irving in London as well. Erskine proclaimed these to be the actions of God in his published writings. However, it was not long before Erskine published a recantation of his earlier position. Both Erskine's approbation and his recantation regarding these phenomena are important to understanding his pneumatological journey and will be examined in this chapter. The writings of theologians of the times, particularly those of Schleiermacher, which were an important influence on Erskine's context shall be examined in Chapter Four.

Next we shall turn to Pneumatology as such. In considering the reasons for Erskine's approach to the Holy Spirit several questions must be asked. Are there other concepts that take the place of the Holy Spirit in Erskine's thinking, and if so, what are they? How much of this is the result of being a child of his time and culture? Does Erskine have a Pneumatology of a sort after all based on the Holy Spirit's agency in the world that largely avoids the metaphysical approach which just looks different?

In Part II we shall turn to an analysis of Erskine's works. A useful taxonomy for understanding Pneumatology has been developed by John McIntyre in his book *The Shape Of Pneumatology*. The categories in McIntyre's taxonomy cover many Pneumatological possibilities from patristic times through the Reformation up to and

including the twentieth century. This taxonomy will be considered in Chapter Five with a view to locating Erskine's thought within it.

Erskine's works are subjected to an initial detailed statistical analysis in Chapter Six. This analysis has been done using a computer search for every occurrence of the words "Spirit" and "Ghost." Each occurrence of these nouns are examined in relationship to attendant verbs. Instances of the use of the word "Spirit" which refer to an attitude (such as "he had a contentious spirit") will be set aside as well as references to evil spirits or to the human spirit. Each time the Holy Spirit is identified the reference will be tabulated and classified. When the Holy Spirit is spoken of as an agent, the relevant verb will be identified. Further analysis will group the actions of the Holy Spirit together to study the use of all verbs associated with the Holy Spirit and the relative force of these verbs will be examined. The purpose of this analysis will be to determine whether Erskine has, in McIntyre's categories, a "dynamic" Pneumatology as contrasted to a traditional one and to determine whether, if such a Pneumatology exists, it is a pronounced one.

In Part III we turn to a more substantial investigation of specific themes in Erskine's work. Chapter Seven will consider a key theme, namely, Erskine's distinction of the "First Bond" and the "Second Bond" between God and man.<sup>2</sup> The concept of the "Second Bond" indicates a knowing of God which can be attributed to conversion, or becoming conscious of a relationship with God within the individual

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<sup>2</sup> The terms "First Bond" and "Second Bond" are peculiar to Thomas Erskine and will always appear in quotation marks in this thesis.

human soul. The “First Bond” for Erskine is a relationship with God inside each individual human soul which is unrecognized by the human until the moment of personal faith. This “First Bond,” according to Erskine, has been found throughout the entire race since the fall and predisposes the soul towards God in some sense. Again we shall explain the importance of this theme in Erskine's understanding of the Holy Spirit's Person and work.

Another key theme is conscience. The concept of conscience associated with an inner knowing of God was familiar in Erskine's era. Erskine himself refers to conscience many times in his writings. We shall see that in his use “conscience” is often used to indicate the human spirit. In addition, we shall see that Erskine does not always distinguish clearly between the actions of the Holy Spirit and the actions of the human spirit within the heart of man. Chapter Eight will, therefore, consider his use of this language and its significance for his Pneumatology.

Christology and Pneumatology are necessarily, or should be, inseparably linked. Erskine's friend Edward Irving developed a Christology in which a high place was given to the Spirit. Therefore, it is worth while considering Erskine's Christology and seeing how and why the same emphasis on the Spirit is not to be found. This will be done in Chapter Nine.

Part IV offers a positive statement of Erskine's Pneumatology in Chapter Ten, and then the Conclusion which includes an important final analysis of the thesis as a whole.

## Chapter I. Erskine's Life And Associations.

### A. The Theme Is Set

As Thomas Erskine prepared to leave the Bar in Edinburgh in 1816 after the death of his older brother James and take up his new duties at Linlathen, he drew up a paper which he intended to give to his companions at the Bar. This paper was never delivered and lay dormant for many years until Erskine was an established and esteemed writer. It then surfaced in 1825 as an *Introductory Essay to the Letters of Rev. Samuel Rutherford*. Erskine's theology is clear in this short piece and its primary theme endured throughout his lifetime. "It follows," he says, "that a restoration to spiritual health, or *conformity to the Divine character*, is the *ultimate object* of God in His dealings with the children of men. Whatever else God hath done with regard to men, has been subsidiary, and with a view to this; even the unspeakable work of Christ, and pardon freely offered through His cross, have been but means to a further end; and that end is, that the adopted children of the family of God might be conformed to the likeness of their elder brother,—that they might resemble Him in character, and thus enter into His joy. . . . The sole object of Christian belief is to produce the Christian character, and unless this is done nothing is done."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters Of Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen From 1800 Till 1840*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 21.

## B. Erskine's Early Life

Thomas Erskine outlived all of his siblings and many of his beloved cousins. His three youngest siblings died before they attained adulthood. William, who died at the age of 8 months was gone long before Thomas was born. John, who died at the age of 7, was gone when Thomas was less than a year old. Therefore, he never knew either of them. His older sister Ann died in 1804 at the age of 18 when Thomas was 16 years old. Thomas never planned to be laird of Linlathen, but the death of his older brother James in 1816 at the age of 29 when Thomas was 28 was a great shock to Thomas and made him the laird of Linlathen. Thomas had two younger sisters, Christian and David, called Davie. Christian was a year younger than Thomas but predeceased him at the age of 77 in 1866 by four years. Davie predeceased Thomas by three years at the age of 76 in 1867.

Thomas' mother had a sister who was next oldest in her generation named Mary who married John Stirling of Kippendavie and Kippenross. They produced thirteen children who were beloved cousins to Thomas Erskine and his siblings. One of the thirteen, Katherine, married Thomas' brother James and was, during James' lifetime, mistress of Linlathen. The youngest of the 13, Jane, was a lifelong friend of Thomas. Jane lived much of her later life in Paris. Another of the 13 was James who was a beloved friend of Erskine's throughout Erskine's life and shared his interests in religious history and art. James was the only one of the 13 cousins who outlived Thomas. Therefore, during his lifetime Thomas Erskine outlived all of his siblings

and 12 of his 13 beloved cousins.<sup>4</sup> During his younger years Thomas spent a lot of time with his cousins at Kippenross. His aunt and uncle were very kind to him and his siblings and he played with his many cousins there. They were like one big family. Thomas loved the countryside there especially the large trees which adorned the place. In later life when he visited Kippenross he was reminded not only of the natural beauty of the place which had not faded in his mind even after living in Italy but also of his many beloved relatives who had died before him.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas was only three when his father died in 1791 in Italy having been in poor health for some time. Thomas and his siblings had been left in the care of their grandmother at Airth. After the return of their mother to Airth they remained there for about a year until the birth of the last of the siblings named David after their father but called Davie throughout her life. Mrs. Erskine chose not to live at Linlathen but rather to stay in Edinburgh for the sake of the children's education.<sup>6</sup> The absence of a father from Erskine's early childhood was an important influence on him in two ways. In the first place Erskine was throughout his life seeking a father figure for himself, thus his constant emphasis on the loving Fatherhood of God. In speaking of the history of the Jewish people Erskine says, "We are told in the history, that the people had murmured against God as if they had been brought up out of Egypt just to perish in the wilderness. Their souls were discouraged. They had denied that God had

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<sup>4</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 7-9.

<sup>5</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 7.

dealt with them as a loving father, they disbelieved his love, and hence they could not trust themselves in his hands, but were in a state of enmity and apprehension and suspicion towards him. This was their sin, the *disease of their souls*.”<sup>7</sup> In the second place, Erskine was profoundly influenced by the gentle spirit of his mother. Needham says that this could have brought forth in Erskine’s soul a sort of a “woman’s heart” which seemed to permeate all of his writings. Erskine was also very attached to his large family of siblings and cousins and aunts and uncles most of whom were sincere Christians. This could have encouraged Erskine’s tendency to equate the spiritual and the natural relationships in life.<sup>8</sup>

When Thomas was seven, he and his brother James went to live briefly in England with his mother where his older sister Ann was receiving treatment for a spinal condition. During that time a Miss Hay, one of an older group of cousins from Cardross, lived with them. Cardross was another favorite place for Erskine. He described its trees as those “under which our fathers’ fathers have played,” and talked about “its beautiful extent of grass, and its seclusion, and its simple peasantry.” Also from that family came Thomas’ “dear, dear cousin Rachel.” She was one of three favorite cousins all from Cardross. It was to Rachel that he wrote his longest and most interesting letters. Thomas’ family consisted of many close cousins.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 16.

<sup>8</sup> Needham, Nicholas R., *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen: His Life and Theology 1788-1837*, Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990, 16-22.

<sup>9</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 10-11.

The earliest recollection that Thomas relates of his childhood was when he was five years old and a visitor came to the house in a snow storm to tell of the death of Louis XVI of France. The housekeeper was incredulous that the visitor, Mr. Bruce, should think that he and the king of France were so important.<sup>10</sup> European events would always have a profound effect on the people of Erskine's time. In Europe the eighteenth century had been the scene of considerable social, intellectual and theological upheaval. In Scotland the second Jacobite rebellion 42 years before Erskine's birth had the effect of making the "old alliance" between Scotland and France powerless and had also dismantled the power of the Scottish clans. The only Jacobite sympathies that remained were on the continent and these were mixed with Catholic or Episcopal leanings. The Hanoverian kings reigned securely in Britain. In 1789 Louis XVI was executed in France by the revolution. The French revolution was one of Thomas Erskine's oldest lifelong memories.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Erskine had quite a Scottish pedigree. His father was a prominent Edinburgh lawyer. He was descended from the Regent Mar who had been counselor to King James VI and I, and from John Erskine of Carnock, the "Black Colonel" who was partially responsible for bringing William and Mary to the throne but who had always remained a staunch Covenanter. On his mother's side Thomas Erskine was descended from the Grahams of Airth. The young Thomas Erskine enjoyed a

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<sup>10</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Hart, Trevor, *The Teaching Father; An Introduction to the Theology of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1993, 3.

privileged environment and beautiful surroundings which “sweetened his whole nature to the core.”<sup>12</sup>

Thomas’ earliest memories were of Airth which was the home of his grandmother, Mrs. Graham. Mrs. Graham was his maternal grandmother. She was an ardent Jacobite and an Episcopalian unlike Thomas’ paternal relatives. She was an attractive and strong willed woman who held private Episcopal services in her home, did not attend Presbyterian services, and would not pray for the Hanoverian kings. But she was pious and spread her religion among her daughters of whom Thomas’ mother was the oldest. Grandmother Graham had a powerful influence on the young Thomas.<sup>13</sup> This gave Thomas an independence from the Scottish Kirk that, along with being a layman, allowed him a more detached perspective than some of his contemporaries like Edward Irving. When he wanted to, he attended Episcopal services.

The earliest specimen of Thomas’ writing is a letter sent to his grandmother at Airth. In this he says, “I never can forget Airth and all the large gardens, and our little gardens which you were so good as to give us.” He was also close to several of the servants who worked at Airth. He sends wishes that “old Body,” a “henwife,” is well and also inquires about a Mrs. Henderson and John Campbell. He reports that he has “read a great many entertaining and instructive books, of which I am very fond.” One

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<sup>12</sup> Hart, *The Teaching Father*, 8-9.

<sup>13</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 8.

of these books, remarks Mr. Hanna, was Knolles' *History of the Turks*. He also says, "In my accounts I am gotten into division, and I hope I shall soon write better."<sup>14</sup>

Erskine's earliest education was probably through a private tutor but his time at Edinburgh High School with his brother James was no doubt very influential. The atmosphere at the High School was quite harsh. The only redeeming feature was Dr. Adam, the principal and teacher of the older boys and a great favorite. But there was one of the Masters who was so "inhumanly cruel to the boys under his charge" that Sir Walter Scott fashioned the character Willie in "the peck o' maut" after him.<sup>15</sup> In Dr. Adam Erskine no doubt found not only a father figure but also an example of the value of education which may have caused him to see the Heavenly Father as primarily an educator of souls.<sup>16</sup>

In 1802, when Thomas was 14 and James was 15, they were sent to school in Durham. Thomas remarks that the countryside around Durham is very beautiful and that the Abbey is "a remarkably fine building"<sup>17</sup> with wonderful bells, but that the city is "a dirty hole in general."<sup>18</sup> During this time Thomas was very sensitive regarding the attentions of his sisters. He complains to his sister Christian that the younger Davie "never sent her love or compliments to me in her letter to James, and only mentions my name once, and then it is squeezed up in a small hole between two

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<sup>14</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Needham, *Erskine: His Life & Theology*, 22-23.

<sup>17</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 13.

lines, and then she says that all sent love to Tom, but never herself. Tell her that I am prodigiously angry at her.”<sup>19</sup> Thomas says that he expects a letter from Davie on her 11<sup>th</sup> birthday the very next month. Obviously, as the baby, Davie was much loved and doted over by the family including Thomas himself. He apologizes for the defects in his letter to Christian as it was “written in darkness.”<sup>20</sup> Within a month of his first letter written upon his arrival in Durham in 1802 Thomas received another from his sister Christian and answered her promptly. His younger sister assured him that he need not worry about who his companions might be as James, only a year older, was with him. A beloved aunt, Lady Hamilton, had died and Thomas, age 14, tells Christian, 13 years old whom he calls “Christy,” to comfort the younger Davie, just turned 11. “Tell her to dry her tears, and to prepare herself for that place where we are assured all the faithful followers of Christ will live for ever and ever.”<sup>21</sup>

### C. University And The Bar

After Durham Thomas began as a student at the University of Edinburgh. He passed the tests and was admitted to the Law school there. He was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1810 and remained in Edinburgh until 1816. Not much is recorded of his studies there. We do know that his love for walking began in childhood and that he loved to walk to the top of Arthur’s seat, that prominent mount

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<sup>19</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 14-15.

in Edinburgh, and back and that he always made it a point to do the round trip within an hour.<sup>22</sup>

Thomas had an aunt Elizabeth, his mother's younger sister, who married James Dundas of Edinburgh. The Dundas family had a house very near that of the Erskines in Edinburgh. Throughout his college years Thomas was exposed to "many distinguished and agreeable visitors."<sup>23</sup> Thomas was in the midst of the society of the Edinburgh of his day which was considered to be an intellectual and cultural center of Europe. "The years during which he [Erskine] attended the Parliament House formed one of the most brilliant periods in the history of the Scottish Bar. Walter Scott was then daily to be seen sitting at the table as one of the Clerks of the Court of Session. . . . The *Edinburgh Review*, established a few years before, was at the height of its popularity and power."<sup>24</sup>

During his years in Edinburgh Erskine lived in a genteel world in New Town and had what might be considered a conversion experience reading the works of John Foster. Foster's writings emphasized God as a loving Father who was the educator of the soul. Additionally, Foster urged a deep personal dependence on this loving Father who would supply the ability to follow God which was naturally lacking in the human soul. During this time the apparent conflict between the concept of a loving God and the reality of Hell was planted in Erskine's mind.<sup>25</sup> One of Foster's essays, *On A*

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<sup>22</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 15-16.

<sup>23</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Needham, *Erskine: His Life & Theology*, 24-29.

*Man Writing Memoirs Of Himself*, affected Erskine greatly at the age of 17 prior to beginning his studies for the bar. “Foster’s ideal man goes through life, noting as he goes, whatever habits and views arise within him; and tracing them, at the same time, to their proper sources within himself, and all with the view of educating and improving character.”<sup>26</sup> This concept captivated Erskine’s mind and he was never free of it. If life was given for the education of character, then it was a serious matter indeed. Life, therefore, was a heavy responsibility and the need to draw on God for help was great and constant; it was a duty and a privilege.<sup>27</sup> During his time in Edinburgh as a young lawyer Thomas had been associating with men who had made no profession of faith as Christians. This forced him to his own study and confirmed him for a lifetime in the biblical values of his childhood. On more than one occasion he gave witness to his Christian faith to dying men. One was his 33 year old cousin Patrick Sterling and another a dear friend. For his boldness he was promptly asked to leave the room of his friend, but was called back by the dying man for instruction and comfort.<sup>28</sup> Later, as he began to practice law, Erskine became cool in his faith until he reached a period of skepticism and ultimately severe doubt. This caused him to return to the Bible of his youth and to undertake a sincere and patient study of its contents. This was a habit that guided him for the rest of his life. Through his study of the Bible Erskine was not only restored to his faith but became progressively stronger

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<sup>26</sup> Henderson, Henry F., *Erskine of Linlathen: Selections and Biography*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1899, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 18.

in it. He always held the Bible above all other authorities. Indeed, the Bible was the only external authority that Thomas Erskine ultimately recognized; the human conscience being the primary internal authority.<sup>29</sup> “I was brought up from my childhood,” he says . . . , “ in the belief of the supernatural and miraculous in connection with religion, especially in connection with the person and life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and like many in the present day, I came, in after life, to have misgivings as to the credibility of this wonderful history. But the patient study of the narrative and of its place in the history of the world, and the perception of a light in it which entirely satisfied my reason and my conscience, finally overcame these misgivings, and forced on me the conviction of its truth.”<sup>30</sup>

James Erskine married in 1811 and moved to take up his duties as laird of Linlathen. Thomas was now without his companionship and influence. When brother James died of typhus in 1816, Thomas was devastated. Thomas was always devoted to his older brother. Fifty years later he said, “He stands out by himself, as one in whom worth of moral character, manliness, truth, and perfect regard for the rights, interests, and feelings of every human being, accomplished more in producing the sentiment of veneration (I would even say) than I have known produced by all the talents in the world, accompanied even by the average amount of moral endowment. I never knew a young man venerated except himself. He was only a year older than myself, and I venerated him from my infancy.” Brother James was also much

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<sup>29</sup> Needham, *Erskine: His Life & Theology*, 30-34.

<sup>30</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 17.

admired by others of his own time.<sup>31</sup> In a letter to a cousin Erskine said, “that we may look more to Christ, that we may look wholly to Christ. Oh ! there is nothing else of any consequence.” And in another letter, “ I have lost a Christian friend, a spiritual guide.”<sup>32</sup> James was 29 at his death and Thomas was 28. This early loss of James had a profound effect on Thomas Erskine and perhaps made him eternally a seeker. James and Katherine had four children, all of whom died almost immediately after birth. This left Thomas as the heir to Linlathen. His life was permanently changed.

#### D. The Revival

Erskine expressed interest in certain reported manifestations of the Holy Spirit in his day and even wrote of witnessing such things. It is significant that there is considerable documentation that Thomas Erskine investigated the alleged appearances of manifestations of the Holy Spirit in his day and for some time personally affirmed their genuineness. This subject is covered more extensively in Chapter Three of this thesis.

#### E. Adult Influences On Erskine

According to Trevor Hart, “Erskine enjoyed a long life and formed some significant friendships with Thomas Chalmers, John McLeod Campbell, F. D.

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<sup>31</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 18-19.

<sup>32</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1800-1840, 20.

Maurice, Thomas Carlyle, and Alexander Vinet, some of whom were particularly influential in the shaping of his own theology.”<sup>33</sup> Erskine formed an early friendship with the great Dr. Chalmers in 1818 and looked upon him as a father. Erskine traveled to Paris with Chalmers in 1838. He was concerned that Chalmers had apparently misunderstood his writings. Their friendship seemed to cool somewhat after 1843.<sup>34</sup> Thomas Carlyle also had considerable influence on Erskine although Erskine’s principal works appeared before Carlyle reached his prime. Erskine particularly admired Carlyle because Carlyle believed in the invisible spiritual world in a “railroad and steam engine” era. Carlyle also condemned the habit of a man living in the “lower part” of human nature. Erskine and Carlyle were, however, very different in their dispositions and mental habits.<sup>35</sup> Alexander Vinet was also influential on Erskine. Vinet was one of the “liberal-minded evangelicals” who sought to balance the harshness of the Wesleyan movement in Britain by striving to reconcile culture and Christianity. Vinet emphasized the subjective over the objective in Christianity and taught that if religion was to be genuine, it must be an inward faith and that conscience was the last judge of truth. With this Erskine heartily agreed.<sup>36</sup> Frederick Denison Maurice was Erskine’s ideal man. Erskine once alluded to Erasmus when Erasmus was compared to Martin Luther as saying, “I can write, but

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<sup>33</sup> Hart, Trevor A., General Editor, *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, *Erskine, Thomas* (1788-1870), Trevor A. Hart , 190.

<sup>34</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 20-21.

<sup>35</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 22.

<sup>36</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 24-25.

Luther can burn.” Erskine said, “Maurice can do both.” Erskine was at odds in his day with the influence of Thomas Boston and the Calvinism of the Marrow Men.<sup>37</sup>

We shall consider the theological influences on Erskine of both Maurice and Boston in Chapter Four of this thesis.

The works of William Law influenced Erskine towards the mystical.

However, he held to the boundaries of reason and sober thinking. Furthermore, Erskine did learn from Law “how to think of God and how to rescue religion after a more spiritual and reasonable manner than was common in his day.”<sup>38</sup> Erskine also took flights into mysticism. He was seeking to satisfy the needs of his intellectual nature in these flights. Eighteen hundred year old documents were not enough for Erskine; he wanted direct experience of God. “His spiritual cravings sent him in search of a Being whose presence was everlasting. It was the voice of evangelicalism addressing itself to him.”<sup>39</sup> However, Erskine’s mysticism is more rationalistic than that of many other mystics. “He holds not merely that the Christ of history reproduces Himself in experience, but also that the Christ of experience explains and confirms the reality of the Christ of history.”<sup>40</sup> This was, in fact, the central theme of his *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion*. In the final

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<sup>37</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 26-30.

<sup>39</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 67.

analysis, according to Henderson, Erskine probably pushed the relationship between the supernatural and the natural too close together.<sup>41</sup>

Thomas Erskine's uncle, John Erskine, wrote a tract entitled *Signs Of The Times* in which he said that a revival such as the Great Awakening under Whitefield was a prelude to the Second Coming. In this Needham sees an "apocalyptic strain in the blood of the Erskines." Needham sees no appreciable theological influence from the Episcopal Church in Erskine's early life even though Erskine stated several times that he preferred the Anglican service. After all, many of the other British liberals had even less Anglican influence in their lives.<sup>42</sup> Erskine's eschatology was very important to him and it was always linked to his soteriology. In this Erskine was perhaps the most influential in his time and after his time. Erskine believed in a universal hope for sinners. He wanted the work of Christ to be so complete that "every particle of evil" in the world was "converted into good." Along with Maurice he believed that the education of man by God should extend beyond the grave. Even though it is not possible to trace exactly the effects of Erskine's influence, he was probably part of a combination of influences that had the effect of "toning down the harshness of former times."<sup>43</sup>

Henderson sees the contribution of Erskine and like-minded men of the 19th century as facilitating the usefulness of the Gospel. Erskine saw the Gospel as

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<sup>41</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Needham, *Erskine: His Life & Theology*, 9-15.

<sup>43</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 79-80.

something wonderfully fitted to cheer, to uplift, to satisfy.<sup>44</sup> Often men admire the teachings of Christ “and they revere His Person, but they find the gospel of no use to them in the battle of life; they can manage to live as well without it as with it.”

Erskine went far in showing that we indeed can not live without it.<sup>45</sup>

#### F. Erskine And His Time

According to Nicholas Needham Thomas Erskine was a “foremost figure” in the theological awakening between 1820 and 1830. He was a man whose writing will be found to have a “remarkable influence.” He was a nineteenth century Scottish layman who was never given the “attention he deserves.” He was a man who, along with Coleridge, “was instrumental in the regeneration of British theology in the nineteenth century.” Needham sees a need to separate the personal regarding Erskine from the theological. He believes that the task of recapturing the personal magnetism and genuineness of Erskine, as it was so often reported in his day, would be virtually impossible. His theological views, however, can be recaptured from his writings of the 1820’s and 30’s.<sup>46</sup> Needham sees three stages in Erskine’s theological development: an early Evangelical Calvinism, an intermediate Irvingism and a final Universalism which was not “easy going” but rather quite dogmatic. Erskine moved through time regarding the first two stages partly due to two great “contentious

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<sup>44</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 84.

<sup>45</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 83-84.

<sup>46</sup> Needham, *Erskine: His Life & Theology*, 1.

movements.” One of which was the Row Controversy centering around McLeod Campbell and the other was the Catholic Apostolic Church movement which was brought about by the followers of Edward Irving. Needham does not seem to be concerned about the general or secular history of Erskine’s times. His primary question regarding Erskine is, how does a Calvinist living in one of the most Calvinistic countries in the world at the time “cease to be a Calvinist” and become a “classic Victorian theological liberal?”<sup>47</sup> The events of Erskine’s childhood may help to explain this.

In the area of ethics and theology Henderson believes that there were few men in the English speaking world at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that were not affected by Erskine’s thinking. “His influence has been great, and helpful even on those matters on which, in the opinion of many, the conclusions which Erskine reached were rash and unwarranted.”<sup>48</sup> Perhaps Erskine’s greatest influence was in his argument with the Calvinism of his day. Erskine often expressed his indebtedness to this Calvinism. He had a lot of love for the old doctrine. However, this Calvinism was in need of some criticism. Erskine said that if Arminianism was a wolf in sheep’s clothing, Calvinism was a sheep in wolf’s clothing. Erskine, like so many good Calvinists, never upheld Calvinism as infallible.<sup>49</sup> In his argument with Calvinism Erskine was particularly keen on the subject of probation versus education in the

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<sup>47</sup> Needham, *Erskine: His Life & Theology*, 2-8.

<sup>48</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 126.

<sup>49</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 126-27.

human life. Erskine believed passionately in God's education of man and he became stronger and stronger in this regard as he matured.<sup>50</sup> Henderson speculates as to whether Erskine would have been more restrained or more recognized if he had been a member of the clergy. Perhaps such a membership would have restrained him more, but a trial for heresy, such as the one endured by Edward Irving, would have spread his fame to a much greater extent.<sup>51</sup> In the end, no one can really know. "However these things might have been, Erskine's influence as a teacher of spiritual Christianity has been great, greater than he has ever received credit for."<sup>52</sup>

Erskine did the majority of his theological writing before the age of 50 after which he took a long hiatus until just before his death. Trevor Hart says, "For the next several decades the flow from Erskine's pen stopped, and he wrote little other than letters to his many friends and associates, a correspondence which in itself makes fascinating reading and is rich in theological and spiritual content."<sup>53</sup> Erskine seemed to lose confidence in the print medium for many years. He invited many to his estate at Linlathen and spent many hours in discussions. It seemed that he hoped that his own vision of God would be transferred to them in these discussions. "In his final years, with his eyesight having already failed, he turned again to writing in order

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<sup>50</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 128.

<sup>51</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 131-32.

<sup>52</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 132.

<sup>53</sup> Hart, *The Dictionary of Historical Theology, Erskine, Thomas (1788-1870)* by Trevor A. Hart, 192.

to capture and clarify some of his mature perspectives. The result was the posthumously published *The Spiritual Order And Other Papers* (1871).”<sup>54</sup>

Although not a cleric, Erskine displayed a strong theological mind in his writings. He was a lawyer and layman who was writing from his own experience and Biblical research and working towards a theology. It is interesting to look for a Pneumatology in his writings. Many things that Erskine says reflect the influence of a certain kind of pneumatology, though Erskine does not produce formal Trinitarian concepts. Bernard Reardon says that Erskine’s “life interest was religion, as to which he displayed a remarkable originality of mind. Not that his views themselves were novel; but in him their growth was spontaneous, since Erskine was not a particularly learned man and his knowledge of the history of Christian doctrine seems always to have been limited.”<sup>55</sup> He compares Erskine to Coleridge in that he “could never endorse the assumption of those who, in accord with Dr. Chalmers, maintained that once the Christian revelation is accepted on its historical evidence it is impious to scrutinize it at the bar of reason and conscience.”<sup>56</sup> And yet Erskine had a great respect for Chalmers as evidenced in many places in his correspondence not the least of which is in a letter congratulating Chalmers on his appointment to the Divinity chair in Edinburgh. Erskine says,

I cannot express to you how much I have been delighted by your

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<sup>54</sup> Hart, *Dictionary of Historical Theology*, 192.

<sup>55</sup> Reardon, Bernard M. G., *From Coleridge to Gore; A Century of Religious Thought in Britain*, London: Longman, 1971, 397.

<sup>56</sup> Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, 399.

appointment to the Divinity Chair in Edinburgh. I have felt it to be a matter of much thankfulness and much hope. It is the situation to which the wishes of many have long destined you, from the conviction that you have a particular gift for the discharge of its high duties. May the Lord answer the many prayers which have been and will be presented on our behalf on this occasion, and send an awakening spirit to arouse and vivify the torpid Church of Scotland, and employ you as an honoured instrument for exciting and preparing many who may be zealous and wise pleaders for God with the coming generation.<sup>57</sup>

Erskine always saw the spiritual condition of the Kirk as being very poor and “torpid” and welcomed anything which was likely to offer a remedy to that situation. Reardon says that “the characteristic of Erskine’s thought is its subjectivity. Truth in the abstract is not truth in any sense that will satisfy the man who seeks faith.”<sup>58</sup> Erskine’s position on the Trinity is well recognized. “The doctrine of the trinity, for example, considered simply as a theory of the divine being, might very well be justified speculatively, but until it is related to redemption it signifies little and the ordinary man would be likely, when confronted with it, only to feel that Christianity holds out a premium for believing improbabilities.”<sup>59</sup> The love of God was Erskine’s primary concern. “Put it [the Trinity], however, within the context of the divine love and it becomes an illuminating belief, a constraining influence. . . . Theology, he felt, had become, instead of a pointer to the living God, a mere intellectual scheme, or, even worse, material for scholastic controversy. What

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<sup>57</sup> Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 124. (Letter to Dr. Chalmers from Linlathen, 10 Nov. 1827).

<sup>58</sup> Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, 401.

<sup>59</sup> Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, 402.

concerned him was the life of faith, the abiding sense of the nearness of the presence of God, as one to be trusted and ever to be learned from.”<sup>60</sup> Reardon’s insight is a key element in understanding both Erskine’s motives and his writings. Subjective experience in the context of Divine love is what is important to Thomas Erskine, whereas the Trinity as a doctrine is not. Erskine is interested in the relational in Christianity. In a personal interview John McIntyre indicated to the writer of this thesis that the book of Acts is relational. There is an interplay between the Holy Spirit and his people and between the people themselves. This is expressed by such passages as when James says at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:28 that “it seems good to us and to the Holy Spirit.” Furthermore, intensity validates the relational.<sup>61</sup> Erskine loves to quote the scriptures. For Erskine the more intense or dynamic the relational the better.

Trevor Hart says,

Erskine presents a fascinating theological figure, and one whose stature and influence within the stream of British theology in the nineteenth century is too rarely appreciated. Measured by the canons of the classical creeds he appears refreshingly orthodox; measured by the more precise canons of his own day in Scotland, less so. But Erskine was unconcerned about such matters, and even his clear incarnational and Trinitarian adherence is more a product of first-hand engagement with the biblical text than concern for traditions. He presents dynamic and narrative accounts of the Father, the Son Jesus and his Spirit sent into the world in power, and perhaps betrays tacitly that impatience with or nervousness concerning metaphysical statement which characterized many in his century. He is, in this sense, above all a ‘biblical’ theologian, one whose reflection is shaped by close engagement with the stories and theologies of the Old and New

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<sup>60</sup> Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, 403.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with John McIntyre, Edinburgh, 9 October 2000.

Testaments. By all contemporary accounts, he was, throughout his life, also a man of such a sort who might convince a person of the reality of the gospel which he proclaimed by the sheer aura of its reality which surrounded him, and by the conformity of his own personality to its essential shape.<sup>62</sup>

The historian A.C. Cheyne sees Thomas Erskine as one of the three most influential men of his time when he refers to the “influential triumvirate” in theology in the nineteenth century.

In the eighteen-twenties and subsequently, men’s minds were further prepared for new developments by the influential triumvirate, Thomas Erskine, John McLeod Campbell, and Edward Irving. Each of them in his own way questioned the traditional Scottish approach to religion. . . Together they had the effect of warning against an over-intellectualised and abstract piety, discrediting a degenerate Puritanism, balancing the doctrine of the Atonement with an equal emphasis upon the Incarnation, and reminding their contemporaries that, “the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”<sup>63</sup>

The following table of the primary works of all three men indicates the closeness of publication dates especially in the earlier works:

- 1820 Erskine, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion*
- 1822 Erskine, *Essay On Faith*
- 1823 Irving, *Orations, Arguments For Judgment To Come.*
- 1824 Irving, *For Missionaries After The Apostolic School, A Series Of Orations.*
- 1825 Irving, *Babylon And Infidelity Foredoomed.*
- 1827 Irving, *Introduction To Ben Ezra And The Ordination Charge*
- 1828 Irving, *Ten Homilies On Baptism*
- 1828 Irving, *The Doctrine Of The Incarnation Opened*

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<sup>62</sup> Hart, *Dictionary of Historical Theology*, 192.

<sup>63</sup> Cheyne, A. C., *The Transforming of The Kirk; Victorian Scotland’s Religious Revolution*, Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1983, 88-9.

- 1828 Irving, *Last Days*  
 1828 Erskine, *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel*  
 1829 Irving, *The Morning Watch*, A Journal, Began publication  
 1830 Irving, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*  
 1830 Irving, *Christ's Holiness In Flesh*  
 1830 Erskine, *On The Gifts Of The Spirit*  
 1830 Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*  
 1837 Erskine, *Doctrine Of Election*  
 1856 Campbell, *The Nature Of The Atonement*  
 1877 Erskine, *The Letters Of Thomas Erskine*

Theologically between Thomas Erskine, Edward Irving and John McLeod Campbell there are important areas of agreement. Some examples include their positions on the true humanity of Jesus which includes the sameness of all human flesh including that of Jesus, the Fatherliness of God, their understandings of the nature and value of Christ's sufferings which are closely linked to their beliefs on the humanity of Jesus, and their commitment to the universal freeness of the gospel, the freedom of man's will and the benefits and necessity of personal assurance. We shall compare Erskine's Christology to Irving's in some detail in Chapter Nine.

#### G. Erskine's Death

Erskine's mature years were not particularly happy. He never married but his health remained relatively good until the end. However, his closeness to his sisters who died before him grieved him very much. Erskine passed calmly and with dignity on 28 March 1870 and his last words were "O, Lord my God ... Jesus ... Lord Jesus."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Hart, *The Teaching Father*, 16.

Even Erskine's death seemed extraordinary. His attending physician said that he died very "gently last night at a quarter to ten; laid his pathetic weary head on the pillow like a child, and his last words were, 'Lord Jesus.' As might have been anticipated, the scene beheld at his deathbed was as heavenly as his life had been. His nephew, who was present, declared that "if many loved him for his life, more would have loved him in his death."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Henderson, *Erskine: Selections and Biography*, 136.

## Chapter II: Erskine's Intellectual And Cultural Context

This chapter is designed to examine some intellectual and cultural influences which influenced Thomas Erskine. Erskine was born in 1788. Many of these influences continued until and beyond his death in 1870. This chapter fits between the necessary biographical information on Erskine and the important considerations of the West Coast Revival and the theological context of Erskine's thinking which follows. Here we consider Romanticism and the Great Disruption. Thomas Erskine lived from 1788 to 1870, 82 years. Romanticism spread from 1783 to 1832. The Disruption flowered in 1843 after many years of preparatory events and changed Scotland to its roots.

### A. Romanticism

#### 1. Pre-Romantics And The Movement

Centuries of religious conflict in Europe and especially Britain had shown that theological debate was not going to be settled by reason, scholarship or debate. People began to turn to "God's other book," or

nature, for answers.

An understanding of the pre-romantic movement is helpful in putting Romanticism in context. Ernest Bernbaum defines the pre-romantic movement.

Romanticism may be found in nearly all periods of literary history. But the most directly influential of these was the so-called Pre-Romantic movement in the eighteenth century, which prepared the way for the great age itself. It used to be assumed that the differences between the age of Pope and the age of Wordsworth were clear and distinct, and that the passage from the earlier period to the later was abrupt and revolutionary. Students felt that they were mastering the subject when they learned to recognize certain allegedly sharp contrasts between the “neo-classic” and the “romantic.” In point of fact, most of the Pre-Romantics were not dissenters from all classical tastes and views, even though they departed therefrom in one respect or another. <sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Bernbaum, Ernest, Ed., *Anthology Of Romanticism*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948, 3.

Bernbaum says that the pre-romantics did not use the word “romanticism.”

<sup>67</sup> He says that the term “‘Pre-Romantic Movement’ is used to designate the development during the eighteenth century of literary tendencies which resemble, or which influenced, those of the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century. It is a

convenient term, although not strictly definable and although applied to different works for different reasons.” <sup>68</sup>

Concerning the Romantic movement itself Bernbaum says that it can be divided into two main periods: from 1783 to 1812 with such personages as Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth and from 1812 to 1832 with such personages as Byron, Scott, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, Landor, Keats and Shelley. In the later period the young Carlyle began and formed a link between the Romantic period and the Victorian. <sup>69</sup> Bernbaum goes on to say that Romanticism “is not the kind of term which can be reduced to a definition. . . . Romanticism is not even approximately defined by the Romantics themselves. . . . Romanticism was an all-embracing faith, and it was never formulated in a creed or a comprehensive

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<sup>67</sup> Bernbaum, *Anthology Of Romanticism*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Bernbaum, Ernest, *Guide Through The Romantic Movement*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Bernbaum, Ernest, Ed., *Anthology Of Romanticism*, xxv.

set of dogmas subscribed to by all the Romantics.”<sup>70</sup> Bernbaum continues,

“Romanticism is not a systematic philosophy, but an intuitive faith expressed through the emotional and symbolical art of literature. . . . .

The Romantic is not an escapist dreamer who does not care whether his dreams are fantastic, provided they are pleasing. Nor is he a dogmatist who maintains that his beliefs can be demonstrated scientifically or rationalistically. Yet he is convinced that his faith, though not demonstrable, is absolutely true, and that it is in accord with eternal realities.”<sup>71</sup>

Historically, Romanticism can not be seen as a school or a movement. It was a period

of “restless experiment.” It represented no “single tendency but rather a simultaneous pressure of many different, often conflicting, principles.” In most European countries several generations were involved which made it more complicated.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Bernbaum, Ernest, Ed., *Anthology Of Romanticism*, xxv – xxvi.

<sup>71</sup> Bernbaum, Ernest, Ed., *Anthology Of Romanticism*, xxvi.

<sup>72</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicaco: 1968, Romanticism, Francis Scarfe, Vol. 19, 561.

Concerning the Romantics Bernbaum says that they receive by inspiration the “real nature of things.” They withdraw from the mundane things of life and concentrate on the “inner life.” The Romantics cultivate imagination which makes them receptive to inspiration. In this there is often an “intense stimulation of the emotions.” This exercise of the imagination does not “suppress or supercede the human feelings, but supplemented and exalted them.”<sup>73</sup> When the Romantics looked at life, they believed that they distinguished between “appearances” and “reality.” The man of “common sense” could see only appearance. The Romantic saw reality. The man of common sense was shallow and selfish and wanted to use nature and man for his own ends. The Romantic saw the true potential in nature and mankind; he saw what they could become; he saw their essential character and their genuine worth. “Romanticism was a revolutionary transvaluation of all conventional values.” The Romantics expected all things to improve, personally, politically, economically and socially. If all was going to improve, then all must in the present day of the Romantic be scorned as inhumane, ugly and evil.<sup>74</sup>

The Lockean version of Newton’s optics illustrated the difference

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<sup>73</sup> Bernbaum, Ernest, Ed., *Anthology Of Romanticism*, xxvi.

<sup>74</sup> Bernbaum, Ernest, Ed., *Anthology Of Romanticism*, xxvii.

between the

appearance and the reality in life. The world did not in fact consist of colors; colors were merely the interpretation of light as it was perceived by the brain from information that it received from the eye. The world of art had a redefined task which did not include the discovery of truth but merely was to “instruct through pleasing.” But another shift was coming. The Bible came to be appreciated as “literature” due to a new appreciation of the translatable qualities of Hebrew verse. Also, art became a bridge between what was considered pure and practical reason. Christianity was proclaimed a “double religion” that had spiritual authority as well as being historically allowed for the creation of a new sense of drama and literary character. The Romantics turned away from the classics with the primary emphasis on death

towards an appreciation for life after death; the soul was immortal. The new sense of

individuality and inner space stemming from the Bible had transformed literature. Mythology had diminished the grandeur of nature. Christianity demythologized nature. The entire aesthetic behind Romanticism was the outcome of a Christian biblical civilization. Furthermore, Romanticism could be described by the dominance of what was called the “principle of

plenitude,” or rather, the “twin principles of plenitude and diversity.” It was diverse in contrast to uniformity and simplicity. And there was plenitude in contrast to the restriction of content by formal rules. The diversity was the result of the new freedom. In religion especially it tended to make things more complicated.<sup>75</sup>

## 2. Romantic Values

It has been suggested that the central concept of Western tradition for over eighteen hundred years was simply that of Plato. Plato did not see virtue as a thing of goodness in itself. Instead he said that virtue is knowledge. If we have knowledge, then we are virtuous. It is this that Romanticism counteracted. Often the battle raged as to exactly what kind of knowledge was meant. Was it the knowledge of physics or psychology or theology; was it individual or public; was it the knowledge of the experts or of the public? Whatever the answer, the knowledge made it possible for man to know what they ought to do. Romanticism said that it is not the knowing but the creation of values that was the task of mankind. Romanticism also stressed that there was no pattern to which we must adapt ourselves. There is only the endless self creativity of the universe. Romanticism changed the world view. Seeking to understand everything necessarily dissected everything. William Wordsworth (1770-

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<sup>75</sup> Welch, Claude, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972, Volume I, 53-55.

1850) said that to dissect was murder and many agreed.<sup>76</sup> If we seek to take everything apart in order to understand, then we destroy the unity of creation and the life passes out of it. We must accept creation and life for what it is and glory in its unity and beauty.

The view of great images dominating mankind spreads into every area of human activity in Romanticism. The role of the unconscious comes forth. The importance of the inexpressible is lifted up. The understanding of the State and of the role of law is also effected by Romanticism. The State is seen as a semi-spiritual organization symbolic of the spiritual powers of divine mystery. The law is seen as the product of the beating force with a nation.<sup>77</sup> Under the influence of Romanticism history is no longer seen as a collection of facts but as an evolution of unconscious dark factors.<sup>78</sup> However, Romanticism can not be pinned down to any particular point of political view.<sup>79</sup>

In England Lord George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) became the leader of the Romantic movement. "Byron's chief emphasis is upon the indomitable will, and the whole philosophy of voluntarism, the whole philosophy of the view that there is a world which must be subdued and subjugated by superior persons, takes its rise from him."<sup>80</sup> Byron wrote of many things, from the small to the large, from the classical

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<sup>76</sup> Berlin, Isaiah, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 118-120.

<sup>77</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 121-125.

<sup>78</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 126.

<sup>79</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 127.

<sup>80</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 132.

to the biblical. One of the most famous of his poems was *The Fall Of Sennacherib* in which he celebrates the delivering power of God in mysteriously slaying the army of their enemies in one night.<sup>81</sup> Curiously Byron was instrumental in bringing Romanticism back into a more realistic light. His contemporaries were “shocked by his wickedness and dazzled by his genius. . . . young ladies wept over his poetry and prayed for [his] conversion.”<sup>82</sup>

Romanticism was a reaction to neo-classicism, but not against the classicism of Greece and Rome. In the historical and aesthetic sense it represented changes in literature and the arts.<sup>83</sup> In brief, two principles typify the position of Romanticism as opposed to classically dominated Rationalism. These two principles are the necessity of the will and the absence of structure.<sup>84</sup> “In the eighteenth century you have an extreme order of sophistication, you have forms, you have rules, you have laws, you have etiquette, you have an extremely tight and well-organised form of life, whether in the arts or in politics or in any other sphere. Anything which destroys this, anything which blows it up, is welcome.”<sup>85</sup>

In Scotland Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) is deemed a romantic because he described the life of ages preceding his own. He liked the values of the past, the

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<sup>81</sup> II Kings 19.

<sup>82</sup> Beers, Henry A., *A History Of English Romanticism In The Nineteenth Century*, New York: Henry Holt And Company, 1901, 396.

<sup>83</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Romanticism by Francis Scarfe, Vol. 19, 560.

<sup>84</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 134.

<sup>85</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 135.

values that preceded Rationalism. Classical and medieval values seemed to have more in common with Romanticism than the values of Rationalism. The legend of King Arthur and the chivalrous values of his knights, the Fantasy, the dream, the indefinable is more important than the reality.<sup>86</sup> Scott liked the middle ages because they were picturesque, because the social structure rested on a military basis, because great individual freedom of action was permitted. All this gave chances for bold adventure missing in Rationalism.<sup>87</sup>

### 3. Romanticism From An Historical Perspective

Ernest Bernbaum offers this summary statement on the Romantic movement,

The sum and substance of all them seems this: The Romantic Movement before its coming to fullness, greatness, and self-consciousness in the nineteenth century, was prepared for by an infinite number of intellectual and aesthetic impulses – was, in other words, an evolution not a revolution; and the difference in emphasis and method between it and Classicism was not a sudden or consistent break but the occasional stirring and reawakening of tendencies never in any previous age quite unrepresented.<sup>88</sup>

The effects of Romanticism even to the present day are significant. Of course, the impact of Romanticism has been softened by far greater advances in science in our day. But Romanticism did “put its finger upon something which classicism had left out, upon these unconscious dark forces, upon the fact that the classical

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<sup>86</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 136-137.

<sup>87</sup> Beers, Henry A., *English Romanticism*, 352.

<sup>88</sup> Bernbaum, *Guide Through The Romantic Movement*, 339-340.

description of men, and the description of men by scientists or scientifically influenced men ... does not capture the whole of man. It recognised that there were certain aspects of human existence, particularly the inward aspects of human life, which were totally left out.” Romanticism made existentialism possible and the central message of existentialism is a romantic one; that there is in the world nothing to lean on.<sup>89</sup> Motives count more than consequences.<sup>90</sup> “What Romanticism did was to undermine the notion that in matters of value, politics, morals, aesthetics there are such things as objective criteria which operate between human beings.”<sup>91</sup> Society and not the individual becomes responsible, we are “simply fragments of an enormous causal process.”<sup>92</sup> “The whole movement, indeed, is an attempt to impose an aesthetic model upon reality.”<sup>93</sup> The legacy of Romanticism was to “to raise everybody to some passionate level of self-expressive experience,” and to make clear “the existence of a plurality of values.” And “the result of Romanticism, then, is liberalism, toleration, decency and the appreciation of the imperfections of life; some degree of increased rational self-understanding. This was very far from the intentions of the romantics. But at the same time - and to this extent the romantic doctrine is true - they are the persons who most strongly emphasised the unpredictability of all human activities.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 142.

<sup>90</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 138-139.

<sup>91</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 140.

<sup>92</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 142-143.

<sup>93</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 145.

<sup>94</sup> Berlin, *The Roots Of Romanticism*, 146-147.

#### 4. Romanticism and Thomas Erskine

Erskine is no doubt totally aware of the philosophies of his own age. But he is also a man of faith. Furthermore, Erskine requires faith in relationship with the living God, the loving Father, and not mere faith in doctrinal facts. Erskine says that “we may have an atheistical knowledge of God and of Christianity.” He says that he has observed this more than once. By this he means that we “may receive the doctrines, without receiving the God of the doctrines,—just as the philosophers of this world receive the doctrines of natural science, without thinking of or receiving the God of nature.” He cautions us to understand that it is “God that we have to do with, and not a science.” He goes on to remind us that “doctrines are lights merely to guide us to God; and if they serve not this purpose, they serve no purpose.”<sup>95</sup>

For Erskine the desired end result is that doctrines “are channels through which that spirit ought to be received into the heart, which is the life of the heart; and if they bring not this spirit, they do nothing.”<sup>96</sup> A purely enlightenment application of thinking for Erskine is “atheistical.” Knowledge and thinking regarding God must lead to a spiritual relationship in order to profit the believer. For Erskine, reasonings alone can not bring peace to the awakened conscience, particularly reasonings concerning facts believed about God even if these facts are correct and from the

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<sup>95</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel*, Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1870, 197.

<sup>96</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 197-198.

scriptures. There has to be a moral element as well. “ It cannot but appear strange to a moral and thinking being that God should pardon him because he believes something.” When the hour of death comes “am I then to draw my comfort from this dry cistern that I have believed certain facts?”<sup>97</sup> Certainly Erskine does dare to think – indeed he dared to think in challenging ways against the theological currents of his day – but this thinking must arrive at a true knowledge of the God behind the doctrines. “Is it not madness in an immortal being to leave eternity entirely out of his account of existence, when, in truth, it is the only thing in his existence which is worth thinking of? Neglect not the pearl, for it is a pearl *of great price.*”<sup>98</sup>

For Erskine thinking necessarily leads to education and education leads to righteousness and morality. Erskine addresses the morals questioned by romanticism and affirms his own convictions. He consistently contends that we all need deliverance from the human condition.

The deliverance which such a man needs is to know that the Ruler, without whom a sparrow falleth not to the ground, is the Righteous One, who loveth righteousness and desireth his righteousness, and hath placed him in these circumstances to educate him in righteousness; and

that assuredly it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 155.

<sup>98</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 207.

<sup>99</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine Of Election And Its Connection With The General Tenor Of Christianity Illustrated Especially From The Epistle To The Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 341.

In this morals and religion are united for “the light given to us as our guide in the former is intended also to be our guide in the latter.”<sup>100</sup> He contends that if a man is “brought up and educated in the knowledge of righteousness” without any denominational instruction and he is allowed to choose between the Bible and the Koran, he “ought to prefer the Bible” as there would be “a moral culpability attached to his preferring the Koran,” precisely because “we feel that the Bible agrees with that of God which is written in the heart, more than the Koran does.” Furthermore, “if this principle be not admitted, there evidently can neither be a right nor a wrong in our choice of religion.”<sup>101</sup> Erskine’s entire emphasis in *Election and Religion* is that we have a choice. We think in order to make choices. This thinking is not merely cerebral, it also involves the heart. In this there is a certain reasonableness.

The loving purpose of God to educate men into a moral sympathy with Himself and with one another, is the light which I require to see in a religious doctrine, in order that I should believe it. I must see a reasonableness in it, that is, I must see that it harmonises both with the nature and character of God, and with man’s spiritual needs and instincts. Now, do I see such a reasonableness in the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ ? I think I do.<sup>102</sup>

## B. The Great Disruption

### 1. A Great Force

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<sup>100</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine Of Election*, 309.

<sup>101</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine Of Election*, 310.

<sup>102</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order And Other Papers, The Divine Son, Selected From The Manuscripts Of The Late Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876, 32.

How great a force was the Scottish Disruption? One historian offers this answer.

The disruption seldom figures among the historical episodes fondly recalled by Scots of their recalcitrance towards the British state in which a unionist destiny has placed them. It was doubtless not bloody or proletarian enough for modern political taste. Yet it turned out to be one occasion when hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women in Scotland challenged the authority set over them. And unlike other Scottish rebellions, it succeeded, up to a point.<sup>103</sup>

Just what was that point to which the Disruption succeeded? Again Michael Fry offers us an answer.

It created a Church, enjoying the allegiance of a large section of the people, which denied the assertion by the British state that religion, along with everything else, was subject to its absolute parliamentary sovereignty. Yet the challenge also failed in a major respect. The Free Church was visibly not a continuation of the old Kirk, a Church of Scotland entire. It was rather a secession, much like previous secessions in nature if not in scale, and that soon came to be reflected in its outlook and actions.<sup>104</sup>

In these words Fry summarizes both the strong and weak parts of the Disruption. Then he amplifies on this by saying that the Disruption did, in fact, alter the “constitutional relations of the two countries.” It did alter the old Union; it led to a situation which would “allow Westminster to become the centre of Scottish affairs.” This was because “the most independent part of that semi-independent Scotland had

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<sup>103</sup> Brown, Stewart J. and Fry, Michael, Ed., *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993, Chapter 2, The Disruption And The Union, Michael Fry, 31.

<sup>104</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 2, Fry, 31.

been the Kirk.” Because the Disruption had not entirely succeeded it weakened the position of the Kirk as a sovereign entity in its own sphere over “religion, morals and welfare.”<sup>105</sup>

On 18 May 1843, the Day of the Disruption, one-third of the parish ministers of Scotland left the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and formed the Free Kirk.<sup>106</sup> This historic schism was the inevitable result of over a century of dissent in Scotland. Over the decades many issues had contributed to this day which shaped the environment, both political and religious, of Erskine’s day. The roots of these issues went all the way back to the Union of 1707.<sup>107</sup>

As the Assembly of 1834 drew near, preparations were begun to bring about the disruption. Thirty-two committed ministers contacted potential supporters and invited them to a convention to be held in Edinburgh the day after the November meeting of the commission of the Assembly. An earlier meeting was held on 17 November at St. George’s Church at Charlotte Square. At this meeting divine worship was held and every effort was made to strengthen the resolve of the weaker supporters. The men conducting this meeting were carefully chosen. As many had expected, Thomas Chalmers was chosen as the preacher and Dr. John McDonald of Ferintosh led in prayer. Dr. McDonald was known as the “Apostle Of The North.” He

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<sup>105</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 2, Fry, 32-33.

<sup>106</sup> Drummond, Andrew L. and Bulloch, James, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843: The Age Of Moderates*, Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1973, 250-1.

<sup>107</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 45.

was very influential with the Evangelicals “beyond the Great Glen, and particularly in Ross-shire. It was expected that McDonald could persuade the Highlanders to follow the other Evangelicals into the Free Church.

After this meeting they adjourned to the Roxburgh Church which was a small building on “an obscure street” nearby. There were 465 ministers crowded into this church. It was essentially a private meeting with no minutes being kept. However, it was generally known that plans were made at this meeting concerning designating speakers from each Synod and to encourage each other in commitment to the cause. A statement of grievances was signed at this meeting by 423 ministers. In a second statement the signers stated their intentions to “resign their offices and endowments” in order to enter the Free Church. They were now ready to take the step and make the necessary sacrifices. At this time 354 signed and some more added their signatures later.<sup>108</sup> Some said that the reduction in signatures was due to the fact that many had to return home before the signing took place. On 24 November a public meeting was held at another church, Lady Glenorchy’s, in Edinburgh. The purpose of this meeting was to publicize the actions of the secret conventions. An “Address to the People of Scotland” was written and sent to the printers. A statement regarding this “Address” was sent to the government. It was now time to make preparations at the congregational level. In the parishes committees were formed to begin to make

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<sup>108</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 244.

preparations for finances to support the disruption.<sup>109</sup>

It had been the hope of the Evangelicals to retain enough of a majority to make the disruption look like a “rejection by the Church of the humiliations forced upon her by the State.” But “the refusal of the so-called ‘Middle Party’, led by Leishman of Govan, sometimes known as ‘the Forty’” was a blow to their hopes. “In these alarming circumstances the Evangelicals decided to take no risks, to abandon this part of their policy, and to anticipate the constitution of the Assembly while their man was still in the chair.”<sup>110</sup> Their victory would have to be a lesser one.

On the day of the Assembly at about 2:30 P.M. a military band made all aware that the service at St. Giles High Kirk had ended and the Lord High Commissioner, the Marquis of Bute, was arriving. Thousands had been waiting for many hours to see the outcome.<sup>111</sup> The opening prayer was the responsibility of the retiring moderator, a Dr. Walsh, but he did not constitute the Assembly. Instead he declared that because the Church’s liberty had been infringed, he protested against proceeding to constitute the Assembly. He declared that it was lawful to separate from the establishment and that they could proceed to another place to do so. He said that they were now to withdraw “humbly and solemnly” keeping in mind the sins of the Church and of the nation. He further insisted that those who were about to leave were not responsible for what was about to happen. “The dishonour done to Christ's crown, and the

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<sup>109</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 245.

<sup>110</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 246.

<sup>111</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 246 –247.

rejection of His sole and supreme authority as King in His Church” was the reason for the separation. Then Walsh laid the signed protest which was signed by 203 commissioners on the table and “bowed to the Lord High Commissioner, and left the meeting.” Chalmers followed Welsh out of the assembly. As the mass exodus continued out onto the street, the commissioners were forced to walk in a column four deep because of the crowds. “Almost a quarter of a mile long, the procession slowly made its way along George Street and down Hanover Street. The Lord Provost of Edinburgh walked down the hill with them and at Canonmills they were joined by the former Lord Provost of Glasgow and the Sheriff of Midlothian.” They entered the “newly built Tanfield Hall” which had been prepared for the gathering.<sup>112</sup> There were about 3,000 crowded into the hall. Dr. Walsh opened the assembly with a prayer. Walsh then proceeded to nominate Thomas Chalmers as Moderator. They sang an opening psalm. The Free Kirk was born. All in all the entire affair was “very well stage managed” even though it had not been planned that way. The number that went out was greater than those who were involved in the struggle ever expected. Most of them were going from “comfort to destitution.”<sup>113</sup> “One-third of the parish ministers of Scotland went out into the Free Church.”<sup>114</sup> To be more specific, “the statistics of the Disruption offer unexpected problems. Vague estimates of the strength of the Free Church in its first years are unreliable. Little groups of adherents

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<sup>112</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 247.

<sup>113</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 248.

<sup>114</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 250.

were formed wherever possible: some of these prospered, but others declined. When allowance has been made, it seems that the Free Church numbered some seven hundred congregations within a few months of the Disruption.”<sup>115</sup>

Williston Walker summarizes thus.

Under Chalmers' leadership, therefore, some four hundred and seventy-four ministers formally withdrew from the state church in 1843 and founded the Free Church of Scotland. They gave up parishes and salaries. All had to be provided anew; but the enthusiasm and sacrifice of the new body was equal to the task. In general, it was a withdrawal of the Evangelical element from the already considerably modified but less zealous and spiritual "Moderates." A third, and that the most active part, of the state church had gone out in the Disruption. Yet the example of the seceders worked ultimately for a quickening of zeal in the state church itself. In 1874 the rights of patronage, the original ground of division, were abolished by law.<sup>116</sup>

The new church set out to duplicate the school system. They had taken with them most of the fervent members although the old church did experience a comparatively strong and fast recovery. The new church was weak in the Northern countryside and among the poor. The new church was forced to worship in a variety of places.<sup>117</sup> Landlords refused places of worship to the new church as they thought that the new church would soon fail. It did not and generations of bitterness and unforgiveness followed.<sup>118</sup>

Unless anyone should think that the Disruption was a merely religious event Drummond and Bulloch say,

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<sup>115</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 251.

<sup>116</sup> Walker, Williston, *A History Of The Christian Church*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959, 502.

<sup>117</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 252.

<sup>118</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 253.

What divided the Scottish Church in 1843 was an issue linked with the unceasing debate of Christendom on the relationship between the believing community and the secular world in which it is set. Apart from that, any judgment which underestimates the place of the Disruption in Scottish history has failed to understand that the Church in Post-Reformation Scotland was more than a purely religious community. It was so integrated with the national life, so truly established, that much of the structure of local government operated through her. Education and social welfare were her responsibility.<sup>119</sup>

They add that the Disruption actually broke the old pattern of Scottish life.

Furthermore, the disruption removed “education and the care of the poor from the Church of the people and from local control.”<sup>120</sup> The Church had been the strongest element in protecting Scotland against the power in London and with the disruption Scotland which had always been the weaker partner in the Union of 1707 that which protected the Scottish people and culture was all but eliminated. “The distinctively Scottish tradition was broken.” “The Disruption was more than a quarrel about church government. It was the fall of a regime.” “Those features of its life which constituted the peculiar institutional inheritance of Scottish democracy had been lost.” It had been said that The General Assembly was not an ecclesiastical council but a national council.<sup>121</sup> It was also argued that The General Assembly “did not derive its spiritual authority from the State, but possessed it *as the State*.”<sup>122</sup> “The structure

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<sup>119</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 260-261.

<sup>120</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 261.

<sup>121</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 262.

<sup>122</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 263.

which it cost Robertson so much trouble to rear, and his successors to preserve, founded on no rock, has crumbled into dust.”<sup>123</sup>

## 2. Contributing Factors

After the disturbance of the *Marrow*, John Glass, the minister of Tealing in Angus, put forth the teaching that the church was not intended to be a political entity thus denigrating the entire spirit of such past historical events in Scotland as The National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. The church was, he argued, called out of all nations and the New Testament model, unlike the Old Testament, put forth the church as an entirely spiritual entity. Glass said that the National Covenants were without warrant in God's Word. For his views Glass was deposed in March of 1730. Glass and his wife and fifteen children moved to Perth where a building was erected for his small but loyal congregation. Drummond and Bulloch say,

Glass took an unprejudiced look at the New Testament and followed as literally as he could the example of the Church as he saw it there. His congregations had no professional ministry, but were led by groups of elders or bishops. His people had dietary laws. They abstained from blood and from things strangled. They regarded their property as subject to the demands of the Church and the poor. In worship they practised the kiss of peace and washed one another's feet in literal obedience to the Gospel command. In especial, Glass saw that the central act of worship of the early Church had been the weekly Eucharist at which all were present. The worship of his congregations — the "Eucharist" — therefore took place after a common meal—the "Agape"—in which the common food of Scotland in his time had been shared.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 265.

<sup>124</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 46.

Glass was later restored to his presbytery, but never went back to a congregation of the Kirk. Glass' followers lived on known variously as Glassites, the "Kail Kirk" or the Sandemanians.<sup>125</sup> This small seed could well have been the death knell for the state church as it was known in Scotland.

The influence of the Deists also crept into Scottish theology. They saw "the law of God in the order of the universe and in defining virtue as an agreement with this universal harmony."<sup>126</sup> An entire generation of students for the ministry in Scotland and Ireland absorbed the Deists teachings. Furthermore, Deist Matthew Tindal argued that "the faith must contain nothing which is not justified by nature and reason." He also argued that "Morality, the end for which all religions existed, was, he contended, the same in all, and accordingly whatever depended on revelation alone might be jettisoned. No more was necessary than nature and unassisted reason taught."<sup>127</sup> The General Assembly of 1735 reflected this teaching when it "urged ministers to recommend moral duties in their preaching not from principles of reasons only but also, and more especially, of revelation."<sup>128</sup>

A new Evangelicalism was arising in Europe. There were "scattered groups who repudiated the connection between Church and State, were more or less indifferent to the clergy, and gathered in the company of their fellows for prayer and Bible study. They thought much of conversion, assurance of salvation, and the

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<sup>125</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 46.

<sup>126</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 47.

<sup>127</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 47.

<sup>128</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 47 – 48.

guidance of the Holy Spirit.” Communion was practiced infrequently in Scotland and when it was held frequently, sometimes local “revivals” occurred.<sup>129</sup> “Praying Societies” sprung up in Scotland and as early as 1640 the Assembly encouraged the restriction of their activities. These societies welcomed Seceders and helped in the establishment of new congregations long before the Great Disruption. As early as the 1740’s “Seceder congregations were composed of the convinced who were prepared to pay for the maintenance of their church and minister.” These congregations “saw no responsibilities in the surrounding community except the opportunity to gather adherents, and they disregarded the old parish boundaries.” Furthermore, when Praying Societies “craved Gospel ordinances and the Seceders responded, a building would be commenced, a stipend guaranteed, commonly through the promised payment of seat rents, and the new minister would preach to a congregation composed of the evangelical and the discontented from many miles around.”<sup>130</sup>

The Seceders formed associate presbyteries. By 1740 there were thirty-six Seceding congregations in Scotland. By 1746 they numbered forty-five. By 1760 they had ninety-nine. These congregations were controlled by their laity who were very strong willed. Outwardly they affirmed the Westminster Confession but this only served to conceal their differences. They did not care about Church unity and they were united by their hostile attitude toward the National Church and they had a strong

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<sup>129</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 49.

<sup>130</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 50.

determination to “have their own way.”<sup>131</sup> When George Whitfield, who brought the results that the Evangelicals wanted, ministered in Scotland in the early 1740’s, he refused to identify with the Seceders and the Associate Presbytery and they denounced him for it.<sup>132</sup>

In the 1800’s in Scotland enormous change was inevitable. The tendencies of the Seceders became known as “Evangelical.” They wanted personal conversions and zeal in the faith; they supported Calvinism and the Westminster Confession. Williston Walker says, “As in England, so in Scotland the story of Christianity in the nineteenth century begins with spiritual awakening. As in England, the reaction against the French Revolution, the rise of Romanticism, and the general revolt from the rationalism of the eighteenth century prepared the way for Evangelical revival north of the Tweed.”<sup>133</sup>

On the other hand were the Moderates. They would sign the Westminster Confession of Faith but they were not bold in preaching its truths. They considered the teachings of the Confession as containing “antiquated notions.” Also, “they flattered human nature as to its ability to obey the moral law. What the apostles would have called sinful pleasures, they called human weaknesses.”<sup>134</sup> Morality, loyalty to the National Kirk and social action were important to Moderates. The General Assembly itself was composed of both Evangelicals and Moderates.

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<sup>131</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 51.

<sup>132</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 54-55.

<sup>133</sup> Walker, *A History Of The Christian Church*, 501.

<sup>134</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 56-57.

According to P. L. M. Hillis, “the sociology of the Disruption varied according to region and according to the different social groups within each region. Moreover, social composition was not the sole determinant of religious adherence since other factors, including the personality of the local ministers and local traditions, played an important role in deciding who stayed in and who went out of the Established Church in 1843.” According to Hillis we need to “look in some detail at the social composition of Established and Free Church congregations within the three most obvious regional divisions: Highland, Lowland rural and Lowland urban.”<sup>135</sup>

In the Highlands, “the real numerical strength of the Highland Free Church came from farm and unskilled workers.” There was also an “almost total lack of support for the Establishment from skilled tradesmen. In many parts of the Highlands, therefore, the Church of Scotland was left with very small congregations confined largely to the large landowners” and their employees.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, the “Church of Scotland was able to retain a broad appeal in these and other areas where agricultural change was less traumatic and other factors, notably the religious revival, were not apparent” and “in many other Highland areas the Free Church was less popular

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<sup>135</sup> Brown, Stewart J. and Fry, Michael, Ed., *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1993, Chapter 3, The Sociology Of The Disruption, P. L. M. Hillis, 44.

<sup>136</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 47.

because the issues which led to its popularity further north could not be exploited to the same degree.”<sup>137</sup>

In the rural lowlands “it is more difficult to see discernible patterns which would suggest that the social composition of the Lowlands explains the Disruption. The patterns more closely mirrored the situation outside the northern Highlands. . . the Church of Scotland retained a considerable presence, a strength which extended throughout Lowland Scotland.”<sup>138</sup> In addition, in the rural lowlands, “the main sociological difference between the Church of Scotland and the Free Church concentrated upon a higher percentage of skilled tradesmen among the congregation and office-bearers of the new Church.”<sup>139</sup> Also, the “Church of Scotland also could state with justification that the ‘common people’ and a significant proportion of the middle class were among its members, and “Lowland agricultural change was not pursued with the same ruthlessness as in parts of the Highlands.”<sup>140</sup> Finally, the “absence of rigid class patterns within church-going indicates that social factors were less important than issues such as patronage and local traditions in determining allegiances. Thomas Chalmers’ claim has been substantiated but his observation also applied to the ‘auld Kirk’. The Kirk may have been the ‘cauld Kirk’ but it was not the ‘Kirk wi’ out the people’.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 50.

<sup>138</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 50

<sup>139</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 51.

<sup>140</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 52.

<sup>141</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 50.

Regarding the urban lowlands Hillis says, “In looking at the strength of the ministerial secession for Glasgow and Edinburgh, shown above, it is clear that outside the Highlands the urban areas saw the Free Church at its numerically most powerful. Further evidence came from Aberdeen where all fifteen Church of Scotland ministers joined the Free Church. An analysis of Free Church congregations shows widespread support both for those ministers and for many who remained in the Established Church.” Also in these areas, “the patterns of middle-class Church membership indicates that the Church of Scotland had most success among the older commercial and professional families.” Furthermore, “many aspirant middle-class members of the Church of Scotland may have felt their route up the social ladder blocked by the upper middle-class dominance of the Church. One way to circumvent this barrier was to form a new Church where they would be more powerful. With the greater wealth brought about by the Industrial Revolution this became a practicable proposition.<sup>142</sup> The Free Church had special success among two main groups: the upwardly mobile middle class and the skilled artisans. The Established Church held a greater appeal to older commercial and professional groups, the unskilled workers and urban poor.<sup>143</sup>

In summary in the whole of Scotland,

The northern Highlands saw the Free Church at its strongest in terms of numbers, drawing widespread support outside the circle of most landlords and their dependents. Opposition to landlord policies during the Clearances was only one factor accounting for the strength of the Free Church, and in many areas of the Highlands both Free and Established Churches were popular. As

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<sup>142</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 54.

<sup>143</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 58.

a cause of the Disruption in Lowland rural Scotland social factors were less important than the personality of ministers and attitudes towards patronage, with both denominations appealing to a wide range of rural society. The financial demands placed on urban Free Church members dented its appeal to the urban poor, but skilled workers and many of those who aspired to higher 'middle class status' saw their future better served by the new Church. The Church of Scotland continued to find support from large sections of urban society. These broad trends contained considerable local variations with evidence which does not support a strict social determinism as a cause of religious adherence.<sup>144</sup>

The great Thomas Chalmers claimed that the “common people” and “a goodly proportion of the middle classes” filled the pews in the Free Church. However, the Church of Scotland could claim substantial middle-class support as well. Chalmers' claim that the “great bulk and body of the common people ... are upon our side” applied to the northern Highlands alone since “outside this area the Established Church could count the working classes among its members.”<sup>145</sup>

The important issue of Patronage was a primary issue in the Evangelical – Moderate debate. Historically, the laird had nominated the minister when the position became vacant. There was little or no consideration of the desires of the Session or the members in this choice. The Moderates supported patronage; the Evangelicals opposed it.<sup>146</sup> In the long run the Moderates “had the support of ordinary men in the ministry and most of their people.” They had firmer control of the General Assembly than they had over the lower courts.

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<sup>144</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 58.

<sup>145</sup> Brown and Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Chapter 3, Hillis, 58.

<sup>146</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 58.

Thomas Torrance also emphasizes the importance of the patronage issue when he says, “what really divided the Moderates and the Evangelicals was not Westminster Theology, however, but the issues of lay patronage and Kirk discipline through the General Assembly, issues that were eventually to play a role in the Disruption.”<sup>147</sup> The patronage issue could not be avoided. The Church discipline issue was fueled by the disagreements of the time. Torrance brings a focus to the period when he says that although they often worked together on many matters at the first of the nineteenth century, “later on in the century, however, both Evangelicals and Moderates, Moderate Evangelicals and Evangelical Moderates, joined in deposing John MacLeod Campbell due to their shared adherence to the Westminster Standards and fear of anything that might undermine the very subscription to those Standards which, ministers claimed, 'secured them their emoluments'.”<sup>148</sup> In the end it all got down to money.

Moderate William Robertson became the leader of the General Assembly in 1762 and served until 1780. He constructed the manifesto of the Moderates. This manifesto included such items as: acceptance of the judgment of the majority or those who were entrusted with the authority; law and order must be accepted if privilege is to be enjoyed and this is particularly true in the church as it is a voluntary organization which is founded on the commands of Christ; rightly enforced discipline

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<sup>147</sup> Torrance, Thomas F., *Scottish Theology From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996, 248.

<sup>148</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 249.

is a part of the nature of the church, if conscience means the right of every one to do what seems good in their own eyes, only anarchy and confusion will result and if men will not face their proper obligations and conform, they should go out of the Assembly. Logic, order and assurance are the key concepts of this manifesto.<sup>149</sup>

In the end Robertson had confidence in the “power of the human intellect.” He was also “convinced that any other way of thought would alienate the educated classes in a transformed Scotland.” This strength became his weakness. Robertson was a “citizen of the world” and he adapted the Church to his worldly position.<sup>150</sup>

Furthermore, the Moderate attitude towards sin was, according to the Evangelicals, very lax. Church discipline entailed sins of a sexual nature only and even then it was not stringently applied.<sup>151</sup> Church attendance became sparse and continued to decline.<sup>152</sup> The General Assembly of 1765 said that “there were now 120 dissenting congregations with a total of 100,000 communicants, and that the numbers were steadily growing.”<sup>153</sup>

Others said that there were actually 87 Secession and Relief congregations and that there were actually far less than 100,000 communicants. The following year in 1766 it was reported to the Assembly that “the abuse of patronage had been a great cause of schism in the Church.” Robertson defended this charge arguing that “the

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<sup>149</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 65-66.

<sup>150</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 67.

<sup>151</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 75-76.

<sup>152</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 73-74.

<sup>153</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 78.

system had provided educated ministers and it was the law of the land in which the church had ample means of controlling any abuses. For the time being the charges were rejected. Some think that confidence among the Moderates had passed into arrogance.”<sup>154</sup> Speaking of the nineteenth century, Drummond and Bulloch say,

The time had gone when the Church of Scotland could be regarded more or less as the nation in its spiritual aspect. The alienation of the industrial masses, the growth of a sizeable Roman Catholic minority, and, above all, the steady increase of the Seceders in numbers and influence, had put an end to this. It was only a matter of time before the Church's privileges should be challenged.<sup>155</sup>

As time went on patronage became a bigger and bigger issue and it was not to continue. Williston Walker says, “The old question of patronage still continued burning. In 1834 the growing Evangelical party secured the passage by the General Assembly of a "veto" rule, by which presbyteries were forbidden to proceed to installation where a majority of the congregation were opposed to the candidate. This rule soon involved legal controversy. The courts held that the General Assembly had exceeded its powers. Parliament was asked for relief, which was refused.”<sup>156</sup>

Gradually the Evangelicals had risen in numbers and influence in the Assembly. The Assembly of 1832 elected Thomas Chalmers as Moderator. At that time “overtures from three Synods and eight Presbyteries called for modification of the rights of patrons and for a reinstatement of the importance of the call.” The

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<sup>154</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 79.

<sup>155</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 220.

<sup>156</sup> Walker, *A History Of The Christian Church*, 502.

Assembly refused by a majority of 46 to send the subject to committee. And the Evangelicals were temporarily defeated. However, in 1833 “the Assembly received a larger number of overtures asking that it should be declared the law of the Church that no minister should be intruded into a congregation against the will of the congregation.”<sup>157</sup>

By the 1834 assembly the control had finally passed to the Evangelicals and the rights of the congregations in the call of the minister were restored.<sup>158</sup> However, there was more involved than this. The controversy which “began out of the endeavour of a section of the Church to secure what it held to be the rights of congregations in the choice of a minister,” had now “passed into a contest regarding the spiritual independence of the Church.”<sup>159</sup> The industrialization of Scotland was creating a new non-agricultural working class and masses of poor and unconverted people in the mines and cities.<sup>160</sup> The differences between the Moderates who had formerly ruled the assembly and the newly powerful Evangelicals became more pronounced. “Two concepts of the Church were involved, but not clearly stated. For the National Church the parish was a sphere of responsibility and evangelism and the territorial base for a congregation; to the Seceders a congregation was a group of committed worshippers drawn, together without respect to parish bounds.”<sup>161</sup> In the

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<sup>157</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 223.

<sup>158</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 225.

<sup>159</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 226.

<sup>160</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 227-229.

<sup>161</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 231.

Assembly Chalmers and his associates were very successful in raising donations for church work.<sup>162</sup> This paved the way for a confidence that a Free Kirk could survive financially. Still the battle for the right of the congregation to choose its minister waged on and on and Chalmers labored to hold everything together.<sup>163</sup>

On 24 May 1842 Dr Chalmers moved in the Assembly the adoption of the document known as "The Claim of Right" which would have reversed the Veto act but still sought a peaceful and fair resolution of the patronage issue. It was a long and complicated act and adoption failed and the crown refused to intervene. All hope of a negotiated settlement was now gone.<sup>164</sup>

### 3. Thomas Chalmers

#### a. Chalmers, The Man

It is not possible to properly consider the Disruption without a thorough understanding of Thomas Chalmers. Williston Walker says,

From 1815, when he entered on a memorable pastorate in Glasgow, the most eminent of the Evangelical party was Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), distinguished as a preacher, a social reformer, a mathematician, a theological teacher, and an ecclesiastical statesman. Under his leadership, and in the changed spirit of the times, the Evangelical party rapidly grew in strength. Under Chalmers' guidance a great campaign to meet the needs of the growing population of Scotland was inaugurated, which resulted by 1841 in the erection of two hundred and twenty new churches by popular gifts.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 233.

<sup>163</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 236-238.

<sup>164</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 241-243.

<sup>165</sup> Walker, *A History Of The Christian Church*, 501-502.

Thomas Chalmers was born at Anstruther on 17 March 1780. He died at the age of 67. He began his studies as a mathematician and after becoming convinced of the necessity of faith for salvation he turned to evangelism. In 1815 he began as minister of the Tron Church in Glasgow. He became so famous as a preacher at the Tron that when he visited London, Wilberforce wrote, “all the world is wild about Chalmers.” In 1819 he took the call from St. John’s in Glasgow and embarked on a mission to help the poor. In 1823 he accepted a chair at St. Andrews University in Moral Philosophy. In 1828 he became professor of divinity at Edinburgh. Here he became leader of those who wanted independence from civil interference in the Church and a voice for the parishioners in the choice of a minister. The campaign against patronage finally ended in the Great Disruption of 1843 where Chalmers was the primary leader. He was made the Moderator of the emerging Free Church. After this he was made principal of New College in Edinburgh, the new divinity school of the Free Kirk, and remained in that position until his death in 1847. Chalmers was a practical preacher. He wanted to bring the ethics of the Christian faith to the practice of philanthropy. As a scientist he claimed that the study of astronomy could only bring glory to the Christian faith. His work among the poor in Glasgow was very effective. He wrote on national resources, civic economy, political economy, and theology. His *Institutes Of Theology* was published posthumously in 1849. His obituaries praised him as a “veteran hero of the disruption” and for his attentiveness to the social and economic

needs of his people. <sup>166</sup>

Thomas Carlyle did not appreciate the fact that Chalmers was so often “the continual topic of conversation.” He says the, “universal admiration of Chalmers” in the Scotland of his day was “slightly wearisome” and “indiscriminate and overdone.” However, he says that “the great man was himself truly lovable, truly loved; and nothing personally could be more modest, intent on his good industries not on himself or his ‘fame.’” He remember several visits with Chalmers. One was in “his own house” for breakfast with Edward Irving and a young man named Crosby. <sup>167</sup> The breakfast room was quite dismal and Chalmers seemed to be “absent; wandering.” He seemed to have a “sorrowful gaze” over “his honest face.” Carlyle was glad to get away from this gathering. <sup>168</sup>

The next encounter was more to Carlyle’s liking in a “fine drawing room” at a “solemn evening party.” Chalmers pulled up a chair next to Carlyle and talked at some length about “some scheme he had for proving Christianity by its visible fitness for human nature: ‘all written in us already,’ he said, ‘as in *sympathetic ink*; Bible awakens it, and you can read!’” Carlyle says that he “listened respectfully” and there was a “clear sense of the geniality and

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<sup>166</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 5, Chicago, 1968, p. 243.

<sup>167</sup> Carlyle, Thomas, *Reminiscences*, New York: Macmillan, 1887, 72. This is found in Carlyle’s half book section of his *Reminiscence* dedicated to Edward Irving.

<sup>168</sup> Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 73.

goodness of the man.” The last time Carlyle saw Chalmers was within a few weeks of Chalmer’s death. Chalmers called at Carlyle’s house. He had been on a tour of the highlands with Mrs. Carlyle. They had a very pleasant conversation about various subjects including art. Carlyle says that even given the opportunity Chalmers “did not speak of that, nor of the Free-Kirk War.”<sup>169</sup> “Chalmers was himself very beautiful to us during that hour; grave, not too grave, earnest, cordial; face and figure very little altered, only the head had grown white, and in the eyes and features you could read something of a serene sadness”<sup>170</sup>

Carlyle continues,

“He was a man of much natural dignity, ingenuity, honesty, and kind affection, as well as sound intellect and imagination. A very eminent vivacity lay in him, which could rise to complete impetuosity (glowing conviction, passionate eloquence, fiery play

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<sup>169</sup> Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 73.

<sup>170</sup> Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 74.

of heart and head),—all in a kind of *rustic* type, one might say, though wonderfully true and tender. He had a burst of genuine fun too.” According to Carlyle, Chalmers’ “laugh was a hearty low guffaw; and his tones, in preaching, would rise to the piercingly pathetic: no preacher ever went so into one’s heart.” Chalmers died soon after in May of 1847. <sup>171</sup>

Overall Carlyle’s concept of Chalmers was that “he was a man essentially of little culture, of narrow sphere, all his life; such an intellect, professing to be educated, and yet so *ill-read*, so ignorant in all that lay beyond the horizon in place or in time, I have almost nowhere met with.” In his early years Chalmers had been “capable of much soaking indolence, lazy brooding, and do-nothingism, . . . a man thought to be timid, almost to the verge of cowardice.” However, in later life he was “capable of impetuous activity and blazing audacity.” Carlyle says, “I suppose there will never again be such a Preacher in any Christian Church..” <sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 74-75.

<sup>172</sup> Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 75.

### b. Chalmers' Theology

Chalmers believes that “part of the strength of a sound natural theology . . . is its initial recognition that we do not know God as we know other persons and things. . . Theology . . . stands distinguished from all other knowledge by the peculiar avenues through which it is conveyed to us ... certain it is, that we can take no direct cognizance of Him [God] by our faculties whether of external or internal observation.”<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, there is an “element in experience which can begin to lead us beyond those facts made available to our consciousness through sense-perception and mere introspection, and this element is our moral sense.” Going even further, “Moral sense has a special character which means that it cannot be satisfactorily described or explained merely as one among all the other phenomena of the mind.”<sup>174</sup> There follows emotions or feelings and since all feelings are not valid the will must determine by selecting the feelings which are to be encouraged.<sup>175</sup> This means then that “judgment has to be exercised, and it is here that morality enters in.”<sup>176</sup> “Will is essential to the existence of moral worth or worthlessness. Moral sense, therefore, lies firmly embedded in human experience but cannot be explained simply in terms of it.”<sup>177</sup> But Chalmers has no answer regarding whether morality

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<sup>173</sup> Addinall, Peter, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation; A Study in Nineteenth-Century Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 112.

<sup>174</sup> Addinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation*, 112.

<sup>175</sup> Addinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation*, 112.

<sup>176</sup> Addinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation*, 112-113.

<sup>177</sup> Addinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation*, 113.

points beyond itself to God.<sup>178</sup> In the final analysis “the supremacy of conscience bears witness to the fact that mere happiness is not the prime concern of God: “however much he may love the happiness of His creatures. He loves their virtue more.”<sup>179</sup>

### c. Chalmers Social Views

Chalmers was also very influential in his social views in his day. “He believed in an organic, hierarchical social structure, with emphasis upon each individual's divinely-ordained social duties and obligations. . . . In language, manners, and outlook, he remained part of the rural communal Scotland of his birth.”<sup>180</sup> His vision for Scotland was a “godly commonwealth” and by the mid-1830’s he had realized considerable progress in this direction. He was organizing “small parish communities” to serve God and to promote communal welfare over private interests.<sup>181</sup> However, instead of eventually achieving his vision of the “godly commonwealth” he became permanently distracted in a struggle to preserve the remnants of that commonwealth against the influence of the state.<sup>182</sup>

Poor relief became the central issue and both the Kirk and the state competed

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<sup>178</sup> Addinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation*, 113.

<sup>179</sup> Addinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation*, 115.

<sup>180</sup> Brown, Stewart J., *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, 286.

<sup>181</sup> Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 287.

<sup>182</sup> Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 287.

to take the lead. In the end the state prevailed.<sup>183</sup> “By his own admission, Chalmers had not carefully scrutinized the poor-relief activities of his individual elders and deacons. If he had, Alison maintained, he would have found that they had reduced legal pauperism only by neglecting the genuine needs of the poor and thus increasing destitution and misery.”<sup>184</sup>

In summary, according to Stewart J. Brown,

The Disruption, then, ultimately proved to be a tragic chapter in Chalmers’ life. Throughout his career, he had argued that only a national territorial established Church could succeed in elevating the nation above the unbridled competition between individual interests, the selfishness of social elites, and the narrow utilitarian values, which, he believed, accounted for most social misery in early industrial Britain. In small parish communities, organized around the religious and moral teachings of church and school, men would learn to subordinate self-interest to the communal welfare, and to redirect social energies ‘from unrestrained commercial and industrial expansion to the cultivation of higher spiritual, moral, and intellectual values. The British State, however, had rejected his godly commonwealth ideal.’<sup>185</sup>

#### d. Chalmers On Establishment

A. C. Cheyne considers Chalmers’ position on the subject of Establishment.

Chalmers’ lectures on Church and State in London in April and May of 1838 was a sensation.<sup>186</sup> “It is one of the simplest and most uncompromising approaches to this

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<sup>183</sup> Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 288-289.

<sup>184</sup> Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 292.

<sup>185</sup> Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 348.

<sup>186</sup> Cheyne, A. C., Ed., *The Practical and the Pious*; Essays on Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847.), Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1985, Chalmers and the State, Owen Chadwick, 65.

difficult subject that has ever been seriously presented to a government for adoption.”<sup>187</sup> The basic ingredients of his position are as follows. First of all, he contends that “government has a duty to encourage the spread of Christian faith throughout the land.”<sup>188</sup> The reason for this is that “Government is not a mysterious impersonal machine, it is an umbrella name for a lot of people; and if they are people they have moral convictions. A righteous and religious monarch, or righteous and religious senators, must impress their characters on their acts”<sup>189</sup> He presumed a common Protestantism throughout the empire. “Men cannot cease to be men merely because they get inside a debating chamber with parliamentary authority. They never behave like that. They spend public money creating schools where morality and religion will be taught.”<sup>190</sup> Therefore, in the end, the state should serve the interests of God and the Godly.

Although Chalmers was a great leader in his own time, most of his followers eventually departed from his concepts. Stewart J. Brown says,

Chalmers had not accepted the Disruption as the end of his Christian commonwealth ideal. With characteristic tenacity, he had insisted that the Free Church cause possessed the support of the vast majority of the Scottish nation. Inspired by the example of sacrifice provided by the outgoing ministers and schoolteachers, the nation would rally to the Free Church cause, and build and support a new national 'establishment'. The Disruption would be essentially a second Scottish Reformation. Chalmers's vision, however, was not fulfilled. The achievements of the Free Church were, to be sure, substantial. None the less, very soon after the Disruption, the Free Church had

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<sup>187</sup> Cheyne, *The Practical and the Pious*, 71.

<sup>188</sup> Cheyne, *The Practical and the Pious*, 71.

<sup>189</sup> Cheyne, *The Practical and the Pious*, 72.

<sup>190</sup> Cheyne, *The Practical and the Pious*, 72.

indicated disenchantment with his national 'establishment' ideal. Despite his pleading, the Free Church began to perceive itself as a gathered Church of true believers. It relinquished ambition to act as a national Church for the Christian nurture of all inhabitants of Scotland, or for the universal dissemination of Christian communal teachings. Chalmers's godly commonwealth ideal now appeared moribund. The Disruption in 1843 had ultimately rendered his vision for Church and nation hopeless, and paved the way for the increase of secular and State authority over Scottish society.<sup>191</sup>

#### 4. Erskine, Irving and Campbell

According to Drummond and Bulloch however, much of the theological controversy preceding the Disruption centered around Edward Irving, Thomas Erskine and John McLeod Campbell. The matters of debate were the “Person of Christ, the nature and scope of the atonement, election, eternal punishment, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>192</sup> They give an account of these three similar to that which is represented in this thesis. Erskine’s dealings with Calvinism are astutely understood by them as follows. “When he [Erskine] commented that all the most deeply devout men he had known had been brought up as Calvinists, he was asked how he could reconcile this with his opposition to Calvinism. ‘In this way’, he replied. ‘Calvinism makes God and the thought of him all in all, and makes the creature almost as nothing before Him. So it engenders a deep reverence, a profound humility and self-abasement, which are the true beginnings of all religion. It exalts

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<sup>191</sup> Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 349.

<sup>192</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 193-194.

God infinitely above the creature. In this Calvinism is true and great, and I honour it.” However Erskine continues, “What I cannot accept is its conception of God as One in Whom power is the paramount attribute, to which a loving righteousness is made quite subordinate, and its restriction of the love of God in a way which seems to me not righteousness but partiality.”<sup>193</sup> Drummond and Bulloch continue, “Despite this tribute to the reverence created by Calvinism, Erskine was strongly critical of the manner in which the Scottish Church had so largely substituted theological discussion for prayer and adoration, making doctrinal conformity the criterion of Christian life.” “Erskine, unlike the eighteenth-century Apologists, was not so much concerned with the defence of the historical origins of the faith as with its vindication through its conformity to men's spiritual needs.” The seminal points of Erskine’s theology are accurately defined by Drummond and Bulloch. For Erskine faith was not merely an intellectual assent to the facts of the Bible. For Erskine faith “meant a spiritual condition which showed that a man had responded to the love of God.” “Erskine thought in terms of the community of mankind. He returned to the Scriptural thought of Christ as the Second Adam.” Furthermore, Erskine “repudiated the Calvinist version of the atonement. . . He did not suffer the punishment of sin, as the doctrine of substitution supposes, to dispense with our suffering it, but to change the character

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<sup>193</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters Of Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen From 1840 Till 1870*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 369.

of our suffering, from an unsanctified and unsanctifying suffering, into a sanctified and sanctifying suffering.”<sup>194</sup> <sup>195</sup> In these matters the writer of this thesis heartedly agrees. Personal prayer and adoration was Thomas Erskine’s theme, not doctrinarism. In this we see a sympathy from Erskine towards the Evangelicals. In his initial support of the West Country Erskine broke with the “whole temper” of Calvinism although he later recanted of this support.<sup>196</sup>

Thomas Erskine is seen as a companion of Edward Irving and John McLeod Campbell throughout the period from 1830 to 1834. Both Irving and Campbell were ministers and, along with others, were deposed from the ministry.<sup>197</sup> However, “as an Episcopalian layman Erskine was beyond the reach of the Church courts.”<sup>198</sup> These depositions were, in themselves, contributors to the changing cultural and religious scene in Scotland. “Nothing comparable with this series of depositions existed in the history of the Scottish Church since the fury of the seventeenth century. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* had been condemned, but the men who defended it had been left in their charges.”<sup>199</sup> It was not only the fury but the vindictiveness that was a contributing factor. “It was not merely the thinking of Irving, McLeod Campbell, and their friends, which was significant, but the vindictiveness with which

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<sup>194</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; Or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 39.

<sup>195</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 195-196.

<sup>196</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 198.

<sup>197</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 200-202.

<sup>198</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 196.

<sup>199</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 205.

they were hounded down. Something had happened within the Church so that there arose a readiness to question the long established documents of Calvinism and, at the same time, a readiness to defend them.”<sup>200</sup> The leader of the Popular Party within the Church, also called the Evangelical Party, until his death in 1827 was Sir Henry Moncrieff of St Cuthbert's. The difference between Moderates and Evangelicals under his leadership had been fading for some time and it soon became “barely apparent.”<sup>201</sup>

Andrew Thompson of St George's, with Chalmers, led the Evangelicals after Sir Henry's death. Thompson was an orator like Chalmers. He was also a pioneer of social reform, an advocate of popular education and a prominent spokesman for the abolition of slavery. His abolitionism alienated him from more moderate “public men” of his time. Thompson was the editor of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. He dealt with the controversies of his time with “a touch of truculence” and he took “a lead in the pursuit of Irving and McLeod Campbell.” It seems obvious that the persecution of Irving and Campbell brought out the meanness in many of the day including some prominent leaders. This in itself could foster an underlying threat to the peace and unity of the country and the Kirk. Furthermore, “in the decade before the Disruption there was a change in the whole nature of society.” Promiscuity was on the rise and two other vices which had “long been banished from all respectable society, were very prevalent, if not universal, among the whole upper ranks —

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<sup>200</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 211.

<sup>201</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 211-212.

swearing and drunkenness.”<sup>202</sup> There was a growing strength of the Evangelicals within the Church, but the Evangelicals themselves were no longer exactly what had been meant by the name “Evangelical.” The Evangelicals were changing. One reason for this change was the growing reaction among them and others against the increase of Roman Catholic immigrants. There was also a growth of sabbatarianism in the country. There was an increase of dogmatism in the Church which profoundly affected the temper of the Kirk. “In the eighteenth century it had been the Seceders who stood most closely to the Westminster Confession while the Evangelicals had followed the lead of the men who found in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* teachings akin to those of McLeod Campbell; but now the Evangelicals were becoming more rigid in doctrine.”<sup>203</sup> James Hogg had written a “brilliant and fantastic novel” entitled *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. “Whatever interpretation is to be placed upon this masterpiece, it is plain that Hogg, though ready enough to distinguish it from what Calvin taught, had no love for contemporary Scottish Calvinism.”<sup>204</sup> The old Calvinism was alienating many Scotsmen.<sup>205</sup> Erskine, Irving and Campbell had broken new ground which could not be put back.<sup>206</sup> Something new was going to be demanded and the demand would be met.

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<sup>202</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 212-213.

<sup>203</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 214-215.

<sup>204</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 217.

<sup>205</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 216-217.

<sup>206</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688 – 1843*, 210.

Thomas Torrance's insights on pre-disruption theology are helpful. He says, "due to the problematic course of Scottish Theology in the eighteenth century, there were notable churchmen, but only a few outstanding theologians were found in the leadership of the Kirk, although there were several very able ministers of the hyper-Calvinist school."<sup>207</sup> Torrance sees the influence of John Brown of Wamphray (1610-79) as very important. This influence had carried over from the previous century into the eighteenth century through powerful theological works published in Holland. Brown lived in banishment in Holland. One of his most formidable works was *De Causa Dei contra Antisabbatarios Tractatus* which appeared in three Latin volumes. These volumes were "heavily indebted to scholastic Calvinism." In some of his other works he "helped considerably to redress the balance of teaching, giving it a more biblical and less schematic basis."<sup>208</sup> Similar to the English puritans Brown insisted that faith was "not our 'gospel-righteousness.'" He insisted that the righteousness of Christ, be it "active and passive, was not imputed to us on the ground of faith, necessary as faith was, but on the ground of union with Christ wrought by him alone." Torrance believes that this is a "much healthier outlook." However, "the essential relation between the Incarnation and the atonement which was so strong in the older Reformation and older Scottish tradition, was allowed to drop out of sight." Brown continued the strong tradition in the Kirk of soul examination, with a "much greater emphasis upon the promises of God extended to

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<sup>207</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 238-239.

<sup>208</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 239.

his people in all ages as the ground of confidence.” Brown also wrote other books which had an impact on Scottish theology. Brown in “his writing on the nature of the church with its divinely endowed ordinances kept alive the rigid tradition of the Westminster Divines like Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie: as there is only one King and Head of the Church.”<sup>209</sup>

In this writer’s opinion we can see here a marked similarity on Thomas Erskine’s part regarding both our union with Christ and Christ as the federal head of the church expressed when he says:

This view, then, is surely agreeable to Scripture, and I may appeal to every reader, whether it does not commend itself to his conscience, as well as his reason, as most right, that the way by which Jesus made reconciliation for the race, as its Head, should be also the pattern of the righteousness to which every individual of the race is called.<sup>210</sup>

And,

Jesus is not the substitute for men, but their Head; and the work by which he made propitiation for men is that same righteousness in which he presents himself as a pattern for the imitation of all men. “Take up thy cross and follow me, and where I am, there shall my servant be.”<sup>211</sup>

Torrance says that the work of “John Brown should be read in tandem with the work of Thomas Ayton.” Ayton’s work is “remarkable in the Post-Revolution Kirk for its unusual balance and lack of rancour!” The outstanding feature of Ayton’s work “is that Ayton not only examined and rejected extreme positions on either side of the Presbyterian-Anglican debate, but distinguished the ground common to the

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<sup>209</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 239.

<sup>210</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine Of Election*, 146.

<sup>211</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine Of Election*, 155.

main body of belief on both sides, and sought to provide a positive and constructive account of the Church and Ministry, in a remarkably ecumenical way.”<sup>212</sup>

Regarding Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, other significant influences, Torrance says,

Rather different from John Brown of Wamphray were the theologians of the Secession, the Erskine Brothers, Ebenezer(1680-1754) and Ralph (1685-1752), who with James Hog and Thomas Boston had led the revolt against the Assembly's rejection of the teaching of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. While rejecting a doctrine of universal atonement, they held firmly to their belief that 'Christ had taken upon himself the sins of all men', and that 'the Father had made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, that whosoever of them all shall believe in the Son shall not perish. . . . What had worried the Marrow Men and continued to worry the Erskines was the prevalence of 'legal doctrine' or 'a kind of refined Arminianism found even in the way that justification by faith was being taught and proclaimed by men in the Church of Scotland. . . . What was at stake for them here was the absolute centrality of the Person of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour,’<sup>213</sup>

The Erskines believed that “God's whole heart and soul is in the offer and promise of the gospel. . . . 'The question', said Ralph Erskine, 'is not, Are you an elect or not? But the question is, Are you a sinner that needs a Saviour?’” The Erskines stressed that “the general call and offer of the gospel reaches every individual person, and God speaks to every sinner as particularly as though he named them by his name and surname.” Also, remission of sins is preached unto *you*, we beseech *you* to be reconciled, the promise is unto *you*. “Supreme place was given to the *Person* of Christ himself as he is in all his promises, and to the *true grace* of God in the daily

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<sup>212</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 240.

<sup>213</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 240-241.

life of believers, as also in the regular ministry of the Church.” Particularly, the Erskines sought to deliver the Church from “the legal strain” that had been corrupting it.<sup>214</sup>

“Along with this approach went a recovery of the kind of evangelical assurance taught by Reformation theology.” There was a “distinction which Ralph Erskine spoke of between 'the fiducial assurance', and 'evidential assurance', which corresponded to that between 'Gospel repentance' and 'legal repentance'.”<sup>215</sup> Torrance says that a “deep cleft had opened up in the Kirk.” This cleft was “between two kinds of doctrine and churchmanship, the evangelically earnest and the formally Calvinistic, or expressed otherwise, between two disparate ways of understanding the Christian faith.” These were “a way of salvation” versus “a system of doctrines.”<sup>216</sup> Again we can later see Thomas Erskine choosing the “way of salvation” and decidedly not the “system of doctrines,” as he always prefers a “way of salvation” to a “system of doctrines.” He says,

Every one who has studied Christianity as a system not only of righteousness but of wisdom, must have perceived that it has a double form throughout, inasmuch as God has, in the first place, set forth to us the whole truth, *objectively*, in Christ, and then calls on us to experience it all, *subjectively*, in ourselves, through the operation of the Spirit of Christ received into our hearts by faith.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 242.

<sup>215</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 242.

<sup>216</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 243.

<sup>217</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine Of Election*,, xix.

Additionally, the so-called “Evangelical Revival and the teaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield” created a tension. This had the effect on “the Erskine brothers and their friends of deepening their concern for Christ as personal Saviour and giving a sharper evangelical edge to their own preaching of the Gospel.”<sup>218</sup> For some time after 1740 “the Seceders were busying themselves as evangelists, and great spiritual quickening took place throughout the country.”<sup>219</sup> This planted in Thomas Erskine and others a desire to see more spiritual quickening. The love of the Father became a significant issue. “In Fisher's exposition of the *Shorter Catechism* the doctrine of the Trinity was given a rather fuller and more integral place in faith than in the *Westminster Confession*, as necessary for our knowledge of the love of the Father.”<sup>220</sup> There evolved considerable discussion among Scottish theologians regarding the universal offer of salvation and the issue of the elect which was never satisfactorily solved to suit the Seceders.<sup>221</sup> With this in mind we can see why Thomas Erskine and MacLeod Campbell and to a lesser extent Irving took so strong a stand for the universal offer of salvation.

##### 5. Where does Thomas Erskine fit in among the issues of the Disruption?

As the name implies, the Moderates in the Scottish church were moderate in their religion; they frowned on any types of zealots. They believed in natural religion,

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<sup>218</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 243.

<sup>219</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 244.

<sup>220</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 245.

<sup>221</sup> Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 246-247.

the brotherhood of man, morality, social duties, and natural virtue. They avoided discussions of depravity, sin and repentance. They even had some respect for deists and atheists. On the other hand the Evangelicals believed in preaching, teaching, Bible studies, individual conversions, prayer and prayer societies.

Thomas Erskine had interests on both sides of the Evangelical – Moderate spectrum. On the Moderate side Thomas Erskine believed in natural religion, the brotherhood of man, morality, social duties and natural virtue. However, in an Evangelical tone, he did not avoid discussions of depravity, sin and repentance. Erskine believed fervently in Bible study and prayer. He was very much interested in individual conversions. Perhaps Thomas Erskine could be seen as a bridge between the two sides. However, as a practicing Episcopalian he did not have to participate in the debate. He was not an ordinate in the Kirk or even a member. He could avoid entanglements in the dispute by retiring to the religion of his mother and grandmother. There are, however, evidences of his positions in his writings.

In moderate style Erskine acknowledges internal evidence within each person which can recognize the moral government of the universe. In Thomas Erskine's *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion* the word "moral" is mentioned no less than 150 times with such examples as the following.

Surely, then, in a system which purports to be a revelation from heaven, and to contain a history of God's dealings with men, and to develop truths with regard to the moral government of the universe, the knowledge and belief of which will lead to happiness here and hereafter, we may expect to find (if its pretensions are well founded) an evidence for its truth, which shall be independent of all external testimony. But what are the precise principles on which the internal evidence for or against a Divine revelation of religion must

rest ? We cannot have any internal evidence on a subject which is in all its parts and bearings and relations entirely new to us. <sup>222</sup>

God is the moral governor. The Divine character can be seen in nature, providence and conscience.

Every man who believes in the existence of a Supreme- Moral Governor, and has considered the relations in which this belief places him, must have formed to himself some scheme of religion analogous to that which I have described. The indications of the Divine character, in nature, and providence, and conscience, were surely given to direct and instruct us in our relations to God and his creatures. <sup>223</sup>

Moral causes are our compass which enable us to judge the internal evidence of Christianity.

The man who adopts this scheme of natural religion, which, though deficient in point of practical influence over the human mind, as shall be afterwards explained, is yet true,—and who has learned from experience to refer actions to their moral causes,—is in possession of all the elementary principles which qualify him to judge of the internal evidence of Christianity. <sup>224</sup>

For Erskine natural religion has a place and the perfect moral tendency of the Bible verifies its authenticity.

He who holds this scheme of natural religion, will believe in its truth, (and I conceive justly,) because it urges him to what is good, deters him from what is evil, and coincides generally with all that he feels and observes; and this very belief which he holds on these grounds, will naturally lead him to believe in the truth of another scheme which tends directly to the same moral object, but much more specifically and powerfully, and coincides much more

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<sup>222</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 9.

<sup>223</sup> Erskine, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence*, 12-13.

<sup>224</sup> Erskine, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence*, 13.

minutely with his feelings and observations. The perfect moral tendency of its doctrines is a ground on which the Bible often rests its plea of authenticity and importance.<sup>225</sup>

God's moral character can be accommodated to the understandings and hearts of men.

He will discern, that this moral mechanism bears no mark of imposture or delusion, but consists simply in a manifestation of the moral character of God, accommodated to the understandings and hearts of men.<sup>226</sup>

Thomas Erskine pleads for personal conversions as an Evangelical would.

My dear reader, be honest with yourself on this matter. Have you peace and joy in God? Do you love God and man—yea your enemies? If you say, "I endeavour to have peace and joy in God, and I endeavour to love God and man as far as I can." If you say, "I know that I have not these fruits, but I have done all that I can to have them. I am sure that my efforts have been sincere and persevering." I answer—listen to what our Lord saith, "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>227</sup>

And

Reader, let me press it on you—you must have a spiritual life in you, before you can do a single action which is not rebellion against the kingdom of God. And don't deceive yourself, by thinking that that life can be in you without your being well aware of its presence—as Spirit of God in him.<sup>228</sup>

Erskine believes in a fallen nature and in the merit of Christ's suffering to redeem us.

Reader, do you understand this? It is eternal life. Well it is this movement of the Son, to declare the love of God in the fallen nature, and to the fallen children of men, and through them to all the creation, which must be recognised in every action and suffering of Christ, before we can understand

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<sup>225</sup> Erskine, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence*, 14.

<sup>226</sup> Erskine, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence*, 187-188.

<sup>227</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 7.

<sup>228</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 7.

what that element in them is, which gave them, and gives them, their infinitely meritorious value in the Father's eyes.<sup>229</sup>

Erskine urges his readers to rejoice in the provision of God for salvation.

Dear reader, let us give glory to God by rejoicing in His provision; we do not need any thing which He has not given us. Let us join in with our Head when he says, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will *receive the cup of salvation*, and call on the name of the Lord."<sup>230</sup>

In *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine appeals to his reader to accept God's provision of salvation no less than 44 times. Erskine constantly quotes the Bible especially in connection to the offer of salvation.

The terms in which the gospel has all along been proclaimed, from the first sketch given to Adam, down to the publication of it by the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and afterwards by our Lord himself, and his inspired messengers, to the Jewish nation and to the world at large, seem to me to involve necessarily a universal and unconditional forgiveness of sin, of the benefits of which man is susceptible during the period of his life on earth, which, on that account, is called the acceptable time, and the day of salvation;—that is to say, they reveal God as the God of holy compassion,—as the God who forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin, through a propitiation made for the sins of the whole world, —as the God who has anointed his only begotten Son to destroy the works of the devil, and to introduce a new life,—as the God who says to all the ends of the earth, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." The reader may consult the following scriptures : Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7; Psalm ciii. 3. 10; Psalm cxxx. 4; Isaiah xlv. 22; Isaiah v. 55; Jeremiah ix. 23, 24; Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Luke ii. 9—14; Acts xiii. 38; Romans v. 6—8; 1 Tim. i. 15, and ii. 4; 2 Cor. v. 19; 1 John ii. 2.<sup>231</sup>

Erskine was concerned with the political and social events of his day as were the moderates, however, unlike the moderates he found his answers in an evangelical

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<sup>229</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 62-63.

<sup>230</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 95.

<sup>231</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel*, 119-120

manner. The French revolution was a major event. The social edifice was important. But only the Bible had the ultimate answers.

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken; and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” In prophetic language, the sun, and moon, and stars, represent either civil or ecclesiastical authorities and constitutions—and the sea and waves rolling, represent popular commotions. Such a scene of things has already passed over the earth in the events of the French revolution—and the present state of affairs proves that the mass of the European world is ripe for a recurrence of them, in a still more desolating form. The cement which has hitherto kept the social edifice together is falling out, and the parts thus detached will be dashed together with violence. Reverence for established authorities has disappeared, and we have nothing but self-interest to take its place. And self-interest is no cement, it is a principle of enmity, not of union.<sup>232</sup>

Thomas Erskine was a man of his time who could echo the principles of both the Moderates and the Evangelicals and, in fact, sometimes seems to reconcile the two. Also, his independence as a non-ordained Episcopalian and his independent living derived from his estate at Linlathen freed him from any fear of the actions of the Kirk. He had a unique way of absorbing many things and subordinating everything to a loving Father with a plan of salvation revealed and accomplished by the obedient Son who is the Head of the church.

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<sup>232</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 195-196.

### Chapter III: The West Coast Revival

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.”<sup>233</sup> 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.<sup>234</sup> 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 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.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving: The Fore-runner Of The Charismatic Movement*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983, 99.

<sup>234</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 99-100.

<sup>235</sup> Oliphant, M. O. W., *The Life Of Edward Irving*, London: Hurst And Blackett, 1864, 286.

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.<sup>236</sup> Before long the manifestations began.

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

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

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<sup>236</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 100-102.

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.<sup>237</sup>

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."<sup>238</sup> 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, inquired eagerly, and would not condemn."<sup>239</sup> 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

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<sup>237</sup> 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.

<sup>238</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 290.

<sup>239</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 290.

Chalmers quietly withdrew from the requirements of his position in this respect. . . . Dr Chalmers preserved unbroken silence.<sup>240</sup>

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 must leave a lasting stain upon the reputation of one of the greatest of modern Scotsmen.<sup>241</sup>

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.<sup>242</sup>

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,

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<sup>240</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 282-283.

<sup>241</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 283.

<sup>242</sup> Strachan, C. Gordon, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1973, 13.

Dunbartonshire.”<sup>243</sup>

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 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. <sup>244</sup>

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. <sup>245</sup> 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.’ ” <sup>246</sup> 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

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<sup>243</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

<sup>244</sup> Irving, *Facts*, 6-7.

<sup>245</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

<sup>246</sup> Drummond, Andrew Landale, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, London: James Clarke And Co., Ltd., n.d., 153.

following Sundays.”<sup>247</sup>

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 McDonald brothers also “spoke with tongues.”<sup>248</sup> 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.<sup>249</sup> James and George McDonald refused to go to Irving’s church in London

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<sup>247</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

<sup>248</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 105.

<sup>249</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 105-107.

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 2<sup>nd</sup> and George on September 14<sup>th</sup>, both of tuberculosis, the disease from which Mary Campbell had been healed. They were both known for their “genuine religious passion.”<sup>250</sup>

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 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.<sup>251</sup> 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.”<sup>252</sup> 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

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<sup>250</sup> Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 151.

<sup>251</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 106.

<sup>252</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 275.

biblical learning” but of “high religious emotion.”<sup>253</sup>

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.<sup>254</sup> 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.”<sup>255</sup>

“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, he found himself locked out of his church.”<sup>256</sup> Pursuant to this the Presbytery of Annan under instructions from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland deposed him on 13 March 1833.<sup>257</sup> McLeod Campbell had been deposed at the General Assembly of 1831 when Irving’s teachings on the humanity of Christ had first been condemned.<sup>258</sup>

Edward Irving began developing his theology on these matters early as

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<sup>253</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 106.

<sup>254</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 13.

<sup>255</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 349.

<sup>256</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

<sup>257</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

<sup>258</sup> Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 153.

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 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.<sup>259</sup>

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.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Irving, *Facts*, 7.

<sup>260</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

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.<sup>261</sup> According to 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."<sup>262</sup> Therefore, Strachan 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.<sup>263</sup> 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

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<sup>261</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14.

<sup>262</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 14 -15.

<sup>263</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 15.

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.”<sup>264</sup>

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.<sup>265</sup> 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 first person to speak in tongues during Sunday worship in Regent Square Church.”<sup>266</sup>

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.”<sup>267</sup> The

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<sup>264</sup> Irving, *Facts*, 1.

<sup>265</sup> Irving, *Facts*, 3.

<sup>266</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 16.

<sup>267</sup> Irving, *Facts*, 2-3.

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'." <sup>268</sup> 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 men." <sup>269</sup> Irving received reports from his friends in the surrounding area. <sup>270</sup> Irving says that he also received information from "many of the most spiritual members of my flock, who went down to see and hear." <sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 70.

<sup>269</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 70.

<sup>270</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 70-71.

<sup>271</sup> Irving, *Facts*, 3.

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.”<sup>272</sup> 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.<sup>273</sup> 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.<sup>274</sup> 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 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.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71.

<sup>273</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71.

<sup>274</sup> Dallimore, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 111-112.

<sup>275</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71.

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. <sup>276</sup>

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 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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. <sup>277</sup>

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*

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<sup>276</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 71-72.

<sup>277</sup> Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 152.

*Brazen Serpent* Erskine heartedly affirmed the manifestations.<sup>278</sup> 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.<sup>279</sup>

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, 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."<sup>280</sup>

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."<sup>281</sup> In his simplicity Irving had a way with people, especially

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<sup>278</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 72.

<sup>279</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology Of Edward Irving*, 72-74.

<sup>280</sup> Irving, *Facts*, 2.

<sup>281</sup> Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 156.

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.<sup>282</sup>

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 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

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<sup>282</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 370-371.

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.<sup>283</sup>

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 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"<sup>284</sup> 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

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<sup>283</sup> Oliphant, *The Life Of Edward Irving*, 287-288.

<sup>284</sup> Drummond, *Edward Irving And His Circle*, 156.

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 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.<sup>285</sup>

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.<sup>286</sup>

The statement “I believe that it is of God” is definitive and his commentary regarding rejecting the phenomena is clear 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.”<sup>287</sup> Then

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<sup>285</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, Edinburgh: J. Lindsay & Co., and J. Nisbet, London, 1830, 3.

<sup>286</sup> Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 20.

<sup>287</sup> Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 21.

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 ?”<sup>288</sup>

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.<sup>289</sup>

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 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

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<sup>288</sup> Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 23.

<sup>289</sup> Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 16.

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.”<sup>290</sup>

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.”<sup>291</sup>

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 intently in the face, and demands from him a continual response.”<sup>292</sup> 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 be comfortable. But he affirms in

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<sup>290</sup> Erskine, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 21.

<sup>291</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 202-203.

<sup>292</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 203.

*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.<sup>293</sup>

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.”<sup>294</sup>

#### 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

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<sup>293</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 203.

<sup>294</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 204.

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 do not feel that I have a stronger reason to believe that it is in others."<sup>295</sup>

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."<sup>296</sup> 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" . .

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<sup>295</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen From 1800-1840*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 204.

<sup>296</sup> Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 205.

.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.<sup>297</sup>

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

<sup>298</sup> William Hanna comments,

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<sup>297</sup> Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, 206-7.

<sup>298</sup> Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, Letter to Dr. Chalmers of 10 Nov. 1827, 124.

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.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> 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."<sup>300</sup> 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."<sup>301</sup> 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 Jesus. But surely they shall yet appear, when God has prepared men to receive them.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, Letter to Rachel Erskine of 21 Dec. 1833, 205.

<sup>301</sup> Erskine, *Letters, 1800-1840*, 205.

<sup>302</sup> Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 205.

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,"<sup>303</sup> 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.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Erskine, *Letters 1800-1840*, 205.

<sup>304</sup> 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.”<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity*, London: Printed for James Duncan, Edinburgh: W. Innes, Glasgow: J.

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 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.<sup>306</sup>

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

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A. Begg, 1837, 571.

<sup>306</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen From 1840-1870*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 48.

followed

that revival that turned Erskine against the authenticity of the manifestations.

### C. Conclusions On The Impact Of The West Coast Revival

#### And Its Fall-Out On Thomas Erskine

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.

#### Chapter IV: Erskine's Theological Context

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the theological context of Erskine's time. As a man of his time Erskine, like all of us, was necessarily influenced by the thoughts and trends of his time. In the previous chapters we have examined Erskine's personal background and the wider intellectual context of his time. Since Erskine was

born in 1788, he was just 12 years old at the turn of the nineteenth century. All of the influences of the eighteenth century were in full sway during his formative years. When Erskine died in 1870, he had seen most of the nineteenth century. Erskine was also unapologetically a Scot and, therefore, subject to not only the intellectual but also the theological thinking of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Church historian Gerald Cragg says that by the middle of the eighteenth century Scotland found itself at the centre of European culture. “ It had so completely assimilated the ideas of the French and English Enlightenment that even Voltaire acknowledged that ‘it is from Scotland we receive rules of taste in all the arts – from the epic poem to gardening.’”<sup>307</sup> Furthermore, the Kirk was not an isolated, out-of-the-way institution during the time because “The General Assembly itself gathered together the ablest Scotsmen from every walk of life; in its debates they considered issues of national importance.” As a matter of fact, “the brilliance of [The General Assembly] proceedings gained added significance from the fact that it was the only national forum in which important matters were discussed.”<sup>308</sup>

One significant movement from the past helped shape Scotland and the theology of Erskine’s day: the *Marrow* movement and controversy.

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<sup>307</sup> Cragg, Gerald R., *The Church in the Age of Reason, 1648-1789*, London: Penguin Books, 1960, 90.

<sup>308</sup> Cragg, *Church in the Age of Reason*, 91.

### A. The Influence Of The *Marrow*

*The Marrow Of Modern Divinity* was first published in London in 1645 and was a compilation of the writings of Reformed and Puritan divines such as Luther, Calvin, Beza, Lightfoot, Reynolds, Hall, Goodwin, Sibbes, T. Hooker, Perkins and others. The design of the book, according to its 1902 editor, C. G. M’Crie, was to “elucidate and establish the perfect freeness of the gospel and salvation, throw wide open the gates of righteousness, lead the sinner straight to the savior, introduce the sinner as guilty, impotent and undone, persuade the sinner to grasp without a moments hesitation the outstretched hand of God’s mercy.”<sup>309</sup> The author of the *Marrow* it is generally agreed was one Edward Fisher probably of Mickleton in Gloucestershire.

Seventy-two years after its publication the *Marrow* was republished in 1717 by a group of Scots clerics known as the Marrow Men. These men were led by James Hog and Thomas Boston who embraced the teachings of the *Marrow*. Boston was ordained in 1699 and by his own admission did not have a clear concept of the doctrine of grace until he discovered and read the *Marrow*. It revolutionized his life. Boston discovered the *Marrow* on a shelf in a friend’s house in 1700 and obtained his own copy. He shared the concepts in the *Marrow* with references to Isaiah 55 and Matthew 11 with a fellow minister, John Drummond, at the General Assembly of 1717. Drummond obtained another copy of the *Marrow* and shared it with James

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<sup>309</sup> F[isher], E[dward], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in two parts, 1645, 1649, C. G. M’Crie, Ed., Glasgow: David Bryce and Son, 1902, ii.

Webster who passed it to James Hog. Hog republished it on 3 December 1717. The theological climate in Scotland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the time of Thomas Erskine was shaped by the Marrow controversy of the previous century.

Thomas Boston is the best known of the Marrow Men and certainly the most published and we shall use him as an example for the purposes of this brief account. A. T. B. McGowan says that Thomas Boston's teaching on the humanity of Christ is the most interesting part of his writings. Boston affirmed the true humanity of Christ. It is significant to note that Boston's writings on the humanity of Jesus were written long before the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century theological debates on this subject began. In 1939 Karl Barth in his discussion of John 1:14 on the word "flesh" in his *Church Dogmatics* said that Christ had assumed "fallen humanity." Barth said, "Flesh is the concrete form of human nature marked by Adam's fall." It is McGowan's opinion that since 1939 Barth's view on Christ and the flesh has been widely accepted by theologians.<sup>310</sup>

A century before Barth there was Edward Irving. Irving said, "our Lord took the same nature, body and soul, as other men, and under the same disadvantages of every sort... his human will had lying against it, and upon it, exactly the same oppressions of devil, world, flesh, which lay against Adam's will after he had fallen."<sup>311</sup> Irving was not welcomed in his views as Barth was; he was put out of the

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<sup>310</sup> McGowan, A. T. B., *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston*, Edinburgh: Rutherford House, Paternoster Press, 1997, 31-32.

<sup>311</sup> McGowan, *Federal Theology of Thomas Boston*, 25. A quote from Strachan, C. G., *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, Darton: Longman & Todd, 1973, 42.

Kirk. McGowan points out that the words, “after he had fallen” are the key words to this particular view. Another century back in time from Irving and Erskine and two centuries from Barth will take us to Boston. Boston believed in the parallel between Adam and Christ. Boston was a federal theologian.

Federal theology is built on the concept of the federal head of the race standing in covenant with God. Adam was the federal head under what has been called the covenant of works; he disobeyed and failed. Christ is the “Second Adam” and the head of the race under the covenant of grace.

For Boston both Adam and Christ are “party contractors” for their people. Adam had a natural seed in the covenant of works, and Christ has a spiritual seed in the covenant of grace. The question is: did Boston believe that Christ’s flesh, his humanity, was like Adam’s before or after the fall? If Christ’s flesh was like Adam’s before the fall, then he took that same pre-fall flesh to begin again where Adam had failed. If Christ’s flesh is like that of Adam after he fell, then he took that fallen flesh after the covenant of works was broken not only in order to fulfill that covenant but also to redeem that very flesh itself. At first Boston seems to choose that Christ took the flesh of Adam before the fall, but upon further investigation it is not as simple as that.

In a sermon Boston said that God is “essentially and necessarily holy” therefore, “the second Adam representing them should be a man of a perfectly holy, pure, and untainted nature, fully answering for them that holiness and perfection of

nature required by the law.”<sup>312</sup> However, according to McGowan, a thorough understanding of Boston’s position requires a consideration of four things: the virgin birth of Christ, the sinless humanity of Christ, the need for Christ to suffer, and the assumption of Christ of sinless infirmities.

The virgin birth of Christ is a key point in Boston’s concept of the humanity of Christ. Boston believed that by being born of a virgin the holiness of Christ’s nature was “effectually secured.” Even though modern federal theologians like Hodge and Machen often talk of the virgin birth, they do not make the same importance of it as Boston does. Perhaps L. Berkhof comes the closest to Boston when he says, “if Christ had been generated by man, he would have been a human person, included in the covenant of works.”<sup>313</sup>

We can tell a lot about Boston’s pneumatology from his teaching on regeneration under the general head of “The State Of Grace.” Boston sees regeneration as a mysterious thing as is natural generation. He refers to John 3:8 “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but you can not tell where it comes from or where it goes, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” He says,

The work of the Spirit is felt; but His way of working is a mystery we cannot comprehend. A new light is let into the mind, and the will is renewed; but how that light is conveyed thither, how the will is fettered with cords of love, and how the rebel is made a willing captive, we can no more tell, than we can tell ‘how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child’ (Ecci 11.5). As a man hears the sound of the

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<sup>312</sup> Boston, Thomas, *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston*, London: W. Tegg, 1854, 341.

<sup>313</sup> McGowan, *Federal Theology of Thomas Boston*, 26.

wind, and finds it stirring, but knows not where it begins, and where it ends; 'so is every one that is born of the Spirit:' he finds the change that is made upon him; but how it is produced he knows not. One thing he may know, that whereas he was blind, now he sees: but 'the seed (of grace) springs and grows up, he knoweth not how.' (Mark 4.26,27).<sup>314</sup>

Boston says that in both natural generation and in the spiritual regeneration "the creature comes to a being it had not before. The child is not, till it be generate; and a man has no gracious being, no being in grace, till he is regenerate." Boston makes it clear that "regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as the quickening of a dead man." "Man in his depraved state, is a mere nonentity in grace." He sees regeneration as a remaking of man after the fall which is at least equal to the creative act itself. Quoting Jesus' words to the Laodiceans where Jesus refers to himself as the "beginning of the creation of God" and from John's gospel where it says that "all things were made by him," Boston adds, "From whence they might gather, that as He made them when they were nothing, He could make them over again, when worse than nothing; the same hand that made them His creatures, could make them new creatures."<sup>315</sup> Boston continues by stressing that just as a child is passive in natural generation, the child of God is passive in spiritual regeneration. He says that one is "born the child of a

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<sup>314</sup> Boston, Thomas, *Human Nature In Its Fourfold State*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989, 225-226.

<sup>315</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 226.

king, another the child of a beggar” and that either way the child has no hand at all in this difference. “God leaves some in their depraved state; others he brings into a state of grace, or regeneracy. If you be thus honoured, no thanks to you; for ‘who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?’”<sup>316</sup>

Boston continues by comparing the created natural life or body to the person in a state of spiritual regeneration. He says that the natural body is wonderfully formed with “nothing wanting, nothing superfluous.” For this he quotes the psalmist who says that he is “fearfully and wonderfully made.” In a similar mysterious way we are made regenerate by God. It is an unseen work just as growing in the womb is unseen.

Both are curiously wrought, as masterpieces of the manifold wisdom of God. O the wonderful contexture of graces in the new creature! O glorious creature, new-made after the image of God. It is grace for grace in Christ, which makes up this new man (John 1.16); even as in bodily generation, the child has member for member in the parent, has every member which the parent has in a certain proportion.<sup>317</sup> . . . All this, in both cases, has its rise from that which is in itself very small and inconsiderable. O the power of God, in making such a creature of the corruptible seed, and much more in bringing forth the new creature from such small beginnings! It is as ‘the little cloud, like a man’s hand,’ which spread, till ‘heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain’ (I Kings 18.44,45). A man gets a word at a sermon, which hundreds besides him hear, and let slip: but it remains with him, works in him, and never leaves him, till the little world is turned upside

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<sup>316</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 226-227.

<sup>317</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 227.

down by it; that is, till he becomes a new man. . . . ‘The grain of mustard seed becometh a tree’ (Matt 13.31,32). God loves to bring great things out of small beginnings.<sup>318</sup>

Boston stresses that just as natural regeneration is carried on by degrees, there is some similarity in spiritual regeneration. He admits that, strictly speaking, regeneration is a “passing from death to life.” In this the soul is quickened in a moment. But he also believes in preparation for the quickening in which the soul is prepared for the quickening and the soul is “prepared for growth.” Boston is one of the Marrow Men who believed in preparation for regeneration and although he does not directly say that it is the Holy Spirit who does this preparation and quickening, His presence and activity is implied.<sup>319</sup> Similarly in both natural generation and spiritual regeneration there are new relationships. The regenerate can call God his Father as they are his children. The church is the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. The believers are therefore related to each other as brothers and sisters. They are “glorified saints” and the “meanest of them” are actually exalted in God.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 227-228.

<sup>319</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 228.

<sup>320</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 228.

There is a likeness between the parent and the child. Every thing that generates, generates its like; and the regenerate are partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet 1.4). The moral perfections of the divine nature are, in measure and degree, communicated to the renewed soul: thus the

divine image is restored; so that, as the child resembles the father, the new creature resembles God Himself, being holy as He is holy.<sup>321</sup>

There is also pain involved in both natural generation and spiritual regeneration. Boston compares a natural mother's birth pains to the pains of conviction experienced by the sinner as the preparation for regeneration takes place. The church suffers pains in prayer to bring forth the new spiritual children. Also, primarily, the pains of Christ were great in purchasing salvation for his people. "And in the end he died of these pangs; they became to him 'the pains of death' (Acts 2.24)."<sup>322</sup>

In the second part of Boston's heading "The State Of Grace" he discusses the "mystical union" between Christ and believers. The doctrine simply is this: "They who are in the state of grace are ingrafted in, and united to, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are taken out of their natural stock, cut off from it; and are now ingrafted into Christ, as the new stock." This union is a spiritual union. Just as a man and a woman by marriage become one flesh, Christ and the believer become one spirit. "As one soul or spirit actuates both the head and the members in the natural body, so the one Spirit of God dwells in Christ and the Christian; for, 'if any man have not the Spirit of

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<sup>321</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 228-229.

<sup>322</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 229.

Christ, he is none of his' (Rom 8.9).” Here the Holy Spirit is referred to directly. It is a high pneumatology because the action and presence of the Spirit of God is mandatory. The regenerating union is of another nature than natural union. In reference to Mary the mother of Jesus Boston says, “It was not Mary’s bearing Him in her womb, but her believing on Him, that made her a saint (Luke 11.27,28), ‘A certain woman - said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.’”<sup>323</sup>

Our spiritual union with Christ in the Holy Spirit is a real union. This reality is attested to by the fact that we can actually know that our nature is being transformed into the nature of him who is the fountain of all reality. It is a transformation of nature. We know this by faith and faith is “no fancy” but “the substance of things hoped for.” This is not an imaginary concept for we are actually members of his body and of his “flesh and bones”.<sup>324</sup> This union is a most close and intimate union. Christ dwells within the believer by the Holy Spirit; he is their foundation; consequently they are one with the Father as well. Although this union is no mere legal union, it is sustained by the law of God. By this Boston does not refer to a legalism as opposed to grace but to an eternal decree which has the force of law in

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<sup>323</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 254-255.

<sup>324</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 255.

eternity. This union is indissoluble. There is eternal security in Boston's theology.

Neither life nor death can separate us from God.<sup>325</sup>

Finally, for Thomas Boston the union that we have with God is mysterious.

Boston understands our union with God in the context of the hypostatical union that exists within the Godhead.

The Gospel is a doctrine of mysteries. It discovers to us the substantial union of the three persons in one Godhead (I John 5.7), 'These three are one;' the hypostatical union, of the divine and human natures, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Tim 3.16), 'God was manifest in the flesh.' And the mystical union between Christ and believers, "This is a great mystery" also (Eph 5.32). O what mysteries are here! The Head in heaven, the members on earth, yet really united! Christ in the believer, living in Him, walking in Him: and the believer dwelling in God, putting on the Lord Jesus, eating His flesh and drinking His blood! This makes the saints a mystery to the world, yea, a mystery to themselves.<sup>326</sup>

Therefore, Boston's theology and pneumatology have a traditional Trinitarian flavor which is the base for his practical teaching on the subject.

In a letter to James Hogg in November of 1727, who was apparently under a great deal of stress for his stand on the *Marrow*, Boston offers him help and comfort.

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<sup>325</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 255-257.

<sup>326</sup> Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 257.

After offering the usual sympathies of the day Boston refers to the Holy Spirit when he says,

the most fit means can of themselves effect nothing, but only as they are blown upon by the Spirit, and so rendered effectual to their ends. The account you give of the situation of matters with you with respect to the way, as it has a comfortable distinctness in it, without anything of the confusion you speak of discernible to me; so it carries such an agreeableness to the way-marks set up by the Spirit, the Leader in the way, to be seen standing for the direction of travellers in the Scripture of truth, that you have ground from the word to take the comfort of your being in the way, in spite of hell, and consequently of your coming assuredly to the end of the journey in a happy sort, since the great Leader drops none by the way, but perfects what He has begun, and never leaves nor forsakes the work of His own hands.<sup>327</sup>

Boston then reminds Hogg of the heroes of the faith found in scripture and tells him that he is honored to be able to contend for the faith even as Martin Luther did. Then he says, “In this last faith had but one single word, “ My lord,” and unbelief had all the rest of the speech; and yet the Spirit of God makes honourable mention of that one word in the New Testament.” Boston assures Hogg that he stands with him in his trial.<sup>328</sup> From this communication between the two strongest and most renowned of the Marrow Men we can see that they not only taught the reality of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer but they relied personally on the presence and strength of the Holy Spirit in their own lives and ministries.

How much was Erskine influenced by this sort of theology? The

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<sup>327</sup> Boston, Thomas, *Memoirs of Thomas Boston*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988, 512.

<sup>328</sup> Boston, *Memoirs of Thomas Boston*, 512-513.

Marrow theologians had softened Calvinism and several of them affirmed the need for the preparation of the believer by the Holy Spirit prior to salvation. While they believed in offering the Gospel to all ‘men,’ they did not abandon the concept of the elect. The Erskine biographer, Henry Henderson, considers some possible influences on Erskine including the “old” Calvinism of the Reformation and the “new” Calvinism of Thomas Boston and the *Marrow*. According to Henderson the school of Boston was still powerful during Erskine’s time “with its humbling estimates of human nature, its

uncompromising doctrine of divine sovereignty, and its awful representations of the divine wrath.” Contrasted to this position was what Henderson refers to as the “moderate” position which was “enthusiastic only in its horror of enthusiasm; its

creed, grammar, and good manners; its *summa tona*—cleverness, cheerfulness, wine, and feasting.” A more wholesome element was the great spiritual awakening which brought a “welcome gospel to the land.”<sup>329</sup>

However, intellectually the new Calvinism did not bring any more blessing than the old Calvinism had done. It professed a “noble scorn” for

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<sup>329</sup> Henderson, H. F., *Erskine of Linlathen: Selections and Biography*, publisher unknown, 1899, 56-57.

seventeenth century shackles but still left a “remorseless entanglement of logical contradictions” because the benefits of grace were still only available to the elect. “Erskine did not believe in this pseudo-liberalism any more than in the harsh Calvinism it displaced. To him there was nothing to choose between the two.” Erskine sees a certain appeal of Calvinism, but he longs to go beyond it. “Here, then, I found that which I had approved in Calvinism, and which I required as an element of every explanation of the doctrine which should be set up in opposition to Calvinism, namely, a recognition that there is no self-quickening power in man, and that there is no good in man but what is of the direct acting of the Spirit of God.”<sup>330</sup>

But this is not enough. He believes in a greater glory for God which is found in man’s choice, his “free will offering.”

I believe that it is the fear of attributing glory to man in his own salvation, and of taking glory from God, that attaches many people to the doctrines of Calvinism, but they would do well to consider whether they are not, in fact, withholding from God the glory which he desires in man, and seeking to force upon him a kind of glory which he does not desire. God receives a glory to his *power* in all the other works of his hands, but they give what they cannot keep back. Man may give him a higher glory—a glory *to his love*, a free-will offering, which he may keep back if he will.<sup>331</sup>

This in turn gives a glory to God’s highest creation, mankind.

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<sup>330</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine of Election*, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 37.

<sup>331</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 37.

Is it giving glory to man, [to say that he] has believed God's assurance that He is the true guide and portion of man, and so has been persuaded to give up all confidence in himself or any creature, and to commit himself to the Lord, and that now he knows righteousness and peace? I ask, Is this to give glory to man? Or, is it not rather a true description of the glory which God desires from man? <sup>332</sup>

According to Henderson Erskine's concept of Divine Fatherhood, which was one of his great contributions, was born more from the old Calvinism than from the new. This Fatherhood was "not achieved in the interests of maudlin sentimentality, nor was it Fatherhood in its weak indulgence, but Fatherhood in its majesty and strength." Comparing Erskine to Wesley, Henderson says, "Erskine objected most to all middle courses like that of the Marrow theology, that were in his view so many vain attempts to tone down" the old harsher Calvinism. For Erskine, "if there be a divine purpose for mankind, its universality must either be something real or something nominal. If nominal only, then the universal offer of benefits that are not intended for all becomes a solemn farce, inconsistent with the truthfulness and goodness of God, an impossible creed which no honest man can proclaim to his fellow men." Both Erskine and Wesley "taught that the benefits of grace, as they ought to be fully and

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<sup>332</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 37-38.

freely offered to mankind, are also intended for mankind, and to a certain extent are really and truly bestowed on mankind.<sup>333</sup>

Therefore, this incredible mix all contributed to what Thomas Erskine saw and heard. It caused him to write about it in his *Gifts Of The Spirit, The Brazen Serpent*, and in his *Doctrine Of Election*. The Marrow men had challenged the tenets of hyper-Calvinism which could have opened the way for the preaching of Campbell and Irving and the “West Country” revival. Erskine observed these results and wrote of them in such a way that pointed to the actions of the Holy Spirit even if he did not develop a traditional pneumatology.

#### B. The Influence Of Pietism And Schleiermacher

“The greatest figure of eighteenth century Pietism was Nicolas van Zinzendorf (1700-60), an aristocrat who underwent an intensely emotional experience of personal conversion and dedication to Jesus, and who ever after evinced a simple, fervid faith in the atoning blood of the Lamb.”<sup>334</sup> Many, including Schleiermacher, were influenced by the spiritual wake that followed Zinzendorf. In the beginning of Schleiermacher’s *The Christian Faith* he deals with the concept of the church. To do this he must first consider various dogmatics in relation to religious communions in order to come to the Christian Church as a “peculiar essence.” He then relates this all

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<sup>333</sup> Henderson, *Erskine of Linlathen: Selections and Biography*, 56-57.

<sup>334</sup> Clements, Keith W., Ed., *Friedrich Schleiermacher; Pioneer of Modern Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, 12.

to Christian piety. He says, “The common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety, by which these are conjointly distinguished from all other feelings, or, in other words, the self-identical essence of piety, is this: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.”<sup>335</sup>

It is the contention of Keith Clements that by the turn of the nineteenth century “full-grown Romanticism . . . had effectively replaced the Enlightenment as the dominant cultural ethos, was at once a view of art and human creativity, an attitude to human behaviour, and a philosophical vision embracing all reality, human, natural and divine.”<sup>336</sup> And that “towards the end of the eighteenth century, then, Enlightenment rationality and Romantic passion were vying to be the order of the day. Both, however, had reason to be excited by *the* great event of the age, with which on the political level the modern age emerges: the French Revolution of 1789. Intellectually and emotionally it convulsed the whole of Europe. . . . It represented a breakthrough in emancipation, a further release from tutelage.”<sup>337 338</sup>

Claude Welch says, “The word Pietism . . . is notoriously vague, being sometimes used so inclusively as to include the whole ethos of Puritanism.”<sup>339</sup> But

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<sup>335</sup> Schleiermacher, Friedrich, *The Christian Faith*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1830, 12.

<sup>336</sup> Clements, *Schleiermacher; Pioneer of Modern Theology*, 12.

<sup>337</sup> Clements, *Schleiermacher; Pioneer of Modern Theology*, 13.

<sup>338</sup> Romanticism was more fully considered in Chapter Two of this thesis.

<sup>339</sup> Welch, Claude, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Volume I, 1799-1870, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 22-23.

there was enough uniformity to consider that a single evangelical revival was sweeping Protestant Europe, Britain and America in the actual height of the Enlightenment. Although some of the zeal waned by the end of the eighteenth century, the influence of this revival continued to affect the thinking of the nineteenth century.<sup>340</sup>

A primary characteristic tendency of Pietism was the call to inwardness which emphasized individualism. The concentration was on the individual self and its experience. The sense of sin was personalized in a particularly strong manner. The entire drama of the race in creation, the fall and redemption was re-enacted in each individual life. The “ true birth of Christ is his birth in our hearts, his true death is in that dying within us, his true resurrection is in the triumph in our faith . . . Christ deals with men one by one.”<sup>341</sup>

Another characteristic of Pietism was the practice of religious fellowship. In these groups the believers expressed their faith and supported each other in their religious attitudes. The Moravians had an especially strong missionary emphasis and they were typical of the pietistic renewal of radical reformation which stressed “the internalization and introversion of religious life, the turn from external authority and the lack of concern for institutional expression, the lay orientation, and the tendency to locate the center of Christian existence.”<sup>342</sup> There was an emphasis on “the new

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<sup>340</sup> Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Volume I, 23.

<sup>341</sup> Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Volume I, 23-27.

<sup>342</sup> Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Volume I, 28.

life in Christ rather than in forgiveness, and the emphasis on transformation of character.” Although religion was not considered to be doctrine but life, along with this came also a seemingly paradoxical emphasis on moralizing in Christianity. Sanctification moved near the center of the believer’s interest. The Christian community was considered to be more a brotherhood of transformed believers than a collection of sinners. Conversion “overcame” depravity. The coming of the kingdom of God was already being realized leaving only the remnants of sin. But the roots of legalism and moralism were still there, and they expressed themselves later. There was also a tendency in Pietism to emphasize the Jesus experience and the Person of Jesus to the expense of the Creator Father and the Spirit. Although the Spirit was relied upon to bring sanctification, Trinitarian theology was compromised. And this “pietist influence showed in the tendency to separate out the religious as only one among other aspects of life.”<sup>343</sup>

Keith Clements says,

Schleiermacher saw that . . . there was a crucial need to state the unique and essential nature of religion as an indelible aspect of human existence, not an antique and superfluous adornment. His emphasis upon the ‘emotions’ or ‘consciousness’ was not an attempt to find a safe sanctuary for religion in the inner life, beyond the reach of rationalism and scientific materialism. . . . Schleiermacher was particularly anxious that religion should not enter the wrong competition with natural science, for religion could never win a contest on supplying information about the world. But the ‘feeling’ or ‘sense’ of God as the Infinite in which all finite things exist, does not subsist in isolation as some self-contained element of the human consciousness. It does not live apart from artistic or ethical activity, or from scientific or speculative knowledge. In turn, none of these activities can flourish without the ‘pious

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<sup>343</sup> Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Volume I, 29-30.

consciousness.’ Schleiermacher’s notion of religion as pertaining to feeling was thus a part of a whole new anthropology of human existence.<sup>344</sup>

The eighteenth century man believed in a God who was the “common lord” of both the human inner life and the outer world, but this God “stands closer” to human kind than to the outer world. It was a given that only God could understand some things, but man’s ability to understand was second only to God’s. All of this either leads to an inevitable conclusion or is, in fact, based on the foundational awareness that man is “ultimately of the same substance as . . . God.” Man is spirit just as God is Spirit. Man’s inner attributes, his wisdom and benevolence, flow from this sameness. The only difference between God and man in this regard is one of quantity but not of quality. All the convictions about man rest firmly on convictions about God. The proof of God’s existence and sovereignty is in the “wonderful concordance between man and the world he inhabits.” This is eighteenth century “theodicy” upon which “anthropodicy” is founded. But it never remains just a theory; it is reaffirmed continually in man’s experience and this experience must always result in virtuous activity.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Clements, *Schleiermacher; Pioneer of Modern Theology*, 36-37.

<sup>345</sup> Barth, Karl, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* (being the translation of eleven chapters of *Die Protestantische Theologie Im 19. Jahrhundert*), New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952, 54.

Clements says, “ Pietism survived attractively, but at the price of keeping itself well insulated from the newer intellectual movements. What options remained for theology? The age claimed to speak on behalf of man, and the traditional religious orthodoxy seemed a tedious, quarrelsome exercise in outworn creeds which served no human interest whatever. A daring but highly creative option for theology, faced with such assumptions, would be to challenge the age at the core of its citadel-belief: humanity.”

This daring option, according to Clements, was exercised by Schleiermacher. Clements asks, “suppose that theology was to agree with Enlightened and Romantic alike that man’s real business is to be true to his own nature, to be truly and fully human, and yet to claim that the age has not yet properly discerned what it is to be human?” And “suppose that religion was to be re-defined as something that was unique, yet the heart and source from which all that is worthy in humanity arises? In other words, religion as the core and essence of being human? And suppose further that ‘God’ was to be viewed not as a doubtful or speculative ‘extra’ to the natural world and the realm of human experience, but as the ineluctable object of every moment of human consciousness?” If we are willing to suppose all this then “a whole new vista of theological possibilities arises.” To Schleiermacher goes the credit. “”This is my vocation,” he once wrote, “to represent more clearly that which dwells in all true human beings, and to bring it home to their consciences.” (LS Vol. II,

p.125.)<sup>346</sup> The human conscience then became the “candle of the Lord.”

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“sanctifying Holy Spirit was not confined to some golden age at the beginning of the history of the church, but was still alive and active<sup>347</sup> . . .

The awakening of

conscience as the ‘candle of the Lord’ and the “viceregent of God in the soul” was a positive mark of the presence of the Holy Spirit; therefore the appeal to conscience was at the same time an appeal to experience.”<sup>348</sup>

Schleiermacher says, “The words ‘*reveal*,’ ‘*revealed*,’ ‘*revelation*,’ present difficulties, since even originally they sometimes signify the illumination of what was obscure, confused, unobserved, and sometimes rather the disclosing and unveiling of what was hitherto concealed and kept secret, and still further confusion has been introduced by the distinction between mediate and immediate (direct and indirect) revelation.” He sees the entire subject of revelation as being confused in the thinking of many. He further argues, “To begin with, all will at once agree that the word ‘*revealed*’ is never applied either to what is discovered in the realm of experience by one man and handed on to others, or to what is excogitated in thought by one man and so learned by others; and further, that the word presupposes a divine communication

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<sup>346</sup> Clements, *Schleiermacher; Pioneer of Modern Theology*, 14.

<sup>347</sup> Pelikan, Jaroslav, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989, 162.

<sup>348</sup> Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 163.

and declaration. And in this sense we find the word very generally applied to the origin of religious communions.” In other words, it is natural for religious leaders, Christian or otherwise, to claim that they have received their words from God.<sup>349</sup> Neither can a religion that is already steeped in their own teaching claim divine revelation from its own past. “Accordingly we might say that the idea of revelation signifies the *originality* of the fact which lies at the foundation of a religious communion, in the sense that this fact, as conditioning the individual content of the religious emotions which are found in the communion, cannot itself in turn be explained by the historical chain which precedes it.”<sup>350</sup> Neither can revelation be originally and essentially doctrine.

Now the fact that in this original element there is a divine causality requires no further discussion; nor does the fact that it is an activity which aims at and furthers the salvation of man. But I am unwilling to accept the further definition that it operates upon man as a cognitive being. For that would make the revelation to be originally and essentially *doctrine*; and I do not believe that we can adopt that position, whether we consider the whole field covered by the idea, or seek to define it in advance with special reference to Christianity. . . . It is the impression made on the self-conscious by God that communicates Him to us.<sup>351</sup>

According to Karl Barth, ultimately because of this relationship between the inner man and nature, man must allow nature to tell him what

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<sup>349</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 49-50.

<sup>350</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 50.

<sup>351</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 50.

is good, and this by the power of “subjective reason, as the elemental voice within every man, and by objective reason, as the elemental voice speaking to every man.”<sup>352</sup>

Schleiermacher’s own understanding of piety is unique in the following ways. For Schleiermacher piety forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions. A Church is “nothing but a communion or association relating to religion or piety,” and this is particularly true of Evangelical or Protestant Christians. He relates this to the subject of ethics. He discusses three concepts as they relate to piety; knowing, doing and feeling. “Piety . . . considered in itself, [is] neither a Knowing nor a doing, but a modification of Feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness.”<sup>353</sup> The “essential business of the Church” is the “maintenance, regulation, and advancement of piety.”<sup>354</sup> Schleiermacher refers regularly to piety as “feeling.” He recognizes two forms of consciousness; knowing and feeling constitute the “abiding-in-self,” and “doing proper is the passing-beyond-self.” But of the three, knowing, doing and feeling, “feeling is the one to which piety belongs.”<sup>355</sup> Piety is not directly connected with knowledge of doctrines. Schleiermacher says, “Knowledge of doctrines is piety only in virtue of the certainty attached to them, and thus only in virtue of the strength of the conviction, while a possession of the doctrines without conviction is not piety at all. Then the strength of the conviction would be the

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<sup>352</sup> Barth, *Protestant Thought*, 51-53.

<sup>353</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 5.

<sup>354</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 6.

<sup>355</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 8.

measure of the piety; and this is undoubtedly what those people have chiefly in mind who so love to paraphrase the word *Faith* as 'fidelity to one's convictions.'" There is a sense in which knowing and doing can pertain to piety.<sup>356</sup> There are certain states of feeling, such as "penitence, contrition, confidence, and joy in God," which can be pious in themselves but they must work themselves out in actions in order to be true piety. However, in the final analysis, "piety is a state in which Knowing, Feeling, and Doing are combined."<sup>357</sup> Then Schleiermacher defines "the common element" in all expressions of piety which distinguishes it from all other feelings and which is the "self-identical essence of piety." This is, "the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God."<sup>358</sup> In "self-consciousness there are only two elements: the one expresses the existence of the subject for itself, the other its co-existence with an Other."<sup>359</sup> Schleiermacher explains the relationship between the feeling of dependence and the feeling of freedom. The feeling of dependence and the feeling of freedom can not exist apart from each other. In fact, one is necessary in order for the other to be possible. He says,

The common element in all those determinations of self-consciousness which predominantly express a receptivity affected from some outside quarter is the *feeling of Dependence*. On the other hand, the common element in all those determinations which predominantly express spontaneous movement and activity is the *feeling of Freedom*. The

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<sup>356</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 9-10.

<sup>357</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 11.

<sup>358</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 12.

<sup>359</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 13.

former is the case not only because it is by an influence from some other quarter that we have come to such a state, but particularly because we *could* not so become except by means of an Other. The latter is the case because in these instances an Other is determined by us, and without our spontaneous activity could not be so determined.<sup>360</sup>

Then he proceeds to say, “Let us now think of the feeling of dependence and the feeling of freedom as *one*, in the sense that not only the subject but the corresponding Other is the same for both. Then the total self-consciousness made up of both together is one of *Reciprocity* between the subject and the corresponding Other.”<sup>361</sup> Schleiermacher sees the feeling of dependence and the feeling of freedom as “co-determinants.” They are inseparable. They are symbiotic as they work together and enable each other. He likens the relationship of these co-determinants to the relationship of children to parents or citizen to the fatherland. They are dependent, however, in their individual freedom and they often exert a “counter-influence” on the entity upon which they are dependent.<sup>362</sup> Schleiermacher says that “there can, accordingly, be for us no such thing as a feeling of absolute freedom. He who asserts that he has such a feeling is either deceiving himself or separating things which essentially belong together. For if the feeling of freedom expresses a forth-going activity, this activity must have an object which has been somehow given to us, and this could not have taken place without an influence of the object upon our receptivity. Therefore in every such case there is involved a feeling of dependence

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<sup>360</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 13-14.

<sup>361</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 15.

<sup>362</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 15.

which goes along with the feeling of freedom, and thus limits it. . . . But without any feeling of freedom a feeling of absolute dependence would not be possible.”<sup>363</sup>

Schleiermacher relates this entire concept to our “relation to God.” There must exist a feeling of freedom on our part concerning God and in choosing Him and His will in order for a feeling of dependence to be possible for us.<sup>364</sup> He goes on to stress that the feeling of dependence is not always necessarily a feeling of pain but can be a feeling of pleasure as well, just as a child’s feeling of dependence on his parents can be one of “perfect well-being.”<sup>365</sup> “If thus the direct inward expression of the feeling of absolute dependence is the consciousness of God, and that feeling, whenever it attains to a certain clearness, is accompanied by such an expression, but is also combined with, and related to, a sensible self-consciousness: then the God-consciousness which has in this way arisen will, in all its particular formations, carry with it such determinations as belong to the realm of the antithesis in which the sensible self-consciousness moves.”<sup>366</sup>

Schleiermacher says that in Christianity the unique character of Christianity as a monotheistic faith is found in the fact that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>367</sup> “In Christianity . . . the redeeming influence of the Founder is the primary element, and the communion

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<sup>363</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 15-16.

<sup>364</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 20.

<sup>365</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 23.

<sup>366</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 25.

<sup>367</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 52.

exists only on this presupposition, and as a communication and propagation of that redeeming activity. Hence within Christianity these two tendencies always rise and fall together: the tendency to give pre-eminence to the redeeming work of Christ, and the tendency to ascribe great value to the distinctive and peculiar element in Christian piety.”<sup>368</sup> Schleiermacher allows that perhaps in some universal philosophy of religion apologetics could appeal to the “inner character” of Christianity and show an “interconnexion” which would show how they all fit together, but this is not his interest or his goal.<sup>369</sup> Schleiermacher says that Dogmatics are an internal matter strictly for the Christian. Furthermore, he boldly proclaims, “*We entirely renounce all attempt to prove the truth or necessity of Christianity; and we presuppose, on the contrary, that every Christian, before he enters at all upon inquiries of this kind, has already the inward certainty that his religion cannot take any other form than this.* (italics mine)”<sup>370</sup>

### C. The Scottish Schleiermacher?

The “inward certainty” of Schleiermacher corresponds to Thomas Erskine’s “judgments and anticipations of conscience.” Nicholas Needham says that Erskine’s “*Doctrine Of Election*, with its Theology of consciousness, is perhaps best understood as Erskine's profoundest attempt to rationalise his own inward-looking,

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<sup>368</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 57.

<sup>369</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 59.

<sup>370</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 60.

individualistic, moralising psychology. The Scottish Schleiermacher had finally subordinated the constraints of objective propositional dogma to the more congenial reign of a Theology of subjective spiritual experience.”<sup>371</sup> Many might agree with Needham’s epithet “The Scottish Schleiermacher” as applied to Thomas Erskine. Needham goes on to say that just as the “Pious Man” is the center of Schleiermacher’s theology, the “Good Man” is the center of Erskine’s theology. For Erskine the chief task of God is to “make men good.” Erskine makes the human conscience the “supreme criterion” of truth. The rule of the “personal, the inward” and the “experimental” is inaugurated in Erskine’s theology. In addition to this emphasis Erskine and Schleiermacher seem to agree on two other primary subjects; dependence and a universal gospel.

Erskine’s early pre-revival published work, *An Essay On Faith*, has four references to the need for our dependence on God. In speaking about the influence of the truth of the atonement upon men Erskine says, “We only know so much concerning the nature of that influence, as may humble us, and keep us in a continual state of dependence on Divine aid. We see thus far, however, concerning the mode in which it is applied, that God works upon our minds by the operation of the truth on those natural faculties which he has bestowed on us.”<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Needham, Nicholas R., *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen: His Life and Theology 1788-1837*, Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990, 457.

<sup>372</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *An Essay on Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, London: Ogle, Duncan & Co., 1822, 65-66.

Erskine sees our dependence on God as the “basis for religion” in human beings.<sup>373</sup> He also sees redemption as being accomplished by a renewal of dependence upon God. “The true state of the creature is a state of absolute dependence on the Creator, and when he has left his true state, he can only be brought back to it, by a way of absolute dependence.”<sup>374</sup>

Erskine talks of the three “great principles” on which rests the entire Biblical revelation. These are: the eternal Sonship, faith or “dependent recipiency,” and the “sacrifice of self which is the only putting away of sin.”<sup>375</sup> To the extent that such things can not ever be fully understood Erskine is content to understand what can be understood and to leave the matter there. “The object of this process is to train man into that dependence on the Father which belongs to the very essence of the eternal Son. I do not attempt any further explanation of the difficulty.”<sup>376</sup> In Schleiermacherian fashion it is learning by experience that proves it all. “Learning by experience that dependence upon God is the true and only righteousness of the creature, we should thus advance in meetness for our appointed place in the body of His Son.”<sup>377</sup>

Erskine’s presentation of dependence stresses a personal evangelical form of

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<sup>373</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1870, 76-77.

<sup>374</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 87.

<sup>375</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, Selected From The Manuscripts Of The Late Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876, 246.

<sup>376</sup> Erskine, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 256.

<sup>377</sup> Erskine, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 257-58.

dependence more than Schleiermacher does; but it is equally high in Erskine's theological priorities. Erskine does not refer to Schleiermacher by name in any of his published writings or letters. Therefore, we must presume that any Schleiermacherian influence on Erskine is an indirect influence.

#### D. Ultimate Reconciliation

In his remarks on eternal damnation Schleiermacher's belief in universalism becomes evident. He refers to Christ's sayings regarding eternal damnation as "figurative sayings," and indicates that their fulfillment could either refer to an earlier, less permanent event, or that their impact is countered by other statements which indicate that before the final general resurrection all evil will be completely overcome. He rules out eternal suffering either as a physical or a spiritual reality since the physical could not endure it and "pains of conscience" are worse in this life than they could be in any subsequent one.<sup>378</sup> But this is not the focus of his argument against eternal damnation for he says, "If we now consider eternal damnation as it is related to eternal bliss, it is easy to see that once the former exists, the latter can exist no longer." He explains away eternal damnation by the very existence of eternal bliss and the righteousness of God.

If the perfecting of our nature is not to move backwards, sympathy must be such as to embrace the whole human race, and when extended to the damned must of necessity be a disturbing element in bliss, all the more that, unlike similar feelings in this life, it is untouched by hope. For reflect as we may that if eternal damnation exists at all, it must be

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<sup>378</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 720.

just, and that the vision of God embraces also His righteousness, yet even so sympathy persists; indeed, even in this life we rightly expect a deeper sympathy to be shown to merited than to unmerited suffering.<sup>379</sup>

In the end Schleiermacher has to give in to what he calls the “equal rights of the milder view.”<sup>380</sup>

In his *The Brazen Serpent*, Erskine signals his universalistic tendency when he says, “If God were not the Saviour of all men, it could be no just condemnation on any man that he did not trust in God, unless he had a particular revelation to himself, but seeing God has proclaimed Christ crucified and Christ risen, His unspeakable gift to every man—every man who has not confidence in God is condemned of making God a liar. It is striking that the *universal atonement* and the *personal assurance* should have been the reproach at all times.”<sup>381</sup>

In a closer look at *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man* which the dying Erskine hurried into publication in pamphlet form he says, “Is it a correct description of man's state in this world to call it ‘a state of probation’?”<sup>382</sup> A few pages later he follows with, “I cannot otherwise interpret this witness than as the expression of God's purpose of unchanging love, which will never cease its striving till it has engaged every child of man to take part with Him in this contest. In coming

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<sup>379</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 721.

<sup>380</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 721.

<sup>381</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 151-2.

<sup>382</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1870, 5.

to this conclusion, it is manifest that 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, we must give up the idea that the purpose of God in creating man was to educate him, as it can no otherwise be maintained. . . . There can be no real gospel, no real good news for man, which does not hold out this assurance.”<sup>383</sup>

Subjective experience, dependence upon God and a universal gospel are important themes for both Schleiermacher and Erskine. We can not prove that Erskine got these themes from Schleiermacher. They can all be extrapolated from scripture. But we can note the similarity and suggest that Erskine was indirectly influenced by Schleiermacher in the theological thinking of his day which could not escape the influence of Schleiermacher.

#### E. Other Theological Currents

Pfleiderer credits the revolution of thought and feeling known as “Romanticism” with bringing revival to the Church. The most influential representative of this movement in England was Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). With Coleridge German idealistic philosophy was transplanted to England. Pfleiderer sees Coleridge as a follower of Schleiermacher in England when he says,

In Coleridge, as in Schleiermacher, his German predecessor, intellect and feeling, faith and knowledge, entered into such a close alliance with each other, that he appeared on the one hand as the apologist of the faith

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<sup>383</sup> Erskine, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, 13-14.

of the Church, in opposition to anti-religious rationalism; and, on the other, as at the same time the champion of a more liberal view of traditional doctrines, in opposition to a literal orthodoxy.<sup>384</sup>

The roots of change in the church in England began with the Tractarian movement. Out of this came the influence of the Broad Church party led by Thomas Arnold and Erskine's friend and correspondent F. D. Maurice. Although the Tractarian movement dates from 1833, a date set firmly in the midst of Erskine's and Irving's writings, it itself was rooted in some thinking that had been expressed 6 years earlier in the publication of Keble's poem, *The Christian Year*, in which the poet expressed the idea of two worlds which lie always open where the visible is a type of the invisible and it is the invisible that lay nearest the heart. Keble was very Anglican and he could not conceive a Christianity apart from Anglican doctrines and ceremonies.<sup>385</sup>

As the result of the interaction of several men who were Oxford graduates spurred on by the conditions of the times involving conflict between the high Church people and those who pressed for an Anglican counter-reformation the Tractarian movement was started by John Henry Newman with his publication of the series *Tracts For The Times* in 1833. All in all 90 tracts were published in six volumes between 1833 and 1841. Combined with this was also an enthusiasm for the writings of the Church Fathers. This movement was not entirely religious; it was also political.

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<sup>384</sup> Pfleiderer, Otto, *The Development of Theology in Germany Since Kant and Its Progress in Great Britain Since 1825*, London, publisher unknown, 1923, 355.

<sup>385</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 356.

It was a war against the liberal tendencies of the age in defense of the traditions of the English Church. However, this movement went so far that it actually appeared to be Anglo-Catholic. The efficacy of the sacraments administered by priests appointed by bishops in the apostolic succession was stressed. Church discipline as a means of grace was also stressed as well as frequent private confession.<sup>386</sup>

A new “love of ecclesiastical antiquity sprang out of the historical impulse of Romanticism.”<sup>387</sup> Due to the extreme Roman Catholic tendencies of the movement a large number of clergy actually defected to the Church of Rome and people had to choose sides in the ensuing conflict.<sup>388</sup> Arnold and his circle pushed for reform in the direction of the State Church in England and wanted the doors opened for all Christians to feel at home in it. They asked only acceptance of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. For them, “the essential thing in Christianity is practical godliness, based on the revelation of God in Scripture, and especially in the person of Jesus, and manifesting itself in the moral purification and sanctification of personal and social life.”<sup>389</sup> There was a flurry of opposition that followed from both sides, the Anglican High Church groups and the Evangelicals. Because of Arnold’s moderate views he was driven to an early and sudden death in 1842. However, he is regarded by many as the “pioneer of free theology in England.”<sup>390</sup> He was

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<sup>386</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 357-359.

<sup>387</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 360.

<sup>388</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 361-365.

<sup>389</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 366.

<sup>390</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 367.

the first to show to his countrymen the possibility and to make the demand, that the Bible should be read with honest human eyes without the spectacles of orthodox dogmatic presuppositions, and that it can at the same time be revered with Christian piety and made truly productive in moral life. He was the first who dared to leave on one side the traditional phraseology of the High-Churchmen and the Evangelicals, and to look upon Christianity, not as a sacred treasure of the Churches and sects, but as a Divine beneficent power for every believer; not as a dead heritage from the past, but as a living spiritual power for the moral advancement of individuals and nations in the present.<sup>391</sup>

A. O. J. Cockshut proposes that there were three remedies for the “state of affairs” in Britain in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The “state of affairs” was concerned with Anglicanism and Evangelicalism and the possible effect of the Roman church. The issue of the State itself was also significant and the appointment of bishops by the crown was a major issue. There was also theological and administrative confusion.

The first remedy was the Evangelical remedy. The Evangelicals dismissed both the theological and administrative issues as irrelevant and put their trust in “vital religion.” This meant stressing a belief that all were sinners and needed the salvation offered in Christ. Without this vital personal life church going and good works were in vain. The Evangelicals were very successful in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second remedy was especially associated with Thomas Arnold and A. P. Stanley. They too placed little value on theology and stressed the moral and educational influence of Christianity. However, they saw the Church of England as the all-inclusive answer where everyone was allowed to enter. The third remedy was the

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<sup>391</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 367.

Oxford Movement or the Tractarians. They wrote many tracts and although they held many views of the old High Church, they differed profoundly in spirit from the Arnold and Stanley group. Although they supported the Church of England, they stressed the need for spiritual content in the church. These were not simple issues and the very fact of their existence reflects the contentious background surrounding Erskine's writings.<sup>392</sup>

Another source allows that there were three challenges to the Church of Scotland in the 1830's. The first challenge was the conflict between "moderates" and "evangelicals." The Moderates sought to soften the harsher Calvinism of the past. The Evangelicals were firm Calvinists who had a great deal of zeal for their cause. The Evangelicals were led by Thomas Chalmers himself. By their efforts the Westminster Confession of Faith was strongly reaffirmed in the Kirk. By 1834 the Evangelicals had a majority in the General Assembly, although Chalmers had already been moderator since 1832. In the 1843 assembly over one third of the ministers, 454 in number, were led out by Chalmers to form the Free Kirk; 752 ministers remained in the parent denomination. This was the Great Disruption. One primary issue, which was not essentially theological, was over patronage. Chalmers and his people wanted to put a stop to it so that parishioners could reject a patron's nominee for pastor. The Scottish civil courts and Parliament would not agree. Amazingly, however, within four years after the disruption, without any of the established church's resources, the

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<sup>392</sup> Cockshut, A. O. J., ed., *Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth Century*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966, 3-4.

Free Church had established 700 churches and 500 schools. Additionally, in 1850 the Free Church established New College in Edinburgh for theological studies.<sup>393</sup> At this time many of the poorer people in Scotland were not interested in attending church as they did not see any advantage in the church that applied to them. Chalmers' concern caused him to lead a movement to establish a welfare system within the church that did not make use of government funds. This was also very successful but it had to be accomplished without the help of the government or the resources of the state supported Kirk.<sup>394</sup>

There was also a challenge in the area of worship and theology. In the established church there was a desire for a more dignified and elegant style of worship which was met by the compilation of prayers and other materials. In theology, Erskine of Linlathen challenged traditional Calvinistic orthodoxy. As a layman Erskine could publish without fear of deposition. "He consistently appealed from the letter of doctrine to its spirit, and from dogmatic formulation about God to experience of God." In his works, similar to Coleridge in England, he laid out a theology which was "subjective, experiential and personal: faith as the commitment of the heart, not assent to creeds based on 'evidences.'" He also argued that God's forgiveness was declared for all, salvation being there for the acceptance, and that

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<sup>393</sup> Parsons, Gerald, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press in association with the Open University; New York: Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, c1988. V. I., Traditions, 120-122.

<sup>394</sup> Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, 123-24.

eternal life meant living in the love of God: hell meant living in self.” Erskine had roots both in the Calvinism of the Scottish Kirk and in the liturgy of Anglicanism. Erskine influenced many others including Maurice in England.<sup>395</sup> The importance of their relationship merits a separate section.

F. Frederick D. Maurice (1805-1872)

Donald Winslow, in his book *Thomas Erskine: Advocate For The Character Of God*, says that Frederick Maurice acknowledged that both Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Erskine were major figures in the development of his ideas. Erskine’s letters also indicate that Maurice had a corresponding influence on Erskine. In all of Erskine’s letters there are over five dozen references to F. D. Maurice. Some specific examples of which are examined in this chapter. Winslow notes that considering the anti-clericalism of Maurice it is significant that both Coleridge and Erskine were laymen.<sup>396</sup>

While a law student at Cambridge Maurice was exposed to the newly published writings of Erskine through a friend of the family. Maurice was a gloomy young man, and the inspiration of Erskine’s view of a loving heavenly Father made an impact upon him. While at university Maurice made the acquaintance of a young man who was later to become Lord Elgin, also a correspondent of Erskine’s. Through

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<sup>395</sup> Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, 124.

<sup>396</sup> Winslow, Donald F., *Thomas Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, New York: University Press of America, 1993, 99.

this friend Maurice first read *The Brazen Serpent*. Maurice was sure that “light had fallen through him on the Scriptures” and that Erskine was “unspeakably comfortable” to him. Many years later in 1870 Maurice dedicated his *The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament* to Erskine with the comment that Erskine’s books “seem to me to mark a crisis in the theological movements of the time.”<sup>397</sup> In 1853 Maurice’s most controversial work, *Theological Essays*, had been published which put forth Maurice’s explicit universalism and which led to the loss of his professorship at King’s College, London.<sup>398</sup> Anti-clericalism and the fear of antinomianism was a major contributing factor in the persecution which Maurice experienced in the wake of the publication of his *Theological Essays*.<sup>399</sup>

For Maurice as well as for Erskine a gospel based on fear was not good news.<sup>400</sup> Even Alfred Lord Tennyson was an admirer of Maurice and he wrote a poem dedicated to him entitled “To The Rev. F. D. Maurice.” In this poem Tennyson said, “should all our churchmen foam in spite at you . . . yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome.”<sup>401</sup> Winslow acknowledges the mutual influence between Erskine and Maurice. They were both against the “arbitrary Despot-God” and they were both against “all that was exclusive in Calvinism.”<sup>402</sup> Winslow sees three particular points of agreement between the two. The first point of agreement concerns

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<sup>397</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 99-100.

<sup>398</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 101-102.

<sup>399</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 103.

<sup>400</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 104.

<sup>401</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 105.

<sup>402</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 106.

Erskine's position that Christ is the representative Head of the human race instead of a substitute for humanity.<sup>403</sup> The second point of agreement was that neither of them believed that baptism was strictly necessary for salvation. Baptism was merely a declaration of something that was already true.<sup>404</sup> The third area of agreement was in regard to the advent of Biblical criticism; neither of them regarded it as a threat. Actually they had both already begun to practice Biblical criticism on their own.<sup>405</sup> Erskine and Maurice were of different temperaments and style. Erskine was more of a recluse than Maurice. Maurice wrote on a broader variety of theological subjects than did Erskine. But both were influential in their time and their ideas were tied together throughout most of their lives as Erskine's letters give ample testimony.<sup>406</sup> Erskine and Maurice even shared their enemies.<sup>407</sup>

Maurice is credited with a great individuality of mind. His theology is more complicated than many of his contemporaries and often more vague. He appeared to be a man of deep religious feeling and considerable speculative power. However, he failed to "reduce his convictions into a consistent logical whole." Along with his speculative thought he had a clear concern for practical Church life. His dogmatic

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<sup>403</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 106.

<sup>404</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 107.

<sup>405</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 108.

<sup>406</sup> Winslow, *Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, 109.

<sup>407</sup> Prickett, Stephen, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church*, Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1976, 225-26. "Through [A.J.]Scott at this time MacDonald also met a man who had been a major influence on Maurice, Thomas Erskine, and who, with Maurice, is the target for some of [Matthew] Arnold's most bitter personal attacks."

statements and inconsistencies caused him to give offence on all sides.<sup>408</sup> In these things he was much like his friend Erskine. Maurice's father was a Unitarian minister and Maurice declared the Unitarian faith un-Christian. He joined with the Tractarians for a while in defense of the unique purity of the English church. However, he taught in his *Theological Essays* that the Biblical phrases "eternal life" and "eternal death" do not "signify states of time of indefinitely long duration in the future, but spiritual states of communion and oneness with or separation from God," and that the Gospel of God's love was for all men.<sup>409</sup> In these concepts Maurice was one with Erskine. In 1833 Maurice had said in a letter to his mother "The truth is that every man is in Christ, created in him, who is the Head of *every* man; the difference between the believer and the unbeliever is that the latter does not perceive or acknowledge the truth, that except he were joined to Christ he could not think, breathe, live a single hour. . . . The one thing therefore is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord of our own spirit, that our spirit belongs to him and not to the flesh, that Christ is in us, and that we must let him do his will in us and through us." And he also said that, "if humanity is thus from the first essentially associated with Christ, a saving revelation pervades human history from the beginning; there is no need for the reconciliation of a world alienated from God, but the work of the historical Saviour can be no other

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<sup>408</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 373-374.

<sup>409</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 375.

than by his word and example to reveal and bring home to the consciousness of men what had always been the fact.”<sup>410</sup>

#### G. Summary

Parsons says, “In short, traditional Calvinist Confessionalism was, by the 1870’s and 1880’s, undermined from the conservative theological right as well as from the liberal theological left. Moreover, it is quite probable that, at the level of popular perceptions of Presbyterianism, the practical revivalist undermining was more significant than the articulate ‘liberal’ objections of a Scott, a McLeod Campbell or an Erskine.”<sup>411</sup>

The streams in the Theological influence in Erskine’s time include the *Marrow*, pietism, Schleiermacher, the tendency toward universalism, Coleridge, Evangelicalism, Maurice and others.

There was no way of escaping the influence of the *Marrow* for Erskine. Although he did not agree with the more stringent aspects of the Calvinism that it represented, Erskine did agree with the softening of Calvinism that the *Marrow* accomplished. Erskine agreed with Boston regarding Christ as the federal head of a redeemed race and regarding the true humanity of Christ.

Erskine was pietistic. He wanted, even longed for, authentic spiritual experience for the people of the Scotland of his day. In many ways he was in

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<sup>410</sup> Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 376-377.

<sup>411</sup> Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, 129.

agreement with Schleiermacher. They both advocated a true dependence upon God. Furthermore, just as the “Pious Man” is the center of Schleiermacher's theology, the “Good Man” is the center of Erskine’s theology. For Erskine the chief task of God is to “make men good.” Erskine makes the human conscience the “supreme criterion” of truth.

Erskine agreed with Coleridge that intellect and feeling, faith and knowledge, enter into a close alliance with each other. Furthermore, they both opposed any literal orthodoxy which robbed mankind of a sincere faith.

Erskine was, therefore, liberal for his day and he was evangelical. With the Evangelicals he dismissed both the theological and administrative issues as irrelevant and put their trust in “vital religion.” For Erskine this certainly meant stressing a belief that all were sinners and needed the salvation offered in Christ.

Like Schleiermacher Erskine was decidedly universalistic. Schleiermacher favored his “milder view” which was essentially against damnation and Erskine believed that this life was essentially a time of probation and education of man by God.

Erskine and Maurice influenced each other. They were in agreement in that for Maurice as well as for Erskine a gospel based on fear was not good news. Erskine was a listener as well as a speaker. He considered the views and positions of others just as he hoped that others would consider his. He was a man of his theological time. However, he was fervent in the propagation of his own beliefs.

## Chapter V: A Taxonomy Of Pneumatological Types

Drawn From John McIntyre

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the taxonomy of pneumatological types drawn from the writings of John McIntyre, in particular in his *The Shape of Pneumatology; Studies In The Doctrine Of The Holy Spirit*. This chapter serves only as an introduction to this taxonomy and to McIntyre himself. The conclusions regarding Thomas Erskine's pneumatology in relation to McIntyre's taxonomy are

found in chapter 10 of this thesis entitled “Positive Statement Of Erskine's Pneumatology In Terms Of McIntyre's Categories.”

#### A. Why John McIntyre’s Categories?

Why should we use John McIntyre’s taxonomy of pneumatological types to evaluate Thomas Erskine’s pneumatology? It has been said that “McIntyre is a sane and sensible theological voice that needs to be raised louder and heard further.”<sup>412</sup>

John McIntyre was born in 1916 and graduated M.A. in 1938 with first class honors in mental philosophy. This distinction in mental philosophy is a good reason why McIntyre’s concepts are useful in evaluating Erskine's pneumatological views as Erskine himself was a man of the classics and philosophy as well as a writing theologian. To critique Erskine with the concepts of a Biblical scholar alone would not be fair to Erskine and his background.

In his role as editor of *Theology After The Storm* Gary Badcock says that McIntyre is not primarily a philosophical theologian. Fully half of McIntyre's publications are on Christology and soteriology. McIntyre is a Christological theologian in the widest sense although his theology draws from a wide variety of sources. Badcock says it is important to consider the bare minimum in McIntyre’s Christology. These are the significance of history for Christology, the doctrine of the

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<sup>412</sup> McIntyre, John, *Theology after the Storm*, Gary D. Badcock, Ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, Thomas W. Gillespie, Princeton Theological Seminary, dust jacket.

incarnation proper, and the nature of the atonement. These are the horizon of McIntyre's Christology in his doctrine of God. In McIntyre's context history serves theology although history has been misused by many. Badcock says that according to McIntyre history is the handmaid of theology because McIntyre believes in the importance of history to theology. According to McIntyre, the skeptical use of history in theology has little to do with history itself but more with the history of theology.<sup>413</sup> Still the Jesus of history versus the Christ of faith dilemma remains. McIntyre believes this is due to the influence of existentialism particularly that of Kierkegaard whom he believes is the father of modern theology. McIntyre is not entirely adverse to modern historical critical scholarship on the new Testament. He is "neither a fundamentalist nor an obscurantist." For the sake of Christian theology an adequate philosophy of history needs to be developed. Badcock says, "McIntyre himself is necessarily committed to the possibility of the miraculous at the point of incarnation as a bare minimum, but in practice, a general openness to the possibility of divine action in the world is characteristic of his whole theology, though sometimes this may be seen more in terms of a spiritual influence than in terms of straightforward physical events."<sup>414</sup> Since the miraculous was very important to Thomas Erskine in his own conception of theology such an approach is not hostile to Erskine's interests.

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<sup>413</sup> McIntyre, John, *Theology after the Storm*, Gary D. Badcock, Ed., A Critical Introduction By The Editor, 25.

<sup>414</sup> McIntyre, *Theology after the Storm*, 27-28.

McIntyre never commits to a “fallen human nature of Christ ” like Irving or Barth, but he entertains that possibility. With John McLeod Campbell he does identify Christ as “our contemporary ancestor.”<sup>415</sup> He says that you do not play justice against mercy, especially with a need to “satisfy” justice as it is God’s identification which justifies the unrighteous. Christ in God is found in John’s baptism, with publicans and sinners and Zacchaeus, and in the cross. This would be very satisfactory with the “triumvirate.” It was the belief of Erskine and it was the theme throughout Campbell’s *The Nature of the Atonement* who taught that Christ took on mankind’s sin and consequences with perfect response of contrition. This was also a favorite theme of Edward Irving.<sup>416</sup>

McIntyre has pioneered in the development of models and the use of imagination in theology. He says, “the creation of models is part of the function which imagination fulfills in theological activity.”<sup>417</sup> After all science and discovery are dependent on models first being constructed with the use of imagination. Only then is there something to proceed to measure and to test. Imagination is a synonym for human creativity, to act in freedom. It is a human function; it is an essential feature of the *Imago Dei* itself. Regarding imagination and models McIntyre believes in the fecundity of models, their ability to create further insights not originally in

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<sup>415</sup> McIntyre, *Theology after the Storm*, 32.

<sup>416</sup> Irving, Edward, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, London: Printed by Ellerton and Henderson For Baldwin and Cradock, 1830, 96.

<sup>417</sup> McIntyre, John, *The Shape of Christology; Studies in the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Edinburgh: T And T Clark, 1998, 173.

view when the model was made, and that a model's test of a theological position lies in the strengths of the model and the range of questions it manages or illuminates. A model does more than provide analogies for something already known. The relation between the model and the image is often closer than you might expect, for instance, as in the very teachings and parables of Jesus.

The purpose of a McIntyre model is to present a three-dimensional picture of the incarnation and the atonement. This can be misunderstood. Macquarrie criticized McIntyre's model approach as having no point of its own because it is not a linear argument. But such models do have a point of their own which is to develop theological understanding.<sup>418</sup> This comes from McIntyre's mental philosophy and is another reason to use him to critique Erskine who had his own bent towards the classics. Further, McIntyre can give a 20<sup>th</sup> century framework with which to examine the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century theologians critically but fairly and, most of all, in a manner which can be relevant to the Christian who has no formal training in theology.

## B. Introduction to McIntyre's Types Of Pneumatology

John McIntyre sketches eleven possible types of pneumatologies: a biblical model, six Trinitarian models, and four dynamic models.

### 1. The Biblical Model

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<sup>418</sup> McIntyre, *Theology after the Storm*, 35.

McIntyre calls the Biblical model the Definitional/Biblical Pluralistic Model which has Multiple Mutually Compatible Patterns. The biblical accounts, McIntyre says, are unstructured and can only provide basic data or raw material for a pneumatology. Consequently pneumatologies built on biblical material are often very heterogeneous and are sometimes mutually compatible. If they are not mutually compatible, they are often not contradicting or finally invalidating of one another. The scriptures can prescribe a range for our understanding of pneumatology and also set a norm for our expectations of experience of the Holy Spirit himself. <sup>419</sup>

## 2. The Trinitarian Model

### a. The Traditional Pattern

The Traditional Pattern of the Trinitarian model has to do with the concept of hypostasis and is, of course, a product of the patristic period and has close connections with the Bible. In this thought pattern the Holy Spirit has a personhood in the same manner as the Father and the Son. From then on the possibilities “fan out in profusion” to form other patterns such as the Christological Pattern and others. <sup>420</sup>

### b. The Christological Pattern

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<sup>419</sup> McIntyre, John, *The Shape of Pneumatology, Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997, 23.

<sup>420</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 24-25.

Another variation of the Trinitarian Hypostatic model of pneumatology is the Christological Pattern stressed by the Reformers which emphasizes the application of the gospel by the Holy Spirit. Calvin is the prime example for such a pneumatology. McIntyre says that Calvin “stands foursquare in the traditional understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and its components” and he is also “positioned close to the Greek fathers . . . as well as to the frequently quoted Augustine from the Latin Fathers.” Calvin makes it plain “that for him the doctrine of the Trinity is the only true account of the God who makes himself known to us in Scriptures.”<sup>421</sup> Calvin himself says, “Say that there is a Trinity of persons in one Divine essence, you will only express in one word what the Scriptures say . . . that when one is spoken of, a unity of substance must be understood, and when three in one essence, the persons in this Trinity are denoted.”<sup>422</sup> This is the distinct language of the Reformer’s view of the traditional pattern in Christological form.

### c. The Revelation-Soteriological Pattern

Still another variation on the Trinitarian Model is the Revelation-Soteriological pattern which stresses the Spirit in the atonement and revelation as found in the theology of Karl Barth.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 109.

<sup>422</sup> Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.13.5, 2 vols., Henry Beveridge, Trans., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, 114.

<sup>423</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 25.

Barth says that the Holy Spirit does not first become God's Spirit in the event of revelation. He admits that in revelation we see the Holy Spirit on its subjective side. But he adds that what He "is in revelation He is antecedently in Himself." The final thing that can be said of the Holy Spirit which is within the "deepest depths of deity" is that God is "Spirit as He is God the Father and God the Son." He continues by saying that "the work of the Holy Spirit in revelation is a work which can only be ascribed to God Himself, and which is therefore actually and expressly ascribed to God." <sup>424</sup>

According to Barth the historical problem in identifying the Holy Spirit as truly divine as the Father and the Son are truly divine is associated with the fact that the Holy Spirit is indeed found so close to his human subjects. We are present at the revelation of the Holy Spirit. This could imply that we can have some mastery over the Holy Spirit and this can not be allowed. Barth clarifies this by saying, "The dogma of the Holy Spirit means the knowledge, that in every respect man can only be present at God's revelation, as the servant is present at his master's action. ...and that this relation ... is in no wise and at no point reversed." <sup>425</sup>

For Barth the Holy Spirit is also the "Reconciler together with the Son and as the Spirit of the Son." The Holy Spirit is the Creator God along with the Father and the Son. He creates not only existence but life as well. However, the Holy Spirit can

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<sup>424</sup> Barth, Karl, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936., 533-534.

<sup>425</sup> Barth, Karl, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, 535-539.

not become the object of natural theology; He can only be known on the basis of revelation and in faith. As Co-creator and life giver the Holy Spirit is thus identified by Barth as fully divine and a fully equal member of the Godhead.<sup>426</sup> Barth cautions that the presence of the Holy Spirit within us must not be taken as in any way reducing his divinity. The Holy Spirit always remains “transcendent over man by being immanent in him.” The presence of the divine Spirit within us is our salvation.<sup>427</sup>

#### d. The Social-Trinitarian Model / Substantival Personal Pattern

The Social-Trinitarian Model with the Substantival-personal pattern sees the Holy Spirit as substantive in his own right and stresses the ‘social trinity’. This pattern depends on a revision of the “notion of ‘person’ as used in a Trinitarian context.” This is very close to tri-theism but it can have useful insights such as those found in Martin Buber’s “I-Thou” concept.<sup>428</sup> In his introduction to Buber’s *I And Thou* translator Walter Kaufmann says, “It is not even impossible that in places Buber himself was not sure of the exact meaning of his text.”<sup>429</sup> Buber is quoted as saying,

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<sup>426</sup> Barth, Karl, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, 539 – 541.

<sup>427</sup> Barth, Karl, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, 557 – 560.

<sup>428</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 27.

<sup>429</sup> Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, Walter Kaufman, Trans., New York: Simon &

“At that time I wrote what I wrote under the spell of an irresistible enthusiasm.”

Kaufmann then comments, “Thus Buber endowed his text with authority and implied that he himself could not tell its full meaning.”<sup>430</sup> Although this is typical of Buber’s Rabbi-like Jewish style, it does not contribute to a western theological clarity. Buber talks in his own unique way about personhood in the first two parts of the book and turns to the subject of God in the third section. Here he says things like, “Men have addressed their eternal You by many names.”<sup>431</sup> “Man receives, and what he receives is not a ‘content’ but a presence, a presence as strength.”<sup>432</sup> “The word of revelation is: I am there as whoever I am there.”<sup>433</sup> In an afterward nearly 40 years later Buber does admit “the designation of God as a person is indispensable for all who, like myself, do not mean a principle when they say ‘God.’”<sup>434</sup> This was as close to western thought as he would admit.

#### e. The Trinitarian Model / Attribute or Predicate Pattern

The Trinitarian Attribute or Predicate pattern sees the persons of the Trinity as mere attributes of God.<sup>435</sup> If the persons of the Godhead are seen only as attributes

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Schuster, 1970, 24.  
<sup>430</sup> Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, 25.  
<sup>431</sup> Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, 123.  
<sup>432</sup> Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, 158.  
<sup>433</sup> Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, 160.  
<sup>434</sup> Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, 180.  
<sup>435</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 27.

of the one God, then the personhood of the members of the Godhead is at least partially denied.

### 3. Comments Regarding Erskine And Trinitarian Patterns

Erskine does not develop any pneumatology along traditional Trinitarian lines which would fit naturally into any of these categories. It is the lack of any expression of a Trinitarian Pneumatology in Erskine's writings that establishes this. Since, however, Erskine refers to the actions of the Holy Spirit quite often, it is far more likely that Erskine does have some form of what McIntyre calls a Dynamic Pneumatology. Additionally, since Erskine does refer to the Holy Spirit, and more specifically to the things that the Spirit does with numerous scriptural references, there is little doubt that Erskine does have a form of Biblical pneumatology. However, as McIntyre points out, this is usually open to many interpretations and only provides us with a range in which to consider pneumatological doctrine.

### 4. The Emperichoretic Pattern : A Bridge

The Emperichoretic pattern is a form of the Trinitarian Model which examines how the persons of the Trinity interpenetrate each other. This pattern is a more recent development and is developed by such theologians as John V. Taylor in his book *The Go-Between God*. This pneumatology forms in a sense a bridge between any traditional Trinitarian pneumatology and the dynamic relational pneumatology and the dynamic ecclesial pneumatology of Thomas Erskine. The emphasis in

Emperichoretic pneumatology on the inter-penetration of the persons of the Godhead by the other members of the Godhead tends to obscure the distinction of the individual persons which the church fathers took such pains to distinguish. This necessarily brings about a more dynamic understanding of the Godhead. The writings of Bishop Taylor were not known to Thomas Erskine, but in a critical consideration of Erskine's pneumatology the theology of Taylor may help in understanding the distinctives of Erskine's thought.

McIntyre says that although Taylor's Emperichoretic pneumatology in *The Go-Between God* is properly considered under the "taxonomic scheme" in *The Shape Of Pneumatology* as a Trinitarian pneumatology, it can also be considered as a Dynamic pneumatology because it is "unique and original" and actually combines some of the traits of the various Dynamic models discussed by McIntyre. McIntyre says that Taylor begins his pneumatology "from below" in situations "in which our recognition and perception are heightened, and our minds and lives transformed."<sup>436</sup> The pneumatology represented by Taylor's pattern can be considered to be a bridge between traditional Trinitarian forms such as those developed by Augustine, Calvin and Barth and the dynamic forms of the Relational and Ecclesial nature into which Thomas Erskine's pneumatology fits so well. For this reason Taylor's pneumatology will be examined in this thesis and compared to the characteristics of Erskine's pneumatology.

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<sup>436</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 197.

Taylor says that there is a presence, a force, enabling people to see in a way that they could not see before. This force is not externalized, but within. Taylor begins by describing this force that heightens our recognition and perception and then he asks, “But what is this force that which causes me to see in a way in which I have not seen? . . . I recognize, I respond, I fall in love, I worship—yet it was not I who took the first step.” In this Taylor is speaking of an anonymous force; but he does not leave it that way for long. He continues, “Christians find it quite natural to give a personal name to this current of communication, this invisible go-between. They call him the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.”<sup>437</sup> With this Taylor puts forward the kernel of his pneumatology. The way in which Taylor structures his book allows it to fit into McIntyre’s taxonomic scheme as Trinitarian. Although we place this pattern here because of its tendency to form a bridge between the traditional Trinitarian models and the Dynamic models, McIntyre considers this pattern as the eighth sub-pattern of the Relational Or Operational Pattern of the Dynamic Models.

McIntyre does admit that this pattern is really more representative of a Trinitarian model of the Relational Pattern. However, since it is unique, it is treated as a Dynamic model and sheds light on other dynamic models. This model starts from below. There is a presence, a force enabling people to see in a way that they could not see before. This force is not externalized,

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<sup>437</sup> Taylor, John V., *The Go-Between God; The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*, London: SCM Press, 1972, 17.

but within; it is the Holy Spirit, the “Go-Between.” We are not directly aware of the Holy Spirit himself since it is He who makes us aware of the Father and the Son. There is *emperichoresis* here, an interpenetration of the members of the Godhead by each other. This has cognitive and non-cognitive components. Taylor talks of Jesus’ use of parables and symbols and metaphors some of which, such as ‘this is my body,’ can not be limited to symbols, metaphors, or parables. But then Taylor speaks of these things as becoming ‘commonplace.’ To this McIntyre disagrees, especially in regard to the Lord’s Supper. McIntyre says that Taylor does not develop a natural theology but that the force of his ideas are somewhere in between. McIntyre says that the Holy Spirit is present in natural order but in kenotic form. McIntyre asks about some form of kenoticism for the Holy Spirit. Is it possible for the Holy Spirit to “empty” himself as some believe that Jesus did; to actually divest himself of his powers and to invest these powers directly into creation? Is there any link to Thomas Erskine’s “First Bond” in this? How about Erskine’s references to the “Word” which seem to replace some pneumatology? Questions like this will be answered in Chapter 10 of this thesis.

## 5. The Dynamic Model

According to McIntyre, Dynamic Models of pneumatology refer to

what the Holy Spirit *does* while they do not claim to provide a definition of the Holy Spirit.<sup>438</sup> Therefore, traditionalists would not be likely to consider any of these to be a proper pneumatology. The Dynamic model's patterns are: Relational or Operational, Ecclesial Polarities, Liberation, and Secular.

#### a. The Relational Or Operational Pattern

The Relational or Operational pattern first affirms the existence or divinity of the Holy Spirit and then describes his various operations particularly in regard to person-to-person or person-to-nature contact. There are eight sub-patterns to this overall pattern.

(1) In the first sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God himself relating himself to the specific details of human existence within the natural process and world history. Even though this is a form of a Dynamic Pneumatology, it is also connected to some traditional thinking about the Holy Spirit as a member of the Immanent Trinity. However, it focuses on his actions as a member of the Economic Trinity in his dealings with creation. In this pattern of the model God can not be separated from his relating, however, the Holy Spirit must remain divine.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 25.

<sup>439</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 173.

(2) In the second sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God involving himself in human volition and action, thought and feeling, as they occur in the natural and historical process. This pattern is most concerned with how God relates. According to McIntyre, “It is this dynamic implicating by God of himself in ordinary human existence, in the various details of thinking, feeling, and willing, in situations which we would be tempted to dismiss at a first regard as beyond the interest of almighty God, that is intended as the Holy Spirit.”<sup>440</sup> This pattern of this model is more vulnerable because of the naturalistic interpretations of things often held by most people and especially by scientists.

(3) In the third sub-pattern McIntyre says that the Holy Spirit is God identifying himself with human thoughts, feelings, and actions, or the natural occasions referred to in the second pattern. He adds that this could merely be a stronger form of the previous pattern. In this form of the model McIntyre stresses identification and refers to the writings of John McLeod Campbell in this regard. The primal use of identification is in relation to the incarnation. This highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit as he is the one who makes the identification possible on an ongoing basis. The whole of God is involved and there is no impoverishment to God. As the

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<sup>440</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 177.

agent God feels the situation more deeply although probably differently. He understands more clearly and is even moved to act more effectively.<sup>441</sup>

(4) In the fourth sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God relating his people to one another in fellowship and communion. This is a more complex notion of the Holy Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit as the place of God's uniting his people and it may be taken three ways: either as communion with the Holy Spirit, communion of the Holy Spirit in community, or that the communion is the Holy Spirit. This unites and maintains both the horizontal and the vertical aspects of our communion.<sup>442</sup>

(5) In the fifth sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God himself preparing us beforehand for the creative, redemptive and sanctifying relationship with himself which is his purpose for us in Jesus Christ.<sup>443</sup> This pattern picks up some elements of other patterns but specializes in spiritual preparation, the prevenient presence of the Holy Spirit in us enabling us. In this theology the Holy Spirit goes ahead to prepare for salvation and is not following behind.

(6) In the sixth sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God the Creator himself setting us in a right and responsible relation to the animal and natural order. This is largely an

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<sup>441</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 181-82.

<sup>442</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 183-84.

<sup>443</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 185.

environmental Pneumatology. The motive here is God's relation to his creation and not the ability of creation to arouse a sense of the presence of God.<sup>444</sup> It is not, however, pantheism. It is the actual presence of the Creator Spirit in his own creation in which the Spirit guides his people in the proper relationship to all of creation.

(7) In the seventh sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is also the means by which the categories of personality and spirit are made applicable to God.<sup>445</sup>

(8) The eighth sub-pattern is the Emperichoretic pattern. This pattern is placed in two positions by McIntyre and has already been referred to as a bridge between Traditional Trinitarian Models and Dynamic models. McIntyre considers it under dynamic patterns because it is "unique" and "original."<sup>446</sup> This pattern is found in the writings of John V. Taylor in his book *The Go-between God*.<sup>447</sup>

(9) McIntyre also hints at the existence of the Definitional substantive Model which can be evolved from the study of these sub-patterns in which the Holy spirit is seen as acting in the world as an autonomous substance.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 190-191.

<sup>445</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 193-194.

<sup>446</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 197.

<sup>447</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 25.

<sup>448</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 203.

### b. The Ecclesial Polarities Pattern

The Ecclesial Polarities Pattern goes into the relationships between the Holy Spirit and the Church and is very close to a Biblical model except that it goes beyond the Biblical model by citing the experiences and history of the Church and developing some sort of understanding of how the Spirit operates in certain periods or movements.<sup>449</sup> McIntyre cites the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in this regard. In an interview with John McIntyre he indicated that he distinguishes “Ecclesial” from “Ecclesiastical” in that the word “Ecclesiastical” is customarily used to refer to the organizational structure of the church whereas “Ecclesial” can be used to refer to the church from the point of view of the universal “body of Christ” which is an informal organism rather than a structure which spans many denominations and cultures.<sup>450</sup> If Thomas Erskine has a developed pneumatology, it is almost certain to be of the Relational and Ecclesial types as he examined the manifestations of the Holy Spirit which followed in the wake of the ministries of both John McLeod Campbell and Edward Irving. There are several good examples of Thomas Erskine’s comments on these movements in his writings plus

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<sup>449</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 26.

<sup>450</sup> Interview with John McIntyre on 9 October 2000, Edinburgh, Scotland.

many references to the activities of the Holy Spirit as Erskine understood them in the Bible.

#### c. The Liberation Pattern

The Liberation Pattern of a Dynamic pneumatology concerns itself with the emerging nations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>451</sup> It is unlikely to be found in the writings of Thomas Erskine.

#### d. The Secular Pattern

McIntyre defines the Secular Pattern as one that is “outside the four walls of the Church and freed from the apron-string of the Church’s sacred theology. . . wherever truth, beauty, goodness, justice, mercy and love are to be found.” He says that he wants to add this pattern since it is most often overlooked by an “exclusivist Christian approach.”<sup>452</sup> As sovereign God no Christian theologian would deny the ability or the right of the Spirit of God to operate in the realms of truth, beauty, goodness, justice, mercy and love although these actions may not bring a salvific effect in the human beings involved. There may be a hint of some sort of a Dynamic

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<sup>451</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 26.

<sup>452</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 27-28.

Secular pattern of Pneumatology in Erskine as he was well read and a man of his time and often noticed evidences of truth, beauty, goodness, justice, mercy and love in various places with which this pattern is concerned.

### C. The Holy Spirit And The Trinity

In conclusion in his section entitled, "The Spirit In The Trinity," McIntyre says,

In the past, the very designation of the Spirit as the third member of the Godhead has had several consequences. For example, the presentation of his nature and works has all too often followed the analogy of christology, so that the Spirit comes to be regarded as an *alter Christum*. Or, again, the work of the Spirit appears to be prescribed by the person and work of Christ, or even by the work of creation. Now, there is no denying that these accounts of the Spirit are faithful to Scripture and tradition - the Spirit fulfils each of these roles. My quarrel with them is that by themselves they misrepresent the full measure of both the nature and the work or works of the Spirit and the high degree of penetration which the Spirit has achieved into the work of the other two persons. So it is not simply that we cannot state the doctrines of creation or of the person and work of Christ without a reference to the Spirit, but, more importantly, that creation, incarnation and redemption would not have been finally effected without the presence of the Spirit throughout. In short, the doctrine of the *emperichoresis* the interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity among themselves, describes the relations which obtain *intra Trinitatem*, but also *ad extra*, in their interrelations in their activities in the created world. When, therefore, we are considering how God works in the world, in the lives of men and women and in the life of the Church, and how these considerations throw light upon the nature of God himself, we have to be sure to take full account of the place of the Spirit in all these situations.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 239.

McIntyre will not allow the Spirit to be represented merely as an *alter Christum* or as any kind of an extension of the other Divine Persons in creation. He must have a position that is uniquely His own. Even in *emperichoresis* “the interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity among themselves” – a concept that McIntyre enthusiastically supports - the Spirit can not be relegated to an inferior position. The Spirit should not be subjugated; He is a Person in His own right. This, therefore, effects both our Christology and our soteriology. McIntyre says that the association of the Spirit with Christology is mostly a scriptural one and the association of the Spirit with soteriology is mostly a traditional one.

Christologically the Spirit can become lost in the historical person of Jesus.

But McIntyre insists,

Yet the Scripture itself will not allow us to mutilate the story in that way, showing us that the Spirit is essential to the biblical account of the 'historical Jesus', the Jesus that we know from the historical records. The Spirit was involved with his birth, centrally, as we argued; at his baptism with its public acknowledgement of his divine role and relationship; at his conscious and explicit acceptance of his messianic role; and in his resurrection in which the Spirit vindicated his status as the Son of God with power, after the humiliation and rejection of Calvary. There is, I find, a considerable sensitivity within Scripture in its account of the presence of the Spirit with Jesus. Two consequences follow. The first is that there would seem to be a clear appreciation of the difference between Jesus, Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, which was part of the incipient Trinitarianism evident in Scripture and the ultimate Justification for the doctrine. The second is that we have here a genuine ground for the rejection of the theory that what we have in Jesus is the incarnation of the Spirit.<sup>454</sup>

#### D. The Holy Spirit In Soteriology

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<sup>454</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 241-242.

When we consider the role of the Holy Spirit in Soteriology, McIntyre says, “two contrary circumstances appear.” In one circumstance no clear place is found for the Spirit. “In the case of such models as ransom, redemption, salvation, reconciliation, atonement, propitiation, expiation and so on, or satisfaction, example or liberation, the theories all seem to be capable of full exposition without reference to the Holy Spirit.” McIntyre believes that this is due to the objective character of soteriological statements found in the theologies that express this doctrine. These theologies are more objective than subjective in character. McIntyre continues, “So, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is intimately and inseparably involved at the point where what has been achieved ‘out there’ by Jesus Christ on Calvary, described as it has been in the immense range of possible models, is brought home to believers, and salvation is theirs.”<sup>455</sup> On these two points, two comments are made by McIntyre, the first comment is that “no account of the doctrine of the atonement is complete unless it lays a proper emphasis upon the part which the Holy Spirit plays in the effective completion of the salvation process in the terms we have indicated above; and it is an error of omission which much too many accounts of the atonement commit.” The second comment is that “this role which the Spirit plays in the fulfillment of the work of Christ is in no sense an afterthought requiring to be implemented after the event of the death of Christ, to obviate God's purpose being nullified through the sinfulness of humankind. On the contrary, it was an integral part

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<sup>455</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 242 – 243.

of that divine design which centred around 'the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world'." <sup>456</sup>

#### E. The Holy Spirit And Sanctification

Regarding sanctification and the Spirit McIntyre says that "sanctification" has not been as popular a word in protestant theology as "justification" has been. This is due in part to the fact that so much has been invested in justification in protestant theology that there has been little room left for sanctification and in part to the fact that protestants have long feared a works theology to which the doctrine of sanctification can often add strength or credence. "Yet," McIntyre says, "it would be inaccurate to suggest that any neglect or minimalising of the part of sanctification in the spiritual life of the Christian was endemic to Reformed theology."<sup>457</sup> Nevertheless, if the sanctification process is neglected in Christian teaching, the place of the Holy Spirit who is vital to the process may be overlooked.

#### F. Summary

A traditional Trinitarian pneumatology is constructed around a discussion of the three Persons of the Godhead. It is founded in the writings of the scriptures, the church fathers, the creeds and the Reformers. A dynamic pneumatology has not so much to do with an understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit but rather with the

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<sup>456</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 243.

<sup>457</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 243.

actions of the Holy Spirit. The personality of the Spirit is implied by what he is attributed as doing. The writings of Thomas Erskine show no developed traditional Trinitarian pneumatology. They do display a powerful dynamic pneumatology. This is our thesis and the contents of this paper is intended to establish and to prove this thesis while showing reasons why it is so.

We shall see in chapter 10 of this thesis that Erskine's pneumatology qualifies as a dynamic relational and ecclesial pneumatology. Erskine shows intense interest in his writings in soteriology and sanctification and he shows the Holy Spirit as the great actor in the human arena who brings about the profound changes in human beings that constitute redemption.

## Chapter VI:

### Statistical Results Regarding The Verbs Associated With The Holy Spirit In Erskine's Writings

Proceeding under the assumption that Thomas Erskine's pneumatology is a dynamic one and not a traditional Trinitarian one, it then becomes necessary to examine his writings in detail to see precisely how he refers to the Holy Spirit and the actions of the Holy Spirit. In order to provide as full an account as possible, we have accounted for every reference to the Holy Spirit and the actions of the Holy Spirit in Erskine's writings.

Among Erskine's six major published works the following three were published before Erskine observed and became involved in the Scottish West Country revival which began in late 1829 and flourished in 1830: *Essay On Faith, The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel (Unconditional Freeness,)* and *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion (Internal Evidence.)* The following major works of Erskine were published after the revival: *The Gifts Of The Spirit, The Brazen Serpent,* and *The Doctrine Of Election.* The terms "Spirit of God" and "Holy Spirit" are presumed in all cases to refer to the same entity, the third Person of the Godhead.

Some explanation of the statistical material that follows and why it is presented as it is would be appropriate at this point. These findings are found in the Appendix of this thesis.

#### A. Explanations Of Statistical Findings In This Thesis

##### 1. Special Summary Table

The Summary Table entitled "A Special Summary Table Of The Overall Usage Of Verbs In All The Works Of Thomas Erskine Associated With The Spirit Of God" shows in numerical form the usage of verbs applied to the Holy Spirit in Erskine's writings. It is arranged in five columns. The first column gives the name of each of Erskine's works. The second column shows the number of times the word "spirit" is mentioned in each work. The third column shows the number of times the word "Spirit" refers to the Spirit of God and is associated with a verb in that work.

This is called “Spirit of God acting.” The fourth column shows the number of times the word “Spirit” refers to the Spirit of God and is not associated with a verb in that work. This is called “Spirit of God not acting.” In other words, the Spirit of God is mentioned but no action is assigned to him. The fifth column is a total of occurrences of other references to “spirit” in each work. This “spirit” could be a number of things: the “spirit” of the world or of the devil, the word “spirit” as meaning an attitude, or other references. The numbers in columns 3 through 5 add up to the figure in column 2. There are pre-revival totals and post-revival totals for the six major published works and the *Letters*. The minor works are listed separately. No specific verbs are listed. Primarily this table shows us the pure dynamism of Erskine’s pneumatology.

## 2. Lists Of Verbs

A. The first list of verbs associated with the Holy Spirit in Erskine’s writings is entitled, “Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God In Erskine's 6 Major Published Works And His Letters.” This is an “at a glance” list which incorporates the verbs associated with the Spirit of God from the six published works in black print with the pre-revival verbs in lower case and the post-revival verbs in upper case and the *Letters* in red print with the pre-revival verbs in lower case and the post-revival verbs in upper case. In this list the verbs are all *intermixed*. The number of occurrences is noted prior to each verb. At a glance one can find, for example, all the verbs used by Erskine associated with the Spirit of God in his *Letters* after the revival simply by

looking for upper case red words. These verbs can be found even faster in the next list but the comparison to the other three categories is not as obvious as it is in this list.

B. The next presentation is also entitled “Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God In Erskine's 6 Major Published Works And His Letters.” This list is a variant form of the previous list and provides a listing of all the verbs associated with the Spirit of God in Erskine’s six major published works and his *Letters* in an “at a glance” one page format. The six published works are listed separately. The verbs are not intermixed. At the top of the page we find in black print the pre-revival verbs in lower case and the post-revival verbs in upper case. The *Letters* are listed separately at the bottom of the page in red print with the pre-revival verbs in lower case and the post-revival verbs in upper case. The number of occurrences is noted prior to each verb.

C. The next list entitled “Summary List Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Erskine’s Six Major Published Works And His Letters” is a consolidated list of the verbs associated with the Spirit of God in Erskine’s six major published works and his *Letters*. Each work and the *Letters* are color coded along with the associated verbs to indicate if the occurrences are pre-revival or post-revival. The number of occurrences is noted in each case. This provides a grand overview with each specific usage of verbs associated with the Spirit of God in Erskine’s six major published works and his *Letters*. The list runs for six pages and reflects the specific verbs

associated with the Holy Spirit on a work-by-work basis which is useful to see how Erskine understands the actions of the Holy Spirit in each work.

D. The list entitled, “The Use Of The Word ‘Spirit’ In The Works Of Thomas Erskine” is a consolidated list of nineteen pages showing all of the occurrences of the word “spirit” by Thomas Erskine in all of his works including his six major published works, his letters and his minor published works. This list shows the verbs that are used in connection with the Spirit of God. In this list not only the work but the page number of the work is noted for each occurrence of the verbs. This list is presented in this manner in order to give a comprehensive overview of Erskine’s use of the word “spirit” and especially of the verbs associated with the Spirit of God with the actual page number of each occurrence.

E. The list entitled “The Use Of The Word ‘Spirit’ In The 3 Major Pre-Revival Published Works Of Thomas Erskine” is a consolidated list of references by Erskine to “spirit” in his three major published works before he observed and became involved in the Scottish West Country revival. The first part of this list shows the verb that is used in connection with the Spirit of God. The latter part shows other occurrences of the word “spirit” which either refer to the Spirit of God with no associated verb or references to other uses of the word “spirit” which do not refer to the Spirit of God. The work and page number of each occurrence are noted. This list is useful to see Erskine’s references to the Spirit of God prior to the revival and to see

the particular verbs used in connection with the Spirit of God. It is also particularly useful when compared to Erskine's references to the Spirit of God and the verbs associated with the Spirit after the revival.

F. The list entitled "The Use Of The Word 'Spirit' In The 3 Major Post-Revival Published Works Of Thomas Erskine" is a consolidated list of references by Erskine to "spirit" in his three major published works after he observed and became involved in the Scottish West Country revival. The first part of this list shows the verb that is used in connection with the Spirit of God. The latter part shows other occurrences of the word "spirit" which either refer to the Spirit of God with no associated verb or references to other uses of the word "spirit" which do not refer to the Spirit of God. The work and page number of each occurrence are noted. This list is useful to see the number of references to the Spirit of God and the nature and power of the verbs that are associated with the Spirit of God in Erskine's three major published writings after the revival.

G. The list entitled "Summary List Of Verbs Use By Erskine In The 6 Major Published Works Before And After He Observed The Revival" is a consolidated list of all references to "spirit" in the six major published works of Thomas Erskine. The six major works are color coded with the pre-revival works in black and the post-revival works in green. The page numbers are not noted but the number of occurrences of each verb associated with the Spirit of God are noted. References to

“spirit” which are not references to the Spirit of God with associated verbs are not included. This list is useful to see a comparison of the verbs used in connection with the Spirit of God in the six major publications of Thomas Erskine before and after the revival.

H. The list entitled “The Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God After And Before The Revival In The Six Major Published Works Of Thomas Erskine (2 occurrences and above)” is a summary list of all the verbs associated with the Spirit of God used by Erskine in his six primary published works before and after the revival arranged in the order of their use both before and after the revival. This list includes references of two or more times. The names of the works and the page numbers are not included. The usefulness of this list is that it is a one page “at a glance” summary of these references which reflects the dynamic nature of Erskine’s pneumatology.

I through N. These lists follow a pattern with each stressing only one particular published work. In these lists each of the six major works of Erskine are represented. In each list the verbs associated with the Spirit of God for one of the works is highlighted in red print and the remaining works in either black print for pre-revival works or green print for post-revival works. This is done in turn for each of the works. The name of each work and the number of occurrences of the verb associated with the Spirit of God are noted. This list enables us to compare the verbs

used in any particular work with the universe of verbs used in association with the Spirit of God in Erskine's six major published works. The lists for the six major works are arranged in the following order:

I. *An Essay On Faith*

J. *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel*

K. *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion*

L. *On The Gifts Of The Spirit*

M. *The Brazen Serpent; Or, Life Coming Through Death*

N. *The Doctrine Of Election And Its Connection With The General Tenor Of Christianity Illustrated Especially From The Epistle To The Romans*

O. The list entitled "Erskine's Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Doctrine Of Election 1837 (in red) As Compared To Doctrine Of Election 1878 (in green)" represents the difference in the use of verbs referring to the Spirit of God in the two editions of this work. The later edition was edited by Erskine himself 41 years after the publication of the first edition. This list shows that there is not a significant difference in his use of verbs referring to the Spirit of God in the two editions.

P. The list entitled "Summary List Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Erskine's Letters (Pre-Revival In Black, Post-Revival In Green)" is a summary list of verbs associated with the Spirit of God used by Erskine in his *Letters*. Pre-revival verbs are printed in black and post-revival verbs are printed in green. The number of occurrences are noted. This list provides a comparison of pre-revival verbs associated

with the Spirit of God with post-revival verbs associated with the Spirit of God in Erskine's *Letters*. Since the first volume of his *Letters* (1800-1840) contains both pre and post-revival letters both black and green color coded verbs are found in this volume. The second volume (1840-1870) contains only post-revival references. This list is useful to see a comparison of the verbs used before and after the revival in connection with the Spirit of God in the *Letters* of Thomas Erskine.

Q. The list entitled "The Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God After And Before The Revival In The Letters Of Thomas Erskine (2 occurrences and above)" does for the *Letters* of Erskine what list H does for the six major published works. This list records the verbs used by Erskine in association with the Spirit of God in his *Letters* before and after the revival in the order of their use. All instances of two or more are recorded. The usefulness of this list is that it is a one page "at a glance" summary of these references which reflects the dynamic nature of Erskine's pneumatology in his *Letters*.

R. The list entitled "List Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Erskine's Minor Published Works (Pre-Revival Works In Black, Post-Revival Works In Green)" is concerned only with the minor published works of Thomas Erskine. This list shows all the verbs associated with the Spirit of God in Erskine's minor works along with the number of occurrences. Pre-revival works appear in black print and post-revival works appear in green print. Compared to the six major published

works and Erskine's *Letters* there are comparatively few references. The five verbs (controls, pours, roots out, shines, supplies - each with only one occurrence each) that appear in the minor works that do not appear in the major works or the *Letters* are underlined.

S. The list entitled "References To 'Spirit' In Erskine's Writings Where The Holy Spirit Is Not The Actor" contains all the other references to spirit such as an attitude, an evil spirit, the human spirit, a spirit of life, the spirit of prayer, the spirit of the world and references to the Holy Spirit where the Holy Spirit is not the actor.

#### B. Methodology

After scanning the published works of Thomas Erskine into a computer database, the following statistics emerged. The word "spirit" or "ghost" was located in all six of the major works covering 1,231 pages. There were a total of 994 references to "spirit" or "ghost." Of the 994 references 728 were to the Holy Spirit with 399 of them being attached to verbs. Of the remaining 273 references 126 references were to the human spirit and 147 references were to other things in a total of 11 categories which are references to a "spirit" of atheism, an attitude, bondage, the devil, idolatry, legalism, power, prayer, religion, reprobation and the world.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> The statistics discussed in this chapter are based on the statistical table and lists found in the appendix.

In his six primary published works, according to Erskine, the Holy Spirit accesses, acts, animates, apprehends, assists, baptizes, bears, births, blesses, breaks, breathes, brings, bruises, calls, comes, causes, cleanses, comforts, communicates, compels, conceives, conforms, confronts, connects, constrains, consumes, contends, contests, counsels, declares, defends, delivers, desires, detects, directs, disposes, does, draws, dwells, empowers, enables, enforces, enlightens, enters, exercises, exhorts, explains, expresses, falls, fits, flows, foretells, frees, gives, grieves, guides, helps, hopes, imbues, impregnates, impresses, indwells, influences, inhabits, inspires, instructs, intercedes, interprets, intimates, introduces, joins, judges, knows, leads, liberates, lifts, lights, longs, looks, loves, makes, manifests, mortifies, moulds, moves, narrates, opens, operates, opposes, performs, possesses, prays, presents, produces, promises, prophecies, prostrates, quickens, raises, recognizes, regenerates, reigns, renews, rescues, resurrects, reveals, sanctifies, saves, seals, searches, sheds, shows, sows, speaks, stands, strives, struggles, suffers, sustains, swells, teaches, testifies, transforms, unites, upholds, visits, wars, waters, witnesses, and works.

In Erskine's *letters* there were a total of 377 references to "spirit" or "ghost." Of the 377 references 197 were to the Holy Spirit with 120 of them being attached to verbs. The remaining 180 references were to "spirit" as an attitude or other meaning.

In the letters the Holy Spirit, in addition to his actions in Erskine's books, also accompanies, accomplishes, adopts, assures, charges, contains, crucifies, discerns, effects, fills, knocks, meets, orders, overcomes, perseveres, preserves,

presses, proceeds, protests, purifies, refreshes, reproduces, seeks, stirs, strengthens, and sympathizes.

In his minor works Erskine adds that the Holy Spirit controls, pours, roots out, shines, and supplies. A specific analysis of the number of such occurrences in the minor works is not productive since they have been edited along the way and they account for a relatively small portion of his writings.

Some interpretation is necessary in the categorization of these references. Interpretation is based on an overall understanding of Erskine's works and an examination of the immediate context of each occurrence. The most difficult part of this interpretation is Erskine's habit, by his own admission, of blurring the boundaries between the human conscience and the human spirit or personality and the Spirit of God. Erskine says,

In looking over the book since it has been finished, I see that I have not always kept to the same meaning of the word conscience, that I have used it sometimes to signify the Spirit of God in man, and sometimes to signify the man's own apprehension of the mind of the Spirit in him, which is often a very different thing. But though this is a fault in point of accuracy, I do not think that it produces any confusion in the meaning, as the context always shows which of these senses is intended.<sup>459</sup>

However, in disagreement with Erskine it must be said that this does cause considerable confusion and necessitates a careful study of each instance which was followed in the preparation of this research.

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<sup>459</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, xxiii.

Occasionally there is possible confusion in Erskine's references to the spirit of Jesus Christ as a man as opposed to the presence of the Holy Spirit himself. I decided on these instances using the context and my best overall judgement. Sometimes multiple verbs were attached to one reference to the Holy Spirit. In these cases I have made multiple entries on the applicable lists or tables. In two notable categories, which I have marked in the table with an asterisk, I have construed the verb "speaks" for the "voice" of the Holy Spirit and the verb "births" for the statement "born of the Spirit." Some noted references are to direct scripture quotations which Erskine used intentionally to support a point which clearly indicate an action of the Holy Spirit. For the purposes of simplicity and clarity in my reporting of this research I use only the present tense of verbs although other tenses and forms are used by Erskine in his writing. However, I am confident that all instances have been accounted for. I did not search for the plural forms of the word "spirit," therefore, a few further references to a spirit other than the Holy Spirit may exist. The decision to exclude this category was made on the basis that the plural form would not have been used to refer to the Holy Spirit.

### C. The Difference In Emphasis Before And After The West Country Revival

It is important to examine these statistics about the Holy Spirit in Erskine's writings in two primary categories: his writings before the 1830 West Country revival (Pre-Revival Works), and his writings after this revival (Post-Revival Works). We do this to determine if there is a greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Erskine's writings and thinking after this revival which he observed and, in part, experienced for himself.<sup>460</sup>

#### 1. Pre-Revival Works

In his book *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion* (1820) Thomas Erskine lays the foundation for something that he believed and championed all of his life. This is a work of some 210 pages in which he begins to develop his theme that there is something within man that can respond to the drawings and influences of God.

My object is quite different. I mean to show that there is an intelligible and necessary connexion between the doctrinal facts of revelation and the character of God, (as deduced from natural religion,) in the same way as there is an intelligible and necessary connexion between the

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<sup>460</sup> An analysis of this is the subject of chapter 3 of this thesis.

character of a man and his most characteristic actions; and farther, that the belief of these doctrinal facts has an intelligible and necessary tendency to produce the Christian character, in the same way that the belief of danger has an intelligible and necessary tendency to produce fear.<sup>461</sup>

Before considering his stress on the actions of the Holy Spirit in this work it is important to note that in this work Erskine begins to stress the place of conscience in man and in his relationship with God. Erskine refers to “conscience” no less than 31 times in this work compared to the emphasis which he gives to the word “spirit”, 33 times in all of its uses.<sup>462</sup> Further investigation shows that among these references to “spirit” only 19 refer to the Holy Spirit as an active entity. Sometimes Erskine attributes the activity of God in human life to the “living Word,” the “Eternal Word,” or the “revealed Word” or similar references. This is done 8 times in this work. Overall they can be seen as synonymous references to the same thing in accordance with Erskine’s tendency to use these terms interchangeably as mentioned above. However, in this work of 210 pages the total number of references to any of these forces, conscience, word or spirit, is slight.

In this work we see only slight emphasis on the actions of the Holy Spirit as might be expected of a work written before Erskine’s visit to the West Country. He ascribes three references to the fact that the Holy Spirit “operates.” After this there

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<sup>461</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 20-21.

<sup>462</sup> There is more on Erskine’s use of the term “conscience” in chapter 8 of this thesis which is dedicated to this subject.

are two for “acts.” In one of these he limits the actions of the Holy Spirit to applying the doctrines of the Bible. “We may gather from this, that the Spirit never acts, except through the medium of the doctrines of the Bible. He uses them as instruments naturally fitted for the Work.”<sup>463</sup> There are also two for “influences”. Then there is one reference each for “animates, confronts, empowers, enforces, enlightens, grieves, impresses, presents, prophesies, teaches, transforms” and “works.”<sup>464</sup>

The shortest published work of Erskine prior to the West Country revival is his *Essay on Faith*. (1822) In this work he allows that the Holy Spirit “influences” three times, as well as “teaches” three times. He says that the Spirit “shows” twice. For example, “even the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them unto the souls of men.”<sup>465</sup> Then there is one reference each for “accesses, blesses, introduces, leads, presents, quickens, strives and works.”

The verb “influences” is an inexact one. It could represent anything from a strong impression to a coincidental happening that is open to various interpretations. It is, therefore, not a strong verb; it does not affirm the precise will or direction of any entity which could be considered a person much less that of the Spirit of God himself. However, at one point Erskine combines the “unfelt influence” of the Spirit with his eye opening ability.

The joy of the Gospel, though it may be at first sought and embraced in gratification of natural instinct, contains in it the principles of the

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<sup>463</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 152.

<sup>464</sup> See Appendix section K.

<sup>465</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *An Essay on Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, London: Ogle, Duncan & Co., 1822, 50-51.

Christian character. At first it may appear mere deliverance from misery, and in this view it attracts the miserable; but as the means by which this deliverance was effected are seen; its moral power develops itself, and that Spirit whose unfelt influence led them here for comfort, opens the eyes of their understandings to discern the truth, and prepares their affections to receive it in the love of it.<sup>466</sup>

The verb “teaches” is somewhat stronger, but three references do not indicate a strong preference for the word especially within the context of the theme of the work which is faith. In this work Erskine is stressing the importance of faith in the life of the believer. He begins to develop one of his favorite themes, that of defining and developing what he calls “natural religion.”<sup>467</sup> By natural religion Erskine means a religion that can be recognized and affirmed by what is naturally within a human being, namely conscience. He is not opposed to natural religion. Erskine is opposed to “conventional” religion which requires adherence to man-made doctrines on the part of its members.<sup>468</sup>

*In his work The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel (1828) Erskine employs only 31 dynamic references to the Holy Spirit. There are 44 references to*

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<sup>466</sup> Erskine, *Essay on Faith*, 55.

<sup>467</sup> Erskine, *Essay on Faith*, 110.

<sup>468</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 1837, 492-496.

*conscience in this work, 23 references to the Word of God.*

Erskine refers to the action of the Holy Spirit to “quicken” or give life four times in this work. He says that God is “introducing them into that manifestation of the divine character . . . in which God reveals himself as the restorer of fallen man, through the atonement of the Son, and the quickening of the Spirit.”<sup>469</sup> This is the most often used verb in this work in reference to the Holy Spirit. After that he says that the Holy Spirit “gives” three times. There are two references each to “animates, opens, reveals” and “sanctifies.” Then there is one reference each for “breaks, breathes, flows, indwells, influences, instructs, judges, operates, promises, renews, saves, seals, sows, speaks, transforms” and “waters.”<sup>470</sup>

The theme of this work is to argue that the gospel offer is open to all in contradiction to the hyper-Calvinistic approach which only allows that the offer is for the elect. There is much arguing and pleading in this work for the reader to accept the provision that God has made for him in Christ. Obviously there is considerable overlap in Erskine’s thinking regarding the convincing power of the Word of God in the lives of men as well as the function of conscience to bring men to Christ.

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<sup>469</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1870, 179.

<sup>470</sup> See Appendix section J.

## 2. Post-Revival Works

Now let us examine the three works written after the revival. *The Spiritual Gifts* (1830) is the shortest of Erskine's early published works and was written just after he observed the West Country revival. Therefore, there was little else on his mind except what he had seen and experienced there. Virtually all of the verbs connected to the Holy Spirit in this short work are direct quotes from scripture. Erskine was letting scripture speak for him in the face of what he had observed.

In this short work the Holy Spirit "speaks" eight times, "gives" four times, and there is one mention each for "baptizes, calls, falls, manifests" and "teaches."<sup>471</sup> These references to "teaches" are entirely included within scriptural references about the gifts of the Spirit.

Since the manifestations of this revival were speaking in tongues, prophesying and healing it is logical that speaking is a predominant theme. Since the gifts of the Spirit are the topic of the work, "gives" is also unsurprising. The other five words, "baptizes, calls, falls, manifests" and "teaches" follow the activities of the revival event itself. These are not many references to the actions of the Holy Spirit, but they are ample for a work of only 24 pages.

In *The Brazen Serpent* (1831) Thomas Erskine's first major publication after he observed the West Country revival, there is an abundance of references to the

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<sup>471</sup> See Appendix section L.

actions of the Holy Spirit. Although *The Spiritual Gifts* immediately preceded this work, it was a very short work on a specific subject. In *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine is developing a typological reading of the Old Testament account of a brass serpent that was put on a pole so that the Israelites could look up to it after so many of them had been bitten by snakes and be healed and live. In this work, as in *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel*, Erskine is imploring his readers to accept the provisions made for them in the Gospel. There is an emphasis on human choice. It could be said that *The Brazen Serpent* is an after-the-revival version of *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel* which is seeking the same response and countering hyper-calvinism but with a new emphasis on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

There are 360 references to the Holy Spirit in *Serpent* with 153 of these attached to verbs. There are just 33 references to “conscience.” There are 99 references to “word” which can be understood as referring to the “Word of God, the eternal Word,” or “the Word made flesh.” As usual in Erskine it should be understood that he attributes changing power to the conscience and to the Word as well as to the Holy Spirit and uses the terms interchangeably in many instances. But here in *Serpent* the specific references to the Holy Spirit as actor are pronounced and we may surmise that this is the result of Erskine’s recent observations of the West Country revival. A brief survey of the verbs used as opposed to those which are not used in this particular work is revealing.

The Holy Spirit as the one who gives spiritual “birth” is predominant with 13 references. “Love is the birth from above, the everlasting life, and enmity is the

natural and universal condition of fallen man, until born of the Spirit. Love is the Spirit. ‘God so *loved* the world as to give His Son,’ and he that believes this love, receives it into him, he receives the Spirit, he is born of the Spirit, he hath everlasting life.”<sup>472</sup> The Holy Spirit as one who “grieves” or who can be grieved by humans follows with 12 references. For example, “The Spirit of holy love in him grieved over all sin and contended against it; and specially it grieved over and contended against sin in the nature of which he had become the Head; and wherever that Spirit is, there will be the same grieving over sin, and the same contending against it. And so a fellowship in Christ's sufferings is not a grief because Christ suffered, it is not a grieving that Christ grieved so much on our account; no, it is having the *same grief*, and this no man can possibly have until he has in him that very living Spirit which grieved in Jesus.”<sup>473</sup> “Indwells, manifests, breathes,” and “works” follow close behind.<sup>474</sup> These are the words of revival. Verbs like “influences” and “impresses” are not used at all here. Erskine’s mind is shifting from an emphasis on vague or uncertain impersonal influences or impressions to one of actually being indwelt and guided by the person of the Holy Spirit himself.

*The Doctrine Of Election* (1878) is a mixture of Erskine’s own ideas and theology and commentary by him on much of the Epistle to the Romans. The first half of the book is his doctrine; chapters 1-5 and 7 and 13 constitutes his own doctrine

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<sup>472</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; R, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 254.

<sup>473</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 160.

<sup>474</sup> See Appendix section M.

of election. The second half of the book, chapter 6 and chapters 8-12, is his commentary on Romans.

Although written after the revival and still reflecting Erskine's active awareness of the actions of the Holy Spirit, *The Doctrine Of Election* was written some years after *The Brazen Serpent* and Erskine appears to be back into a more doctrinal frame of mind. From a Reformed perspective the book is actually a rebuttal to the concept of election widely held by Calvinists in the Scotland of Erskine's day. Of the total of 424 references to the Holy Spirit 161 of those are "dynamic" in our sense. "Quickens," "speaks," "witnesses," lead the list with 11 references each. "There is no self-quickening power in man, and that there is no good in man but what is of the direct acting of the Spirit of God.<sup>475</sup> . . . He is the quickening Spirit; and it is only in knowing him that we know the mind of God."<sup>476</sup> These are followed by words like "operates, teaches, leads, breathes, lights" with occurrences of 8, 7, 7, 6 and 5.<sup>477</sup> Although the verb "influences" is associated with the Holy Spirit 3 times in *Election*, it does lag far behind "quickens, speaks, and witnesses." The weak verb "impresses" is not used here. The point in these observations is that verbs like "quickens, speaks, and witnesses" are revival words and "influences" and "impresses" are not. "Influences" and "impresses" are more typical of Erskine's writings before the West Country revival. This change in emphasis illustrates

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<sup>475</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 37.

<sup>476</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 45.

<sup>477</sup> See Appendix section N.

Erskine's reorientation towards an understanding of a pro-active Holy Spirit and a more personal account of the Holy Spirit rather than an impersonal force. This could be the result of his observation of and possible participation in the revival.

### 3. Erskine's Letters

In *The Letters of Thomas Erskine* (1877) there are many references to "spirits" of many kinds. As in my analysis of the six primary published works of Erskine I have analyzed the *Letters* in the categories of the actions of the Spirit of God, references to the Spirit of God where the Spirit of God is not the actor, and references to other "spirits" such as the human spirit, Satan or Evil spirits, the spirit of the world, or the word "spirit" being used to express an attitude. The analysis of the use of the word "spirit" in the *Letters* is a separate and parallel analysis to the similar analysis involving Erskine's six published works. We keep these analyses separate in order to determine if Erskine's "private" words about the Spirit show a different attitude or emphasis from his "public" words about the Spirit.

Just as I have considered Erskine's use of "spirit" in the six published works in divisions before and after Erskine was involved in the "West Country" revival, I have also considered the *Letters* in the same manner. Volume One of the *Letters*, 1800-1840, contains letters written by Erskine before and after the revival and these are not printed in sequential order, therefore, I had to first separate these letters into the two pre and post-revival categories. Volume Two of *Letters* contains letters

written by Erskine only after the revival and are all considered to be post-revival letters. Letters written to Erskine in these volumes are not considered in the analysis. The statistics regarding the use of the word “spirit” from *Letters* are not intermixed with the statistics for the complete major published works since the editor of the *Letters* admits to omitting letters and parts of letters for various reasons. Therefore, we do not have a complete corpus of the letters as we have for the primary published works.

There are 120 references to the Spirit of God as the actor in all of the published letters of Erskine. There are an additional 77 references to the Spirit of God in the letters in which the Spirit is not the actor. Of the 120 references to the Spirit of God in *Letters* in which the Spirit is the actor, only 13 occur before the revival. 107 instances to the Spirit of God as actor occur after Erskine was involved in the revival. The verbs with the highest instance of use are “speaks” at 8 times. This varies from a reference to a voice in the conscience, “we need to know that the voice which in conscience speaks to us of right and wrong is the voice of a love which suffers when we do wrong, and must continue to suffer until we return from self to God,”<sup>478</sup> to a direct reference to the Spirit of God as the speaker, “our business is to give utterance to that voice which the Spirit of God speaks in our consciences, and this utterance is to come not out of our mouths only but out of our lives.”<sup>479</sup> The verbs “teaches” and

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<sup>478</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen From 1840 Till 1870*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 85.

<sup>479</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen From 1800 Till 1840*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 347.

“strives” occur at 5 times each, “strengthens” and “manifests” at 4 times each, and 3 times each for “breathes”, “indwells”, “quicken”, “witnesses” and “works.” Except for “indwells” these are all verbs that reflect an active and powerful Holy Spirit especially compared to the few words, such as “accompanies” and “promises”, which are used in Erskine’s pre-revival letters.

It should be noted that the overall ratios of use in his *Letters* stresses Erskine’s emerging dynamic pneumatology even more than in the published works. For instance, the most important statistic, that of references to the Spirit of God in action, shows 66 references before the revival and 333 references after the revival in the six published works; whereas the same type of references occur 13 times before the revival and 107 times after the revival in the *Letters*. Seen as a ratio this is 1 to 5 in the published works and 1 to 8 in the *Letters*. Erskine’s private correspondence is thus even more dominated by emergent references to the actions of the Holy Spirit than those major works that were published during his own lifetime.

#### D. Summary Of Findings

In his six primary early works Erskine refers to the Spirit of God under that name or the name of the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Divine Spirit, or merely the Spirit. In a total of 1231 pages he makes 728 such references to the Spirit, 399 occurrences of which are directly associated with one of the 130 verbs named above. In his *Letters* the 26 verbs listed above are added to the original list. In his minor works 5 more verbs are added. This makes a grand total of

161 verbs that are used by Thomas Erskine in all of his works that refer to the actions of the Holy Spirit.

An analysis of the particular verbs used by Erskine in connection with the Spirit of God will be helpful in understanding the dynamics of his pneumatology. Erskine's use of verbs describing the actions of the Holy Spirit before and after he observed the West Country revival reflects a significant difference in his emphasis after this experience.

It seems to be particularly significant that Erskine refers to the voice or the speaking of the Holy Spirit in his post-revival published writings 21 times and only once previously. This indicates an awareness on Erskine's part after the revival of a Holy Spirit who actually communicates with his people.

The definition of "to speak" in Erskine's day would have included such concepts as "to utter articulate sounds, to express thoughts by words, to pronounce, to proclaim, to celebrate, to address, to exhibit."<sup>480</sup> The medium of this speaking for Erskine was either the written word or through the mouths of inspired believers. After the revival it was most often through the mouths of believers that Erskine understood the Spirit to be speaking or uttering articulate sounds. Sometimes such sounds were in unknown tongues, but other times they were in the form of prophetic utterances or the speaking of some word of wisdom or word of knowledge; this was to express

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<sup>480</sup> Walker, John, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, London: Thomas Tegg, 1831. All dictionary references in this chapter are to this work which was published contemporary to Erskine's own time. Some definitions differ from present day usages, but most do not.

thoughts by words. In many of the prophetic utterances there was also the flavor of a pronouncement or a proclamation or a celebration. Such utterances also exhibited the character or will of God.

Erskine says,

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 I am compelled to regard these things as strong confirming signs of a great approaching crisis—which I believe to be no less than the reappearing of the Son of man upon the earth. <sup>481</sup>

Again, Erskine refers to being “born of the Spirit” 15 times after the revival with only a single such reference before the revival. This appears to indicate an awareness on Erskine’s part after the revival of a “born again” experience in which the new believer is internally aware of beginning a new life in Christ. The second most used verb used by Erskine in his major published works after the revival is “births.” This is used 15 times in his major works after the revival compared to none before the revival. “To birth- the act of coming into life, the act of bringing forth.” This verb connotes the very life giving power of God which can be supplied by no other. It is the strongest possible dynamic verb. Erskine says,

How is this new life to be had? “Jesus answered, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and or rather even the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born again; the Spirit breatheth where he will, and thou

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<sup>481</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 203.

hearest his voice, but canst not tell whence he cometh nor whether he goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit.<sup>482</sup>

Along with this is the synonymous verb “quickens.” It is used 15 times after the revival in the major published works as compared to only 5 times before the revival and 3 times in Erskine’s letters after the revival compared to none before the revival. “To quicken -To make alive, to become alive, to hasten, to excite. Quickener - one who makes alive, that which actuates.” Here we have the concepts of making alive, that which only the Creator can do, as well as the more human ability of hastening or exciting.

Before the revival the most used reference to an action of the Holy Spirit in Erskine’s published writings is to the “influence” of the Holy Spirit. There are only 6 such references with all other action references to the Holy Spirit occurring less often. It would appear from such differences that Erskine had some appreciation of an “influencing” power of the Holy Spirit prior to the revival, but understood such “influencing” as occurring through a variety of sometimes subtle methods. He says,

The Spirit of God brings these causes to act upon the mind with their natural innate power. This influence, then, is quite different from that inspiration by which prophets were enabled to declare future events. It is an influence which probably can never be distinguished, in our consciousness, from the innate influence of argument or motive.<sup>483</sup> . . . I have used this illustration to show that the influence of the Spirit does not necessarily destroy, and is not necessarily independent of, that

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<sup>482</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 5.

<sup>483</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 153-154.

natural relation of cause and effect which subsists between the doctrines taught and the moral character recommended by the Bible.<sup>484</sup>

This “influence” of the Holy Spirit is so unremarkable that it is difficult to separate it from normal human thought processes. Thus, compared to the directness of the post-revival references to the “speaking” of the Holy Spirit or being “born” of the Spirit, the pre-revival references to “influencing” reflect the use of a comparatively emaciated verb in reference to the Holy Spirit.

After the revival the “quickenings” or life-giving power of the Holy Spirit is also mentioned 15 times as compared to only 5 times prior to this. The other double digit references to the Holy Spirit after the revival are “witnesses, grieves, breathes, and manifests.” Following these are “works, teaches, indwells, operates, gives, leads, acts, and comes” all with more than 5 references each. Of these “teaches and operates” occur most in pre-revival references.<sup>485</sup>

What are we to make of this? Erskine sees the Holy Spirit as very active in ways that have a strong impact on humanity after his experience of the West Country revival. “Speaking, birthing” and “life-giving” are not only powerful predicates but “life-giving” is an action which can only be performed by God Himself. “Speaking” is an overt action which has been given by God to his highest creation, man. The animals do not have the ability to form a language. It was by speaking, the going forth

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<sup>484</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 154-155.

<sup>485</sup> See Appendix section A and G.

of God's Word, that creation came into being. Other forms of life may be capable of being an "influence" but they are not capable of speech. Such a thing as an "influence" may be an impersonal force, but speaking is done only by those who possess personhood, God and man.

"Witnessing" is another form of speaking but with a particular purpose. That purpose being to convince someone to admit to a particular position. "Witnesses" follows in use in the major published works after the revival with 13 occurrences compared to none before the revival. This is the Spirit of God "attesting" or "bearing testimony" to the reality of God in the world. This verb is also used 3 times in Erskine's letters after the revival compared to none before the revival.

According to the dictionary contemporary to these works "to grieve" is "to be in pain for something past, to mourn, to sorrow." "Grieving" is a personal attribute which involves an emotional action usually as a result of the action or actions of another person. References to "grieving the Holy Spirit" are clear in scripture. Some form of the verb "to grieve" is used 13 times as well in the major published works after the revival compared to once before the revival. This verb is also used twice in the letters after the revival compared to none before the revival in reference to the Spirit of God.

Another verb after the revival is a form of the verb "to breathe" which is found 12 times in the published works after the revival compared to once before the revival and 3 times in the letters after the revival compared to none before the revival. Walker's 1831 dictionary defines "to breathe" as "to draw in and throw out the air by

the lungs, to live, to rest, ...to utter privately, to give air or vent to.” Obviously the drawing in and throwing out of air by the lungs is not a function of the Spirit of God, but “to live” and to “utter privately” are both functions that a spirit can perform. The “breathing” of the Holy Spirit is a direct reference to the “psuche” or the “ruach” which is the Spirit himself. In order to “manifest” himself the Spirit must move out of the dimension of the unseen into the dimension of the seen. Such things as this are often considered to be the essence of miracles.

“Working” is something which is done by a person and which has an impact on those around him and which can take place in a variety of ways, whereas “teaching” involves the instruction of the mind or a communication from mind to mind which is also the function of sentient personhood on both the part of the teacher and the learner. By the same token “indwelling, operating, giving and leading” are all functions of intelligent personhood and of leadership with “leading” itself being the core of them all.

With scant references to “quickens” and “teaches” before the revival and even fewer references to other verbs we see an Erskine who did not spend much time before the revival writing about the third Person of the Godhead. The volume of references indicates this, as well as the particular words that were used. The number and variety of the lesser used words after the revival show a significantly enhanced appreciation for the distinctive actions and personhood of the Spirit of God. The great majority of these verbs are not found at all in reference to the Holy Spirit before the revival.

### E. Is There A Pneumatology?

These statistical results reveal that Erskine speaks of the Spirit as active in many different situations. Does this constitute a pneumatology? Yes, but only if by the term pneumatology we presume that it is a dynamic one. Erskine does talk about the Spirit extensively in his writings. We must remember, however, that he has no interest in developing any kind of a traditional Trinitarian pneumatology because historically such a pneumatology is based on examining the distinctions between the members of the Godhead. Erskine is firm when he says, “The distinction of persons in the Divine nature. We cannot comprehend; but We can easily comprehend the high and engaging morality of that character of God which is developed in the history of the New Testament.”<sup>486</sup> It is the moral character of God which interests him and he is only interested in a doctrine of the Holy Spirit in this regard. “The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is also connected with most important moral consequences. He is represented as dictating originally the revealed word, and as still watching and assisting its progress. He is where the truth is, and he dwells in the hearts where it operates.”<sup>487</sup>

These are reasons why Erskine is silent about the Holy Spirit where we might expect him not to be, namely, in traditional pneumatological terms. However, he is not silent about the Holy Spirit in dynamic terms. This discussion and the statistics on which they are based are testimony to this.

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<sup>486</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 74.

<sup>487</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 151-152.

Virtually all the verbs attached to the Person of the Holy Spirit discovered in this research indicate the effects of the Holy Spirit on individual human beings, human relationships, and human culture. Furthermore, these effects are asserted, in Erskine’s emphases, for the purpose of changing and elevating human morality so that it is more in concert with the morality of God. We note here just a few examples in context from the list of verbs found above.

It is being “birthed” by the Holy Spirit that begins our Christian life and the corresponding change in our moral character. “And as the connexion with Christ by the “Second Bond,” namely, of the Spirit, is just the same thing as being born of the Spirit, or having the life from above, the everlasting life,—so those who are thus connected with the Head see the kingdom of God, and shall enter into it, when it comes.”<sup>488</sup>

The Holy Spirit “grieves” over sin and “contends” against it as mentioned above in order for our moral nature to improve.<sup>489</sup>

“And, in like manner, he [Jesus] declared the Father and witnessed for him, as the fountain of power, even in the presence and during the reign of the beast, by the mighty works which he wrought by the Spirit of God dwelling in him.”<sup>490</sup> The terms “works” and “wrought” have been combined in the tabulation of statistics in this thesis. “Works,” as used in the excerpt directly above can be a noun, where “wrought”

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<sup>488</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 99.

<sup>489</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 160.

<sup>490</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 240.

is the verb form. Here Erskine attributes the mighty works of God done through Jesus by the Spirit of God in establishing our salvation in order that our moral character might be changed.

“The love which gave the root, and the Spirit communicated through the root, are profitable only when they are thus received and used by the branch.”<sup>491</sup> The task of “communicating” the love of the Son to each member of the church falls to the Holy Spirit. This is paramount in elevating the moral condition of the church.

As noted above it is only through the quickening, or life-giving, power of the Holy Spirit that we can know the mind of God. “He is the quickening Spirit; and it is only in knowing him that we know the mind of God.”<sup>492</sup>

The Holy Spirit “acts” to bring good to the hearts of men. “There was nothing good in man but what was of the direct acting of the Spirit of God.”<sup>493</sup>

Erskine’s dynamic pneumatology is actually more dynamic than the New Testament itself. Erskine attributes action to the Holy Spirit in his major works and letters 519 times and mentions the Holy Spirit as a non-actor an additional 399 times. In a study of the New Testament itself (New American Standard Version) we find a total of 62 different verbs in 128 separate occurrences where action is attributed to the Holy Spirit representing its dynamic pneumatology. There are an additional 144 references to the Spirit of God in the New Testament where the Spirit is not acting;

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<sup>491</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, xxii.

<sup>492</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 45.

<sup>493</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 8.

another, ie: Christ etc., is the actor. This totals 272 references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

Erskine's dynamic pneumatology consists in his application of actions of the Holy Spirit to change the moral nature of human beings. It is an extensive dynamic pneumatology which is further discussed in chapter 10 in terms of McIntyre's taxonomy for pneumatology.

## Chapter VII: The Theology Of The “First” and “Second Bond”

### In The Writings of Thomas Erskine

In this chapter we shall consider Thomas Erskine’s concept of the two “Bonds” which he understands to exist between Jesus Christ and the Christian believer. Although the basic concepts are not wholly unique with Erskine, his understanding of them is unique and absolutely central to Erskine’s theology.

#### A. The Light

Erskine’s thinking process in this area seems to be based on his understanding of the Light which has shined on every person. This is primarily taken from the Gospel of John Chapter One:

8 He [John] was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (AV)

Erskine's understanding of this is expressed in his own view of election when he says,

When we see the two natures, of flesh and spirit, so in every man that he may join himself to either of them, and thus become either reprobate or elect, we see the root of the doctrine of election. And when we see rightly the gift of Christ, we shall see that as he is the true light which lighteth every man, so also there is in him a communication of life to every man. For "in him was life, and the life was the light of men," and thus, the light which lighteth every man is a living light—a light whereby he may live. And thus by the entrance of the word into our flesh, not only has God been brought near to us, as an object of trust and love, but also his living Spirit, the divine nature, has been communicated to us subjectively as a capacity of embracing God, whether we exercise it or not.<sup>494</sup>

Here we see references to the "light," the "word," the "living Spirit," and the "divine nature" all mixed together and apparently referring to the same implantation by God into every human being. All of this is the basis of Erskine's "First Bond;" it took place immediately following the fall and it was a federal event.

Later in *The Doctrine of Election* Erskine says,

The presence of the conscience in every man, however condemning it may be and however disregarded, is a satisfying demonstration of our organic relation to the Son of God, " the true light which lighteth every

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<sup>494</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine Of Election And Its Connection With The General Tenor Of Christianity Illustrated Especially From The Epistle To The Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 38.

man that cometh into the world," and our neglect of its admonitions does not destroy that relation.<sup>495</sup>

Still much later in *The Doctrine of Election* Erskine says,

And surely it is with the purpose of leading us to look for, and to find such corresponding types within us, that John begins his gospel by identifying Jesus, *first* with God, "The Word was God," and *then* with the Spirit or light in man's conscience, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. That was the true light which lighteth every man."<sup>496</sup>

Here Erskine equates the Spirit with the Light as being identified as Jesus by John.

Erskine immediately follows on to further discuss the Light and relate it to conscience.

Both [John 1 and 3] passages evidently treat the same subject; they both show *how* fallen man has been put into a capacity of becoming a child of God, and how he may profitably use that capacity, so as actually to become a child of God, a conscious partaker of the Divine life and nature; and they both testify that the recognition of God in the voice of conscience is the way to that blessing.

In chap. i. Jesus and his Spirit are described as the "*Light of men,*" as "the true Light which lighteth every man," or that which in every man's conscience pointeth out to him the direction in which he should go. And then it is said, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God (or to be regenerated), even to them that believed in *his name*"—that is, to *them that recognised the Light which lighted them to be the Word who was with God, and was God*—who had come from God, and went to God; for *this* was his *name*, the description of his being and his office.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 211-212.

<sup>496</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 324.

<sup>497</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 326-327.

Therefore, in these extensive passages Erskine refers to the Light which has been mysteriously implanted in every person as that which, in the conscience, points a person in the “direction in which he should go.”

Erskine makes use of references to the True Light no less than 13 times in his *Doctrine of Election*. He does not refer to the Light in *The Brazen Serpent*, his first significant post-revival work. (*On The Gifts Of The Spirit* is very short and was mostly incorporated into *Serpent* which was published in the same year immediately following the beginning of the revival.) Neither does Erskine employ the Light concept in his pre-revival works, *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel*, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion*, or *An Essay On Faith*. He mentions it once in the post-revival compendium *The Spiritual Order And Other Papers*, and eight times each in his two volumes of letters, most of which are in the post-revival period. All of these references are in the same context and imply the same meaning as they do in *Election*.

#### B. Pre-Revival Discussions Of The Bond

Thomas Erskine speaks of a bond between God and man only three times in his published works before the revival. All three of these references are in his *The Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel*. These are more or less vague references compared to his later development of the concept of the “First” and “Second Bond.” Erskine refers to God as the bond that unites his family, his body, when he says, “He is also the bond which unites all the members of the family to each other, and there is

no schism in that body; they have all their place in him, and they are all one in him, and with him.”<sup>498</sup>

Erskine also believes that being bonded to the “living personality of God” is the only thing strong enough to overcome death. Any doctrine that teaches us about eternal life is futile without a personal bond with God himself who is the font of life.

[God] brings a genuine reality, such as death, and sets its before us, and makes us feel how mere notions melt into nothing at its presence, and how utterly vain and valueless a religion is, which does not unite us to God, by a bond as real as death is real. The living personality of God, if I may use the expression, must animate and fill out the Christian doctrines,—otherwise they only tend to add a fatal security to the sleep of the soul.<sup>499</sup>

Even as early as the writing of *Unconditional Freeness* Erskine was longing to see some supernatural manifestations which would attest to the power of the bond that believers have with the living God, the human spirit “bound with a real bond to the real God.” His understanding of the bond at this point was of a reality that enables people to walk with God. There is not, however, at this point any development of the concepts of the “First” and “Second Bonds.” In this pre-revival work Erskine is more concerned with the “sweet communion” that the believer has with God.

Surely this sweet communion between heaven and earth is true religion. Oh for the putting forth of that power which made the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, that such sounds might enter our hearts, and draw forth such answers. To a spirit thus bound by a real bond to the real God, life and death are equal, for it finds the will of God in either, and his will is its delight. It finds God in every thing, and God is its portion.

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<sup>498</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1870, 64.

<sup>499</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 77.

When Jesus says, behold I come quickly, it answers, even so come, Lord Jesus. This is to walk with God.<sup>500</sup>

### C. Post-Revival Discussions Of The Bond

After the revival Erskine speaks of the “First” or “Second Bond” no less than 42 times in *The Brazen Serpent* with one very important additional reference in *The Doctrine Of Election* which we shall examine in this chapter. This is the sum total of his published teaching on the subject. In his letters he speaks of the bond of love between God and man several times, but these references are somewhat vague and general and definitely not of the same sense and structure as his teaching on the two “Bonds” in *Brazen Serpent*. Therefore, the entire development of Erskine's teaching on the two “Bonds” is to be found in *Brazen Serpent*. The references in *Brazen Serpent* appear in several clusters.

In the first cluster Erskine's concept of the bond between God and man starts before the fall. He says, “Before the fall, God and man were united by the law of love. This was the bond—this was the medium of communion, and the bond was both of God and of man, because love is God's nature, and whilst man continued faithful, it was his nature. And through this medium, God communicated, and man received all blessings, and all these blessings were but different forms of love.”<sup>501</sup> For Erskine there was the initial bond of love between God and man, but he has not begun his

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<sup>500</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 80.

<sup>501</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 58.

development of the two “Bonds” at this point. The development of the two “Bonds” actually begins just after the fall with the promise to the seed of the woman. “But when man fell, this bond of love was broken, and there was no longer a medium of communion between God and man. Then it was that God promised the seed of the woman who was to destroy the works of the devil: that is, who was to renew the broken bond, and restore the interrupted communion, by becoming himself the medium or mediator of communion—Himself, who was the *living law of love*.”<sup>502</sup>

The foundation of the “First Bond” is the assumption of a “fallen” human nature by Jesus Christ. “And thus He did it. He was Himself Jehovah, and He assumed to Himself the nature which had fallen, and thus within His own person, He united the two natures. On the one side He was one with the Godhead, on the other side, he was one with the fallen manhood. This was the plan of that living bond by which man was to be again united to God, and to be put in a condition of receiving out of his fullness. But this bond had to be made perfect through sufferings.”<sup>503</sup>

Here we have Erskine's first six references to the bond. Here he establishes the concept that God and man were mutually bonded to each other with the bond of love before the fall. The fall broke that relationship. Erskine sees the bond as being re-established in the incarnation. Erskine sees the re-establishment of the bond prefigured in God's promise to the seed of the woman thus implying that in God's mind the bond is re-established with this promise.

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<sup>502</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 58-59.

<sup>503</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 59.

When Erskine resumes his discussion of the “Bonds” later in *Serpent* he begins to develop it more fully. A key statement by Erskine is:

*Jesus has taken our flesh, and become one flesh with us, in order that we might be one spirit with him.* These are the two bonds. All men are necessarily connected with him by the first bond, namely, the flesh,—and all who believe in the love which produced that first bond, become connected with him by the second, namely, the Spirit, and these only. And the gospel consists in explaining what the manner of love is, which connected every man with Jesus, by the first bond, namely, the flesh, and what it did for each man, when it established that connexion. Now the manner of the love we have seen to be this—that God so loved every man, that, in order to destroy the work of the devil in him, He was willing to die for him—and that he so loved every man, that He desired fellowship and union with him, in the spirit of holiness.<sup>504</sup>

This statement in Erskine's own words is, in summary, his position on the two “Bonds.” No statement of Erskine's is clearer and more to the point than this one. The “First Bond” is established with the incarnation with every human being who ever lived. The proclamation of the gospel is merely the explaining of the “First Bond” so that individual souls can embrace it and thus form the “Second Bond” with God.

And that which the love did for each man, when it established the connexion of the first bond, namely, of the flesh, between him and Christ—is, that during this present dispensation of “the accepted time and day of salvation,” sin is not imputed to him, and Christ is truly given to him as his head, (for “the head of every man is Christ,”) in whom he has a standing in the favour of God, and the Spirit, or eternal life, which he will receive according to his faith.<sup>505</sup>

Although man can take no real credit for his salvation, he must still

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<sup>504</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 97-98.

<sup>505</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 98.

acknowledge by an act of his will what God has done.

And the man has not to make any thing in the matter, he has just to acknowledge or believe what God has done. And this belief will open his heart to let in the life, the spirit. And thus he becomes connected with Christ by the bond of the Spirit, he becomes a living member of the righteous head—an heir of the righteousness which is by faith—he is reckoned righteous—not in virtue of something put *upon* him, as in the bond of the flesh, but of something *within* him, even the life of God, and that life is righteousness. And as the belief of what God has given us in the flesh of Christ, lets in this blessed life, so the unbelief of it shuts out the life and the righteousness, and the man remains unconnected with Christ by the Spirit, he remains dead in his sins and in his unrighteousness.<sup>506</sup>

Erskine believes that “sin is not imputed” during the present dispensation because of the “First Bond” of the flesh. During the time between the first and second comings God does not impute sin to anyone as they have the opportunity during their own lifetimes to accept what God has done for them and therefore establish the “Second Bond” which is the spiritual one. The “First Bond” is actually something within each person. He greatly clarifies this concept later in *The Doctrine Of Election* when he says,

And observe, that as the fall had come by an individual, who was the First Head of the nature, sacrificing the will of God to self-will, so this restoration and counterbalancing power came into the nature by another individual, its Second Head, in all things sacrificing self-will to the will of God. That other individual was Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who ***though not personally manifested for four thousand years, yet entered into the nature immediately after the fall, and commenced his great work of the new creation, by bringing his Spirit close to every individual of the nature, striving in their consciences,*** and enabling them to join themselves to him, and in his strength to accept their

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<sup>506</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 98-99.

punishment, and to sacrifice their self-will to the will of God.<sup>507</sup>  
 (Italics mine)

From this we can see that Erskine believed that the Spirit was brought “close” to every individual immediately after the fall and began to strive with the conscience. This is the basis of the “First Bond.” The concept of conscience in Erskine will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

The actual individual recognition of the closeness which is given in this “First Bond” is a free act of the human will which establishes the eternal second spiritual bond.

And here is a remarkable thing. Those who are connected with Christ by the Spirit are living members, and they shall be raised to the resurrection of life, which is the first resurrection *by the Spirit that dwelleth in them*, see Rom. viii. 11, Rev. xx. 6. And those who are not connected with Christ by the Spirit, shall be raised also, but not to the resurrection of life, nor by the Spirit, for they have it not, but, it would seem, simply by their connexion with his flesh, to be judged for their contempt of all that was contained in that connexion.<sup>508</sup>

Erskine attributes the power of the “First Bond” as the reason for the general resurrection of the unbelievers. A belief in the resurrection of unbelievers is not unusual; however, Erskine's belief that this resurrection is possible, even inevitable, because of the “First Bond” of the flesh which every person has with God is unusual. Because there is some connection with Christ as a result of the “First Bond” of the flesh the unbeliever must be resurrected. However, those who have rejected God's

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<sup>507</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 173.

<sup>508</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 99.

offer of salvation by not recognizing this “First Bond” will be raised only to face the judgement of God. This goes far beyond an elementary belief in the image of God in man. It is the “Second Bond” which brings life and is the bond of the Spirit.

And as the connexion with Christ by the second bond, namely, of the Spirit, is just the same thing as being born of the Spirit, or having the life from above, the everlasting life,—so those who are thus connected with the Head see the kingdom of God, and shall enter into it, when it comes. Whilst those who are not thus connected with him cannot see that kingdom, and cannot enter into it. But yet so long as they continue living in this dispensation, they do not fall out of the forgiving love of God, which rests upon the righteous Head, and descends from Him, on all the body, quite irrespective of the character of the individuals; and, although of a truth God's eye sees and condemns every form of sin, in every heart, and especially condemns the unbelief which rejects His love, and thus shuts out the life—yet this condemnation is not the imputation of sin, it is the displeasure of a Father, because his children will not believe that he loves and forgives them.<sup>509</sup>

People bring God's condemnation upon themselves if they do not choose to accept the truth of the “First Bond.” God's condemnation of those who do not choose to recognize the “First Bond” is not primarily on the basis of their sins but on the basis of their refusal of a father's love. In reference to the brass serpent that was raised up in the wilderness for the Israelites he says,

Had an Israelite, after he had been bitten, refused to look *immediately* at the serpent, he certainly would not have been cured *immediately*. But his delaying to do so did not destroy the virtue of the serpent; and did not disqualify him from looking afterwards at it, so long as life lasted. No doubt God condemned him for not looking at it, but this condemnation was the disapproving love of a friend, and not the sentence of a judge removing him from the serpent, or withdrawing its healing virtue with respect to him. The interval between the bite and the death, or the removal of the serpent, was the accepted time and day of

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<sup>509</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 99.

salvation, during which he might look and be healed. Whilst life lasted, his not looking would prevent a cure, but it would not throw him out of the dispensation of forgiveness.<sup>510</sup>

Erskine compares the recognition of the “First Bond” in the Christian era to the title theme of *The Brazen Serpent* in which the ancient Israelite looked upon the brass serpent and lived after being bitten by snakes in the camp. He reminds us that looking upon the brass serpent was a voluntary act which remained available to each Israelite as long as he lived. When he looked, he was healed of the effects of the snake bites. Similarly, we are healed of the effects of sin when we recognize the “First Bond” of the flesh and are then born of the Spirit and establish the “Second Bond” with God through Jesus Christ.

This is essentially Erskine's entire concept of the two “Bonds.” Further mentions of it are either variations on the same theme or some subtle insight into the theme which underscores its importance. Before going on he summarizes.

The first bond, namely, that of the flesh, is the provision which God has made for every man, and it lasts during this life or this dispensation, with all that is contained in it. And we have seen that the favour of God flowing from the righteous Head, and the non-imputation of sin, are specially contained in it, as coming on all, whether believers or unbelievers, just in virtue of this oneness with Christ in the flesh. And we have farther seen that the knowledge of this bond produces the second bond, namely, that of the Spirit, which is life everlasting. The preaching, therefore, of this first bond of the flesh, is, in fact, the preaching of the gospel—it is the preaching of that provision, by the knowledge of which the creature becomes the habitation of God through the Spirit, and it is in the knowledge of this provision that the

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<sup>510</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 99-100.

only true knowledge of God consists, for we can only know God aright when we know Him who came in our flesh to declare the Father.<sup>511</sup>

Another insight into the two “Bonds” theme which Erskine considers important involves the passage from I John which says, “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh*, is of God.” (1 John iv. 2.) Erskine asks, “What is the meaning of this?” He answers, “The view of the bond of the flesh which has been given, throws a strong light on this remarkable word.”<sup>512</sup> Then he refers to the reconciliation mentioned in Colossians, “It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.”<sup>513</sup> We are “reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, (that is, he hath brought you into the first bond,) to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight; (that is, in order to bring you into the bond of the Spirit which will take place and will hold,) if ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard.”<sup>514</sup> He inserts his concept of the two “Bonds” directly into the scripture.

Erskine also sees the biblical phrase, “Christ in you the hope of glory” as another reference to the “First Bond”. And this is the basis of Erskine's understanding of the doctrine of substitution. The “First Bond,” where Christ comes into our flesh, is substitution; he has substituted himself for us in the flesh and become the head of a

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<sup>511</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 100.

<sup>512</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 101.

<sup>513</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 101.

<sup>514</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 101.

new race. “Each man is a microcosm, a miniature of the world and of the race, and therefore when we hear of Christ coming into the flesh of our race, we in fact hear of his coming into the flesh of every man. . . . Remember, Christ came into Adam's place. This is the real substitution.”<sup>515</sup> The “First Bond” is, “ ‘Christ in you the hope of glory,’ then, is the gospel to every man, for it is the description of the “First Bond,” namely, that of the flesh, by which every individual of the race is united to Christ. The “Second Bond” is ‘Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith’ . . . namely, that of the Spirit, by which those only who believe in the truth are united to him; and without which the other bond will at last bring against unbelievers the charge of love, and power, and bliss rejected—when the time of judgment comes.”<sup>516</sup>

The place of the devil is not neglected by Erskine who sees the priesthood and the headship of Christ as something that destroys the power of the devil over people by virtue of the two “Bonds.” He proclaims, “It appears from this, that Christ came to deliver those who were liable to Satan's power and to the fear of death.”<sup>517</sup> The power of Christ over the devil is not established for the believer only. “Now, does this description apply to any particular class of persons? No, it is applicable to every human being. All are subject to the assaults of that subtle and powerful foe; and all who know not the better resurrection are subject to the fear of death, that is, all men naturally. So Christ came into the nature of all men, as the deliverer of all men. . . .

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<sup>515</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 104-105.

<sup>516</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent* 109-110.

<sup>517</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 110.

He is *of one* with them all. They are all connected with him by the common bond of the flesh, to the end that they may be connected with him by the bond of the Spirit.”<sup>518</sup> Erskine distinguishes between the manner of God’s love and the purpose of God’s love in the two “Bonds.” “The *manner* of love is declared in the first bond—the *purpose* of that love is declared in the second, that we should become the sons of God— born of the Spirit.”<sup>519</sup>

Erskine sees the Holy Spirit as the teacher who teaches us about the importance of these “Bonds.” We see here an example of Erskine's tendency to see faith as an educative function. The human nature of Christ reveals the manner of the love of God. “*The Spirit* or teacher, then, *that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*, is one who teaches, that, by the incarnation of the Son of God every man is connected with Christ by the bond of the flesh.”<sup>520</sup> The doctrine of the human nature of Jesus Christ becomes very important for it is “just an exposition of the *manner* of God's love to every man. God *so* loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; and the object of that love is, that men should, by the belief of this great gift, receive everlasting life, and become the sons of God.”<sup>521</sup>

The Eucharist is, for Erskine, yet another proclamation of the “First” and “Second Bonds” for “Eating Christ, is believing in the love which constituted, and in the privileges contained in, that bond of the flesh whereby Christ is united to every

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<sup>518</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 110 – 111.

<sup>519</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 111.

<sup>520</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 111.

<sup>521</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 112.

man. It is believing in all that Jesus did in the flesh for us. It is believing that Christ is in us, the hope of glory.”<sup>522</sup>

Erskine believes that all of the gospel depends on our oneness with Christ in the two “Bonds.” As a result of what he was seeing in the revival Erskine believes that this great truth was being restored to the body of Christ and was a sign of the nearness of the second advent of Christ.

I do not wonder that Christianity withered away when this glorious truth was let slip [the truth that he should have become one flesh with us, that we might become one spirit with him]. It contains all—the universal love of God, and the atonement for every man, as the ground of personal assurance, and the indwelling of the Spirit; and it contains also the personal glorious advent and reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth, because it connects him by an eternal bond, with the very substance of this earth. Blessed be God for having again revived it before the end come. O may he put his own mighty voice into those mouths which he has opened to declare it, and make it a mighty instrument for the ingathering of the harvest.<sup>523</sup>

Erskine sees a difference in the administration of the Holy Spirit under the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the Spirit “strove” with man as from without. In the New Testament the Spirit is our fountain of life because of the “First Bond” that we have with the Head of the body. The Spirit is given in the New Testament in a “higher and fuller manner” and also in a “different manner” because “The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 123.

<sup>523</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 133-134.

<sup>524</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 168.

Erskine sees the “First Bond” in effect during the time of Abraham because Christ was “at that time in Abraham” being a descendent of Abraham. “As Levi paid tithes *in* Abraham, so was Christ verily at that time *in* Abraham,— and thus that very gospel which Paul was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, was then preached by God's own mouth to Abraham—that gospel which declares the common bond of the *one* flesh, by which Jehovah has connected himself with every man.”<sup>525</sup> Since our righteousness is by faith and Abraham is the father of faith, then the bond is effective with us through Abraham. “And although it be not true of us, as it was of Abraham, that the Christ is to be our *descendant* according to the flesh; yet it is true, that the common bond of the flesh, whereby Christ is the root of every man, and in every man, must be a bond as near and as close as the bond of actual descent, otherwise Abraham's case could never have been set forth as the common pattern of faith to all men, nor could his righteousness have been recorded for *our* sakes, as well as his.”<sup>526</sup>

However, we can not by unbelief “annihilate” the “First Bond.” The “First Bond” is an accomplished fact for mankind. “Even so, we cannot by our unbelief annihilate that bond of the flesh by which God hath bound us to himself; but we may by our unbelief exclude ourselves from the blessing, for by unbelief we shall continue without righteousness, and without that life from above, which discovers to us, and fits us for entering into the kingdom of God.”<sup>527</sup> It is the “Second Bond” that is the

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<sup>525</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 143.

<sup>526</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 147-148.

<sup>527</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 150.

result of our faith. However, since Christ is the Head of the race who has conquered death. The “First Bond” gives us a claim on his life giving power.

Christ as our head broke through death’s prison “for although he is on that side of the veil, and we on this, yet the bond of the flesh by which we are connected with him, remains unbroken, we are still bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, so that the channel of communication between him and us is still open, and the life which is in him, is available to us, and flows into us just according to our faith in him.”<sup>528</sup>

In *The Doctrine Of Election*, while taking the Arminians to task, Erskine makes a major new departure. In *Brazen Serpent* Erskine has seen the Spirit coming “close” just after the fall and beginning to strive with man’s conscience. Now in *Election* he says “Arminians have generally been understood to regard the voice in conscience as a merely human faculty, a relic of the original state of man.” Quite differently Erskine believes that the conscience is the “spirit of the Word” which came into nature after the fall, a “seed of regeneration,” and which is the “real and substantial pledge and bond, connecting every child of Adam with the blessings of the New Covenant.”<sup>529</sup>

#### D. Erskine and Calvin

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<sup>528</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 155-156.

<sup>529</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 346-347.

How does Erskine's position in this regard compare to that of John Calvin?

Calvin's approach to understanding the Spirit of God begins with a discussion of the divinity of the Spirit Himself as opposed to the effect of the Spirit upon mankind. He begins by quoting Moses in Genesis.

In asserting the divinity of the Spirit, the proof must be derived from the same sources. And it is by no means an obscure testimony which Moses bears in the history of the creation, when he says that the Spirit of God was expanded over the abyss or shapeless matter, for it shows not only that the beauty which the world displays is maintained by the invigorating power of the Spirit, but that even before this beauty existed the Spirit was at work cherishing the confused mass.<sup>530</sup>

The creation power is directly attributed to the Spirit and although it is a dynamic exegetical representation of the Spirit of God, it is also dealing with the essential divinity of the Spirit of God from the very beginning. Calvin then proceeds by quoting Isaiah when he says, " 'And now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me' (Isa. 43: 16), thus ascribing a share in the sovereign power of sending the prophets to the Holy Spirit." If the Spirit of God shares the sovereign sending power, then He is in Himself divine. Calvin then says "the best proof to us is our familiar experience. For nothing can be more alien from a creature, than the office which the Scriptures ascribe to him, and which the pious actually feel him discharging," He then refers to the fact that the Spirit of God is "diffused over all space," or omnipresent. The Spirit sustains all things; he invigorates all things; he quickens, or gives natural

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<sup>530</sup> Calvin, John, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Henry Beveridge, Trans., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, Book I, Chapter 13, Sec.14, 122.

life, to all things. The mere fact that the Spirit does not have the limits that humans have “raises him above the rank of creatures.”<sup>531</sup> Then Calvin comes to the Reformed emphasis on the Spirit of God regarding regeneration. “Again, if regeneration to incorruptible life is higher, and much more excellent than any present quickening, what must be thought of him by whose energy it is produced?” This giving of eternal life is the Spirit’s greatest work.<sup>532</sup> For Calvin regeneration and eternal life is a creative work, an even greater work than the original creation itself. This is not Erskine’s position.

#### E. Overall Implications

The overall implications of Erskine’s concept of the “First” and “Second Bond” figure strongly in his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The “Second Bond” is not the peculiar one. The “Second Bond” is the bond of the Holy Spirit within the believer. It is established by the recognition of the “First Bond.” It is the “First Bond” which is peculiar to Erskine’s teaching. Erskine’s “First Bond” in its final form appears to be an actual indwelling presence of the “seed of the Word” brought “close” by the Spirit of God in every member of the race by some unknown process immediately after the fall.

Erskine’s pneumatology regarding salvation is significantly “lower” than a Calvinistic pneumatology. However, as we proceed to see the place and strength of

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<sup>531</sup> Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, Chapter 13, Sec.14, 122.

<sup>532</sup> Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, Chapter 13, Sec.14, 122.

Erskine's pneumatology, it is worthy of note that Erskine's continued stress on the activities of the Holy Spirit as introduced in Chapter Six reveals his pneumatology as strongly dynamic in form. A more extensive analysis of the "Bonds" and the subject of conscience is found in the conclusion of this thesis.

#### Chapter VIII:

##### The Role Of Conscience And Erskine's Anthropology

The place of conscience in the writings of Thomas Erskine warrants a separate chapter in this thesis. It is a concept very closely related to the subject of the previous chapter on the "First" and "Second Bond." It is also a subject, like the subject of the two "Bonds," which reflects Erskine's understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. This is especially interesting when it is examined in relation to Erskine's pre and post-revival mindsets. Reference to "spirit," "character" and

“conscience” are compared in the short table below for four primary works of Erskine.

Pre-Revival:

<i>Evidence</i>	Spirit 23 w/19active	character 244	conscience 31
<i>Freeness</i>	Spirit 44w/31active	character 54	conscience 44

Post-Revival:

<i>Serpent</i>	Spirit 308w/153active	character 111	conscience 33
<i>Election (1878)</i>	Spirit 302w/161active	character 80	conscience 170

#### A. Pre-Revival References To Conscience

In the *Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel* (1828) Erskine refers to “conscience” 44 times, “character” 54 times and the “Spirit of God” a total of 44 times, 31 of which the “Spirit” is seen in the active sense. This indicates a roughly even emphasis on these concepts in this particular pre-revival publication. The gist of what Erskine has to say about conscience in the *Unconditional Freeness Of The Gospel* can be found in the most intense cluster of a discussion of conscience found between pages 148 and 153. This book was written to challenge the prevalent Calvinistic doctrine of election of Erskine’s day in Scotland. He distinguishes between a justification that is “received by faith” and a justification that is “bestowed on account of faith.” It is the latter that is unacceptable to Erskine. For Erskine the key is conscience.

Whereas if justification means a sense of pardon through a

propitiation, or, as it is called in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ix. 9—14, *the being made perfect as pertaining to the conscience*, and *having the conscience purged from dead works*, then all is simple; for we can have no difficulty in seeing that a sense of our own personal pardon and acceptance must arise out of a belief, that a propitiation has been made, by the holy love of God, for the sins of the whole world. <sup>533</sup>

Erskine sees justification as a “state of mind” which results from a belief in the love of God as expressed in the gospel. <sup>534</sup> The contrary of this is to “not understand the atonement of Christ,” and then our consciences are not purged and “our belief in the atonement can do us no good,—it does not justify us, it does not comfort nor strengthen us, it is a well to us without water.” <sup>535</sup> Erskine acknowledges that “there are exceeding precious promises to those who trust in God, and wait on God.” However he affirms that “the promise of pardon, as the reward of faith in any thing, seems to me a mere human invention, in direct opposition to the whole tenor of the gospel.” <sup>536</sup> He continues, “It is evident, from Rom. v. 1, that justification is necessarily connected with peace of conscience,—“being justified by faith, we have peace with God,”—but pardon, unknown or unbelieved, will not, and cannot give peace of conscience .” <sup>537</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1870, 148.

<sup>534</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 148.

<sup>535</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 149.

<sup>536</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 149.

<sup>537</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 149-150.

Erskine understands that the Old Testament “rites were intended rather to keep up a sense of sin than to give a sense of pardon” and that “they removed ceremonial pollution, but they could give *no peace to the conscience*, except by referring the worshipper to that great sacrifice of which they were only shadows.”<sup>538</sup>

Erskine emphasizes his point when he expresses his understanding of Paul’s epistle to the Galatians with many references to conscience.

This same idea is expressed by Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, chap. ii., where he gives his reasons for condemning Peter’s conduct at Antioch. If I seek to quiet my *conscience* (he argues) by the rites of the law, do I not deny the sufficiency of Christ to atone for my guilt and to clear my *conscience*? “but if, whilst we seek peace of *conscience* through Christ, we yet be found to have our *conscience’s* laden with a sense of condemnation, do we not falsely represent Christ as a dispenser of condemnation, instead of a dispenser of pardon, which he really is?” If the knowledge of Christ leaves my *conscience* still burdened by a sense of guilt, then either Christ is not the dispenser of the divine mercy, or my knowledge of him is miserably defective. I refer chiefly to the 17th and 18th verses of the 2d chapter. “But if, while we seek to be justified (to have our *conscience’s* purged of the sense of guilt) by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners (still labouring under a sense of condemnation), is therefore Christ the minister of sin (the dispenser of condemnation)?”<sup>539</sup>

Erskine also refers to the Epistle to the Hebrews with several quotations of the word “conscience.”

I quote also the passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Heb. ix. 9. “Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service

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<sup>538</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 150.

<sup>539</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 151-152. Italics Mine

perfect as pertaining to the *conscience*.” Verse 14. “How much more shall the blood of Christ who, through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your *conscience*’s from dead works to serve the living God?” Chap. x. 2. “For then would they not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more *conscience* of sins?” Verse 22. “Let us draw near with a pure heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil *conscience*, and our bodies washed with pure water.”<sup>540</sup>

From these passages Erskine is led to believe that the conscience is delivered from the sense of “unpardoned sin” by the gospel. This is the same as “justification by faith” which brings “peace with God” and “boldness” and “full assurance” which a person can not have unless his conscience has been relieved of the weight of this unpardoned sin in his conscience.<sup>541</sup> The subjective feelings of each man’s conscience which has been forever endowed by God with an effective moral compass are, for Erskine, the basis of salvation.

Thomas Erskine considered his book *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion* (1820) to be a logical and philosophical treatise. It is important to note that his goal is to analyze the parts of the Christian scheme of doctrine.<sup>542</sup> This is not a book primarily about experience. It was written prior to Erskine’s involvement in the West Country revival. In it he concentrates on the moral qualities in the character of God which he hopes can be excited in the human being and thus lead to moral development and perfection.

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<sup>540</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 152-153. Italics Mine.

<sup>541</sup> Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness*, 153.

<sup>542</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 16.

## B. Pre and Post Revival References To Conscience Examined In Juxtaposition

Erskine refers to “conscience” 31 times and “character” no less than 244 times in *Internal Evidence* while at the same time referring to the “Spirit of God” 23 times 19 of which refer to the Spirit in the active sense. This is the highest number of occurrences of the word “character” for both the pre and post-revival eras in Erskine’s writings. Conversely in *The Brazen Serpent* (1831), which is a post-revival work, Erskine refers to “conscience” 33 and to “character” 111 times and to the “Spirit of God” 308 times of which 153 reflect some action on the part of the “Spirit.” The use of the word “character” in Erskine’s writings is unmistakable; he is referring to either the character of God or the character of man and this almost always in the context of the goal of bringing the character of man into conformity with the character of God with the corresponding high moral stand that accompanies it. Erskine never abandoned this theme. If anything, it only became stronger as he grew older.

We examine *Internal Evidence* and *The Brazen Serpent* in juxtaposition here because of the stark pre to post-revival contrast in these concepts and because of the emphasis on “character” found in the earlier work. The 111 references to “character” in *The Brazen Serpent* are not inconsequential, but they are considerably fewer than the 244 references in *Internal Evidence*. However, the most significant factor is the 23 references to the “Spirit of God,” 19 of which reflect some action on his part, in *Internal Evidence*, compared to the 308 references to the “Spirit of God” in *The*

*Brazen Serpent*, 153 of which reflect some action on the part of the Spirit. Erskine does not abandon his burden to see the character of God formed in man as we move from *Internal Evidence* to *Brazen Serpent*, but he does alter the manner in which he expected to see this change come about. Before the revival Erskine was content to believe that man could be inspired to change by understanding the character of God. After the revival Erskine still wants to see the transformation of character in man, but he realizes that it is by the direct dynamic action of the Holy Spirit that this comes about.

In *Internal Evidence* Erskine talks of the “theory of internal evidence” as put forth by one Bishop Butler but he assures us that his view is essentially a different one. While Butler, according to Erskine, did show the relationship between natural and revealed religion and that they often had similar difficulties, it is Erskine’s goal to show that there is an “intelligible and necessary connexion between the doctrinal facts of revelation and the character of God. . . in the same way as there is an intelligible and necessary connexion between the character of man and his most characteristic actions.”<sup>543</sup> He follows this with the statement, “we cannot have stronger evidence for any truth whatever, than that which we have for the reality of moral obligations.”<sup>544</sup> Since Erskine wants to see the human emotions “excited” by

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<sup>543</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 20.

<sup>544</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 22.

the morals of God he wants to show that such excitement can be a proof of the truth of revealed religion.<sup>545</sup>

The critical connection between conscience and character or morals occurs when Erskine says, “the testimony of conscience is that verdict which every man returns for or against himself upon the question, whether his moral character has kept

pace with his moral judgment.”<sup>546</sup> Erskine holds the conscience responsible for knowing if a person has lived up to his or her own standards. When a person’s conscience does not perform as it should, then we are reduced to operating as we want and dreading any contact with the “Lord of the universe.” We then enjoy ourselves in the intervals between divine visitations and only at death is the veil removed so that we see plainly that we have not functioned with a character that is near to that of God. Erskine holds that we can believe in revelation and not live in harmony with the character of God. However, according to Erskine, we are not happy when we do so as “the joys of heaven are described in scripture to consist in a resemblance to God.”<sup>547</sup> Erskine says,

It was to produce this necessary and salutary change, that the gospel was sent from heaven. It bears upon it the character of God. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that those whose principles are opposed to that character,

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<sup>545</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 24.

<sup>546</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 33.

<sup>547</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 39.

should also be opposed to the gospel. Christianity thus anticipates the discoveries of death: It removes the veil which hides God from our sight: it brings the system of the spiritual world to act upon our consciences; it presents us with a specimen of God's higher and interior government; it gives us a nearer view of his character in its true proportions, and thus marks out to us the points in which we differ from him; it condemns with his authority: it smiles and invites with his uncompromising purity.<sup>548</sup>

Erskine reiterates his theme when he says, “the object of Christianity is to bring the character of man into harmony with that of God.”<sup>549</sup> This is the heart of the work *Internal Evidence*. It is consistent with Erskine’s entire “educational” approach to Christianity especially before the revival. In *Internal Evidence* although he does not deny the need for the work of the Holy Spirit in order to bring this about, he does not emphasize it like he does later in *The Brazen Serpent*. Continuing in *Internal Evidence* Erskine looks to creation and providence to show that “moral good is necessary to permanent happiness, and . . . that misery is the result of moral evil.”<sup>550</sup> At this point in Erskine’s development it could appear that he believes that this truth should be obvious to any rational being who chooses to see what goes on in the world around him. However, he qualifies it by again stressing the importance of

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<sup>548</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 39.

<sup>549</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 49.

<sup>550</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 50.

conscience when he says that “conscience comes much more directly to the point here than reason does.”<sup>551</sup> He credits “natural religion” with being able to show us the moral way but not with the ability of causing us to love that way. It took a remarkable action to inspire us to love the way of God and that action was the incarnation, ministry and sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The influence of Hume is seen directly on Erskine when in referring to Christ’s life he says,

The principles which it [the gospel] addresses ought evidently to be such as are in a great measure independent of the extremes of cultivation and barbarism: and, in point of fact, they are so. They are indeed the very principles which Mr. Hume designates to be, " a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought or understanding is able either to produce or to prevent." Its argument consists in a relation of facts: If these are really believed, the effect on the character necessarily follows. It presents a history of wondrous love, in order to excite gratitude; of high and holy worth, to attract veneration and esteem: It presents a view of danger, to produce alarm; of refuge, to confer peace and joy; and of eternal glory, to animate hope.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 51.

<sup>552</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 57-58.

Erskine dwells on the theme that we are “comparatively little affected by abstract truth in morality.”<sup>553</sup> He illustrates this with a story. This story is about a friend who wanted to warn others about the danger of quicksand ahead but his warning was not believed. So he went ahead and perished in the quicksand in order to show his friends the true danger that existed. In an appeal to the gospel Erskine stresses that both the reasoning born of an understanding of nature and the power of conscience have failed to communicate the true danger of sin and its effects to mankind and that the “Warner” had to prove the danger of sin personally by “exhibiting himself as a sufferer under its consequences. . . . It was even so. God became man, and dwelt among us.”<sup>554</sup> He follows this with a story about a king who shared the punishment with his son when the son was the first to break his law. The punishment was to have both eyes put out and the king decided to have one of his son’s eyes put out and one of his own in order to demonstrate his justice as well as his compassion. The impression on the transgressor must be “energetic”, “interesting” and “overwhelming.”<sup>555</sup> In all of this Erskine relies almost exclusively on example to alter human character and morals. Yet at the point at which *Internal Evidence* (1820) was written there is a lack of convincing evidence as to how an example accomplishes its goals. After the revival Erskine will emphasize the activity of the Holy Spirit in accomplishing this alteration of character in human beings.

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<sup>553</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 63.

<sup>554</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 64-66.

<sup>555</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 67-68.

In *Internal Evidence* a primary concern of Erskine is to contrast any abstract concepts of God to true realizations of his nature. He says that abstract concepts lack the offensiveness to impress themselves on our minds. When abstract concepts of right and wrong become true realizations, we then choose what is comfortable over against what is true. But he says that God has taken this into account. All arguments for the good fail at the hands of men and God's arguments are subject to the same prejudices. However, with the aid of conscience Erskine believes that God's character can make an impression on man.

In the Bible, the Christian doctrines are always stated in this connexion: They stand as indications of the character of God, and as the exciting motives of a corresponding character in man. Forming thus the connecting link between the character of the Creator and the creature, they possess a majesty which it is impossible to despise, and exhibit a form of consistency and truth which it is difficult to disbelieve. Such is Christianity in the Bible; but in creeds, and church articles it is far otherwise.<sup>556</sup>

In beginning *The Brazen Serpent* Thomas Erskine states that the object of religion is that the life of God should be manifested in man and that the life from above is the Holy Spirit dwelling in man. He alludes to the bronze serpent in the wilderness that the Israelites were "to look upon" after they were bitten by the snakes

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<sup>556</sup> Erskine, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, 93.

in the camp if they were to live. He develops this to say that for the soul to look upon any thing is for the soul to actually believe and thereby to know that a thing is true.<sup>557</sup> Erskine believes that the forgiving love of God exists for all men and that when a particular person sees or understands that love then that person has a personal assurance which is founded on that love. This brings it into the realm of personal experience for the individual. The person is enlightened by perceiving the light which originates from God.<sup>558</sup> But it must be personally seen.

And the reason is evident, the purpose of the gospel is to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, and most assuredly, no message of forgiveness can purge my conscience, except a message of forgiveness to myself. The law burdens my conscience, only in consequence of its personal reference to myself, and the gospel can only purge my conscience by a reference to myself equally personal.<sup>559</sup>

He is sure that no message of forgiveness can purge his conscience except a personally perceived and understood and received message. The gospel must be capable of relieving the burden placed on the conscience by the accusations of the law. In this first bit of reasoning in *The Brazen Serpent* we can see in Erskine both a strong affirmation for the universal freeness of the gospel, being that universal offer of forgiving love to all mankind, and the affirmation of the need and availability for individual assurance of salvation, being the purging of the conscience from the

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<sup>557</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 9.

<sup>558</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 28.

<sup>559</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 29.

burden imposed upon it by the law. All this takes place by actions upon the human conscience. The closing words of the first chapter of *Brazen Serpent* reveal Erskine's dependence on the Holy Spirit regarding the changes expected in man when he says, "But we must not content ourselves with the general aspect of this mighty work. There is life in every part of it. The whole word is *living* and powerful, and our God invites us to look into it, by the light of his own Spirit, that we may press on to know even as we are known."<sup>560</sup>

Erskine's understanding of Christ as the Head of the human race comes against the prevailing Calvinistic teaching of his day regarding substitution. He appeals to reason in the context of conventional earthly understanding by affirming that it would not be considered justice for an earthly judge to accept the sufferings of an innocent person as satisfaction for the lawful punishment of a guilty person.<sup>561</sup> Therefore, "as the work of Christ was wrought to declare and make manifest the righteousness of God, not only to powers and principalities in heavenly places, but to men, to the minds and consciences of men—it is not credible that that work should contain a manifestation really opposed to their minds and consciences."<sup>562</sup> Thus the work of Christ is judged according to the values commonly found in the minds and consciences of men. One of Erskine's major points, that of the headship of Christ

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<sup>560</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 35.

<sup>561</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 36.

<sup>562</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 36-37.

over mankind, is rooted in what can be naturally found in the minds and consciences of men. From here he goes on to develop his understanding of substitution.

I believe that Christ did taste death for every man, and that, too, in a far deeper and truer sense than is taught by the doctrine of substitution in its ordinary acceptation. The humanly devised doctrine of substitution has come in place of, and has cast out the true doctrine of the headship of Christ, which is the large, and glorious, and true explanation of those passages of Scripture which are commonly interpreted as teaching substitution. Christ died for every man, as the head of every man—not by any fiction of law, not in a conventional way,—but in reality as the head of the whole mass of the human nature, which, although composed of many members, is one thing,—one body,—in every part of which the head is truly present.<sup>563</sup>

Erskine contemplates that believers share with Christ in the death of the flesh which in turn brings newness of life and a joyful anticipation of their own resurrection. Erskine sees the place of conscience here as well. Referring to the sprinkling with the water of separation, he says, “who is thus sprinkled, is sprinkled from an evil conscience, his conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God; because he sees that God's will and God's glory are one thing with the blessedness of the creature, and because he sees that in his righteous head he has a righteous life, even God's own pure life, in which he may look on God's face with joy.”<sup>564</sup> Erskine allows that the consciences of the Jews were “poisoned” during the time of Jesus’ trial in that they chose to have the murderer Barabbas released to them instead of Jesus.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 37.

<sup>564</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 52.

<sup>565</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 75.

Erskine later speaks of the “awakened conscience.” For the Jews in the wilderness gazing on the brazen serpent to get healed of their snakebites there was no real revelation of the fountain of God out of which flows the benefits of the gospel. The conscience is not awakened or satisfied here. “In the type, we have got a declaration of forgiving love; but it has to be taken upon trust; there is no opening up of God’s heart to let us see the fountain out of which that stream of forgiving love flows. . . . We have, to be sure, the promise of the resurrection, . . . but for many a long day after, there was no actual specimen of a resurrection life.”<sup>566</sup> It is the actual resurrection life of the gospel era that answers the dilemma of the awakened conscience.

Erskine assumes that every individual realizes his separation from God because of his sin and his own polluted and corrupted nature and has found it useless to try to meet the demands of his own conscience. He does not make it clear here whether it is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit which has caused this remorse or merely a dissatisfaction inherent in the mind or heart of the person. Asserting that we can have no lower grounds than the grounds applied to Abraham, for we are in the Gospel age, Erskine assures his reader, “You have in your flesh Him who is the righteous head, on whose account sin is not imputed to you, and who is the mighty God, in whose strength you may overcome all the evil that is in you. This may appear very improbable, but you have the word of God for it.”<sup>567</sup> This having in our

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<sup>566</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 115-116.

<sup>567</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 148-149.

flesh the Christ who is our righteous head is another form of reference to the “First Bond.”

Erskine understands that the kingdom of God is not preached unless the resurrection and exaltation of Christ are proclaimed which includes the teaching of the headship of this risen Christ over all men in a “general membership” and over believers of a “special membership.” He calls for a revival of this belief in the assurance that “the consciences of both preachers and hearers must witness to the justness of what is here written.”<sup>568</sup> Therefore, conscience also dictates the proclamation of this doctrine of the headship of Christ.

For Erskine the difference between the elect and the non-elect does not consist in one person being loved and forgiven in Christ, and another not; but in one person being taught by God to believe this forgiving love, and the other being permitted to push it away. Men are elected not to “the shedding of the blood,” but to “the sprinkling of the blood,” which means the purging of the conscience through faith in the atonement.<sup>569</sup> He affirms that there is nothing to hinder men from believing except their own self-will. He contests the Calvinistic view that we can not believe without direct supernatural influence. He calls this a perversion of the doctrine. He sees it as an excuse to disobey since the ability to believe has already been given to everyone. “But their error lies here, that they do not understand that

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<sup>568</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 187.

<sup>569</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 232.

God has already given Christ to every man as a head of life, and that it is in the power of this life already given that we are called on to serve God in any way.”<sup>570</sup>

### C. Other Post-Revival References To Conscience

In Erskine’s *Doctrine Of Election* he refers to “conscience” 170 times and to “character” 80 times while referring to the “Spirit of God” 302 times of which 161 times the “Spirit” is seen in an active sense. He refers to conscience as “the good seed, in every heart” and proceeds to discuss here some prevailing errors regarding the understanding of the conscience. He says that the “whole responsibility of man consists in his power to recognise and follow this inward drawing of God or to reject it, according to his own personal choosing.”<sup>571</sup> And he maintains that God holds persons responsible for this power of choice and deals with each one accordingly. Furthermore, he believes that there is an ongoing judgment from God in every life wherein God gives increased light as a reward for obedience and that there is a hardening of the conscience and decreased light for disobedience. Erskine believes that the voice of conscience is continually speaking in every person promising to guide and to direct. He interprets Psalm 49:20 as saying that this voice is the honour in man which elevates him above the animals.<sup>572</sup> Erskine says that the voice of

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<sup>570</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 232.

<sup>571</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity Illustrated Especially from the Epistle To The Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 39

<sup>572</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 39.

conscience is often supposed to be a faculty of human nature like feelings of “benevolence or compassion” or the “faculties or feelings” of one’s own mind. He maintains that this is not true and that such misconceptions cause people to misunderstand the “honour” that they possess as a human being and therefore to miss the voice of God and fail to seek the person of God who is the source of the voice. He insists that everyone really knows that this voice is something other than a projection of his or her own mind and because this is really known, it is a sin to fail to respond to the voice of conscience. According to Erskine, it is demeaning to the voice of conscience to recognize it only as the indicator of right and wrong; the purpose of the voice of conscience is to lead man to the person of God himself. Furthermore, “Conscience is the link between flesh and spirit, the entrance by which the voice of the Word of God enters into man, calling for the submission of his heart and will, and through which he would communicate himself personally and consciously, if man would submit his heart and will, and seek His manifestation.” Therefore, conscience is like a door which can admit “the living Word”. This “living Word” not only gives direction but also supplies the willingness to do that which is pleasing to God.<sup>573</sup>

This is an enormous jump and lies at the heart of Erskine’s understanding. He sees the nearness of the Word as actually being resident with every man without the prior necessity of conversion. This contributes to an under-developed

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<sup>573</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 40.

pneumatology in his theology as the Holy Spirit's convicting power to draw people to Christ is not required. However, it may also be a form of empirichoretic pneumatology.

It is also clear at this point that Erskine does not consider the conscience to be identical with the Spirit of God or the living Word. If it is a door by which they can enter, then it can not be the living Word or the Spirit himself.

Erskine says that the purpose of the written Word, the Bible, is to tell us what in our own hearts is true; it does not make things true.<sup>574</sup> It tells us that the Saviour is in the heart; it does not put him there. Erskine understands that without the Bible this voice functions only as a task master and a rebuker, but with the Bible this very same voice is revealed as Saviour and God. It is necessary for the rebuker to function first so that the revelation of Saviour can be of use to the individual. Erskine is intent on the fact that the conscience is the "door" which is totally under the control of the individual and acts as the "point of connection" between God and man. He also affirms that while "theologians" may assert that the fall caused the loss of all power of choice on man's part, the accomplished redemption has indeed restored the power of choice in man with an added advantage. He bases this conviction on the scripture. "Where sin abounded, there hath grace much more abounded" (Romans 5:15). This is so important to him that he appeals to "every candid reader of the Bible, whether

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<sup>574</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 41.

he does not feel that these words might be rightly taken as the sample, and text, and epigraph of the whole book.”<sup>575</sup>

#### D. Erskine In His Day

Erskine’s emphatic emphasis on conscience was noticed in his day as he commented that “some of my readers may think that I have given too great a place throughout the whole book to the subject of conscience; but in this I have acted from the conviction that neither the doctrine of Election, nor any other doctrine, can be rightly understood, except through the doctrine of conscience.” He continues by criticizing President Edwards for failing to base his entire argument concerning the freedom of the will on a “true view of human nature” which is a proper understanding of the conscience.<sup>576</sup> This confidence in the human conscience is one of Erskine’s strongest convictions.

Erskine refers to several scriptures which distinguish between those who are capable of knowing and understanding the voice of God and those who can not know or understand. “The continual retribution with which God meets us at every step of the inner history of our own hearts is strikingly and solemnly set before us in the reason which Jesus gives for speaking to the people in parables. . . . ‘Therefore speak I unto them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.’ John 8: 31; ‘If ye continue in my word, then are ye my

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<sup>575</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 42-43.

<sup>576</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 333-334.

disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

These are the persons to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. “The man had a talent entrusted to him to trade with, and he hid it in the earth. There was a voice of God speaking in him. . . he might have had a special direction from God at each step, and might have walked in conscious fellowship with God all the way, yet he did it not, but being in honour, he had no understanding, but walked as the beasts that perish. That talent was the true light, and by hiding it in the earth he made himself dark.”<sup>577</sup>

Erskine obviously believes that he is grounding all his convictions about the inner voice of the conscience in every person born into this world in the solidarity of scripture. However, it was said of Erskine by McLeod Campbell that once Erskine was set upon an interpretation, he would bend everything to those beliefs including scripture. Campbell writes of him in 1863:

He is very full, as has ever been his way, of the thoughts which have last taken form in his mind, and would bend everything to them; and my work, as of old, has been to endeavour to keep before him what he may seem to me to leave out of account.’ This exactly describes his discourse as his friends knew it.-<sup>6</sup> And would bend everything to them,’ that is, to the thoughts that for the time absorbed him. This was especially observable in many of the interpretations which he imposed on difficult texts of Scripture. They were exceedingly ingenious, and such as could only have occurred to a meditative and highly spiritual mind. But it often seemed, as if the interpretation was born from within his own thought, rather than gathered from impartial exegesis. So strong was the heat of his cherished convictions, that before them the

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<sup>577</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 43-44.

toughest, most obdurate text gave way, melted and fused into the mould which his bias had framed for it.<sup>578</sup>

However, Erskine was admired by no less than Dr. Thomas Chalmers himself. No doubt such thoughts occupied Chalmers as he led in the great changes that were to take place in the Scottish church not far in the future. Chalmers said of Erskine's book on *The Universal Freeness Of The Gospel* that it is "one of the most delightful books that ever had been written." William Hanna, who edited these memoirs, adds, "It seems to me that the Gospel had never appeared to him in any very different light from that in which Mr. Erskine represents it."<sup>579</sup>

Near the end of *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine includes a long note on the subject of personal assurance which repeats many points that have already been made. He says that personal assurance is a knowledge in the believer that God is now looking on him with a Father's love and that he is not imputing sin to him. This is because God has given the believer "the righteous One, who hath finished transgression by tasting death for every man, to be my Head." He then equates this personal assurance with what is called in the Letter to the Hebrews as "being made perfect as pertaining to the conscience," and "having the conscience purged from dead works," and "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." (Heb. 9:9, 14 ; 10: 22) "The man must know himself loved and forgiven before he can serve

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<sup>578</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen From 1840 Till 1870*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 363.

<sup>579</sup> Hanna, William, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*, 4 vols., London: Hamilton Adams and Co., 1851, vol. 3, 246-247.

God.”<sup>580</sup> Erskine clarifies that this personal assurance does not add to the sacrifice, but that it is only the purging and perfecting of the conscience by the knowledge of the sacrifice. “The man is not a true worshipper without it, but his sin has been atoned for without it.”<sup>581</sup> Here, as well, Erskine complains that the term “Justification by faith” is an “improper expression” as it does not occur as a “substantive” in the Bible. It should be “righteousness by faith.” What “righteousness by faith” really means is confidence in God and that is having the conscience purged through personal faith in the atonement. He says that in Acts 13:38 there is announced “a general forgiveness of sins through Christ, and the 39th verse declares, that those only who believe in this announcement can have their consciences purged so as to have confidence before God . . . These two verses do not contradict each other; the first declares the unlimited forgiveness, the second, the personal assurance founded on it, in those who believe it.”<sup>582</sup>

#### E. Conclusions

Erskine holds a very high regard for the conscience and ultimately sees it as the door through which the living Word can enter the heart. For Erskine neither the conscience nor the will is bound as the will is bound in Calvinistic teaching. Erskine

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<sup>580</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 255.

<sup>581</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 256.

<sup>582</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 258.

seemed to find the place of conscience equally important in his thinking both before and after the revival.

Erskine's concept of conscience is inseparably linked to his understanding of the "First Bond" of the flesh. Erskine still sees the Spirit as active, but he is not the initiator that he is in Calvinism. Erskine believes that there is a "condemning light within" each man, the conscience. This is a "retribution which is continually going on in man's life." Each man has a "capacity to take part with" this light and to decide whether to "yield himself either to the Spirit of God, or to the spirit of darkness."<sup>583</sup> A more extensive analysis on the subject of conscience and the two "Bonds" is found in the conclusion of this thesis.

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<sup>583</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 42.

## Chapter IX:

## 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.<sup>584</sup> 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.

## A. 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

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<sup>584</sup> Cheyne, A. C., *The Transforming of the Kirk; Victorian Scotland's Religious Revolution*, Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1983, 88-9.

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.<sup>585</sup>

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 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.”<sup>586</sup> It would be a long time before there was any significant interest in Irving again. Irving’s followers formed the Catholic

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<sup>585</sup> Strachan, C. Gordon, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, 200-201.

<sup>586</sup> Carlyle, Thomas, *Reminiscences*, Vol. II, London: Macmillan and Co., 1887, 1-2.

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."<sup>587</sup> 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 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

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<sup>587</sup> Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1956, Vol. I, 151.

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.<sup>588</sup>

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 (Luke i.); in his miracles, and knowledge, and wisdom, which was by the anointing of the same Holy Ghost.<sup>589</sup>

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

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<sup>588</sup> 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.

<sup>589</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 121-122.

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.<sup>590</sup> 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.”<sup>591</sup> Erskine’s massive references to the 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,

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<sup>590</sup> Campbell, John McLeod, *The Nature of the Atonement and Its Relation to Remission of Sins and Eternal Life*, London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1959. (1<sup>st</sup> edition published by Macmillan & Co. in 1856.)

<sup>591</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 74.

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."<sup>592</sup> 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 stammering lips and another tongue will he

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<sup>592</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 203.

‘speak to this people.’ This is a sign to our age.”<sup>593</sup>

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.”<sup>594</sup> 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.<sup>595</sup> 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.<sup>596</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 204.

<sup>594</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *An Essay on Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, London: Ogle, Duncan & Co., 1822, 52-53.

<sup>595</sup> Erskine, *Essay on Faith*, 11.

<sup>596</sup> Erskine, *Essay on Faith*, 19.

Erskine spends much time in his writings developing his Christology with Christ as the federal Head of a new 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.<sup>597</sup>

## B. 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

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<sup>597</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1870. 14.

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 messages on the subject. At the time of their publication there was no expectation of the turmoil that they would produce.<sup>598</sup> 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.<sup>599</sup> 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*.<sup>600</sup> 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

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<sup>598</sup> Strachan, *Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 26.

<sup>599</sup> Strachan, *Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 35.

<sup>600</sup> Strachan, *Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 46.

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.<sup>601</sup>

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.”<sup>602</sup> 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.”<sup>603</sup> 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

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<sup>601</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vi.

<sup>602</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

<sup>603</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

was full of fellowship and community with us all his life long, and was not changed but by the resurrection.”<sup>604</sup> 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 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.<sup>605</sup> 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.”<sup>606</sup> 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.<sup>607</sup> 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

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<sup>604</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

<sup>605</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, vii.

<sup>606</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, viii.

<sup>607</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, viii.

away from God. And this doth Christ in the salvation of every sinner resist, overcome, and destroy the devil's power and work.<sup>608</sup>

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 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."<sup>609</sup> 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

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<sup>608</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, viii.

<sup>609</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 111-112.

all knowledge of God's inclinations and affections towards us, and defeats us of all heavenly influences whatsoever." <sup>610</sup> 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 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. <sup>611</sup>

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

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<sup>610</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 112.

<sup>611</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 112-113.

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.”<sup>612</sup> 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, not 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. 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.<sup>613</sup>

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

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<sup>612</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 114.

<sup>613</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 115-116.

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.”<sup>614</sup> 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 introduce man-worship, creature-worship, and all forms of idolatry.”<sup>615</sup> 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.”<sup>616</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 118.

<sup>615</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 118.

<sup>616</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 118-119.

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.<sup>617</sup>

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

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<sup>617</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 119.

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.”<sup>618</sup>

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 Ghost.”<sup>619</sup> 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.”<sup>620</sup> 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.”<sup>621</sup>

In comparing Erskine to Irving we cannot say that Erskine is not Trinitarian in

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<sup>618</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 119.

<sup>619</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 119.

<sup>620</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 120.

<sup>621</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 120.

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 fulness <sup>622</sup>

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 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.” <sup>623</sup> 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.” <sup>624</sup> He affirms the Trinity when he

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<sup>622</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 64-65.

<sup>623</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 90.

<sup>624</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 172.

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.<sup>625</sup>

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 with the Father, in condemning sin in the flesh, and a partaker in Christ’s righteousness.<sup>626</sup>

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.<sup>627</sup>

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

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<sup>625</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity Illustrated Especially from the Epistle To The Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 65-66.

<sup>626</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 228.

<sup>627</sup> This reference is used in a negative sense. Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 94.

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.<sup>628</sup>

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

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<sup>628</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 120.

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.”<sup>629</sup>

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 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.<sup>630</sup>

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.<sup>631</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 120.

<sup>630</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 33-34.

<sup>631</sup> Hart, Trevor, *The Teaching Father: An Introduction to the Theology of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1993. 21-22.

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. 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.”<sup>632</sup> 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.”<sup>633</sup>

“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.”<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part One, 175.

<sup>633</sup> Irving, Edward, *Christ's Holiness in the Flesh*, Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1831, 76.

<sup>634</sup> Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 78.

“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.”<sup>635</sup>

“Fourth and last proposition; that our Lord's human nature, being wholly and perfectly sanctified in the conception, underwent no process or progress of sanctification, as it needed none.”<sup>636</sup>

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.<sup>637</sup>

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.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 86.

<sup>636</sup> Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 91.

<sup>637</sup> Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 86.

<sup>638</sup> Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 91.

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 with Godhead, and hath fixed it there for ever by the resurrection."<sup>639</sup>

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."<sup>640</sup>

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

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<sup>639</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 88.

<sup>640</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 89.

kingdom, or children of the wicked one.<sup>641</sup>

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.”<sup>642</sup> 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.”<sup>643</sup>

### C. 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

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<sup>641</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 48.

<sup>642</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 90.

<sup>643</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, 90.

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 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.”<sup>644</sup> 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.<sup>645</sup> 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

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<sup>644</sup> Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 168.

<sup>645</sup> Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 168.

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 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.”<sup>646</sup>

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 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.’<sup>647</sup>

Irving reinforces his federal position saying, “He was the great Head of the regenerate race, the great Base of the regenerate world.”<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 48-49.

<sup>647</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 48.

<sup>648</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, 110.

#### D. 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 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"<sup>649</sup> 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

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<sup>649</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, Selected From The Manuscripts Of The Late Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876, 32-33.

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.”<sup>650</sup> 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 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.”<sup>651</sup> 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

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<sup>650</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 36.

<sup>651</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 37.

God.”<sup>652</sup> 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 usefulness and nowhere 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 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.

#### E. Conclusions

Erskine and Irving are in agreement regarding Christ as the Federal head of the

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<sup>652</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers*, 44.

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.”<sup>653</sup>

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 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.”<sup>654</sup> 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.<sup>655</sup> He calls universalism “a most damnable heresy” and says that election is no hindrance to the

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<sup>653</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 159-160.

<sup>654</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 106.

<sup>655</sup> Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 177-203.

“freeness of our door of entrance.”<sup>656</sup> Redemption is comprehensible and visible to us and election is invisible and incomprehensible and is revealed individually.<sup>657</sup> 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?’”<sup>658</sup> 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, 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.”<sup>659</sup> 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

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<sup>656</sup> Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 248.

<sup>657</sup> Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 251.

<sup>658</sup> Erskine, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, 5.

<sup>659</sup> Erskine, *The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man*, 14.

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.



Chapter X:  
Positive Statement Of Erskine's Pneumatology In Terms Of  
McIntyre's Categories

John McIntyre's taxonomy for pneumatology was presented in chapter five of this thesis. Chapter six and the appendix set forth the research of Erskine's writings regarding the Holy Spirit. In this chapter we shall determine precisely which category or categories most helpfully describe Erskine's pneumatology. There may be elements of particular models, patterns and sub-patterns of any pneumatology set forth by McIntyre found in Erskine's writings, but we are seeking a "best fit," one that fulfills most or all of the characteristics of a particular one.

A. The Biblical Model

"The scriptures can prescribe a range for our understanding of pneumatology and also set a norm for our expectations of experience of the Holy Spirit himself."

<sup>660</sup> This is what John McIntyre says regarding what he calls the Biblical Model of pneumatology. Is Thomas Erskine's pneumatology after the Biblical model? Of course it is. Erskine never tires of quoting significant passages of scripture verbatim

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<sup>660</sup> McIntyre, John, *The Shape of Pneumatology, Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997, 23.

in his writings. Erskine's "clear incarnational and Trinitarian adherence is more a product of first-hand engagement with the biblical text than concern for traditions."<sup>661</sup> Furthermore, many of these quotations are in reference to the Holy Spirit. For example, "Jesus answered, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of rather even the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born again; the Spirit breatheth where he will, and thou hearest his voice, but canst not tell whence he cometh nor whether he goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." —John iii. 5-8.<sup>662</sup> And, "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."—Rom. viii. 1. All the benedictions in the Bible are addressed to Christ's Spirit, and to the partakers in it; for example, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit," —Mt. v. 3 "Blessed are they that mourn." —Mt. v. 4.<sup>663</sup> There are multitudes of such references in Erskine's writings. His short tract, *On The Gifts Of The Spirit* is little more than a lengthy list of scriptural quotations on the Spirit. However, McIntyre is

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<sup>661</sup> Hart, Trevor A., General Editor, *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, *Erskine, Thomas* (1788-1870), Trevor A. Hart, 192.

<sup>662</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 5.

<sup>663</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity, Illustrated from Many Parts of Scripture, and Especially from the Epistle to the Romans*, London: Printed for James Duncan, Edinburgh: W. Innes, Glasgow: J. A. Begg, 1837, 24.

correct when he says, “The biblical accounts are unstructured and can only provide basic data or raw material for a pneumatology. Consequently pneumatologies built on biblical material are often very heterogeneous and are sometimes mutually compatible.”<sup>664</sup> Even though the scriptures can set a range “for our understanding of pneumatology” or “provide raw data,” the use of them is usually not distinctive enough to construct a pneumatology which is separate from any other pneumatology. This is true not only for other writers but for Thomas Erskine as well. We can not stop with an admission that Erskine’s pneumatology is Biblical; it must also fall into a more discrete category within McIntyre’s taxonomy. Having said this regarding the Biblical model we shall now proceed to the six Trinitarian models and the four dynamic models of pneumatology set forth by McIntyre with their various sub-patterns.

## B. The Trinitarian Model

The patterns of the Trinitarian Model consider the Holy Spirit in the context of the relationships between the members of the Godhead and their individual functions.

### 1. Traditional Pattern of the Trinitarian Hypostatic Model

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<sup>664</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 23.

McIntyre describes the Traditional Pattern of the Trinitarian hypostatic model as the pattern that has to do with the concept of hypostasis and is, of course, a product of the patristic period and has close connections with the Bible.<sup>665</sup> In this thought pattern the Holy Spirit has a personhood in the same manner as the Father and the Son. Inasmuch as this pattern has close connections with the Bible, and Erskine does make heavy use of scriptural quotations in his writings, it could be said that generally Erskine's pneumatology fits into this pattern. However, the same objection regarding the non-distinctive nature of the Biblical model could apply to this pattern as well due to its close connections with the Bible. But this is not the primary reason to reject this pattern as the pneumatological pattern conformed to by Erskine. The primary reason to reject this pattern as the one expressed by Erskine is his indifference to any concept even related to hypostasis. He says clearly, "The distinction of persons in the Divine nature we cannot comprehend."<sup>666</sup> Erskine does make references to the Holy Spirit which imply that he has personhood in "the same manner as the Father and the Son." For example, "even the name of King of kings, and Lord of lords. When we see this, and when we know that this was the forthcoming of the eternal love of Father, Son, and Spirit."<sup>667</sup> But these references are not for the purpose of developing a pneumatology and are often obscured in his dealing with the subject. For instance, "for the sight of that love is the very spirit of

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<sup>665</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 24.

<sup>666</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 74.

<sup>667</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 35.

Jesus.”<sup>668</sup> Erskine is not attempting to construct a Traditional Pattern of the Trinitarian model of pneumatology.

## 2. Christological Pattern

Another variation of the Trinitarian Hypostatic model of pneumatology is the Christological Pattern stressed by the Reformers which emphasizes the application of the gospel by the Holy Spirit.<sup>669</sup> This is another hypostatic model which Erskine is not interested in simply because it is an hypostatic model as explained above. This does not mean that Erskine does not see the Spirit applying the gospel to the human heart. He says such things as, “for the law is as much the voice of the Spirit as the gospel is.”<sup>670</sup> However, none of these references is an attempt to build a Christological Pattern of a pneumatology.

## 3. Revelation-Soteriological Pattern

Another variation on the Trinitarian Model, according to McIntyre, is the Revelation-Soteriological pattern which stresses the Spirit in the atonement and revelation.<sup>671</sup> Again here Erskine does mention the Holy Spirit in regard to the atonement or revelation. One such instance regarding the atonement would be “Jesus Christ was God, taking human nature into union with himself—and he made the

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<sup>668</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 48.

<sup>669</sup> McIntyre, John, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 24-25.

<sup>670</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 177.

<sup>671</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 25.

atonement. Christians are men who yield themselves up to be taken into union with God, by submitting themselves to be led by his Spirit —and thus they become righteous.”<sup>672</sup> An example regarding revelation would be, “even we, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit (the revelation of the truth and Spirit in Christ).”<sup>673</sup> These types of references are, of course, Biblical. However, they are not an attempt by Erskine to construct any kind of a Trinitarian model of a pneumatology especially in the light of the pneumatology which does emerge from Erskine’s writings which is decidedly dynamic in nature and which we shall discuss below.

#### 4. Social-Trinitarian Model / Substantival-personal pattern

The Social-Trinitarian Model with the Substantival-personal pattern sees the Holy Spirit as substantive in his own right and stress the “social trinity.” This can be confused with tri-theism.<sup>674</sup> In no place in Erskine’s writings does he approach a pneumatology which could in any way be construed as a form of tri-theism.

#### 5. Trinitarian Attribute or Predicate Pattern

The opposite to the above Model, the Trinitarian Attribute or Predicate Pattern sees the persons of the Trinity as merely attributes of God.<sup>675</sup> Although this is not an anti-Trinitarian monotheism as such, it essentially denies the individual

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<sup>672</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 231.

<sup>673</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 240.

<sup>674</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 27.

<sup>675</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 27.

personhood of the members of the Godhead. Erskine is too Biblical and too orthodox to approach this form of a pneumatology in any manner. Erskine “remained utterly orthodox in his adherence to the symbols of the Trinity and incarnation, and he offered as sensitive and meaning an account of the doctrine of the atonement as any.”<sup>676</sup> Erskine affirms his fundamental belief in the personhood of the Father and the Son throughout his writings. A minor work entitled *The Divine Son* is particularly affirmative of the Son. In no place does Erskine deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The concept behind the Trinitarian Attribute pattern would have been unlikely to have entered Erskine’s mind.

Thomas Erskine does not develop a pneumatology along Trinitarian lines in any of these categories. It is the lack of any expression of a Trinitarian Pneumatology in Erskine’s writings that establishes this. The greatest support for the lack of a traditional Trinitarian pneumatology in Erskine’s writings is what is *not* there. This I have found to be so after a detailed examination and evaluation of his works. Since Erskine refers to the actions of the Holy Spirit quite often, it is far more likely that Erskine does have some form of what McIntyre calls a Dynamic Pneumatology. Before considering more dynamic patterns we should first look at a bridge between the traditional and the dynamic in pneumatology; the Emperichoretic pattern.

### C. A Bridge: Emperichoretic Pneumatology

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<sup>676</sup> Hart, Trevor A., General Editor, *The Dictionary of Historical Theology, Erskine, Thomas (1788-1870)* by Trevor A. Hart , 191.

As we introduced it in chapter five, the Emperichoretic Pattern is a form of the Trinitarian Model which examines how the persons of the Trinity interpenetrate each other. This pattern is a more recent development and is developed by such theologians as John V. Taylor in his book *The Go-Between God*.<sup>677</sup> This pneumatology forms a sort of a bridge between any traditional Trinitarian pneumatology and the dynamic relational and ecclesial pneumatology which we shall proceed to show are the forms of Thomas Erskine's pneumatology.

Furthermore, the emphasis in Emperichoretic pneumatology on the interpenetration of the persons of the Godhead by the other members of the Godhead tends to obscure the distinction of the individual persons which the church fathers took such pains to distinguish. This necessarily brings about a more dynamic understanding of the Godhead. The writings of Bishop Taylor were not known to Thomas Erskine, but in a critical consideration of Erskine's pneumatology the theology of Taylor may help in understanding the distinctives of Erskine's thought.

John McIntyre says that although Taylor's Emperichoretic pneumatology in *The Go-Between God* is properly considered under the "taxonomic scheme" in *The Shape Of Pneumatology* as a Trinitarian pneumatology, it can also be considered as a Dynamic pneumatology because it is "unique and original" and actually combines some of the traits of the various Dynamic models. McIntyre says that Taylor begins his pneumatology "from below" in situations "in which our recognition and

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<sup>677</sup> McIntyre, John, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 197.

perception are heightened, and our minds and lives transformed.”<sup>678</sup> The pneumatology represented by Taylor’s pattern can be considered to be a bridge between traditional Trinitarian forms and the dynamic forms of the Relational and Ecclesial nature into which Thomas Erskine’s pneumatology fits so well.

Taylor says that there is a presence, a force, enabling people to see in a way that they could not see before. This force is not externalized, but within. Taylor begins by describing this force that heightens our recognition and perception and then he asks, “But what is this force that which causes me to see in a way in which I have not seen? . . . I recognize, I respond, I fall in love, I worship—yet it was not I who took the first step.” In this Taylor is speaking of an anonymous force and he continues, “Christians find it quite natural to give a personal name to this current of communication, this invisible go-between. They call him the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.” Is there some form of kenoticism for the Holy Spirit? Is it possible for the Holy Spirit to “empty” himself as some believe that Jesus did; to actually divest himself of his powers and to invest these powers directly into creation?<sup>679</sup> With this Taylor puts forward the kernel of his pneumatology. The way in which Taylor structures his book allows it to fit into McIntyre’s taxonomic scheme as Trinitarian. Ultimately McIntyre considers this pattern as the eighth sub-pattern of the Relational Or Operational Pattern of the Dynamic Models. To consider this pattern now is to

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<sup>678</sup> McIntyre, John, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 197.

<sup>679</sup> Taylor, John V., *The Go-Between God; The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*, London: SCM Press, 1972, 17.

take it out of McIntyre's order in his taxonomy; but since it can be a bridge, it is appropriate to consider it at this place in this thesis.

Is there any link to Thomas Erskine's "First Bond" in Emperichoretic pneumatology? How about Erskine's references to the "Word" which seem to replace the Holy Spirit from time to time in Erskine's writings? Regarding Erskine's famous "Bonds," there are two principal references as discussed in chapter seven of this thesis. Erskine refers to the "law of love" which united Adam and Eve with God before the fall. The fall broke this "law of love" and, therefore, the union between man and God. It took the incarnation to restore the union. "He united the two natures. On the one side He was one with the Godhead, on the other side, he was one with the fallen manhood. This was the plan of that living bond by which man was to be again united to God, and to be put in a condition of receiving out of his fullness."<sup>680</sup> Even though Jesus was not manifested as a human being for "four thousand years," the Word "entered into the nature immediately after the fall, and commenced his great work of the new creation, by bringing his Spirit close to every individual of the nature."<sup>681</sup> This enabled mankind to strive "in their consciences, and enabling them to join themselves to him, and in his strength to accept their punishment, and to sacrifice their self-will to the will of God."<sup>682</sup>

We can see traces of an anonymous force instilled in man after the

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<sup>680</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 58-59.

<sup>681</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 173.

<sup>682</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 173.

fall in Erskine's "First Bond." However, since Taylor lived and wrote considerably after Thomas Erskine it is difficult to prove any empirichoretic intentions on Erskine's part from such references by Erskine. Furthermore, Erskine does not equate the Holy Spirit with this force.

What about Erskine's reference to the "Word" which may replace the Holy Spirit in certain places in his writings? Here we can, perhaps, make a stronger case. The Word is linked to the conscience in Erskine as considered in chapters seven and eight of this thesis. Erskine says that "Conscience is the link between flesh and Spirit, the *entrance* by which the voice of the Word of God enters into man . . . It is the voice of the living Word not only giving direction as to what ought to be done, but also, in those who yield to it, working in them, not to will only, but to do, of his good pleasure." <sup>683</sup>

Erskine not only clarifies his understanding of the place of conscience but he also refers to the "voice of the living Word" which comes through the conscience from the Spirit to the human being. It has traces of the kenotic regarding the Spirit. It is definitely a contact between God and man. However, Erskine sees this as a communication of God to man "personally and consciously." <sup>684</sup> This may be a form

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<sup>683</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 40.

<sup>684</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 40.

of kenoticism regarding the Spirit, but it is not anonymous or subconscious. It is, however, apparently an inter-penetration of the persons of the Godhead expressed in a dynamic manner. The “Word” is usually used in reference to the Son. According to Taylor, the emperichoretic model stresses an inter-penetration of the persons of the Godhead and is at least partially dynamic. However, even with these considerations Erskine’s pneumatology is not strong enough in these emperichoretic traits to place it clearly within this category. Since the emperichoretic pattern can serve as a bridge, we should cross it to examine the decidedly dynamic models into which Erskine’s pneumatology clearly falls.

#### D. The Dynamic Model

According to McIntyre, Dynamic Models of pneumatology “deal with what the Holy Spirit *does*, and, while they do not claim in so many words to define the Holy Spirit, they effectively offer to us signs and evidences of how the Holy Spirit may be identified, and of where he may be found.”<sup>685</sup> In other words, a dynamic pneumatology refers to the acts of the Holy Spirit but does not provide a definition of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, traditionalists would not be likely to consider any of these to be a proper pneumatology. The pneumatology of Thomas Erskine is dynamic in that it refers richly to the actions of the Holy Spirit as reflected in the

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<sup>685</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 25.

original research statistics of this thesis found in the appendix. Erskine's pneumatology is highly Relational and Ecclesial in its dynamism.

### 1. The Relational or Operational Pattern

The Relational or Operational pattern first affirms the existence or divinity of the Holy Spirit and then describes his various operations particularly in regard to

person-to-person or person-to-nature contact. There are eight sub-patterns to this overall pattern.<sup>686</sup> Person-to-person contact between God and man is Erskine's passion. The possible overlaps in these sub-patterns may make it difficult to securely place Erskine's overall pneumatology into one particular sub-pattern. They are, however, all dynamic relational sub-patterns. Erskine's pneumatology is decidedly dynamic and relational. We shall attempt here to get a "best fit" for Erskine's pneumatology within one of these sub-patterns. We shall pass over the first sub-pattern as we begin these considerations and come back to it later.

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<sup>686</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 25-26.

#### a. The Second Sub-Pattern

In the second sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God involving himself in human volition and action, thought and feeling, as they occur in the natural and historical process. This pattern is most concerned with how God relates. According to McIntyre, “It is this dynamic implicating by God of himself in ordinary human existence, in the various details of thinking, feeling, and willing, in situations which we would be tempted to dismiss at a first regard as beyond the interest of almighty God, that is intended as the Holy Spirit.”<sup>687</sup> This pattern of this model is more vulnerable because of the naturalistic interpretations of things often held by most people and especially by scientists.

This second sub-pattern could be considered a good fit for Erskine’s pneumatology except for the existence of the third sub-pattern. There is a vulnerability here to a naturalistic interpretation especially when compared to what McIntyre calls the Trinitarian Hypostatic Christological Pattern stressed by the Reformers or the Trinitarian Revelation-Soteriological pattern which stresses the Spirit in the atonement and revelation. The third sub-pattern with its emphases is a more accurate fit to Erskine’s pneumatology.

#### b. The Third Sub-Pattern

In the third sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God identifying himself

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<sup>687</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 177.

with human thoughts, feelings, and actions, or the natural occasions referred to in the second pattern. He adds that this could merely be a stronger form of the previous pattern. The primal use of identification is in relation to the incarnation. This highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit as he is the one who makes the identification possible on an ongoing basis. The whole of God is involved and there is no impoverishment to God. As the agent God feels the situation more deeply although probably differently. He understands more clearly and is even moved to act more effectively.<sup>688</sup> This is indeed a stronger form of the previous pattern. The great identification of God with human thoughts, feelings, and actions found in the incarnation is key.

The importance of the Holy Spirit as the one who makes this identification

possible on an ongoing basis is typical of Erskine. Even the emphasis upon God as feeling man's condition more deeply is typical of Erskine. Certainly Erskine sees all of God as being involved. An example of these emphases can be seen in Erskine's thinking on the suffering of Christ and the place of the Holy Spirit in communicating the essence of Christ's sufferings to his body, the church. In *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine speaks of the "death pang"

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<sup>688</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 181-82.

which Christ dealt to the flesh. Christ loved the law because he saw in it the character of his heavenly Father. Because Christ was “born of the Spirit” he could see the character of God in every feature of the law. Christ condemned with a “painful hatred” everything which was against the law. This was because “the whole human nature was pressing on him, as belonging to himself, and as it was all an unclean thing, as it was altogether sinful, with the exception of that part which the Spirit had sanctified as his own personal body.”<sup>689</sup> Since Erskine sees Christ as absolutely sharing the human nature with all mankind, he sees Christ’s dealing with sin as a personal issue. He shares this view with Edward Irving.<sup>690</sup> It is the Spirit who sanctifies Christ and causes him to embrace this pang of pain and to pass it on to the church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ was burdened with the human nature and its sin. Yet he “embraced every pang” which “put his seal” on the righteousness of God. “He thus bore our sins and carried our sorrows. . . . The sinful fallen nature could only be restored through penal sufferings received in the spirit of holy love, which is just the eternal uncondemned life of God.”<sup>691</sup> Erskine says that we must accept this pang in order to share the redemption which is in Christ.

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<sup>689</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 46.

<sup>690</sup> Please see chapter 9 on the Christology of Erskine and Irving.

<sup>691</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 47.

*Accepting our punishment*, is just being of one mind with God, in hating and condemning sin, and longing for its destruction. It is submitting ourselves to the process of its destruction, and setting our seals to the righteousness of God in the process. *It is the death-pang of the crucified head thrilling through the member, and accomplishing in it what it did in the head. . . .* 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.* <sup>692</sup>

Erskine ends this intense section regarding the pang which eradicates sin with the statement, “The thrill of this pang is the sin-consuming power of the Spirit, and until it passes through the creature, the power of sin remains in it, and must exclude it from God.” <sup>693</sup> Here is the Holy Spirit initiating the action in Christ in a total identification with mankind. The primal use of identification is in relation to the incarnation. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes the identification possible on an

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<sup>692</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 48-49.

<sup>693</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 49.

ongoing basis. As the agent God indeed feels the situation more deeply although probably differently. God understands more clearly and is even moved to act more effectively. Erskine's pneumatology is thoroughly dynamic. It is relational in the terms of this sub-pattern.

### c. The Fourth Sub-Pattern And The Ecclesial Polarities

#### Pattern

The fourth sub-pattern of the relational model is somewhat applicable to Erskine's pneumatology and has a strong similarity to the Ecclesial Polarities Pattern which is a dynamic pattern that is not listed as a sub-pattern of the relational model by McIntyre. An example of the Ecclesial Polarities pattern is the Charismatic Pattern.<sup>694</sup> They shall be considered together here because of the similarity.

In the fourth sub-pattern the Holy Spirit is God relating his people to one another in fellowship and communion. This is a more complex notion of the Holy Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit as the place of God's uniting his people and it may be taken three ways, either as communion with the Holy Spirit, communion of the Holy Spirit in community, or that the communion

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<sup>694</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 26.

is the Holy Spirit. This unites and maintains both the horizontal and the vertical aspects of our communion. <sup>695</sup>

The Ecclesial Polarities pattern goes into the relationships between the Holy Spirit and the Church and is very close to a Biblical model except that it goes beyond the Biblical model by citing the experiences and history of the Church and developing some sort of understanding of how the Spirit operates in certain periods or movements. <sup>696</sup> McIntyre cites the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in this regard.

<sup>697</sup> Erskine sees the Holy Spirit as the one who provides spiritual communion to the church very strongly in his post-revival writings.

In Erskine's short work *On The Gifts Of The Spirit* (1830) published just before *The Brazen Serpent* (1831) he mentions the Spirit of God 26 times, 19 of which refer to an action of the Spirit. Most all of these are from scriptural quotations which are dense with references to the Holy Spirit. Particularly central is a quote from I Corinthians 12:

“ Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed ; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of

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<sup>695</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 183-184.

<sup>696</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 26.

<sup>697</sup> Interview with John McIntyre on 9 October 2000, Edinburgh, Scotland.

operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.<sup>698</sup>

In his discussion on the continuation of the gifts in the church Erskine reasons, “besides I cannot easily conceive that Paul should have been taught by the Spirit to leave on record such a detailed system of rules for the right use of spiritual gifts in the church, if those gifts were to be done away so soon after he had written the Epistle.”<sup>699</sup> We can clearly see here not only a dynamic relational pneumatology but an ecclesial one as well. Erskine ties in the works of the Spirit with one of his favorite themes, the dependence of the body of Christ on the Head, when he says, “The common dependence of the whole body on the Head, and the mutual dependence of each member on the others, are beautifully and powerfully taught by the diversity of operations wrought by the one Spirit throughout the body.”<sup>700</sup> He uses the gifts of tongues and interpretation as an example of the mutual dependence that exists within the body of Christ. “Their mutual dependence was thus taught them, so also by their feeling themselves to be merely channels of the utterance of the Spirit, their own individual emptiness, their common dependence on their Head, and their federal strength from union with Him, would be irresistibly impressed on them.”<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *On the Gifts of the Spirit*, Greenock: R. B. Lusk, Glasgow: W. Collins, M. Ogle, and G. Gallie, Edinburgh: J. Lindsay & Co., London: J. Nisbet, 1830, 6-7.

<sup>699</sup> Erskine, *On the Gifts of the Spirit*, 11.

<sup>700</sup> Erskine, *On the Gifts of the Spirit*, 24.

<sup>701</sup> Erskine, *On the Gifts of the Spirit*, 24.

In *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine expresses his ecclesial pneumatology regarding the revival saying, “and yet 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.”<sup>702</sup> This is strongly related to Erskine’s eschatology as he continues, “I am compelled to regard these things as strong confirming signs of a great approaching crisis—which I believe to be no less than the reappearing of the Son of man upon the earth.”<sup>703</sup>

As enumerated in chapter six and the appendix of this thesis, in *The Brazen Serpent* the Holy Spirit as the one who gives spiritual “birth” is predominant. “Love is the birth from above, the everlasting life, and enmity is the natural and universal condition of fallen man, until born of the Spirit. Love is the Spirit. “God so *loved* the world as to give His Son,” and he that believes this love, receives it into him, he receives the Spirit, he is born of the Spirit, he hath everlasting life.”<sup>704</sup> Also the Holy Spirit as one who “grieves” or who can be grieved by humans. For example, “The Spirit of holy love in him grieved over all sin and contended against it; and specially it grieved over and contended against sin in the nature of which he had

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<sup>702</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 203.

<sup>703</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 203.

<sup>704</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 254.

become the Head; and wherever that Spirit is, there will be the same grieving over sin, and the same contending against it. And so a fellowship in Christ's sufferings is not a grief because Christ suffered, it is not a grieving that Christ grieved so much on our account; no, it is having the *same grief*, and this no man can possibly have until he has in him that very living Spirit which grieved in Jesus.”<sup>705</sup> In *The Brazen Serpent* The Holy Spirit also “Indwells, manifests, breathes,” and “works.” In *The Doctrine Of Election* verbs associated with the Holy Spirit like “quickens,” “speaks,” “witnesses,” lead the list. “There is no self-quickening power in man, and that there is no good in man but what is of the direct acting of the Spirit of God.”<sup>706</sup> . . . He is the quickening Spirit; and it is only in knowing him that we know the mind of God.”<sup>707</sup> We have “sweet fellowship” with Christ because we are quickened by the Spirit.

The knowledge of God’s love in all things having made them the channels of sweet fellowship with him. The curse belongs to the *old man* and his life, and accordingly we find it assumed in the following verse, that he who is separated from *him*, and united to *Christ*, the

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<sup>705</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 160.

<sup>706</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 37.

<sup>707</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 45.

quickening Spirit, partaking in his new life, is out from under it. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.”<sup>708</sup>

In *The Doctrine Of Election* the Holy Spirit also “operates, teaches, leads, breathes,” and “lights.”

#### D. Definition of Erskine’s Pneumatology In Terms Of McIntyre’s Categories

Therefore, Erskine’s pneumatology is first of all primarily dynamic instead of traditional. As a dynamic pneumatology it fits into the relational sub-pattern two, “God involving himself in human volition and action, thought and feeling, as they occur in the natural and historical process,”<sup>709</sup> and the relational sub-pattern three, “God identifying himself with human thoughts, feelings, and actions, or the natural occasions referred to” in the second pattern.<sup>710</sup> Also, as a dynamic pneumatology it is also clearly

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<sup>708</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election*, 222-223.

<sup>709</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 177.

<sup>710</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 181-182.

ecclesial which corresponds to the Ecclesial Polarities pattern itself which is closely connected with the relational sub-pattern four, “God relating his people to one another in fellowship and communion.”<sup>711</sup> The pneumatology of Thomas Erskine is dynamic, relational and ecclesial in terms of McIntyre’s categories.

#### E. The Model, Patterns and Sub-Patterns From McIntyre’s Taxonomy Rejected As

##### Forms Of Erskine’s Pneumatology

The sub-patterns of the relational pattern which we have rejected regarding Erskine’s pneumatology are these.

##### 1. The First Sub-Pattern

The Holy Spirit is God himself relating himself to the specific details of human existence within the natural process and world history.<sup>712</sup> Even though Erskine is interested in world history there is not enough evidence on a pneumatology

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<sup>711</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 183-184.

<sup>712</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 173.

in this area in Erskine's writings to qualify entering his pneumatology in this category of McIntyre's.

## 2. The Fifth Sub-Pattern

The Holy Spirit is God himself preparing us beforehand for the creative, redemptive and sanctifying relationship with himself which is his purpose for us in Jesus Christ. This pattern picks up some elements of other patterns but specializes in spiritual preparation, the prevenient presence of the Holy Spirit in us and enabling us. In this theology the Holy Spirit goes ahead to prepare for salvation and is not following behind.<sup>713</sup> Erskine's "First Bond" is the preparatory element in his theology. The "First Bond," as discussed in chapter seven of this thesis, is the bond of the flesh which every human has in common with Christ. It is the "First Bond" which enables a person to choose Christ and thus form the "Second Bond" of the Spirit. However, Erskine does not attribute the formation or presence of the "First Bond" to the Holy Spirit. It is a common element in human nature or the flesh. Therefore, we can not fit Erskine's pneumatology into this sub-pattern.

## 3. The Sixth Sub-Pattern

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<sup>713</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 185.

The Holy Spirit is God the Creator himself setting us in a right and responsible relation to the animal and natural order.<sup>714</sup> There is virtually none of this type of pneumatology found in the writings of Erskine.

#### 4. The Seventh Sub-Pattern

The Holy Spirit is also the means by which the categories of personality and spirit are made applicable to God. Since McIntyre helps define this sub-pattern as one in which there is some necessity to redefine what a person is, we can say that Erskine is not interested in any such exercise and there is no pneumatology from this sub-pattern included in his writings.<sup>715</sup>

#### 5. The Eighth Sub-Pattern

The Emperichoretic pattern already discussed above as a bridge between traditional Trinitarian models and Dynamic models is, for all practical purposes, rejected as a discrete category for Erskine's pneumatology.

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<sup>714</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 190.

<sup>715</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 193.

## 6. The Definitional Substantive Model

McIntyre also suggests the existence of a Definitional Substantive Model which can be evolved from these sub-patterns and envisions the Holy Spirit acting in the world as an autonomous substance.<sup>716</sup> Erskine does not see the Holy Spirit as autonomous.

Leaving the sub-patterns of the Relational pattern there remain only two patterns described by McIntyre to consider.

## 7. The Liberation Pattern

The Liberation pattern of Dynamic pneumatology concerns itself with the emerging nations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is unlikely to be anticipated directly in the writings of Thomas Erskine. The French revolution which had such a profound effect on Erskine was, of course, a distant precursor of such 20<sup>th</sup> century movements, but the pattern had not been fully developed. Additionally, attributing the actions of the Holy Spirit to such movements would not have been a tendency for Erskine in his time.

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<sup>716</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 203.

## 8. The Secular Pattern

Finally there is the Secular Pattern. McIntyre defines the Secular Pattern as one that is “outside the four walls of the Church and freed from the apron-string of the Church’s sacred theology. . . wherever truth, beauty, goodness, justice, mercy and love are to be found.” He says that he wants to add this pattern since it is most often overlooked by an “exclusivist Christian approach.”<sup>717</sup> As the sovereign God no Christian theologian would deny the ability or the right of the Spirit of God to operate in the realms of truth, beauty, goodness, justice, mercy and love although these actions may not bring a salvific effect in the human beings involved. There may be a hint of some sort of a Dynamic Secular pattern of Pneumatology in Erskine as he was well read and a man of his time and often noticed evidences of truth, beauty, goodness, justice, mercy and love in various places with which this pattern is concerned, but he had no interest in developing it in a way which we can discern as a pneumatological pattern.

From the research which is reflected in this thesis the dynamic relational and ecclesial pneumatology of Thomas Erskine is clear and pronounced.

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<sup>717</sup> McIntyre, *Shape of Pneumatology*, 28.

## Conclusions

### A. Overview

Thomas Erskine was born in 1788 and died peacefully in his bed at Linlathen in 1870 aged 82. His last words were, “O, Lord my God ... Jesus ... Lord Jesus.”<sup>718</sup> His entire life was one of comparative leisure. His early years were spent in country estates and castles such as Airth and Cardross. He was surrounded mostly by women. His father had died when he was three years old. His grandmother, his mother, his sisters, his only brother (just a year older), his many cousins (mostly female) were his companions. He was known for his gentleness. He sought an understanding of God chiefly as a loving Father. Erskine spent his teenage years in the affluent New

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<sup>718</sup> Hart Trevor, *The Teaching Father*, Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1993, 16.

Town in Edinburgh which was a leader in the Europe of the day. He began his own search of the scriptures after a temporary lapse in confidence in the spiritual teaching of his childhood. After this study he was stronger than ever in his confidence in the scriptures. He was proficient at law and became Laird of Linlathen at the age of 28 with the death of his brother and beloved companion James. His last male companion of childhood was gone. In time Erskine's dislike for the abuses of theology and his search for the loving heavenly Father effected his life and teaching profoundly.

The Intellectual and Cultural Context of Erskine's time were influenced by Romanticism in Europe and The Great Disruption and the West Coast Revival in Scotland. Romanticism was a long and massive movement that is difficult to localize. It looked to nature and to the inner life of human beings. The Great Disruption changed Scotland forever because its ultimate failure broke the power of the Kirk and left Scotland even more vulnerable to Westminster's influences. The West Country revival which began in 1829 captivated Erskine. He strongly affirmed the manifestations of the Spirit in his writings, but soon recanted of these views due to the lack of fruit that he observed among the participants of the revival.

The theological context of Erskine's Europe was largely shaped by the Pietism of Schleiermacher. The call to inwardness emphasized an individual faith that was not controlled by an ecclesiastical hierarchy. The human conscience was awakened as "the candle of the Lord."<sup>719</sup> Feelings were important in the spiritual life

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<sup>719</sup> Pelikan, Jaroslav, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989, 162.

and a dependence upon God was primary. Erskine believed in a “dependent reciprocity” upon God by the believer accompanied by faith and a belief in the eternal Sonship of Christ. Erskine agreed with Schleiermacher regarding the ultimate salvation of every human being. However, before Schleiermacher Erskine’s Scotland was influenced by the Marrow men of the previous century. Thomas Boston was the most published and the most prominent of the Marrow men. The Marrow men confirmed a federal theology and softened the harsher Calvinism of the day. The believer’s spiritual union with God was important to the Marrow men and to Thomas Erskine. Erskine agreed with his long time friend and correspondent F. D. Maurice on many things. For Maurice, as well as for Erskine, a gospel based on fear was not good news.<sup>720</sup>

In order to examine Erskine’s pneumatology it was necessary to adopt some sort of taxonomy to use as a screening device for Erskine’s writings. The categories outlined by Professor John McIntyre of Edinburgh in his book *The Shape Of Pneumatology* were decided upon. McIntyre presents eleven models or patterns for pneumatology.<sup>721</sup> The first model, the Biblical model, is too broad to describe particular pneumatologies. Of the six Trinitarian patterns Erskine’s writings do not reflect enough developed Trinitarian traits regarding the Holy Spirit to qualify. McIntyre defines a dynamic pneumatology as one which stresses the actions of the

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<sup>720</sup> Winslow, Donald F., *Thomas Erskine: Advocate for the Character of God*, New York: University Press of America, 1993, 104.

<sup>721</sup> McIntyre, John, *The Shape of Pneumatology, Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997.

Holy Spirit and is not based on a traditional analysis and comparison of the Persons within the Godhead.

Of the four dynamic patterns Erskine's pneumatology qualifies strongly as a relational pneumatology particularly in the third sub-pattern in which the Holy Spirit identifies himself with human thoughts, feelings and actions. Erskine's pneumatology, particularly in his post-revival writings, also qualifies strongly as a dynamic ecclesial polarities pattern which stresses the Holy Spirit's actions within the church as the informal body of Christ. This is closely related to the fourth sub-pattern of the relational pattern in which the Holy Spirit is God relating his people to one another in fellowship and communion. The decision to include Erskine's pneumatology under these categories is based on the extensive research and analysis of Erskine's writings as found in this thesis. This research illustrates a strong dynamic pneumatology by Erskine's use of verbs associated with the Holy Spirit in his writings. In his six major books and in his letters Erskine refers to the Holy Spirit 1,371 times. In 519 of these times he attributes an action word, a verb, to the Holy Spirit using a total of 156 different verbs. Our research shows that Erskine consistently saw the Holy Spirit as much more active in his post-revival writings. Verbs such as "speaks, births, quickens, witnesses, grieves, breathes, manifests, teaches, indwells, operates gives, leads, works, acts" and "comes"<sup>722</sup> are all prominent and display a marked dynamic pneumatology.

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<sup>722</sup> See Appendix section H.

Compared to Irving Erskine's Pneumatology is not as clear. Irving approaches his pneumatology structurally from a clear Trinitarian position. Although Irving and Erskine are in essential agreement on most of their Christology and Pneumatology, they differ in their approach and clarity. Irving believes in “universal reconciliation” or a free “door of entrance” to salvation as does Erskine.<sup>723</sup> However, after universal reconciliation Irving believes in particular election and he makes a convincing case that the true humanity and the atoning life and sacrifice of Christ is the basis for both doctrines.

Erskine and Irving are not in agreement on one vital issue which is universalism. Irving calls universalism “a most damnable heresy” and says that election is no hindrance to the “freeness of our door of entrance.”<sup>724</sup> Erskine goes along with Schleiermacher in affirming a softer conclusion and believing in a continuing chance for salvation after death.<sup>725</sup>

#### B. The Relationship Of The Role Of Conscience And Of The Word To The “First Bond” In The Writings Of Thomas Erskine: Analyzed With Critical Commentary

Erskine seeks to clarify the mysterious implantation of the “First Bond” in *The*

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<sup>723</sup> Irving, Edward, *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving in Five Volumes*, London: Alexander Strahan, 1865, *The Doctrine of The Incarnation Opened*, 248.

<sup>724</sup> Irving, *Collected Writings: The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, 248.

<sup>725</sup> Schleiermacher, Friedrich, *The Christian Faith*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, [1830] 1999, 721.

*Doctrine Of Election* as a part of his federal theology when he says, “the Word made flesh, who though not personally manifested for four thousand years, yet entered into the nature immediately after the fall, and commenced his great work of the new creation.”<sup>726</sup> This is his version of a federal theology. The implantation is made in the race once-for-all four thousand years prior to its consummation in the incarnation. The result of this implantation is to bring “his Spirit close to every individual of the nature, striving in their consciences, and enabling them to join themselves to him, and in his strength to accept their punishment, and to sacrifice their self-will to the will of God.”<sup>727</sup> Therefore, it eventually results in an individual application for each member of the race. We really cannot determine exactly what this “bringing . . . close” actually is but it would seem to indicate a certain availability of the Spirit which is stronger than it would have been without the “First Bond” thus enabling the person to join with God, etc. However, it does seem clear that the establishment of the “First Bond” is a federal issue and that the consequences of it are individual.

Since Erskine develops his teaching of the “First” and “Second Bond” in his *The Brazen Serpent* while the development of the True Light is found in his *The Doctrine of Election*, in the final analysis we must combine these two factors and other developments in order to attempt to understand the totality of Erskine’s thinking on the matter. Chapter Seven above gives an explanation of

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<sup>726</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Doctrine of Election and Its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity Illustrated Especially from the Epistle To The Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 173.

<sup>727</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 173.

the “First Bond” and in Chapter Eight the concept of conscience is discussed.

What follows is a summary and final analysis of the several issues involved.

In *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine says,

And here is a remarkable thing. Those who are connected with Christ by the Spirit are living members, and they shall be raised to the resurrection of life, which is the first resurrection *by the Spirit that dwelleth in them*, see Rom. viii. 11, Rev. xx. 6. And those who are not connected with Christ by the Spirit, shall be raised also, but not to the resurrection of life, nor by the Spirit, for they have it not, but, it would seem, simply by their connexion with his flesh, to be judged for their contempt of all that was contained in that connexion.<sup>728</sup>

Erskine attributes the power of the “First Bond” as the reason for the general resurrection of unbelievers. A belief in the resurrection of unbelievers is not unusual. However, Erskine believes that this resurrection is possible, even inevitable, because of the “First Bond” of the flesh which every person has with God.

The actual individual recognition of the closeness which is given in this “First Bond” is a free act of the human will, through the entrance or door of the conscience, which establishes the ongoing never-ending second or spiritual bond. He even refers to the “preaching of the gospel” as being part of the “First Bond.”

And we have farther seen that the knowledge of this bond produces the second bond, namely, that of the Spirit, which is life everlasting. The preaching, therefore, of this first bond of the flesh, is, in fact, the preaching of the gospel—it is the preaching of that provision, by the knowledge of which the creature becomes the habitation of God through the Spirit, and it is in the knowledge of this provision that the only true

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<sup>728</sup> Erskine, Erskine, Thomas, *The Brazen Serpent; Or, Life Coming Through Death*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1831, 99.

knowledge of God consists, for we can only know God aright when we know Him who came in our flesh to declare the Father.<sup>729</sup>

In addition to the Light, the conscience and the Word are integral to Erskine's concept of the "First Bond." Erskine recognizes the Word in its three forms as the Logos, the Word Incarnate, and the written Word. In his preface to the first edition of *The Doctrine Of Election* Erskine says that he has not entered into any "striking speculations" but has kept the place of the "commentator or expositor" and "confining myself entirely within the range of the written word and human consciousness."<sup>730</sup> Erskine believes that he has taken a strictly scriptural approach to the subject of election. He says, "I have never forgotten that the Scriptures were given, not to supersede or stand in place of the rational conscience, but to awaken and enlighten it." Erskine does not believe in submitting to human authority unless it is confirmed by the conscience. For Erskine it is a matter of "the views which I bring from Scripture, in the light of the rational conscience, that is, to show the relation which they bear to it."<sup>731</sup> He also says, "But if men were called on by Jesus to try what he himself personally taught them by a light within them, we are surely bound to try by the same light the things which have come down to us through the written Word. And those who would teach the things which are contained in the written word ought to remember, that their teaching is really of no use unless they make them clear

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<sup>729</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 100.

<sup>730</sup> Erskine, *Election*, xi-xii.

<sup>731</sup> Erskine, *Election*, xi-xii.

to the consciences of the learners, showing in the things taught a righteousness of God which the consciences of the learners can apprehend and approve.”<sup>732</sup>

Erskine sees conscience as more than a part of human nature; it has a “semblance of faithfulness” to a higher reality.

Men are prone to act on the supposition that the voice in their conscience is a faculty of their own nature, like their feelings of benevolence or compassion, and thus even when they follow it, they are not brought to a sense of dependence on a divine authority, which is their true creaturely condition, nor led to seek acquaintance with the speaker. They do not understand the honour, and thus lose the blessing, even when there is a certain semblance of faithfulness to the voice. But it is only a semblance, for every one may know that the voice in his conscience is of a different order from the faculties or feelings of his own mind, *because* he knows that, however weakly it sounds, he sins, unless he humbles before it the highest and strongest movements of his spirit.<sup>733</sup>

For Erskine, the conscience is more than a moral arbiter and the living Word is indispensable in completing the process.

Even to those who do, in a certain way, acknowledge the oneness of God with the voice in conscience, there is a danger of so identifying him with this voice, as to bring him down to the level of a mere intimation of right and wrong, instead of rising up through the voice to an acquaintance with himself from whom the voice comes, and who sends it forth for the express purpose of leading man up to himself. Conscience is the link between flesh and spirit, the *entrance* by which the voice of the Word of God enters into man, calling for the submission of his heart and will, and through which he would communicate himself personally and consciously, if man would submit his heart and will, and seek His manifestation. It is the voice of the living Word not only giving direction as to what ought to be done, but

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<sup>732</sup> Erskine, *Election*, xv-xvi.

<sup>733</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 40.

also, in those who yield to it, working in them, not to will only, but to do, of his good pleasure.<sup>734</sup>

Therefore, Erskine holds a very high regard for the conscience and ultimately sees it as the entrance or door through which the living Word can enter the heart. For Erskine neither the conscience nor the will is bound as the will is bound in Calvinistic teaching. Man has free choice. Erskine differs from the Arminian in this regard because it is his “First Bond” which enables the choice.

Erskine says that his goal was to present a biblical view on the subject of election. He says that he has, “entered largely into the subject of Conscience, and the adaptation of the Scriptures to it, and into the consideration of those general and elementary views of the condition of man, as a moral and responsible being, which the Scriptures . . . expressly set forth.” He is also careful to state that he is “scarcely attempting to touch the metaphysical questions relating to Free Will and Necessity.” This would necessarily exclude much commentary on the actions of the Holy Spirit upon the human will or conscience.<sup>735</sup>

Erskine still sees the Spirit as active, but he is not the initiator that he is in Calvinism. Since Erskine believes that there is a “condemning light within” each man, the conscience, there is a “retribution which is continually going on in man's

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<sup>734</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 40.

<sup>735</sup> Erskine, *Election*, xii.

life.” Each man has a “capacity to take part with” this light and to decide whether to “yield himself either to the Spirit of God, or to the spirit of darkness.”<sup>736</sup>

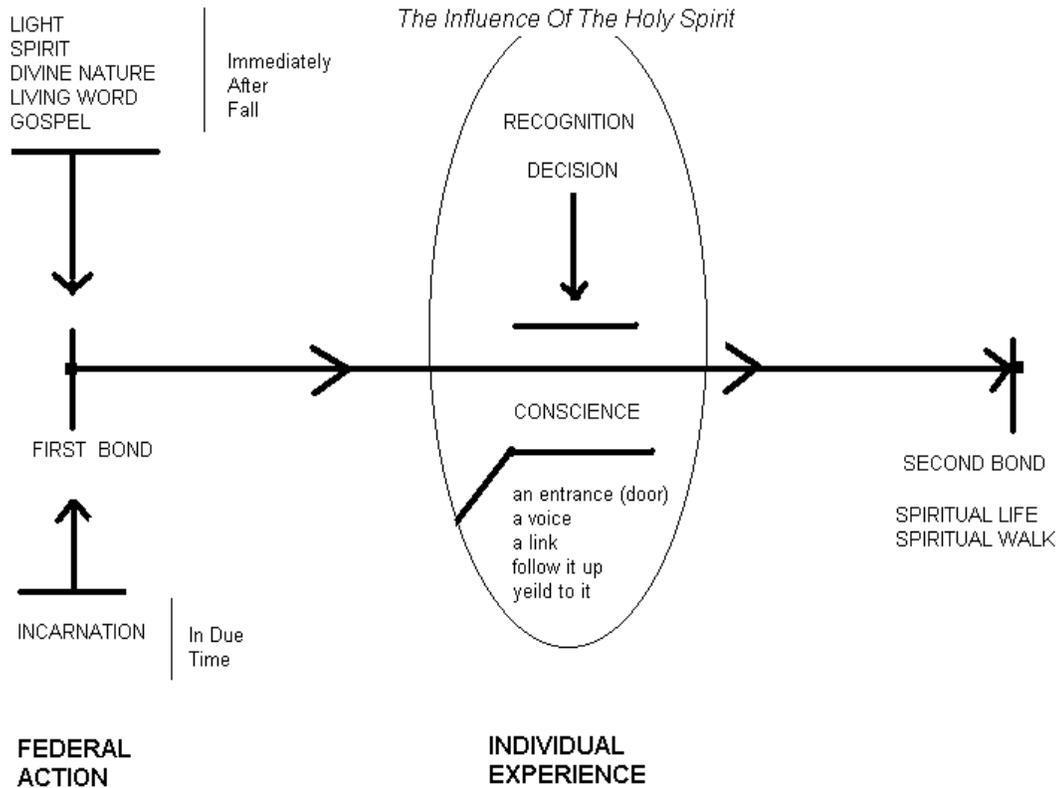
Erskine sees the nearness of the Word as actually being resident with every man and, in fact, as a necessary precondition of conversion, providing the capacity for response. This contributes to an under-developed pneumatology in his theology as the Holy Spirit’s convicting power to draw people to Christ and the nearness of the Word are one and the same.

It is also clear at this point that Erskine does not consider the conscience to be identical with the Spirit of God or the living Word. If it is a door by which they can enter, then it can not be the living Word or the Spirit himself which are themselves virtually identical. Indeed nineteenth century theology can tend to blur the distinction between “conscience” and the “voice of God” within us. However, Erskine will maintain a distinction, if not for the sake of the Spirit alone, at least for the sake of the living Word.

In a final analysis a graphical representation of the factors in this entire process may be helpful.

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<sup>736</sup> Erskine, *Election*, 42.



As represented in the above figure the following appear to be identical as included in the Godhead; the Light, the Spirit, the Divine Nature and the Living Word. The Gospel is the printed or verbal form of the Word. These form the federal “First Bond” which is affirmed, in due time, by the Incarnation. The conscience is the door, which having been influenced by the “First Bond,” enables the individual under the influence of the Holy Spirit to accept salvation. The conscience is explained as an entrance or door and a voice or a link which one follows up or yields to in order

to experience individual salvation which results in a spiritual life or a spiritual walk. It is the opinion of this writer that in Erskine's thinking the human conscience is already there but it is activated by the presence of the Word as a result of the "First Bond" so that it operates at a deeper and much more important and powerful level. It is not the mere umpire of morality, it is the door to a great salvation which will create a righteous being.

Erskine himself admits to creating some confusion in his writings when he says,

In looking over the book since it has been finished, I see that I have not always kept to the same meaning of the word *conscience*, that I have used it sometimes to signify the Spirit of God in man, and sometimes to signify the man's own apprehension of the mind of the Spirit in him, which is often a very different thing. But though this is a fault in point of accuracy, I do not think that it produces any confusion in the meaning, as the context always shows which of these senses is intended.<sup>737</sup>

This writer can not agree that the context always makes the meaning clear. However, the explanation above sorts out much of the ambiguity and helps clarify Erskine's thinking.

What then are Erskine's primary faults in his unique soteriology and resulting pneumatology? The biggest fault is his use of different words for the same concepts or influences which produce the "First Bond." Other theologians might see these words as describing very different things. The second fault is his unsubstantiated concept of what this writer calls "the mysterious implantation." Since this is unique to Erskine, he should have made his reasons for it clearer. Instead, he merely presumes its veracity and continues on. Thirdly, the conscience as an entrance or door is not clearly substantiated; it too is Erskine's own and not adequately supported in the reasoning process found in his writings.

Erskine's "First Bond" does not put the creative miracle of regeneration of the New Testament era just previous to the point of the individual's conversion as we find it in Calvinism. Man is not entirely dead to God before conversion as the

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<sup>737</sup> Erskine, *Election*, xiii.

Calvinist maintains. For Erskine God is at work in us and in the world prior to conversion and it is the dynamic of the “First Bond” which enables man to recognize the calling of God and to accept what has already been placed there in order to form the “Second Bond.” If there is a creative miracle in Erskine’s soteriology, it is the mysterious implantation in mankind just after the fall. Therefore, Erskine’s pneumatology is significantly “lower” than in a Calvinistic pneumatology.

This is not the salvation of the Arminian in which the individual heart and mind is capable of recognizing the truth of the gospel when it is presented, without the “First Bond,” and then does or does not freely choose to allow the renewing power of God to operate in one’s life.

Still, with Erskine our salvation is not inevitable; there is still a need for God to work in us. Uniquely even though Erskine leaves a place for the work of the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith he does make the establishment of the “First Bond” in a federal sense the more important factor. This makes regeneration at the moment of faith possible by individual choice in the process as illustrated above with the aid of the Spirit of God. In other words, his emphasis shifts the center of regenerative gravity from the moment of faith to that moment at which the “First Bond” was established with the race.

We must remember, as McLeod Campbell pointed out, Erskine has a tendency to “bend everything . . . to the thoughts that for the time absorbed him.” Because, “so strong was the heat of his cherished convictions, that before them the toughest, most obdurate text gave way, melted and fused into the mould which his bias had framed for it.”<sup>738</sup> So strong was Erskine’s conviction of the “Bonds” that, in his mind, everything must be made to agree with it.

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<sup>738</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen From 1840 Till 1870*, William Hanna, Ed., Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 363.

### C. The Shape Of Erskine's Theology

Erskine's doctrine of God is Binitarian instead of Trinitarian. He recognizes fully the personhood of the Father and the Son in the Godhead, but he does not fully recognize the Holy Spirit as a co-equal member of the Godhead. To begin to understand this we shall look first at Erskine's "The Divine Son." Erskine makes several very telling statements in this work. He begins his argument when he says,

"I am persuaded that the highest and truest reason will adhere to the principle that there can be no goodness of which God is not the proper fountain. And if so, we must also admit that for every active form of goodness in God there is a corresponding recipient form; consequently that there must be in the divine nature distinct personalities representing these two forms, otherwise there could be no possibility either of their exercise or of their manifestation, in Himself apart from the creature."<sup>739</sup>

His starting place here is goodness. This is a moral argument not a theological one, which Erskine shares with the romantic movement and the moderates in the Church of Scotland. He acknowledges God as the fountain of goodness. He then constructs a form in which there must be in God both an active and a passive form of this fountain of goodness in order for God to function as the fountain of goodness in and of himself apart from the creation. If there is to be a "corresponding recipient form" of God, then

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<sup>739</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *The Spiritual Order And Other Papers; Selected From The Manuscripts Of The Late Thomas Erskine Of Linlathen*, Second Edition, "The Divine Son," Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876, 34-35.

“there must be in the divine nature distinct personalities representing these two forms.” Erskine assigns personalities to both the giving and receiving attributes of God which he equates to the Father and the Son. In doing this the personhood of the Father and the Son is confirmed in his theology. However, there is no corresponding personhood of the Spirit in Erskine’s theology. Furthermore, in doing this Erskine incipiently denies the true divinity of the Son by making the Son the receiver. This belies the title of the work, “The Divine Son.” If the Son can only be the receiver of this goodness, then he is not Himself the fountain of life. But, we shall put this aside in order to see the end of Erskine’s argument and how it reflects on the Spirit. The next stage in Erskine’s argument is this.

But if we were intended to know God and to live in relations with Him (and that we are, the history of the race, as well as each man's consciousness, abundantly testifies), it is impossible to arrive otherwise at any idea whatever of God. <sup>740</sup>

In referring to the history of the race he echoes the influence of the “First Bond” which, according to him, was planted in man just after the fall. He is so confident that he states that no other conclusions are possible. In considering Erskine’s approach to the Godhead we should remember John McLeod Campbell’s words when he said that once Erskine’s thoughts were fixed, he would “bend everything to them.” Campbell added that this was especially true regarding Erskine’s interpretation of the

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<sup>740</sup> Erskine, “Divine Son,” 36.

scriptures.<sup>741</sup>

In a further development of Erskine's Giver-Receiver concept of God Erskine 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, 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.<sup>742</sup>

For Erskine our concept of divine goodness is built on our understanding of human goodness which is expanded “into infinity.” This is a reasonable argument and it proceeds from the natural to the spiritual. It does, however, continue to rely on man's ability to extrapolate God instead of relying on revelation. This emphasis as to the reasonableness of the truth is a characteristic of Erskine's time. Erskine accepts the powers attributed to reason by those around him. From this he derives the “two hemispheres in the Divine nature,” not three equal parts, but two, which are the Father and the Son. Here again, Erskine appears to allow for no third reality within God.

Figures 1-3 following offer a graphical representation of three possible views

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<sup>741</sup> Erskine, *Letters*, 1840-1870, 363.

<sup>742</sup> Erskine, “Divine Son,” Italics mine, 36.

of the Godhead. Suppose we consider Figure 1 as a representation of a traditional Western or lineal representation with the Father on the top and the Son and the Spirit lined up below the Father. Furthermore, suppose we consider Figure 2 as representative of a more Eastern concept which is a less linear and more fluid representation of the Godhead. Here each person is co-equal and interactive. There are advantages to both the Western and Eastern concepts. Most importantly each of them finds a place for the Spirit. Figure 3 represents a model of the Godhead intimated by Thomas Erskine in "The Divine Son". In this conception the Father and the Son constitute the upper and under "two hemispheres" in the Divine nature with the Spirit as more of a substance than a person uniting them.

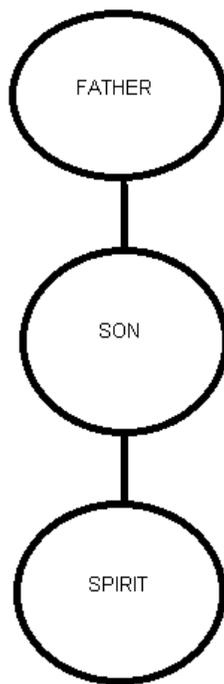


FIG. 1

THE WESTERN MODEL

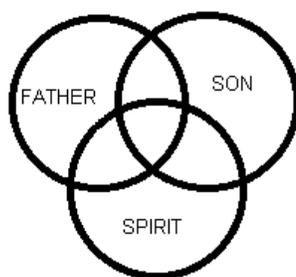


FIG. 2

THE EASTERN MODEL

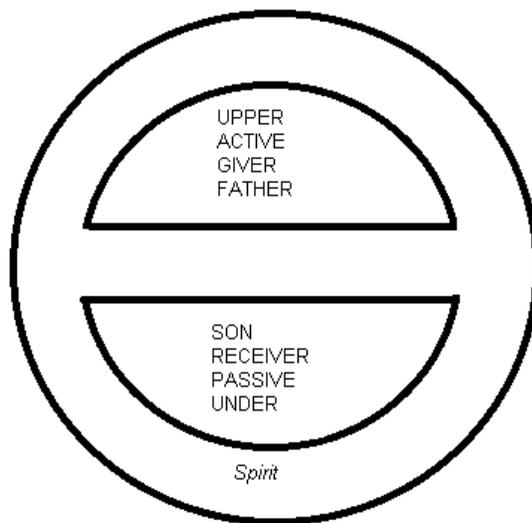


FIG. 3

ERSKINE'S BINITARIAN MODEL

Erskine is convinced of his argument because love has to have “sympathy” to be complete. Erskine has not departed from his moral argument. As in the above model Erskine does not leave the Spirit of God out completely. He says,

This idea of God as 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.<sup>743</sup>

So the Spirit does unite the personalities of the Father and the Son thus giving acceptance in Erskine's theology to the actuality of the Spirit. However, in this context the Spirit is more of a force than a person and continues to confirm the dynamic aspect of Erskine's pneumatology. The Spirit is a force uniting the two Persons of the Father and the Son. Throughout Erskine's works the Spirit is represented as more of a force than a Person. Since "spiritual creation" is included in the Son, then we share in this love relationship. Erskine says in another place,

He 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.<sup>744</sup>

The Spirit is equated to "the eternal life." Again, less of a personality here. The eternal life is the human Jesus' entrance into the presence of the Father since his natural life which he shares with all men is under condemnation and can not appear in the presence of the Father. Consequently, the fellowship of love that exists between the Father and the Son is extended to the "spiritual creation" because "spiritual creation stands in the Son."

"When St. John wrote "God is Love," he was no doubt contemplating the Divine Father pouring out the eternal treasures of His love and wisdom into the all-embracing and all-sympathising capacity of the

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<sup>743</sup> Erskine, "Divine Son," 36-37.

<sup>744</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 64.

Divine Son, who receives it not for himself alone, but as the Head and First-Begotten of the whole creation. . . . There can be no full and perfect revelation of Fatherhood but in and through Sonship, and thus the revelation of an eternal Son in the Divine Nature itself,—a Son in whom the whole spiritual family has its root and standing,—gives an assurance of the unchangeable fatherly relation of God to man which nothing else could have given.<sup>745</sup>

This is in agreement with Erskine’s Federal Theology; Christ is the Head of the new creation. It is a confirmation of his Christology; the Son receives the treasures of the Father. It is a confirmation of his soteriology; man receives from the Father through the Son who shares man’s flesh or mortal nature in the “First Bond” and can therefore share the life as a result of the Second spiritual bond.

Now let us think what the right place must be for such moral intelligences to occupy. If they are created to be good, and if there is no goodness but of God, surely their goodness must be that of the Son,—loving and sympathising obedience, trustful dependence, a filial will entering into and adopting the purpose of the Father; and their capacity of goodness must consist in the indwelling of the Son, whose presence in them both confers on them his own filial relation to the Father and communicates to them the character of his own goodness. Thus we see how Christian morality rises out of and is dependent on Christian theology; and how those precepts which direct the doing of the most ordinary actions of humanity have, according to the Christian theory, their root in these claims of Jesus.<sup>746</sup>

The communicating of the Divine goodness to mankind through the indwelling Son is the basis for Christian morality. Erskine’s method of arriving at his conclusions is

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<sup>745</sup> Erskine, “Divine Son,” 38-39.

<sup>746</sup> Erskine, “Divine Son,” 39-40.

shaped by his preconceptions about the bond of the flesh and his concept of the essentially Binitarian nature of God. Erskine's belief in the "moral and spiritual education of man" by God is a part of his theology and of this particular argument.

We may venture then to say, that, even apart from all authority, we have reason to believe that there exist in the Divine nature these personalities of Father and Son; and the light which this fact throws on the whole conception of the spiritual world, and of man's place in it, and relation to it, shows us that the revelation of it is no superfluous information, but is of the highest importance in the moral and spiritual education of man.<sup>747</sup>

Here Erskine sees just two Personalities in the Divine nature and man's place in this scheme is to be educated morally and spiritually by God. Furthermore, just as the life of God is a substance to be transmitted to man through the Son so is the Spirit of God likened more to a substance and not a Person.

The spiritual creation constitutes the body of the Son, its countless individualities going to make up the organs and members of that body in all its fair proportions. For he is "the beginning of the creation of God," the point, so to speak, in the Divine nature from which the creation proceeds. And as he 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.<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> Erskine, "Divine Son," 42-43.

<sup>748</sup> Erskine, "Divine Son," 43-44.

In all of his writings Erskine only refers to the “Trinity” one time and that is in a negative context. In discussing the difference between a moral argument and a metaphysical argument he says, “I may instance the ordinary statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, as an illustration of what I mean. It seems difficult to conceive that any man should read through the New Testament candidly and attentively, without being convinced that this doctrine is essential to and implied in every part of the system.” On the one hand Erskine sees that the doctrine of the Trinity is “essential to and implied” throughout the New Testament theological system. On the other hand he says, “But it is not so difficult to conceive, that although his mind is perfectly satisfied on this point, he may yet, if his religious knowledge is exclusively derived from the Bible, feel a little surprised and staggered, when he for the first time reads the terms in which it is announced / in the articles and confessions of all Protestant churches.”<sup>749</sup> Even if the fact of the “essential and implied” existence of the Trinity is accepted, Erskine says that if a person first encounters the terms in which the doctrine is articulated in the confessions of the church he will, in fact, be misled. This is because, “ In these summaries, the doctrine in question is stated, by itself, divested of all its scriptural accompaniments; and is made to bear simply on the nature of the Divine essence, and the mysterious fact of the existence of Three in One.” The missing element in creeds and confessions is that they do not include the scriptural context that helps develop moral character. “It is evident that

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<sup>749</sup> Erskine, Erskine, Thomas, *Remarks On The Internal Evidence For The Truth Of Revealed Religion*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829, 94-95.

this fact, taken by itself, cannot in the smallest degree tend to develop the Divine character, and therefore cannot make any moral impression on our minds.”<sup>750</sup> This is why Erskine tends to avoid the traditional approach in his theology which can have the effect of slighting a pneumatology.

For instance, there are twenty-six references to “person” in *The Brazen Serpent* with many more in the plural, or references to “personal, personality” etc. Many of these refer to the person of Jesus, others to human persons regarding their involvement with Jesus or God. This book, *The Brazen Serpent*, is Erskine’s celebration of the Spirit written when he was at the height of his excitement concerning the West Country revival. Whatever high pneumatology he would ever have will be expressed in this book. However, none of these references to “person” refer to the Spirit. The thirteen references to “person” in *The Doctrine Of Election*, Erskine’s other major post-revival work, all refer to a human person or to Christ.<sup>751</sup>

One time in his writings Erskine refers to the “anti-trinity.”

And thus the flesh appears as the third person of the anti-trinity—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—the devil, the world, and the flesh—the dragon being opposed to God, as the fountain of life—the beast being opposed to Jesus, as the anointed king—and the false prophet, who continually urges on us the delusions of the dragon and the beast, being opposed to the spirit, who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us.<sup>752</sup>

Erskine is willing to consider three influences that oppose God under the title of

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<sup>750</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 95.

<sup>751</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine Of Election*.

<sup>752</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 219.

“anti-trinity” but studiously avoids references to the actual Trinity except in the one negative instance already discussed above.

Erskine even speaks of how the Spirit dwelled in Jesus “personally” and “federally,” but “personally” refers to the person of Jesus and not to the Spirit.

This same life was in him before his resurrection—it was the life by which he lived, but he was not the Fountain of life, he was not the Head of life, until his resurrection. 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.<sup>753</sup>

Therefore, in Erskine we see a lot of a dynamic “spirit”, but no “personal” Spirit. Erskine sees a two Person, or Binitarian, Godhead, with an dynamic auxiliary Spirit.

#### D. Analysis

Erskine’s pneumatology is closely related to his Christology. His Christology is higher than his pneumatology. Since he perceives of the “living Word” as the force that enters into man bringing new life, this diminishes the place of the Holy Spirit in the process. “It is the voice of the living Word not only giving direction as to what

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<sup>753</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 159-160.

ought to be done, but also, in those who yield to it, working in them, not to will only, but to do, of his good pleasure.”<sup>754</sup> His pneumatology is not intentional but merely reflected in his talk about the actions of the Spirit. Erskine was unable to follow Irving’s more thoroughly Trinitarian doctrine because he was proud to be unfettered by the restraints of a traditional reformed theology.

In comparing Erskine’s pneumatology to that of Irving and Campbell we are forced to conclude that Erskine’s is a one-of-a-kind pneumatology. Irving’s is strongly Trinitarian in nature although there are certainly many dynamic mentions of the Spirit in his writings as well. Campbell accepts traditional concepts of the Holy Spirit but does not dwell on this much. In his *The Nature Of The Atonement*, he barely mentions the Holy Spirit. He speaks of the fellowship we have in Christ but not directly about the Person who makes this possible. In the conclusions to *The Nature Of The Atonement* where he speaks of the value of mystery in the faith he repeats the Trinitarian formula twice, “God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” but this appears to be more out of habit and a sense of theological propriety than conviction.<sup>755</sup> Erskine mentions the Holy Spirit dynamically many times in his writings as reflected in the research of this thesis. He simply does not develop a traditional pneumatology. This would seem to put Erskine solidly in the middle with a strong dynamic pneumatology between Irving on the one hand with both a

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<sup>754</sup> Erskine, *The Doctrine Of Election*, 40.

<sup>755</sup> Campbell, John McLeod, *The Nature Of The Atonement And Its Relation To Remission Of Sins And Eternal Life*, London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1959. (1<sup>st</sup> edition published by Macmillan & Co. in 1856.), 321-323.

traditional and dynamic pneumatology and Campbell who rarely speaks of the Holy Spirit at all.

In order to repair Thomas Erskine's particular theology a mixture of the dynamic and traditional is required. Erskine's friend and contemporary Edward Irving can offer some help in this regard. Edward Irving organizes his, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature* in four parts. In the first part he discusses the doctrine of Jesus' human nature as it is derived from scripture. Then he confirms this doctrine from the creeds of the church, both of the primitive church and of the Church of Scotland. Then he carefully considers the objections to the true doctrine of the human nature of Christ. This includes objections arising out of beliefs in the miraculous conception, the nature of atonement, and the value of Christ's sufferings. Based on this foundation Irving then considers other doctrines which "stand or fall" with the doctrine of the human nature of Christ. The first three of these considerations are the bearing upon the work of the Father, the bearing on the work of the Son, and the bearing on the work of the Holy Ghost. Regarding the doctrine of the human nature of Christ and its bearing on the work of the Holy Ghost, Irving says,

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. . . .He serveth himself

with Holy-Ghost power which the Father bestows upon him. . . . 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;<sup>756</sup>

This excerpt, and indeed Irving's entire method, is a thoroughly Trinitarian approach which is founded in scripture and in the creeds and it is dynamic as well, while Erskine's only concern is to be scriptural in accord with his own moral and reasonable presuppositions. Irving finishes this book with the bearing of the doctrine on the scriptures, on faith and union with Christ and on regeneration and holiness before he summarizes and concludes his work and argument. He finishes all of his arguments in a thoroughly systematic manner.<sup>757</sup>

At one point Irving says, "Surely this systematic divinity is becoming as noxious a thing as the scholastic divinity ever was."<sup>758</sup> Irving is taking his fellow theologians to task for departing from a scriptural view of Christ Himself. Irving believes that they were doing this because they were using a "convenient logical form" instead of adhering to the testimony of scripture.<sup>759</sup>

Thomas Erskine's theology is free of any error resulting from following any external systematic theology does not prefer this. Erskine is not enslaved to any

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<sup>756</sup> Irving, Edward, *The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*, London: Printed by Ellerton and Henderson for Baldwin and Cradock, 1830, 118-119.

<sup>757</sup> Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine Of Our Lord's Human Nature*.

<sup>758</sup> Irving, *Our Lord's Human Nature*, 101.

<sup>759</sup> Irving, *Our Lord's Human Nature*, 101.

“convenient logical form.” He demands the freedom to search the scripture under the guidance of his own conscience. His Christology is taken directly from the New Testament and is not bound by any imposed systematic form. Perhaps the greatest advantage of this is Erskine’s understanding of the true humanity of Christ which is at the heart of his federal theology. “The doctrine of the human nature of Jesus Christ, is not merely that he is of the *same nature, of the same flesh and blood* with every man; but that he has *part* of that *one nature, that one flesh and blood*, of which, as a great whole, all are partakers.”<sup>760</sup>

It is in his anthropology and soteriology that Erskine isolates himself from his reformed contemporaries because of his convictions concerning the “First Bond.” In his anthropology man is not found to be dead in sin which changes the very nature of the needed salvation. Therefore, in the opinion of this writer, the weakness in Erskine’s pneumatology comes from two major factors. The first factor is the power of the “First Bond” which eliminates the need for the power of a convicting and resurrecting Spirit among mankind with the attending weaknesses as discussed above. The second major factor is his self-avowed aversion to creedal sources. Erskine does not trust any dependency upon doctrine which stems from “church articles.” He says, “I do not talk of the propriety or impropriety of having church articles, but the evils which spring from receiving impressions of religion exclusively or chiefly from this source.”<sup>761</sup> Erskine prefers the Bible to creeds and church articles. He says that the

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<sup>760</sup> Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 39.

<sup>761</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 94.

Bible always presents doctrines in connection with the character of God and the character that God expects to be formed in man and that they have a “majesty” and “consistency and truth” which further affirm their authority. Erskine says that it is “far otherwise” with the creeds and articles. Creeds and articles were written to deal with error and “metaphysical speculations” in religion and were intended only to be “barriers against the encroachment of erroneous opinions.” The doctrines in creeds and articles are not presented with reference to the “great object in the Bible,—the regeneration of the human heart, by the knowledge of the Divine character.” <sup>762</sup> They indicate no moral cause or effect. <sup>763</sup>

Here is a key to Erskine’s thinking. He is most interested in moral cause and effect in the Christian life. He is not interested in metaphysical speculations. A traditional Trinitarian pneumatology is more of a metaphysical speculation delving into the relationship between the members of the Godhead and issues of personhood. A dynamic pneumatology deals with the actions of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people in order to cause them to become believers and to enable spiritual growth. However, the creeds and counsels of the church have been her guiding light from patristic times and should not be so easily discarded.

His resulting dynamic pneumatology can be noticed by a cursory scan of Erskine’s writings and can be more clearly seen when his works are analyzed as in

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<sup>762</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 93.

<sup>763</sup> Erskine, *Internal Evidence*, 93-94.

this thesis. Such an analysis uncovers a preference on Erskine's part to see the Spirit in His actions as recorded in the Scriptures.

#### E. Looking Forward

Today we can appropriate Erskine's work into a theology which affirms Christ's humanity from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from the writings of Hugh Ross McIntosh and D.M. Baillie and which moves on into the theology of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century which is an outgrowth of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement with their emphasis on the dynamism of the Spirit of God. Mackintosh, who affirmed the true humanity of Christ as did Irving, Campbell, and Erskine, says,

For it is only as the Spirit – one with Christ Himself – comes to perpetuate the spiritual presence of the Lord, and to cast light on the unending significance of His work, that we are quite liberated from the impersonal and external, whether it be lifeless doctrine or the historically verified events of an ever-receding past. Only through the Spirit have we contact with the living Christ. . . . The coming of the Spirit, however, is not to be conceived as forming a compensation or substitute for the absent Christ; it is the higher mode in which Christ Himself is present. "I will come to you" and "when the Comforter is come" occur interchangeably, and any doctrine of the Trinity which finds that an insuperable obstacle stands so far convicted of tritheism.<sup>764</sup>

Mackintosh here blends the traditional Trinitarian with the dynamic in an effective

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<sup>764</sup> Mackintosh, Hugh Ross, *The Doctrine Of The Person Of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: T. And T. Clark, 1951, 373-374.

way. These words were published in 1912.

D.M. Baillie says

A new thing had come into the world with Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh; and the new thing, while dependent on him, was not confined to the days of His flesh or to those who had known Him in the flesh: it is available in an even fuller form to everybody, everywhere, and in every age, through the Holy Spirit. If we go on to ask whether there is any difference between having God's presence with us, having Christ dwelling in us, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, we are bound to answer that the New Testament makes no clear distinction. It is not that no distinction is made between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but all three come at every point in the full Christian experience of God. It is not the case of three separate experiences: it is all one.<sup>765</sup>

Here we also see traditional distinctions with dynamic workings. This was published in 1948.

John V. Taylor agrees in *The Go-Between God* that he is critical of the dogma or the lack of theology in the classical Pentecostal movement. However, "he remains Pentecostal in practice and believes it to be vital for a truly ecumenical Christianity to understand Pentecostalism as an expression of New Testament forms of religious belief and practice which might be following a very independent line, but could not be ruled out on a priori theological grounds!"<sup>766</sup> Indeed, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Pentecostalism and charismatic thinking does lack sound theology. And although it

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<sup>765</sup> Baillie, D. M., *God Was In Christ*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948, 153-154.

<sup>766</sup> Taylor, John V., *The Go-Between God; The Holy Spirit And The Christian Mission*, London, SCM Press, 1972, 200-201.

should “not be ruled out on a priori theological grounds”, there is much wisdom available from Irving, Campbell, Thomas Erskine, Mackintosh and Baillie for the Pentecostal and charismatic movements which have an enduring influence today. The many errors of those movements can move towards correction with a sound pneumatology which is balanced with both the traditional Trinitarian and dynamic elements. As Taylor says, “But, positively, this constantly recurring desire for the charismatic gifts must surely be seen as an insistence upon the wholeness of man. No man, least of all Christian man, can live fully in that protracted paranoia which exalts and idealizes his cerebral life and demotes his instinctual being. True growth is not from the intuitive to the rational, but always towards an integration of the two. We never leave primitive man behind but must learn to travel with him in the company.”<sup>767</sup> Taylor speaks to us from 1972 which was the height of the charismatic movement.

#### F. Finally

All in all, Erskine was a man of his time. He was influenced by the spirit of his time in which Romanticism, the *Marrow*, Schleiermacher, Zinzendorf, the Great Disruption, the West Coast Revival and others were significant factors. His love for the Scriptures and his zeal for the Spirit of God shaped his own unique theology. His two “Bonds” are perhaps his most precious concepts. Yet, in the opinion of this writer, we should reject the entire construct of the two “Bonds” and Erskine’s

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<sup>767</sup> Taylor, *The Go-Between God; The Holy*, 220-221.

understanding of the role of conscience for the more tested Reformed position in which we are dead in our sins and totally at the mercy of the Godhead. We should certainly stand more in Irving's direction than in Erskine's regarding the Trinitarian, as opposed to a Binitarian, approach to Christian theology. In this writer's opinion Erskine's position on universalism is unacceptable. Yet, Erskine had much to offer in the dynamism of his pneumatology to future theologians. His overall approach leaves little need or room for a strong formal pneumatology. The primary value of Erskine's pneumatology lies in his zealous appreciation of the Spirit as seen dynamically in the overall context of his works.

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## APPENDIX

Special Summary Table

Lists Of Verbs NOTE: ALL ON EXCEL FILE EXCEPT A,B,H,Q

- A - “Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God In Erskine's 6 Major Published Works And His Letters” (Intermixed)
- B - “Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God In Erskine's 6 Major Published Works And His Letters” (Four Lists)
- C - “Summary List Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Erskine’s Six Major Published Works And His Letters”
- D - “The Use Of The Word ‘Spirit’ In The Works Of Thomas Erskine” is a consolidated list of nineteen pages
- E - “The Use Of The Word ‘Spirit’ In The 3 Major Pre-Revival Published Works Of Thomas Erskine”
- F - “The Use Of The Word ‘Spirit’ In The 3 Major Post-Revival Published Works Of Thomas Erskine”
- G - “Summary List Of Verbs Used By Erskine In The 6 Major Published Works Before And After He Observed The Revival”
- H - “The Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God After And Before The Revival In The Six Major Published Works Of Thomas Erskine (2 occurrences and above)”
- I - “Erskine’s Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In *Essay On Faith*”
- J - “Erskine’s Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In *Unconditional Freeness*”
- K - “Erskine’s Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In *Internal Evidence*”
- L - “Erskine’s Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In *Gifts Of The Spirit*”
- M - “Erskine’s Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In *Brazen Serpent*”
- N - “Erskine’s Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In *Doctrine Of Election-1878*”

- O - “Erskine’s Use Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Doctrine Of Election 1837 (in red) As Compared To Doctrine Of Election 1878 (in green)”
- P - “Summary List Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Erskine’s Letters (Pre-Revival In Black, Post-Revival In Green)”
- Q - “The Verbs Associated With The Spirit Of God After And Before The Revival In The Letters Of Thomas Erskine (2 occurrences and above)”
- R - “List Of Verbs Referring To The Spirit Of God In Erskine’s Minor Published Works (Pre-Revival Works In Black, Post-Revival Works In Green)”
- S - “References To ‘Spirit’ In Erskine's Writings Where The Holy Spirit Is Not The Actor”

## STATISTICAL TABLES

A

The six major pre-revival (in black print) and post-revival published works

(IN BLACK PRINT) *The Letters Of Thomas Erskine, 1800-1840*, (in red print) and *1840-1870* (IN RED PRINT)

accesses, 2-accompanies, **ACCOMPLISHES**, 2-acts, 6-ACTS, **2-ACTS**, **ADOPTS**, 3-animates, 2-ANIMATES, 2-APPREHENDS, **2-APPREHENDS**, ASSISTS, **ASSURES**, BAPTIZES, 2-BEARS, 15-BIRTHS, **2-BIRTHS**, blesses, BLESSES, breaks, breathes, 12-BREATHES, **3-BREATHES**, 2-BRINGS, 3-BRUISES, CALLS, CAUSES, **CHARGES**, CLEANSES, **CLEANSSES**, 6-COMES, comes, **2-COMES**, COMFORTS, **COMFORTS**, 2-COMMUNICATES, COMPELS, CONCEIVES, CONFORMS, **CONFORMS**, conforms, confronts, 5-CONNECTS, 2-CONSTRAINS, CONSUMES, **CONTAINS**, 4-CONTENDS, CONTESTS, COUNSELS, **CRUCIFIES**, DECLARES, DEFENDS, 3-DELIVERS, 3-DESIRES, DETECTS, DIRECTS, **DISCERNs**, DISPOSES, 2-DOES, **2-DOES**, 4-DRAWS, **2-DRAWS**, 2-DWELLS, **DWELLS**, **EFFECTS**, empowers, **EMPOWERS**, ENABLES, enforces, enlightens, 3-ENLIGHTENS, **2-ENLIGHTENS**, 2-ENTERS, **2-ENTERS**, EXERCISES, EXHORTS, EXPLAINS, 2-EXPRESSES, 2-FALLS, **fills**, **2-FILLS**, FITS, flows, 2-FLOWS, **FLOWS**, FORETELLS, 3-FREES, 3-gives, 7-GIVES, **2-GIVES**, 13-GRIEVES, grieves, **2-GRIEVES**, 4-GUIDES, **2-GUIDES**, HELPS, **2-HELPS**, HOPES, IMBUES, IMPREGNATES, impresses, indwells, 7-INDWELLS, **3-INDWELLS**, 3-INFLUENCES, 6-influences, INHABITS, INSPIRES, instructs, INTERCEDES, INTERPRETS, **INTERPRETS**, 3-INTIMATES, introduces, JOINS, judges, **KNOCKS**, 4-KNOWS, **knows**, 7-LEADS, leads, **2-LEADS**, LIBERATES, 2-LIFTS, 5-LIGHTS, 2-LONGS, LOOKS, LOVES, **LOVES**, 4-MAKES, **MAKES**, 10-MANIFESTS, **4-MANIFESTS**, **MEETS**, 2-MORTIFIES, 2-MOULDS, MOVES, NARRATES, 2-opens, 4-operates, 8-OPERATES, **2-OPERATES**, OPPOSES, **ORDERS**, overcomes, **PERSEVERES**, PERFORMS, POSSESSES, PRAYS, PREPARES,

2-presents, **PRESERVES**, **PRESSES**, **PROCEEDS**, 2-PRODUCES, promises, prophecies, PROSTRATES, **PROTESTS**, **PURIFIES**, 15-QUICKENS, 5-quickens, **3-QUICKENS**, 4-RAISES, RECOGNIZES, **REFRESHES**, REGENERATES, REIGNS, renews, **renews**, **REPRODUCES**, RESCUES, 2-RESURRECTS, 3-REVEALS, 2-reveals, **REVEALS**, **reveals**, 4-SANCTIFIES, 2-sanctifies, **SANCTIFIES**, saves, 3-SEALS, 3-SEARCHES, **SEEKS**, SHEDS, SHOWS, **shows**, 20-SPEAKS, speaks, **speaks**, **8-SPEAKS**, STANDS, **STIRS**, **4-STRENGTHENS**, 5-STRIVES, **5-STRIVES**, STRUGGLES, SUFFERS, **SUFFERS**, SUSTAINS, SWELLS, **SYMPATHIZES**, 9-TEACHES, 4-teaches, **2-teaches**, **5-TEACHES**, 2-TESTIFIES, **2-TESTIFIES**, 2-transforms, UNITES, UPHOLDS, VISITS, WARS, waters, 13-WITNESSES, **3-WITNESSES**, 11-WORKS, 2-works, **3-WORKS**

\* “Births” and “Speaks” taken from all expressions such as “born of the Spirit” and “the Spirit said.”

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## B

In The 3 Major Pre-Revival Published Works

accesses, 2-acts, 3-animates, blesses, breaks, breathes, confronts, empowers, enforces, enlightens, flows, 3-gives, grieves, impresses, indwells, 6-influences, instructs, introduces, judges, leads, 2-opens, 4-operates, 2-presents, promises, prophecies, 5-quickens, renews, 2-reveals, 2-sanctifies, saves, seals, shows, speaks, strives, 4-teaches, 2-transforms, waters, 2-works

Total 66

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#### In The 3 Major Post-Revival Published Works

6-ACTS, 2-ANIMATES, 2-APPREHENDS, ASSISTS, BAPTIZES, 2-BEARS, 15-BIRTHS, BLESSES, 12-BREATHES, 2-BRINGS, 3-BRUISES, CALLS, CAUSES, CLEANSSES, 6-COMES, COMFORTS, 2-COMMUNICATES, COMPELS, CONCEIVES, CONFORMS, 5-CONNECTS, 2-CONSTRAINS, CONSUMES, 4-CONTENDS, CONTESTS, COUNSELS, 2-DECLARES, DEFENDS, 3-DELIVERS, 3-DESIRES, DETECTS, DIRECTS, DISPOSES,

2-DOES, 4-DRAWS, 2-DWELLS, ENABLES, 3-ENLIGHTENS, 2-ENTERS, EXERCISES, EXHORTS, EXPLAINS, 2-EXPRESSES, 2-FALLS, FITS, 2-FLOWS, FORETELLS, 3-FREES, 7-GIVES, 13-GRIEVES, 4-GUIDES, HELPS, HOPES, IMBUES, IMPREGNATES, 7-INDWELLS, 3-INFLUENCES, INHABITS, INSPIRES, INTERCEDES, INTERPRETS, 3-INTIMATES, JOINS, 4-KNOWS, 7-LEADS, LIBERATES, 2-LIFTS, 5-LIGHTS, 2-LONGS, LOOKS, LOVES, 4-MAKES, 10-MANIFESTS, 2-MORTIFIES, 2-MOULDS, MOVES, NARRATES, 8-OPERATES, OPPOSES, PERFORMS, POSSESSES, 2-PRAYS, PREPARES, 2-PRODUCES, PROSTRATES, 15-QUICKENS, 4-RAISES, RECOGNIZES, REGENERATES, REIGNS, RESCUES, 2-RESURRECTS, 3-REVEALS, 4-SANCTIFIES, 3-SEALS, 3-SEARCHES, SHEDS, SHOWS, 20-SPEAKS, STANDS, 5-STRIVES, STRUGGLES, SUFFERS, SUSTAINS, SWELLS, 9-TEACHES, 2-TESTIFIES, UNITES, UPHOLDS, VISITS, WARS,

13-WITNESSES, 11-WORKS

TOTAL 333

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Q

In The Pre-Revival Letters

2-accompanies, comes, conforms, fills, knows, overcomes, renews, reveals,

shows, speaks, 2-teaches

Total 13

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In The Post-Revival Letters

ACCOMPLISHES, 2-ACTS, ADOPTS, 2-APPREHENDS, ASSURES,  
 2-BIRTHS, 3-BREATHES, CHARGES, CLEANSSES, 2-COMES,  
 COMFORTS, CONFORMS, CONTAINS, CRUCIFIES, DISCERNS, 2-  
 DOES, 2-DRAWS, DWELLS, EFFECTS, EMPOWERS, 2-  
 ENLIGHTENS, 2-ENTERS, 2-FILLS, FLOWS, GIFTS, GIVES, 2-  
 GRIEVES, 2-GUIDES, 2-HELPS, 3-INDWELLS, INTERPRETS,  
 KNOCKS, 2-LEADS, LOVES, MAKES, 4-MANIFESTS, MEETS, 2-  
 OPERATES, ORDERS, PERSEVERES, PRESERVES, PRESSES,  
 PROCEEDS, PROTESTS, PURIFIES, 3-QUICKENS, REFRESHES,  
 REPRODUCES, REVEALS, SANCTIFIES, SEEKS, 8-SPEAKS,  
 4-STRENGTHENS, STIRS, 5-STRIVES, SUFFERS, SYMPATHIZES,  
 5-TEACHES, 2-TESTIFIES, 3-WITNESSES, 3-WORKS

TOTAL 107

\* “Births” and “Speaks” taken from all expressions, such as “born of the Spirit” and “the Spirit said”

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H

After

Before

*Speaks	21	1
*Births	15	0
Quickens	15	5
Witnesses	13	0
Grieves	13	1
Breathes	12	1
Manifests	10	0
Teaches	9	4
Works	9	2
Indwells	8	1
Operates	8	4
Gives	7	3
Leads	7	1
Acts	6	2
Comes	6	0
Connects	5	0
Lights	5	0
Strives	5	1
Contends	4	0
Draws	4	0
Guides	4	0
Knows	4	0
Raises	4	0
Sanctifies	4	2
Bruises	3	0
Delivers	3	0
Desires	3	0
Enlightens	3	1
Frees	3	0
Influences	3	#6
Intimates	3	0
Makes	3	0
Reveals	3	2
Seals	3	1
Searches	3	0
Suffers	3	0
Animates	2	3
Bears	2	0
Brings	2	0
Communicates	2	0

Conforms	2	0
Constrains	2	0
Declares	2	0
Does	2	0
Dwells	2	0
Enters	2	0
Expresses	2	0
Falls	2	0
Fits	2	0
Flows	2	1
Lifts	2	0
Longs	2	0
Mortifies	2	0
Moulds	2	0
Prays	2	0
Produces	2	0
Resurrects	2	0
Testifies	2	0
	Before	After
Influences	6#	3
Quickens	5	15
Teaches	4	9
Animates	3	2
Gives	3	7
Acts	2	6
Opens	2	0
Presents	2	0
Reveals	2	3
Sanctifies	2	4
Shows	2	1
Transforms	2	0
Works	2	9

# Highest for Before The Revival

\* Some are derived from references to Voice of the Spirit, Born of the Spirit.

	After	Before
Speaks	8	1
Strives	5	0
Teaches	5	2
Strengthens	4	0
Manifests	4	0
Breathes	3	0
Indwells	3	0
Quickens	3	0
Witnesses	3	0
Works	3	0
Acts	2	0
Apprehends	2	0
Comes	2	1
Does	2	0
Draws	2	0
Enlightens	2	0
Enters	2	0
Fills	2	1
Grieves	2	0
Guides	2	0
Helps	2	0
Leads	2	0
Operates	2	0
Testifies	2	0

	Before	After
Accompanies	2	0
Teaches	2	5

NOTE: THE REMAINDER OF THE ORIGINAL RESEARCH STATISTICAL MATERIAL IS ON THE MSEXCEL DOCUMENT LABELED "FINAL ERSKINE SORT." (THERE ARE MANY SUBFILES)