# THE PREACHER AND THE POETS:
## The Relationships of Edward Irving with Carlyle and Coleridge

by

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**Abstract**

The life of Edward Irving was one of the most tragic in church history. In the decade following his arrival in London, in the fall of 1822, he became an enormously popular preacher, was friendly with important politicians and writers, faded into obscurity, was excommunicated, and died from exhaustion at the age of forty-two. From 1826, Irving's focus changed from preaching a straightforward gospel message to warning of Christ's return. Four years later he became extremely unorthodox and encouraged speaking in tongues. His preaching grew more narrow and vehement, and his interpretation of scripture more highly personal. Finally, in 1830, he was excommunicated from the Presbyterian church for preaching "the sinfulness of Christ's humanity".

Why was he initially so popular, and why did he deteriorate so drastically in both popular and personal terms? Two main avenues of investigation are: (1) his writings (he wrote all of his sermons) and (2) his relationships with Thomas Carlyle and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. His writings shed light on his theology, style, and overall appeal. His relationship with Carlyle reveals a man who was rooted in his past, was sensitive to human nature, and was respected by those close to him. Through Coleridge's eyes, however, we start to see his degeneration as one who was hungry after knowledge, easily flattered and easily led. In the end, Irving came to resemble, in many ways, a dangerous, cultish leader. He became his own authority, neglected the advice of friends, distanced himself from society, and gathered around him a group of people who relied on him for guidance. However, he remained motivated by an idealistic spiritual vision: that religion be fresh and motivating, and that God be seen as active and accessible.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Edward Irving

*"There are few things which bind me to this world, a very few; one is to make a demonstration for a higher type of Christianity -- something more heroical, more magnanimous than this age affects. God knows, with what success."*

-- Edward Irving to John Martin, following London invitation, Spring 1822 (Drummond 42)

Edward Irving (1792-1834) was a flamboyant preacher, often regarded as the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and a controversial figure throughout his short career. Between 1822 and 1826, he was probably the most popular preacher in London. Because Irving spoke directly to politics, art, and social issues in his sermons, in a refreshing style, his Hatton Garden Church drew people from all walks of life. Andrew Drummond--author of Edward Irving and His Circle (1934), which revived interest in Irving and investigated the psychology of charismatic dynamics--portrays Irving's church thus:

> Sunday after Sunday the mean-looking, dingy chapel was thronged with statesmen, philosophers, poets, painters, and literary men; peers, merchants, and fashionable ladies were mingled with shopkeepers and mechanics . . . The Duke of Sussex, the Earl of Aberdeen, Sir James Graham--even the Tory premier, Lord Liverpool--were among Irving's frequent listeners.(Drummond 49)

In a time in which many old class distinctions were being broken down through attempts at political reform, industrialization, and preaching--especially of the Methodists and Evangelicals--Irving spoke to all levels of society. Great though his acclaim was, the spotlight soon shifted away from him, and he began a rapid downhill course. As with many doomsday prophets of his time, in 1825 Irving began to preach on the second coming of Christ, citing "the signs" of his imminent return, and speculating on scripture with a sense of authority. In 1830 Irving was excommunicated by the London presbytery for publishing his doctrines regarding the humanity of Jesus Christ, in which he argued that Christ had the same sinful nature as fallen humanity--distinct only in his reliance upon the Holy Spirit. He also came under serious criticism from both secular and ecclesiastical quarters when members of his church began to experience charismatic manifestations such as tongues, miracles, and prophetic utterances. Irving himself had come to believe that he personally possessed apostolic power, was able to work miracles, and could hear direct revelation from God. In his last years, Irving, along with his church, drifted into obscurity. He died, apparently exhausted, on December 7, 1834, at the age of 42.

In his short yet influential career in London, Irving came to know, and impressed, many literary figures of the time. William Blake gave qualified praise: "He is clearly a sent one--the only problem is that sent ones often go too

far." Thomas DeQuincy referred to him as "a very demon of power" and "the greatest orator of our time"(Drummond 52). Both he and William Hazlitt came into contact with the preacher, mainly through their association with Samuel Taylor Coleridge who knew Irving well. Irving strongly defended Coleridge over the "Broad Church" debate in which liberal theology and a move toward toleration were challenging the Anglican Church, and Coleridge's influence may have led the preacher into mysticism. In an elegy for Irving, he would later write,

> Friend pure of heart and fervent! we have learnt
> A different lore! We may not thus profane
> The Idea and Name of Him whose Absolute Will
> Is reason -- Truth Supreme! -- Essential Order!"(Aids to Reflection 378)

Finally, one cannot neglect Irving's life-long friendships with Thomas and Jane Carlyle, formed during Irving's teaching days in Scotland, a decade before both the popular and turbulent period in London. Carlyle, the often vehement essayist and historian, writes in Reminiscences, "From the first we honestly liked one another and grew intimate, nor was there ever, while we both lived, any cloud or grudge between us, or an interruption of our feelings for a day or hour. Blessed conquest of a friend in this world!" (Reminiscences 80)

What was it in Irving that drew so much attention, even from intellectual and literary people--many of whom were

slowly becoming distanced from mainstream religious life? And what were the reasons for Irving's drastic decline--both in terms of his popularity and his mental, physical and emotional health? In the hope of answering these questions, this thesis investigates the life and preaching of Edward Irving, and especially his close relationships with Thomas Carlyle and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Through an analysis of Irving's sermons and other writings the thesis will establish his character and ideas, and then consider the effect he had on these literary contemporaries, and their effect on him. The focus will be on Irving's time of intense popularity between 1822 and 1826, but some attention will be given to the later period, when many of his friends deserted him as his practices and doctrines drew suspicion. This first chapter will sketch Irving's life and career up to his arrival in London.

Edward Irving was born on August 4, 1792 in Annan, Scotland, to Gavin Irving, a tanner whose heritage went far back in the Annan area, and Mary Lowther, a descendant of French Protestant refugees and Albigenses. He was one of eight children, five daughters and three brothers--all three of whom died before him. Annan is at the western end of the border with England, and was then rife with folklore of battles and heroes. Old fortifications still echoed with the stories of the Covenanters who resisted the London government's attempts to assimilate them, even under

deprivation and torture. The people of Annan were, in general, pious, and trained their children in prayer and psalm reading. A heroic life, dedication to truth, and a pure religion--these were the ideals which nurtured the youthful dreams of Irving and his brothers and indeed would be the themes throughout his short yet momentous life.

In Scotland, the latter part of the eighteenth century was a new age of revolution. Along with the French Revolution, industrialization and the European enlightenment were strong forces for change. In a country where a student thirty years earlier could be expelled from school for atheistic assertions, David Hume was praised. In an economy which had once been centred upon self-sustaining villages, a class system, and the individual worker, massive industries were springing up in centres such as Glasgow, producing iron, linen, and tobacco, creating new industrial classes who would become politically aware and powerful. The spirit of inventiveness and cheap mass production and migration changed the social landscape significantly. It was a time of both commercial and intellectual adventurousness, as well as social change.

Along with social and economic upheaval and growing individualism, the Church of Scotland also saw much dissent in its ranks. By the time of Irving's youth, there were approximately 400 Seceding congregations in Scotland, accounting for about 500,000 people and almost a quarter of Scotland's population (Burleigh 284, 324). They were

dissatisfied with the orthodox church of Scotland, which over the century, particularly under the leadership of William Robertson, attained a more moderate, rational approach to religion than that of the Covenanters. The Church leaders too had been influenced by the European thought, such as German biblical criticism (some leaders even questioning the supernatural and the deity of Christ), and sought to bring peace and tolerance to a previously turbulent and schismatic church. However, many Seceders recalled the religious zeal of their ancestors, fighting for an independent church, and signing the covenant in blood, and they believed that the church had lost its passion for truth and holiness.

Patronage too had become normal--another grievance to the Seceders. This was the practice whereby a landowner, who usually funded the building of the local kirk and provided the land, was given the right to choose the minister who filled the pulpit. The Patronage Act of 1712 went completely against the "spirit" of the former Union Act of 1707 in which control had been given to the Church of Scotland. Now the British government was once again asserting control over the church. While patronage, once again, raised the contentious issue of ecclesiastical independence, as the practice served to give the governing classes heavy influence, it was also in direct contradiction to the Presbyterian democratic ideal of the congregation's right to choose its leader, according to God's will. The

proponents of patronage hoped that the practice would allow landowners to induct men of intellect and good standing, thus raising the quality of pastoral leadership and preaching. They wished to rid the church of the "fanatical spirit", which had plagued Scotland for centuries, and bring order. While the spirit of tolerance did benefit the church, giving stability and respect, patronage also nourished growth of these "Nonconformist" bodies.

In general, Seceders were a zealous people, who sought a life of holiness, adherence to the letter of scripture, "a return to the old ways", and a church independent of patronage. A glimpse into their mindset is given by Thomas Carlyle, the son of a Burgher Seceder, in his Reminiscences, written during the 1860s and published in 1881. He recounts an anecdote from his childhood. The Burghers had gathered in a small farming village. Here, crops grew well during the rainy season and there were usually but two dry days in which the farmer could harvest--but these days were often too windy. On one such day the group of Seceders was gathered for worship, when a farmer ran into their midst: "Such a raging wind risen as will drive the stooks (shocks) into the sea if let alone." "Wind!" [answered the minister presiding], "wind canna get at the straw that has been appointed mine. Sit down and let us worship God"(Reminiscences 64). This Calvinistic trust in the providence and plan of God was a strong characteristic of the Seceders. They were willing to seek out seceding

bodies, no matter how far away, rather than attend the parish Kirk, some walking from six to fifteen miles twice. Carlyle describes the places of worship thus: "They were rude, rustic, bare--no temple in the world was moreso--but there were sacred lambencies, tongues of authentic flame from heaven which kindled what was best in one, what has not yet gone out"(Reminiscences 69). Although Irving would later assert that the Church of Scotland was "by far the most venerable relic of ecclesiastical dignity" in his sermon of 1825--"Missionaries After the Apostolical School" (Writings II, 441), he joined these ardent believers in the few years previous to his enrolment in college, and despite his youth, entered into discussion with them on religious or philosophical matters, and the need for a purer form of religion.

At the age of thirteen, Irving and his brother went to Edinburgh where Irving studied for a Master of Arts degree--the first degree in Scotland. Irving was to study the classics, philosophy, mathematics and Latin for four years, after which came theological training--theology, Hebrew history, and biblical history. Even in university, as in the rest of life, Irving was not a pure academic. He was also enthusiastic about open-air exercises such as swimming, walking, rowing, and climbing. At heart, he was an adventurer. Also, while competent in mathematics, geometry and philosophy, his favourite reading was the religious works of Richard Hooker and the escapist and fanciful

literature such as "Don Quixote", "The Arabian Nights" and "Ossian". He could be seen with a copy of "Ossian" or Milton tucked in his pocket as he ventured out into the surrounding countryside to recite verses for his companions (Oliphant 32). Thus in his teenage years he was working on his voice and gestures in the hills surrounding Edinburgh, perhaps on Arthur's seat, orating to the old city below.

Irving graduated with an M.A. in April 1809, at the early age of sixteen and a half. As part of the theological requirement, he was to do six years of service in a local parish before ordination and, under the recommendation of Sir John Leslie and Professor Christison (two former professors), went to Haddington to teach at one of the newly established mathematical schools which were then springing up all over Scotland, mainly in the highlands. Two years later, Irving was invited to Kirkaldy where he would stay until 1818. In the Kirkaldy years, much of the folklore surrounding Irving finds its origin, and much of his character is revealed. Here he won both respect and a following, motivating and challenging his students who, according to Margaret Oliphant--Irving's most contemporary and knowledgable biographer -- began to call themselves "Irvingites" (Oliphant 53). Even during his time off, Irving and his followers could be seen marching out in the fields, with their books, headed for some new adventure. As an above average swimmer and hiker he often took them on swimming, boating or climbing outings which were seasoned

with object lessons. The outdoors were the arena of adventure and learning. That is the image that people of the area remember--Irving pacing up and down the beach with books, reciting verse, and at night collecting his pupils around him and pointing out the stars, even waxing poetic as he did so. He approached the world in a Whitmanesque way which said, "everything, every inch is a miracle" and imparted this attitude to his pupils.

Irving's unorthodox approaches and ideas were not completely welcomed by the community which, like many in Scotland, was highly conservative and wary of heresy. These were very new teaching methods and he was soon held in suspicion. For example, in one season, when the pupils gathered on these starry nights, many falling stars were seen. The people whispered that Irving called down the stars himself, and if not, at least knew when they were going to fall. The story reveals something of what Irving's reputation would later be, too flamboyant, vehement, and unorthodox to be trustworthy, and perhaps even with some affinity to the black arts.

Certainly, charismatic leaders are often viewed with great suspicion, yet if there is one defining characteristic--one aspect which is remembered about Irving--it was his passion for life, which he communicated to his pupils and companions. Contrary to what one might expect from his later preaching, which often contained narrow and angry declamations of the hopeless and cursed state of

humanity because of its rejection of God's prophet (Irving), and its refusal to watch for Christ's return and to embrace his signs of the Holy Spirit, Irving's personality was positive, hopeful, and tolerant. Carlyle writes: "Irving's voice was to me one of blessedness and new hope . . . No man that I have known had a sunnier type of character, or so little of hatred towards any man or thing. On the whole, less of rage in him than I ever saw combined with such a fund of courage and conviction" (Reminiscences 148,149). As we will see throughout this thesis, the later reputation of an angry prophet needs to be set against the words of those closest to him. At the core of his nature was grace and a sense of wonderment in dealing with his fellow man.

However, Irving was not without his harsher sentiments. He was entirely capable of anger, or at least righteous indignation. On one occasion he and some young students went to hear Dr. Chalmers speak at St. Giles in Edinburgh in the "Debate On the Pluralities". The Church was debating the right for clergy to hold both ministerial and academic seats simultaneously. Chalmers had recently written a contentious pamphlet which asserted that, "after the satisfactory discharge of his parish duties, a minister may enjoy five days in the week of uninterrupted leisure, for the prosecution of any science in which his taste may dispose him to engage"(Bulloch 156). It was a pivotal point in the Church's history: the issues involved included ecclesiastical influence in the university, the importance

of a minister's liberal education along with theological training and, most importantly, how much time the church would demand of the clergy in their parishes as secular forces gained momentum and attendance dropped. However, Irving and his peers were shut out of the proceedings by an official. Irving contended with the doorkeeper, demanding that he and his companions be given entrance. When he was denied, Irving put his strong shoulders to the doors and broke them in!

Indeed, throughout his life, when he discerned injustice, Irving did not hesitate to act. This explosive and fiery attitude, akin to that of the prophets of old, and indeed many co-Calvinist preachers, is evident in another similar incident. Irving could not accept pretension, especially when his or his companion's personal respect was affronted. The story is told that one night Irving and certain ladies under his care attended a public meeting. As an official walked through the line to make space for a public person, he called people to move aside while pushing Irving and his companions. Immediately, in anger Irving took the man's arm and warned, "Be quiet, sir, or I will annihilate you!" The man was embarrassed and the entire crowd broke out in laughter (Oliphant 65). Irving's tolerance, then, was balanced by a willingness vehemently to confront injustice and pretension.

Along with his charismatic, genial yet confrontative personality, Irving's appearance was also inspiring, despite

a squint in one eye. He was very large and regal looking, with strong features, standing six-foot four. In Glasgow days, a maid announced his arrival by rushing to her mistress with the words, "Mem! There's a wonderful grand gentleman called; I couldna say you were engaged to him. I think he main be a highland chief"(Oliphant 82)! The novelty surrounding the highlanders had not yet worn off. Others compared him to a cavalry officer or a "brigand chief"(ibid). Perhaps the best encapsulation of Irving's appearance is given by William Hazlitt in his essay Spirit of the Age. He writes of Irving's power in the London pulpit, citing his appearance:

> The Rev. Edward Irving, with all his native wildness, hath a smooth aspect framed to make women saints; his very unusual size and height are carried off and moulded into elegance by the most admirable symmetry of form and ease of gesture; his sable locks, his clear iron-grey complexion, and firm-set features, turn the raw, uncouth Scotsman in the likeness of a noble Italian picture; and even his distortion of sight only redeems the otherwise "faultless monster" within the bounds of humanity.(Hazlitt XI,40)

As Hazlitt affirms in the essay, Irving had many qualities which drew people to follow him. He was passionate about life, romantic in his imagination, had a strong sense of justice, and a regal appearance. These factors, while

drawing many to his side, also fostered in him a sense that he was destined to live a higher form of Christianity.

After receiving his licence to preach in 1815, Irving was sometimes asked to preach in the Kirkaldy parish by his future father in-law, the Reverend John Martin, whose daughter, Isabella, he was tutoring at the time. While Irving had planned on marrying Isabella, no formal engagement had been concluded in his six years of residence in Kirkaldy. Yet, as their relationship was maintained, the father pressed for marriage. In 1823, Irving actually fell in love with his former pupil from Haddington, Jane Welsh (later Carlyle's wife) and considered marrying her. However, in October of that year he honoured his "commitment" to the Martins. While it may be seen as a noble decision, in hindsight it may not have been the most prudent, as the adoring Isabella (described by Carlyle as homely and "dead ugly") was unable to steer the enthusiastic Irving away from danger. In contrast, the more assertive Jane suggested that had *she* married Irving, the "tongues" would never have happened.

Unfortunately, as a preacher in Kirkaldy, he was not much of a success. Irving, with all of his brimming passion, had not yet found his platform nor perfected his craft, and his reception was luke-warm at best, as asserted by Thomas Carlyle. The people in the Kirkaldy parish had groaned that he "had ower muckle gran ner" (too much loud barking) and was misunderstood and unappreciated as

preaching "spiritual bombast." His "Miltonic or old English Puritan style," boldly asserted such things as "If this thing is true, why not do it? Thou had better do it. There will be nothing but misery and ruin in not doing it". His passion was explosive and his tone elevated. Carlyle humorously asserts, "I for one was perhaps rather entertained by it, and grinned in secret to think of the hides it was piercing!" (Reminiscences 94-96)

In 1818, Irving resigned his post in Kirkaldy and returned to Edinburgh. While considering professorships of Geometry and Latin his love was for preaching. Although he had been unappreciated, and burned all of his Kirkaldy sermons following his departure, he continued to work on his oratory, writing out his sermons and then preaching them to himself, always thinking of the person in the pew who needed to hear something unique from the pulpit. He wanted to inspire people with a fresh delivery and a heightened vision of the gospel. As attested to in his later professed kinship with John the Baptist, he wanted to be a vibrant "voice crying in the wilderness."

This period in Scotland, preaching before audiences which did not appreciate Irving, was what Margaret Oliphant calls, his "trials for licence". It was out of these trials, however, that Irving's motivation was strengthened as there were signs of his future greatness. One such instance was in the early part of 1815 when he preached in Annan. During his sermon, Irving's outline, or what the

parishioners sarcastically termed "the paper", fell to the floor. While they held their breath, wondering what he would do, Irving bent down, grabbed the paper, crumpled it up and kept on preaching, with fluent and natural tone, without losing his train of thought. To a people who held "the paper" in disdain--people who did not want the sermon to be read but wanted fire, spontaneity, and inspiration in the pulpit--Irving's calm demeanour and confidence was appealing (Oliphant 60).

In the fall of 1819, after Dr. Thomas Chalmers heard Irving preach at St. Andrew's church in Edinburgh, he invited Irving to be his assistant at his St. John's parish in Glasgow. Chalmers, who was to become the Evangelical who, in 1843, would lead one-third of the Church of Scotland out of the establishment, was one of the most popular preachers in Scotland. Coming to the Tron Kirk in Glasgow in 1815, he sought to end pauperism among the growing poorer classes in Glasgow, create schools for every parish, and fund the building of new churches in a town whose population was exploding with industrialization. His was a social gospel. To him, "The great instrument for thus elevating the poor is that Gospel of Jesus Christ which may be preached unto the poor . . . Jesus Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God. This is a truth which, when all the world shall receive it, all the world shall be renovated"(Bulloch 165). He preached with evangelical fervour on contemporary issues, believing that religion

would change the state of society. He was further known as an intellectual who published such works as "Theory of the Earth", and "The Antiquity of Man", and other writings and sermons which were widely circulated throughout the United Kingdom.

Irving's work among the poor of Glasgow left a legacy. The situation was dire. The population had exploded with industrialization and city resources were few. The newcomers, mainly Irish Catholics and Highlanders, lacked space and water and food, and were separated from their social structure, their religion, and their families. One sheriff stated that three-quarters of young girls in the slums lost their virginity before the age of twenty. Common scenes were six and seven weavers, infested with fever, sleeping in one small room, and others sleeping in alleys as sewage flowed by. Children too worked for a pittance on long shifts of equal length to the adults, had no time for learning, and suffered from malnutrition and sickness. Early in the revolution, efficiency and capital were the tenets for the industrialist tycoons, who were slowly becoming a completely segregated class, and the quality of living for the new factory workers was not a priority. Many independent workers were also very badly off. Weavers who had once known a comfortable living, most owning their own homes and some able to take two days off per week, were reduced to poverty as mechanical looms replaced them, and goods of equal quality to those woven on the manual loom

were sold at half the price. Many a once-dignified weaver took to heavy drinking. Unemployment, detached family units, small living quarters in a city bursting with new workers--these created widespread poverty, sickness and general despair. Unrest and riots were often the result.

In this scene, Irving was a notable example of Christian charity. He endeared himself to the poor, particularly with the tough-minded Calton weavers, who had been a strong presence in Glasgow and Paisley for over thirty years, had formed some of the first unions, and had sometimes rioted to protest poor conditions. His trademark greeting, "Peace Be On This House" was remembered long after his death. In a letter of 1821, to his friend William Wilberforce, Dr. Chalmers writes of Irving:

> He stands among them, and calls out with courageous, tender voice that they are all men like others; men trustful and cordial; kind to himself, open to kindness; whom it behooves their neighbours to treat, not with the cruelty of fear, but with tenderness and feeling, as well is due. (Oliphant 86)

Irving spoke to the poor with kindness and respect, treating them as equals. He elevated their humanity. Thomas Carlyle recounts: "That he was altogether human we heard and could well believe; he broke at once into sociality and frankness, would pick a potato from their pot and in eating it get at once into free and kindly terms (Reminiscences 122). This respect for the poor, this "speaking as man with man"

characterizes Irving's activities. He would neither skirt the truth of their sometimes immoral lives nor would he condemn. Arnold Dallimore, in The Life of Edward Irving--The Fore-runner of the Charismatic Movement, points out that although there were undoubtedly foul scenes and smells in this underworld without sanitation, Irving not once makes allusion to being repulsed by its residents (Dallimore 26). He was respectful, dignified, and courteous.

One story, which personifies not only the respectful quality in Edward Irving but also his view of the Christian ministry, is told of his helping a poor man along the road. Walking to a Presbytery meeting one day, he came upon a man carrying a heavy sack. He was worn out. After a brief inquiry, Irving took the burden off the man's shoulders and put it to his own. Some clerics headed to the same meeting came along the way, comfortable in their carriage, and made snide remarks as they passed by this minister carrying a poor man's sack. Irving gave them a look of strong indignation and continued along with the man, who was Irish--the subject of much ecclesiastical and social prejudice (Oliphant 94).

Irving certainly appreciated the appointment to work with Chalmers, as evidenced in various letters to his friends, yet as the years wore on he grew restless. Most of the middle-class parishioners, who were numerous at Chalmer's assembly, did not appreciate him. There are even accounts of some leaving the Kirk upon the announcement that Irving was to speak. Sometimes a youth would recognize his

greatness, but most of the members, especially the old, sat patronizingly quiet, waiting for Chalmers to speak. After three years in Glasgow, Irving was considering moving on, possibly to missions work--an option which he had considered in 1818, and which had been an interest for much of his life as he sat on various county mission boards. The mystery of the far east had always pervaded his imaginations, and colonialism and the newly established London Mission Society, was opening many opportunities for evangelical men of zeal and adventurous spirit. Then, in the winter of 1821, three parish offers came his way. One was to a congregation in Jamaica, another in New York, and the third, the Caledonian church at Hatton Garden in London. The two ministers who had the church under their charge had been recalled to Scotland and having heard Irving's name and reputation, they spoke to Chalmers about the needs of the little church. After preaching twice, Irving was invited to stay. It was as minister of this unassuming church--whose congregation was made up of aliens in England--that Irving was catapulted into the spotlight of London society.

## CHAPTER TWO

## The Preaching of Edward Irving

*"No preacher ever went so into one's heart".*
*-Carlyle, (Reminiscences 127)*

*[His preaching] flowed along, not as a swift flowing river, but as a broad, deep, and bending or meandering one. Sometimes it left on you the impression almost of a fine noteworthy lake. Noteworthy always; nobody could mistake it for the discourse of other than an uncommon man. Originality and truth of purpose were undeniable in it, but there was withal, both in the matter and the manner, a something which might be suspected of affectation, a noticeable preference and search for striking quaint and ancient locutions...-- T. Carlyle,(Reminiscences 129)*

Upon hearing him in London in 1823, Coleridge called Irving "the modern day Savanarola." Certainly Irving's greatest strength was in oratory, and hundreds of fashionable people flocked to hear him. Examples of his earlier sermons are found in Orations, published in 1823, the year after he arrived in London. The volume reveals many aspects of Irving's character and ideas, and is a valuable insight into what it was that drew the masses to him. Essentially, it reveals his style, as the book is his assertion of the proper way to convey truth, a matter which he had been developing since leaving Kirkaldy. He writes in the preface, "It hath appeared to the Author of this book, from more than ten years' meditation upon the subject that the chief obstacle to the progress of divine truth over the

minds of men is the want of its being properly presented to them." He will endeavour, in his new style, to convey truth in a fresh, potent fashion.

He lays down his argument in two sections. The first is entitled "The Oracles of God," where Irving argues for the importance of religious men preaching scriptural truths as they should be preached--making them ring with freshness and life for present-day hearers, and with the authority intrinsic in the Bible itself. The second part is called "Judgment to Come," where he pleads for the unconverted to come to Christ. We will examine Irving's preaching by focussing first on his evangelical emphasis and thought, secondly on his delivery, and thirdly on his audience.

Like the great Chalmers, Irving was one of the new breed of "Evangelical" preachers. Typically, evangelicals stood for the separation of church and state. They often gathered in small groups for prayer and Bible study. Most importantly, "they thought much of conversion, assurance of salvation, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit"(Bulloch 49). Furthermore, they veered away from Calvinistic complacency, seeking to lead all to Christ. This was, indeed, Irving's focus and motivation.

But, apart from the theology, Irving's call sounds new and fresh. His religion was heroic, and was portrayed in images from antique and romantic ages--images usually associated with epic poetry, and novels. Irving and his society had become calloused to the voice from the pulpit. Gone were the days of reformation and Covenants. Now the usual ethos of the Christian life was meek and self-sacrificing: Christians were expected to be quiet and conservative, not revolutionary. Yet Irving preached,

"Adventurers above your sphere I would have you all become; brave designs, not antiquated customs, should move your life. A path heroical you should trace out, and follow to glory and immortality"(83,84). To Irving, conversion meant not only escaping the flames of hell, but living a life of greatness--achieving the potential which God had purposed for each person.

Irving believed in the heroic potential within all people, himself included. Anything was possible with God, who had invested people with a "divine spark": "Oh heavens! how the soul of man is restless and unbound--how it lusteth after greatness--how it revolveth around the sphere of perfection, but cannot enter in--how it compasseth round the seraph-guarded verge of Eden, but cannot enter in"(142). Man aspires to divinity but lives in a corrupt world. He senses that he was created for an idyllic life which, at present, he is not living. In conversion, this idyllic persona is renewed. Irving gives a notably vivid picture of a transformed soul. It is like a bird, bursting its shell; it soars on Eagle's wings into the presence of God where it rests, steadily staring into God's face. Conversion, then, was not only to get people into heaven or to help bear the throes of earth, but to transform them into the paradisal creature they were created to be.

This change was not only outward or emotional but also involved the mind. The converted soul can see truth. It is not weighed down with the concerns of the world, nor the fear of God. There is peace and unity of mind and heart as elements within the human character--presently disjointed and reaching only partial potential--are merged and strengthened. The picture echoes Jesus' words "that they

might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,"(John 10:10) and conveys freedom and power, and peace with self and God.

And finally, Irving's picture of the after-life for the converted soul also suggests a wholeness of the various aspects of human nature and an abundant life:

> And the soul which here doth peep and feel about the surface of things, shall dive then into all mysteries of knowledge. Intuition shall see far and near the essences of all created things. And all intelligence shall fan flames of benevolence, and feed eternal purposes of well-doing to every creature within our reach. All heaven shall smile for us; for us every neighbouring creature shall labour and we for them. Angels with the sons of men shall exchange innocent love, and the creatures under man shall serve him with love, and drink from him their joy as we shall drink our joy from the service of God.(202)

Human reason will reach its potential, will be whole, and will be used for benevolent purposes alone, leaving behind merely earthly concerns. There will be perfect unity. Presently, humanity uses its energies to attempt to peer into this world, yet comes up short: there is a division between the reality we sense and the reality we know. In the after-life the two are merged. All our expectations will be fulfilled as speculation meets truth: "Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known" was Paul's way of saying it to first century hearers, and now Irving impacts his own parishioners--tired of religious rhetoric--with a fresh articulation of an old truth.

Irving was an evangelical, trying to restore the visions of antiquity. If someone turned to Christ, God would enable him to live his potential, and he would eventually live in a place that far exceeded any vision of the poets. It was a place of peace where the capacity of the soul was realized and all questions were answered. These were the sentiments that, for centuries, people had wanted to hear, but they had been lost among the clichés and narrow visions of theologically preoccupied divines or unidealistic pastors.

Irving's God is personal. This creator, giver of immortal life, is not only sovereign but remarkably close and involved in human life. Here we see another strongly evangelical characteristic--in contrast to the trends within his society, such as deism and atheism, Irving's God is touchable and knowable, and yearns for a personal relationship with his creation. "[The Soul] cometh to know, that this God, whom she fancied hidden in secrecy, sits displayed on every visible object; that this God, whom she had placed remote from her concerns, is full of carefulness over her welfare, and of the promise for every want and enjoyment of her being"(198). The God of judgment is also the God of daily care and, instead of the Bible being a cold set of codes, it is a book of poetry--the description of the lover of mankind's soul. "Doubtless it contains a code of laws, but these laws set in the bosom of a thousand noble sentiments and warm affections and generous promises towards us--such as are wont to catch and captivate and ravish the spirit when uttered by a mortal"(122). Throughout his sermons he frequently uses the words, "ravish" and "capture," emphasizing God's passionate love for his

creation. Irving's images bleed, feel, and sing, and the call of God was not arbitrary but one of love:

> He stands at the door of every heart and knocks. Our enemies he fought unto the death, and he hath conquered them in death. He hath singly beat our tyrants, and put into every man's hand a patent of his liberty. And now he goeth about and about amongst us, rousing us with songs and sweet melody to rise from slavery and be ourselves again.(129-30)

This was, once again, Irving's personal, passionate God seeking out the penitent. He is not a malevolent judge, but the bridegroom of Solomon's song. The call is being sounded to come close to a God who rules the heavens with a divine sceptre and also whispers quietly into the penitent's ear.

Underlying all of this evangelical emphasis is a reverence for scripture. If Christ was the giver of the abundant or heroic life, scripture was the guidebook. In these early writings, Irving, true to his calling as an orthodox minister of the Church of Scotland, elevated scripture as the source of all truth and the nourishment for the soul. "Array yourselves under the word of God;" he says, "it will lead you, it will guide you, it will raise you high above earthly objects, through a noble course of well-doing to the holy place of the Most High"(84). It was the source of direction and truth. Specifically, the word of God is the best guide to Human nature, and to Irving it was a logical conclusion for one to consult the creator of life on matters of life. The Bible was for everyone from the most learned to the most common. To the men of culture, politics, and medicine, he asks why--as well as studying Hippocrates, Blackstone, Locke, and Smith--they are not

studying the scriptures which train them for the eternal life in which they claim to believe(93). Even above the secular classics that cultured people value, the word of God is the best guide for this life *and* the life to come, and in a society drawn to many new sources of knowledge, speculative and scientific, this conviction stood out as an anomaly. Many were surprised that an intelligent, cultured, imaginative man found his inspiration from a book of legends, Jewish history, and an ancient religious leader.

For Irving, then, the Christian life is an idyllic one, one of which the romances and epics of literature had painted only a shadow. Irving's visions--the beauty of a restored soul, the wisdom of the ancient guidebook, the power and benevolence of its creator--are extensive, brightly coloured, and captivating. They speak of a God who is mysterious and powerful, yet also highly personal and concerned with the individual.

How were these passionate sentiments presented to his hearers? The most characteristic feature of Irving's style was his imagery--to which all of his contemporaries allude. In contrast to the pastoral visions already mentioned, some visions are nightmarish:

> Obey the scriptures or you shall perish . . . Then around the fiery concave of the wasteful pit the clang of grief shall ring, and the flinty heart which repelled tender mercy shall strike fangs into its proper bosom; and the soft and gentle spirit which dissolved in voluptuous pleasures, shall dissolve in weeping sorrows and outbursting lamentations. . . (63)

While God was not a malevolent judge, a sinful life led to its just rewards. These are not merely rhetorical clichés such as "hellfire and damnation", but strong, terrifying

images which could keep the most ardent of parishioners uneasy. Hazlitt, in Spirit of the Age, comments that the notion of eternal punishment was a device used by Presbyterian ministers to keep their congregations awake yet which repelled fashionable or intellectual people

> till Mr. Irving, with his cast-iron features and sledge-hammer blows, puffing like a grim Vulcan, set to work to forge more classic thunderbolts, and kindle the expiring flames anew with the very sweepings of skeptical and infidel libraries, so as to excite a pleasing horror in the female part of his congregation.(39)

Certainly, Irving was true to the Presbyterian tradition but added a theatrical flair to his presentation that was worthy of Milton. The truths of scripture were no longer relegated to an ancient book, distanced from the hearer, but Irving revived them, bringing them into his hearer's experience from where there was no escape.

However, Irving's images of fiery judgement are more than balanced by those of beauty and love. His images are sometimes reminiscent of those of Coleridge and Wordsworth as he brings in the elements of nature, music, and various senses and affections:

> And who shall speak of the Son going forth clothed with the plenitude of his Father's power to create new worlds in the depths of space, out of nothing to bring the waste and chaotic deep, and out of wildest chaos to order the teeming womb of nature; to diffuse his spirit over things that lately were not, and create millions of happy beings, brightening with his image, and strong to perform that good pleasure of his will?. . . and if there was such a merry-making over its completion, that

> to welcome their youngest sister into being, the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy.(185)

The images are characteristic of the Romantic era. The son of God is like the errant knight, headed out into the wilderness to bring joy to creation. He is not serious or dull, but enthusiastic, and like an artist, creates beauty out of nothing in flamboyant strokes. The passage conveys a vast, Blakean ethos of Christ gathering up prolific creative power, as from Enatharmon's womb, and thrusting it out into the cosmos. It is a vibrant picture of the wild sublime, and music and nature echo the actions. Although there is nothing unorthodox, there is a freshness about the picture which could be appreciated by the converted and unconverted alike.

Irving's vision of the transformed soul is equally powerful:

> Then she beginneth to burst the shell of her former darkness, and to open her eyes on light; her callow nakedness sprouteth with a divine plumage; she spreadeth her wings and ariseth to heaven, and floateth over the oceans of eternity; she soareth like the eagle, and looketh steadily into the face of God; she feeleth for the divine Spirit within her, and setteth her heart upon all excellency. (Orations 201)

The image of a powerful bird bursting from its shell, is, of course, from nature. Throughout the work, Irving ties human emotion and a spiritual principle to nature. In using images of nature, Irving is able not only to enhance the truth of scripture, but to surmount the religious programming within culture. One might say words like "re-

birth", and "conversion" and have them fall upon deaf ears. Yet, by using new and striking images from nature, the spiritual possibilities become open to all and appealing to many.

Irving's strongest images are of Christ (indeed the Christocentric nature of his theology is evident throughout his early writings). In an age in which The Man of Galilee was once again a mere statue or window pane, Irving revitalized Him in the minds of his hearers. The stories of scripture, which had become commonplace, were now infused with life. For example, this is his depiction of the cosmic reaction to the passion of Christ:

> Buffeted, spit on, crowned with thorns, basely betrayed, his blood sold for money, justice, the common right of man, refused him; nay, against the voice and in the sacred face of justice, sacrificed and crucified on that tree where a murderer should have hung, from which a seditious murderer was released, to make room for the Son of God. Oh heavens! oh earth! oh sacred justice! oh power supreme! where slept ye when such indignity was offered your Prince? ye slept not, but ye murmured forth your indignation in thunder, and ye frowned darkness upon the face of day, and ye heaved forth from the secret place the ghastly bodies of the dead to affright the living . . . (189)

Irving breathes life into the event, whereas many other preachers fell back upon clichéd images. He dwells on the backward order of the universe at Christ's death. Speaking to Londoners who had become over-satisfied with their thoughts and achievements, Irving appeals to their sense of justice--notice his repetition of the word. He shows the

paradox of Christ's death; the creator slaughtered by the creation; the perfect innocent killed instead of a vile murderer. From this reversed order of things nature recoils. She is a living entity with appropriate reactions. To Irving, this should be the response of those who believe in Justice when they hear the Easter events. It should affront them and cause them to question "why".

Irving not only uses powerful images, but also (on nearly every page of Orations) uses lists and rhetorical repetition. He forcefully confronts the sinful, using words like a hammer:

> How many malicious sentiments do we entertain! How many actions of our enemies do we not forgive! How many quarrels and feuds do we cherish! How many wanton thoughts pass through and find harbour in our minds! How many of our affections doat on worldly objects! How much passion, how much insincerity, how much censure, how much hypocrisy, how much revenge! How many of our good actions are done to be seen of men, thought upon with self-complacency, and talked over with vain delight! How consequential we become when we get wealth, how imperious when we get power, how self-conceited when we get distinction! How covetous before we reach the desired haven, how envious and inimical to those who already hold it!(153)

The hearer is overwhelmed by this insistency. The first phrases, short and potent, gain attention, focussing on one solitary thought, but by the end, the hearer is confounded by the list as the tempo of accusation increases, running on in an overwhelming stream. And with each "how much" the person receives a shock, and also an answer about his/her

condition. It is an onslaught. The "punchiness" of the diction, the tempo, and the length, overwhelm the hearers. They are perhaps unable to distinguish their one vice within the list and are overwhelmed by them all.

Irving's lists are also often an historical or biblical survey. He frequently moves from Peter to Presbyterianism or Genesis to Revelation with ease, in each case emphasizing a common ingredient or truth. In so doing he ties a common thread through all events or people, giving weight to his argument, showing that all of history is arranged by God in this fashion--a coherent system, an order of things, to which humanity needs to align itself.

The rhetorical question is also used powerfully in Irving's sermons:

> Have you suffered spiritual oppression and drowning from the fleshly appetites? freedom from this you lose. Have you groaned under the general bondage of the creature, and called for deliverance? this deliverance you lose. Have you conceived pictures of quiet and peaceful enjoyment amidst beautiful and refreshing scenes? the realities of this you lose . . . "(87)

The pervading answer is "you lose." Through a life denying the safe-haven of salvation, the reader loses in the end. In this case, the questions are somewhat ironic. Irving raises the hopes of the hearer in the question and then dashes them in the answer with "you lose." These questions are poignant and searing, as they reflect Irving's sense of human nature and its fundamental desire for peace and freedom. He asks the rhetorical question and suddenly the hearers are forced to examine themselves. They have been

brought from viewing dramatic images and being entertained to examining their own condition, and must now face the fact that they cannot enter the garden of peace which Irving has portrayed.

The final rhetorical device which is evident in Orations is Irving's use of paradox and irony, and again he uses it often. Many Christian preachers have used paradox for it is an essential aspect of Christian doctrine. Irving expresses this reality in phrases like, "The law is the Gospel to the unfallen, the Gospel is the law to the fallen. The law is God manifest in words, The Gospel is God manifest in flesh"(192). There is a musical quality in each case; a quaint parcel of truth which, while surrounded by lists, repetition and elongated eloquent explanations, can be grasped with ease. They encapsulate a truth. They are "quotables" that can be held onto and used in daily life.

Whether he be painting images of hell, rhyming off lists of the most important aspects in his hearers' lives, poignantly asking the rhetorical question to which his hearer had no choice but to give assent, or perhaps turning the hearers' world upside down with the possibility that the truth was indeed in contradictions, Irving ardently confronted his hearers. Yet he did not rely merely on emotion. There is always substance, and Coleridge's description of him as "the modern day Savanarola" is understandable.

The tone of his messages is also noteworthy, especially, given his latter reputation. Although, in Orations, Irving often reacts against the sinfulness and backwardness of the world around him, he is also gentle and respectful to his readers. He never stoops to sarcasm and, in shaping his argument in a rational legal fashion, he also

respects the intelligence of his hearers. During the argument one feels carried along by a gentle guide, to the truth of God. For example, before introducing the notion that one is saved from God's wrath through Christ, Irving offers this invitation:

> Here we have to introduce an idea, which will be new, and therefore may sound strange to such of our readers as are unacquainted with the Gospel of Christ; but we beg of them not to break off, but to hear us to an end; for we must proceed according to the rule which we laid down for the conducting of our argument, gathering the matters of fact of the revelation, and showing that the whole is conducive to every good and noble and gainful end.(174)

Irving invites his hearers to the words of life, taking a gentle pastoral approach. While he is indeed passionate, and convinced of the world's need, he does not stoop to cheap manipulation or anger. He is respectful and sincere.

Who was his message for? Irving's challenge to intelligent leaders of culture is one of his most celebrated legacies. Early in his personal letters he reveals his passion for reaching leaders of culture with the gospel--for impacting the political and cultural world--and coming to London was his opportunity to do so. He particularly challenged leaders to trust in a higher power than intellect and turn to God's order:

> I do challenge them;--to show me in all the records of history or speculation, any one constitution of laws in spirit so pure, in application so extensive, in effects so beneficial, in motives so spirit-stirring and spirit ennobling, in its whole machinery so complete and in

its several parts so excellent, as this constitution of law and gospel hath been proved to be . . . (207-08)

He truly believed that God's order was greater than humanity's. Just as he challenges leaders to set the bible alongside their texts of learning, he believed that true wisdom and discernment came from God alone. Throughout his ministry he challenges these men to admit this and submit to God.

Irving does not ask the intelligentsia to throw caution to the wind but, believing that Christianity is the most logical system, he appeals to human reason. "Our religion stands by thought, and hath been always the mother of thought; but the culture given to bad passions and unholy feelings, is all against us, creating habits and likings which our religion must reverse in its progress over the mind"(94). The mind can direct one to God and keep one on the Godly path--the mind is a necessary tool of God: "Thought would become a constant device for the good ends which God hath set before us, and action a constant enterprise to bring these ends about . . . "(108).

However, he does not rest on reason alone. He says, "Human reason in its fallen state may do much to assist, but it is incompetent to guide and overmaster you"(84). Faith and the human will must also be given place. Irving speaks to the entire person, to his "affections, his interests, his hopes, his fears, his wishes--in one word, his whole undivided soul"(103-104). The mind can only reach its potential if one, in faith and a decision of the will, submits it to Christ. It is then free from the constraints of the world's wisdom, and experiences freedom and beauty "to which the flattery of royal persons is as nothing"(151).

Again, Christianity involved the whole person. Irving did not only appeal to intellect; in his opinion, it was a mistake to relegate spiritual discussion to this realm, as did the "Moderates" of the Presbyterian church. "There must be something more manageable, something that can speak to intellect as it grows, that can touch feeling, that can curb passion, that can minister a present reward to benevolence, to piety and tenderness of heart"(141). Christian doctrine encompassed the whole person, including will, nature, and experience.

Irving's messages are also for his fellow clergy. He wants to stand with his peers in religious service and asks them to join him in addressing the sins of society. He offers this passionate plea to other ministers:

> Until advocates of religion do arise to make unhallowed poets, and undevout dealers in science, and intemperate advocates of policy, and all other pleasers before the public mind, give place, and know the inferiority of their various provinces to this of ours--till this most fatal error, that our subject is second-rate, be dissipated by a first-rate advocation of it--till we can shift these others into the back ground of the great theatre of thought, by clear superiority in the treatment of our subject, we shall never see the men of understanding in this nation brought back to the fountains of living water, from which their fathers drew the life of all their greatness.(96)

The truest thought, the most civilized culture, the most secure society could only be founded upon religious grounds. Irving, convinced of the life-changing influence of the gospel, was tired of watching the power of Christianity

being squandered in half-hearted, stale sermons and letting culture dictate thought. As he begins his career, he invites his brothers to work with him to take up their heroic quest, assume their rightful place as God's ambassadors, and change the world.

In a society in which the religious life was beginning to seem outdated and irrelevant in comparison to the new inventions and sense of progress, Irving's religion was robust, imaginative and exciting. His words rang loudly in the midst of a busy society, too satisfied with its own pursuits and abilities to look heavenward. His images enliven the imagination and his rhetoric is an intellectual battering-ram at the gates of fortified hearts. His portrayal of Christ, and the heroic life now and in eternity, offer more vibrant ideals than those of any romance novel. And the God that he presents, as wisdom to the cultured, compassion and love to the lonely, confronts all hearers to contemplate a change. Is it any wonder, then, that he became the most popular preacher in London, or that several of the most eminent literary figures of his age sought comfort and enlightenment from this large, imaginative Scotsman?

In 1835, one year after Irving's death, thirty of his early London sermons were published in book form under the title, Thirty Sermons. The publisher writes, "The following Sermons, which are now first printed from the short-hand writer's accurate report, were among the earliest of the pulpit addresses of the late Rev. Edward Irving, on his commencing his ministerial labours in Cross Street, Hatton Garden, London in 1823, and may be said to have laid the

foundation of his future fame and popularity." The sermons are compiled from Irving's first three years in London, the period of his great success. The Collected Writings of Edward Irving, (published by his nephew Gavin Carlyle in 1865) includes many of these and also a series of sermons on John the Baptist, preached in 1823, "Discourses on Special Occasions" and "Missionaries After the Apostolical School"(1825). We now turn to these works to examine how Irving's thought and delivery developed during this pivotal period.

As in Orations, Irving takes scripture as a guidebook to life. He asserts, along with Christian Kings before him, that under the Word of God "we ought to live, to fight, to govern the people, and to perform all the affairs: from that alone we obtain all power, virtue, grace, salvation, and whatsoever we have of divine strength"(Irving quoting Edward the Sixth. Sermons 259). Moreover, all should experience salvation and conversion.

The sovereignty of God also continues to be stressed. Irving can argue for a Christian system of government, and for Christian ideals to steer society, even for his own doctrines, because he firmly believes that God's sovereignty applies to all aspects of life--to education, and pleasure; to the private and the public sphere; and to both the church and the state. Indeed, he always believed that if people were humble before God, He would show the way. As he surveys biblical history, which he does more frequently than in Orations, citing David, Paul, and others, Irving proves that every action, every difficult trial, served God's overall plan, and if a person would depend upon Providence, He would guide their lives toward His heroic purpose. He

affirms that "Every man hath been placed by the providence of God"(Sermons 217).

The need for Christian heroism is still emphasized. At a time in which people were looking for a hero, Irving offered a strong example, both as a Christian and as a preacher. He witnessed, first-hand, deterioration in philosophy, culture, and religion. In response he cries, "Now is the time for grace of behaviour, for gentleness of speech, for meekness and gentleness, and all the arts of persuasion--for argument, eloquence and fearless energy"(42). He continues to impress this ideal upon his hearers, as attainable through Christ. "To die, in daring to utter God's truth, where others have not the heart to speak it, is at all times a godly death; because strength for what we do, is from God alone: it is a righteous death, because it prefers truth, the offspring of Heaven, to all things on earth. . ."(45). But it is not only the parishioners who are called to be strong. Yet again, Irving wants the guardians of God's people to lead. Ministers were to be the bravest of leaders, "They ought to think, to reason, and to rouse up their manhood: they ought to awaken the gift that is in them; and to be grave and expedious in the warfare of the soul"(24). And when Irving heard a man who did this he remarked, "O, my spirit is recreated and refreshed by such manliness"(14). He consistently held to the heroic calling of both the minster and all converted.

There are, however, some changes that are discernible in Irving's thought and preaching, most significantly his conception of himself as a prophet. Late in 1825, Irving began to take on the role of an apocalyptic prophet, immersing himself in apocalyptic literature and believing in

the imminent return of Christ. Phrases such as "The Lord will reckon with the world in fire and blood, when he comes terribly to shake the earth" became more frequent (Sermons 346). These later sermons suggest a contemporary John the Baptist, and indeed Irving refers to John the Baptist frequently. In 1823, he delivered fifteen lectures in which he highlights the ministry of the Baptist while assuming a kinship with him. He also assumes that, just as the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of the Lord, so he is called by God and speaks as one confident of his prophetic role, willing to accept the persecution which may ensue. "I was appointed to utter truth," he says, "as well as of private and personal"(Sermons 256). His credo is also that of Ezekiel: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel"(Sermons 257). Throughout the sermons, Irving is certain of his office.

Biblical apocalyptic literature is a confusing genre to interpret. It is "a loose mysterious allegory of things earthly and heavenly in great confusion of times"(Sermons 333). This is primarily because of historical distance, but perhaps also because the author does not fully understand his own visions. Often the images appear convoluted (as in "something like a wheel within a wheel" or references to time such as "a time, and a half a time"). Irving however, inspired by Hatley Frere's writings and Lacunza's "The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Power," is convinced of his own ability to interpret apocalyptic literature, and assigns concrete meaning to various symbols. He also interprets apocalyptic literature as unconfined to its historical context but serving a larger purpose in predicting the entirety of Church and global history. In

his sermon "The Plan of the Apocalypse", he explains, "It is a subject by no means intricate, being accurately studied, and surely very profitable, and at present very necessary"(Sermons 334). He moves through Daniel's four monarchies, tying them to real events in Church history such as the persecution of the saints and the rise of the Roman Church, much in the same way as today's prophets of doom. He makes claims with absolute certainty, such as "the church's experiences with suffering have been from Arianism, Paganism, and Popery"(335) and "Satan is enthroned in the mighty seat of Rome"(224). He systematically sets history in dispensations. And when interpreting these visions, Irving uses the words, "this is", making a firm assertion of what the visions represent.

He also admits to conjecture. As this tendency increases there are two further important phrases used more frequently; namely, "This I take to be" and "it comes to my mind." The former is important with reference to his speculation on scripture. Coleridge would later criticize Irving for using the preaching office to voice his passing opinions and unfounded interpretations of scripture. He opened the pulpit up as a place of speculation, rather than stating simple truths. It is also interesting to note that in the years following 1825 the frequency of the phrase "it comes to my mind" increases. Its use coincides both with Irving's growing speculation on apocalyptic literature and his assumption of personal revelation, which, by 1830 had led his congregation into frequent "prophetic utterances". Indeed, for Irving, the statement, "it comes to my mind" grew to mean, "God is telling me"--a dangerous assumption for the enthusiastic prophet.

Irving's prophetic role within society also expanded in these years. He was a preacher for all peoples. As seen already, Irving was a strong advocate for the poor. One of the judgments to come upon society is due to its lack of care for the poor. In "The Sins of the Upper Classes" he invites the congregation to give an offering for the poor, "not for pity's sake but for necessity's sake"(Sermons 268). Irving is no longer a gentle disciple of Chalmers, passing out money to the poor on his visits, nor simply pronouncing his popular benediction of "peace be on this house": Now he warns London that the ills of the land are due to a lack of benevolence, and judgment will come should the poor not find charity among the rich. His call is wide and loud. "If we draw not near to do tender offices for the dying--if nature speaks not for them--then will terror speak"(294). Irving uses his prophetic office for more than just warning of final judgment; he also rouses compassion for those in need. As in the parable of "the Sheep and the Goats", God will judge people for what they did or did not do.

He speaks to people of all walks of life. Among various instructions, he challenges people of fashion to let into their parties only those of good repute, and masters to watch over the spiritual state of their servants. Certainly, Irving is blunt, and sharp in places ("I say, we are by nature wretched slaves"(21)), yet he exhorts them as a father might exhort his children. In his sermon "To The Publicans and Soldiers," he addresses each strata of his congregation: The Poor, The Industrious Tradesmen, The Speculative Merchants, Those Retired from Cares to Enjoy Their Ease, Those Occupied With the World of Fashion and Gaiety, Servants, Masters, Children, Young Men, Men of

Letters, Governors, Senators, and Magistrates. Irving engages, in detail, with the needs and failings of each group, and addresses each earnestly, speaking to matters of finance, reputation, and maintaining moral purity with reference to each person's role. Furthermore, he does not appear to set one group up as more important than another but, even in the case of the fashionable classes often neglected by preachers as out of God's grace, sees each as having its place within God's plan. He is a preacher for all peoples.

As such, Irving is interested in human nature, and his analyses become more frequent in these sermons. He considers what negative effects some charitable services can have among the poor, unveiling the dynamics of abuse, laziness, and family disruption. And even a politician, or other public official, could have found wise instruction from the preacher who said, "The most common disguise which envy assumes is, an interest in your welfare. They profess to know how rich you are in the commodity which they would steal, and then they would sicken your enjoyment of it, by telling you how full of poverty it is"(34). Some of his arguments border on the psychological and sociological. "[Envy] springs from a consciousness of inferiority, and is a confession of it. It endeavours to hide a discontented mind, but cannot; it must divulge"(34). He speaks to the whole council of man. His hearers would not only respect him for his insight but would also be able to take away an application for their lives, Christian or not.

These warnings concerning envy are also connected to a growing line of thought within these sermons: Irving becomes more pre-occupied with criticism and those who had flattered

him and then turned their backs. Carlyle asserts that one of Irving's tragic flaws was his love of being loved, and in these sermons there are many references to criticism. Between the second and third week of Irving's lectures on John the Baptist, for example, there was heavy criticism of Irving's authoritative tone. Irving retorts, "And if any challenge us for following such a course, or ask at us our authority for such a daring invasion upon the pleasant places of their fond affections, it is our part to answer them as the Baptist did, "that we are the voice of one crying in the wilderness"(29 Lecture III). Notice how Irving quickly responds to criticism by likening himself to a spiritual figure and giving his actions a spiritual and divinely motivated quality. As the sermons continue through the years, and Irving's tone grows more vehement, one wonders if this defence was for the sake of the gospel or himself.

Not only is Irving's tone more prophetic, and his scope farther reaching, but the messages are also conveyed in a much more conversational style. Although his pulpit rose high above the congregation, he interacted with his hearers on a one-on-one basis, using images, informal style and lists, and compact proverb-style phraseology. At times he says, "I ask you this. . . " and "I answer . . .". The sermons are naturally more conversational than the written out, more systematic Orations, and have less detailed imagery. Their intent is not to convince through lengthy rational argument, but to ask a question of the hearer, implant one or two significant truths, and give something to think about over the week to come. This is done informally, as one speaking man to man. An example of this is Irving's

portrayal of John the Baptist before Herod. One can see the young idealistic preacher, perhaps softening his voice slightly, spreading his arms, inviting his hearers into his range as he says, "Now brethren, gather yourselves together; and gather your thoughts together for an observation and an experiment, to witness and consider the meeting of two such men"(39). It is a way of drawing the attention, and suggesting that "we will discover something"; the hearer and the preacher participate in the exercise together.

This informal style is also, as with Orations, supported by using lists, and juxtaposition and irony. The turns of phrase would catch the hearer's attention and hold it. In a somewhat rhythmic, or playful tone, the phrases make the listener think and are just as plentiful, if not moreso than the Orations. It is interesting to note that in most sermons the use of lists begins at approximately the same time--three to four pages in, which, when timed, works out to about twelve to sixteen minutes into the discourse--at least by today's standards, a time at which the hearer's attention may have been wavering. Clearly, Irving was always attentive to what the hearer needed, and structured his sermons in order to communicate the truths effectively.

Two other devices deserve mention. Throughout these latter writings, Irving pleads with boisterous repetition and illustration. As he rises in passion to the climax of his argument, he says "Oh Brethren, Oh Brethren!" and after asking "What gain ye by such a course [as dying with the voice of salvation in your ear]?" he charges, What? What?"(Lecture II, 26). If he were in court he would be "badgering the witness", while in his congregation he is appealing to them seriously to consider their spiritual

state. Secondly, throughout the latter sermons, illustrations abound, much more so even than the thoughtfully laid-out images of Orations. He is clearly a topical preacher rather than exegetical. In his discussion of the famine, for example, he paints a fable-like picture of a man dying of hunger in the streets who is then ushered into the presence of God where, after answering in the negative to the Almighty's question about the benevolence of society, God issues curses upon the city for its lack of care for His saint. The image is didactic and universalizable and makes his point brilliantly. But his messages are not built upon one illustration alone. The hearer's attention is kept through the many illustrations from real-life, which all ranks can appreciate, interspersed with scriptural or theological truths. The images give the sounds and smells of the street, the character of the learned, and the devastation of God's judgment. In effect, as with his various lists, Irving produces a "buckshot" effect, knowing that at least one illustration will drive home the truth to the hearer and, in sum, secure his argument and perhaps bring a response from sheer weight.

In these sermons, preached between 1822 and 1825, one sees the germination of certain disturbing tendencies. Irving assumes a prophetic office and becomes more preoccupied with speculating on Christ's return. However, the prophetic element and the human are, at this point of his highest popularity, working together in a potent mixture. Irving is precise in his analysis of human behaviour, penetrating in his personal edification and illustration, and conversational in his tone. He speaks to

people where they are at. Despite his apocalyptic tone, his appeal to the needs of each person shows thought, sensitivity, and pastoral concern. And he still has an uncritical view of scripture, which has both a negative and positive effect on his ministry. Neglecting contemporary rationalist thought and biblical criticism, Irving assumed that the demands and the portents of scripture were concrete. One must simply interpret it based on internal evidence and follow its guidelines. He is confident of God's sovereignty, humanity's need, and God's ability to help, and being convinced of these he is not speaking merely to vent frustration or to prove his bravery, but to move people toward the haven of Christianity. One is reminded of the story of his carrying the burden of the travelling peasant as he attempts to carry all of London with him to this destination. The tone of his preaching is elevated, and his voice and images attempt to invoke a sublime sense of awe. The Christian life was exciting and even heroic and he endeavoured to prove this in example. However, one unfortunate result of his success in portraying this heroic and prophetic ideal, the consequent acclaim he received, and his growing confidence--is an authoritarian tone. When criticism comes, this tone increases in frequency and vehemence. The two critical signs of danger are his tendency toward a self-assumed prophetic role and his reaction to criticism. Unfortunately, as the years progress, these tendencies will overshadow the warmer and more attractive aspects of Irving's vibrant early ministry.

## CHAPTER THREE

## The Two Men From Annan

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

-Carlyle, Reminiscences.

*This mad City (for it is mad as Bedlam, nine-tenths of it) killed him; he might have lived prosperous and strong in Scotland, but there was in him a quality which the influences here took fatal hold of; and now -- Alas! alas!"(344 Vol 7. Letters)*

Thomas Carlyle was Edward Irving's closest friend for much of his life. They came from the same background, held romantic ideals in a country becoming rapidly industrialized, and became strong voices within their culture. This chapter plots the course of this friendship: first discussing shared ideas; then Irving's possible influence on Carlyle; and thirdly, the differences in thought. Finally, it discusses Carlyle's criticism of Irving in his declining years in London.

Although both grew up in the region of Annandale, before the Kirkaldy years Irving and Carlyle had not come

into significant contact. The first appearance that Carlyle remembers of Irving was in 1808 when Irving had returned to the Annan grammar school from Edinburgh to visit the teacher Adam Hope. In Reminiscences (1881), Carlyle talks of his courteous demeanour, his scrupulous dress, and the reputation which had preceded him as an intelligent student. But it was in Kirkaldy that the relationship really began. The town had started a second school next to Irving's academy, apparently because some parents were dissatisfied with Irving's teaching methods, many thinking him too strict. Carlyle was appointed as master of the new school in 1815; he was three years younger than Irving, and was concerned that there would be sparks between them. However, although the two schools soon entered into a strong rivalry, Carlyle discovered that Irving bore no jealousy, nor ill feelings: "My house and all that I can do for you is yours: two Annandale people must not be strangers in Fife!" he said and took Carlyle into his circle of acquaintance (Reminiscences 78). Carlyle's interest in history developed during this time when Irving lent the new teacher many volumes not easily obtained in that area. This was the beginning of their friendship and mutual respect, which was to last until Irving's death in 1834.

The reasons for this enduring relationship are many. Some are stated in a letter of June 1821, where Irving considers their friendship:

I have been analyzing, as [much as] I could, the origin of my esteem and affection for you which made me so loath to part with you and shall make me so happy to renew our wanderings. You are no more a general favourite than I am and in the strong pockets of character we are not alike, not yet alike in the turn of our general thoughts--and we are both too intrepid to seek in each other pity or consolation, and too independent to let anything sinister or selfish to enter into our attachments. How comes it to pass then that we have much pleasant communion? I'll tell you one thing, High Literature is exiled from my sphere and simple principle is very much exiled from yours. There we feel a blank on both sides which is supplied in some measure when we meet. I'll tell you another thing -- livened from the ordinary ways of men, influence place, fortune, each in his place has been obliged to turn to delight his solitude and hang his hopes upon something higher, and though we have not chosen the same thing, in both cases it is pure and unearthly, and next to his own thing which the other amuses most. I can easily see that in the [pockets] of our thoughts and character there might me ample room for toleration and charity which might form the touchstone of our esteem."(MSS 1764, June 12,1821)

Between the two, there were significant differences in character. Irving was spontaneous, and saw the world in

concrete terms. When he was convinced of a life-principle, he set his will to follow it. Carlyle, on the other hand, was more speculative. He was analytical and given to thought more than action. Furthermore, as we will see later, Carlyle was more focussed on the world of high literature--especially works of history and philosophy in German and French--while Irving had an equal ministry to the common man and to the great: the poor weaver and the man of literature.

However, key aspects of their character appear similar. The first thing that Irving alludes to is that they are not "general favourites" and later he speaks of their solitudes. Neither Irving nor Carlyle was generally popular. They both had dreams that were larger than their environment. They were preoccupied with subjects and pursuits not shared by most of the country people--broad speculations on literature and philosophy, society's degradation, and theories of how to improve matters. These subjects they mused on and debated passionately. Like foreigners in a strange land, they were drawn together, seeing and understanding in each other a sense of isolation, and recognizing that no one understood them except the other person.

This sense of isolation combined with the seeking of a place in the world is evident in much of their lives. Carlyle was to write later that Irving "loved to be loved", and indeed Irving appears an extrovert, consistently trying to connect with people. Carlyle also felt an acute need for

relationships, writing such confessional questions in his journal as "will I ever join in fellowship with an active body of men?"(March 1830, Reader 17) and Irving attempted to help him in this endeavour. Ironically, only Irving was really able to amass the fellowship that both wished for, and yet it was this achievement which helped to destroy him.

In the letter Irving describes himself and Carlyle as "intrepid" and "independent" and certainly both can be remembered for these qualities. They were courageous and confrontational. Early in life, Carlyle's temper, apparently inherited from a long line of explosive men, had to be curtailed by his mother. However, more than once he returned beatings on his schoolmates and earned their respect. Much of his writing is vehement, and he confronted his critics head-on. Like Irving, he was a driven character with a fearless approach to life. Irving's own strong, independent character is alluded to in Reminiscences (1881), where Carlyle remembers the early years of their friendship. Carlyle recounts that in their meetings they did not as often touch on personal subjects as upon the world of ideas, and their letters demonstrate this. The two are not concerned with fleeting emotions or weakness, nor are they given to self-pity or emotional dependence. Instead, they build on each other's strength of character and motivate each other to press ahead.

A strong motivation was their mutual sense of destiny. "One day," said Irving, "we two will shake hands across the

brook, you as first in literature, I as first in divinity, and people will say, 'Both these fellows are from Annandale. Where is Annandale?'"(Reminiscences 148-49) They sought to make an impact on the world--Irving by the pulpit and Carlyle by literature. However, Irving was also interested in literature, although not in German philosophers, and Carlyle was concerned with the moral condition of society (although his solutions would have been developed through rationalism not faith). Thus, as Irving says, their independence and strength, and their passion for their individual pursuit, won the respect of the other.

Irving and Carlyle were also strikingly similar in their romanticism. They idealized nature and rural life and were suspicious of the enthusiasm for mechanization and industrialization. Their rural upbringing in the south-west of Scotland probably influenced their views: the tension between the land of their youth and that of the frantic city was to be a lifelong theme. Carlyle was later to call London "a monster" and "Bedlam", convinced that the frantic pace and moral deterioration was a madness. He believed that the industrial revolution was producing a moral revolution as well. London was a "mad" city of unceasing change, immorality, and desperate poverty. It was a symbol of the widespread degradation against which Carlyle was to rail for life.

While in London Irving certainly enjoyed the privilege of speaking to the leaders of his day, but he too had

negative sentiments regarding the busy city. He first called it "a place of terrible labour and industry" (March 6,1823) and would later write to his friend, "I am here in the midst of the busy world, and its busyness only interrupts me, and would vex me if I would let it"(MSS 1784). In sermons he spoke of the frantic pace his parishioners endured, and the sweeping changes that industrialism brought, effectively shutting out the voice of God. He observed a drastic deterioration in morals. The poor were being ignored and losing their personal dignity, living in foul quarters and working in slave-like conditions, while capital filled the pockets of the rich. People were also neglecting religion more than ever. In fact, it is likely Irving's experience of London was a factor in heightening the preacher's apocalyptic consciousness in those early years: two years after arriving, he started warning that the end of the world was near. While this shift in focus was nurtured by many influences, it is certainly possible that what Irving saw in the capital--the frantic pace, the noises and pollution of industrialism, the collapse of morality--was largely responsible for the change in his ideas.

In contrast to this scene were the remembered pastoral images of youth. After speaking of London's ability to "vex" him, Irving encourages his friend to "Fill up with the softness of rural beauty and the sincerity of rural manners and the contentment of rural life, those strong impressions

of men and of nature which are already in your mind." The memories of Scotland were of beauty and peace, where there was quiet and one could still sense nature at work. Here people were content, sincere and more benevolent, not clambering over each other for prominence or place. They were shepherds, lighthouse keepers, and farmers, who had the common traits of quick-wit, hospitality, simple purity, and strength. They had left a strong impression of deep character and the memories were a source of strength when faced with the shifting world of London and its pretence, riches, and preoccupation with appearance. In Carlyle's case, the wish to marry Jane Welsh and raise a family on a small farm in Scotland, also reveals that he idealized this land and its benefits.

In the remembrances of these pastoral scenes, both Irving and Carlyle would find solace. When Irving's health was failing, the natural scenes of Scotland were a source of strength and rejuvenation. In a letter of hope to Anna Montague, Carlyle recounts a visit from Irving, "Do you ever see Edward Irving? He stretched himself out here on the moors, under the free sky, for one day, beside me, and was the same honest soul as of old."(Nov. 3,1829. Collected Letters, V, 34) Throughout the last decade of his life, Irving would return to his roots to find peace, drawn back to the person he was before the cares of London set in. As one reads of their younger days, and hears these recollections of Carlyle, one senses the foreboding city in

the distance. London was the poison; the country was the antidote.

Another quality common among romantic figures was melancholy. Passion was often counterbalanced by long periods of self-doubt and lethargy. Both Irving and Carlyle struggled with these and confessed their struggle to each other. While Irving's public reputation is certainly one of courage, strength, and energy, his letters to Carlyle reveal another side. He calls many of his letters a "reformation of my personal idleness"(Aug. 6, 1823) and often confesses that he has been in an "an interval of apathy"(ibid). Given Irving's passionate nature, it is likely that he shifted from extreme to extreme. In public, he was always seen visiting and speaking with people. He confesses to Carlyle: "I am encumbered with a heart of too large sympathies both for the [divisions] of my head and the power of my hands and also for the [quantity] of time; my wish to be useful to every one I meet, my desire not to disoblige them . . . I am driven"(Feb 23, 1823). The people of his parish would probably not have known of his melancholy moments, for he seemed confident and energetic. But it was probably *because* of this pace that he had periods of melancholy. He could only go so far before collapsing in physical and emotional weariness. Already, in his mid-twenties he confesses, "There is not any rest in life"(MSS 1764, March 15,1821), and the tendency toward overwork, over-pleasing, and unrealistic expectations, would result in moments of

collapse. But these were only known to those closest to him.

Carlyle too had moments of melancholy and, even more than Irving, wrestled with them vehemently. Journal entries include such comments as "Writing is a dreadful Labour; yet not so dreadful as Idleness."(Feb. 1829, Journal, Reader) His abhorrence of idleness is somewhat more acute than Irving's. Carlyle, also a driven man, must keep going: Idleness is sin, illogical, and possibly also a sign of weakness. Throughout life, Carlyle's ideal was Action and he became frustrated with those who were not so inclined. "Man is made for work" Carlyle would say, and indeed would not allow himself room for rest, reflection and rejuvenation. Both Irving and Carlyle struggled with melancholy. The result was guilt, which they confessed to each other, and no doubt the sharing of these personal sentiments in early days formed a bond which would last for life.

Yet both were "intrepid" and passionate voices for change within their culture. Irving called people to look heavenward and to history--to live a life of submission to God and find in him strength, nobility and wholeness. Carlyle challenged society to value the undefinable, trust the individual, and not discard the work ethic and means of the past for the sake of a "quick-fix". Like prophets of old, they summoned hearers back to a traditional lifestyle, away from the apostasy of a culture which had turned to a

different god. The spheres of influence of these two prophets were different; most obviously one was a minister and the other a man of literature. The obvious assumption, then, is that one focussed on the soul and the other on the mind. While the distinctions between the two are perhaps not quite so simple, Irving did emphasize basic spiritual principles while Carlyle dealt with intellectual issues. The result was that Irving ministered to various people at a down-to-earth level, while Carlyle was focussed on intellectuals. Irving can be seen carrying the pack of a poor man or dropping a potato in his pot, while Carlyle engaged in dialogue and speculation on historical trends. Irving stressed that, although people do not all think alike, they suffer from the same human condition, whereas Carlyle focussed on man's intellect.

However, there are similarities in some of the people they sought to confront. Long before his voice was heard in London, Irving singled out literary men for rebuke. In July of 1820, he writes to Carlyle, "There is little enthusiasm among [men of letters] for self-denial, or patient endurance of suffering, or noble [submission] to the humble destinies of man -- it is all either practical politics or scientific facts"(MSS 1764 July 10, 1820). Irving consistently tried to get men to trust in something higher than their intellect. Rather surprisingly Carlyle, himself a literary figure, makes similar complaints--at least of London literary society:

> How few people speak for Truth's sake, even in its humblest modes! I return from Enfield, where I have seen Lamb etc., etc. Not one of that class will tell you a straightforward story, or even a credible one about any matter under the sun. All must be perked up into epigrammatic contrasts, startling exaggerations, claptraps that will get a plaudit from the galleries! (Nov 1831. 23 Reader)

To Carlyle this endless line of words, without any substance or meaning, is repulsive. He hears many witty anecdotes about Hazlitt, yet cannot really make out the man's character. And he uses the word "convulsive" to describe Lamb, adding that "there is not even a phrase or an opinion that you can thank him for". He just prattles on without substance to his discourse. Carlyle, ever focussed on substance and action, abhors this. To both Carlyle and Irving, the literary establishment seemed pedantic and patronizing. They spoke in high tones but did not live equally elevated moral lifestyles. In response, Irving writes, "I want to invoke the stolid quills of the literary men . . . and bring them forth from their fancied [opinions] to my conclusions"(Feb 23,1823). Both the writer and the receiver of the letter share these sentiments.

Irving also set his sights on challenging the religious leaders. Early on, as he developed his own style of preaching, he knew that the divines were not reaching much of society. He was also aware that established ministers

looked on him with suspicion. From London he writes to Carlyle, "I have had to [fight] against the whole stream of the religious . . . I am like a saviour among pharisees, their vile panderers of the Ecclesiastical and political state would glory to cut me down". This is dated August 6th, 1823, nine years before the Presbyterian church condemned him as heretical. From the beginning he felt isolated, with the church leaders against him. Both Irving and Carlyle see themselves as more purposeful, thoughtful, strong, idealistic, and resolute than the leaders around them, and seek to confront them.

How far did the two influence each other? Early in his career, Irving often gave Carlyle advice on literature, such as what to read and where to publish. In letters he recommends the tragedies of a Cuban named Alfresis, and Scott's Lady of the Lake, adding "If ever it be thy lot, or mind, Carlyle, to marry, may the lady be the pattern of Helen Douglas, in logic and mind, and we will scarcely fail of being happy. -- beautiful, Cheerful, Generous Character, Honourable, Good-Tempered"(MSS 1764 Aug. 1820). Irving was especially drawn to the heroic and romantic epics of the Arabian Nights, Ossian, and Milton. He sometimes attempts to nudge Carlyle to this realm of the fanciful, away from the high literature of Goethe and Schiller. His emphasis is on heroic action and dreams of other realms, not on academic speculations or on ordinary reality.

Irving also took seriously Carlyle's potential as a writer. He often challenges Carlyle to write and publish "to obtain that ear of the public, which you must have, and which you cannot get like me by preaching"(MSS 1764 Feb 23, 1823). He also suggests firms with which Carlyle should publish. For example, in December 1819, a time at which Carlyle had published very little, Irving tells him that he should write for the "Edinburgh Press" instead of "Blackwoods", suggesting that "Blackwoods Magazine presents bad company"(Dec 26, 1819). And, as well as offering advice, Irving also used his influence both in Glasgow and London as a way to get Carlyle into publishing, often trying to win a hearing for his "young literary friend." Right away, upon his entrance onto the London scene in the summer of 1822, he writes to Carlyle that he has met with and recommended him to a publisher named Taylor-- the proprietor of "London Magazine". This would become an important stepping stone in Carlyle's literary career.

In the Spring of 1822 Carlyle invited Irving to advise him on his potential as a literary figure and to point out his failings and possible solutions. The result is an important glimpse into Carlyle's character at a transitional time. He had recently undergone a conversion experience in 1821, which he describes in Sartor Resartus, as "the everlasting Yea", was quickly growing closer to Jane Welsh, to whom Irving had introduced him in June 1821, and was

attempting (as would be the case for the next decade) to get published. He seeks advice from Irving. Irving writes:

> You have indeed set me a task which I am neither willing nor able to perform, not willing because you are one whom I have been accustomed to defend, and how to judge or condemn you I find not, not able because your mind is dissimilar to my own, and rises, I think, into an altitude where it is not congenial for mine to live.(MSS 1784. April 29,1822)

Nevertheless, he undertakes the task. First, Irving considers the nature of Carlyle's intellect, suggesting that while it is a benefit, it also hinders him. Carlyle has too many ideas--his mind takes in so many issues, that it paralyses communication. Irving writes, "I might be bold to hazard a stricture upon the make of your understanding, it does not proceed methodically enough. You are so full of matter, that you would require double skill and endeavour after distribution." He needs to proceed more "methodically" and indeed a major theme of the letter is the polarity between Carlyle's mind and his communication with those around him.

Not only does his mind take in so many aspects, but his thoughts consume him, resulting in impatience and insensitivity. Irving is uncertain whether it is merely his mind's "nature" or Carlyle's "impulses" (the mechanics of his intellect or the tendencies of his personality) but he suggests that Carlyle's intellect "has an impatience, and

quick decision that seems to me [against] the accuracy of its results, and much against the pleasant communication of them." He thinks and speaks too quickly and harshly, and alienates others by ranting on without listening to and reflecting on others' words.

Irving notices that it is in person only that Carlyle overreacts in this impatient manner while "in writing it is not so, there is much wisdom, much truth." When Carlyle meets someone weak or prejudiced, he forces his point upon his hearers "most impetuously", before they have a chance to engage him. Or, in the words of Leigh Hunt, "in his zeal for what is best he sometimes thinks it incumbent on him to take not the kindest tone"(Sketches 178). This "excessive severity", is also alluded to with a caution, by Margaret Gordon, an early intimate of Carlyle, in her departing letter to him many years earlier. Now Irving, always the pastor, speaks strongly against his impatience, not only for the benefit of Carlyle's career but because the result is "the offending of one's neighbour". He invites Carlyle to have grace and curtail his forcefulness in argument.

Carlyle was not only impatient but also satiric: "Your wit, your sarcasm, your contempt, your hatred at this moment threaten to devour your benevolence, your admiration, and your tender affection." His intellectual strength and impatience takes precedence over the kinder, more accepting aspects of character. His pride, the sense that he was "one-up" on those around him ruled his discourse and made it

seem as though he was not nurturing, did not care, and was more interested in semantics and witticisms (a quality which he would later abhor in literary society) than in the people he was addressing. Unfortunately, this would only gain him short-lived attention, and would not win him the loyal support for which he wished.

Living in the lofty land of intellectuals--viewing life through speculation and constantly shifting viewpoints--Carlyle also lacks firm ideals. He has no established vision of the life he wants to live and the principles he wants to impart--whether it be to help the poor, encourage learning among the young, fight for democracy, or save souls. Irving, the man of deep, solid convictions, asks him to "join yourself to a course in which men are deeply concerned" and "let it be something worthy of man, something which you truly love". Again, in this crucial, transitional time for Carlyle, his far-reaching intellect may lead him only into wandering and vagueness. The challenge is to narrow his focus, guard his attitude and give his energies to a noble pursuit.

Perhaps the core of Carlyle's problems, the cause of both his harsh personality and lack of focus, is that he struggles with self-doubt. "To hear you speak," says Irving, "one would take you for the most aimless, indifferent mortal upon earth . . . learn to esteem yourself up to your proper dimensions and to act accordingly." Irving sees the lack of self-trust and remarks on it because

he knows his friend's abilities. Yet Irving believes that if Carlyle continues overreacting, alienating people in impatience, and following the bright spurts of intellect instead of reflecting and trusting in himself, Carlyle will go nowhere in his career. Irving challenges him to narrow his focus, and let his good qualities dominate.

The letter to Carlyle is strongly pastoral and gives much insight into Carlyle's character and strong advice on how to improve it, but it also reveals much about Irving. He understands human nature, being able to see how his friend's mind functions, speculate on the reasons, and then articulate his hypotheses. He is also sensitive to the reactions of people around Carlyle, and wants Carlyle to think of his role and effect on society. The essence of his response to Carlyle is not only to "believe in yourself" and "narrow your focus", but "think of those around you". He has watched people's reactions to his friend and seen their chagrin, as well as Carlyle's reaction to them. He has also watched his friend become completely absorbed in his own mind. He wants to bridge the gap between Carlyle and others.

Finally, Irving's belief in Carlyle's potential is also seen. The tone of the letter is not condemnatory but encouraging. He balances his criticisms by highlighting Carlyle's abilities, suggesting that if he would refine some of his behaviour and thought, "they will both wonder and respect, for I know no vice in practice or opinion with

which you are chargeable". He knows Carlyle could be a leader and that people could benefit from his leadership. He wants his friend to cast off the tendencies which he describes as "corroding" and "devouring" and live the influential life for which he is destined. Certainly, Irving is not only a critic but a motivator for his friend.

There are two very different characters in this letter--one the explosive, passionate man and the other the insightful, gentle friend, pastorally encouraging. However, it is worth examining three further areas of divergence--their views of human nature, metaphysics and the religious life. First, then, the contrast between Irving's optimism and Carlyle's pessimism, regarding human nature is evident in many of Carlyle's earlier writings. He sees humanity as blind sheep and places little faith in them. We see this lack of faith through Teufelsdrock, for example, of _Sartor Resartus_ (1834):

> Strange enough how creatures of the human-kind shut their eyes to plainest facts: and by the mere inertia of Oblivion and Stupidity, live at ease in the midst of Wonders and Terrors. But indeed man is and was always, a block-head and dullard; much readier to feel and digest than to think and consider.(163)

To Carlyle, whose somewhat harsh sentiments would remain throughout his life, people simply do not open their eyes and see in the world around them signs and events which appear so tangible to him. They see neither wonder nor

danger. In his writings, this accusation is most often levelled against the common people, whose state Carlyle is quite dismayed by and impatient about, especially during the depression early in the century. But it is not only the common man with whom he is dissatisfied. Even in 1864, while writing his generally graceful memoirs, he calls the intelligent classes "that class of people and the many that hang by them"(Reminiscences 55). These leaders impose their power and narrow ideals on society, and, unaccepting of ideological deviance, destroy those in their way. He sees men not thinking for themselves and he sees his land and people exploited on the whim of those in power. For a man of independent thought and action, who already felt distanced from society, these frustrations are not surprising.

Irving is more graceful, and his accepting, genial attitude is evident throughout. In Kirkaldy, he was not threatened when a new master started a new school next to his, but instead took him under his wing. In Glasgow, he worked hard under Chalmer's shadow and is never recorded as speaking deprecatingly of the poor in whose dismal lifestyle he was absorbed. In London, he was continually visiting all the members of his parish, no matter how poor, and appealed strongly to the rich to help the needs of those suffering from poverty. In 1833, at the end of his career, Irving returned from a tour of Scotland, to find that the congregation, believing itself to be acting under the

guidance of the spirit, had appointed another leader. Irving did not fight for his right to lead, but gracefully stood aside. Throughout his life, he was not given to jealousy or manipulation. When affronted, he spoke his mind and moved on, without bearing grudges. Carlyle wrote in "The Death of Edward Irving": "he was so loving, full of hope, so simple-hearted, and made all that approached him his"("Death of Edward Irving", Fraser's Jan 1825, Reader 114). It is likely that Irving had some effect on the hard edges of Carlyle's personality.

A further difference between Irving and Carlyle was their view of Metaphysics--that is the most abstract philosophy which speculates on man's place in the order of the universe, identity and the ability to know. Carlyle believed that it was a worthless pursuit and liable to lead to the systematizing and deconstruction of man's spiritual aspect. Characteristics, published in 1831, outlined Carlyle's rejection of orthodox metaphysics which he believed was: "the attempt of the mind to rise above the mind; to environ and shut it, or as we say, *comprehend* the mind. Hopeless struggle, for the wisest, as for the foolishest! (Reader 89). Carlyle saw Metaphysics as a paralysing force in society. Instead of wondering about one's place in the cosmos, or how one knew one's self to exist, one should focus on progress and action.

He believed that the age needed heroes. However, "at the fervid period when his whole nature cries aloud for

Action, there is nothing sacred under whose banner he can act(92). There was nothing to believe in, even less to be convinced of and motivated by. Constant worrying about the larger questions of one's purpose and significance robbed people of belief in themselves and the universe, and there was no ideal to believe in while he was turned inwardly in second-guessing and an endless pursuit of the reasons for existence and action. This dissecting of action and thought was self-destructive.

It was not only the ideal of action and heroism which Carlyle was attempting to uphold, but, of wonder and respect for the sacred places within society. As today's scientist investigates genetics or the impulses of love, so too Metaphysics peered into once mysterious realms which Carlyle preferred untouched. The individual's mind and soul (words he used interchangeably) constituted, "the sacred mystery of a Person". Carlyle warned, "let us rush not irreverently into man's Holy of Holies"(96)! He believed action was rendered impotent when one was gazing inward; he wanted to leave personality, action and mystery fully intact. The summation of his denial of metaphysics is "Man is sent hither not to question but to work"(87). It is impossible for a person or society objectively to analyze itself and in the attempt, along with denying individual dignity, they use their energies in searching for unattainable answers, and in so doing stagnate.

The arguments presented in Characteristics were published as Irving, having sat at the feet of Coleridge, was becoming enamoured of, and intellectually depleted by, metaphysical speculation. He saw metaphysics as capable of bringing new and vibrant revelations of Christianity and, instead of focussing on conversion and "simple principles", he was caught up with "the grand secrets of Necessity and Freewill, of the Mind's vital or non-vital dependence on Matter, of our mysterious relations to Time and Space, to God, to the Universe"(Characteristics, Reader 38). Carlyle's negative opinion of much of Coleridge's philosophy is no secret: he called him "The father of Puseyism and of much vain phantasmal moonshine which still vexes this poor earth" (Reminiscences 245). He deplored metaphysics, its proponents and its effects on his friend, and one wonders if his disapproval of Irving's new metaphysical interests was a motivation in the composition of Characteristics.

Carlyle and Irving also viewed religion in quite different lights. Always a pragmatist, Carlyle believed that religion was the medicine for society--religion works. While Irving argued for a more personal relationship with the Almighty, and eventually was led into the mystical and obscure in his own search, Carlyle affirmed a personal faith but also valued religion partly because it seemed vital to the smooth functioning of society. "It is not by Mechanism but by Religion; not by Self-interest, but by Loyalty, that men are governed or governable"(Reader 102). Irving was a

preacher whose faith and early ministry was built on simple principle and passion, and Carlyle was firstly an intellectual--in the end not an evangelical but a converted philosopher who saw the religious life as the best foundation for both himself and society.

It is difficult to assess the influence of Irving upon Carlyle's religious life. From 1818 onward, one can see that Irving was the believer and Carlyle the sceptic, and this tendency did not change. Interestingly, in the letters between the two there is little mention of religion, apart from, in the early twenties, Irving wishing for Carlyle's conversion. There was also a lengthy period between 1825 and 1830 in which he and Carlyle corresponded little--a fact which is alluded to in the few letters they wrote at the time--and they did not meet between 1827 and the fall of 1831. This was a chaotic period in which Irving's acclaim was declining, and Carlyle, newly married, was moving from place to place, seeking literary circles and publishers. In this interim period Irving's faith was becoming more speculative and apocalyptic while Carlyle was laying his own questions to rest. In both religion and philosophy, Irving and Carlyle continued to diverge and when Carlyle finally did start spending more time in London (he did not move there until 1834) he and Irving were worlds apart in religious terms. The surprise which Carlyle conveys (in personal letters of 1831) at the transformation of his friend is understandable.

This brings us to Carlyle's perspective on Irving's years of decline. In 1825, Irving began to speak on the second coming of Christ, certain that His return and judgment upon the earth was at hand. He also began to open the canon of scripture to his own interpretation, suggesting concrete meanings, framed by his own experience and opinion, for vague symbols and references. In 1825 his sermon Missionaries After the Apostolical School evoked much criticism for heavy-handedness and insensitivity. Shortly thereafter, he further distanced himself both from general society and orthodox religious culture as he affirmed faith in the significance of eccentric manifestations, such as shrieking and shaking, which by 1830 had evolved into "the tongues movement". His church was taken from him in the Fall of 1832, the same year that he was excluded (May) from the Church of Scotland, for his doctrines regarding the Trinity, and the "Irvingites" cloistered themselves at the estate of Henry Drummond, a rich banker. Finally, in May 1834 his home presbytery of Annan deposed him as both a minister and a member of the Church of Scotland.

Carlyle's feelings on Irving's degeneration are revealed in personal correspondence. The first glimpse of the friend he has not seen in four years is conveyed in a letter of 1831 to William Graham:

> The good man is strangely beleaguered with Shadows and Substances; preaching, teaching, working miracles, and

> what not; and I fear partly seems to "scunner" at [flinch from] communicating freely with one so heterodox as me. I purpose yet to tell him my whole mind about that miraculous rubbish of his one day.(Oct. 17, 1831, Letters VI, 21-2).

There are two significant issues throughout the criticism: the extent of Irving's eccentricity and unorthodoxy, and the strain on their friendship. It seems that Carlyle's presence is a reminder to Irving of previous days and a revealer of both his deviation from earlier ideals and the distance that the two have diverged from each other. Irving flinches from in-depth doctrinal discussion, and prefers superfluities. Throughout these letters, Irving's new tendencies as well as the deteriorating relationship between him and Carlyle are revealed.

To most people of the 1830s, as to many today, "tongues" represented only incoherent babblings at best--to others it was hysterical and insane behaviour. In November 1831, Carlyle writes to Margaret Carlyle, "I told him with great earnestness my deepseated unhesitating conviction that it was no special work of the Holy Spirit, or of any Spirit save of that black frightful unclean one that dwells in Bedlam . . ."(Nov 10, 1831, Letters VI, 41). Carlyle denies any divine source, and affirms that the "gift" is madness. Many times, in the various meetings of Irving's inner circle (called "The Albury Circle"--from the name of Drummond's estate) the manifestation of "tongues", described by Carlyle

as gibberish such as "lah lall lall", was accompanied by other signs of extreme emotionalism, from tears to shrieks to shaking. On one occasion on which the Carlyles were visiting the Irving household, where his followers had also met, the ferocity of the sounds was so intense that Jane nearly fainted and spent the journey home in tears. To Carlyle these were symptoms of madness. As one sees throughout his letters, Carlyle's criticisms are not based on scriptural foundations but on the emotional extremism of the doctrine. The madness of these "fanatical women" was serious enough in itself, but the tongues could also be seen as evidence of demonic activity. Carlyle implies this. "God deliver him! If that is not the Devil's own work, then may the Devil "lay down the gun" (Nov 13, 1831 To John Carlyle, Letters VI, 51). Two years later, after much criticism and abuse of these "gifts", Irving himself came to believe that in the speaking of tongues and the contingent prophesying, one could, if not using discernment, be an instrument of the devil.

The presumption of "new revelation" is Carlyle's second criticism of Irving and his followers. He writes to Jane, "Strangely enough is it all fashioned among [the fanatical classes] a certain everlasting Truth, even new Truth, reveals itself in them, but with a body of mere froth, and soap-suds and other the like ephemeral impurities"(Aug 15, 1831 Letters V,330). Carlyle does not respect this perception of truth nor its conveyance. Its conjuring is

seen as an habitual activity which the obscure group relishes, takes pride in, and abuses for selfish gain. It does not produce solid truth, but shallow, insubstantial "froth" which does not stand up to another's experience, nor theology, nor the tradition of the church. As the leader of this group, Irving is guilty of shepherding them toward this land of shadows, or at least facilitating their experience.

Another of Carlyle's objections was simply that Irving was dealing with people of low intellectual stature. The emphasis in Carlyle's criticism of Irving's following is that they are "fanatical classes", also known as "the crazed and weakliest of his wholly rather dim and weakly flock"(Reminiscences 251) or "a whole posse of enthusiasts, ranters and silly women"(Nov 10, 1831 To Margaret Carlyle, Letters VI, 41). Carlyle would rather keep a distance from them.

Irving believed that miracles, usually of healing, were commonplace among his congregation. He also believed that he was an agent in these miracles, using such phrases as "when I work miracles." This approach Carlyle scorns for two reasons. The first was that Irving was gradually receding into isolation with these spiritual fanatics who, in their quest for guidance and affirmation, were holding him up as a sort of guru. This elevation of himself created a dangerous cultish dynamic, strengthening Irving's belief in these strange doctrines, and distancing himself further into obscurity away from society and Carlyle himself.

Secondly, "the working of miracles", which Carlyle calls "the most doleful of all phenomena" (Reminiscences 251), brought the mysterious and holy into the realm of the systematic, temporal, and mundane. It assumed that "If I do this, God will do that"--in this case, if I pray and have faith, God must heal, and if a healing does not take place it is due to a lack of faith on my part. God was a puppet who would move if his strings were pulled, not the awesome being who deserved reverence from "a many-voiced choir"(Characteristics, Reader 86). This emphasis on the human power to manipulate the spirit is also greatly emphasized with the vocal manifestations. Often tongue speakers worked themselves into a frenzy before speaking and others were able to turn the messages off and on at will, "as on a stop-watch"(Dallimore 120). One Mary Caird was also known for teaching people how to speak in tongues. This was not dynamic, unexplainable energy, but manipulation.

Carlyle had a vastly different approach to miracles. He believed that they happened everyday, in God's indiscernible way and time: "Miracle? What is a Miracle? Can there be a thing more miraculous than any other thing? I myself am a standing wonder"(March 1830, Journal, Reader 18). The sentiments, strangely akin to Whitman's "every inch a miracle", suggest that the miraculous was everywhere and for everyone to wonder at, not to be construed into a process, effected by a person. The Irvingite flamboyant

dynamic of miracle-working also affronted Carlyle's preference for silent appreciation of God and his works. "Thought works in Silence; so does Virtue. . . Speech is human, Silence is divine"(Reader 20). And indeed the focus of Characteristics is the importance of silence and wonder. The showy and boisterous "working of miracles", similar to the activities of a magician or showman, was insubstantial when compared to the silent and mysterious.

Carlyle also believed Irving's mind was deteriorating and that he was losing much of his tact and sensitivity to the world outside his spiritual environment. This distressed Carlyle, especially when Irving's obsessions affected him personally. On the day of Carlyle's father's funeral, (Saturday January 21st, 1832) Irving and his wife visited the Carlyle home. The "tongues" movement was in full swing and Irving and Carlyle were more distant than ever. They had not seen each other recently (Carlyle believed that Irving's adoring wife, who had embraced the new phenomena, was trying to keep the skeptic away) and the meeting only served to enhance their alienation. He writes to his sister:

> I felt that he meant kindly; yet cannot say that either his prayer or his conversation worked otherwise on me than disturbingly. I had partly purposed sending for him [to officiate at the funeral]; but was then thankful I had not done it. His whole mind is getting miserably crippled and weakened; but his inane babble

about his tongues and the like were for me like froth to the hungry and thirsty. (Jan 1832, Letters VI, 111)

Carlyle was grieving, and Irving was preoccupied with the arrival of tongues in his congregation, believing this was a sign that Christ was to return very shortly. Irving could not enter into his friend's pain. Whatever one might say about Carlyle being a late romantic figure, he was equally a man rooted in the world around him. Carlyle's was the tradition of Knox--though a prophet, yet an active, down-to-earth revolutionary. He believed that God works in the temporal realm, in real ways, through pain and not outside of it. But Irving spoke more of the new spiritual manifestations than about the couple's loss. Carlyle wanted to grieve for his father, not deny the reality of death.

Irving's insensitivity had become apparent in other meetings between the two. Carlyle recalls an earlier visit to Irving's house; when he and Jane wanted to leave, Irving laid hands on them and prayed for them both. Carlyle and Jane were highly uncomfortable, and the event is recounted with poignancy thirty years after the fact in Reminiscences. Irving had become so "heavenly minded that he was no earthly good"; his sensitivity to those outside of his mindset was waning. Sadly, Irving was so pre-occupied that he was no longer pastoral to even Carlyle, his friend of many years, and whom he had more than once encouraged along his path.

However, throughout the letters, Carlyle's admiration for Irving and a strong desire that he return to the sanity

of earlier days is ever present. Carlyle still places trust in Irving. He writes to Jane, "I love the man, and can trustfully take counsel of him"(Aug 15, 1831 Letters V, 330). Carlyle still sees Irving as the man who understands him and will support him. "With such a man I could defy the world," he tells his nephew in November 1831. Throughout their lives they have encouraged each other. In his youthful days Irving believed the best of Carlyle when he was misunderstood, and now Carlyle does likewise. He deplores the criticism that is being levelled at Irving. He writes to Margaret Carlyle, "None of you, I am sure, will join in any ill-natured clamour against him: defend him rather with brotherly charity"(Nov 10, 1831 to Margaret Carlyle, Letters VI 41). Even Irving's closest friends such as the Montagues, were speaking maliciously about Irving. Carlyle responds in a pointed letter in the same month, and asks his own family to be loyal to their friend. This is noteworthy in a man who could be sharp and sarcastic in his words and sentiment. Though Carlyle was often a prejudiced, proud, and explosive man, he did remain loyal to Irving. Throughout their friendship, contrasting doctrine and philosophy, and even prejudice, could not subdue their mutual loyalty. While both were highly opinionated and vehement, their esteem for each other was ever present, and the two men from Annan remained loyal until the end.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Prophet and the Sage

*"You know that Irving sits at his feet, and drinks in the inspiration of every syllable that falls from him. There is a secret and, to me as yet unintelligible communion of spirit betwixt them, on the ground of a certain German mysticism and transcendental lake poetry which I am not yet up to."*

*-Chalmers, after a visit to Highgate*

In January 1825 Irving dedicated his published sermon, Missionaries After the Apostolical School, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He said he had learnt more from Coleridge on the nature of faith, Christianity, and the Christian Church, than from all the men he ever conversed with, and thanked him for enlightening him as to the revelations of the Christian faith, calling the sermon "the first-fruits of my mind since it received a new impulse towards truth, and a new insight into its depths from listening to your discourse"(Writings II, 428). From 1823 to 1826, when Irving's popularity was at its peak, Coleridge did indeed fulfil the roles of sage and friend, and he was an important influence on Irving.

In the summer of 1823 Irving had already been gaining popularity for some time, and drawing people from all walks of life to his Hatton Garden church. Within a year his

congregation had grown from fifty to exceed the five-hundred capacity of the building. Canning, then cabinet minister and later Prime Minister, quoted him in Parliament. He had attended Irving's church and noted the phrase, "falling upon the Fatherhood of God". In July of that year, Coleridge, although ill, went to hear him. Many intellectuals were beginning to attend the sermons--partly because they had heard that Irving was attacking them. According to Hazlitt, Irving had learned the art of "attracting by repelling"(Spirit of the Age 41). But the appeal, for Coleridge and others, was more than just to hear the latest critic. Coleridge calls him "the super-Ciceronian, ultra-Demosthenic pulpiteer of the Scotch Chapel"(July 7, 1823 Letters, II, 722-23). And to his brother, the Rev. Edward Coleridge, he writes his first impression:

> [Irving is] certainly the greatest orator I ever heard (N.B. I make and mean the same distinction between oratory and eloquence as between the mouth + the windpipe and the brain + heart), is however, a man of great simplicity, of overflowing affections, and enthusiastically in earnest."(July 23, 1823. Letters 726)

In the qualified commendation, Coleridge alludes to Irving's pure talent as a speaker (in the mechanical sense--the vehicle of the mouth and windpipe) although he does suggest that eloquence is more a matter of the brain and heart than mere oratorical devices. Irving had certainly perfected his

oratorical talents. Yet his simplicity of principle was also appealing. He was a bright light for Coleridge who believed that the age needed more enthusiasm, which was sadly lacking, in the wake of rationalism and fanaticism.

Soon Irving was to become a frequent participant in Coleridge's "Highgate Circle" which met on Thursday evenings (called "Attic Nights") at the home of Dr. Gilman, where Coleridge resided. In this somewhat exclusive, yet diverse, group of intellectuals with backgrounds in law, medicine and art, Coleridge would expostulate in his flowing, ethereal style, having developed the reputation of being the greatest talker of the time, or at least, as Carlyle calls him, "the most surprising one"(Life of John Sterling 57). Here Irving's relationship with Coleridge took root. Like many others, Irving was attentive to Coleridge's every word. After such a meeting, Irving's former mentor, Chalmers, reflected:

> We spent three hours with the great Coleridge . . . You know that Irving sits at his feet, and drinks in the inspiration of every syllable that falls from him. There is a secret and, to me as yet unintelligible communion of spirit betwixt them, on the ground of a certain German mysticism and transcendental lake poetry which I am not yet up to. (Bulloch 200)

The widely acclaimed intellectual and lake poet, whom Irving had read in his younger years, had now taken him into his acquaintance and, finding a kinship with him, extended his

friendship. Interestingly, while Carlyle could not get Irving to read German philosophy (Irving was critical of Goethe and Schiller for having "seduced" his friend), Coleridge was able to inspire him in this direction. Irving was obviously flattered by this attention and offered his loyalty.

Irving was not, however, simply a disciple but also an impressive member of the Highgate Circle in his own right. To Mrs. Aders, Coleridge writes, "I should like you very much to be here one of the evenings which Basil Montague and Mr. Irving spend with us -- I am not the only person who thinks Mr. Irving more delightful still these times than even in the pulpit"(June 3, 1824 Griggs, II, 325-26). Considering Irving's reputation as a preacher, this is high praise. Along with sharing Coleridge's romantic inclination he had a wide-ranging knowledge of society, history, and literature, and clearly his love for life and knowledge were evident, and perhaps also contagious.

This friendship was to last for approximately six years, before Coleridge publicly distanced himself from the controversial figure in 1829. What was the basis of this friendship? In some ways, it was an attraction of opposites. The two were at opposite ends of their lives and careers. Irving, twenty years Coleridge's junior, had become a successful preacher less than a year before they met, while Coleridge was a seasoned veteran of the literary community, had travelled much, and suffered through much

criticism. Their relationship of elder and disciple is understandable. Irving, however, had something significant to offer the older Coleridge--namely, his idealism. Coleridge was frequently pre-occupied with the unfairness of life, and his struggle with melancholy may have made him especially responsive to Irving's passionate optimism. Coleridge composed poems such as "The Pains of Sleep", in which he writes of night torments, "This Limetree Bower My Prison", where he speaks of isolation, and "Ode to Dejection" in which he grieves the loss of his poetic gift. With a life often painful and bedridden, suffering through an Opium addiction, and increasingly isolated from the public, it is likely that Coleridge sought someone to offer encouragement and hope. Around him were various intellectual acquaintances who might have helped to settle and affirm his ideas, but the idealism of Irving was a mainstay to his faith and hope. Many of the Romantics had lost their former idealism and public voices were often critical, but Irving brought encouragement and inspiration.

Irving's energy and Coleridge's slothfulness were also in contrast. Some of Coleridge's critics speak deprecatingly of his size and lack of action. While his face and eyes spoke of energy, his body spoke of gluttony and inaction. His adventures were mainly mental. In body and mind, however, Irving was the picture of youthful energy. He was an active outdoorsman who often chose to walk rather than take transportation. And Coleridge

described him as "having overflowing affections," and "a vigorous and (what is always pleasant) a GROWING mind, and his character is MANLY throughout"(741 Letters). He was the picture of enthusiasm.

While differing in certain emotional and active terms, Coleridge and Irving also shared common personality traits. The first and over-riding quality was a love for life and knowledge. Both approached the world in a youthful, wide-eyed manner. Coleridge's various travels--Germany, France and Italy among them--his prolific writing career, his wide circle of acquaintances, even his penchant for flowers, are signs of this. As for Irving, he says to Carlyle: "I suspect you have already put me down for an adventurer, hunter, which is too near a truth to [be] a story"(MSS 1764, 1820). He sought out experiences. On occasion, this love for life showed itself in an impulsive tendency. In his school days, Coleridge would jump in the river wearing his clothes (a frequent activity which some say contributed to his weakened health) and later he would suddenly decide to ignore appointments in order to escort a lady to her destination. We have already seen Irving's impulsive character, capable of challenging someone to a duel or tearing doors off hinges if his sense of justice was affronted.

But it is Coleridge's mental character which is most remembered as being spontaneous. In a letter to "Mrs. C." written during his trip to Germany, he quips, "Now I know,

my gentle friend, what you are murmuring to yourself -- 'This is so like him! running away after the first bubble that chance has blown off from the surface of his fancy; when one is anxious to learn where he is and what he has seen'"(Biographia II,175). He is consumed by an idea and must see where it leads him. His mind, as Hazlitt affirms, is "tangential" and he is remembered as "dallying with every subject by turns"(Hazlitt 36), rather than focussing all of his energies in the pursuit of one discipline or line of thought. Irving too had an investigative, unfettered mind. Indeed, Hazlitt affirms that it was his ability to combine the various ideas from literature, art and politics, as well as theatrical devices, which won him acclaim. And when one considers the relationship between the two men, one watches Irving's mind being carried away upon the whims of his teacher. He loved knowledge of any kind, and was willing to follow his search, even without proper foundation.

They also shared the ideal of free thought: truth must be sought out, in whatever arenas, unhindered. For example, in theological debates, rather than balking from certain questions, Coleridge would say "If Christ is truth, whatever is known as true, must be of Christ"(Marginalia 23), and speaking proverbially, "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity and end in loving himself better than all"(Aids 125). He would seek out truth wherever it was. His shifting loyalties from Unitarianism,

to the Church of England, while holding to "broad-church" ideals, are some products of this belief. Irving highlights the importance of reading the scriptures, but he does not deny finding truth by other avenues. One must read the bible *along with* Blackstone, Locke and Smith. His new willingness to seek out other forms of revelation in discussion with Coleridge suggests that Coleridge also persuaded Irving toward this avenue of free thought. This stress on free and spontaneous thought contributes to the difficulty in pinning down both Coleridge's philosophy and Irving's theology.

One point of contrast, however, needs be noted--their view of scripture. Coleridge took a much more sceptical approach to scripture than Irving, often to the point of considering the motivation of the gospel writers, and even completely denying the logic and reliability of certain books such as the minor prophet "Daniel". Irving on the other hand was, at least early on, much more accepting of the words of scripture. "For Irving then the question is put at rest. Scripsit Petrus: ergo demonstratum est (Peter wrote it; therefore it is proved (ie. beyond question)" (Coleridge, Marginalia 28). Irving did not embrace the higher forms of biblical criticism, but suggested that if the bible said it one ought to believe it and live accordingly.

Irving and Coleridge did share personality characteristics--both were genial and great

conversationalists. Is it any wonder that the greatest converser of the time and the most "long-winded" orator were friends[1]? Both Coleridge and Irving loved to talk, and hear themselves talk, and were clearly more extroverted than introverted. Coleridge's reputation as converser is attested by all who knew him. Carlyle, recounting his adventures with Irving through the Scottish countryside and in Glasgow, speaks of his ability to talk with anyone upon any subject. Indeed, his reputation among even the poorest and least educated in Glasgow attests to this. And Coleridge and Irving (except perhaps in his last years) were recognized as good-natured, genial, respectful people. Leigh Hunt calls Coleridge, "a good-natured wizard, very fond of earth, and conscious of reposing with weight enough in his easy chair, but able to conjure his etherealities about him in the twinkling of an eye" (Selected 89). Unlike Carlyle, Coleridge's intellect did not lead him to have a sarcastic or proud attitude, but rather a sense of wonder at the potential of the mind and the beauty of people and the world. It is not surprising that he would be drawn to Irving--intelligent, noble, always hopeful, and upon whose laughter Carlyle still reflected thirty years after Irving's death.

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[1]Chalmers timed one of Irving's prayers to have lasted for forty minutes. Bulloch 201

These were their personal characteristics. But both were also similar in thought. Firstly, both are products of the Romantic age and stressed the importance of imagination. For Coleridge, it is "the soul that is every where, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole"(Biographia II, 18). Imagination is the creative power that brings unity and wholeness. In Coleridge's estimation, one's aptitude with and reliance on imagination is the gauge of greatness in poets. Wordsworth, for example, "in imaginative power, stands nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own"(Biographia II, 151). Coleridge also responded to Irving's imagination. Irving did not articulate his ideas in the same philosophical fashion, but he saw imagination as vital to life, especially the spiritual life. Intrinsic in his sermons is a reliance on imagination to draw people to God. One had to envision the power of one's potential under God, and equally the greatness of the gospel message. The spiritual life, then, was nurtured by the imagination. In an increasingly scientific age, one which Hazlitt calls an old age, where "we are so far advanced in the Arts and Sciences, that we live in retrospect, and doat on past achievements"(Spirit 38), an age in which the sublime vision of the mind's potential was abandoned for mechanism and analytic thought, and where "genius was to be abated, crushed, or set aside as a nuisance"(Spirit 37), both Coleridge and Irving valued

imagination as bringing inspiration and unity, and satisfying spiritual hunger.

The second Romantic quality which the two shared was an emotional tie with nature. Coleridge applauds nature as the giver of inspiration and nourishment, the basis of true civilization and a spiritual consciousness. "Our eldest poets . . . were naturally induced to adopt, as a poetic language, those fabulous personages, those forms of the supernatural in nature"(Biographia II 175-76). Nature not only caused biological birth, but also nurtured culture and the imagination. Furthermore, Coleridge commends Wordsworth's poetry for showing, "the long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expression to all the works of nature"(Biographia II, 148). Nature enlivens the mind and the spirit, but it also nurtures the soul. This dependence on nature for rejuvenation and inspiration is, however, most strongly exemplified in his poetry. In poems such as "This Limetree Bower My Prison", it is to nature that Coleridge turns in his hour of despair. He is like the Psalmist who begins his poetry in inner turmoil, yet as he contemplates nature his soul is lifted. In "Limetree Bower" Coleridge watches his friends disappear out of sight while he must remain in his garden. Yet, while he muses on the beauty that they will behold, his attitude is changed. He can in the end say, "Henceforth I shall know/ That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure"(Works 181).

Irving too was dependent upon nature and had his most meaningful moments outdoors. The pivotal moments in his personal relationships are remembered as taking place in sublime natural scenes which echoed inner feelings. And he taught many of his lessons outdoors, regarding nature as his tutor and textbook. Finally, many of the images in his sermons highlight the sublime power of nature and its ability to reach and nourish the human soul. To both Coleridge and Irving, the path to civilization as well as the rejuvenation of one's spirit is found not in the hectic pace of the city, but in nature.

The attachment to nature was also linked to their religion--the strongest point of contact between Coleridge and Irving. A glimpse into his affirmation of God in nature, is given in Coleridge's account of his voyage to Germany. Of an encounter with a Dutch passenger, he writes:

> He talked of Deity in a declamatory style, very much resembling the devotional rants of that rude blunderer, Mr. Thomas Paine, in his age of reason . . . Assuming a serious look, I professed myself a believer, and sunk at once an hundred fathoms in his good graces. He retired to his cabin, and I wrapped myself up in my great coat, and looked at the water. A beautiful white cloud of foam at momently intervals coarsed by the side of the vessel with a roar, and little stars of flame danced and sparkled and went out in it: and every now and then light detachments of this white cloud-like

foam darted off from the vessel's side, each with its own small constellation, over the sea and scoured out of sight like a Tarter troop over a wilderness. (Literaria II 167-68)

Coleridge, after hearing the arguments of an atheist, looks out upon the ocean and finds assurance of his professed faith. In nature divinity was evidenced, and the arguments of the little Paine floated away. Here God was present and active--He could even be known as a friend (which Coleridge saw as an inherent need in humanity)--not distant like an absentee landowner.

Irving shared this fundamental aspect of Coleridge's faith--namely, the link between nature and religion. At the beginning of Irving's lecture series on the parable of the sower, he highlights his view of nature and spirituality: "The vineyard is the Church, the stem of the vine is Christ, the branches are His disciples, and the keeper of the vineyard is the Father. . . Natural life is altogether, by the Holy Spirit, made to be but one allegory of spiritual things"(Writings 71). Everything in nature is a type of one aspect of the spiritual life, now and in the future. Thus, Irving's dependence upon nature as nurturing to the soul in times of anxiety, as instructive to students, and as providing good sermon illustrations, is understandable. To both Coleridge and Irving, nature was religion's teacher.

If God was present in creation, so was moral law. Coleridge and Irving affirmed that a moral law had been

given by God to humanity to establish a life of peace. If one could see and submit to the underlying truths within the order of nature, society could work together in harmony under God. Coleridge inspired people to live by principles of conduct, which were God-given--although his explanations were highly theoretical (unlike Irving's) and founded not only upon scripture but in philosophical speculation. The "Pantisocracy", envisioned by Coleridge and Robert Southey, was a community where each resident would live by a moral law, and selfishness and private property would be abolished. Later Coleridge conveyed his views on moral law in the periodical "The Friend", setting out to "not so much prescribe a Law for others, as to set forth the Law of my own Mind; which let the man, who shall have approved of it, abide by; and let him, to whom it shall appear not reasonable, reject it"(9). These were his "principles and fundamental doctrines"--the foundations of all ideals, sectarian or otherwise. These principles were to bring harmony: a "common-ground" would be established, after which people could examine each other's distinctives objectively, and hopefully peace would ensue. Throughout life, he sought to awaken people to this underlying, universal, moral grid-work of principles (somewhat akin to Kant's). He was always seeking for one unifying principle.

Interestingly, the preacher's opinion was quite similar. The principles of Christianity worked perfectly with society because they were the guidelines of the creator

for maintaining His creation--they were the architect's specifics. With regard to "proving Christianity by its visible fitness for human nature," Carlyle recounts Irving saying, "All written *in* us already, in sympathetic ink. Bible awakens it and you can read"(*Reminiscences* 125. Emphasis mine). Moral and spiritual law was already threaded through human nature. In *Orations*, and throughout his career, Irving consistently argued that a person would serve either society's own set of laws and mores or God's and that God's provided a higher potential both for the individual and society. We were created to work with God's laws, so that adherence to any other was illogical and unhealthy. In a time when many were looking for a higher moral order, Irving and Coleridge reasoned that God's order was intrinsic in creation and that one need only to see and submit to it for a life of peace.

The reasonable aspect of their faith is perhaps self-evident. Coleridge believed that reason was essential in religion. "Thoughtfulness, and a desire to ground all our convictions on grounds of right reason, are inseparable from the character of a Christian"(Sanders 33). Reason (the same for each man, contrary to "understanding" which could be developed) was a tool that was given to all and should be used for good and to bring us to Truth in God. Reason proved the logic of religion: thus Coleridge asserts, "the scheme of Christianity, as taught in the Liturgy and Homilies of our Church, though not discoverable by human

Reason, is yet in accordance with it; that link follows link by necessary consequence. . .". A personal axiom is "REASON AND RELIGION ARE THEIR OWN EVIDENCE"(*Biographia* II, 243). And in *Orations*, Irving too argued that reason was a divine tool used to see truth. God's ways are logical, and one could be led to Him by reason.

However, reason could only get one so far in the search. A new life required faith. For Coleridge, while religion was logical, long before one was spiritually fulfilled--before one truly discovered and experienced the "scheme" of Christianity--reason's power petered out. Faith needed to be exercised. He argues:

> Religion passes out of the ken of Reason only where the eye of Reason has reached its own Horizon; and that Faith is then but its continuation: even as the Day softens away into the sweet Twilight, and Twilight, hushed and breathless, steals into the Darkness.(*Biographia* II, 247-48)

This is where "the Will", the aspect of a person which encompasses freedom and decision, must come into action--this hinterland of the unknown, Kirkegaard's leap. For Coleridge, reason could "lead the horse to water", but it took faith to drink. Irving's call to faith is apparent in his preaching and his evangelical invitation to take this leap was a strong aspect of his benedictions. This stress on the importance of faith and reason working in conjunction served to distinguish Irving and Coleridge from many of

their day--from intellectuals who denounced Christianity under the guise of higher criticism, deism, atheism or evolution; or fanatics who followed it in blind faith, claiming, "it is a mystery"(Sanders 33).

Sadly, in 1825 a rift began to develop in this friendship after Irving's publication of Missionaries After the Apostolical School which was actually dedicated to Coleridge. This sermon was a crucial point in Irving's career. The circumstances surrounding it are as follows. Each year, the "London Missionary Society", invited a well-known figure to speak at its annual dinner. The Society sent missionaries abroad, particularly to Asia and Africa, and, after almost thirty years in action, was becoming well respected and established. In the summer of 1824 Irving had been invited to the gathering of clergy, missionaries, and financial supporters, with the expectation that he would offer encouragement and affirmation to the society's activities in a brief message before supper. Instead he spoke for two hours and, in emphasizing the scripture's call for the missionary to live under an apostolic standard, brought a heavy-handed condemnation to the gathering. "Let this type of missionary stand, that he is a man without purse, without a scrip, without a change of raiment, without a staff, without the care of making friends or keeping friends, without the hope or desire of worldly good, without the apprehension of worldly loss, without the care of life,

without the fear of death. . ."(Writings II,508). His call, as always, was high and he saw Christ's command (given in Matthew 10, Mark 6, and Luke 9) as applying to all missionaries for all time. The sermon condemned the society's *modus operandi* in its provision for missionaries, and indeed implied that the members present were worldly in having temporal interests and assets. "When they call him a pensioner, trader, householder, citizen; man of substance, man of the world, man of science, man of learning, or even a man of common sense, it is all over with his missionary character"(ibid.). He argued that temporal concerns hindered the progression of the gospel, and strongly implied that the missionaries and their supporters were far too interested in material goods and worldly status. He was speaking to a body which contained many respected people within London, many of whom were wealthy benefactors of the society, and the sermon was seen as condemnatory, disrespectful, and out of place. Apparently, in a period of reflection before the occasion, the "missionary charter" had been affirmed to Irving's mind by God--or so Irving believed--and he would face whatever criticism his message evoked by elevating these spiritual guidelines. And indeed criticism did come to Irving, and also to Coleridge as his mentor.

Coleridge's own opinions of Irving and his later preaching (his early preaching being the period before and during his rise to fame), are found in personal

correspondences and Marginalia, edited by Kathleen Coburn. Here, the texts of Missionaries After the Apostolical School(1825), "The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened", "Lectures On The Parable of the Sower", and "The Kings of the East or The Ten Tribes" (all published in 1828, three years after the missionary sermon) are interspersed with marginal notes by Coleridge. He tries to come to grips with the rumours that have been circulating about Irving, and also to understand his friend (mainly confined to bed, he was not a regular attender of Irving's church). The notes are Coleridge's initial response to the Irving controversy and are analytical and critical but are also compassionate--he hopes the best for his friend. Furthermore, Coleridge, does not deny his friend commendation. For example, following a section in which Irving lays out his description of God's election and transformation of the saints, Coleridge remarks: "The whole of this Paragraph is excellent, and worthy of my friend, Irving"(52). Other similar comments, such as "this is soundly built up" are interspersed throughout. But these are occasional (and refreshing) interjections in what is otherwise a strongly negative critique of the popular preacher from his friend and mentor. Coleridge hopes for Irving's renewal, but becomes disheartened. His notes on the 1829 sermons are even more negative.

As one might expect, his criticisms of Irving's enthusiastically conceived and passionately delivered

Missionaries After the Apostolical School focus on the need to build a sound argument. The tone of Coleridge's remarks, made in the winter of 1826 is relatively academic, suggesting different word usage and a better analysis of the Greek scriptures. He emphasizes Irving's hastiness in constructing his argument, and confirms Carlyle's assertion that Irving did not invest substantial time in his sermons, usually writing them on the Saturday before their preaching. One result of this impatience is that Irving contradicts himself on certain points. While suggesting that a missionary should have no assets, nor scrip, nor be concerned with the opinions of man, Irving suggests a Missionary College to impart such ideals. Coleridge counters with: "*how* can and on what plan should, a College claim or exercise superintendence of *such* Missionaries!"(8) Irving has not considered the ramifications of his argument. How can a person be answerable only to God and yet in submission to his or her mentors?

Secondly, Irving neglects to emphasize important aspects of his argument. Coleridge writes, "it is still to be regretted that he had not in the very outset of his argument met the main objection of his Antagonists, the *miraculous* Gifts of the Apostolic Missionaries"(8). Irving's "working of miracles" and the belief that special powers were given to those who followed the Apostolic code, had come under much attack from critics. Within the sermon, Irving also assumes that miracles should follow the work of

missionaries. However, this belief is only loosely presented at the outset of the argument and, in focussing more on material assets and reputation, Irving does not address the immediate questions or criticisms from his opponents. For Coleridge, Irving should have either addressed the issue at the outset or left it completely out of the sermon. Because he does neither, the issue lingers in the hearers' minds for the remainder of the sermon, and Irving's ability to move them beyond it is hindered.

Thirdly, Irving comes across as impatient and insensitive. In a letter, Coleridge writes, "Mr. Irving's error--Declamation (high and passionate Rhetoric not introduced and pioneered by calm and clear logic)"(Letters 4963). To illustrate this point, Coleridge uses the image, "To knock a nail into a board without wimbling a hole for it, which then either not enters, or turns crooked, or splits the wood it pierceth." Irving's messages get misconstrued or ignored as froth without substance. He tries to "drive his message home" without first convincing his hearers of his fundamental premises or being sensitive to their unique mental or spiritual condition. As evidenced in the reaction to the missionary sermon, although his messages have truth in them, his presentation may become more harmful than helpful.

Coleridge goes on to criticize Irving's "Sermons, Lectures, and Occasional Discourses"(1828). This was a

three-volume set and the first contains the contentious "Doctrine of the Trinity Opened". Since 1826, Irving's view of the Trinity, with his emphasis on both Christ's humanity and his earthly work as an example of human potential rather than the atonement for sin, was considered possibly heretical. When this volume--dedicated to "my sage counselor and most honoured friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge"--was published, his doctrines were attacked outright, and two years later he was excommunicated by the London presbytery. Coleridge sympathized with Irving's doctrines but pledged his loyalty to orthodoxy and the English Church.

Although Coleridge was impulsive (and perhaps for this reason) he sought in others a calm, reflective attitude. One of his first comments on Irving's treatment of the Trinity, is: "Would to heaven, I could induce the high heart and vehement intellect of my friend, Edward Irving, to devote one quiet genial day of Spring or Autumn to the contemplation under the form of Absolute identity"(Coburn 11-12). As he wishes that Irving would reflect on this method of understanding the Trinity--considering the Godhead as a whole before discussing its parts--Coleridge's tone is somewhat more vehement than in the criticisms of the Missionary Sermon. He has witnessed Irving's growing impatience and deviance, and throughout the latter criticisms emphasises the importance of reflection. He hopes for a "a steadfast and calm consideration" of Irving's

ideas, and "a cool and tranquil mind"(43) which would presumably result in modifying the doctrines.

Nearly three years after Missionaries After the Apostolical School Irving's quick assumptions and lack of systemized, reflective thought, have led him into controversial theology. Although not completely orthodox himself, Coleridge has further objections to Irving's treatment of the Trinity:

> I cannot be supposed to feel much interest in these somewhat startling Speculations of my friend according <to which> the Holy Ghost by a distinct and peculiar agency performed the office of an additional placenta in secreting and forming out of Mary's flesh and blood a fit body for the Son of God, which yet however remained sinful flesh, requiring his (the Holy Ghost's) continued energy and presence to keep in check, &c. &c. . . .But alas! there are too many of these heat-pimples and fever-spots on the fair and manly face of my Friend's elocution.(Marginalia 36-7)

The Holy Ghost worked as an additional agency in nurturing Christ's human body, and yet His body was just as sinful as any human's and liable to the same temptations. To Coleridge this point in Irving's argument appears a contradiction. Irving was trying to show that Christ was both divine and human, but while Calvinist thought emphasized his divinity (the "spotless lamb" being the atonement once and for all), Irving focussed on his

humanity. In order for Christ to be our "high-priest" who was "in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin" he had to share the same human flesh (Heb 4:15). Christ's ability to live with all of humanity's fleshly weaknesses made him the great example for all people, and a sign that with the Holy Spirit's help we could do the same. Irving could not accept that Christ's flesh was more divine than human because that implies that all the hard work, with regards to temptation and living a good life, had already been done by God (indeed Irving often comments to Carlyle that his adversaries "want all the work done for them"). Yet, in orthodox doctrine (at least in the *emphasis* of the time) Christ's flesh was more in accordance with pre-fallen Adam, not bearing the human *tendency* to sin, while he was yet faced with it. To Irving, Christ's flesh was not different from that of a human, it too was in a cursed state. It did not undergo the transformation in the conception that orthodoxy had propounded. The incoherence of Irving's attempt to merge the divine with the human would plague him for all of his ministry. He was subsequently condemned for asserting "the sinfulness of Christ's humanity". Indeed, according to H.R. MacKintosh, A. Drummond, and J. Bulloch, the pronouncement seems unfounded and unjust (Bulloch 207). One wonders whether it was actually upon behavioural and not doctrinal grounds that Irving was condemned.

According to Coleridge, not only is Irving's view of the Trinity inconsistent with orthodoxy, but he has also awkwardly attempted to assimilate the views of Arminianism and Calvinism. Coleridge's vehemence becomes evident:

> I cannot help--notwithstanding the unfeigned and earnest respect, in which I hold Mr. Irving--I yet cannot help at times comparing him in my fancy to a Hornet or Dragon-Fly who having been caught and bound in the strongly-woven Spider-web of Calvinism had at length by vigourous efforts liberated himself, left the Web, rent and ruined but alas! carried off with him a portion of the Threads and viscous bonds that impede the free action of his Wings, and render his flight unsteady and bewildered.(Marginalia 26)

Irving's lack of patience and hard-work in systematic thought has led him to become trapped and confused. Throughout the volume, he contradicts himself. At times Irving suggests that "the account is paid" and that man's place in heaven is secure (Calvinism) and the next he argues for a type of "salvation by works" theology (in living up to Christ's example). On one hand he suggests that Christ has done all the work and one must just live by faith, and on the other "whatever he suffered . . . is all to be placed to the account of mankind, and not to his own account"(47). First we are free from the weight of guilt, and then we are not.

Irving's growing tendency to conjecture is also a concern for Coleridge. Irving relied on scripture less, indeed lending his own opinions much the same weight. Firstly, he adds to the scriptures. In Irving's Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened, after his treatise on paradise, suggesting that there was no decay, nor change of seasons or other states of life, Coleridge counters with: "In what precious Relic of ante-diluvian, nay ante-lapsarian Chorography, has he discovered this anecdote respecting the unique properties and privileges of the Garden"(41). He does not clearly distinguish biblical quotations from his own observations. Further examples are Irving's depiction of Christ's torments in hell after his crucifixion. In exasperated tone, Coleridge calls them, "lawless Fictions" and "portentous and unhallowed Fancies"(55-56) and later in the passage, when Irving speaks of the ransom that Jesus took from the grave, Coleridge says, "It would be a severe but not unmerited Chastisement to collect the numerous fictions of this sort under the name of the Gospel according to Irving"(56). Irving has clearly let his imagination get the better of his judgment, and in trying to inspire his hearers (and prove his doctrine) has let his own imagination into the sacred realm of doctrine. Coleridge calls this "the Katterfelto Glass of an extravagant Paraphrase"(27)[2] as

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[2]This is the analogy of Katterfelto, a man who, looking at his cat through a glass and a drop of water, saw over 500 various species of animals. It is the Kaleidoscope effect.

Irving takes one aspect of scripture and expands it beyond reasonable proportions. Coleridge objects that these are the opinions of the speaker, and opinions only. This tendency to amplify scripture and impose personal ideas on the text is a dangerous undertaking for one interpreting the voice of God. The ideas might be acceptable for discussion in the press, but not for proclamation in the pulpit.

Coleridge notes some of the later influences on Irving. In 1824, Irving had offered himself as a pupil to Hatley Frere, a lawyer who had systematically mapped out church history and prophesied the end of the world in A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras, and S. John (1815)[3]. In a letter to the Reverend Edward Coleridge, Coleridge writes that Irving's acquaintance with Hatley Frere, "a pious and well-meaning, but gloomy and enthusiastic Calvinist", has led him to be "swallowed up in the quicksands of conjectural prophecy." In 1826 Frere had predicted the imminent return of Christ and the end of the world, and Coleridge charges him with taking "the vividness of the impression for the force of truth," and further asserts that, "standing as an Ambassador of Christ he interpolated his instructions by mere conjectures of his own fancy. . ."(1827 Letters 396-97). The pulpit is a place to

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[3]To Coleridge, Irving is "mixed up and debased with the Dross of the Dream-book compiled under the name of Daniel and the ruinous and fleshly fancies entertained by the Jews from the time of Alexander the Great."(Marginalia 34)

be respected and doctrine is a painstaking discipline. Frere, along with Drummond--a wealthy banker, politician, and religious enthusiast--was among the strong personality forces at work in the life (and degeneration) of the still somewhat naive preacher and Coleridge affirms the proverb, "Bad company corrupts good character."

Next, Irving's character comes under Coleridge's scrutiny. Irving's personality was becoming authoritarian and sectarian. His tone became harsher when he assumed a prophetic authority. Coleridge wishes that he would consider other theologians' work in the construction of his "dogma"(26) and that "he would attach a less terrific importance and in a less angry and imperious tone, to statements and assertions in words of his own finding. . ."(36). Irving also presupposes a special anointing of God for the discernment of truth: he assumes personal revelation. Speaking on the notion that all of creation "stood represented in the body of Christ", Irving adds, "I cannot tell how this is, and I do neither say nor gainsay it, being minded only to speak what the Lord hath made me clearly to know"(48). This is startling for Coleridge and the latter portion of this assertion, he underlines adding five exclamation marks. Irving's authoritarian assumption is audacious. He is falling into the same tendencies as Frere. Not using such phrases as "the scripture suggests", or even "it seems to me", he believes that God has imparted objective truth directly to him.

Irving's more frequent divisive tone is also especially poignant. He and his congregation had come under much scrutiny regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and his growing vehemence regarding his critics is evident. Three years after his entrance onto the London scene, when he hoped that from the highest to the lowest classes people would return to Christianity, and that he would be an instrument in this, Irving calls the society's leaders, "the enlightened and philosophical (falsely so called) Sadducees--that is, our liberal and benevolent disbelievers in all the mysteries of our holy religion"(56). His tone is divisive and he challenges his hearers to "expect the uttermost scorn and derision, as men of disordered minds and dangerous opinions"(56). He and his followers, however, have God's favour and "must first drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism, in order to enter into his kingdom"(56). Clearly, he is promoting division between the somewhat pliable religious enthusiasts and the disinterested intellectuals.

His tone was certainly distasteful to the genial Coleridge who retorts: "how can it be, that wise men should not be disgusted, to hear him boasting of his persecutions, and his cup of martyrdom, while he lives in the riot of popularity in his own World"(56,57)! Coleridge was unimpressed with Irving's divisive tone. Throughout life Coleridge sought to unite people and said, "Of all things I most dislike party politics"(Sanders 73). Furthermore,

claiming loyalty to the English church, Coleridge affirmed that truth came through discussion within this "great Household"(Sanders 77) and counters Irving's conjectures, suggesting that "learned and pious Divines have not considered [them] deducible from [scripture]"(36). Irving's denial that learned people had wisdom or deserved respect is clearly distasteful to Coleridge.

In his rhetoric, Irving's changing attitudes are apparent. He becomes more an angry prophet than a graceful pastor. This is a far cry from the earnest appeals of the younger Irving, who sought by persuasion to lead intellectual leaders to conversion, and in fact tailored his sermons to minister to them. Because of criticism on their part, and impatience on his, Irving has changed his focus. Now he is alienating them. No longer will Canning, or other members of parliament, praise his sermons in the House of Commons.

By the end of his analysis of Irving's writings Coleridge has become disheartened. "Alas! if Mr. I. could see into my heart, he would do justice to the pain and regret with which I have written these animadversions" (Marginalia 56)! When Irving writes on the importance of following God's actions throughout Church History, Coleridge reflects, "I find myself wholly unable to reconcile my friend's doctrines"(72). He affirms that Irving's trek into heightened speculation has been unhealthy and wishes that Irving would return to "his first love"--that being the

straightforward presentation of the gospel message. Of Irving's benediction to "The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened," he writes:

> The concluding Paragraph--o what affectionate regrets does it awaken in my heart, while it reminds me of my friend's saner days, when he was well content to know no more of Christ's History than the Gospels had preserved for him! and to unfold the plain meaning of the Evangelists Chapter-wise, instead of deducing meanings, say rather fancies, of his own from simple words or sentences, these too often mistranslated, and in more than one instance of suspicious authenticity.(58)

And, interestingly, he places some of the blame upon himself:

> I begin to fear that I ought to regret my intercourse with Mr. I. on his own account. For if he had never been tempted out of the popular way of thinking, and guided wholly and exclusively by his honest feelings and the letter of Scripture . . . he might by his Zeal and exalted disinterestedness and extraordinary eloquence have been the Benefactor of Thousands & Ten Thousands.(67)

Certainly Irving's errors were not nourished in a vacuum and Coleridge begins to hold himself partially responsible for them. Instead of resting on the concrete pronouncements of scripture, which would have made him a great religious

leader, Irving has moved to speculation and then relied on an ill-constructed system of philosophy and presumed truths about man's identity, self-knowledge, and physiology. He has limited aptitude for dealing with these ideas, and a little learning is a dangerous thing. Coleridge is now disheartened. For three years he has watched Irving's deterioration and a short time after the publication of "Sermons, Addresses, and Occasional Discourses", in an essay of 1829 Coleridge makes "a frank declaration", publicly distancing himself from Irving, though still admiring:

> Well then! I have no faith in his prophesyings; small sympathy with his fulminations; and in certain peculiarities of his *theological* system, as distinct from his religious principles, I cannot see my way. But I hold, withal, and not the less firmly for these discrepancies in our moods and judgments, that EDWARD IRVING possesses more of the spirit and purpose of the first Reformers. . . than any man now alive; yea than any man of this and the last century. (Constitution of Church and State (1830) 142-143)

Edward Irving was, in many ways, vulnerable to being led astray by charismatic people with either obscure or unorthodox doctrine. He was quickly attached to those who showed him affection and would give an ear to their ideas. His consistent love for knowledge (which Coleridge calls "too potential to be static"(Church and State 142) and high, imaginative thought also meant that those who offered such

novelties were liable to gain his attention and even his loyalty. At a time in which some of Irving's popularity was waning, Coleridge's affection and approach became even more appealing. Irving was seeking freshness and perhaps a new approach which would re-establish his prominence, and, instead of stepping back and examining the strong points of his past ministry (such as pastoral care and preaching simple truths), he tried to emulate Coleridge's mode of thought, for which he had not the patience, experience, or intellect.

Clearly, Coleridge was not solely responsible for Irving's intellectual and personal degeneration. He was one of many influences, including the fleeting fancies of the fashionable, and the growing speculations about the apocalypse in a turbulent age. However, especially considering that he sought diligently to leave a positive impression upon young minds, Coleridge's discernment in acting as Irving's mentor does appear to be somewhat lacking. Instead of having a positive impact, his liberality of thought and his metaphysical speculations became detrimental to Irving, at a time of emotional and spiritual instability, when Irving needed wisdom and security from the veteran sage.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Conclusion

*But now in Kensington Gardens (no delved garden, but the beautifullest immensity of a Park, with water-pieces, and grass-pieces, and skyhigh clumps of frondent beeches, where you shall often walk), there starts from a side-seat a black figure and clutches my hand in both his: it is poor Edward Irving! O what a feeling! The poor friend looks like death rather than life; pale and yet flushed, a flaccid, boiled appearance; and one short peal of his old Annandale laigh wen thro' me with the wofullest tone.*

*--Thomas Carlyle to Jane Carlyle, May 17,1834*

The picture of Edward Irving's last year is of mist and approaching darkness. After he returned from excommunication in Annan, in 1832, the prophets of his London church removed him from sacramental duties; he was relegated to preaching only seldom, and was banned from preaching openly. The tone of the group of charismatics now assembled in a smaller building at Newman street was highly enthusiastic; tongues and miracles were continually sought; and church government was run by prophetic utterance. They had recreated themselves as the Catholic Apostolic Church. The movement was now being carried along without Irving's direction and his involvement was increasingly infrequent.

It is as though the man of action and charisma had slipped into the background.

The Irvings had also undergone much hardship in recent years. Apart from his excommunication, two of their children had died, and the Irvings saw this as God's condemnation for their sin--in one case, Edward's apparent sin of having preached in Annan following his excommunication. Even his ill health was seen as sent from God. Yet he was continually encouraged by the pronouncement, by some church elders, that he would receive a great healing followed by the charismatic signs, which had not yet come upon him.

In the spring of that year, the "Apostles" of his church commissioned him to go to Edinburgh, where contention had arisen within a fledgling Catholic Apostolic congregation and he was to resolve it. He returned to London after resolving this conflict, and two Apostles went to ordain the Edinburgh minister. Finally, in September, the Apostles called him to make another visit north, this time to Glasgow, where apparently God would heal him and he would begin a long and fruitful ministry. Years earlier there had been another prophecy of the sort, and, against the better council of many, including his doctor who said that Irving would not live through the winter unless he retired to warmer climates, Irving set off through Wales en route to Glasgow. He preached sometimes in the open air, and still drew crowds (even people who had previously

scorned him) all the while affirming that the cool air was refreshing and that open air speaking was "the best exercise for the lungs"(Drummond 225).

From Glasgow he sent back an important letter to his congregation in London. The letter raised many questions about his personal responsibility in his excommunication and the public criticism against the congregation. Irving also asked serious questions concerning the church government and the charismatic manifestations. A short time after the letter had been circulated, Henry Drummond, a prophet of the Apostolic Church, and one of the subjects of Irving's concern, collected what copies of the letter he could and burned them.

Although Irving was always hopeful, in Glasgow his health continued to fail. His expectation of healing took him to great lengths, refusing to stay in bed and sometimes venturing out in faith only to stumble back in deteriorated condition. Once he went to the extent of standing in a basin and pouring cold water over his head to alleviate the fever. Finally, in November he was confined to bed. As his health continued to ebb away, many gathered around him (his wife had joined him in coming to Glasgow), especially during the final days in which he seemed at peace and mumbled out words which to the onlookers sounded like tongues. Finally, he died on Sunday December 7th, 1834, with the words "Whether I live or die, I am the Lord's. Amen." He was buried in the crypt of Glasgow Cathedral where Chalmers also

was later placed. After his funeral a party of women dressed in white tarried around his coffin, awaiting his resurrection.

At the beginning of this thesis, two questions were posed. What was the source of Irving's enormous success in London, and his appeal to intellectuals? What were the reasons for his degeneration, both in popularity and in personal deterioration in health and stability? The answers may be found in the examination of his sermons, and of two of his closest relationships, with Carlyle and Coleridge. Examining these relationships reveals a great deal about Irving's personal life.

To say that Edward Irving was novel in the early 1820s is an understatement. He broke preconceptions and disrupted social mores (which often wins popular, yet short lived, acclaim). He was very different from most other pastors. He was not meek, restrained, or theologically distant, but theatrical. He used his Scottish manners and accent (which had become more fashionable with the recent popularity of Scott's poetry) eloquently and passionately, not only to proclaim the gospel message but make it entertaining. His courage and confrontational character immediately got London's attention and held it. Not only the delivery and style but also the content of Irving's message was fresh and appealing. His view of Christianity was noble, ideal, and heroic--making it more exciting and relevant than any other

system of thought. God was real, personal, even chivalric, and with Him one could do all. With Him, one was elevated to a type of person found only in the heroic tales of the past.

However, the substance of Irving's popularity must lie at a deeper level, as it lasted the better part of four years, and in a quickly changing society that did not readily welcome the traditional God. First, contrary to many preachers who dwell on the cursedness of creation and convey a message of hate rather than hope, Irving was clearly in love with life. When he preached repentance from sinful ways he was idealistic and hopeful. His sermons, and the accounts of Carlyle and Coleridge, reveal a wide-eyed adventurer who loved knowledge and people--and used his energies in appreciating nature, adapting to new avenues of thought, conversing, and bearing the burdens of those in need. And when he entered the pulpit in those early days, quoting Shakespeare and Milton, and challenging his hearers to become "Adventurers above your sphere" and to "trace out a path heroical", his positive energy was evident. The weight of his message was not of "hellfire and brimstone" but good news.

Irving was idealistic, and the power of ideals in explaining his popularity cannot be diminished. All great leaders "have a dream" which is unshakeable. Those who accommodate doctrine and practice for their hearers have only short-lived fame. They neglect the human search for

structure--for clear ideals which provide security and meaning. Irving did offer these. While he was sensitive to his parishioners' weaknesses, needs, and temptations he was also firm in his stance. His world was clearly delineated. Scripture was God's Word; one was either converted and knew real life, or one was walking in darkness; one was either prepared for death or Christ's return, or one was not. Furthermore, one's spiritual status did not depend upon society's appraisal--the politician needed God as much as the shopkeeper, the intellectual as much as the common labourer. Christ's lines were clearly drawn and so were Irving's. This structure also meant that, at least during his popular period, Irving's theology was firm. He had recently finished theological training, first in university, and then under the mentorship of Chalmers, and preached doctrine which was orthodox, and more in the ardent reformation style than did many of his Presbyterian peers. This steadfast adherence to orthodoxy gave Irving's hearers what T.C. Smout calls "nostalgic stability"--a sense that in a changing world, there were some things which were secure--and brought a following (Smout 499). Thus, what Coleridge says is true: had Irving stayed with the simple truths of the gospel he could have been a benefactor to thousands, and perhaps his vision of a converted London would have become reality.

Irving did not expound on mere theological platitudes: his preaching was highly relevant and earthly. First, he

spoke to real issues, and addressed the personal aspects in his hearers' lives. Just as, early on, he was able to address psychological and personality issues in Carlyle, so he did from the pulpit for each in attendance. In his view, God was interested not only that one was converted or that "the banner of truth" was upheld, but also that one used money or time properly, kept his/her reputation clean, and fed the poor. Secondly, Irving's preaching did not necessarily suggest a delineation between the worlds of the church and the secular. His message was not laced with religious clichés, or the assumptions of a religious sub-culture, but was universal, for all to hear and understand. God was for all, was present in all places--from the Commons to the fashion-house, to the merchant's home, and could speak to each in his/her own way. Irving's scope was far-reaching: he addressed people and real issues at all levels, and his hearers could feel as though he was talking directly to them.

This personal approach to theology was as attractive to the literary community as to others. And Irving's thought, his way of using words, and his romantic personality were also appealing. Although Carlyle calls him one of the most unread people he knew, Irving had a wide, if rather cursory, knowledge of many subjects. He was also a fine conversationalist, able to expound on various issues, in a witty and fresh way. His sermons, especially those of the London years, show his ability to use striking turns of

phrase and irony, and to coin apparently proverbial or Pope-like epigrams, in such a way that his words were entertaining and easily remembered. He would proclaim: "Prudence dwelleth in earthly palaces: truth is the badge of heaven's court..." (Orations 42) and, "The law is the Gospel to the unfallen, the Gospel is the law to the fallen. The law is God manifest in words, The Gospel is God manifest in flesh"(Orations 192). And his shorter bursts include the indictment, "Your literature is a most unweeded garden of passion"(Sermons 24) and the encouragement, "Ministers preach the word with large, and open, and fearless mouth"(Sermons 261). He says, heroically: "There wanteth a power to enable a man to turn the wheel of his own destiny, and to arrive at true greatness and blessedness" (Orations 109). His way of conveying romantic sentiments is also striking and appealing: "Doubtless it contains a code of laws, but these laws set in the bosom of a thousand noble sentiments and warm affections and generous promises towards us--such as are wont to catch and captivate and ravish the spirit when uttered by a mortal..."(Orations 122). Not only did Irving have a way with words, but he seemed a throwback to a simpler, more heroic age. He had Scottish wildness and natural wisdom; he could be colloquial without being ignorant and knowledgeable without being pretentious. For the generation brought up with Lyrical Ballads, he seemed the ideal, natural man.

However, by late 1826, Irving's popularity was on the wane. Again, there are superficial reasons for this as well as deeper ones. Much of Irving's novelty had simply worn off and his eloquence no longer dazzled his audience. His tone continued to be elevated; his calls to conversion, and repentance in high places, his invitation to the scriptures--these had all been sounded time and time again. He was no longer new and entertaining. The fact that Irving was essentially not out to entertain, but was fully serious, may also have contributed to his waning popularity. Interestingly, most of the commentators of the time call Irving "the greatest Orator", and only Carlyle and Coleridge speak of his unshakeable faith. Critics dwelled more on his outward talents rather than the burning fire within. But although Irving certainly wanted to hold the attention of his hearers, and perhaps even enjoy their accolades, he wanted a return to Christ above all. This was the core of his thought and motivation, and his words were not just meant to be eloquent sounding, but to convince of truth. When his ideals became less appealing, he could no longer "attract by repelling". Once people saw that he really meant what he said, they were no longer entertained. It was more pleasant to dwell on human potential, scientific discoveries, and secular ideas. How could he preach the need for repentance and religion to a culture which was leading the world in its reforms such as labour laws and the abolition of slavery; which was bringing civilization to

savages; and annihilating space and eventually poverty with invention and industrialization? Beneath all of the rhetoric and theatrics, there was a stirring deep inside the man that was offensive to the enlightened nineteenth century.

The charismatic emphasis was also a likely factor in Irving's declining popularity. He no longer focussed on earthly issues but was "too heavenly minded to be earthly good". Since about 1826, he had gradually become more a mystical philosopher and less a down-to-earth preacher. Now after 1830, charismatic utterances and manifestations, and apocalyptic conjectures, tended to affront and alienate those of broader, less fanatical minds. This was partly because society was becoming more rationalistic, leaving superstition behind. Charismatic manifestations have always been potentially offensive, and the more rational a society becomes, the more such ecstatic behaviour is likely to repel. The contemporary mystic suffers much more scorn than the medieval one.

Finally, as Irving's popularity waned and popular criticism mounted, his authoritative tone became more strident and bitter. He was increasingly resentful. He had no time for those "depraved minds", those "liberal disbelievers". When Hazlitt comments on Irving in 1825, he focusses on his popularity and charm and compares him to Thomas Chalmers. Writing in March 1829, he is vehemently critical of Irving's tone. Irving had attacked eminent

people in the past, but had become more heavy-handed and divisive. Furthermore, he insinuated that God was equally as harsh with His creation. Hazlitt (and Coleridge also) is now defensive in his reactions to the preacher, and retorts in a much angrier tone ("The Rev. Edward Irving: An Hypothesis". The Examiner, March 29, 1829. Miscellaneous XX,223). Instead of attracting by repelling, Irving was now just repelling.

The personal side of Irving's degeneration is even more revealing, and important to a final appraisal. Ironically, Irving should have listened to his own advice to Thomas Carlyle in 1821, which was somewhat prophetic about Irving's own later career. He had challenged Carlyle to focus on simple principles and action, suggesting that Carlyle thought too subtly and acted too little. Secondly, Irving had said that Carlyle was directionless and asked him to narrow his focus, take up a calling important to humanity, and pattern his life around that pursuit. Thirdly, he had warned Carlyle to consider those around him and suppress his sarcasm and heavy-handedness. While it appears that Carlyle attempted to take Irving's advice to heart, the "beam" in Irving's own eye became more pronounced. In the latter part of the decade, he skirted many of his simple principles, such as the objective truth of the bible (which he had once said was God's last word on all matters); he lost his focus, that being the conversion of his congregation and beyond

(turning instead to heightened spiritual experience); and he became insensitive, authoritarian, and heavy-handed in his preaching. The effects were self-reliance and isolation. When the tables are turned between the years of 1831 and 1834, and Carlyle attempts to caution the prophet as Irving once cautioned him, Irving is somewhat patronizing in his response and, at least initially, pays little heed.

Irving was also caught in London's web. In 1822, when he came to London, Irving left Carlyle and his past behind. He came to a completely new world, with new acquaintances who did not share his culture. But he was enamoured of London, and perhaps ultimately ensnared by the attention and praise he received, especially from literary intellectuals. Coleridge was easily the most influential of these, and certainly had a part to play in Irving's downfall. Their relationship was ultimately detrimental, not only because of some lack of wisdom on Coleridge's part, but also because of weakness on Irving's side. Irving, though thirty-one when he met Coleridge, was still too accepting of praise, and too naive about new sources of knowledge; he was easily led. It appears that the country man from Annan was flattered by being brought into the urbane, sophisticated circle of "Highgate", which included some of the greatest writers of the time such as the Lambs, Hazlitt and Coleridge. It appears that the experience of London made him vulnerable to unsettling influences; had he stayed in Annan, he might not have been so accepting. Instead the praise of intellectuals

and cultured society, at the height of his popularity, flattered him and perhaps convinced him that his intellectual abilities were greater than they were in reality. The unfortunate result was that after only two years, this company was unconsciously beginning to lead him away from his first calling.

As to his personal decline in health and mental state, there can only be speculation, for there was no firm diagnosis of the cause of his death. Firstly, Irving's intellect could not adapt to abstract philosophizing. When Carlyle first sees Irving again in 1831, he reflects that Irving is anxious, his mind filled with too many thoughts. Irving's mind was not attuned to the metaphysical, apocalyptic, and charismatic enormities of thought which he sought to comprehend. They were like surplus baggage to his idealistic character, rooted deeply in simple truths and a pastoral upbringing. His words to Carlyle in the spring of 1822 ("your mind is dissimilar to my own, and rises, I think, into an altitude where it is not congenial for mine to live"), like many others, become prophetical. When one considers Irving's strong physical health, and equally strong mental and emotional state, upon entering London, and then the sudden degeneration between 1831 and 1834, one can only assume that he was carrying a burden for which he did not have the strength.

Secondly, when he became a charismatic preacher he was presented with a new world of inquiry and experience which,

as seen in the lives of many charismatic leaders, can be detrimental to health. When a congregation becomes consumed with ecstatic experience and new realms of questioning and theology, the demands on a pastor's time are heightened. Furthermore, one of the reasons for frowning upon the public display of these signs is that it opens the door to extreme behaviour, personality conflicts, division, and disruption. A reasonable church is much more manageable than an emotional one. Also, the constant strain after a heightened spiritual experience can, without a doubt, be mentally and emotionally taxing for the parishioner; and even moreso for the presiding minister, who is both seeking the experience and attempting to guide a ship through dark waters. For Irving, who had not experienced the "signs", yet sought a manifestation nonetheless, this struggle must have been intense and exhausting.

Thirdly, society's rejection was undoubtedly a further factor in Irving's physical and mental decline. Carlyle suggests that the excommunication by Annan "broke his heart". He also says that Irving was dependent upon approval. Carlyle writes to Jane regarding Irving's new career in London, "when fed with flatteries and prosperity, his progress soon changes into "ground[less?] and lofty tumbling..."(Aug 10,1823 Reader 6). He fed on and was seduced by praise. Popularity was one cause of his degeneration, and then lack of popularity a cause of his destruction. Finally, after losing his church, he retreated

to a religious sect which affirmed him and his beliefs, amidst criticism from the outside world. Upon Irving's death, Carlyle cries out, "O foulest Circean draught, thou poison of Popular Applause! madness is in thee and death; thy end is Bedlam and the Grave"("The Death of Edward Irving" Reader 115).

Finally, as to his quickly degenerating health, God took Irving for reasons beyond our understanding, but perhaps because he was not holding to "his calling". One night in 1827, during the construction of the mammoth Regent Square church, Irving was walking by the building, alone. He later told his wife that in that moment, while stricken with a sense of awe at the number of people the church would influence, he said a prayer. He asked God to enable him to shepherd these people wisely, and if not, to take his life and raise up another. Perhaps God answered him.

Then as now, Edward Irving has come under various forms of attack. Some suggest that he lost his mind, others that he was chasing after popularity, and still others, such as Andrew Drummond, criticize him for believing in personal revelation and the visible activity of the Holy Spirit. Instead of seeing the positive effect he had on the church in ushering in, along with Wesley, Whitefield and other revivalists, an emotional quality to religion, critics focus on his negative impact. Along with being a prophet of the apocalypse--whose offspring we see in today's Jack VanImpes

and American Revivalists--and nurturing what many see as unhealthy and divisive charismatic dynamics, critics also place Irving alongside leaders of "personality cults", many of which have such negative ends as that of David Koresh and his Waco following.

Admittedly, in some ways, Irving fits the description of many of these dangerous leaders. He was, first of all, charismatic and able quickly to attract a following. He was also independent in thought and method, and willing to confront his leaders, even to the point of ex-communication. The fact that he was not highly intellectual, was rather unread, interpreted the bible in fundamentalist fashion, and was ruled by passion rather than disinterested reason, also made him volatile and potentially dangerous. L.E. Elliot-Binns' criticism of early Evangelicals may also apply to Irving in that he did not stress the harder aspects of character development and discipleship but rather immediate experience and the more enticing aspects of religion. Indeed his focus was always on the wonderful: he drew attention to the heroic aspects of Christianity (not the meek), embraced phenomena such as tongues and miracles, and was consumed with an apocalyptic consciousness. His stress on the apocalypse may be seen as similar to modern cult leaders who gain a following by warning of the end of the world. As believers seek security in their fear, they cloister together around a strong and charismatic teacher. Like Irving, these leaders view their own biblical

interpretation as authoritative, and apocalyptic literature as predictive--where the "remnant", a holy group set aside because of their special knowledge and lifestyle, is usually their own followers. This gives the leader tremendous power. Irving himself was independent, dangerous in his ability to draw a crowd and convince them by raw passion, and unstable in his foundations and focus. Certainly in these ways Irving does resemble cult leaders.

While his similarities to contemporary cult leaders may suggest that Irving was after power, and in love with himself, the humble side of Irving needs to be set against this. There are early signs of this aspect of his character. Firstly, while only six years of teaching were expected of him before entering the ministry, he did so for eight, teaching not aristocrats or people who would necessarily enhance his ego, but youngsters in a small burgh school. Secondly, his work among the poor must be noted; in many ways the poor are the great equalizers. Working in desperate conditions every day does not enhance one's ego but challenges it. And Carlyle asserts that he was not patronizing, but "altogether human" in this situation. Those in dire poverty, and angry at middle-class society, would not warm to an egotistical character, but instead to a man who could drop a potato in their pot or carry their burden. The fact that Irving stayed in Chalmers' shadow in the Glasgow work at its most desperate time, for two and a half years, even though he was thirty and without his own

charge, is also significant: Egocentrics disdain servitude. Thirdly, young men who seriously consider overseas missions work may be after adventure, but not usually fame. Sitting as he did on missions boards, Irving must have had a realistic view of the life of sacrifice and isolation that missions work often entailed. Even the original fifty-member Hatton Garden church, with its orphanage, was not the ideal situation for one seeking accolades. There must have been a deeper motivating factor in all these actions than wanting praise: his desire to work hard and to show people Christ. His subsequent vow to live a "life more heroical" was not mainly to be praised for his own talents and character, but to give an example of the potential of the Christian experience.

And later in his career, mixed with Irving's zeal for the wonderful and his self-confidence was always a firm sense of God's sovereignty, and fear of Him. He did not take God's grace or his role as a leader lightly, as attested in his ordination charge of 1827 to Hugh Baillie MacLean (Dallimore 69,70); he feared that God's wrath was on him and his wife for sin, and prayed that God would end his life were he in error--a hope not preached but conveyed quietly to his wife. Indeed, pervading all of his ministry was a sense that God was, above all, in control. Thus, upon returning to London in 1833 and finding himself usurped from the leadership of the group that he had nourished for over a decade, he did not fight for his right to rule, nor did he

start his own movement, but stepped aside and submitted to leadership, even to the point of harming his own health.

Certainly Irving became the leader of a sect but, while his preaching grew more vehement, his governmental structure was not heavy-handed nor founded on him alone. He was usurped easily because the "Angels" of the movement had a sense of their own power, while a cult following is often based upon one person and disintegrates in his/her absence. Furthermore, in a cult, freedom of thought is also quenched. In Irving's dealings with those who left the movement, such as his former assistant David Brown, who served his congregation in 1830, his tone is gracious and, especially in his final years, he attempts to maintain his friendships. A further testament to the limits of his egocentricity is the final letter which he wrote to his congregation. While most members by then enthusiastically embraced charismatic manifestations, Irving was still questioning. Irving's continuing intellectual inquiry and humility do not suit the cult leader profile.

Edward Irving, with all of his "simple principle" and idealism was a highly complex person. He had a love for speculation, balanced by passion and action; he had a belief in the sovereignty of God with equally strong self-confidence; a longing to be praised with a passion for truth. Many of the criticisms surrounding Irving are based on a limited perspective, do not take into account his complexities--any life direction results from various

dynamics--and judge by outward appearances rather than inner motivations. Three more assertions may reasonably be made about Edward Irving's life: he was a product of changing times, he was a tragic figure, and he did--in many ways--live a heroic life. Irving held and preached high ideals in a scientific age and not a heroic one; an age of criticism and not of acceptance. He sought to bring the ideals of the past into the present while ardently striving to pull society to God. But he attempted to use the tools of his own age, systematization and heightened speculation, and these led him off course. His Herculean heart was unable to merge the ideals and visions of the past with a world that was rushing forward. Perhaps the charismatic doctrines were an attempt at compromise between the two.

Irving is one of the most tragic figures in Church History. There are few examples of such a vibrant force ruined by its own pursuits, within a decade. Irving's heroic approach to Christianity, and his seeking for the "abundant" and exciting life that scripture suggested, led to a doctrinal flight into fancy. He saw London as his opportunity but it became his destroyer. Instead of following him to Christianity, "Bedlam wore him out by her engines", as Carlyle puts it. When Carlyle returned to London in 1831, not having seen his friend for four years, he is astonished at the drastic decline in Irving's theology, mind, and body. Many of Carlyle's letters of the period are essentially asking the question, "What has

happened to my friend?" In 1834, Carlyle composed a letter to Drummond (an elder of Irving's church) in which he ardently tried to convince him of the need for Irving to go to the Continent for peace and rest from both his mental anguish and his active preaching schedule. He never sent it, and Irving died exhausted, a few months later. He was living a divided life. His ideas had become contrary to those he had prized for most of life--action, simplicity, and concrete truth--and he died before he had time to reflect on and assimilate them and proceed to a steadier course. Indeed, the reflections sent to his congregation may suggest an attempt to do so.

While in many ways Irving's life appears tragic, wasted upon the shifting sands of popular applause and cloud-lands of speculation, the passion by which he lived it, and indeed his impact, suggest that he actually did live the ideal life for which he set out. To Irving, Christianity meant energy and action. He set out boldly, seldom exercising caution, believing in God's sovereignty and society's immediate need. He confronted a society that was running ahead of itself, too quickly leaving the past behind and, in confronting her leaders and idols, took risks that few were willing to take. Furthermore, in religious terms, he challenged the structures of tradition and even theology, in seeking for a more vibrant faith, and in so doing allowed emotion and experience into a realm that had become cerebral and even dull.

Those who assume that Irving's life was a failure also assume that "a higher form of Christianity" means visible success, in temporal terms. But the spiritual life is not so. Irving was unaware of the impact that he would have in his short time: he sought only to follow what he believed to be divine direction. This adventurous life certainly had its pitfalls, and led to an early death--but it also had an impact on the world. Edward Irving was clearly a key forerunner of the Charismatic movement which, one-hundred and sixty years after his early death, is the fastest growing religious movement in the world. His prayer was "*to make a demonstration for a higher type of Christianity -- something more heroical, more magnanimous than this age affects. God knows, with what success.*" In death and in life, perhaps God did indeed answer him.

It would appear that the decision one makes regarding Irving (viewing him in either a negative or positive light) hinges upon one's personal ideals. He is still a confrontational character in his life and impact. Those who perceive the charismatic movement to be unhealthy and schismatic will perhaps disapprove; as they may if theology is to remain within the realm of pure logic. Others may embrace Irving fully, convinced that the birth of the charismatic church was as important as the Reformation, while neglecting the abuses, anti-intellectualism, and the dangers of some visionary leaders--endowed with presumed supernatural power--having a drastically negative effect on

their followers. However, amidst all of the controversy around Irving's life and influence, one fact still remains--Edward Irving played a central role in revitalizing religion, in London in the 1820s as now. Irving taught that not only was Christianity exciting, but God was active and accessible. This was his greatest legacy. Whether his errors outweigh this vital truth is the real issue. Whether or not one sifts through the bag of chaff to find the seed within depends on the importance one gives to that seed.

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