

**Forerunner of the Charismatic Movement. The Life of Edward Irving by Arnold Dallimore, Moody Press, Chicago, Ill., 1983; softcover, 200 pp.**

Edward Irving (1792-1834) was a Scottish Presbyterian, an assistant to Thomas Chalmers at St. John's, Glasgow. In 1822, he went to the Caledonian Chapel, London, which proved inadequate for the hundreds who flocked to hear him. A new church was erected in 1826. Many famous people were among Irving's listeners. The poor also gladly heard him. Many called him "the greatest orator" of his age. His mind was that of a genius. His friends included Thomas Carlyle, a name prominent in English literature. And he was strongly influenced by Samuel-Taylor Coleridge, England's celebrated poet, philosopher and critic.

Irving was not an expository preacher. He used a text as a peg on which to hang his numerous ideas. Unbalanced emphasis crept into his sermons. He alienated many with his strange views on prophecy. Irving believed that God was granting a restoration of the apostolic gifts, especially speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy. He claimed that "no Christian ought ever to be overcome by sickness." His views on Christ became so controversial that they led to his arraignment before the London Presbytery, where he was charged with holding the sinfulness of Christ's humanity. Irving taught that Christ's great work of salvation was accomplished not by Christ's death, but by His life. Christ was kept from sin by the Holy Spirit.

Dallimore writes, "with all his being he believed Christ was kept from sin only by the Holy Spirit and that therein lay the very essence of Christianity – that mankind too may have the same measure of the Spirit's power and experience the same victory." Irving also came to reject the doctrine of human depravity and divine election. He was excommunicated and deposed from the Church of Scotland's ministry. His congregation split. Eight hundred followers went with him. Many of these erstwhile Presbyterians were to join the Catholic Apostolic Church, which founding has been wrongly attributed to Irving. In this church he held the modest position of deacon. He became an itinerant preacher and hoped in this ministry to have more freedom.

Irving was a tragic figure, who experienced intense personal suffering. He became a thoroughly disillusioned man. His story ends with the unfulfilled expectancy of being healed. He died in Glasgow and was buried there.

Today Irving has received new recognition as the forerunner of Pentecostalism. The beliefs held by him and the Pentecostals have proved very similar. Dallimore shows how Irving came to his beliefs. He also demonstrates how the spiritual gifts functioned in his congregation, resulting in frustration and division. Irving's life contains a warning and instructions for our times. Dallimore's book is timely, sensitive, balanced and contributes to the current discussion on the charismatic movement.

Rev. Arnold Dallimore, who received his degrees from the Toronto Baptist Seminary and Northwest Baptist College, Vancouver, BC, was a pastor for many years. He has also written a major, two volume study on the life of George Whitefield.

Johan D. Tangelder February, 1984