

Forerunner of the Charismatic Movement: The Life of Edward Irving, by Arnold Dallimore, Moody Press, 1983, 200 pp.

This is a fascinating biography of a tragic figure. Edward Irving was born the same year as was Charles Finney (1792), one year after the death of John Wesley. He was a close friend of Thomas Carlyle and a contemporary of such men as George Muller in England, F.C. Bauer in Germany, and Charles Hodge and William Miller in the United States. Irving was a curious mixture of greatness and weakness; possessing remarkable talents and abilities, he at the same time suffered from a lack of emotional stability and his premature death at age 42 (1834) was the result of an unrelated physical weakness (tuberculosis).

Having been trained for the Presbyterian ministry, Irving at age 27 became assistant to the famous Thomas Chalmers of St. John's in Glasgow, Scotland and very quickly immersed himself in a very effective and sensitive pastoral ministry. Irving's great ambition during this period was to be able to preach to his own congregation and after three years, in 1822, the opportunity arrived; he received a call to the Caledonian Chapel in London. The Caledonian church was in a shabby part of the great city and the congregation, having been without a minister for the past year, had dwindled to a mere 50 persons.