

## BRITISH ROOTS IN AMERICAN MILLENNIALISM: EDWARD IRVING AND THE MILLERITE MOVEMENT

RICARDO A. GONZÁLEZ, PH.D. CAND.

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, PHILIPPINES

*Edward Irving has been recognized as one of the most remarkable figures of nineteenth century British premillennialism. Yet, despite this recognition, towards the end of his life he had become an embarrassment to evangelical Christians. Among the reasons for his tragic end were doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues. However, some years later the foremost American premillenarian movement, namely Millerism, would almost entirely replicate his understanding of eschatology, the latter rain, and the concept of Babylon. The particular extent of the influence of Irving on Millerism is intriguing and has not been thoroughly evaluated in the relevant literature. This study suggests that some of the teachings of Millerism were rooted in Edward Irving's ideas.*

*Key Words: Edward Irving, William Miller, premillennialism, eschatology, latter rain, Babylon*

### 1. Introduction

Edward Irving, the famous Scottish preacher of the Regent Square Caledonian Church in London, has always been a controversial figure.<sup>1</sup> His name is associated with fringe theological ideas and charismatic excesses. People of his generation were divided in their opinion about his person.<sup>2</sup> However,

<sup>1</sup> Juanita S. Carey, *E. W. Bullinger. A Biography* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), 105.

<sup>2</sup> In 1828, during a trip to England, the well-known American clergyman and biographer William Sprague met Edward Irving. His first encounter with him was in church. After the sermon Irving invited him to visit his home in the coming week. After an hour of dialogue he left his house with the following impression: "Everybody knows that Edward Irving's singular character and history have given occasion to much speculation. There are not wanting those who believe that he was originally a mere actor, practising upon the credulity of the people, and that God, in judgement, gave him up to the delusion which he had thus courted. ... But such, I believe, is not the more common opinion." See William B. Sprague, *Visits to European Celebrities* (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1855), 19. In the same vein in 1863, the anonymous reviewer of the just published biography of Edward Irving (published by Margaret Oliphant) stated: "We, of course, are aware that many sketches of Irving, of more or less merit, exist. Besides,

it was his personal influence and prophetic legacy, which led Ernest Sandeen to assert that "if early nineteenth-century millenarianism had produced a hero, it would have been Edward Irving."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the extent of his influence which spread far beyond the shores of Great Britain is something that the scholarship has not yet addressed adequately. The purpose of this study is to suggest that some of the teachings of the "most famous millenarian [movement] in American history,"<sup>4</sup> namely Millerism, had its roots in Edward Irving's millenarian ideas. The first section of this study provides some important biographical details about Irving. The second part concentrates on three of his key teachings that would later be integrated into the ranks of Millerism and further on one of its branches, i.e., sabbatarian Adventism.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Edward Irving: The Person

Edward Irving was born "in the autumn of the eventful year 1792" amid fearsome revolutionary events in Europe.<sup>6</sup> Adam Hope was his schoolmaster, to whom he subsequently ascribed [his] education.<sup>7</sup> Having finished the school in Annan at thirteen, Edward Irving began his studies at Edinburgh

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the articles in biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias which, so far as we are acquainted with them, repeat with a dull monotony the same distorted opinions of the man." See Anonymous, "The Life of Edward Irving," *The Christian Remembrancer: A Quarterly Review* 44 (1863): 291.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Evangelicalism, 1800-1930* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> These teachings included: (1) his eschatology; (2) his understanding of the latter rain; and (3) his concept of Babylon.

<sup>6</sup> [Margaret] Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving: Minister of the National Scotch Church, London: Illustrated by His Journals and Correspondence* (2 vols.; London: Hurst & Blackett, 1862), 1:1.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Carlyle pointed out this influence when he said: "One of the circumstances of Irving's boyhood ought not to be neglected by his biographer—the remarkable schoolmaster he had. 'Old Adam Hope,' perhaps not yet fifty in Irving's time, was all along a notability in Annan." Cf. Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1881), 75. See also *Lives of the Industrious: The Biographical Magazine Vol. 2* (London: Partridge & Co., 1856). Cited 16 October 2006. Online: [http://books.google.com/books?vid=0JIH6XyvM5BUDY1B9Ba&id=-rW7XsCyRUMC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=Lives+of+the+Illustrious&as\\_brr=1](http://books.google.com/books?vid=0JIH6XyvM5BUDY1B9Ba&id=-rW7XsCyRUMC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=Lives+of+the+Illustrious&as_brr=1). The biography of Edward Irving in this book was written by Washington Wilks. Two years later he published a complete book on Edward Irving in which he refers to this previous publication of Irving's life. See Washington Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography* (London: W. Freeman, 1854). The influence of Adam Hope in Irving's life is something that should not be ignored.

University where “he so excelled in mathematics” that he was appointed as a mathematics teacher at the young age of eighteen in an academy in Haddington.<sup>8</sup> Through this appointment he worked his way through college to become a minister of the Church of Scotland. Two years later he was appointed the head of a “newly-established academy in Kirkcaldy.”<sup>9</sup> At the same time he studied divinity, “making his appearance at college to go through the necessary examinations, and deliver the prescribed discourses; but carrying on his intermediate studies by himself, according to a license permitted by the Church.”<sup>10</sup>

After completing his theological studies Irving could not easily find a pastoral assignment in the Church of Scotland, probably because of his preaching style.<sup>11</sup> He was nearing his thirties and no official call had come from the presbytery. In 1819, tired and frustrated, Irving left Kirkcaldy and decided to become a preacher among the heathen.<sup>12</sup> He was on the way to accomplish his plan when he received an invitation to preach for Dr. Andrew Thomson in Saint George’s church, Edinburgh. When the day for delivering his sermon came, among his hearers was Dr. Thomas Chalmers who was looking for an assistant minister “in the splendid labors he was beginning in Glasgow.”<sup>13</sup> Shortly afterwards he became Dr. Chalmers’ assistant minister. “His memory was cherished by the poor of Glasgow” for a long time after his departure from the city.<sup>14</sup>

In 1822 Irving moved to London as the minister of the Caledonian Asylum Chapel in Hatton Garden,<sup>15</sup> where he created quite an unprecedented

<sup>8</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:34.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:49.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:35.

<sup>11</sup> See Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 8, who also makes this point: “It seems, in truth, that whenever his preaching gift had been exercised, it was so much to the discontent of the hearers, that he got no second invitation.” He follows by saying that “he had fed his soul with the word of Chrysostom, the Christian Plato—of Jeremy Taylor, the English Chrysostom—and of Hooker, the Bacon of the church—till he had come to regard, as of mean speech and feeble thought, all living preachers and theologians. ... he had consorted with the shades of Hildebrand and Knox till he had become of such heroic mood.”

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:92.

<sup>14</sup> *Lives of the Industrious*, 314.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Walsh, Eliakim Littell, and John J. Smith, *The Museum of Foreign Literature (Science and Art 2; Philadelphia: E. Littell, 1836)*, 368. Cited 22 September 2006. Online: [http://books.google.com/books?vid=OCLC03831287&id=ZSGKnU8pWmEC&pg=PA370&dq=Edward+Irving&as\\_brr=1](http://books.google.com/books?vid=OCLC03831287&id=ZSGKnU8pWmEC&pg=PA370&dq=Edward+Irving&as_brr=1). The entry on Irving has been signed by Walsh. Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 30, affirms that Irving started his career one month before. He points out that “on the second Sunday of July,

sensation. People of all ranks in London's society wanted to hear the Scottish preacher.<sup>16</sup> Some years later, he would be pointed out as one of the most eloquent men of the century.<sup>17</sup>

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1822 ... Irving entered on his new ministry." Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:150, also gives July as the beginning of his ministry. She writes: "'On the second Sabbath of July, 1822,' Irving began his labors in London." It seems that she based her conclusion on the work of Wilks. Walsh argues that Irving preached in the Caledonian church for four successive Sabbaths. During this time he confirmed his calling among those who had invited him there. However "a difficulty [...] remained to be overcome; a parliamentary grant had been made to the Caledonian Asylum, to support a clergyman who could preach in Gaelic as well as in English, and the diverting of the grant, as the appropriation of the pulpit, from that specific purpose to any other, could be sanctioned only by act of parliament. The friends of Mr. Irving now found necessary to interest in his cause the Directors of the Asylum, and his Royal Highness the Duke of York, as President of that national institution, condescended to honour the candidate with his presence. The permission of the legislature was consequently obtained and in August, 1822, Irving began officially his ministry in London." See Walsh, Littell, and Smith, *The Museum of Foreign Literature*, 367-68.

- <sup>16</sup> Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 31, affirms: "In the first quarter, it is recorded, the seat-holders at the Caledonian Asylum Chapel had increased from fifty to fifteen hundred." During the first years of his ministry in the metropolis the impact of his preaching was powerful. People of all ranks came to hear him. Just two years after his death Walsh, in an early biography of Irving published in 1836, refers to his impact in London. He writes: "He soon attracted very large congregations by the force and eloquence of his discourses, and the singularity of his appearance and gesticulation. The greatest orators and statesmen of the day hurried to hear him; the seats of the chapel were crowded with the wealthy and the fashionable, and its doors were thronged with carriages. It became necessary to exclude the public in general and to admit only those who were previously provided with tickets." See Walsh, Littell, and Smith, *The Museum of Foreign Literature*, 368.
- <sup>17</sup> Fish suggests that it was a "most remarkable combination of powers, physical, moral and mental that won his unprecedented popularity." See Henry C. Fish, *History and Repository of Pulpit Eloquence. Volume 2* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1856). Cited 24 October 2006. Online: [http://books.google.com/books?vid=OCLC08037818&id=D2m\\_b2NL6c0C&pg=RA1PA336&vq=Edward+Irving&dq=Edward+Irving&as\\_br=1](http://books.google.com/books?vid=OCLC08037818&id=D2m_b2NL6c0C&pg=RA1PA336&vq=Edward+Irving&dq=Edward+Irving&as_br=1). This is also confirmed by Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 31, who states that "the genuineness of his genius, and the unfeignedness of his virtue were admitted by the most cynical of his critics, and the bitterest of his theological detractors." Thomas Carlyle, a good friend from the boyhood years, also refers to the virtues of the Scottish preacher. He asserts that at the beginning of his ministry "bodily and spiritually, perhaps there was not ... a man more full of genial energetic life in all these Islands." See Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: Collected and Republished* (4 vols.; Boston: Brown & Taggard, 1860), 3:404. All of these statements are sharply contrasted with Sandeen who, when referring to Irving's oratory skills, affirms that he had the "ability to assume a role so completely as to forget that he was wearing a mask made him seem like a poser to many—which he was not. It does, however, reflect the chief weakness of his character. He was a ship without a keel. Although he was earnest and serious in



Edward Irving was a person who polarized people. Walsh affirms that early in his ministry in London he “threw down the gauntlet and commenced open hostilities with preachers of every class and description.”<sup>18</sup> He continues saying that “the imposing attitude which he assumed was that of ‘John the Baptist risen from the dead.’”<sup>19</sup>

Irving’s preaching focused on sharing hope with those in trouble. Wilks affirms that the secret of his attraction “lay in the tenderness with which he bound out the wounds of the poor humanity, rather than in the skill with which he proved them.”<sup>20</sup> His theological emphasis centered on God’s love. His most frequent theme was “the fatherhood of God and the filial going forth of the human heart.” And “the parables and miracles of Christ [were] his abounding inspiration.”<sup>21</sup>

He was the kind of person who was in a continuous process of learning. It is in this sense that his peculiar acquaintance with the poet Samuel T. Coleridge<sup>22</sup> might be understood.<sup>23</sup>

Irving was the kind of person who was always ready to challenge religious ideas that were based mostly on the tradition of the church. His

every pursuit, he swung around in each new breeze until he was blown over.” See Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 15

<sup>18</sup> Walsh, Littell, and Smith, *The Museum of Foreign Literature*, 368.

<sup>19</sup> Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 32, affirms that Irving’s popularity did not denote “unanimity of admiration.” He continues on the same page: “Never was opinion more divided on the merits of a public character. And, as usually happens, on the point most open to observation, the controversy was hottest.”

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Samuel T. Coleridge (1772–1834) was an English poet, critic, and philosopher and one of the founders of the Romantic Movement in England. He was born in Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, in England. His father was a well known vicar priest in Ottery St. Mary. He is probably best known for his poems “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Kubla Khan,” as well as his major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. It is said that he was an authentic visionary in anticipating modern existentialism. For biographical details see James Gillman, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Vol. 1* (London: William Pickering, 1838). Cited 5 November 2006. Online: [http://books.google.com/books?vid=OCLC04384177&id=YtruUj2MlwQC&pg=PR3&dq=Samuel+T.+Coleridge&as\\_brr=1](http://books.google.com/books?vid=OCLC04384177&id=YtruUj2MlwQC&pg=PR3&dq=Samuel+T.+Coleridge&as_brr=1). Unfortunately at the time of this research the second volume of Gillman’s biography was not yet available online.

<sup>23</sup> Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 16, points out that “Coleridge may seem like strange company for a minister of the Scottish irk and an evangelical at that.” However, as Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:189, affirms: Irving “in his own consciousness was always learning.” This can be evidenced in all the generous dedicatory addresses of his books.

commitment to the truth of the Bible is clear.<sup>24</sup> He liked to analyze new spiritual ideas from an unusual perspective. Dr. Chalmers in his notes of May 1827 refers to a meeting he and Irving had had with Coleridge. After the meeting he told Irving that he found some of the affirmations of Coleridge mysterious. Chalmers stated that "he liked to see all sides of an idea before taking up with it." In reply Edward Irving said: "You Scotsmen would handle an idea as a butcher handles an ox. For my part, I love to see an idea looming through the mist."<sup>25</sup> This interest for new ideas should not be understood necessarily as something wrong.<sup>26</sup> Irving had what Wilks

<sup>24</sup> Scriptural authority was a vital element in Irving's ministry. Oliphant points out: "His Bible was not to him the foundation from which theology was to be proved, but a Divine Word, distinct with meaning, never to be exhausted, and from which light and guidance—not vague, but particular—could be brought for every need. And the weight of his 'calling' to instruct was never absent from his mind." In a letter to his wife he refers to his activities in Caledonian church by saying: "My lecture was upon the ministry of women in their proper sphere in the Church, which I drew out of the Scriptures by authority." Cf. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:222–23, 337. His high view of God's word can also be seen during his defense before the Presbytery of London when he made the following appellation: "I entreat you to set up the Holy Scriptures as the only basis of faith and practice; to look as ministers, and to look as people, to them alone; and I know this, that if you throw the Bible aside, you will not look to much else that is good. You may talk about standards as you please, but I know there will be little reading of the standards or other good books if there be not much reading of the Scriptures." *Speeches of Irving before the Presbytery of London, March, 1832*; quoted in *ibid.*, 2:462.

<sup>25</sup> *Lives of the Industrious*, 322.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding Irving's statement of loving "to see an idea looming through the mist," Sandeen points out: "Irving loved the mysterious. ... And once captured by such an idea, once seized by its mystery, he would become its slave, never asking what contradictions or complications might follow." Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 16. It seems that it was not the mysterious that he loved so much as acquaintance with new ideas. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:224, affirms: "When any subject was presented to him, his mind immediately carried it away out of the everyday atmosphere into a world of thought and ideal truth, where practicabilities, much more expediences, did not enter; interrogated it closely to get at its heart; expounded it so from the depths, from the heights, from the unseen soul of the matter, that people, accustomed to look at it only from the outside, stood by aghast, and did not know the familiar doctrine which they themselves had put into his hands. This will be found the case in almost every thing he touches." In his reflection on the importance of the Ten Commandments for the Scottish nation it is possible to see an example of what "looming" could have been for him. It seems that it was related to the way or focus with which he attempted to apply the Bible's truth to practical life. In talking on God's law he said: "My notion is, that the Ten Commandments contain the ten principal of these mother-elements of a thriving soul—these laws of laws, and generating principles of all institutions. These also, I think, ought to be made the basis of every system of moral and political philosophy. *But all this is but looming upon my eye, and durst not be spoken in*

calls "a usual ingenuousness and noble-minded simplicity,"<sup>27</sup> that made him to stand often, unashamedly, on the side of those who were ready to learn. He was convinced that a man called to be a minister needs to be committed solely to the Bible.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Carlyle in his posthumous writing on the death of Edward Irving affirmed:

To the Bible he more and more exclusively addressed himself. If it is the written Word of God, shall it not be the acted Word too? Is it mere sound, then; black printer's-ink on white rag-paper? A half-man could have passed on without answering; a whole man must answer. Hence Prophecies of Millenniums, Gifts of Tongues, whereat Orthodoxy prims herself into decent wonder, and waves her, Avaunt! Irving clave to his Belief, as to his soul's soul; followed it whithersoever, through earth or air, it might lead him; toiling as never man toiled to spread it, to gain the worlds ear for it, — in vain.<sup>29</sup>

As Carlyle pointed out, for Irving the Bible was not just a book to be believed. It was a book to be acted upon. It is in this sense that his millenarianism ought to be understood. His conviction that the Bible was God's complete word for his people in the last days determined his approach to eschatology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and consequently his understanding of the church.

### 3. Edward Irving as a Forerunner of Millerite Ideas

The popularity Irving gained in London through his preaching in Regent Square increased through his preaching and writings on prophetic topics. In these prophetic studies it is possible to find some surprising coincidences with later American Millenarianism. We will now turn our attention to them.

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Scotland, under the penalty of high treason against their laws of logic and their enslaved spirit of discourse." See *ibid.*, 1:286–87 [emphasis supplied].

<sup>27</sup> Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 178.

<sup>28</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:224–25, follows by saying: "No sooner does he apply himself to the special consideration of any point than all its hidden, spiritual meanings come gleaming upon his mind. ... Men enough there are in all times—in our time, perhaps, too many—who can expound the practicable. Irving's vocation was of a totally different nature: it was his to restore to the enterprises and doctrines of universal Christianity—without consideration of what was practicable or how it could be realized."

<sup>29</sup> Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 3:405.

### 3.1. Irving's Eschatology

Millenarian ideas came to Irving's life in two different ways. The first channel was—as he mentions in the preface of his work *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God*—from his acquaintance with James Hatley Frere.<sup>30</sup> Oliphant affirms that when Frere met Irving for the first time he said: "Here is the man!" She follows by pointing out that in Irving Frere gained a "disciple and expositor."<sup>31</sup>

The second source, and probably the most important one, came as a result of his reading and translation of Lacunza's work *La venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad*.<sup>32</sup> L. E. Froom affirms that "though interested earlier in the prophecies concerning the advent, Irving's entire absorption in them dates from 1826, when he became acquainted with Lacunza's book."<sup>33</sup> In Lacunza he discovered "the chief work of a master's hand." In his acquaintance with Lacunza's work he saw the action of God's providence "for the love of His Church."<sup>34</sup> It was this conviction, which led him to become the translator of

<sup>30</sup> The sequence of events that culminated in the publication of this book started in 1824 when Frere, a man with an especial interest in the books of Daniel and Revelation, approached Irving. In the introduction to his book *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God: A Discourse on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse which relate the Second Advent* (2 vols.; Glasgow: Chalmers & Collins, 1826), Irving recounts the way in which his thoughts were brought to prophetic studies. Cf. Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 178–79, and Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:226.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:221. Along the same line, Froom wrote: "Frere's greatest acquisition was the winning of Edward Irving, one of the most celebrated preachers of London. Irving's studies with Frere opened a whole new world to him, with prophecy becoming the central theme of his thoughts, speech and writings." Cf. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (4 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1946–1954), 3:275, 386.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Carlyle does not make any reference to the influence of Frere on Irving. Rather, he believes that his thoughts were "nourished and corroborated" specially by the work of Lacunza, *The Coming of the Messiah*, and by his acquaintance with Coleridge. He writes: "Soon after the opening of Irving's new church in Regent Square in 1827 his great popularity began to subside. It is thought that this fact, which had been a serious blow to his self-esteem, had only confirmed his belief that the world was not to improve and turned him toward supernaturalism. Aben [sic] Ezra's *Coming of the Messiah* and all that is mystical in Coleridge both nourished and corroborated his long-held beliefs in prophecy and the impending approach of the second coming." Cf. Thomas Carlyle, Alexander Carlyle, and Edwin W. Marrs, *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to his Brother Alexander, with Related Family Letters* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 289, quoted in George P. Landow, "Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church." Cited 25 January 2007. Online: <http://victorianweb.org/religion/apocalypse/irvingite.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Froom, *The Prophetic Faith*, 3:515–16.

<sup>34</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 1:380–86.



Lacunza into English and the mouthpiece of his ideas in the Anglo-Saxon world.<sup>35</sup>

It should be noted that he was not alone in his millenarianism because at that time—in the middle of the 1820s—“the subject was exciting very general interest among religious people.”<sup>36</sup> It is in that context that millenarian ideas would become the main topic of the discussions among the participants in the extremely influential Albury Park meetings.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Aecio E. Cairus has made an important contribution in clearing up several misconceptions regarding the work of Manuel Lacunza. One of those has to do with the role Lacunza played in the Advent Awakening. He suggests that while it is clear among historians of Adventism and Dispensationalism that Lacunza exerted a wide influence in Europe and the Americas it is not clear enough that “he was not merely a part of the Advent Awakening, but one of its initiators.” He continues: “Though premillennialism has a long history in Christianity, the Advent Awakening ... shows from the beginning the pervasive influence of the work of Lacunza.” See Aecio E. Cairus, “History of the S.D.A. Church: Early Seventh-day Adventism” (Silang: Seminary Productions/Class Notes, 2006), 9. Manuel Lacunza or Juan Josafat Ben Ezra was born in Santiago, Chile, on July 19, 1731. His parents gave him a careful religious education in literature, Latin grammar, and rhetoric at the Jesuit Colegio Máximo in Santiago. In 1747, at the age of sixteen, he was admitted on probation status into the Jesuit Order. Completing his two-year vows in Bocalemu and having finished his secondary school, he studied philosophy and theology in the Colegio Máximo, which he finished with honors. As the third year ended, he received sacred orders and he was given instructional and spiritual supervision of the younger. In 1766, Lacunza took the four vows of the Jesuits. In the next year, in the autumn of 1767, he was expelled from Chile, with all the members of the order. This was due to a decree of Charles III of Spain which was applied in all Spanish dominions. Lacunza went first to Cádiz, Spain, and then moved to Imola, Italy. There he resided until his death in 1801. It was in that city that his monumental work *La venida del Mesías* under the pseudonym of Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra was produced. For further biographical and historical data concerning Manuel Lacunza see Miguel Rafael Urzúa, “La venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad: el R. P. Manuel Lacunza.” Cited 26 July 2006. Online: <http://www.abcog.org/lacunza.htm>. See also Froom, *The Prophetic Faith*, 3:303–24.

<sup>36</sup> *Lives of the Industrious*, 321.

<sup>37</sup> The Albury Park Conferences were a number of meetings in which twenty people “lay and clerical, of various communions, but all united by one common curiosity about the hidden things of prophecy and the Apocalypse” participated for the first time “in Advent 1826 for prophetic studies.” These meetings were held under the auspices of Henry Drummond in his residence in Albury Park, Surrey. He was a banker, politician and writer who supported Irving’s teachings and he was one of the founders of the Catholic Apostolic Church. Among the participants of these conferences were Joseph Wolff, Hugh McNeile, Vaughan of Leicester, Lewis Way, Dodsworth and Henry Drummond. See anonymous, “The Life of Edward Irving,” 304–6.

The core of the ideas presented in his work *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed* was reviewed in *The Baptist Magazine* in the same year.<sup>38</sup> The author states: "Mr. Irving's theory is briefly this: he considers the prophecies of Daniel to have respect to the same periods and events as the Apocalypse."<sup>39</sup> In his understanding, the book of Revelation "is not a prophetic narrative in chronological order, which is to be forced to apply to the order of history, or history forced by arbitrary divisions to apply to it."<sup>40</sup> He understood that the visions of the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets and the Little Book point not to "successive, but [to] contemporaneous and synchronical"<sup>41</sup> events. It is this idea which is the core of the system he and Frere exposed.<sup>42</sup>

Edward Irving's commitment to the study of prophecy enabled him to see in the development of secular history the background of prophetic realities. Walsh affirms that "none of Mr. Irving's numerous predecessors in the bold undertaking of unraveling the web of prophecy, had ventured to fix the application of particular predictions to the events that were produced by the late revolution in France which Mr. Irving has done."<sup>43</sup> Making use of the year-day principle Irving fixed the beginning of the prophecy of 1,260 years<sup>44</sup> in A.D. 533 when the code of Justinian,<sup>45</sup> "which greatly enlarged and

<sup>38</sup> "Review of *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*," *The Baptist Magazine* 18 (1826): 317–20. Cited 21 November 2006. Online: [http://www.google.com/books?vid=LCCNsn95016139&id=auoRAAAIAAJ&pg=RA11PA318&lp=RA11Infidelity&as\\_brr=1#PRA11-PA317,M1](http://www.google.com/books?vid=LCCNsn95016139&id=auoRAAAIAAJ&pg=RA11PA318&lp=RA11Infidelity&as_brr=1#PRA11-PA317,M1).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>40</sup> Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 179.

<sup>41</sup> Referring to his understanding of the Book of Revelation, Irving stated that "neither is it a series of disconnected visions. ... It is not until the fourth chapter that we come to the distinct revelation of the things that are to be; those great future events, of prime importance to the church, which occupy the remainder of the book; in the giving of which, the following method can be distinctly traced: a revelation under the name of SEVEN SEALS; another under the name of the SEVEN TRUMPETS; and a third under the name of the LITTLE BOOK; which are not successive, but contemporaneous, or synchronical." See Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*, quoted in Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 179–80 [emphasis his].

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>43</sup> Walsh, Littell, and Smith, *The Museum of Foreign Literature*, 369. In referring to the role that the French Revolution played in prophetic interpretation, Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 181–82, affirms that, in regard to Irving's views concerning the dates and the role of the papacy in the French revolution, "Protestant expositors are generally agreed."

<sup>44</sup> See Revelation 11:2–3; 13:5–7. For Irving, this period marks the captivity of the church.

<sup>45</sup> The Code of Justinian is the major contribution of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I to the jurisprudence. It consists of four books: (1) *Codex Constitutionum*, which clarified and updated past imperial statutes; (2) *digesta*, or *pandectae*, interpreted and updated past legal decisions; (3) *institutiones*, a handbook for student lawyers; and (4) *novellae*

strengthened the Papal power, was promulgated."<sup>46</sup> His calculations put the end of this prophecy in the year 1793 in the middle of the French Revolution. According to his view the two witnesses of the prophecy are the Old and New Testaments. They "were 'slain' ... when infidelity was established in France, in 1793; and their 'resurrection' took place when freedom of religious worship was restored in that country, in 1797, in which year also the Missionaries were sent to Otaheite [Tahiti], and the Serampore translations were commenced."<sup>47</sup>

Irving expected that the second coming of Jesus would be an event of his own days. By means of a historical reading of the 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 prophetic periods, Irving concluded that the second coming of Jesus would take place in the year 1868. He writes:

From the setting up of the Papacy, therefore, there shall be 1,290 days, till something, which is not determined by any event; and there shall be 1,335 days till the term is pronounced, BLESSED; blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to it. There can be no doubt, that this is the commencement of the glorious time, when all men shall be blessed in Christ, and all man shall call him blessed. No other epoch in holy writ is pronounced blessed. Therefore, we say that in 75 years, over and beyond the 1,260, that is from the year of our Lord 1792, or in 43 years from this time (A.D. 1825), when I now write, the blessed reign of Christ shall have commenced. The Lord lengthen out my life to see one of these days of the Son of Man.<sup>48</sup>

This historical understanding of the prophecies of the 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 years as related to the end of the world was something that some years

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*constitutiones post codicem*, a collection of Justinian's laws that were issued after publication of the Codex. The *digesta* was drawn from A.D. 530–533. Through the important assistance of well-known scholars he compiled and gave form to a number of dispersed laws back to the time of Hadrian. See "Code of Justinian." Cited 27 November 2006. Online: <http://geoanalyzer.britannica.com/ebc/article-9044217>. For a complete reading of the code, see Samuel Parsons Scott, "The Justinian Code from the *Corpus Juris Civilis*." Cited 25 November 2006. Online: <http://vitaphone.org/history/justinianc.html>. A number of pronouncements of the code established the Catholic religion as the official religion of the state. It is precisely this point which provided Irving with an important clue for dating the year A.D. 533 as the beginning of the 1,260 days prophecy.

<sup>46</sup> "Review of *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*," 317.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 318. It is important to say that, years later, this teaching would be essentially advocated among one of the branches of the Millerite movement, namely the Seventh-day Adventist church. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950), 265–88.

<sup>48</sup> Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*, 1:173, quoted in "Review of *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*," 318.

later, William Miller, would also endorse.<sup>49</sup> Sabbatarian Adventists, one of the main branches of Millerism, essentially inherited Miller's understanding of these prophecies as well. The main difference between Irving's understanding of these prophetic periods and American Adventism is given in the date set for the beginning of them.<sup>50</sup>

This interpretation was something with which Protestant expositors generally agreed.<sup>51</sup> However, Irving went further in his analysis because he brought new insights to the discussions on prophecy and history.<sup>52</sup> A thorough and careful observation of contemporary history led Edward Irving to conclude that the end of the world was at hand. In the tumultuous events of his days he was able to see the role of Islamic powers in prophecy.<sup>53</sup> Wilks observes that he "ventured to trace a correspondence between the events

<sup>49</sup> William Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843, Exhibited in a Course of Lectures, Second Advent* (Boston: J. V. Himes, 1842), 95–104, 296–97. See also Alberto R. Timm, "The 1,290 and 1,335 Days of Daniel 12." Cited 20 January 2006. Online: <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/daniel12.htm>. At this point it should be said that Miller recognized the importance of Edward Irving for his interpretation. He affirmed that, in his approach to these prophecies, he was in agreement with other expositors of his century. He said: "'Midnight cry' is the watchmen, or some of them, who by the word of God discover the time as revealed, and immediately give the warning voice, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' This has been fulfilled in a most remarkable manner. One or two on every quarter of the globe have proclaimed the news, and agree in the time—Wolf, of Asia; Irving, late of England; Mason, of Scotland; Davis, of South Carolina; and quite a number in this region are, or have been giving the cry." See Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ*, 238.

<sup>50</sup> Since Irving computed the beginning for these three prophetic periods in the same year (A.D. 533) he concluded that Jesus' Second coming would occur in 1868. If he instead, would have chosen the year A.D. 508 as the date that points to the beginning of these prophecies, his conclusion would have matched Miller's, namely, the year 1843. For a better understanding of the teaching of Miller on these prophecies, see *ibid.*, 100–14.

<sup>51</sup> Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 181–82.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>53</sup> The finding of Islamic powers in the Book of Revelation was not something novel to biblical interpretation in Irving's days. Early Bible commentators had referred to it. See Froom, *The Prophetic Faith*, 2:525, 531. What is really new in Irving's understanding is the timing he set for the events predicted in the sixth trumpet and in the sixth bowl. In 1826 he said: "The Mahommedan, and more especially of the Turkish power, which, we have seen by the Apocalypse, is to wane and waste away, like the streams of a river in times of drought, before the great day of the coming of the Lord. We have shewn from the exact study of prophecy, that within *twenty years from this period* ... that wave be rolled back from off the Holy Land, and the other parts of Christendom which it hath overspread." Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*, quoted in Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 182 [emphasis supplied].



symbolized by the SIX VIALS, and the events of the French Consulate and Empire—and even to find, in the circumstances of his own day, such as the alleged decadence of the Papacy and the Ottoman Empire, indications of the rapid approach of the final struggle.”<sup>54</sup> In 1826, he affirmed: “Now if the Turkish power be thus drying up, and manifestly near its end, it must be that the battle of Armageddon, and the coming of Christ, are also near at hand; for the former is the sixth vial and the latter is the seventh vial, which immediately follows it.”<sup>55</sup> His understanding of the political realities both in the West and the East led him to connect historical events with prophecy. He believed that spiritual forces were behind the conflicts of nations and that the battle of Armageddon was there ready to be fought. In his view “the battle of Armageddon [was] ... no less than the last crisis of the strife between good and evil which hath been waged upon the earth since the world began.”<sup>56</sup> He saw that it is this final battle for the earth which is to determine “whether Satan or Christ shall have it and hold it for ever.”

### 3.2. Millerite Eschatology

Like Irving, Millerites would also advocate the role the Ottoman Empire would play in prophecy, specifically in the fulfillment of the sixth bowl, which would be followed by the Battle of the Armageddon. In the issue of August 1, 1840, the *Signs of the Times* (a Millerite magazine), published two articles by Josiah Litch. In what seems to be some type of introduction to them the editor affirms that since “there has been much enquiry of late on the subject of the closing up of the day of grace, or probation, we here give the Scriptures on which this opinion is founded, with some remarks and leave our readers to judge for themselves.” Then, in referring to Rev 16:12–21, the editor—possibly Joshua Himes—proceeds to connect the fall of the Ottoman Empire with the end of probation. He wrote:

When the sixth Trumpet hath ceased to sound, the seventh begins, and in the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he shall BEGIN to sound, the mystery of God, or dispensation of grace shall be finished. It would appear from this, that upon the fail of the Turkish empire [sic] which will take place on the closing up of the “sixth vial” and “trumpet,” that the day of probation will close.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 184.

<sup>56</sup> See Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*, quoted in “Irving and Others on the Prophecies,” *The Eclectic Review* 27 (1827): 193.

<sup>57</sup> [Joshua Himes], “The Closing-Up of the Day of Grace,” *Signs of the Times* (August 1, 1840): 69.

This understanding of the role of the Ottomans in prophecy was fully supported by “the foremost personality of the advent awakening”<sup>58</sup> in America, namely, William Miller. He believed that the fifth and sixth trumpets represented the Ottoman Empire. In his view the fifth trumpet pointed to the rising of the Ottomans and the sixth to “the period of domination.”<sup>59</sup> It is worth noting how similar his understanding is to Irving’s. Miller wrote:

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. The scene has now changed from Europe to Turkey. The “river Euphrates” means, in prophecy, the people of that country bordering on the river, and, of course, refers to the Turkish power, as I have formerly shown in my lecture on the fifth and sixth trumpet. “Water thereof was dried up,” is an emblem of the power and strength of that kingdom being diminished, or taken away. This vial was poured out on Turkey, by the loss of a great share of the empire; first, Russia on the north, in her last war with the Turks, took away a number of provinces; then, by the revolt of Ali Pacha; then, by the rising of the Greeks; since, by the Albanians and Georgians, and other distant parts of the empire, becoming disaffected; which, all together, have so wasted the power of the Turks, that, now, it is very doubtful whether she can maintain her power against her own intestine enemies; and, to compare her now with her former greatness, would be like comparing a fordable stream with the great river Euphrates; so that the way now appears to be prepared for the kings to come up to the battle of the great day.<sup>60</sup>

Josiah Litch—the main proponent among the Millerites of the role of the Turks in prophecy—would also connect the presence of “Islamic powers in Revelation” with the end of the world.<sup>61</sup> In the August 1 issue of the *Signs of*

<sup>58</sup> Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (rev. ed.; Nampa: Pacific Press, 2000), 29–34.

<sup>59</sup> See “Additional Note on Chapter 9,” in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (ed. Francis D. Nichol; 7 vols.; rev. ed.; Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 7:795 For further reading on Miller’s interpretation of the fifth and sixth trumpets see Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ*, 116–26.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>61</sup> Josiah Litch, “Fall of the Ottoman Power in Constantinople,” *Signs of the Times* (August 1, 1840): 70. Two years before—in 1838—Litch had predicted that the Ottoman Empire would fall in August 1840. He said that this prediction “is the most remarkable and definite of any in the Bible, relating to these great events.” Josiah Litch, *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ About A.D. 1843* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1838), 157–58; quoted in Eric Anderson, “The Millerite Use of Prophecy: A Case Study of a ‘Striking Fulfillment,’” in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 84.

*the Times* he stated that this approach to the surrounding historical events "has probably been brought about in a great measure by Brother Miller's lectures; and *other works on the same subject*."<sup>62</sup> In this article he affirmed that people were especially concerned with events in the East. He said:

A very general impression prevails at the present time among all classes and in all countries ... that we are on the point of some great revolution both in the political and mortal world. ... The public mind seems at the present time to be directed especially towards the affairs of the east—Constantinople, and the surrounding nations.<sup>63</sup>

He wrote that the events predicted in the sixth trumpet would "end in the 11th of August, 1840, when the Ottoman power in Constantinople may be expected to be broken."<sup>64</sup> Even though apparently nothing special had occurred on this date, early in 1841, Litch confirmed his predictions. In looking back on the events of the summer of 1840, he affirmed that the Ottomans had really fallen and that "since the 11th of August, [they were] entirely under the dictation of the great christian [sic] powers of Europe."<sup>65</sup>

It is not surprising that in this eschatological context Edward Irving in Great Britain, and years later the Millerites in America, would support a new approach of the work of the Holy Spirit. Both, Irving and the Millerites, believed that a special granting of his presence had to be given to the church to preach the last warning to the world. The full range of his teaching would move from the conservative Millerite approach to the provocative one that would emerge from one of its branches, namely, early Sabatarian Adventism.

### 3.3. Irving's Understanding of the Latter Rain

Studies related to the work of the Holy Spirit in the frame of prophetic concerns were revived in the nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup> In 1821, Lewis Way, an Anglican priest who ascribed an important role to the Jews before the Second Advent, wrote a treatise entitled "The Latter Rain."<sup>67</sup> Way's main concern in this book was "to prove from Scripture the restoration of Israel, and the

<sup>62</sup> Litch, "Fall of the Ottoman Power in Constantinople," 70 [emphasis supplied].

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. See also George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1993), 93–98.

<sup>64</sup> Litch, "Fall of the Ottoman Power in Constantinople," 70.

<sup>65</sup> Josiah Litch, "The Eleventh of August 1840: Fall of the Ottoman Empire," *Signs of the Times* (February 1, 1841): 162.

<sup>66</sup> Andrew Miller, "The Last Chapter." Cited 20 January 2007. Online: <http://www.newble.co.uk/writers/Miller/historylast.html>.

<sup>67</sup> For a better understanding on Way's ideas, see Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 9–14.

consequent glory in the land.”<sup>68</sup> Three years later, in 1824, he wrote *Palingenesia*, a poem in which he again applies the expression “latter rain” to the Jewish nation.<sup>69</sup> The use of this expression would have a new understanding and a renewed emphasis in the writings of Edward Irving.

Irving believed that the Reformers did not reach far enough with their Reformation because they “dugged [sic] not deep enough in the Holy Scriptures.” In his understanding, three important Christian doctrines had been almost completely forgotten: (1) The doctrine of the church; (2) the role of the Holy Spirit as the comforter and endower of spiritual gifts to the church; and (3) the Second Coming of Jesus. In a kind of protest he affirmed:

But the Reformers were too intent upon the mere negation of Popery, and upon the emancipation of the civil estate of Kings and peoples, upon leagues and covenants constructed for the preservation of what they had made good. They lacked discernment in the truth of God; they dugged not deep enough in the Holy Scriptures; they saw not the glorious privileges of the Church, her spiritual gifts and supernatural endowments, the coming and kingdom of the Lord, and the blessed offices of the ever-present Comforter.<sup>70</sup>

He understood that his role as “Christ’s minister” was to move the reform toward the “best days” of the church. In his view, these days were in the past. Without dismissing what the reformers had done in previous centuries, he affirmed that his role was to bring the church back to the days of Pentecost:

I am in no wise fettered by their shortcomings, I have no homage to offer at their shrines, but in my liberty of Christ’s free-man, in my prerogative of Christ’s minister, I am intent upon the knowledge and faith of all the truth written in His holy word, and do perceive a work arising into view which will far surpass the work of Reformation, and bring back the best days of the Church.<sup>71</sup>

It is on this point that Irving saw new light regarding the expression the “latter rain.” He interpreted Joel 2:28–29 in the light of his own days. While others had seen the fulfillment of this promise at Pentecost Irving understood that the promise of Joel is for the Christian church at the end of time. He wrote:

<sup>68</sup> Miller, “The Last Chapter.”

<sup>69</sup> Lewis Way, *Palingenesia, the World to Come* (London: Martin Bossange, 1824). Cited 20 February 2007. Online: [http://www.books.google.com/books?vid=0TZuX84FwNvMV5P9&id=FPcvz0XM14EC&pg=RA1PA1&lpg=RA1PA1&dq=Lewis+Way&as\\_brr=1#PRA1-PA57,M1](http://www.books.google.com/books?vid=0TZuX84FwNvMV5P9&id=FPcvz0XM14EC&pg=RA1PA1&lpg=RA1PA1&dq=Lewis+Way&as_brr=1#PRA1-PA57,M1).

<sup>70</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:498–99.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:499.



The passage in Joel [2:28-29] stands remarkably wedged in between the two parts of his prophecy; all before it concerning the destinies of the Jews, all after it concerning the destinies of the Gentiles. . . . The prophet thus discloses the purpose of God in respect to the outpouring of the Spirit upon "all flesh," as well Jew as Gentile; which began in the Jew on the day of Pentecost, and went on spreading abroad to all nations along with the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, and after a long silence hath again been revived amongst us.<sup>72</sup>

For Irving, the revival of the gifts in his own days meant that the church had not been deprived of any of the blessings given at Pentecost. He affirmed: "I cannot find by what writ of God any part of the spiritual gift was irrevocably removed from the Church."<sup>73</sup> He believed that every new Christian at the moment of his or her baptism is endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost for "profiting the Church" with the gift he or she has received. With conviction he stated:

I do not hesitate to affirm, that all we who have been baptized were baptized unto the fullness of the spiritual gifts, according as it might please God to divide unto every man, whether the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gift of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kind of tongues, or the interpretation of tongues; each one of these being the outward sign of a particular inward operation of the Spirit upon the soul, and qualifying the soul for profiting the Church with that inward gift which is given to it.<sup>74</sup>

His understanding of Christian baptism led him to the conclusion that the presence of the gifts of the Spirit was real in the church because it is not possible to affirm the presence of some gifts and to deny others.<sup>75</sup> He reasoned:

How any man dareth to take out of this passage [Eph 4:11-13] apostles, evangelists, prophets, and to say that they were only intended for a sea-

<sup>72</sup> Edward Irving, *The Day of Pentecost or The Baptism with the Holy Ghost* (London: Ellerton & Henderson, for Baldwin and Cradock, 1831), 62.

<sup>73</sup> Gavin Carlyle, *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving* (5 vols.; London: Alexander Strahan & Co., 1864), 2:276.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>75</sup> He affirmed that "there is not one passage in which the gifts of the Holy Ghost are mentioned, where they are not mentioned as the property of the whole Church, as the blessing of the whole Church, as needful to the growth of the whole Church, and as designed to continue until that which is perfect is come." He followed: "The body needeth to be edified, and we are not yet come to the measure of the stature of Christ; and I believe the Lord will seal apostles; I believe that the Lord hath sealed prophets; and I believe that the Lord will seal evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, in the power of the Spirit, if only the Church, laying hold of the Word of God, [forsakes] the traditions of men." Cf. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:426-28.

son, but that the pastor and the teacher were intended always to continue, I never have been able to find a reason. But I hold it to be a daring infraction of the integrity of the Word of God.<sup>76</sup>

Irving held a very high respect for the authority of the Bible. In fact, this submission to its authority led him to conclude that the integrity of God's word supersedes the presence of the gifts of the Spirit in the church. In other words, each one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit had to be tested according to the Bible. In this context he pointed out "that the speaking with tongues was only a *method* of prophecy, and subsidiary thereto. ... [It is] a new form of prophecy."<sup>77</sup> Referring to those that prophesy he asked: "And does this living voice supersede the Scriptures?" No, by no means. "And can it contradict the Scriptures?" Never. If it should, then say, it is not the Spirit of God, but an unclean spirit which hath spoken."<sup>78</sup>

Irving understood that one of his responsibilities as a minister was to proclaim "aloud what invaluable gifts of God the Church of Christ, since the day of Pentecost, hath been fraught with, and is still fraught with."<sup>79</sup> However, this conviction did not hinder him from seeing an eschatological fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28–29.

In 1833, Irving replied to a letter from South America from somebody who "had been a partaker in the gift of prophecy." It seems that this member of the church was requesting a missionary to those lands. Irving's reply to his demand is very interesting.

In respect of an Evangelist being sent to you from my Church, I know they shall be sent out unto all the world from this land, and especially from this Church, if we abide faithful and patient in the Lord; but not until we receive power from on high, the outpouring of the latter rain, the sealing of the servants of God upon their foreheads, which even now God longeth to give; for which we wait and pray daily, yea, many times a day.<sup>80</sup>

Irving understood that the work of the Holy Spirit, active in the church since Pentecost, had to be supplemented. The church had to pray and wait for a special granting of his presence in order to give the world the last admonition before the second coming of Jesus. He believed that the eschatological fulfillment of Joel 2:28–29, manifested the redemptive purposes of God in two senses. The first was related to the world. He affirmed that the giving of the Holy Spirit was "the extreme and utmost effort of God to save

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 2:427 [emphasis in original].

<sup>77</sup> Irving, *The Day of Pentecost or The Baptism with the Holy Ghost*, 65–66.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 64–65.

<sup>79</sup> Carlyle, *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, 2:337.

<sup>80</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:367 [emphasis supplied].

men from that day of wrath and perdition which will come."<sup>81</sup> The second was related to the church. He expected "that by the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" the church would be ready "for His appearing."<sup>82</sup>

In Irving's view, the events of his church through people claiming to have the gifts of the Spirit were only an anticipation of the era that was to come. It is in this sense that his words during his defense before the presbytery of London should be understood. He warned the presbytery against "the peril of rejecting the small and slender beginnings of the Holy Ghost's work" in the church. He affirmed that these manifestations were only "a few droppings before the abundant latter rain."<sup>83</sup>

The opposition to and rejection of his views led him to secession from the official church. The fact that strong opposition came from those from whom he had expected support persuaded him that they were no longer Christians but part of Babylon.

### 3.4. The Millerite Understanding of the Latter Rain

Millerites believed that the work of the Spirit would be seen in the world in the progress of the preaching of the gospel. For them, the success in conversions was a clear indication that the Spirit was actively involved in the affairs of the church. In 1840, Miller affirmed that God had "poured out his Spirit in a remarkable manner, for twenty years past."<sup>84</sup> He asked: "What signs are now fulfilling, which are given us by Christ, the prophets, or apostles of his second coming and glorious reign?" He replied: "The pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and last reign of grace."<sup>85</sup> He understood that the spreading of the gospel "in a rapid and extensive manner" was an undeniable evidence of his presence in the church. Based on Rev 10:11 he believed that "the gospel must again be published ... as it had been in the apostolic days," because it would be after this "that [the] time should be no longer." In talking about James 5:7–8 he said:

And now, can any man, who has any knowledge of the present times, deny that God has poured out his spirit, in a remarkable manner, for twenty years past? Has not the gospel been spread in as rapid and extensive a manner, as in the apostolic day? Has not opposition and persecu-

<sup>81</sup> Irving, *The Day of Pentecost or The Baptism with the Holy Ghost*, 68.

<sup>82</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:462.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:464.

<sup>84</sup> William Miller, "A Lecture on the Signs of the Present Times," *Signs of the Times* (March 20, 1840): 4–5. See also *idem*, "Signs of the Present Times," *Midnight Cry* (December 17, 1842): 3.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, "A Lecture on the Signs of the Present Times," 4.

tion of the kings of the earth, of the woman that sitteth on many waters, the sea, been in a great measure kept in check and powerless, by some invisible power, some mighty arm, until the servants of God should be sealed, the latter rain of grace descend, and God's purposes completed concerning this latter day? Here, then, we have a clear and visible sign, that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.<sup>86</sup>

Millerites believed that they had a special role to play at the close of what they saw as eschatological times. They recognized that, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God was sealing his people and they saw themselves as God's chosen agency to carry forward the last warning to the world.

### 3.5. The Sabbatarian Adventist Understanding of the Latter Rain

It is interesting to note that from one of the branches of the Millerite movement, namely early Sabbatarian Adventists, a broader understanding of the latter rain and the gifts of the Spirit would emerge. It was here where Irving's ideas would be almost entirely replicated.

In 1847, three years after the great Adventist disappointment of October 22, 1844, James White published *A Word to the Little Flock*. In this pamphlet he expressed his conviction that at the end of time there would be a special manifestation of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

I conclude that there is not one Second Advent believer who will take the ground, that all of the prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; for there is not the least evidence that any part of it was then fulfilled, only that part which related to the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. ... Dreams and Visions are among the signs that precede the great and notable day of the Lord. And as the signs of that day have been, and still are fulfilling, it must be clear to every unprejudiced mind, that the time has fully come, when the children of God may expect dreams and visions from the Lord.<sup>87</sup>

White believed that the presence of the Holy Spirit would be a preparatory event for the second coming of Jesus. He understood that the timing for the "out-pouring of the Holy Ghost must take place before the second advent, to prepare us for the glory of that scene: for in our present state, none of us could stand a single moment before the brightness of that coming."<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>87</sup> James White, *A Word to the 'Little Flock'* (n.p., 1847), 13.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 7.



In May 1850, James White as the editor and publisher of *The Present Truth* introduced a dream that had been published in the *Advent Herald* two years before. Under the title, "Brother Miller's Dream" he pointed out that God had given that dream on behalf of the believers that had faced the disappointment. He affirmed that the gift of prophecy was "one of the gifts of the gospel church." He concluded that the manifestation of "dreams and visions [were] the medium through which God [had] revealed himself...in the last days."<sup>89</sup> In 1851, James White addressed the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the *Review*.<sup>90</sup> In this article he asked:

It is universally admitted that a portion of the gifts exist in the church at this day, such as "the word of wisdom," and "the word of knowledge," and no one denies that "pastors" and "teachers" were to be in the church until its perfection. Then if a portion of the gifts were to remain in the church, why not all of them remain? Why should the professed church of Christ pick out from that catalogue of gifts, so freely bestowed by the Great Head of the church, those that suit them best, and trample the others in the dust?<sup>91</sup>

James White was fully convinced that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were active in the church. In his view there was no biblical foundation for the assertion that the church could only have some of the gifts. He concluded: "it is therefore very evident that all the gifts run parallel with each other, none of them ending before the rest, and that they were to extend quite through the gospel age."<sup>92</sup> He also stated that the revival of them did not dismiss the authority of Scripture. He penned:

As all objections against the revival of the Gifts can be fully met, then we inquire, what is their object? Were they designed to take the place of the Word? Never! If the Gifts be revived, and the church receive instruction from them, will not this supersede the necessity of searching the Scriptures for truth and duty? No! Never! ... The revival of any, or of all the

<sup>89</sup> It is important to mention that, in this introduction, James White wrote the word "prophet" all with capital letters. This aspect is important because even though nobody would think that William Miller had the gift of prophecy this decision of James White (firstly, by publishing the dream and, secondly, by capitalizing the word prophet), was in harmony with his conviction that this gift would be manifested in the true church of God in the "last days." Cf. James White, "Brother Miller's Dream," *The Present Truth* (May 1850): 73.

<sup>90</sup> James White, "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," *Review and Herald* (April 21, 1851): 69. The importance of this issue among early Sabbatarian Adventists may be seen in the fact that this article would be reprinted in the *Review and Herald* in the issues of June 9, 1853, as well as on October 3, 1854. See also James White, "The Gifts, Their Object," *Review and Herald* (February 28, 1856): 172-73.

<sup>91</sup> James White, "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," 69.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

Gifts, will never supersede the necessity of searching the Word to learn the truth.<sup>93</sup>

A comparison of James White's understanding of the gifts of the Spirit with Irving's suggests that their hermeneutical approach to the Bible was the same. Moreover, it might also be possible that James White was well acquainted with some of his ideas, given the fact that several of the Scottish preacher's books, were part of the personal library of the Whites.<sup>94</sup>

### 3.6. Irving's Concept of Babylon

Edward Irving, as many other Protestants who employed historicist hermeneutics, identified the Roman Catholic Church with Babylon. However, he stretched this concept out further to include also the Protestant churches.

Edward Irving indeed believed that the Catholic Church was Babylon. Wilks emphasizes that, in his book *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*, Irving had identified "the Antichrist, or Babylon the Great, of the apostolic writings, with the Papacy, and [interpreted] the period of its duration as one thousand two hundred and three score years."<sup>95</sup> Irving believed that the influence of the Catholic Church had appalling consequences on the faith of the Europe of his days:

Look unto Catholic Europe, which hath fallen under the curse of God, because of the long series of cruelties and abominations transacted in that mystery of iniquity, Babylon the great, an abject priesthood, a people either of crouching devotees or regardless unbelievers, living either in the hotbed of a misguided superstition, or in the perfect callousness of confirmed Atheism.<sup>96</sup>

This understanding of Babylon, centered in one religious body, changed when Irving started to experience strong opposition for his eschatological

<sup>93</sup> James White, "The Gifts, Their Object," 172.

<sup>94</sup> The books written by Irving that were part of the White's library are: *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God: A Discourse on the Prophecies of Daniel and Apocalypse* (2 vols.; Glasgow: Chalmers & Collins, 1826); *For the Oracles of God: Four Orations. For Judgment to Come. An Argument in Nine Parts* (New York: J. F. Sibell, 1823); *Homilies on the Sacraments* (London: n.p., 1828); *The Last Days: A Discourse on the Evil Character of These Our Times* (London: R. B. Seeley, 1828); *The Rev. Edward Irving's Preliminary Discourse to the Work of Ben Ezra* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1859). Also they had the English version of the work of Manuel Lacunza, *The Coming of the Messiah*, translated by Irving, as well as Margaret Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving. Minister of the National Scotch Church, London* (2 vols.; London: Hurstand Blacket, 1862). Compare here Warren H. Jones, Tim Poirier, and Ron Graybill, compilers, *A Bibliography of Ellen G. White's Private and Office Libraries* (3rd ed.; Silver Springs: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 30, 34, 43.

<sup>95</sup> Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 181.

<sup>96</sup> Carlyle, *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, 3:155.

ideas.<sup>97</sup> He affirmed that the rejection of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church was a rejection of “what [could] reconstitute the Church of God” to its original state. He saw that the Spirit was being manifested to alert the church to its “Babylonish” state. Before the presbytery he said:

I sit down, solemnly declaring before you all, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, on the faith of a minister of Christ, that I believe it to be the work of the Holy Ghost, for the edifying of the Church, for the warning of the world, and for preventing men from running head long into the arms of Antichrist, and for pointing out that condition of Babylonish confusion into which the *churches* are come.<sup>98</sup>

At the end of his speech,<sup>99</sup> before the presbytery of London, Edward Irving had taken a strong stand against those who did not accept his views. He expressed his conviction by stating: “I do solemnly declare my belief that the Protestant Churches are in the state of Babylon as truly as is the Roman Church.”<sup>100</sup> After a conviction like this his next step was predictable. He decided to secede from the communion of the Presbyterian Scottish church. He explained his position in the following words:

And I do separate myself, and my flock standing in me, from that Babylonish confederacy, and stand in the Holy Ghost, and under the great Head of, the Church, waiting for His appearing, who shall come out of Zion a Deliverer, constituting no schism; but, as a minister believing his Lord is soon to appear, desiring and praying that his Church may, by the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, be made meet for His appearing. And with this hope and prospect, I still have great love for each of you, and desire you to know the same, and entreat you to come out from the Babylonish mixture, to come out of all carnal ordinances, from all human authority repressing you, and putting you in bondage to man’s devices, and preventing you from entering the promised land of the Spirit.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> See Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:461.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:461 [emphasis mine].

<sup>99</sup> His speech lasted more than four hours. See Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 225–29.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:462. The identification of the Protestant churches as Babylon was not a novel concept developed by Irving. It had been used before to refer to Protestant doctrinal deviations, Protestant persecutions and Protestant political issues. See Froom, *The Prophetic Faith*, 4:767–70. What was really novel in Irving’s understanding is his view that God’s giving of the Holy Spirit in his days was a signal of the nearness of Jesus’ second coming. For him, the rejection of such a signal by the church implied that they were a “Babylonish confederacy” and consequently he and his “flock” had to go out in order to wait for “[His [Jesus’] appearance.”

<sup>101</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:462.

In 1830, Edward Irving had "quietly withdrawn from the Presbytery ... permitting it to judge him a heretic."<sup>102</sup> Now in 1832, and having submitted again to a new trial before the Presbytery of London, he was declared unfit to be a minister of the Scottish church.<sup>103</sup> This meeting marked his definitive withdrawal from the Scottish Presbyterian communion. The next day, when he and his adherents came for their regular early prayer meeting, they found the church locked as a clear sign that he was not anymore the minister of the Caledonian church.<sup>104</sup> Without any physical place for their regular meetings they congregated for a while in a room in Gray's Inn Road. "In the beginning of autumn" they found a large picture gallery in Newman Street that would fit well for the new congregation. Early in 1833, the Presbytery of Annan "called Irving before its bar to answer the charge of holding the heretical doctrine of 'the sinfulness of our Lord's human nature.'"<sup>105</sup> As a result of this trial Edward Irving was deposed as minister of the Scottish church in the same place where "he had been baptized and ordained."<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 227. Irving summarizes the outcome of this trial by suggesting that they "have condemned my writings, excommunicated me from their body, and recommended their sentence to be read from the pulpits." Quoted in Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:161.

<sup>103</sup> "This was but the first step of Mr. Irving's ecclesiastical punishment; for, though deprived of his church, his standing as a minister of the Church of Scotland was still untouched." For a reading of the charges against Irving see *ibid.*, 2:291-98.

<sup>104</sup> Oliphant says: "The next morning, in the early May sunshine, before the world was half awake, the daily congregation gathering to their matins, found the gates of the church closed upon them." When the trustees were requested to open the church "they refused to do so, on the ground that, as they could not conscientiously join with Edward themselves, they would thereby be deprived, under the provisions of the trust-deed, from having a voice in the election of a future minister." Cf. *ibid.*, 2:300, 301.

<sup>105</sup> In this point it is important to make a clarification. Edward Irving never accepted the doctrine of the sinfulness of Jesus' human nature. In fact, during his trial before the Presbytery of Annan he protested to the bar against such accusation. He begged them not to depose him under a false accusation. A witness of the event wrote out Irving's protest: "I object, not for my own sake, but for the sake of Christ my Lord, whom I serve and honour. I object for your sakes, ... I object for the Church's sake." He continues: "Again solemnly declared that he did not hold the sinfulness of the human nature of Christ [...] and concluded by most earnestly beseeching the Presbytery, as they valued the salvation of their souls, not to pass sentence upon him." Quoted in *ibid.*, 2:348. In the end, it seems that the reasons for his trial and final deposition from the Scottish church were more ecclesiastical than theological.

<sup>106</sup> Anonymous, "The Life of Edward Irving," 324. Derek Vreeland presumes the participation of the Presbytery of Annan, pointing out: "In March 1833, the Church of Scotland in Irving's hometown of Annan charged him with heresy regarding Irving's doctrine of the 'sinfulness of our Lord's human nature.' The London Presbytery had already rendered a judgment condemning Irving as a heretic although they lacked the



What follows his deposition of the ministry of the Scottish church is both surprising and painful and is beyond the scope of this study. Some time later, Irving was re-ordained in Newman Street by the "Apostolic hands of Mr. Cardale" and served in the office of the 'Angel' of the church, always submitting to the "inspired."<sup>107</sup> In 1834, at the age of 42 and while repeating Psalm 23 in Hebrew, Edward Irving expired. It was only after his death that Irving would receive the recognition he had lost while alive.<sup>108</sup>

### 3.7. The Millerite Concept of Babylon

Millerites had generally, and "especially during the early years of their movement," also identified Babylon as the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>109</sup> In spite of this conviction, Catholics that accepted the Millerite message were welcomed into the ranks of the Millerites.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, it was the resistance and hard opposition to their message from some of the Protestants that convinced them that their understanding of this concept had to be expanded.

In the summer of 1843, Charles Fitch "preached what became one of the most famous Millerite sermons."<sup>111</sup> Based on Revelation 18:1-5 and 14:8 he

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ecclesiastical authority to remove his ordination. Irving was ordained by the Church of Scotland in Annan, therefore the Presbytery that convened there had the authority to revoke Irving's ordination." See Derek Vreeland, "Edward Irving: Preacher, Prophet & Charismatic Theologian." Cited 7 March 2007. Online: [http:// www.pneumafoundation.com/resources/articles/EIrving.pdf](http://www.pneumafoundation.com/resources/articles/EIrving.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> The reviewer of Mrs. Oliphant's biography of Edward Irving mentions that Irving was not the leader of any sect. He points out: "To suppose him to be the leader in all matters is quite contrary to the fact. All the authority he had in the sect, all the responsibility with which he can be justly charged respecting it, begin and end with the time when he gave it out at his conviction that the 'tongues' were the utterances of the Holy Ghost." Cf. anonymous, "The Life of Edward Irving," 325.

<sup>108</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2:402-3, writes: "They buried him in the crypt of Glasgow Cathedral. ... He was followed to that noble vault by all that was good and pious in Glasgow, some of his close personal friends, and many of his immediate followers, mingling in the train with the sober members of Dr. Chalmers's agency, and 'most of the clergy of the city', men who disapproved his faith while living, but grudged him not now the honour due to the holy dead. The great town itself thrilled with an involuntary movement of sorrow. 'Every other consideration' says the Scottish Guardian, a paper at all times doubly orthodox, 'was forgotten, in the universal and profound sympathy with which the information was received' and all voices uniting to proclaim over him that divine consolatory verdict of the Spirit, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'"

<sup>109</sup> P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 46-47.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>111</sup> Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*, 154.

invited the people to come out of Babylon. He believed that “whoever is opposed to the PERSONAL REIGN of Jesus Christ over this world on David’s throne is ANTICHRIST; for though he may admit that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, he is opposed to the object for which he came, and therefore must be Antichrist.”<sup>112</sup> He asked: “who, then, is opposed to the personal reign of Christ on David’s throne?” His reply reflects the primary soul of Millerism on this issue because he pointed to the Catholic Church. His argument was:

The primitive church believed in the personal reign of Christ, and looked and longed for it, and waited for his appearing, and loved it as the apostles had done before them. Justin Martyr, one of the primitive Christians, declares that this was the faith in which all the orthodox in the primitive church agreed. But when the papacy came into power, they concluded to have Christ reign, not personally, but spiritually, and hence the Pope entered into the stead of Christ, and undertook to rule the world for him—claiming to be God’s vicegerent on earth. Inasmuch, therefore, as the Papists wish to retain their power, we find them all opposed to Christ’s coming to establish a personal reign.<sup>113</sup>

Fitch affirmed that Protestants had also denied the physical appearing of Jesus. This fact likewise places them in the band of the Antichrist and Babylon. He stated that Protestant churches were

... willing to rule the world, as the Papists have done, FOR Christ; but no one of them is willing to have Christ come in person to rule the world for himself, while they take their place at his feet, to do his bidding; nor are they willing to listen for a moment to what the Bible says respecting Christ's personal coming.<sup>114</sup>

He moved forward in his reasoning affirming that “inasmuch as all these multiplied sects are opposed to the plain Bible truth of Christ’s personal reign on earth, THEY ARE ANTI-CHRIST.”<sup>115</sup> Fitch argued that to come out of Babylon is “to be converted to the true scriptural doctrine of the personal coming and kingdom of Christ; to receive the truth on this subject with all readiness of mind.”<sup>116</sup> George R. Knight affirms that through this sermon “Fitch had provided his fellow advent believers with a theological rationale for separating from the churches.”<sup>117</sup> He includes an interesting interpretation of this call:

<sup>112</sup> Charles Fitch, *Come Out of Her, My People* (Rochester: J. V. Himes, 1843), 9.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 [emphasis his].

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>117</sup> Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*, 155.

In one sense, that rationale was a response to the times. After all, large numbers of Millerites were being thrown out of their churches, while others were being shut out from giving the message that was at the center of their being and Christian experience. It was only natural for them to conclude that those who opposed them also opposed Christ. The hostile action of the churches merely confirmed the Adventist's interpretation of them as anti-Christian.<sup>118</sup>

Millerites, like Irving, had denounced established religious bodies as Babylon. This new understanding of the concept came as a reaction to what they believed was a voluntary and conscious rejection of one specific biblical truth, namely, the second coming of Jesus. This understanding of Babylon would find its way some years later into the ranks of early Sabbatarian Adventism.<sup>119</sup> However, this view centered in one doctrine would evolve as a result of further theological development.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> John Bates assigned the fall of Babylon to the events of 1843–1844. He said: "Where is the history for the fulfillment of this event? We answer. Just where it ought to be, following in its order, and no where else. When this subject first began to be introduced in 1843, the most of the professed nominal Churches had closed their doors against the Second Advent doctrine, and began to treat the message with scorn and contempt." Cf. Joseph Bates, "Third Waymark, the Fall of Babylon," *Advent Review* (November 1850): 66.

<sup>120</sup> In 1851, James White wrote: "The Catholic Church is said to be a unit; but Babylon signifies confusion, mixture. The Catholic Church abstractly has its seat at Rome; but Babylon has her seat upon many waters. The woman, which is the great city, called Babylon, symbolizes the fallen apostate churches." See James White, "The Beast With Seven Heads," *Review and Herald* (August 5, 1851): 3. In 1854, John N. Andrews defined Babylon in a broader way, including other religious bodies. He wrote: "We do not limit the Babylon of the Apocalypse to the gospel dispensation, nor do we confine its existence during this dispensation to any one of the corrupt bodies of nominal professors which have arisen since the apostasy. On the contrary, we understand that all the corrupt religious bodies which ever have existed, or which exist at the present time, united to the world, and sustained by the civil power, constitute the Babylon of John's vision, which shall be thrown down as a mill-stone is cast into the mighty deep ... Babylon must include the Jewish church. ... In this great system we understand that the corrupt Papal and Greek churches occupy a large space, and act an important part." He follows by presenting also the "Protestant church as a part of Babylon." Cf. John N. Andrews, "What is Babylon?" *Review and Herald* (February 21, 1854): 36. In 1862, Uriah Smith asked, "What is Babylon?" Then he provided the following answer: "The figure is taken from the ancient city of Babylon; and that took its name from the confusion of tongues which there took place; hence we understand that by this symbol is meant the great mass of confused and corrupt Christianity, 'Whose creeds are various as her costly towers.' Her fall was a moral fall, caused by rejecting the vivifying truths of the first message, or great advent proclamation." Cf. Uriah Smith, "Thoughts on the Revelation," *Review and Herald* (November 18, 1862): 197. For a better understanding of the development of this concept among early Sabbatarian Adventists see

The troubles Edward Irving underwent as a result of his millenarianism set a kind of pattern that Millerism would almost entirely replicate some years later. For instance, George R. Knight describes the opposition Millerites had to face in "both congregations and denominations," as a result of their agitation on the subject of the end of the world. The hostility took "at least" three forms:

The first one was that an increasingly larger number of congregations forbade the Millerites to hold services in their buildings as the time of the end approached. ... The second form of resistance to Millerism ... [was the] revoking [of] church membership of adventists because they would not be quiet about their beliefs. ... The third form of resistance to Millerism ... was the expulsion of preachers who had accepted the advent doctrine.<sup>121</sup>

The similarities of some of the theological positions of the Millerites in America with those of Edward Irving suggest that their common approach to the Scriptures had led them to similar conclusions. Since they had shared the same hermeneutical method, their understanding of eschatology, the latter rain, and the broader concept of Babylon would become almost the same. However, similarities in the expression and formulation of Millerite ideas suggests an even more direct link to Edward Irving.

#### 4. Summary and Conclusion

The Scottish preacher Edward Irving was a key protagonist in the development of millenarian thought and should be taken into account when trying to understand Millerism as the foremost representative of American millenarianism. The conviction that he was living on the edge of a new order shaped his millenarianism and gave a new perspective to his understanding of the doctrines of eschatology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology. This study has shown that Irving's approach to these doctrines would be replicated some years later among the Millerites.

Irving and the Millerites shared the same eschatological concerns. They saw the Second Coming of Jesus as an imminent event. Their interpretation of the prophetic dates in Daniel and Revelation led them to the same conclusions. Both understood in a similar way the role of the Ottomans in prophecy. The connection of the role of the Turkish Empire as indicating the nearness of Jesus' coming is unique to both parties. Before Irving, Bible

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Samuel Kibungei Chermutoi, "James White and J. N. Andrews' Debate on the Identity of Babylon, 1850–1868" (M.A. thesis, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2005).

<sup>121</sup> Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*, 148–49.



interpreters had seen the Ottoman power in prophecy. However, the prediction of their fall, as preparing the way for Armageddon in their own days, is something unique in prophetic interpretation. The basic difference between Irving and Miller was in the date marking the beginning of these prophecies.

Second, Irving and Miller shared the conviction that before the Second Coming there would be a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They refer to this event as the outpouring of the latter rain. This concept was later incorporated into the eschatological language of what would become one of the main branches of Millerism, i.e., Sabbatarian Adventism. Concerning this point, it is noteworthy to observe that Irving's belief in the presence of the gifts at the end of time and that of early Adventists is almost the same. Both groups saw the eschatological fulfillment of Joel 2:28–29 in their own days.

Third, strong opposition to the doctrine of the soon coming of Jesus led Irving, and later also the Millerites, to the denunciation of the churches as fallen. They affirmed that in order to be ready to meet Jesus they had to leave the religious bodies that strongly opposed their convictions. Circumstances led them in this direction. The inclusion of Protestant churches within the realm of Babylon was not novel to them. What was new for both Irving and the Millerites was the fact that their "come outerims" is essentially connected to the rejection of the belief in the nearness of the second coming of Jesus.

When Irving died in 1834, Miller was just beginning his preaching ministry in America. To what extent the latter borrowed from Irving's conclusions is not clear. However, it is difficult to believe that Miller's ideas were completely original. As Sandeen points out, it would be "ironic to argue for Miller's independence of mind only to demonstrate that he came independently to conclusions virtually identical to the British."<sup>122</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, "Millennialism," in *The Rise of Adventism* (ed. Edwin S Gaustad; New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 110.