



Lambeth Palace Library Research Guide

Catholic Apostolic Church





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The Catholic Apostolic Church Collection

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1 Introduction

The Catholic Apostolic Church collection was presented to Lambeth Palace Library by the Right Reverend Dr. Kenneth Stevenson (9th November 1949 - 12th January 2011) in 2009. It was a generous and welcome gift of an unusual and special collection. The collection arrived at Lambeth in June 2009 and was not fully catalogued until October 2011. Online records are now available for the entire collection via the Lambeth Palace Library [catalogue](#) and [COPAC](#) and readily available for anyone searching for the whole collection or individual titles.

In early 2009, Kenneth Stevenson approached Richard Palmer, the then Librarian of Lambeth Palace Library, about presenting to the library a collection of materials concerning Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church movement. He anticipated that his imminent retirement as the Bishop of Portsmouth would require a considerable downsizing of his personal library, including the books and attractively bound sets of pamphlets relating to the Catholic Apostolic Church that he had amassed over the years and which he thought would be of interest to Lambeth Palace Library readers. Much of the material originally came from the Catholic Apostolic Church, Mansfield Place, Edinburgh, where Kenneth Stevenson's grandfather, William Reid Stevenson (1849-1923) had been Angel in the concluding years of his life. Kenneth Stevenson was fortunate to have received many of the valuable books from the library housed there when it was dispersed in the 1960s.

Kenneth Stevenson was brought up in the Catholic Apostolic community. His family, particularly his father and grandfather, were heavily involved in the Church - his father's family through the Catholic Apostolic Church in Scotland, and his mother's through the Danish branch of the Church. Although the community is now defunct, there still exist trustees, money and buildings, which remain very secretive with no access granted to those outside the community. There is possibly still a considerable archive held at the Apostles' Chapel in Albury, although gaining access may prove very difficult. It was only through his family's involvement that Kenneth Stevenson



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was granted access to archival materials still held by the community when writing his PhD thesis on the Catholic Apostolic Eucharist. The Church's secrecy is the main reason for the sheer scarcity of available research materials. The papers of Father Columba Flegg, a larger collection of Catholic Apostolic materials, is held by St. Andrew's University Library, but the collection now housed at Lambeth Palace Library is believed to be the next largest and most comprehensive selection of materials.

It is hoped that this collection will prove to be a useful tool for researchers in all kinds of ways, particularly those studying Irving's Christology, which is still considerably admired, or the way that the Catholic Apostolic Church combined Catholic and charismatic strands in the rich blending of different sources throughout its services. The collection is an important historical resource, in an area where there is a scarcity of readily available material and one which Lambeth Palace Library was most grateful to receive.

2 The Catholic Apostolic Church

The Catholic Apostolic Church was a religious movement which originated in England around 1831 and later spread to Germany and the United States. While often referred to as Irvingism, it was in fact not founded by Edward Irving (1792-1834). His relationship to the Catholic Apostolic community was, according to its members, more in keeping with that of John the Baptist to the early Christian Church. He was hailed by his followers as the forerunner of a coming dispensation and not the founder of a new sect. The primary concern of the new congregation was the immediate second coming of Christ and the restoration of perfect institutions by "apostles" was viewed as the necessary preparation of the whole church for this event. The doctrines of achievable personal holiness, attainable universal salvation, the true spiritual unity of all baptized persons, the possibility of rapture without dying, and the necessity of the fourfold ministry directed by apostles for perfecting the Church as a whole, formed the cornerstones of the new theology.

Prior to the Catholic Apostolic movement, there had been renewed interest in the prayer movement of the 1820s, generated by the Anglican priest James Haldane Stewart. He produced more than half a million pamphlets, which spread throughout Great Britain, the United States and Europe, calling for renewed spiritual power. At the same time, the Scottish Presbyterian John Macleod Campbell was preaching in Scotland that Christ died, in principle, for all believers and not only for a small group of the elect, in contrast to standard Church of Scotland doctrine. Edward Irving, a minister in the Church of Scotland and supporter of Campbell, preached in his London church on the impending return of Jesus Christ and the real substance of his human nature. Within the first few months of taking up a position in London, Irving had experienced a precipitous rise to fame – his unorthodox appearance and the affected, overly grand language dismissed by Scottish congregations early in his career had found their mark with the upper echelons of London society, who embraced his style as a unique combination of profound scholarship and prophetic



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fury. Gradually however, his popularity began to wane, in part due to his uncompromising position on many religious issues which aroused hostility and his tendency towards overly long sermons. His fame as a preacher began to fade – his congregation remained large but many of his more famous (and wealthier) members had departed.

Irving found himself drawn to Henry Drummond's annual conferences at the latter's Albury estate, studying unfulfilled Biblical prophecy. Participants included, amongst others: Irving, Joseph Wolff (a missionary traveller), Hugh McNeill (the rector of Albury), J. Hatley Frere (a commentator on the Apocalypse), Spencer Perceval (the son of the former Prime Minister), and John Tudor (the Secretary of the Prophetic Society). Following the conferences, Drummond and Irving co-edited *Dialogues on Prophecy* (1827), which contained important pre-millennial conclusions. By the late 1820's, Irving was emerging as a leading voice in the pre-millennial movement in British evangelicalism, predicting that the world was sinking into an irredeemable state of evil and confusion which would culminate in the destruction of the church and the return of Christ, followed by the last judgement and the end of the world.

Early in 1828, allegations of heresy were raised against Irving for his teachings concerning the human nature of Christ. Controversy waged in the press and formal charges were finally brought against him in 1830, in front of the London presbytery. After a trial, he was found guilty but refused to accept the London presbytery's authority to depose him, insisting that it did not represent the Church of Scotland. He separated his church from the London presbytery and continued in his ministry. Around this time, reports reached Irving of strange manifestations in the West Highland parish of Rhu, whose minister (John Macleod Campbell) was a friend. Campbell's parishioners had experienced an outbreak of prophesying, faith healing and speaking in tongues, as individuals claimed they were exhibiting gifts of the Spirit. Though initially sceptical, Irving came to be convinced, through his assistant minister, that such manifestation was a sign of the impending second coming and urged his London congregation to pray for a similar return of spiritual gifts. Spiritual phenomena did begin to appear throughout 1831, but caused distress to many in the congregation. Initially Irving suppressed such outbursts, but after reflection allowed what he believed to be genuine expressions of the Holy Spirit during regular service. Over the course of the next two years, his congregation experienced charismatic utterances which called for the restoration of apostles and were guided by claimed words of prophecy.

Campbell and Alexander Scott (Irving's assistant) were charged and eventually deposed in the Scottish Church Assembly for their Christological teachings. The same Assembly also condemned Irving's views and initiated proceedings for another trial, to be brought against him this time before the presbytery of Annan. Shortly after the trial and his subsequent deposition, in 1833, Irving restarted meetings in a hired hall in London, and much of his original congregation followed him. This congregation became known as the "Central Church", one of seven in London that were said to form a pattern of the whole Christian Church. Irving came to be designated an Angel of this new Church, which emerged from Drummond's Albury conferences and



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Irving's teachings. Six members of the community were designated as apostles by others who claimed prophetic gifts. Some months after Irving's death in 1835, six more apostles were similarly appointed to complete the number of the twelve.

The final twelve apostles were: John Bate Cardale, Henry Drummond, Henry King-Church, Spencer Perceval, Nicholas Armstrong, Francis Valentine Woodhouse, Henry Dalton, John O. Tudor, Thomas Carlyle, Francis Sitwell, William Dow, and Duncan Mackenzie. The following account has been given of them:

Classed by their religious position, eight of them were members of the Church of England; three of the Church of Scotland; and one of the Independents. Classed by their occupations and social positions, three were clergymen, three were members of the Bar, three belonged to the gentry, two of them being members of Parliament; and of the remaining three, one was an artist, one a merchant, and one held the post of Keeper of the Tower. Some of them were of the highest standing socially and politically, some of them of great ability as scholars and theologians; and all of them men of unblemished character, soundness in the faith, and abundant zeal in all Christian labors.

Apostles were the conveyors of the Holy Spirit and the authoritative interpreters of prophetic utterance, acting in concert as the source of doctrine. Together with the seven congregations in London, they formed what was known as the Universal Church. They retired to Albury to set in order the worship and prepare a "Testimony" of their work. This was presented to the spiritual and temporal rulers throughout Christendom in 1836, beginning with an appeal to the bishops of the Church of England, then in a more comprehensive form to the Pope and other leaders, including the Emperor of Austria-Hungary, the Tsar of Russia, the Kings of France, Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden, and King William IV of England. The apostles asserted that the Church was the body of all that had been baptized, laying aside all divisions between Christians. They also stated that the Apostolate had been restored in order to prepare the whole body of Christianity for the second coming of Christ, and called upon all clergy and lay authorities to recognize this and submit to the self-appointed apostles. Following the more or less complete rejection of their Testimony, the apostles set up congregations to look after those who had accepted them and had been excluded from their habitual places of worship. In the 1850s, clergy of the Church of England were invited to come and see what had been set up, but nothing came of this venture.

The ministry was exclusively male, on the grounds of men's authority over women as laid down in Genesis. Ministers had to be called by the word of prophecy; this was elective, in that frequent opportunity was given to present oneself as willing to take on a role in the ministry, and also that the call could be refused, though in practice this was extremely rare. All ministers had to be ordained by the apostles or their delegates. Three grades of ordained ministry were recognized: Angel/Bishop, Priest/Elder, and Deacon. Each rank had different vestments to differentiate their



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function. All grades were allowed to preach sermons and homilies, although all sermons were referred to the apostles in order to ensure that the teachings were in accordance with the Bible, revealed truth, and the apostles' doctrine.

An angel was in charge of only one congregation, though others might be under his care until they could receive of their own angel. The term "angel" was used as in Revelations: 2-3, "a bishop who has been ordained by an Apostle". All angels received a small salary and were "separated", in that they had no other work to support them. While angels had full authority within their congregations, it was expected that having received the apostles, they would acknowledge apostolic oversight, doctrine and forms of worship. Each angel could have one assisting "coadjutor" who would also be of the rank of angel. At least six priests helped the angel in the services although there were frequently many more than six. Each would have the oversight of particular members or areas. The six priests were separated and received stipends. They might also have helpers who were also of the rank of priest. The diaconship was particularly set up to look after the monetary affairs of the congregation, help the laity with regular visits and advice, and take part in evangelism. Seven were set up in each full congregation and there would be one helper who was also a deacon. Deacons were not separated and each had in general his own source of income outside of the Church. They were also not identified by word of prophecy but elected by the congregations.

The ministry was supported by tithes in addition to the free-will offerings for the support of the place of worship and for the relief of distress. Each local church sent a portion of its tithes to the apostles, by which the ministers of the Universal Church were supported and its administrative expenses met; by these offerings, too, the needs of poorer churches were supplied. There was no collection during the service, but a trunk with various compartments for the different types of offerings was placed at the entrance to the church. They were generally divided into tithes, general offerings, thank-offerings, offerings for the upkeep of the church, the poor, and support for the universal ministry. Uniquely this trunk was left untouched until the presentation of the offerings during the Eucharist on Sundays, when it would be emptied and counted in a vestry by two deacons during part of the service, before a prayer of dedication was pronounced. Distribution of money to the poor, not just members, was regularly practiced, although each family or person living alone within a congregation was under the care of the ministry, to whom they were encouraged to seek out if in need of advice or help, temporal and financial as well as spiritual.

For the services of the church a comprehensive book of liturgies and offices was provided by the apostles, who were directed to travel through Christendom, to visit all parts of Christianity and Christian worship, and search for the correct forms; the form and content of worship was not to be the result of arbitrary choice but through interpretation of the Bible. Although many forms and prayers were taken from different parts of the Church, many had to be written by the apostles since they did not exist elsewhere; about two thirds of the liturgy was original. Cardale put together two large volumes of writings, entitled *Readings on the Liturgy*, a history of the liturgy and explanation of some of the rituals. The first impression of *The Liturgy and other*



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Divine Offices of the Church dates from 1842 and includes elements from the Anglican, Roman, and Greek liturgies as well as original work. Lights, incense, vestments, holy water, chrism, and other adjuncts of worship were in constant use. The community laid great stress on symbolism, and the Eucharist, while rejecting transubstantiation and consubstantiation, held strongly to a real (mystical) presence. It emphasized also the phenomena of Christian experience and deemed miracle and mystery to be essential in a spirit-filled church. The forms of worship and the liturgy developed until the 1860s, as special services were added.

Inspired by manifestations of the Spirit and miraculous healings, the numbers of those who accepted the apostles throughout the world grew. However, when the last apostle (Frances Valentine Woodhouse) died in 1901 without an appearance of the 'Light of the World', the Catholic Apostolic Church declined; since ordination was only possible with apostolic consent, no further consecrations to the ministry could be made. External evangelism, common since the beginning in 1835, ceased at the same time, and all services were reduced to a shorter form, even in congregations where the full ministry was operating. The last Angel died in 1960 in Siegen, Germany; the last Priest in 1971 in London, England; the last Deacon in 1972 in Melbourne, Australia and in modern times, the Church has entered a period of silence.

3 The Collection at Lambeth Palace Library

The collection includes many bound pamphlets about Edward Irving and his theology, contemporary controversies, and the formation of the Church, as well as teachings and sermons after its formation. These were assembled by John Miller, a priest in the Edinburgh Church in the 1920s. Although much of the material was published anonymously, wherever possible, Kenneth Stevenson has sought to indicate authorship and has provided a copy of *Copinger's Bibliography*, an invaluable source of published material and biographical detail, to aid researchers in identifying possible authors of unattributed works.

There are also books published by the Church such as John Bate Cardale's *Readings on the Liturgy, The Church and Tabernacle*, considered the standard work about the life and worship of the Church and much praised even by detractors of the Universal Church. Robert Norton's *Restoration of Apostles and Prophets* sets out to explain why members of the Church of England might be drawn to the new church. Also notable amongst the numerous items written by influential members of the community are Irving's first book, *The Oracles of God and the Judgment to Come*, a plea for heartfelt religion, written at a time when he was beginning to take a leading role in religious controversies of the day, and Thomas Carlyle's major works *Pleading with my mother, the Church in Scotland* (included in his *Collected writings*) and his *Short History of the Apostolic Works*. Drummond was perhaps the most prolific author within the community, producing 140 works on ecclesiastical subjects, many of which are available through the collection. Remarkable amongst them were: *Tracts for Last Days* (1844); *Abstract Principles of Revealed Religion* (1845); *Elements of the Christian Religion* (1845); and *Discourses on the True Definition of the Church*



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(1858). Drummond's writings put forward the Church's views on the contemporary apostasy of the churches, the second coming of Christ, the need for renewal, and its progress under the new apostles. His son-in-law (Lord Lovaine, later 6th Duke of Northumberland) also published two volumes of Drummond's parliamentary speeches in 1860.

Perhaps most interestingly, the collection includes a comprehensive selection of the various editions of the Catholic Apostolic "*Liturgy and other divine offices of the Church*", starting with the English editions from 1842 until the definite edition in 1880. There are also early Scottish editions, French, German, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish language editions, and the special edition for the German speaking congregation of Switzerland. There are also copies of hymn books and some church music as well as several copies of the *Testimony* drawn up by the collective apostles for presentation to spiritual and temporal rulers of Christendom.

More recent books about the Church include detailed chronicles of the origins and development of all the Churches that existed in the former Greater Germany, one of the few areas outside England where the Church could be said to have found a real measure of success and where the Church's influence remains quite strong. There are also copies of the Right Reverend Dr. Kenneth Stevenson's PhD thesis concerning the various forms of the Eucharist, and Paul Roberts' PhD thesis on the rights of initiation, both of which also expand most helpfully on the early development of the Church and refer to other materials available within the collection. The appendices to Kenneth Stevenson's thesis may be of particular interest to researchers, as they include drawings of the vestments worn by various ministers and the positions taken during various stages of the Eucharist.

4 Archival Resources

- Columba Flegg collection at St. Andrew's University (<http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb227ms38594>)
- UCL Bloomsbury Project (b/c the church was there and many prominent members lived nearby) (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/index.htm>)

There are a some [references to the Church among the archival collections at Lambeth Palace Library](#).

See also the National Register of Archives: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra

5 Further Reading

- C.G. Flegg: *Gathered Under Apostles; A Study of the Catholic Apostolic Church*; Oxford, 1992.
- Edward Miller: *The History and Doctrines of Irvingism or of the so-called Catholic Apostolic Church in two vols. - Vol. I & II*; (C. Kegan Paul & Co.) London, 1878.



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- A.L. Drummond: *Edward Irving and his Circle*; London, 1934.
- P.E. Shaw: *The Catholic Apostolic Church, sometimes called Irvingite (A Historical Study)*; New York, 1946.
- Rowland A. Davenport: *Albury Apostles*; London, 1973; translated as *Albury Apostel*; (Oculi Verlag) Hannover, 2004.