

## 'UP, UP AND AWAY': PENTECOSTAL PREACHING AND THE MANIC DEFENCE

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### 1. Changes in preaching over five decades in Australia

A slice of the history of the Assemblies of God in Australia can be seen in two early magazines: *Glad Tidings Messenger* and *The Australian Evangel* which later amalgamated. Almost any Pentecostal journal lasting a number of decades will reflect changes in the wider church. There is a record of sermons by great preachers from overseas principally England in the early years and later the USA, but perhaps most interesting is the record of local preachers many of whom were women. The magazines also contained testimonies of healing, opinions on doctrinal controversies, and reports of the growth of the movement. Naturally distinctive beliefs such as 'Baptism in the Spirit' are explained, with a kind of creedal emphasis, and there is the occasional mention of a modernist (usually educated at a prestigious university) being converted (to Pentecostal faith). It is a valuable record of a vital spirituality finding a range of manifestations in the less than welcoming social environment of Australia.

I set out to note some indications of a change in Pentecostal preaching in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This is clear in how broadly psychological concerns are addressed. However, with the exception of melancholy in the early decades there is hardly any use of psychological terms until about twenty years ago.

In general I was surprised and generally impressed with the content of sermons that indicated a healthy balance in dealing with psychological issues. In an early issue of the *Messenger* E. Williams (1935) preached on the 'Valley of Baca', and noted:

The way to the celestial city leads the Christian pilgrim through many valleys, one of which is the Valley of Baca.

The word 'Baca' means weeping. Jesus wept, Paul wept, Jeremiah was the weeping prophet and all good people have wept. Life brings with it many sorrows. But we must not too long remain in the Valley of Baca. The blessed man is he who is but 'passing through'.

There was an acceptance of broadly negative emotions including sadness, regret, melancholy, distrust and doubt (which are listed). The preacher went on to encourage the listener to find the divine blessing 'that God wishes us to find there' and then move on. There is a realistic recognition that the faithful will suffer in this life, but later receive an eternal reward. This emphasis is typical of early fundamentalism which arguably can be seen as healthy in affirming the common experience of suffering.

The next decade was overshadowed by a global war. Naturally this was not a context in which emotions can be readily ignored. Weakness is an opportunity for Divine strength. Zelma Argue (1945) encouraged her listeners to realize that in hours of exhaustion, weariness, trial, sorrow and fear 'God has to get us where we truly look to him'.<sup>3</sup> Suffering was accepted within a Christian world view. Dr Jerrett (1943) recalled the decline of his wife with cancer over '13 weeks of suffering' but God sustained him and his family.<sup>4</sup>

The vivid experience of 'Baptism in the Spirit' led to strength in suffering. There was witness to a present experience of the reality of God, but the theological refinement of inaugurated eschatology with its dialectical tension of the 'already' and 'not yet' of the Kingdom of God was not articulated. Good Friday is allowed to be Good Friday without rushing on to Easter.

There were many changes to Australian Pentecostalism in the wake of WW2. This included a greater exposure to believers from the USA who came as soldiers on R&R. Healing evangelists and conference speakers came in the 1950's. Perhaps this contributed to something of a change in the preaching of the 1960's. I could be over highlighting a contrast with the 'Valley of Baca', but E. M. Irish (1963) preached a message 'On the mountain top!!' (yes, two exclamation marks). This

<sup>1</sup> E. Williams, 'Valley of Baca', *Glad Tidings Messenger* 1.4 (Feb 1935), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, 'Valley of Baca', 5.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Argue, 'Out of Weakness we are made Strong', *The Australian Evangel and Glad Tidings Messenger* (Feb 1945), 21.

<sup>4</sup> H. Jerrett, 'This Sickness for God's Glory', *Glad Tidings Messenger* 9.8 (July 1943), 19-23.

preacher listed the benefits of ascending the mountain 'we can rejoice in the Lord for that he has appointed us to a mountain top experience in his grace and blessing!!'<sup>5</sup> There was more than a trace of positive thinking in a sermon by G. Rowlands (1964), since if we have a 'thought pattern of defeat we are defeated'<sup>6</sup>. There was mention of the renewing of the mind 'it will take effort and will power. It demands discipline and purpose. However we can do it and God will give us all the help that we need.' (p. 10) Slowly there was a greater recognition of what might be loosely termed psychological states but not with psychological language or diagnoses. For example, there was a description of a woman clearly depressed 'food tasted like saw dust, nights were long; days were hard' with the message to push on. This woman said to her friend, 'The feet go on even though the heart stands still for a while.'" It is interesting to note a shift to the denial of negative feelings in a sermon by F. J. Miles (1965). His theme was joy. He challenged the common view of Jeremiah as a weeping prophet, instead Jeremiah stood for righteousness.<sup>8</sup> This might be a reflection of the prosperity and social stability of the previous decade. Perhaps even a greater optimism which was evident in the sermons. But I think it is more likely that a form of preaching emerged that was impatient with suffering and anything less than being victorious in Christ.

Stan Hunt (1973) wrote an article 'Bad Nerves', clearly relevant to some kind of psychological disorder, in which he described depression (without using the term). He even acknowledged that 'Christians can benefit from professional help and guidance'. However, negative thinking needed correction, 'We need to stop every day and deliberately put out every negative or unkind thought, exchanging them for positive and love thoughts'.<sup>9</sup> In some ways this was a sensitive, if somewhat spiritualized, response to depression. It was becoming more common to find the expression of a formula for healing. Percy Brewster (1973) stated: 'There is nothing mystical about divine healing. It is the gift of God, like salvation, and we appropriate it through simple faith. What

<sup>5</sup> E. M. Irish, 'On the Mountain Top!!', *The Australian Evangel* 20.5 (May, 1963), 10.

<sup>6</sup> G. Rowlands, 'Be ye Transformed', *The Australian Evangel* 21.4 (April 1964), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Annon, 'Permission and Power', *The Australian Evangel*, 21.4 (1964), 22.

<sup>8</sup> F. J. Miles, 'Jeremiah, Jesus and Joy', *The Australian Evangel* 22.4 (April 1965), 12-13.

<sup>9</sup> Stan Hunt, 'Bad Nerves', *The Australian Evangel* 30.4 (May, 1973), 4.

God has said he will surely do. Believe it, and healing will come.'<sup>10</sup> Pastor Ian Parker (March 1983), of Mt Gambier SA, captured a more human dimension:

After ten years in the ministry I have served God in fields I never intended to include in my journey to heaven. My life has been threatened, I've preached sermons that should never have been preached, I've been a target for criticism – I wondered why people died when I prayed and fasted for their healing – I wondered why people backslid when I did everything in my power to prevent it... I've been confused and ashamed and I too have known the same blues as Jeremiah.<sup>11</sup>

This spiritual struggle highlighted an expectation that God would provide a miraculous solution, perhaps if he had sufficient faith, but he sensibly concluded that 'God's promises never fail – but his plan for their fulfilment will probably be different from your imagination.'<sup>12</sup>

In this decade a number of leaders emerged who were to have a powerful influence upon the AOG movement in Australia. Pastor David Cartledge was one of these key figures. He relocated the national training college to Sydney and re-established it with the name Southern Cross College. Cartledge (October 1983) evaluated the Confession or Prosperity teachings that were coming to Australia and said that these:

contain much that is valid, precious and necessary for an effective Christian life, but through the extreme emphasis placed on the human response in faith, God is dethroned. There is no such thing in this philosophy as the sovereignty of God. It is all up to man. If the needed miracle or blessing does not eventuate it can only be because the person expecting it 'did not have enough faith.'<sup>13</sup>

In a fair and succinct way this comment gets to the heart of things.

In the market place of Pentecostal thought there were different shops all selling different goods. In contrast Ronald Dayman (1984),

<sup>10</sup> Percy Brewster, 'Supernatural Healing', *The Australian Evangel* 30.7 (1973 July), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Parker, 'Has God deceived you?', *The Australian Evangel* 40.3 (March 1983), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Parker, 'Has God deceived you?', 10.

<sup>13</sup> David Cartledge, 'Faith Confusion', *The Australian Evangel* 40.10 (October 1983), 7.

encouraged his listeners, 'You need to refuse defeat and accept the victory... never allow defeat to be part of your thinking for we have the victory.'<sup>14</sup>

In the 1990's society was changing and the magazine reflected this in a brighter format. Increasingly psychological issues were addressed. For example the March 1996 issue had articles addressing themes such as selfishness in marriage, victims of emotional abuse and sexuality for youth. What is the healing dynamic? National superintendent Andrew Evans (1996) acknowledged a reality of personal struggle but he expressed the answer: 'If we constantly maintain a Spirit-filled life through fellowship with the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves conquering those fleshly attitudes and wrong character traits.'<sup>15</sup> Dermot Cottuli (May 1996) gave the now familiar formula, 'The power of God is always released in response to sincere believing prayer.'<sup>16</sup> There was a subtle shift. The sincere believer was increasingly expected to unlock the stores of heaven with the key of faith.

John Warwick (1997) began by acknowledging the obvious fact that Christians will have problems, and he lamented the 'amount of counselling Christians undergo is phenomenal' but they are in God's kingdom, 'Christians have been set free from Satan's grip, chains, death hold and the power of sin. *We are free – absolutely and gloriously!*'<sup>17</sup> He argued for the need to believe God's word, the promises 'Everything for victory belongs to those who are born again... That simple faith of believing the gospel is the same faith God wants us to continue to display throughout our Christian walk.'<sup>18</sup>

Brian Houston established Hillsong, now the largest church in Australia, and became national superintendent. In (Sept 1997) he wrote:

Healing of the memories, deliverance, counselling, healing of the iniquities of the third and fourth generations... perhaps they all have some validity but the day comes when you have to take hold of the promises of God's Word, have the wisdom to apply

<sup>14</sup> Ronald Dayman, 'Victory belongs to the Lord', *The Australian Evangel* 41.1 (January 1984), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Evans, 'Living up to Jesus Example', *Australian Evangel* (March 1996), 50.

<sup>16</sup> Dermot Cottuli, 'The Power of God', *Australian Evangel* (May 1996), 34.

<sup>17</sup> John Warwick, 'Everything we need', *Australian Evangel* (Feb 1997), 31.

<sup>18</sup> Warwick, 'Everything we need', 32.

them to your life, live in the freedom Christ has promised you, and collide with your destiny.'<sup>19</sup>

In what was to be the last issue of the *Australian Evangel* Brian Houston (Dec 1997/Jan 1998) wrote, 'Psalm 62:11 says, "Power belongs to God." It may be simple but you need to get this established in your spirit. God just doesn't do powerful things he is power; he is the source of power.'<sup>20</sup> He outlined the importance of the various aspects of what it is to be human including right thinking, finding a revelation of grace, and recognising the power of the Holy Spirit. He concluded, 'If you trust in him, you can draw on the power of the living God to fulfil his purpose in your life and overcome all powerlessness and hopelessness.'<sup>21</sup>

The magazine appears to have been representative of what was happening in the AOG and perhaps other Pentecostal denominations in Australia. There was an apparent demise of anything like critical thinking, whether based on Biblical interpretation or theological principles. Readers were exposed to a range of theological views but increasingly without any evaluation. Undoubtedly believers heard many sermons with different emphases, read popular Christian books and possibly attended large conferences with overseas speakers. This provided a rich oral tradition which was largely understood in terms of personal experience and perhaps pragmatically 'what has worked for me'. Even sensible inspirational preaching such as Brian Houston's was probably heard in terms of what the individual was inclined to believe. For example some would have heard 'You can draw on the power of the living God' in terms of the Word of Faith teaching. In this way there was a proliferation of simplistic formulas to guide Christian living and ultimately the promotion of what I think is a shortcut to effectively dealing with unpleasant emotions. It is to the psychological dimension that I will now turn.

## 2. Psychological Dynamics of the Manic Defence

Mania as an idea goes back to the Greeks who described excitable states. The cyclical nature of mania and depressive states had long been recognised in psychiatry and this was assumed by a number of the early

<sup>19</sup> Brian Houston, 'Collide with your Destiny!' *Australian Evangel*, (Sept 1997), 49-50.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Houston, 'Overcoming Powerlessness', *Australian Evangel* (Dec 1997/Jan 1998), 49.

<sup>21</sup> Houston, 'Overcoming Powerlessness', 50.

analysts.<sup>22</sup> Freud (1917) was interested in understanding depression. He wrote also about the dynamics of mania, and how similar it was to melancholia, "The content of mania is no different from that of melancholia, that both disorders are wrestling with the same "complex", but probably in melancholia the ego has succumbed to the complex whereas in mania it has mastered it."<sup>23</sup> The idea of mania having a defensive function was raised by Helen Deutsch (1932) and Bertram Lewin (1932).<sup>24</sup> The term 'manic defence' is normally associated with psychoanalyst Melanie Klein and is first mentioned in her paper 'A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states'.<sup>25</sup> In the simplest of terms it is a psychological way of avoiding the recognition or feeling of a negative emotion. It is perhaps easiest to understand this dynamic when it applies to using hyperactivity or 'feeling up' in place of feeling sadness or guilt.

*Mary lost her job because of her erratic attendance. She was struggling financially, due to impulsive spending habits, and it was possible that she might soon be evicted from her shared apartment. The thought of having to return to living with her parents in a small town was anything but appealing. Her friends were surprised to find her mood was unusually cheerful, 'It is God's will for me! I just know I will be offered a better job at a higher salary.'*

Mary exhibits emotional immaturity. In this brief vignette there are elements of denial which characterize the manic defence. She does not recognise her role in causing her current problems. This is a lack of

<sup>22</sup> S. Rado, 'The Problem of Melancholia', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 9 (1928), 420-438.

<sup>23</sup> S. Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', *Standard Edition* 14 (1917), 237-260, 254.

<sup>24</sup> H. Deutsch, 'Melancholic and Depressive States', in *The Psychoanalysis of the neuroses*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1932); Bertram Lewin, 'Analysis and Structure of a transient Hypomania', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 1 (1932), 43-58.

<sup>25</sup> M. Klein, 'A contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic Depressive States', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 16 (1935), 145-174, quoted 162. Later analysts including B. Lewin disputed Klein's concepts about mania from a more classical stance. *The Psychoanalysis of Elation*, (New York, W. W. Norton and Co, 1950). He argued that the manic state is a repetition of the infant's mood while being breast fed.

insight and it includes any appreciation of realistic **guilt**.<sup>26</sup> But how could it be that she was feeling almost euphoric?

I would speculate that Mary is vulnerable to depression. This might be a factor in her impulsive spending, trying to lift herself from low moods, and dysfunctional work performance. If this is the case then Klein would see the manic defence operating against what she identified as the depressive position. It is a reaction to anxieties about feeling loss or grief. The temporary euphoria is a substitute emotion, in place of the more appropriate grief over her loss of employment and financial stability. The denial includes what needs to be faced about herself and it leads to projecting responsibility onto God.

The manic defence against depressive affect is not the only form this defence takes. There is a broader application. Klein attempted to describe psychological dynamics in infancy and the manic defence can only be understood in the context of her wider theory. The first stage, or what Klein would call a position because it can be returned to again and again, is the Paranoid Schizoid position. This is characterised by primitive psychological processes and occurs naturally in the first year of life. The second is the Depressive position, a later healthier achievement and has been introduced with Mary. The manic defence is a psychological defence against anxieties associated with both positions: it may be in response to a sense of persecution (characteristic of Paranoid Schizoid) or feelings of loss (Depressive).

*Robert was a student in a local Bible college associated with a Pentecostal church. He was the most enthusiastic member of the student body, often reading the Word late at night. While he was widely respected by students and faculty, he was not especially liked. He tended to be black and white, very judgemental, and even militant about his belief, 'If you really believe something - speak it out - then God will make it happen' In the first examination period the stress started to show on Robert. He began thinking that other students were talking about him.*

Robert is very fragile in psychological terms. He is in danger of a psychotic deterioration. The increase of stress overwhelmed his essentially manic defence against feelings of persecution characteristic of

<sup>26</sup> H. Guntrip, 'The Manic Depressive problem in the light of the Schizoid Process', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 43 (1962), 98-112.

the more primitive Paranoid Schizoid position. It is also possible that he was struggling with an inner sense of **deadness**.<sup>27</sup>

Klein developed Freud's concept of inner objects, which is a way of understanding how we psychologically represent self and others. The representations are connected by relationship patterns involving emotions. For example a battered spouse may have inner representations associated with a self-image of being a victim and feeling helpless. If we think of inner psychological dynamics as played out on a stage, then the manic defence has the script: the loss is denied with the object<sup>28</sup> omnipotently restored and idealized.<sup>29</sup> The manic restoration of an internal good object is only based in **fantasy**.<sup>30</sup> It is not grounded in psychological or external **reality**.<sup>31</sup> Naturally this psychological reliance on unrealistic processes eventually leads to problems in living.

A short while ago I was teaching mental health professionals about aspects of personality disorder. A Sydney psychiatrist recalled treating a severely depressed patient. She used a hypnotic technique in which he imagined himself soaring like an eagle. This was partially helpful in that the patient reported an elevated mood for about three days after the session. However, he would then need another boost of hypnotic treatment. This was repeated for three sessions but then the psychiatrist was warned by her supervisor to cease this kind of treatment because of an enhanced risk of suicide. The supervisor recognised the manic defence, artificially enhanced by **treatment**<sup>32</sup>, was masking a very deep and potentially dangerous depression.

<sup>27</sup> N. Browne, 'Some enuretic Derivatives in an Adult Analysis', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 67 (1986), 449-457. Also I. M. Kumin, 'Emptiness and its relation to Schizoid Ego Structure', *The International Review of Psychoanalysis* 5 (1978), 207-216.

<sup>28</sup> The object is an inner representation of an important person such a parent or sibling.

<sup>29</sup> J. Riviere, 'A Contribution to the Analysis of the negative therapeutic Reaction', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 17 (1936), 304-320.

<sup>30</sup> J. Wisdom, 'Comparison and development of the psychoanalytic Theories of Melancholia', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 43 (1962), 113-132.

<sup>31</sup> Hanna Segal, 'A psychoanalytic approach to Aesthetics', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 33 (1952), 196-207, 197. The term manic defence has been widely used in psychoanalysis, more broadly than simply by those who have been influenced by Klein.

<sup>32</sup> H. Stewart, 'A comment on the psychodynamics of the hypnotic state', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 36 (1955), 16-26.

### 3. Hyper-spirituality in Pentecostal Circles

What all this leads to is something that we can readily see in Christian circles. Who hasn't heard countless sermons encouraging the denial of feelings of sadness, loss, or guilt? There is much of the human experience that passes without comment. I have never heard anyone speaking publicly of inner deadness. It is alarming to see an artificial spirituality of 'Happiness in Jesus'. This is not to deny genuine joy or spiritually ecstatic states, but in this case there is no defence and it is more integrative into a believer's life in **Christ**.<sup>33</sup>

Some might be tempted ask about the manic defence 'What if it works?' But the defence even fails on pragmatic grounds. The defence leads to a brittle euphoria which barely masks what lies beneath. And we are often surprised when the defence breaks down with a particular individual ending up in a deep depression or a psychotic episode. Some Christians might be tempted to dismiss it as a lack of faith, but the problems are more complex and raise **fundamental** questions about what is encouraged in our Christian culture.

Another form the manic defence takes is hyper-sexualized **activity**.<sup>34</sup> Like the nine headed Hydra this takes many forms including the sexual abuse of children, addiction to internet pornography or seeing prostitutes. It has been very visible in the 'fall from grace' of high profile Christian leaders. While popular culture may contribute there are other forces at work, including reliance upon the manic defence.

The manic defence is a psychological short-cut based on denying what should be acknowledged and better integrated in psychological terms. It is hardly surprising that the manic defence, whether spiritualised or not, does not really work. The real challenge for the more neurotic client is to do the work of grief, but if more personality disordered then work towards better self-structure through

<sup>33</sup> This genuine possibility is acknowledged in psychoanalysis, Charles Rycroft, 'Two notes of Idealization, Illusion and Disillusion as normal and abnormal psychological Processes', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 36 (1955), 81-87, quoted 85.

<sup>34</sup> Joyce McDougall, 'Primal Scene and sexual Perversion', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 79 (1972), 1217-1220; also 'a rejuvenated erotic life' as noted by S. Akhtar 'Mental pain in the cultural ointment of poetry', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 81 (2000), 229-243, quoted 234. And especially M. Masud Khan, 'Foreskin Fetishism and its relation to Ego Pathology in a male Homosexual', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 46 (1965), 64-80.

psychotherapy. According to Klein this allows a process of repair<sup>35</sup> which she understood as a mother after the death of her son.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

It is important to question what it is about being in Pentecostal church circles that encourages and maintains the manic defence. It appears to have largely replaced an earlier healthier acknowledgement of suffering and spread as a kind of psychological cancer – now characteristic not only of Pentecostal but Evangelical faith. This is associated with an over-emphasis on a theology of victory, without finding a place for a theology of suffering. In theological terms it is an over-realized eschatology.<sup>37</sup>

Our culture tends to support the widespread use of the manic defence. Hyperactivity is widely used to ward off facing negative feelings. After the death of a family member, how often do we hear the person say, 'I felt better when I went back to work.' Many preachers are simply Christian motivational speakers. It is hardly surprising that such preachers literally practice what they preach, with predictable results. The real challenge is offer a genuine Christian spirituality rather than encouraging believers to simply to go into hyper-drive. 'Up, up and away?' Hopefully not!

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<sup>35</sup> M. Klein, 'Mourning and its relation to Manic Depressive States', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 21 (1940), 125-153, quoted 137.

<sup>36</sup> J. Sayers, 'Melanie Klein and Mothering: A feminist Perspective', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 16 (1989), 363-376.

<sup>37</sup> The larger psychological issue is narcissism, but that will await a later paper. The manic defence is but a facet. Roy Schafer (1970) noted, 'Such terms as neurotic pride, egocentricity, inflated narcissism, infantile ego ideal and manic defence refer to different aspects of, or different theoretical approaches to, the residual yet powerful core of grandiose self-representations people carry forward from early childhood,' R. Schafer, 'The psychoanalytic Illusion of Reality', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 51 (1970), 279-297, quoted 294.