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CHAPTER FIVE

THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELICALISM

The quest for holiness and the fullness of the Holy Spirit (1875-1920)

‘Oh that a preacher might arise and expound from the Book of books a religion with a God, a religion with a heart in it,’ lamented Sybylla Melvyn in *My Brilliant Career*, Miles Franklin’s ground-breaking 1890s depiction of Australian country life. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, there were many who shared her sentiments.

As has been noted, the previous decades had seen the emergence of a number of new religious groups in Australia.¹ It was also a time of intellectual challenge for the churches. The publishing of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* in 1859 had radically changed many people’s attitudes to the Bible. Secular rationalism was not new — since the days of the Enlightenment it had been gaining favour — but in nineteenth century Australia, it had taken on an almost evangelistic fervour. Rationalist speakers held regular meetings, more often than not, on Sundays, with musical programs to attract clientele and with vigorous arguments against faith in a higher power.² Testimonies were given of ‘conversion’ from religion to rationalism. Books were sold. Debates were invited. Reason was proclaimed as the final arbiter of truth. The Australasian Secular Association, founded in Melbourne in 1882, soon spread interstate.

¹ See above, Chapter Three.

² W.W. Phillips, ‘Defending a Christian Country’: *Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880’s and After* Brisbane: St Lucia, 1981, pp.114f

Rationalist associations were formed in New South Wales (1910), Queensland (1914), Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia (1918).³

On the other hand, during the two and a half decades from 1890 to the beginning of World War I, there was also an increasing level of evangelical Christian fervour. The pervasive influence of Wesleyan revivalism and the extraordinary career of John Dowie have already been noted as has the succession of overseas evangelists who toured Australia in the late nineteenth century.⁴ The early years of the twentieth century were equally punctuated with evangelistic campaigns.⁵

There was increasingly animated debate over traditional moral or social issues such as Sunday observance, temperance, and mixed bathing.⁶ Gradually, the restrictions of sabbatarianism gave way as Sunday newspapers were introduced and public buildings such as art galleries opened on the Lord's Day. On the beaches, thousands of people began to defy the laws which in some places forbade sea-bathing during the daylight hours, and in other places forbade mixed bathing at any time. By the mid 1890s, Sunday amusements were becoming more acceptable with concerts, picnics, excursions and sporting events taking place with increasing frequency.⁷

The 1890s were also difficult economically. The withdrawal of overseas investments in Australia had a domino effect, resulting in the cessation of public works and the closure of some banks — some fifteen in the Eastern States by 1892. Prices of farm produce fell and there was industrial unrest. For many, the rising Labor Party offered a heaven on earth which had more immediate appeal than the less tangible after-life proclaimed by the churches.

³ Brown, 1986 p. 229

⁴ See Chapters Three and Four.

⁵ George Bernard Shaw commented that in England there was such a reawakening of religion 'that not the Church of England itself could keep it out.' See G.B.Shaw, *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant: Volume II, Pleasant Plays* London: Constable: (1898) 1947, p.vi.

⁶ Jackson, 1987, pp.108ff, 114; Brown 1986: pp.336, 361; M.Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand* Ringwood: Penguin, 1987, p.134; Hunt, 1985, p. 170; F.B.Smith, 'Sunday Matters' in Gammage and Spearritt (eds), 1987, p. 391; O'Farrell, 1985, p. 282.

⁷ Jackson, 1987, p.114.

For others, it was the promise of a foretaste of heaven now, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, that sent them to their knees in prayer.

In 1899 the Boer War broke out in South Africa, and thousands of young Australians rushed to enlist. Senior politicians and statesmen were working painstakingly towards the final shape of Federation of Australian States, which took place in 1901. And those most popular inventions of the twentieth century, the moving picture, the motor car and the aeroplane were making their first hesitant beginnings. Like the 1990s, the 1890s were a time of rapid change, the questioning of traditional values, the struggle for economic betterment, the search for identity and rigorous debate over the future direction of the nation. In all this, there was a significant number of people who believed that only an evangelical gospel which stressed a vital relationship with Christ through the power of the Spirit would satisfy human need and resolve social ills.

The Keswick movement

In the early 1870s, Robert Pearsall Smith from Philadelphia initiated a series of conferences in England, where several other Americans, including Smith's wife, Hannah, were involved. Humbled through an act of indiscretion, Smith withdrew from the convention scene but Dundas Harford-Battersby, Vicar of St. John's, Keswick, took over.⁸ He had been praying earnestly for a more meaningful experience of Christ. As a result, he explained, 'I got a revelation of Christ to my soul so extraordinary, so glorious and so precious that from that day it illuminated my life. I found HE was ALL I wanted.'⁹

In 1875, he organised a convention in Keswick, for worship, prayer and teaching, where he shared something of his own new experience in Christ. He told how he had learned the difference between a seeking faith and a resting faith. Seeking faith came to Christ bearing a burden, but resting faith had found Christ — and the burden was gone. Soon Keswick Conventions were being held regularly. The message was simple —

⁸ Burgess et al (eds), 1988, p.518; Jackson, 1987, p.63; A.Deane, *The Contribution of the New Evangelical Movements of the Late Nineteenth Century to Evangelical Enterprise in Australia 1870-1920*, unpublished MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1983, p.47.

Keswick stands distinctively for this: Christ our righteousness, upon Calvary, received by faith, is also Christ our holiness, in the heart that submits to Him and relies upon Him.¹⁰

This concept was presented with such conviction that it struck responsive chords in many hearts. There was also a focus on the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Years later, H.P. Smith summarised the Keswick emphases from the beginning as having been —

1. The exceeding sinfulness of sin
2. The way of cleansing and renewal
3. The life of full surrender
4. The fullness of the Holy Spirit
5. The path of service and sacrifice¹¹

Keswick theologians rejected the perfectionist emphasis of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, but stressed that the fullness of the Spirit was normative for Christian living.¹² To be filled with the Spirit, it was necessary to yield your will completely to Christ and to ‘surrender’ to Him. At one of the early Conventions, Andrew Murray (1828-1917), Keswick leader and pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church at Wellington, South Africa, set down eight steps to the fullness of the Spirit —

1. I know and believe there is a Pentecostal Blessing still to be enjoyed by God’s people.
2. I have not got it.
3. It is for me; and it is my own fault that I have not got it.
4. I cannot grasp it. God must give it.
5. I long and desire, at any cost, to become possessed of this Blessing.
6. I am going to surrender all to obtain it.
7. I believe that He accepts me, and I claim the Blessing now — this very moment.

⁹ J.C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964, p.12.

¹⁰ Pollock, 1964, p.74.

¹¹ *Keswick Quarterly* November 1947.

¹² Burgess et al (eds), 1988, p.518.

8. I reckon that He now fulfils His promise; and I go forth to obey.¹³

In 1876, Hussey Burgh Macartney, the Irish-born Vicar of St Mary's Anglican church in Caulfield, Victoria, and son of the Dean of Melbourne, presided over a small convention in Melbourne.¹⁴ Two years later, he visited Keswick and was so impressed he began similar conventions in Melbourne when he returned. These were the beginning of what was to become a series of annual gatherings in Victoria for decades to come.

Waiting on God, a book of short readings on prayer by Andrew Murray, was being circulated and hungrily read. It culminated with an exhortation to pray earnestly for the fullness of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ The popularity of books like this was another indicator of the desire among Evangelicals for a more meaningful spirituality.

George Carleton Grubb

In 1890, George Carleton Grubb arrived in Australia with an evangelistic party. Hailing from Tipperary, he was a vigorous man of 33 years, although his balding head made him look older. If Harford-Battersby was a typical Anglican clergyman, Grubb was the opposite — a boisterous Irish rover. Pollock describes him like this —

Everything about him had a rip-roaring wild Irishness. He would have an audience cringing in fear of judgement one moment and bursting their sides with guffaws the next. ... Grubb was a man of emotions, not happy unless in strong measure he could feel the presence of God, but a man of sheer faith who fully expected and often saw the most improbable occurrences in answer to prayer.¹⁶

¹³ J.S.Holden (ed), *The Keswick Convention 1929: Notes of the Addresses Revised by the Speakers* London: Paternoster, 1929, p.157.

¹⁴ Piggin, 1996, p.72; Jackson 1987, pp.63ff.

¹⁵ Greenwood, 'Address given at Australian Pentecostal Fellowship Convention,' Beulah Heights, Victoria, 1964; D.Cragg in Douglas (ed), 1978, p.685 ('Murray was the most influential leader of his own church in the nineteenth century, and an evangelical Christian of international stature'); Murray, 1961, pp.101-103.

¹⁶ Pollock, 1964, p.90

It did not take long for Macartney and Grubb to meet.¹⁷ For two weeks the two Irishmen conducted a mission before Grubb travelled on to New Zealand. A year later, in 1891, with a tour group including E.C. Millard and his wife and V.D. David, a Tamil evangelist, he returned to Australia, and again held meetings in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.¹⁸ His topics were varied but generally focused on commitment to Christ—¹⁹

He was met by an enthusiastic response. Six hundred people were turned away from one gathering he held. Most of his financial needs were provided by the local people, and many were led to commit their lives to Christ. A number of these later entered full-time Christian work. The impact of his athletic preaching was such that ‘amazing scenes’ were witnessed at his services.²⁰ Anglicans, like Methodists, were enthused by Grubb’s fervent approach and his emphasis on the revitalising, experiential power of the Spirit and congregations often responded with spontaneous shouts of praise. His emphasis on holiness and separation from the world was attractive to people looking for more effective Christian living. Judd and Cable credit Grubb with originating the ongoing distinctive Sydney Anglican emphasis on evangelism, emotional consecration hymns, invitations to follow Christ, the signing of decision cards, holy life-style and stirring up greater involvement in foreign missions.²¹ But Sydney Anglicanism has been shaped by other influences as well. Nathaniel Jones, Principal of the Anglican Moore College in Sydney, although initially happy to cooperate with Grubb, began to develop misgivings. What Jones saw as Grubb’s emphasis on ‘imparted righteousness’ and his own

¹⁷ Millard refers to Macartney and his wife as ‘our kind of friends.’ See E.C. Millard, *The Same Lord: An account of the Mission Tour of the Rev. George C. Grubb M.A. in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand from April 3rd 1891, to July 7th 1892*, London: Marlborough, 1893, p.39.

¹⁸ Millard, 1893, Frontispiece and p.46.

¹⁹ Subjects were — The Cities of Refuge; God’s Dealings in Distress; Learn of Jesus, Lean on Jesus, Live for Jesus; What the Daily Life of a Christian Ought To Be; Walking with God; Tests of Discipleship; Wash and be Clean; ‘Nothing’ (1 Tim 6:7); The Silence of Christ — G.Grubb, *Notes of Sermons and Bible Readings* Hobart: Mercury, 1893.

²⁰ Pollock, 1964, p.92.

²¹ Judd and Cable, 1987, p.150f.

teaching of ‘imputed righteousness’ were not comfortable bed-fellows.²² Grubb emphasised the power of the Spirit for service; Jones the power of the Gospel for salvation through the all-sufficient work of the Cross. Grubb advocated the Holiness idea of ongoing sanctification; Jones held to the Reformed position of completed redemption in Christ which would be realised eschatologically at the Second Coming.²³

Consequently, Sydney Anglicanism never embraced revivalism in the way that Grubb expressed it and today still reflects the direction set by Jones, with a strong, almost bibliolatrous adherence to the text of Scripture and a stern scepticism about emotional expressions of faith. The Keswick movement, on the other hand, pursued its emphasis on an experience of Christ and, in its early days at least, its participants were encouraged to continue to cry out to God for a Pentecostal outpouring.

It is interesting that Millard’s record of Grubb’s visit begins with a complete quotation of 1 Cor. 12:1-11, the one New Testament passage that lists in detail the special gifts of the Spirit such as prophesying, healing and tongue-speaking. Wherever Grubb went there was an emphasis on the need to be filled with the Spirit.²⁴ One congregational minister had such an experience with God that he left his church to himself become a revivalist.²⁵ After one meeting, the team members had an enlivening experience of the Spirit —

I went back to the hotel, where I heard a tremendous shouting of Hallelujah in our private room. The others were literally jumping around the room, and David was shouting, ‘Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God!...’

²² ‘Imparted righteousness’ implied a sense of *feeling* forgiven and hence justified (ie made righteous); ‘imputed righteousness’ meant believing you were forgiven and justified whether you felt anything or not.

²³ W.Lawton, *The Better Time To Be* Kensington: NSW University Press, 1990, pp. 94f, 99, 101; Judd and Cable, 1987, p.152. Jones’s position was similar to that held by the ‘finished work’ believers who established the Assemblies of God in the United States.

²⁴ For example, ‘At the invitation of the minister of the Baptist Chapel, about four miles away, we went to a prayer-meeting of all denominations — to ask the Lord for blessing on the mission — and after two hours’ waiting upon God, we sought for a special baptism of the Spirit for our own souls, and followed the apostolic example of “laying on of hands” (Acts 8:18). It was a solemn scene, when clergy, ministers and laymen alike, took their turn in being thus prayed over.’ — Millard, 1893, p.61f.

²⁵ Millard, 1893, p.84n.

On the other hand, their joy was tempered by Mrs Millard enduring a painful swelling in the face, which nothing would alleviate. Finally, they decided to put aside all medical treatment and ask God to heal her. Within a few minutes she declared she was quite free of all pain. The shouting began again.²⁶ It was not uncommon for Grubb to encourage people to give voice to their praises. He poured scorn on those who would grow excited over football but not about the safety of their souls. The question asked (about the preachers) was not, ‘What Church does he belong to?’ but, ‘Is he up to shouting pitch yet?’²⁷

When teaching and preaching about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the emphasis was consistent — the need to yield to God in total obedience and then to take the blessing of the Spirit by faith.²⁸

Preparation in Prayer

Around 1890, a small group of men, led by John MacNeil (1854-1896), began praying together for revival in Australia.²⁹ MacNeil, born into a Presbyterian family in Scotland, was brought up in Ballarat, Victoria, and worked as a ‘railway contractor.’³⁰ After studying theology at New College, Edinburgh, he was ordained in 1879 and shortly after introduced to the Keswick movement. He experienced ‘an anointing of the Holy Spirit’ and in 1881 began evangelistic ministry. A battle with health hindered his itinerant work until he recovered after laying on of hands by an Anglican minister. He was no mean evangelist, drawing crowds in many places — he saw as many as 1200 professions of faith in six weeks in 1894 in Queensland.³¹

²⁶ Millard, 1893, pp. 108f.

²⁷ Millard, 1893, p.161.

²⁸ When Mrs Millard talked with one clergyman, he showed particular grace by being ‘willing to humble himself and be dealt with by a woman’ — Millard, 1893, pp.140, 149.

²⁹ See M.Prentice, ‘John MacNeil,’ in ADEB, pp.243f, for an outline of MacNeil’s life.

³⁰ John MacNeil in *Reports of Addresses at the Christian Convention September 15th, 16th, 17th, 1891* Ballarat: E.E.Campbell; Melbourne: Bible and Tract Depot; Melbourne: M.L.Hutchinson and Co.; Adelaide: Wesleyan Book Depot, 1891, p.28.

³¹ ‘The Rev John McNeil [sic], B.A., is continuing his evangelistic services in Warrnambool with a large amount of success... Large audiences are attracted, and it is believed that he is effecting a large amount of good’ (*The Warrnambool Independent* Wed July 11 1883); ‘The people of Portarlinton have just been favoured with the valuable services of the Rev John MacNeil ... At all these meetings, there were large congregations, in some cases many had to go away, or be content to stand outside ... Many responded to his earnest pressing invitations to

In 1890, together with Allan Webb, John Watsford and a handful of others, he formed a prayer group which came to be known as ‘The Band’ which met regularly to pray for revival, even if it was to be years coming. They also focused strongly on the need for an infilling of the Holy Spirit as part of the ‘higher Christian life’ espoused by Keswick and were praying for ‘the full Baptism of the Holy Spirit for themselves and for all ministers, officers and members of the Churches.’³² MacNeil wrote a popular booklet called *The Spirit-filled Life*.³³ The devotion of these men to prayer was internationally acknowledged.³⁴ Out of their intercessions came the decision to mount a Keswick-style convention in Geelong, a Victorian provincial city, some 80 kilometres from Melbourne, with George Grubb — who had addressed Keswick Conventions in England — as the primary speaker, along with MacNeil, Webb and others.³⁵ The large Mechanics Institute was used and people came from all over Victoria and even from ‘neighbouring Colonies.’ There were overflow meetings in the Presbyterian church next door. For four days, there were four meetings a day and they could not accommodate all those who came, ‘not to hear eloquent addresses or exquisite music, but to hear of Pentecostal Christianity, and how it may be ours.’

The theme was ‘Apostolic Christianity’ and the focus from the beginning was on Christ. ‘We want to write up over this Mechanics hall,’ said Grubb, in his

accept of a present salvation, while others have been much encouraged and strengthened in the faith’ (SC II:25 23 June 1883, p.7); ‘Colac has just been favoured with a second visit from the Rev. John McNeil [sic] the well-known evangelist’ (SC II:26 30 June 1883, p.6). See also M.Prentice, ‘John MacNeil,’ in ADEB, p.244. In 1896, MacNeil toured Queensland again. At the end of the tour he collapsed and died in a city shop. American missionary Minnie Abrams, with a touch of the dramatic, told a congregation in Chicago in 1909 how John MacNeil and Allen [sic] Webb had devoted themselves to prayer for revival and how the ‘DeLong’ Convention and the visits of Torrey and Alexander had grown out of this. She noted that MacNeil, she thought, had died in the pulpit ‘the very night of the first meeting of that great revival’ and that Webb ‘so poured out his soul to God in prayer that he fell dead praying.’ See *The Latter Rain Evangel* July 1909, Chicago: The Evangel Publishing House, p.8.

³² Watsford, 1900, p.272.

³³ D.Paproth, ‘Revivalism in Melbourne from Federation to World War I: the Torrey-Alexander-Chapman Campaigns,’ in Hutchinson et al (eds), 1994, pp.147,165.

³⁴ *Latter Rain Evangel* July 1909, Chicago: The Evangel Publishing House, p.8.

³⁵ Watsford, 1900, pp.272-293. Following details are also from this source, unless otherwise stated.

opening address, ‘“For Jesus Only”’: for we are met here for the glory of our Saviour, and to learn His holy will.’³⁶

There were frequent calls to holiness, to love and to the fullness of the Spirit, Grubb did not mince matters —

Ah! my friends, the baptism of the Holy Ghost means the identification of ourselves with the common herd of sinners around us. No one will obtain the baptism without this. Come down from your ecclesiastical perches, oh! reverend teachers of men, for power and unction of the Spirit can only come to you if you be identified with the baptism of sinners. May the Lord deliver us from the pride of reputation.

and,

The effect of the baptism of the Holy Ghost is to set our tongues free. First the heart free, then the tongue free; that is the Holy Ghost’s order. He sets the heart free and our heart begins to bubble and swell, and it comes out at our mouth. We should get ill if we could not shout and sing. If you have the Holy Ghost in you you will not need a spiritual force-pump to get up a shout or a sermon either... Oh Lord! Give us the Spirit of Pentecost for Thy name’s sake.³⁷

When MacNeil spoke, he was equally direct. He had not got ten lines into his message when he said, ‘Look here, man! Are you born again? You need not begin to think about Apostolic service until you can say “yes” to that.’ He concluded with a strong challenge to his hearers to be sure they had the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives —

What then was the secret of the Apostolic Power? God — God the Holy Ghost, within them, around them, that was their equipment. The same equipment may be ours today. Have you got it?... If you have asked Peter, or Thomas, or John... they would have said, ‘Yes.’ They knew they had it. Some of you are living on the wrong side of Pentecost...³⁸

³⁶ George Grubb, ‘Apostolic Christianity — Is it Ours?’ in *Reports*, 1891.

³⁷ Grubb, *Reports*, 1891, pp. 17, 24.

³⁸ MacNeil, *Reports* 1891, p.28.

Edward Harris, of West Melbourne Baptist church,³⁹ raised the issue that some people felt the need to distinguish between being baptised with the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. In that case, he said, ‘go in for both of them.’⁴⁰ There was a strong emphasis of the centrality of Christ, on prayer, on holiness, on entire sanctification, on absolute surrender to God. Allan Webb declared, ‘Apostolic Christianity meant complete surrender ... You want to be useful? ... There is only one way. It is to be surrendered to God.’⁴¹ At one rally, after a woman sent up a gift of two pounds for the China Inland Mission, people streamed to the platform to present a missionary offering. ‘There was no excitement, no hysterics, no rushing from seats and clapping of hands. The Holy Spirit just laid on the people’s hearts an intense yearning for the heathen, and gave the world a practical illustration of Apostolic Christianity.’ They brought silver, gold, rings, chains, watches, jewellery, cheques, notes and laid them on the table. The value was estimated at over a thousand pounds. An archdeacon gave his archidiaconal ring; one man gave a cottage and nine acres of land; a couple offered 120 pounds per year to support a missionary. Ultimately, after Grubb’s Victorian mission, fifty people offered themselves for mission work.⁴²

In New South Wales, the story was similar. At St. Peter's, Woolloomooloo, after Grubb had ministered, ‘as the people moved out they seemed to walk on tiptoe, as if it were holy ground... no talking... an unmistakable solemnity...’⁴³ At the Sydney Convention, (5-7 January, 1892), Christians of all denominations met and ‘the Lord was present in Holy Ghost power’, while the expectation of the people was so great that all the seats in the Centenary Hall, York Street, were occupied at least two hours before the advertised hour.⁴⁴

³⁹ *The Torrey-Alexander Souvenir, Special Mission Number of the Southern Cross*, Melbourne, 10 September, 1902, p.10.

⁴⁰ Harris, *Reports*, 1891, pp.74.

⁴¹ Webb, *Reports*, 1891, p.48.

⁴² From a letter to clergy and leading layman quoted by Millard, 1893, p.167.

⁴³ Millard, 1893, pp.215f.

⁴⁴ Millard, 1893, pp.261f.

In Launceston, Tasmania, ‘the blessing... without doubt surpassed the previous ones held at Geelong and Sydney...’ There was ‘clear teaching’ that it was pointless to ask for the fullness of the Holy Spirit without first being cleansed of all sin. Over two thousand people packed the auditorium and forty or fifty ministers sought to be filled with the Spirit.⁴⁵

Another convention was held in Geelong in September 1892 — it had already become an annual event — and again crowds attended. Again, there was plenty of excitement as ‘from all parts of the building came shouts of “Hallelujah!”, “Glory be to God!” and a wave of glory seemed to roll over the audience.’

Grubb did not stay in Victoria. He travelled through England, South America and even Russia, as well as various parts of Australia. His popularity waned when it was reported that he held the view known as conditional immortality or annihilation,⁴⁶ and his associations with the Keswick movement were for a time broken. Nevertheless, the Geelong conventions which George Grubb started formed the background to the convention movement that was to continue in Victoria into the twentieth century.⁴⁷

Reuben Torrey

In 1899, the popular American evangelist D.L. Moody (1837-1899) received a petition from 15,831 people in Australia and New Zealand inviting him to preach.⁴⁸ Moody’s death prevented his coming. But two years later, Yale graduate and Congregationalist minister Dr. Reuben Torrey (1856-1928) did, together with his song leader, Presbyterian layman Charles Alexander (1867-1920). Torrey is still well-known because of the books he wrote, many of which continue in print — including those on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ And Alexander’s hymns are still widely sung.

⁴⁵ Millard, 1893, pp.269.

⁴⁶ That is, that the wicked do not suffer eternally in hell but are annihilated.

⁴⁷ In more recent years, Keswick Conventions were conducted at Belgrave Heights, whose auditorium seated nearly 2000 people.

⁴⁸ Piggin, 1996, p.59.

⁴⁹ Torrey, *How to Receive* 1904; *Baptism*, n.d.

Torrey's visit was part of a well orchestrated Simultaneous Mission which involved thousands of people and hundreds of churches and Christian workers. There was a committee of 70 with sub committees handling specific areas such as finance and venues. Thirty large tents were secured for regional meetings. Missioners were drawn from seven denominations. Extensive door-to-door visitation took place.⁵⁰ In Melbourne, main meetings were conducted in the Town Hall and later in the vast Exhibition Building; in Sydney the venue was the Town Hall — where 10,000 people tried to gain admittance, and William Taylor declared, 'We have never known Sydney so moved.'⁵¹ Regional rallies were conducted in the suburbs and in provincial cities such as Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. Some 214 churches were involved in the Melbourne mission, with 50 missioners, 2000 'personal workers,' 16,800 home meetings attended by 117,600 people, 2500 choir members and 700 men on local committees. Lunch time meetings at the Town Hall resulted in hundreds being turned away.⁵² Torrey was accompanied by the more outgoing Walter Geil, whose preaching also drew large crowds and was received with good effect. In Footscray, for example, in one service, some 700 people signed cards as an expression of their confession of Christ.⁵³ By May, press reports referred to what was happening as a 'religious revival.'⁵⁴ The Mission also raised some 3000 pounds for the YMCA.⁵⁵ Overall, the visit was so successful that 20,000 conversions were reported throughout the country.

Not every church was involved. Roman Catholics neither participated in it nor opposed it, until Geil made some harsh comments on the activities of Catholic friars in the Philippines.⁵⁶ And the Melbourne branch of Dowie's Christian Catholic Church in Zion publicly challenged Torrey on his statements about Dowie and his alleged inconsistency in denouncing 'secret societies' while

⁵⁰ Paproth, in Hutchinson et al (eds), 1994, p.150.

⁵¹ W. Taylor in *Souvenir*, 1902, pp.84f.

⁵² *The Age*, 19 April 1902, p.6; 22 April 1902, p.4; Torrey, *Baptism*, p.3.

⁵³ *Souvenir*, 1902, p.26

⁵⁴ *The Age* 14 May 1902, p.6.

⁵⁵ *The Age* 14 May 1902, p.6; 27 May 1902, p.4.

⁵⁶ *The Age*, 19 May 1902, p.6.

‘worshiping with their members.’⁵⁷ Torrey was not ‘revivalistic’ in methodology. He dressed immaculately, he preached clearly and consistently, he attempted to persuade by force of reason rather than through stirred emotions. Among his sermon topics were —

- Is the Bible the Word of God (several addresses)
- The Power of Prayer
- Hell and Who Are Going There
- Every Man's Need of a Hiding Place
- Causes of Infidelity
- The Most Important Question
- What Shall I Do to be Saved?
- What does it cost not to be a Christian?
- Hindrances to Prayer
- Proofs of the Resurrection
- The Holy Spirit and His Work
- A Manufacturing Business Which Does Not Pay
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit⁵⁸

His constituency was largely middle class Protestantism.⁵⁹ Although his primary aim was conversions, he repeatedly stressed the need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. Both in Melbourne and Sydney he concluded his meetings with a strong challenge in this area. His theology was straight Wesleyan. He himself had experienced a personal encounter with the Spirit —

One day as I sat in my study, something fell on me, and I literally fell to the floor, and I just lay there and shouted. I had never shouted before ... but I lay there shouting ‘Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God!’ ... The Spirit had put something in me that was not there before.⁶⁰

He taught others that their experience could be the same — that just as it was possible to know the certainty of salvation, it was possible to know the reality of being baptised in the Spirit. It was a work additional to the Spirit’s regular work of salvation. It was not to make us happy, but to make us useful. The

⁵⁷ *The Age*, 26 April 1902, p.15.

⁵⁸ *Souvenir*, 1902.

⁵⁹ Paproth, in Hutchinson et al (eds), 1994, p.151

⁶⁰ *Souvenir*, 1902, p.77.

results would be joy, boldness, clear knowledge and appropriate spiritual gifts. The promise of the Spirit was for people of all ages and in every church. If we were to be soul-winners, we must be baptised in the Holy Spirit. To receive the Spirit we needed to repent, to confess Christ openly, to be obedient to God — which meant absolute surrender to him — to thirst for the Spirit like a dying man for water, to ask specifically for the Holy Spirit and then to believe.⁶¹

It is noteworthy that this has been classical Pentecostal teaching on this subject since its inception — the significant difference being Torrey's lack of reference to tongues. A few years earlier, Torrey had often pondered the question, 'If one is baptised with the Holy Spirit will he not speak in tongues?' He also believed that the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 would be expressed through Spirit-filled people.⁶² But he felt it was 'a mistake to suppose that everyone should speak in tongues.' In practice, this seems to have meant that none should.⁶³ In later years, he rejected 'the Tongues Movement' altogether.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Torrey's emphasis on the need for an experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit fostered the growing spiritual hunger in the evangelical churches and that it was indirectly responsible for the nascence of the infant Pentecostal assemblies that emerged struggling and crying into the twentieth century world.

Hervey Perceval Smith

One of Torrey's most significant converts was Hervey Perceval Smith (1869-1947). In 1893, Smith, a former journalist, succeeded his father as manager of the Federal Palace Hotel, 'the greatest and most exotic hotel Australia has seen,'⁶⁵ in Collins Street West, Melbourne, Victoria,⁶⁶ where Torrey and his

⁶¹ *Souvenir*, 1902, pp.78ff.

⁶² Torrey, *Baptism*, n.d., p.6.

⁶³ Torrey, *Baptism*, p.16, quoted in J.Wimber, *Power Evangelism* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985, p.137; *The City Was Moved: Special Daily Edition of the Australian Christian World* 29 August,1902, p.2ff.

⁶⁴ Ewart, 1947, p.7; L.Jones, letter to C.H.Nash, 20 May 1925.

⁶⁵ D.Beer, 'Keswick Book Shop: its beginnings and now.'

⁶⁶ *The Age*, 25 June 1902, p.10.

party were accommodated. Walking home one night after a Torrey meeting, he decided to believe the gospel and the realisation transformed him.⁶⁷

He became leader of what was known as the Melbourne Gospel Crusade with its emphasis on the ‘three R’s’ of ruin by the Fall, redemption by the blood and regeneration by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁸ and devoted himself to evangelism, welfare work, hospital visitation and the like. He spent much time in prayer. His board of directors later challenged him to license the establishment, but he refused, believing that with God’s help, he would make it prosper without a licence.⁶⁹ Room 7, on the second floor, a large sitting room, became the venue for many Melbourne believers who met together to study, to pray and to hear visiting speakers. Later, Smith founded the Keswick Tea Rooms and Book Depot at 315 Collins Street, Melbourne.⁷⁰

Smith found himself strongly in the Keswick tradition and recounted how the early Keswick meetings in England had resulted from a hunger for a closer walk with God, a life of ‘unbroken fellowship with Christ,’ victory over all known sin and a conscious sense of need for the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the resultant power for service.⁷¹

After nearly twenty years, the Geelong Conventions had dwindled. So in 1909, under Smith's leadership, several small conventions were organised elsewhere. The first was at Eltham, a pastoral spot on the outskirts of Melbourne, which was attended by about 50 people. In 1918-19, another was held at Upwey, in the Dandenongs, east of Melbourne, where annual conventions continued for the next 30 years. An undated general guideline for speakers at Upwey, based on the English Keswick conventions, lists the topics for Day Five as, ‘The Fullness of the Spirit,’ with subheadings ‘A command,’ ‘A birthright,’ ‘A promise,’ ‘A need,’ and, ‘The way to receive.’

⁶⁷ A. Pocklington, personal interview, n.d.; *Rivers of His Grace*, Melbourne: Belgrave Heights Convention, 1959; J. Wright, ‘Hervey Perceval Smith,’ Sydney: Tabor College, unpublished essay, 1993. Further information about Smith is from these sources, unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁸ Piggitt, 1996, p.99.

⁶⁹ A licence was finally granted in 1924 and Smith resigned. See W. Renshaw, ‘Hervey Perceval Smith’ in ADEB, 1994, p.344.

⁷⁰ Renshaw, ADEB, 1994, p.344.

⁷¹ KQ May 1929.

Indian revival

In 1898, Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), of Mukti (ie Salvation) Mission, the celebrated Indian Christian reformer,⁷² visited a Keswick Convention in England, where she urged the 4000 delegates to ‘pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all Indian Christians.’⁷³ News of ‘the Revival in Australia’, the result of evangelical initiatives such as the Simultaneous Mission, prompted Ramabai to send her daughter Manoramabai and American missionary Minnie Abrams (1859-1912) to this country ‘to catch the inspiration of the Revival fire’ and to form groups to pray for Mukti.⁷⁴ Later, reports of the Welsh revival of 1904-05⁷⁵ stirred them to organise daily prayer meetings at Mukti, which were attended by over 500 girls. There, Minnie Abrams began to teach on the baptism of the Holy Spirit for effective service. At 3.30 am, on 29 June, 1905, she was woken by a girl who had seen flames over one of her companions and had run to get a bucket of water. But there was no fire: it was a new Pentecost (cf Acts 2:3).⁷⁶ Soon all the girls in that compound were weeping, praying and confessing their sins.⁷⁷

On June 30, while Ramabai was expounding the Scriptures ‘in her usual quiet way’, she had to stop because ‘the Holy Spirit descended in power’ and the girls began to cry out aloud to God. Some saw visions; two little girls had ‘heavenly light shining on their faces’ as they prayed for hours. After times of strong conviction and much weeping, the girls had a clear understanding of Christ’s work on the Cross and there was a sense of peace, followed by joy.

⁷² For brief biographical details see Douglas (ed), 1978, p.823; Burgess et al, 1988, p.755f.

⁷³ Dyer, 1907, p.41. Following details are from this source unless otherwise stated. See also H. Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai: The Story of her Life* London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1914, p.101ff; Frodsham, 1946.

⁷⁴ Minnie Abrams was an Episcopalian missionary to India from Minneapolis, Minnesota, who joined Pandita Ramabai in 1898. She was baptised in the Spirit and spoke in tongues in 1905 at Mukti. She later wrote a booklet entitled *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire* Kedgaon: Mukti Mission Press, 1906, in which she described the revival there, some copies of which reached Australia. See Burgess et al (eds), 1988, p.7; Frodsham, 1946, pp.105ff.

⁷⁵ For further detail on the Welsh Revival, see E. Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904* Bryntirion, Wales: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1969; B.P.Jones, *An Instrument of Revival: The Complete Life of Evan Roberts 1878-1951* South Plainfield: Bridge, 1995; Frodsham, p.101f; J.E. Orr, *The Light of the Nations* London: Paternoster, 1965, pp.230-235.

⁷⁶ Acts 2:3 — ‘They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.’ (NIV)

⁷⁷ M.Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire* Kedgaon: Mukti Press, 1906, pp.5ff.

Normal meals were missed; the regular program was abandoned. There were waves of prayer over the meetings as hundreds cried audibly to God. There were similar manifestations as Mukti workers visited other missions nearby — visions of Jesus, shining faces, weeping for sin, dancing, overflowing love and joy, shaking, falling to the floor, casting out of demons, all nights of prayer. Missionaries, too, had to humble themselves, repent before God and put things right. On 7 November, 1905, Ramabai closed the school and announced ten days of prayer. Most of the 700 girls gathered together, while about 60 each day went to the villages in evangelism. In March, at the general assembly for churches in the area, thousands gathered. There were ‘Pentecostal scenes’ — people testified to the miraculous supply of food, to visions of angels, even to the building shaking.

During the first twelve months, five thousand conversions were recorded. People claimed miraculous healing. Others were freed from addiction to tobacco. Stolen property was returned. Many were called to the ministry. Most remarkable was the occurrence of glossolalia. Speaking in tongues was widespread at Mukti and at other nearby missions, to which girls from Mukti went to testify. On several occasions, there were well-authenticated reports that Indian girls had spoken clear, idiomatic English under the influence of the Spirit.⁷⁸ Shortly after this, ‘a bright, intelligent lady’ named Joan McGregor came to Melbourne from Mukti mission, attended meetings in the Federal Hotel and told of these remarkable events.⁷⁹ Furthermore, reports also came to hand of the Welsh Revival, with its widespread conversions, and its emphasis

⁷⁸ Dyer, *Ramabai*, 1914, pp.101ff. Frodsham records incidents where one woman who knew no English prayed, ‘O Lord, open the mouth; O Lord, open the heart; O Lord, open the eyes!’ and another, equally ignorant of the language, said, ‘Oh, the love of Jesus! Oh, my precious Lord! My precious Lord!’ — Frodsham, 1946 pp.107ff.

⁷⁹ Greenwood, Address, 1964; M.Hurst, personal interview, 14 August 1991. Joan McGregor, who was possibly a New Zealander, worked with the Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission for over 30 years. Around 1906, she visited Australia and New Zealand seeking support for the work, and distributing ‘mite boxes’ for people to save their spare coins for the Mission. She spoke Marathi fluently and spent at least 30 years supervising the printing and publishing of Scripture booklets, farming, sewing and evangelism. Ultimately, she was to become one of the leaders of the Mission. One photo, taken in the 1930’s shows her as an elderly lady. C.Hood, personal correspondence, 20 August 1996; E.R.Bruerton, correspondence to C.Hood, 13 December 1995; H.Johnstone, correspondence to C.Hood, 22 January 1996; *Prayer Bell* July-August, 1929, pp.11ff; September-October 1932, pp.25ff; September-October 1933, pp.4f; September-October 1935, pp.26ff; September-October 1936, pp.22ff; RE 3:2 July 1935, p.25.

on the fullness of the Spirit.⁸⁰ These stories were greedily absorbed by Christians in Melbourne.

Wilbur Chapman

In 1909, another American, the Presbyterian Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918), visited Australia, accompanied by Charles Alexander. As with Torrey, there was an astonishing response by Australians to his evangelistic approach. The meetings extended over a period of four months and drew huge crowds.⁸¹ Chapman's preaching covered similar themes to those addressed by Torrey — the authority of Scripture, the need for repentance, salvation by faith in Christ and the Spirit-filled life. He made no bones about the need to be Spirit-filled —

If you will allow me to choose between the man who has had a definite experience in conversion, and knows little of the Holy Ghost, and the man who may be uncertain as to the time of his conversion, but who knows about the third person of the Trinity, I will choose the latter every time, for I am certain that I may be a Christian and not know when I crossed the line, but I cannot be a Christian with an experience of power until I know something definite about the Holy Ghost.⁸²

The party travelled through four States with campaigns in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Ballarat and Bendigo and single rallies in several other regional centres. In Adelaide, a city of 140,000, there was an aggregate attendance of 144,000. In Melbourne, some 400 churches contributed to a choir of 1,500 voices. As with Torrey's campaign, people spoke of it as a revival. Alexander's wife and biographer later described these events as a time of Pentecost for the whole Commonwealth.⁸³ In 1912, Chapman and Alexander returned for an even larger evangelistic mission. Although press reports spoke inevitably of emotionalistic fervour, much of the support for the reasonably conservative Chapman came from equally conservative middle

⁸⁰ See Evans, 1987; Jones, 1995.

⁸¹ Pigginn, 1996, p.60; Deane, 1983, p.65; Paproth, pp.153ff. Following details are from these sources unless otherwise stated.

⁸² W.Chapman, *Power and Its Secret* Melbourne: T.Shaw Fitchett, n.d., p.78. Although this book was published after Chapman's visit, it was a reprint of an earlier volume, *Received Ye the Holy Ghost*.

⁸³ Helen Alexander, *Charles M. Alexander* London: n.d., 153, quoted in Deane, 1983, p.65 and Pigginn, 1996, p.60.

class evangelicals. Chapman's ongoing emphasis on the fullness of the Spirit was a significant factor in the emergence of Pentecostalism.

The Eltham convention

While most of the impact of the prayer movement, the Simultaneous Mission, and the visits of overseas evangelists was felt in the Evangelical world, with 'a revived spirit' in the churches and 'the reinspiration of flagging church institutions,' there was also another result — namely, the emergence of new movements.⁸⁴ One of these was Pentecostalism. The cry for revival, for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, for a closer experience of God's presence, for holiness and power for service found expression in an identifiable baptism in the Holy Spirit marked by speaking in tongues.

When the 1910 Eltham Convention was conducted, it had behind it a rich and varied series of influences — Wesleyanism, Dowie, Keswick, Grubb, Torrey, Chapman, Alexander, Murray, Ramabai, H.P. Smith. While Wesleyanism was the dominant factor in all this, it is interesting to note that both Anglicanism and Congregationalism were also strongly represented, with some Baptist and Salvation Army elements evident as well.

It would be an exaggeration to suggest that all of these developments affected all members of the small group of people present at Eltham. But there was an atmosphere of hunger for God and an eager expectation of revival. At one of the prayer meetings, a young woman named Fraser, was praying for the fullness of the Spirit when she spoke in tongues. Others began to have the same experience, including Ada Painter⁸⁵ and well-known Pentecostal identity, Maudy Rabley. Jessie Ferguson, who was to become a missionary, received the Spirit later.⁸⁶ One woman was laid in a bed in the meeting tent through serious sickness. Prayer was offered for her and that evening she played the

⁸⁴ *The Missionary Review of the World*, December 1909, p.882, quoted in Paproth, p.155.

⁸⁵ She, her three sons Alan, Robert and Reginald Wilson and her daughter and their families all became lay leaders in Pentecostal churches. Her grandson Ron Wilson is an Assemblies of God pastor. This information is obtained from them in personal interviews and confirmed by Jessie Ferguson, personal interview.

⁸⁶ Jessie Ferguson, personal interview.

organ for the singing. Another woman suffering with eczema collapsed at the door of the tent. When they picked her up the eczema had gone.⁸⁷

These manifestations caused a furore. While some saw them as answers to their prayers for the fullness of the Spirit, others rejected them. Although it is said George Grubb practised healing,⁸⁸ most of the leaders, saw these phenomena as extremist. When one person spoke in tongues on emerging from baptism, somebody tried to stop her, but without success.⁸⁹

After this, Smith continued to conduct meetings in the Federal Coffee Palace, and to allow reference and testimony to baptism in the Holy Spirit. Meetings were also held in the Assembly Hall in Collins Street. Ultimately, however, Keswick officially rejected the new manifestations, and refused to allow people to speak about them publicly. The emphasis on the fullness of the Spirit was sustained, but emotions, feelings and outward expressions of the Spirit's presence were plainly discouraged. The esteemed British evangelist and convention speaker F.B.Meyer (1847-1929) told how when, as an old man, he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, 'there was nothing emotional ... nothing ecstatic, nothing sensational about the experience.' Yet this made him 'a spiritual power that was literally Pentecostal.'⁹⁰ The fullness of the Holy Spirit was a free gift. It was important to 'dismiss from our minds forever the idea that we must struggle and agonise' to receive it. Just as salvation was accepted by simple faith, so was baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁹¹ H.P. Smith

⁸⁷ Greenwood, Address, 1964. To this point, I have only been able to confirm the story of Ada Painter.

⁸⁸ Broome, 1980, p.65; see also Millard, 1893, pp.108f.

⁸⁹ Greenwood, Address, 1964.

⁹⁰ Holden (ed), 1929, p.43. One Keswick hymn said, 'I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies; no sudden rending of the veil of clay; no angel visitant, no opening skies; but take the dimness of my soul away.' At the 1929 Keswick Convention in England, J.Russell Howden declared, 'You may not feel anything. Well, I hope you don't, and I hope you won't, because your filling, as your saving, does not in the least depend upon what you feel. It depends upon God's fact, not upon your faith. And when you dare, in the absence of all feeling and all emotion to believe what God says, He fulfils His word.' Holden (ed), 1929, pp.43, 157.

⁹¹ R.Wallis, 'The Fullness of the Spirit,' in W.H.Aldis (ed) *The Keswick Convention 1938: Notes of the Addresses Revised by the Speakers* London: Paternoster, 1938, pp.216f. Although this address was given in 1938, it is fair to assume it reflected a long-standing Keswick approach. Ian Randall points out that 'unlike Keswick, Pentecostal insisted that they taught a baptism which was not a "faith" baptism — believe you have received — but rather a "power" baptism.' See I.M.Randall, 'Old Time Power: Relationships between Pentecostalism and Evangelical Spirituality in England,' in *Pneuma* 19:1, Spring 1997, p.62.

adopted this approach, abandoned the emphasis on Pentecostal phenomena and continued to work in Keswick meetings and conventions until his death in 1948.⁹² Two of his sisters went to India as missionaries. One of them, Rosa, accepted Spirit-baptism and spent the rest of her life at Mukti.⁹³

John Henry Coombe and John Barclay

One man who exemplified the blend of the old evangelicalism and the new Pentecostalism was John Henry Coombe (1883-1957). On 28 February 1907, Coombe was the first person in Melbourne, Victoria, to speak in tongues.⁹⁴ He was, for a time, a Pentecostal leader, known for his excellence in biblical exposition. ‘John Coombe taught deep things from the Word of God,’ recalled Elizabeth Barclay. ‘The folk came to hear him because he was so earnest and so hungry for the things of God. His teaching was so rich.’⁹⁵

Born in Drouin, Victoria, and brought up in New Zealand, with a Methodist father and a Presbyterian mother, Jack, as he was known to his family, was an accomplished cyclist and cricketer and skilled with the rifle.⁹⁶ At one point, he planned to take up cycle racing, but felt called by God to a ride a different race.⁹⁷

In September 1906, he attended the first Pentecostal meetings held in Melbourne in the North Carlton home of an elderly lady named Mrs

⁹² *New Life*, Vol.35, No.66, 21 September 1972, p.1; Renshaw, ADEB, 1994, p.344..

⁹³ Ferguson, interview.

⁹⁴ J.H.Nickson, ‘Pentecost in Melbourne, Australia,’ in M.W.Moorhead, *A Cloud of Witnesses to Pentecost in India* Pamphlet #4, Bombay, 1908, p.28.

⁹⁵ S.Muirhead, ‘John Barclay,’ unpublished essay, Tabor College, Adelaide, 1988, research notes.

⁹⁶ B.Coombe, ‘A Tribute to Dad,’ handwritten note, n.d.

⁹⁷ ‘Our Pioneer Missionary: An appreciation of the late Rev J.H.Coombe by a Council Member,’ R.M.B.U. News Bulletin cutting, n.d. but probably around 1957. A.Coombe, ‘Notes on the Coombe Family,’ 1 February 1982; J.A.Coombe, ‘Notes on the Coombe Family,’ n.d.; Gwenda Cowell, personal interview, 22 March 1997; Joyce Whitburn, personal interview, 22 March 1997; S.Muirhead, essay, 1988; Beryl Coombe, ‘Rev John Henry Coombe,’ n.d.. Family details are generally from these sources unless otherwise stated. For a general summary of Coombe’s family background see my unpublished paper, ‘John Henry Coombe (1887-1957): a Dream Fulfilled.’

J.H.Nickson.⁹⁸ How these meetings began and to what extent they were a product of the various conventions and campaigns of the previous two decades is not known. But it is a fair assumption that they did not emerge in isolation but grew out of that well-cultivated Evangelical soil. Only three people attended the first gathering, but the numbers grew and on 28 February 1907, this ‘earnest young brother’ spoke in tongues. Mrs Nickson described the incident with wonderment —

I had not heard anyone speak in unknown tongues before, and a great awe came over the meeting. Some fell down under the mighty power of God. This brother spoke and sang, and gave some of us sweet messages from the Lord, in the unknown tongue which he also interpreted. It was a wonderful time and we were full of praises to our God, for condescending to come among us in such a marvellous manner. All glory to Jesus be given.⁹⁹

Around June 1907, as some of the group planned to attend a meeting at the local Church of England, they decided to meet for prayer first. They never did arrive. ‘The Lord came down in great power’ and four more people spoke and sang in tongues. Over the next few weeks, similar phenomena occurred and soon there was a sizeable company who had experienced charismata.

Another woman told how she had attended meetings at Canning Street, Carlton, in May 1907, ‘in deadly earnest’ to receive the fullness of God’s blessing. In October of the same year, she ‘received Pentecost.’ Again, it was a vivid encounter with God —

The blessing was so wonderful, I was prostrate, trembling and shaking from head to foot. I did know that the blessed Holy Spirit was poured out upon me as in the days of Pentecost. Words fail to express what I felt and know of Jesus. I do praise Him, He has given me such love for everyone... People said when I first received

⁹⁸ Muirhead, 1988, p.2; J.H.Nickson, ‘Pentecost in Melbourne, Australia’ in Moorhead (ed), 1908, p.28. More research is still to be done about Mrs Nickson as virtually nothing is currently known about her background. .

⁹⁹ Nickson, in Moorhead (ed), 1908, p.28; Ninety years later, Coombe’s nephew could recall that Coombe had received a ‘rich experience’ at this time — S.Coombe, personal interview, 21 March 1997..

the blessing it was excitement and would soon pass away; but glory to Jesus, it is Jesus only, He is still the same wonder working Jesus.¹⁰⁰

Another to be immersed in the Spirit was policeman John Barclay. Born in Northern Ireland on 26 October 1881, Barclay had come to Australia at the turn of the century. In late 1906 or early 1907, he began to attend the meetings at the Nickson home. He was soon numbered among those who experienced the power of the Holy Spirit —

I saw the heavens opened and my precious Jesus sitting on the throne. Oh, the joy and beauty and glory! It is unspeakable. Then Jesus came right down into the room and I saw Him smile all around. But he looked so sadly at me, and His look condemned me for refusing before to yield myself fully up to Him. His loving but sad look broke my heart, and I burst into tears, and cried: ‘Lord, I yield my all up to you to do with me as Thou wilt.’ I just cried from my heart that verse, “I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord...” It was simply celestial; no beauty on earth like it! No words on earth can describe what it was like.¹⁰¹

Barclay was for about an hour and a half unconscious to everything except the Lord’s presence. When he ‘returned to earth again,’ one of the women present began to entreat God for blessing on the believers and for the conversion of unbelievers, after which she began to pray and sing in a strange tongue which sounded to Barclay like Chinese. He was entranced —

What heavenly music! It sounded very much like an angel’s voice coming rolling over the balconies of heaven. Of all the grand singers I have heard, I have never heard anything so sweet. She gave messages from God to several. Our meeting lasted till four o’clock in the morning.

As a result of this experience, Barclay had an earnest desire for a more intimate knowledge of God and began ‘seeking in real deep earnest for the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire.’ He was beset with doubts for a time, but after praying about this, he felt an encouraging peace of mind. Indeed ‘a beautiful calm and

¹⁰⁰ M.McDonald, ‘Pentecost in Melbourne,’ in Moorhead (ed), 1908, p.30.

¹⁰¹ John Barclay, ‘A Victorian Policeman’s Witness’ in Moorhead (ed), 1908, p.31. Subsequent quotations are also from this source.

peace' permeated his being and he 'saw a light shine from heaven far brighter than the noonday Sun' and so intense that he had to cover his eyes with his hands.

That night he went to another house meeting but was again troubled with doubts. Nevertheless, he persisted in prayer until about 10-30 pm with some others, some of whom were speaking in tongues. Finally, about one o'clock the next morning, one of the men laid hands on him and he was baptised in the Spirit. For him it was a powerful encounter —

My hands, arms, and whole body trembled greatly and I was thrown to the floor. All the others were praising the Lord... He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He baptises with the Holy Ghost the same today as nineteen centuries ago. On that night the Lord gave me the tongues, and since then I have spoken in four or five different languages. All glory to His Name!

He soon ran into criticism and opposition, with Christian friends telling him it was 'all of the devil.' But his experience was so meaningful, he was convinced it was from God. How could Satan give the peace, joy, and happiness that he was experiencing?

The leadership of the home group was early put into the hands of John Coombe, although the meetings were equally recognised as Mrs Nickson's. They were marked by extraordinary phenomena —

I might say many have seen Jesus... Many have also seen Fire. I think all interpret. The interpretations seem to show the near coming of Jesus... and following Jesus all the way... The precious Blood is always exalted in our midst. I think all who have received the gift of tongues have *seen* the Fire of God as well as felt it... Sometimes our meetings are all praise to Jesus and adoration with this heavenly singing.¹⁰²

The sense of wonder that permeates this report was matched by a reflective sense of humility. Those who had received the gift were 'very lowly' and of little account in the world's eyes. Hence, they were often criticised. But they did not mind for the Lord filled them with 'so much joy.'

¹⁰² J.H.Nickson, 'Pentecost in Melbourne' in Moorhead (ed), 1908, p.29.

Following his baptism in the Holy Spirit Coombe and his fiancée Lillian Carroll were helpers at the Chapman-Alexander Mission of 1909. That same year, Coombe married Lillian and moved to Essendon. In 1910, with the assistance of A.S.Joyce, who provided the money, Coombe established a Mission in Palmer Street, Fitzroy and asked Barclay to join him there.¹⁰³ This small church of about 100 people, was never known as ‘Pentecostal,’ although Pentecostal manifestations did occur at times. One story is still recalled today of how one Ben Gibson spoke in tongues and a Chinese person alleged he had used text-book Chinese.¹⁰⁴ Around 1920, Gibson was involved in a business partnership with C.L.Greenwood, at Sunshine. Greenwood, who attended meetings at Palmer Street on occasion,¹⁰⁵ later became one of Australia’s most effective Pentecostal evangelists and a leader in the Assemblies of God.¹⁰⁶ Overall, however, their practices were more Evangelical than Pentecostal. People like Jeannie Lancaster were seen as ‘extreme’ with too great an emphasis on the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷

Tarrying meetings, where people prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, were held regularly on Saturday evenings. ‘We had wonderful times there,’ recalled one woman. ‘People came from all over Melbourne.’¹⁰⁸ A single sheet ascribed to Coombe for conducting these ‘Waiting Meetings’ outlines guidelines for the evaluation and control of physical expressions of emotion and worship.¹⁰⁹

The emphasis at Palmer Street was on witnessing and evangelism. Often, people were brought from the streets to the meetings. Sunday morning services were devoted to prayer, the sacrament of communion and testimonies. There was an afternoon Sunday School and in the evenings, the services were again given over to worship and prayer. There was ‘a lovely spirit of love and

¹⁰³ Mrs Ridge, personal interview, n.d.

¹⁰⁴ Muirhead, 1988, p.3; Whitburn, personal interview, 22 March 1997.

¹⁰⁵ Mrs Ridge, personal interview, n.d.

¹⁰⁶ Greenwood, *Life Story*, 1965, pp.48ff.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁸ Mrs Ridge, personal interview, n.d.

¹⁰⁹ J.Coombe (?), ‘Waiting Meetings,’ typed sheet, n.d. Original supplied by E.Barclay.

unity.¹¹⁰ Basically, Coombe was the teacher, Barclay the evangelist. During May, June and July, 1913, at the Esperanto Hall, Coombe preached a series of sermons on the Second Coming of Christ.¹¹¹ In one of these, commenting on international trends, the Welsh Revival and the Pentecostal effusion at Azusa Street, he makes an oblique, but pointed reference to his own experience of the Holy Spirit —

The Holy Flame of Fire burned not only in the East — the Western Hemisphere is also lit up by its beacon light; Wales bursts into flame; but Wales alone could not contain it; soon it burns with intense heat in Los Angeles, and America is aglow, and, Bless God, the Fire has reached us here.¹¹²

Around this time, Coombe also visited the small group of Pentecostal people led by William Sloan at Freeburgh, near Bright, Victoria.¹¹³

From the beginning, the fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit was seen as a commission to engage in world-wide evangelistic outreach.¹¹⁴ Taking Acts 1:8 literally, they sought to go to the ends of the earth. So in 1910, as a result of these experiences, at a meeting in Coombe's home addressed by Miss J.C.Cole, the Nepalese Mission Band was formed. This was subsequently to become the Australian Nepalese Mission and ultimately to be merged with the Regions Beyond Missionary Union. William Jarvie, who was later to lead the Palmer Street Mission, became chairman of the Board and Coombe's brother Alfred was secretary.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Muirhead, 1988.

¹¹¹ Muirhead, 1988, p.2; J.Coombe, 'The Second Coming of Our Lord,' typed transcripts of sermons in possession of Gwenda Cowell, Melbourne, Vic.

¹¹² J.Coombe, 'The Vision of Nebuchadnezzar and its Interpretation,' sermon transcript, 19 June, 1913, in possession of Gwenda Cowell, Melbourne, Vic..

¹¹³ See Chapter Three.

¹¹⁴ 'The Australian Nepalese Mission,' typed transcript, no author, n.d.

¹¹⁵ Coombe personally felt called by God to reach Nepal with the gospel. As Nepal was one of the few countries closed to missionaries at that time, this was an unlikely commission. The members of the new Mission prayed for several years for Nepal and finally, in March 1917, with their two children, Beryl, 6, and Keith, 3, the Coombes journeyed to India on the *Mongolia* and settled at Ghorasahan, a railway settlement near the border of Nepal. Before leaving Melbourne, Coombe organised some thirty monthly prayer meetings in several cities to undergird the work. Coombe lived in India, on the border of Nepal, for the next 25 years, engaged in a wide range of missionary activities. After his wife's death, he returned to Australia and spent the next three years recuperating in the home of his son Keith and

Overseas influence

In spite of the significant number of overseas evangelists and missionaries who visited Australia between 1890 and World War I, there is little evidence that Pentecostalism was imported. Like evangelicalism, early Pentecostalism benefited from the cosmopolitan flavours being added to the local Christian fare, but the leadership and the major work was carried out by Australians.¹¹⁶ Certainly, both news and ministry from other countries had an effect. The Pentecostal phenomena in Keswick circles were inspired both by visits of overseas speakers and news of overseas revivals. Yet it is equally clear that the first Pentecostal meetings were not started as planned outreaches from overseas organisations. They were basically indigenous movements. It is not known where Joseph Marshall first heard of glossolalia. If his detractors are to be believed, he discovered the idea for himself.¹¹⁷ Sarah Jane Lancaster, for her part, resolutely denied any external influence on her thinking.¹¹⁸ Other pioneer leaders such as Florrie Mortomore, Ellen Mather, C.L.Greenwood, Robert Horne, W.A.Buchanan, Philip Duncan, Maxwell Armstrong, Charles Enticknap were Australian-born.¹¹⁹

Once the movement was under way, there were further visitors from America, India, England, South Africa, New Zealand and other lands. These helped to shape the movement, but not to make it. The first Pentecostal believers may

daughter-in-law Grace. In 1947 he married Jean Clezy. The couple settled in Naracoorte, South Australia, where he continued to serve God and to encourage support for the Mission. Ten years later, in 1957, he died, but not before hearing that Nepal was at last open to Christian missions. Barclay took over leadership at Palmer Street and two years later resigned from the police force to give himself to the work full-time. He and Elizabeth never did go to China: he continued at the Fitzroy Mission until his death in 1946. Jarvie was 'not Pentecostal' and discouraged Pentecostal practices — 'Australian Nepalese Mission'; Mrs Ridge, personal interview, n.d.

¹¹⁶ Paproth (in Hutchinson et al, 1994, pp.147ff) points out the local flavour of evangelicalism in Melbourne during this period and suggests that Chapman, for example, may well have learned from the cooperative approach taken here as he seems to have duplicated the concept of a simultaneous mission elsewhere.

¹¹⁷ *Christian Weekly and Methodist Journal*, 20 July 1883; for more on Marshall, see Chapter Three.

¹¹⁸ J.Lancaster, 'From Our Letter Box', GN 19:11, Nov 1, 1928, p.4f. For more on Lancaster, see Chapter Six. It is interesting to compare the introduction of Mormonism which was substantially the work of foreign missionaries. See Newton, *Saints*, 1991. Compare also movements such as Theosophy, which seem to have owed considerably more to overseas input. See Roe, *Beyond Belief*, 1986.

¹¹⁹ See Chapters Six, Nine and Twelve.

have been influenced from overseas, but their experience was their own. They were very clear about it. No one formulated a three-stage initiation as Seymour had done. The approach was simple. Regeneration was for salvation; baptism in the Spirit was for service — and this was evidenced by speaking in tongues. That glossolalia was the initial sign of the coming of the Spirit was plainly expressed in the writings of early Pentecostal preachers.

‘In all of these outpourings of the Spirit,’ claims a Parramatta leaflet, ‘the same evidence was manifested, the speaking in tongues. The Holy Ghost gave us the three incidents of companies receiving the Holy Ghost to establish the fact that the Spirit always speaks in tongues through a baptised believer.’ The Statement of Faith for Good News Hall declared, ‘We believe that a definite physical manifestation accompanies the reception of the Holy Spirit.’ The Assemblies of God Statement of Faith was even more plain —

(We believe) in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit for all believers with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.

An examination of the available evidence shows that the Pentecostal movement in Australia did not begin in a vacuum. It was germinated in a bed of revivalism that drew its life both from Methodist perfectionism and Dowie’s focus on divine healing and was cultivated in the wider evangelical garden of those who simply wanted ‘more of God.’ From the earliest-known meetings in the home of Joseph Marshall (1870) to the establishing of Good News Hall in 1908, all three played a significant part in its development. The forces that shaped the movement were rich and varied — both religiously and internationally.