

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FREE FLOWING SPIRIT

F.B.Van Eyk — carrying the message across the land, 1926-1934

In 1926, there came to Australia a South African evangelist named Frederick Bernadas Van Eyk (1895-1939).¹ Having formerly been both a 'notorious character in the wilds of Transvaal,' poorly educated, his life characterised by gambling, drinking, smoking, profanity and the like,² and later a mounted policeman,³ he was converted in Durban and joined the Apostolic Faith Mission. Around 1916 he became an evangelist.⁴ He was a vigorous preacher and an inspiring singer⁵, and another of the significant international visitors who contributed to the development of the Pentecostal movement in Australia.

Van Eyk was not a tall man, but he was very strong.⁶ Photographs display a determined, confident face, softened by fleshy lips. His personality was such

¹ Actual dates are 6 June 1895 to 23 December 1939. See J.K.Wallis, *The Beginnings: an Account of the 1929 Cessnock Revival Aberdare*: 1989, p.58; see also the photo of his grave in my possession.

² GN 17:9 September 1926, p.5; 17:10 October 1926, p.12.

³ GN, June 1926, p.18; P.Duncan, 'Lecture,' 1965.

⁴ FGE 1:3 July 1932, p.14 ('...in all my sixteen years of experience ...').

⁵ 'He could sing you into heaven' — Isak Burger, personal interview, 14 July 1997.

⁶ L.Harris, personal interview; GN, December 1927, p.10 — 'You are a little man but you have big faith.'

that he won both fierce loyalty and fierce antagonism. While some saw him as a powerful preacher 'sent by God',⁷ others regarded him as a brazen charlatan.⁸ As we shall see, opinions about him are still divided today. Given that he started two Pentecostal denominations and established some 17 Pentecostal congregations in Australia, his significance cannot be ignored.

Van Eyk was invited to Australia by a group of three men in the fledgling Pentecostal movement there — J.E. ('Grandpa') Rieschick, Hines Retchford and 'Brother' Stevens. These men had been conducting regular open air meetings at the Kingston Statue in Adelaide, South Australia. Later they were to form the Adelaide Council of the Apostolic Faith Mission. With them was another South African, Isaac Hugo, a lithographer, who had been engaged in Mission work for some twelve years since his baptism in the Spirit and was now coming to work for an Adelaide printer. On his first Saturday night, he came across the open air meeting and soon joined the Pentecostal group. By 1926, he was pastor of the Adelaide assembly. The fifth in the leadership group was the secretary, Gus Jansen, a former school teacher.⁹

When Van Eyk arrived in Australia, he was accompanied by his wife Cecilia Isabel and four children, Neilsie, Dick, Freddie and Faith.¹⁰ He arrived in Perth, Western Australia in March, 1926, where he held some meetings. An excited report noted how a man with an arm so painful and weak he could not even lift a teaspoon to his lips was dramatically healed.¹¹ He then sailed on to Adelaide. Meetings were arranged there with Van Eyk, Hugo and Jansen as the speakers. They were advertised with a strange blend of humility and hubris. Neither names nor photos of the evangelists were included in the advertising, so that 'Jesus Christ alone' was lifted up. Yet the meetings were featured as the 'greatest effort ever made to cope with the suffering and need of our fellow

⁷ Chant, 1984, p.103.

⁸ eg 'Drowning the devil in a two-foot tub! Stop Van Eyk's balderdash!' in *Truth*, 7 July 1929.

⁹ GN 18:2 February 1927, p.11. For more on Jansen see Appendix Ten.

¹⁰ GN, April 1928, p.11; Wallis, 1989, p.58.

man.' The campaign was to be strictly non-sectarian and all Christians were invited to participate. There was a special invitation to the sick and suffering, and divine healing would be both preached and demonstrated. There would be no offering and seats were free. No closing date was set, so the Holy Spirit was 'being permitted to lead.'

The invitation was anything but subtle —

COMPLETE DELIVERANCE FOR ALL CAPTIVES

Are you a sinner? Come and be saved

Are you a drunkard? Come and be delivered

Are you a sceptic? Come and be convinced

Are you a christian? Come and be baptised in the Holy Ghost.¹²

Van Eyk's usual method of praying for the sick was to lay hands on their head and to command the sickness to go. Sometimes, people were given printed instructions on how to prepare themselves for healing.¹³ The Protestant Hall in Hindmarsh Square was crowded and many professed to be converted and baptised in the Holy Spirit, with the 'evidence' of glossolalia. 'Many mighty miracles' were claimed. Among those who were declared cured were a blind girl, a hunch-back, a deaf woman, a dwarfed baby and a child with a growth in his throat. When Van Eyk invited those who had been healed to come to the front of the hall, there was insufficient room. On 9 May, over one thousand people attended a service of baptism by immersion at the River Torrens.¹⁴ Rieschick, described as a 'veteran Pentecostal elder,' paid enthusiastic tribute to the evangelist —

When on the platform or praying, he enters into the very presence of God, and is a changed man, full of fire; his whole being is in it.

¹¹ GN 17:4 April 1926, p.20.

¹² GN 17:4 April 1926, p.20; GN 17:5 May 1926, pp.18, 20. Within two months, Van Eyk's and Hugo's names were being used in advertising — GN 17:7 July 1926, p.20.

¹³ GN 18:12 December 1927, p.14.

¹⁴ GN 17:6 June 1926, p.20.

He is fond of music and singing, his delivery powerful, eloquent, and accompanied by action, his address — dictated by the Holy Spirit — flowing like rivers of living water. When he unfolds the mysteries of God's Holy Word, you are lost in wonder and adoration, and are just carried away on a higher plane into the presence of God. It is beautiful how he can bring a subject before us; explain, illustrate, and demonstrate it by the Word of God.¹⁵

Soon they were in Melbourne where 31 people claimed to be healed from complaints such as deafness, partial blindness, alcoholism, goitre, eczema, gastritis, catarrh, bad nerves, blood pressure, rheumatoid arthritis, back pain, asthma (of 25 years' standing), influenza, kidney trouble, curvature of the spine, insomnia and nervous tension.¹⁶ Van Eyk also visited some country areas in Victoria. In Korumburra, his visit overlapped with that of Chief Stoker Stephens, a Methodist evangelist. The local press acknowledged Stephens's rallies but ignored Van Eyk's.¹⁷ Similarly, although Van Eyk had been told that Geelong was 'the city of revivals,' a reference, no doubt, to the activities of people like George Grubb forty years previously, it proved difficult to find any churches willing to cooperate with him and attendances at the Eastern Hall initially were small. The evangelist lamented that there were 'walls of prejudice and barriers of denominationalism to be broken down,' apart from the 'usual' ignorance and fears. He preached on the theme of divine healing and soon people began to testify of recovery. Nevertheless, the sight of so many sick and suffering people was deeply challenging. He later said —

As we looked with pity upon them, we saw only too plainly the meaning of our travailing in the Spirit, our groans and tears for God's mercy upon the people as we agonized before Him those long days and longer nights preceding these meetings. Those times when our souls were so burdened by God that they abhorred both meats and sleep, so engrossed were they in intercession on behalf of this awful condition of things. As we moved from one to another of these poor, afflicted ones, each bending low under the burden of one or another of the following: — Cancer,

¹⁵ J.Lancaster, 'First Impressions,' GN 17:5, May 1926, p.18.

¹⁶ GN 17:9 September 1926, p.12

¹⁷ *The Korumburra Times* 21 August 1926.

gallstones, arthritis, neuritis, nervous debility, defective eyesight, lameness or deafness — we cry from our innermost souls, ‘Father, in the name of Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, we ask you to blast this cursed disease, and grant now a full and free deliverance from pain and suffering.’ One after another we saw the finger of God touch, removing from their bodies the last vestige of pain.¹⁸

He admitted there were some who were apparently not healed, but claimed that ‘the large majority’ were set free, and that many testimonials of healing were received. Moreover, people began to come to his lodgings either to report a healing or to urge him to go with them to minister to someone in need. The *Geelong Advertiser* was warm in its appraisal of the meetings —

In praying for the sick, Mr Van Eyk’s axiom is. ‘Remove the cause, and the patient is healed’; therefore, it is necessary for hatred, envy, jealousy, covetousness, and, in fact, all sin to be forsaken. On Wednesday night 14 persons rose to declare they had been wholly or partially delivered from various sicknesses or disabilities; a man suffering in feet and legs for eight months walked and jumped to demonstrate that he was completely healed. A young woman removed her powerful glasses, and claimed the complete restoration of eyesight, which had been partially destroyed through concussion of the brain caused by an accident ... Deaf people said their hearing was restored. One deaf-mute spoke for the first time since babyhood.¹⁹

Van Eyk’s audacity and daring faith was demonstrated when a woman of Christian Science persuasion came for healing. ‘I want to demonstrate to you tonight the difference between ‘Divine Healing’ and Christian Science so-called,’ pronounced the evangelist. Pointing to the woman, he said, ‘This woman ... has been under the treatment of Christian Science for the last six years, and here she is tonight with excruciating pains in body and head. I am now going to pray for her, and prove to you by her immediate healing that C.S. is a fake.’ He anointed her with oil and prayed for her. She testified then and there that the pain had vanished.²⁰

¹⁸ F.B. Van Eyk, ‘Evangelist Van Eyk’s Report of the Geelong Campaign,’ GN 17:9 October 1926, p.14.

¹⁹ *Geelong Advertiser* 4 September 1926, quoted in GN 17:10 October 1926, p.13.

²⁰ *Geelong Advertiser* 4 September 1926, quoted in GN 17:10 October 1926, p.13.

Good News reported a couple of dramatic incidents which took place at this time. Before Van Eyk's arrival in Adelaide, South Australia, a woman saw a vision of a man 'in apostolic garb' and heard a voice say, 'This man will teach you the way of righteousness.' A few weeks later, she saw a photo of Van Eyk in a newspaper advertisement and recognized him as the one she had seen. A woman in Melbourne had a similar experience. Another claimed that when Van Eyk was preaching in Good News Hall, his figure faded and Jesus was seen standing in his place. Others said they saw the figure of Jesus standing behind him while he spoke. Jeannie Lancaster was awestruck. She had witnessed the ministry of Aimee McPherson and Smith Wigglesworth and A.C.Valdez, but never, she whispered, had she seen 'such wonderful anointings of the Spirit' as had been granted to Van Eyk. 'Our God,' she continued, 'is exercising a peculiarly jealous care over him.'²¹ The tragedy is that within three years a dark shadow would attach itself to him so closely that it would frustrate even this divine mantle.

The Apostolic Faith Mission

After a brief visit to New Zealand, Van Eyk proposed to Lancaster that Good News Hall, together with its handful of satellite churches, should adopt the name of his South African home church, namely Apostolic Faith Mission.²² At their first annual conference, held at Easter, April 15-24, 1927, Van Eyk was appointed as their 'first evangelist.'²³ Lancaster was impressed with Van Eyk's 'sweet spirit of humility and conciliation.' She believed he would be used by God to bring unity and love, to those whose hearts were not already given over to bitterness, and that although he was a fearless man of God, he was so filled with love, even his words of rebuke would be 'shorn of offense.'²⁴ Soon his pioneering work began to open up new assemblies. Accompanied by

²¹ GN 17:10 October 1926, p.15.

²² GN 17:9 September 1926, p.11; 18:6 June 1927, p.10.

²³ GN, June 1927, 10f.

²⁴ GN 17:9 September 1926, p.11; GN 18:6 June 1927, p.10.



Sarah Jane Lancaster and F.B. Van Eyk
Photo courtesy C.J. Buchanan

Lancaster's son-in-law, W.A.(Alex) Buchanan, he travelled an estimated 27,000 kilometres through every State of the Commonwealth preaching the gospel.²⁵

During this time, his methods became legendary. He was vigorous and athletic. He rarely stood still when he preached. He would leap, jump, walk, run across the platform. On one occasion, to make a point, he stood on the piano.²⁶ He would wave his handkerchief, shout, sing, weep. He sometimes tackled unruly interjectors himself, leaving the platform if necessary to evict them personally. 'The Lord prohibits me from hitting people,' he said, 'but he does not say that I cannot put them out.'²⁷ In street meetings, he drew large crowds and virile abuse. On at least one occasion, raw eggs were thrown at him. He loved repartee and used it to his advantage. When one man shouted, 'I believe in evolution,' he responded, 'Looking at you, I'm inclined to believe in it myself! But what do you say when you pray? "Our Father who art up a tree?"' ²⁸

His son recalled —

He was a vital person. He could eject interjectors, yet at the same time, he could be very gentle. People would turn and look at him as he walked down the street. He did not call attention to himself, but people were just attracted to him. He was always interested in people and wherever he went he drew a crowd. It didn't matter to him if he was preaching to five people or to a thousand. He did it with the same enthusiasm. He used to tell us never to run away from a fight — but never to go looking for one either!²⁹

²⁵ W.A.Buchanan, 'Know Your Minister,' AE 20:12 December 1963, p.17.

²⁶ F.Lancaster, personal interview, 18 December 1993. Other interviewees also referred to this.

²⁷ CE, 12 July 1929.

²⁸ 'Van Eyk's Mission', SMH, 8 July 1929, p.11; *Cessnock Eagle*, 12 July 1929; N.Armstrong, personal communication; *Truth*, 7 July 1929; GC, November-December, 1932.

²⁹ G.East, 'The failure of F.B.Van Eyk to establish a continuing movement in Australia,' unpublished essay, Tabor College, 1984.

His second wife described him as a 'strong, vital, energetic live-wire.'³⁰ An early supporter of his ministry wrote —

He was an outstanding preacher of the Word on all subjects. People were gripped by the power of the Spirit as he spoke. He was fearless of persecution ... He sang and played the piano with as much power as he did in preaching.³¹

Another man said —

You couldn't help liking him. He was a man's man. He could lift a bag of wheat, wrestle, shoot better than anybody. He put on wrestling bouts for the boys in Parkes. He was musical, He had personality. He once boasted — my father and Uncle Ben Michalk and old Brother Marsh and I were sitting at the table when I was a boy — 'I can fill any hall in Australia.' He could, too.³²

George Burns noted that after Van Eyk's visit at least half his workers were men. Pentecost had solved the problem of catching men for Jesus Christ, he said, and made them realise that witnessing for Jesus Christ was 'a man's job.'³³ In February 1927, Van Eyk and Buchanan visited Maryborough, Queensland. Here as a result of Mortomore's ministry, George Burns, former journalist with the *Maryborough Chronicle*³⁴ and pastor of the local Church of Christ, had with about 40 of his original members, formed a new congregation named the Christian Mission. There was some scepticism in the community about the beginning of what they saw as a new sect and some predicted their early demise. At the first meal together, Burns felt 'a foregleam of heaven' —

When our dear brother rose to speak the first dozen words were sufficient to satisfy my heart that we were in the presence of a prophet of the risen Christ... our

³⁰ Hilda Van Eyk in a letter to Marie Allsopp, 14 February 1940. Original in the possession of Mrs Marie Fraser of Newcastle.

³¹ G.Muir, personal communication.

³² N.L.Armstrong, personal interview, October 1993.

³³ G.Burns, 'God's work in Maryborough, Qu.,' GN 19:2 February 1928, p.17.

³⁴ *The Canvas Cathedral Cooee Toowoomba*, #1 17 October 1931.

Mission ran on for three weeks and three days, and during that time our eyes beheld the glory of God and majesty and power of God as we had never seen it before.³⁵

Meetings began in the Orange Hall, with seating for about 250 people. Van Eyk also held consultations each morning. By the end of the week, the campaign was transferred to the much larger Naval Hall, which could handle some two thousand.³⁶ There were neither seats nor platform, but the small congregation worked hard and by Tuesday 2 April, it was ready. According to Burns, it was full for the first meeting. Some had clearly come to question and criticise, but a testimony of healing from diabetes and the evident recovery of sight to a blind woman were hard to refute. Burns reported healings from goitre, asthma, gout, rheumatism, diabetes, lumbago, ulcers, internal troubles, incipient cancer, paralysis, deafness and blindness. He was impressed with the way Van Eyk prayed with authority, telling sickness to go in Jesus' name. 'Whole families were swept into the Kingdom,' Burns claimed, usually as the result of at least one member being healed. He expected the church numbers to increase by one hundred as a result.³⁷ Van Eyk later claimed that on one occasion there had been a sound like that recorded on the day of Pentecost which swept through the building and resulted in about 15 people being converted.³⁸ The campaign was not without competition. On weekdays, the local cinemas were making the most of the newest films. On Sunday 13 March, the International Bible Students Association hosted a rally in the Town Hall. And the churches, of course, all had their regular services.³⁹ Nevertheless, the crowds continued to flock to Van Eyk.

³⁵ G.Burns (?), 'The Land of Promise,' GN 19:8, August 1928, p.10.

³⁶ Note that Burns seems to have jumbled his reports in places. He claims that the meetings began on Wednesday 27 March. In fact, they commenced on Wednesday 23rd February. Furthermore, a press report suggests there were one thousand people present. See GN 18:5 May 1927, p.12; MC 5 February 1927, 22 February 1927, p.4.

³⁷ GN 18:5 May 1927, pp.10f.

³⁸ FGE 1:3 July 1932, p.13.

³⁹ MC 12 March 1927

On Sunday 20 March, the final day of the campaign, 42 persons were baptised by immersion in the local river, a service witnessed by huge crowds.⁴⁰ By May of that year, some 300 people attended a church picnic, and within a few months, there were 200 members and 100 Sunday School children in regular fellowship. Between 30 and 50 people attended week night tarrying meetings with nearly 100 receiving the Spirit in the first year. Crowds of up to one thousand attended their open air meetings.⁴¹ Like those before him, Burns was captivated by the two evangelists. 'Oh! How our hearts have grown to love these two dear servants of God as they have poured themselves out in service day by day in our midst,' he enthused. 'Of our dear Brother Van Eyk as a preacher of the glorious truths of the gospel one cannot speak too highly. He is, indeed, a ministry in demonstration of the Spirit and power.'⁴²

Soon after the campaign, letters began to appear in the local press, disputing the claims to healing. A correspondent using the name 'Bible Student' argued that the recoveries were largely the result of suggestion.⁴³ Burns's response was to provide details of people who had been healed of such complaints as kidney trouble, heart trouble, gall stones, deafness, ulcers and paralysis.⁴⁴ Others soon joined in the debate with 'Old Timer' referring to Pentecostal orgies and the current Churches of Christ pastor Alan Price detailing cases of people who had not been healed.⁴⁵ Burns continued a steady stream of letters attempting to answer these charges. Then members of the church began to contribute, addressing letters to the editor containing their own experiences of healing.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ MC 21 March 1927, p.4. GN 18:7 May 1927, p.11.

⁴¹ GN 18:7 July 1927, p.12; August 1927, 15; GN 19:6 June 1928, pp.13f; GN 19:8 August 1928, pp.10f; Duncan, *Pentecost in Australia*, pp.12f.

⁴² GN 18:5 May 1927, pp.11.

⁴³ He was apparently an elder in one of the Maryborough churches. See GN, 19:1, February 1928, p.10.

⁴⁴ MC, 19 March 1927, p.8.

⁴⁵ MC, 8 April, 1927, p.2; 16 July 1927, p.2; 30 July 1927, p.16; 4 October 1927, p.2.

⁴⁶ MC, 9 July 1927, p.8; 14 July 1927, p.8; 16 July 1927, p.14; 4 October 1927, p.2; GN 19:2 February 1928, pp.10f.

The debate continued until Van Eyk's return in September. He thrived on the challenge. Newspaper advertisements declared, 'Van Eyk is coming! You must hear this Fearless Preacher of the Living Christ' and the evangelist himself was quoted as saying, 'I have returned to Maryborough as a challenge to my critics on their own ground, not merely a challenge by argument ... but by producing facts, substantiating my claims when here earlier in the year.' He went on to describe many cases of healing attributed to his ministry and to engage in a discussion of basic biblical textual criticism — a reflection of a sophistication not normally associated with his kind of evangelism.⁴⁷ 'Bible Student' took to his pen again, claiming that the dispute was not over the fact of the cures, but the cause of them, reaffirming his position that they were basically the result of suggestion.⁴⁸ Again, Christians responded with testimonials of healing and strong expressions of their faith both in God and Scripture.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the meetings continued with 'exceedingly good audiences.'⁵⁰

Controversial

These meetings in Maryborough demonstrated the controversial nature of the evangelist's ministry. People were either enthusiastic or antagonistic. It was difficult to take the middle ground. They also illustrate Van Eyk's strong conviction that Christianity was a faith to be experienced: and the most telling experience was to be found through the Pentecostal blessing.

Between his two visits to Maryborough, Van Eyk, accompanied by W.A.Buchanan, visited Perth, Western Australia and Brisbane, Queensland. In Perth, although interest was initially outweighed by the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York where over 30,000 people gathered for the opening of the

⁴⁷ MC, 10 September 1927; 24 September 1927, p.8.

⁴⁸ MC, 1 October 1927, p.8.

⁴⁹ MC, 5 October 1927, p.14; 7 October 1927, p.2.

⁵⁰ MC, 27 September 1927, p.4.

new Parliament House in Canberra, the campaign ‘eclipsed all his other Australian meetings.’⁵¹ An enthusiastic report read —

The trenchant truths of the full gospel were poured forth like a mighty burning lava stream that consumed criticism, withered opposition, exposed and demolished the subtle fingers of the devil, and lifted God’s people up to heights where they beheld in the light of Calvary the stupendous possibilities of a church baptised in the Holy Ghost.⁵²

There were testimonies of healing, many of a compelling nature. Stories came in of people being healed from paralysis, gall stones, partial blindness, deafness, arthritis, heart trouble, floating kidney, chronic dyspepsia, cancer, consumption, rheumatism, catarrh, gastric ulcers, diabetes, sciatica, gout, varicose ulcers and various complaints such as ‘internal troubles’ and bodily pain. Some of these afflictions were of many years’ standing.⁵³ James Bell, 68 years of age, waited five months before declaring his healing of a chest complaint of seven years, the result of a bout of pneumonia.⁵⁴ Cecil Harris, father of Leo Harris, who founded the Christian Revival Crusade,⁵⁵ told how he had been delivered from 17 years’ addiction to nicotine. He never smoked again.⁵⁶ Young seven-year-old Leo was prayed for by Van Eyk for healing from tonsillitis. Years later he recalled how Van Eyk and Buchanan arrived at their home in a late model Chevrolet. Buchanan walked sedately up the steps, but the athletic Van Eyk vaulted the front fence, mounted the stairs two at a time, picked up the boy, threw him over his shoulder, talked and prayed with him, and left the way he had come.⁵⁷

⁵¹ GN 18:8 August 1927, p.10.

⁵² GN 18:8 August 1927, p.11.

⁵³ GN 18:9 September 1927, pp.12ff.

⁵⁴ GN 18:12 December 1927, pp.13f.

⁵⁵ Founded in 1945, the Christian Revival Crusade was in 1997 the third largest Pentecostal denomination in Australia. See Chapter One; Cooper, 1995.

⁵⁶ GN 18:9 September 1927, p.14. I personally heard Harris give this testimony thirty years later in Adelaide.

⁵⁷ Leo Harris, personal interview, n.d.

At the conclusion of the Perth meetings, 48 people were immersed in two separate baptismal services at the Crawley Baths. A Perth layman claimed he had been involved in every evangelistic campaign in Western Australia for the previous 30 years, but had never seen anything to compare with Van Eyk's ministry. 'Behind this man's message there is a spiritual power,' he declared.⁵⁸

Florrie Mortomore had already started small meetings in Brisbane's West End. In August and September, 1927, the Bohemia, a disused theatre, in Stanley Street, South Brisbane, previously used for boxing and vaudeville events, and garishly decorated accordingly, was secured for Van Eyk's visit, and in spite of some criticism, night after night, people responded to the preacher's challenge. Van Eyk mainly addressed four themes —conversion, divine healing, the second coming and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. On one Sunday night, 35 people responded to the invitation to follow Christ.⁵⁹ The gatherings were so successful that Van Eyk wrote to his wife that the previous night had seen 'the most wonderful meeting we have yet had in Australia.' He went on —

When I gave the altar call there was a rush for the penitent form. Many of the large audience just fell down in the dust, and began to pray and cry out to God ... In about an hour and a half, nine came through to the baptism [ie spoke in tongues] ... I must tell you of a miraculous healing. A young girl with a terrible hunch back was prayed for ... The raised shoulder has dropped four inches, the hunch is diminishing, and the power of God is wonderfully straightening her out. Glory to the living Lamb!⁶⁰

For three weeks, this young lady, Ethel Everett, experienced 'invisible operations' during which these changes took place. Two months later, Van Eyk could claim that she was completely whole.⁶¹ There were other reports of

⁵⁸ GN 18:9 September 1927, p.11.

⁵⁹ CM 3 September 1927, p.3; 10 September 1927, p.3; GN 18:10 October 1927, pp.12f; GN 18:11 November 1927, p.11.

⁶⁰ GN, October 1927, p.12.

⁶¹ GN, 18:11, November 1927, p.11; 18:12, December 1927, 3. Note that in February 1928, Phyllis Hobbs wrote to *Good News* pointing out that Ethel Everett was not yet completely healed, although her spine was much straighter and her hunch greatly diminished. GN 19:2 February 1928, p.32.

healing. A woman whose disease had mystified doctors for sixteen years was free of pain. A man with a dislocated neck was healed. Others testified to healing from catarrh, goitre, dropsy, deafness, blindness, rheumatism, longstanding damage to the vertebrae, and numerous other complaints.⁶² There were seventy reported conversions in three weeks and then followed a 'memorable mammoth baptismal service' in which 61 people were baptised by immersion in the baths at Wickham Street, Valley, and 31 were baptised in the Spirit. The evangelist exulted that this campaign had 'eclipsed everything yet experienced in Australasia.'⁶³

Baptism

Whatever the Pentecostals thought about these events, as far as the Christian public was concerned, the campaign was just one of several options. In the Lyceum Theatre, one A.W.Anderson was preaching on biblical prophecy and the mainline denominations were all strongly advertising their own services.⁶⁴ The Monday after the 'mammoth baptismal service,' the *Courier Mail* displayed prominent photos of a procession of Children of Mary, the laying of the foundation stone at St Margaret's School, the anniversary services at St Paul's Church of England and the Bishop-elect of Rockhampton. It also carried news of a Baptist Garden Party, St Andrew's fete and a Church of England fete, but there was no reference to the baptisms.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, there were possibly more people immersed that day than in any previous single Christian service in Australia's history. The result was a congregation of about 200 enthusiastic people, engaged in a regular program of services at the Druid's Hall, open air meetings, magazine distribution and Sunday School work.⁶⁶ The spirit of Pentecost was very much in evidence.

⁶² GN, November 1927, p.13.

⁶³ GN, 18:10 October 1927, p.14; 18:11 November 1927, pp.10f. There were 75 immersed in water altogether during the campaign.

⁶⁴ CM 3 September 1927, p.3; 10 September p.3.

⁶⁵ CM 19 September 1927, pp.18f.

⁶⁶ GN 19:1 January 1928, p.31; GN 19:8 August 1928, p.10; Church notices, CM 24 September 1927, p.3.

Langley Simmons, a converted Jew, was so enthused he thought these meetings might induce 'a mighty revival in Queensland which nothing can stem.'⁶⁷

In Rockhampton, the story was the same. There were evangelistic rallies for nearly two months, the last three weeks of meetings being held in the Congregational church. Van Eyk reported —

... the healings supersede those of any previous campaign, both in percentage and greatness. One young girl, terribly deformed was prayed for ...; her left shoulder blade has now dropped nearly six inches, and whereas, owing to the large hump and deformity on her back, the ridge of the spine could never be seen, yet now it is clearly discernible ... It is her grandmother who has been healed from 47 years of paralysis. And there are more mighty healings from deafness, blindness etc ... I have not in all my ministry seen such mighty baptisms [in the Spirit] ... The hunger of these seekers is unique; some of them remain six or seven hours on their knees seeking ... One can hardly describe the solemnity and grandeur of the presence of God in some of these meetings. The power of God would surge through us and sweep over the meeting like a mighty gale, while people would just sit in their seats not wanting to go ...⁶⁸

J.H.Smith, the Congregational minister was equally enthused —

I have worked with many ministers and preachers, but never have I worked with a man such as Mr Van Eyk. From the commencement of the campaign to its close, there have been manifest his unswerving loyalty to his Lord, his utter consecration to the work, his faithful and fearless presentation of the Gospel of salvation, and his earnest desire to win men and women for the Lord. His Scriptural basis is sound. His is the powerful preaching of a man filled with the Holy Ghost, proclaiming a risen Lord ... A noticeable feature of his preaching is the exultation of Jesus Christ, and he demonstrates the fact that men and women can walk with the risen Lord without splitting hairs over obscure doctrines.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ GN 18:11 November 1927, p.12.

⁶⁸ 'Rockhampton Campaign Special', Supplement to GN, 19:3 March 1928, pp.1ff.

⁶⁹ GN, 19:3 March 1928, Supplement, p.2.

At the conclusion of the campaign, 45 people were baptised in water in the Corporation Baths 'in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress of the city and other interested members of the public.'⁷⁰ Within six months, Smith had left the Congregational church and was pastor of the new AFM congregation in Rockhampton.⁷¹

Cairns

That same year, Carl Lewis (Charlie) Kajewski, the leader of a small Pentecostal group and his wife Bessie, having 'faithfully tithed their money,'⁷² invited Van Eyk to visit Cairns. Van Eyk arrived, together with Hines Retchford, of Adelaide, as his song leader.⁷³ On the opening night, 8 January 1928, in the Palace Theatre, in Lake Street, 1000 people turned up!⁷⁴ Van Eyk preached on 'The Continuous Progressive Revelation of God to Man' or the 'Evolution of Divine Healing.' The 15 cm, two column notice in the *Cairns Post* announced, 'This is your opportunity, come and hear the message, and be Healed [sic], why suffer longer?'⁷⁵ The local newspaper described the evangelist's methods as 'original' and his exposition 'unorthodox', but the outline of his message indicates a systematic and consistent approach to Scripture. Perhaps the 'originality' lay in the fact that Van Eyk boldly informed his large congregation that he had come to Cairns to demonstrate that 'God was still the living God' and that before a week was out, there would be verifiable cases of divine healing in Cairns.

The evangelist's commitment to the Scripture was made clear. It was God's Word and he believed it. Those nations which had cast it aside, like France and Russia, had plunged into dissipation and depravity. Britain, on the other hand,

⁷⁰ GN, 19:3 March 1928, Supplement, p.1.

⁷¹ GN 19:6 June 1928, p.14; GN 19:11 November 1928, p.19.

⁷² Henry Freudenberg, personal communication, 15 April 1993.

⁷³ *The News* 5 October 1927 — 'Farewell to Bro. Hines Retchford, who is relinquishing his secular occupation to devote all his time to gospel work in conjunction with Evang. Van Eyk.'

⁷⁴ CP, 9 January 1928. See also GN 19:3, March 1928, p.14; GN 19:5, May 1928, p.5; May 1928, p.13. Following details are from these sources unless otherwise stated.

⁷⁵ CP, 7 January 1928.

by honoring the Scripture, was 'the highest amongst the respected countries of the world'. Yet Scripture was not only to be believed: it was also to be experienced. Divine healing was revealed in the Bible from the days of the Exodus through to the New Testament. The healing covenant was 'perfected in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross and subsequently placed in the church as a perpetual gift by the Holy Spirit'. He challenged any minister to prove from the Scriptures that healing gifts had been withdrawn. Why wasn't the Church still ministering healing to the sick and needy? A girl in Adelaide had been healed of 'apoplectic fits.' A Brisbane girl being treated by two physicians had recovered. People in Maryborough and Rockhampton had experienced God's healing power.⁷⁶ The Word of God was foundational, but it was being presented in the spirit of Pentecost.

The Mission continued over subsequent weeks. Van Eyk preached mostly on the Second Coming, world events and divine healing. On Friday night 13 January the message was again devoted to healing. During the message, Van Eyk declared, 'I will prove that the Word of God is true.' He asked who in the audience was suffering pain, and began to pray for them. According to the press report, the first person was 'instantly healed' and 'a wave of enthusiasm swept over the audience.'⁷⁷ Soon others were claiming relief from pain and distress. The result was that testimonies of healing were reported daily.⁷⁸

His theme on Sunday 22 January was a denunciation of Roman Catholicism as the scarlet-clad mother of harlots; on another night, it was 'Jubilee'. 'Surely we heard the bells ringing,' said Bessie.⁷⁹ Instead of the usual listing among the churches in *Good News*, the Cairns entry now read, 'GREAT REVIVAL at

⁷⁶ CP, 9 January 1928.

⁷⁷ CP, 14 January 1928.

⁷⁸ B.Kajewski, 'The Angels Rejoicing', GN 19:3, March 1928, p.12; see also GN 19:5, May 1929. Because of numerous requests, the evangelist was also available for consultation at Kelburn House, from Mondays to Thursdays, 10 am to 2 pm.

⁷⁹ GN 19:3, March 1928, p.12; GN 19:5, May 1928, p.13. Following details are from this source unless otherwise stated.

CAIRNS, Hundreds saved — many healed.’⁸⁰ People in the streets were now friendly and cordial and whole families were coming to God.

Van Eyk preached on the Second Coming.⁸¹ On 29 January, the ‘Cleansing Power of the Blood’ was ‘chemically demonstrated’ and the newspaper editor was ‘awestruck’ at the way business men and prominent citizens respected Van Eyk.⁸² Later Bessie Kajewski wrote —

At times I could hardly believe that our brother was facing a Cairns audience; surely these keenly-interested people who sat forward in their seats couldn't be our indifferent citizens ...

The people are positively gripped. It is a joy to see the rapt expression as they listen to the blessed message. They have never heard anything like it before, and they come night after night, hungry for more.⁸³

Finally, on 30 January, it was announced that the most important stage of the campaign had been reached. Now Van Eyk was going to address the theme of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There were meetings from Tuesday to Friday night in the Hibernian Hall, with the daily consultations continuing. On Sunday 5 February, the evangelist chose the unusual topic of ‘The Great Pyramid’ which, he claimed, foretold ‘the date of every event in English History since 1840... with amazing accuracy’ including the start of the Great War.⁸⁴ After six weeks, the campaign came to an end on 12 February, with dozens testifying to conversion or restoration to health or baptism in the Holy Spirit. The campaign concluded with a baptismal service at Freshwater Creek, four miles north of the city, a farewell social and a closing Sunday night rally on one of the evangelist's

⁸⁰ GN 19:1, January 1928, p.31; see also GN 19:3, March 1928, p.12.

⁸¹ GN 19:3, March 1928, p.14; GN 19:5 May 1929, p.13. The report in GN says this message was preached on 8 January 1928, but this is clearly a mistake as press reports show plainly that Van Eyk preached on divine healing on that date.

⁸² GN 19:3, March 1928, p.12.

⁸³ GN 19:5, May 1928, p.13.

⁸⁴ CP, 4 February 1928. It is interesting that an article about this appears in GN 19:3, March 1928, p.10.

‘greatest themes’ — ‘Decision.’⁸⁵ For the baptisms, a special train was provided from the Central Station and according to Jesse Deacon, they had the foresight to engage two local police who were ‘urgently needed to control the immense crowd.’ He noted that the interest of hundreds of people had evidently been sufficiently aroused for them to want to witness ‘such an old-time Gospel scene enacted in public view.’ Thirty-seven believers were immersed. Others had apparently thought about joining them, but at the last minute, held back.⁸⁶ Bessie Kajewski was deeply moved —

I’ll never forget that scene; it was grand to see the ever-increasing courage of those who obeyed [the Lord], and their obedience made a great impression upon many of those around ... The people of Cairns do not realise how deeply they have been stirred.⁸⁷

A subsequent report claimed —

In many respects more wonderful things were witnessed than in any preceding Mission, and Brother Van Eyk declared it to be the high-water mark of his labors [sic] up till that time.⁸⁸

The home meetings now became a church. Sunday services were conducted in the Oddfellows’ Hall and the Sunday School at the Deacon house had increased significantly. Further campaign meetings were planned for the Atherton tableland and Townsville. Van Eyk’s preaching on the imminence of the Second Coming was so effective that Jesse Deacon wondered whether there would be sufficient time before the Lord’s return for the Atherton and Townsville meetings to be held!

⁸⁵ One report says the campaign lasted only two weeks but this is obviously incorrect. The meetings started on 8 January and concluded on 12 February. See GN 19:3, March 1928, pp. 12, 14; GN 19:5, May 1928, p. 13; CP 10 February, 1928. George Burns of Maryborough described a campaign of six weeks’ duration in Cairns as ‘an undreamed of thing.’ See GN 19:8 August 1928, p. 11.

⁸⁶ GN 19:3, March 1928, p. 13.

⁸⁷ GN 19:5, May 1928, p. 13.

⁸⁸ GN 19:8, August 1928, p. 11. Note that this report claims there was a six weeks campaign in Cairns.

The local meetings continued in Cairns. Over the next two months, another 45 people were baptised in water. Regular 'instruction meetings' and 'waiting meetings' were held and one by one people received the Spirit and spoke in tongues. Sunday morning and evening services and mid-week Bible studies were conducted weekly.⁸⁹

From Cairns, the party went to Toowoomba where meetings were held in the Princess Theatre. Again, the testimonies rolled in. People reported healing from tumors, gallstones, poor eyesight, catarrh, kidney trouble, headaches, rheumatism, bronchial problems, neuritis, deafness, rupture and heart trouble. Some 80 people were baptised in water in the Toowoomba baths, over 70 spoke in tongues, including eight out of ten in one family, and there were 300 reported conversions. Not everyone was impressed. Rowdy elements interrupted the meetings and rocks were thrown on the roof. Some of these people were stirred up, claimed P.B.Swenson, by 'a devil's agent and false shepherds.' But whether the local clergy were supportive or no, 'the side of Jesus won all the way.' Swenson was full of enthusiasm. 'Glory to God!' he wrote. 'Such blessed times are the outcome.'⁹⁰

Difficulties

The evangelist himself found it a strain on his health and had to terminate his meetings for a time so he could rest. Nevertheless, a fully-fledged church was established and 'glorious open-air services' were conducted.⁹¹ Van Eyk moved on to Ipswich and then Townsville and Mackay.⁹² He was faced with some daunting requests. A returned soldier removed his glass eye and asked the evangelist to pray for a new one. A man with no teeth asked for a third set. In both cases, he prayed 'not even flinching.'⁹³ In Townsville, on 15 July, some 60

⁸⁹ GN 19:6, June 1928, p.19,

⁹⁰ GN 19:7 July 1928, p.12.

⁹¹ GN 19:6 June 1928, p.16; 19:7 July 1928, supplement pp.5ff, p.12..

⁹² GN 19:6, June 1928, p.14; 19:8 GN August 1928, p.11; GN 19:10 GN October 1928, p.5; GN 19:12 December 1928, pp.11f.

⁹³ GN 18:5 May 1927, p.10. There is no record of the outcome of these prayers.

people were baptised at Picnic Bay, Magnetic Island.⁹⁴ By September 1928, the Apostolic Faith Mission had grown sufficiently in Queensland for a State Advisory Committee to be set up and a conference to be held. Thirty eight delegates were present.⁹⁵

Van Eyk's public notoriety may have been increasing, but there were difficulties in his personal life. When he and his family had first arrived in Australia, they had been received with love and admiration. Tributes were paid not only to the evangelist, but also to his wife Cecilia. Lancaster wrote —

In her are combined all the qualities required in the wife of an evangelist. Quiet, unassuming, affable, and accomplished, she stands unflinchingly with her husband, always on hand when wanted, and never too tired for service for her King.⁹⁶

Cecilia was also appointed an evangelist with the Apostolic Faith Mission and sometimes assisted Van Eyk in his preaching ministry.⁹⁷ People came to her for counsel and healing. One lady told how Cecilia had laid her hands on her head and 'the power of God went surging and tingling through her body, encircling the affected part,' resulting in her immediate healing.⁹⁸ Another had a vision of being prayed for by 'Sister Van Eyk,' — a vision which was fulfilled.⁹⁹ Cecilia was also a soloiste. After his return to India in 1927, and still grieving over the death of his wife, missionary H.N.Todd wrote —

All the time Sister Van Eyk's solo which she sang so sweetly is ringing in my ears: 'I will never leave thee, I will not forsake thee.' I praise God for it — and ask her to send me the words and music. They are a complete strength to me.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ GN 19:9 September 1928, p.10.

⁹⁵ GN 19:11 November 1928, p.10. For a list of churches established to this point see Appendix One.

⁹⁶ GN 17:10 October 1926, p.15.

⁹⁷ GN, June 1928, p.15; MC, 15 October 1927, p.7; 19 October 1927.

⁹⁸ 'These Signs Shall Follow,' GN 18:8 August 1927, p.7.

⁹⁹ GN 18:6 June 1927, p.17.

¹⁰⁰ GN 18:8 August 1927 p.16.

Cecilia joined the evangelist in Maryborough in 1927 and preached there.¹⁰¹ ‘Undoubtedly our sister is a tower of strength and help to her husband,’ wrote George Burns, ‘and her consecrated talents will be much used of God for His glory in the future.’¹⁰² On New Year’s Eve, 1927, with her little daughter Faith in her arms, Cecilia led a band of women into the streets singing Christian songs before the reveling crowds.¹⁰³ But then she experienced a break down in health. Incompatible as it seems with other people’s impressions, Bert Banton, who later worked closely with Van Eyk, claimed that she displayed ‘signs of hereditary insanity’¹⁰⁴ In late 1928, she returned, with her children, to South Africa. Five years later, Lancaster published a brief notice that ‘friends of Sister Van Eyk will be glad to know that she is well again,’ together with an address for correspondence. Eventually, however, she was to be confined to an institution.¹⁰⁵

A year before her breakdown, Lancaster had published an unusually frank and serious appeal for prayer —

We believe the man in Australia who is most in need of your prayers today is the popular Evangelist, F.B.Van Eyk ...

The change from being an insignificant unit in a community to the role of an eagerly and widely sought after evangelist, approved by God by the mighty signs and wonders wrought by him in the midst of the people, is one which places him in a precarious position; for the plaudits of the people are likely to become a dangerous asset; many of God’s favored [sic] and gifted messengers have fallen

¹⁰¹ MC 15 October 1927, p.7; MC 19 October 1927.

¹⁰² G.Burns, ‘God’s Work in Maryborough, Qu.,’ GN 19:2 February 1928, p.17.

¹⁰³ GN 18:2 February 1928, p.16.

¹⁰⁴ A.E.Banton, *Pentecostal Pioneering with the Foursquare Gospel in Australia*, Westmead: Essington Christian Academy, 1984, 4. See also C.J.Van Eyk, interview. Some others were of the opinion that it was Van Eyk who drove her to the point of collapse. See F.Lancaster, personal interview, 18 December 1993.

¹⁰⁵ GN 24:1 January 1933, p.16; GC, July 1934, p.3f; G.East essay; C.J.Van Eyk, personal interview.

through pride. So, beloved, do not fail to surround him with such a wall of prayer that satan and all his hosts shall find it impossible to break through.¹⁰⁶

This was an extraordinary thing to put in print. It almost amounted to an accusation of arrogance on the part of Van Eyk. Had Lancaster observed warning signs? Did she see Cecilia's return as leaving Van Eyk vulnerable? Were there already indications of reckless behaviour? Was it womanly perception or an intuitive premonition? Or was it a telling example of the kind of spiritual insight that she herself prized so highly? Whatever the explanation, her words sounded a prophetic warning that was to be tragically fulfilled.

When Van Eyk and Buchanan had left Maryborough, some 500 people had come to farewell them. There was 'a mass of weeping people thronging the evangelists and kissing their hands when they could not get close enough to kiss their faces.' Later, one disenchanted pastor claimed that Van Eyk gave special attention to the touches of the girls.¹⁰⁷ During his convalescence in Toowoomba Van Eyk was nursed by Hilda Kajewski, whose family were all involved in the work there, and who had been among the first to receive the Spirit.¹⁰⁸ The two became close friends. Soon rumours began to spread that the relationship was more than platonic. The newly established church in Toowoomba was split in two. Later, when Van Eyk attempted to conduct tent meetings in Bell Street, the tent was burnt down. Crowds continued to flock to his meetings, now transferred to various halls, including the Princess Theatre. But again there was a rising tide of discontent. Rotten eggs were thrown, people tried to break up the meetings. Banton was later to describe what happened as 'the fiercest physical opposition and persecution' he had ever witnessed.¹⁰⁹ In the views of

¹⁰⁶ GN 18:5 May 1927, p.10.

¹⁰⁷ GN 18:5 May 1927, p.10; C.G.Enticknap, personal interview. n.d.

¹⁰⁸ GN 19:7 July 1928, p.12.

¹⁰⁹ Banton, 1984, p.9; see also Lenore Grey, personal communication, 13 November 1983; T.Hallopp, personal interview, 15 April 1993.

others, the meetings were marked by such extreme emotionalism, the reaction was predictable.¹¹⁰

The Assemblies of God

The Queensland pastors were forced to intervene. On 25 October 1928 and 8 January 1929, the Queensland Advisory Council met with Van Eyk 'to strongly advise him to alter his ways in a certain direction.' However, the evangelist 'disregarded the advice.'¹¹¹ They reported this to the Executive Council who decided that Van Eyk should no longer be allowed to minister under the auspices of the AFM, unless he arranged for his wife and family to return to Australia and for her to accompany him in his campaigns. Finally, the 1929 Conference of the Mission in Melbourne was forced to erase Van Eyk's name from membership of the Council and of the AFM. The printed report of these resolutions is dispassionate, but it is not hard to imagine the blend of anger, disappointment, betrayal, grief and sorrow that lay behind them. The way Van Eyk was going, he could have left scores of churches all over Australia. Now the work was seemingly struck a devastating blow from which it might never recover. *Good News* would never again print a report of a Van Eyk crusade.

Gleefully, and with unusual piety, Sydney's *Truth* proclaimed —

Van Eyk has been hounded out of Queensland by irate and respectable citizens ... The [Apostolic Faith] Mission was ... forced to listen to the reports that this missionary, this 'Shepherd of God,' a married man, was driving around in a motor car with an attractive young girl, the daughter of one of his parishioners with whom he stayed.¹¹²

On 5 July 1929, seventeen Queensland pastors met together in Brisbane. Charles Enticknap, whose assembly in Mackay had only been accepted into the AFM the previous October, moved that they adopt the name Assemblies of

¹¹⁰ T.Hallop, personal correspondence, 30 April 1993.

¹¹¹ GN 20:5, May 1929, p.12. Following details are from this source unless otherwise stated.

¹¹² 'Drowning the Devil in a Two-foot Tub,' *Truth*, 7 July 1929.

God, a motion carried by 15 votes to two. A doctrinal statement and constitution were approved.¹¹³

Members of Van Eyk's family affirm the evangelist's innocence. His eldest son, though only a child of ten at the time, said, 'Many things have been said about him, but I don't believe them. He was a tremendous man and I am proud to be his son.'¹¹⁴ The evangelist's brother was unflinching —

There is no truth whatsoever in the charges laid against him. Nothing unseemly happened at all. His wife's condition was such that the marriage was impossible. He tried as long and as hard as he could, but it just couldn't work. These are the facts I'm telling you. This is the truth.¹¹⁵

Van Eyk himself continued to protest his integrity. Five years later, a Pentecostal journal reported that the Executive Council [of the Apostolic Faith Mission?] in South Africa had 'thoroughly investigated' the affair and that 'after negotiating with him for a few hours, the Council unanimously agreed that our brother has suffered much wrong ...'¹¹⁶ Van Eyk had put it to them that after his wife and children had returned to South Africa, the newspapers had taken advantage of the situation to attack him.¹¹⁷ He would have had a harder time of it persuading the newly formed Assemblies of God in Queensland.

Van Eyk did finally agree to bring his family back to Australia and set out from Melbourne on the *S.S. Bendigo* for South Africa. When he reached Adelaide, South Australia, however, in response to what he saw as divine guidance, he disembarked.¹¹⁸ There he teamed up with Albert Banton, and they held a few meetings. C.L.Greenwood of the newly formed Pentecostal Church of Australia

¹¹³ AE June 1984, p.23; a copy of *Good News* for September 1924 has the name 'Assembly of God,' stamped on it.

¹¹⁴ C.J. (Neilsie) Van Eyk, personal interview with G.East, 10 April 1984. Quoted in G.East, essay, 1984.

¹¹⁵ C.J. Van Eyk, personal interview, March 1984.

¹¹⁶ *The Comforter* quoted in GC, July 1934, p.4.

¹¹⁷ There is some evidence that reporters did hound him. See C.J.(Neilsie) Van Eyk interview.

¹¹⁸ Banton, 1984, p.5; B.Chant, 1984, p.150.

(PCA), at Richmond Temple in Melbourne,¹¹⁹ invited them to attend an Easter Convention there. Given that earlier criticism of Good News Hall's distinctive doctrines and female leadership had come from Greenwood, and that Van Eyk had chosen to identify with them from the beginning, there seems to be a degree of opportunism in this decision — especially at Easter, the time of the AFM's annual conference.¹²⁰

Cessnock

From here, Van Eyk and Banton continued to Parkes, NSW,¹²¹ and thence to the coal mining town of Cessnock, bearing a letter of introduction to the Mayor of Cessnock from the Mayor of Parkes. In 1929, Cessnock was in the throes of unrest. On 15 February, miners were locked out when they refused to accept a reduction in the hewing rate. The dispute was not resolved until June of the following year.¹²² Sydney newspapers carried almost daily reports of demonstrations by miners, of unemployment, of picketing, of employer-employee confrontation.¹²³

When Van Eyk arrived, he sought and obtained the cooperation of both the local Methodist minister and the Salvation Army captain.¹²⁴ Plans were made for publicity and the hiring of the Strand Picture Theatre. One morning, Banton and Van Eyk found an angry meeting of miners in progress in the Theatre. There was some talk of violence and one man declared, 'We don't need any Father, Son and Holy Ghost — the union is our Father, Son and Holy Ghost.' With characteristic audacity, Van Eyk asked to address the meeting from his experience of mining disputes in South Africa. At the conclusion he sang them a gospel song! Banton recalled —

¹¹⁹ For Greenwood and the Pentecostal Church of Australia see Chapter Nine.

¹²⁰ GN 17:10 October 1926, p.15.

¹²¹ Banton, 1984, p.5. Further details are from this source unless otherwise stated.

¹²² Aplin et al, 1987, p.141.

¹²³ eg SMH, 7-13 June 1929.

¹²⁴ *Truth*, 7 July 1929; CE, 16 July 1929 and following issues.

The crowd were completely captivated and swept by the tide of God's love released in the song. They clamoured for more. He sang another verse and chorus; again, thunderous applause. More than that, the whole purpose of the meeting was defeated and as ... we departed ... we heard one of the speakers frantically trying to get the meeting back to order saying, 'We don't want any of this Utopian dope! We don't want pie in the sky!' But it was of no avail. A crisis had passed.¹²⁵

There was a meeting at the Salvation Army Hall on Tuesday 4 June for interested parties to meet the evangelist. The opening public rally was held in the Strand Theatre on Sunday 9 June, with Alderman Hunter, the mayor of Cessnock in the chair and Van Eyk preaching on the theme, 'The Present Industrial Crisis (World Wide); Its Solution and Biblical Parallel, and Prophetic Significance.'¹²⁶ One hundred men stood to their feet in response to a challenge to consecrate their lives to God in the fight against sin.

People crowded to the meetings and there were notable conversions. Within a week the theatre was comfortably full with some 600 attending a healing meeting. On Sunday 16 June, the *Cessnock Eagle* reported that 'as the appeal was made, the whole audience as one man leaped to their feet expressing their desire to be ready when Jesus comes again.'¹²⁷ Some miners confessed to having made bombs which they had intended to use against the mine owners, but had now dismantled. People began to claim healing from various physical complaints.

For six weeks, Van Eyk's campaign continued in the Methodist Hall or the Strand Theatre. People arrived at 5 pm queuing up night after night with blankets and rugs, waiting for the doors to open. The *Cessnock Eagle* was enthusiastic —

¹²⁵ A.Banton, personal communication. Van Eyk was plainly uncomfortable with union activism — 'The Unions are like the slimy paw of an octopus; stealthily but surely gaining hold of the working man, and one of these days the world will find itself hopelessly bound in their clutches' — GN, 18:10, October 1927, p.6.

¹²⁶ CE, 4 June 1929.

¹²⁷ CE, 18 June, 1929.

During the last week, scenes which defy description have been witnessed in Cessnock by many hundreds. Hundreds revived and saved from a life of indifference and sin, whilst many have been healed from all kinds of maladies. The city is in the grip of a religious fervour and enthusiasm which has no parallel in its history. Every night many can be seen at the altar seeking salvation and healing for their bodies.¹²⁸

One meeting at the Methodist Hall lasted from 7 pm to 11.30 pm. Several claimed to have their sight restored. One woman was able to walk for the first time in seven years. A girl who had never taken a step unaided did so freely after a steel frame was removed from her leg. People responded to these events with singing, dancing, waving handkerchiefs in the air and shouts of joy.¹²⁹ 'Cessnock is now in the throes of a religious revival,' wrote a local reporter. He described the 'most extraordinary scenes' and meetings which were 'growing in power, wonder and intensity.'¹³⁰ There was a stream of testimonials to divine healing from various afflictions including deafness, goitre, poor eyesight, lameness and asthma.¹³¹ Overall, some 700 people made commitments to Christ. Crowds of between two and three thousand people were gathering for each rally.¹³² In a community of around 14,000 people,¹³³ this represented at least 15% of the population. Towards the end of the series, a baptismal service was held in which 73 people were baptised.¹³⁴ This event aroused a great deal of interest. The Theatre was crowded and the service had to be cut short because of people crowding around the orchestra pit (which had been modified for the inclusion of a baptismal tank) for a better view. Later an offering was taken to

¹²⁸ CE, 25 June, 1929

¹²⁹ CE, 25 June 1929.

¹³⁰ CE, 12 July 1929.

¹³¹ CE 12 July 1929.

¹³² CE, 5 July 1929; A Walker, *Coaltown*, Melbourne: MUP, 1945, p.59.

¹³³ 1933 Census, quoted in Walker, 1945, p.61.

¹³⁴ Walker claims there were 73 men and 31 women, but this seems to be a mistake. According to the CE of 5 July, there were 42 men and 31 women. Note that the figures quoted in my *Heart of Fire* (1984, p.153) are also incorrect. See also Banton, 1984, p.8.

pay for damages to the seating.¹³⁵ Banton recalls how some opponents of the campaign secreted Condy's crystals into the water, resulting in reports to the effect that Van Eyk baptised in red water whilst Bert Banton led the congregation in 'Wash me in the blood of the Lamb.'¹³⁶ Years later, a journalist named Frank Mattocks admitted to being responsible. 'It was worth it,' he recalled.¹³⁷

Although it made no reference to this incident, *Truth* contained almost a full page report headed, 'Drowning the Devil in a Two-foot tub!' with sub-headings which continued, 'Stop Van Eyk's balderdash! How cheeky quack, Duck-pond expert, has pulled Cessnock's leg. Uproarious assault on Old Nick.'¹³⁸ Accompanying photos showed people being baptised. The article went on with a brief report of the evangelist's work in Queensland, including a claim that residents of Mackay had ducked him before evicting him from town and that he was 'specially gentle' in baptising girls. Although some reporters came looking for things to criticise, one who, like Goldsmith's fool, came to scoff, remained to pray. Later he became a Foursquare pastor.¹³⁹

By this stage, the early euphoria began to wane in some quarters. The reports in the *Cessnock Eagle* became less supportive and a touch of scepticism began to emerge. Young men invaded the meetings and let off fireworks during the proceedings. There were regular interjections. Van Eyk himself spoke of increasing persecution.¹⁴⁰ It seems likely that it was the first occurrences of glossolalia that alienated some people. Rev Evans, the Methodist minister, certainly found this phenomenon difficult to accept and offered to pay the hospital ten pounds if Van Eyk could produce one convert with genuine spiritual gifts; otherwise, the evangelist should pay. Van Eyk gladly accepted

¹³⁵ CE, 5 July 1929; 12 July 1929.

¹³⁶ Banton, 1984, 8. Banton's claim that newspaper headlines reported this story seems to be exaggerated.

¹³⁷ CE, 19 February 1946.

¹³⁸ *Truth*, 7 July 1929.

¹³⁹ This was T.Lafsky. See Wallis, 1989, 63; C.J.(Neil) Van Eyk, interview, 10 April 1984, quoted in East, essay, 1984..

the challenge.¹⁴¹ Letters now began to appear in the press denouncing glossolalia as ‘gibbering foolishly’ and ‘blasphemy’.¹⁴²

Although Van Eyk had begun his crusade by seeking the cooperation of existing churches, the baptismal service created a further difficulty for them as Methodists were not in the habit of practising adult baptism and the Salvation Army did not baptise at all. The Anglican rector alleged that by ‘re-baptising’ Van Eyk was in danger of ‘sending a soul to hell.’¹⁴³ When Van Eyk announced that he intended to establish a church, the rift was complete. Captain Franks of the Salvation Army took the stage at one of the rallies and alleged that Van Eyk had broken his word. They had supported him on the understanding that he did not intend to establish a church but now he was doing just that. Van Eyk replied, ‘This man has gone around town saying things about me that I could put him behind prison bars for. He has withdrawn from the campaign without any intimation to me, and therefore it is my duty to look after the spiritual welfare of my converts myself.’¹⁴⁴ According to Banton’s loyal report —

The Salvation Army officers and the Methodist Minister got stirred up because we told the people God’s plan of salvation ... and the Truth of God’s word cut across their traditions.¹⁴⁵

This was clearly an oversimplification. As a gesture of good will, Van Eyk raised over fifteen pounds for the local hospital at a second baptismal service and later another thirty pounds for poor and distressed families. Meanwhile, the crowds continued to throng to the rallies, the ministers continued to distance themselves from the evangelist, and *The Cessnock Eagle* continued to publish letters by both supporters and detractors.

¹⁴⁰ CE 12 July 1929.

¹⁴¹ As it turned out, neither would concede defeat, so the money was never paid.

¹⁴² CE 12 July 1929.

¹⁴³ CE 5 July 1929.

¹⁴⁴ CE, 18 July 1929; *Truth* 7 July 1929

¹⁴⁵ Banton, 1984, p.8.

Now reports began to surface of the incident in Toowoomba, with the Methodist minister stating that Van Eyk had been dismissed from the Apostolic Faith Mission for not altering his ways 'in a certain direction.'¹⁴⁶ Van Eyk replied to the allegations by affirming that the Brisbane congregation of the AFM had stood by him and were convinced that the matter was a 'domestic' one which should not have been made public. As Van Eyk fell short of stating outright that he was innocent of the charges laid against him, Evans, reasonably enough, found this less than satisfactory.¹⁴⁷

Elim Foursquare Church

On 25 August 1929, the Cessnock Foursquare Temple was opened. Formerly 'Ezzy's Reliance Motor Works' in North Avenue, it was now dedicated as a place of worship. Hundreds of people were present and another 36 were immersed.¹⁴⁸ The building seated about 500 with provision for a choir of 60 and an orchestra of 10. Pastor E. Hooker was appointed as minister and a full program of meetings launched —

Sunday —	10.30 am Breaking of Bread 3.00 pm Sunday School (300 children) 6.00 pm Open Air Meeting 7.00 pm Gospel Meeting
Monday —	Open Air Meeting at Bellbird Cottage Prayer Meeting at the home of Brother and Sister Harris
Tuesday —	Teaching on Baptism in Water and Baptism in the Spirit
Wednesday —	Prayer and Tarrying Meeting for Baptism in the Spirit
Thursday —	Teaching on Divine Healing and Prayer for the sick
Friday —	Open Air Meeting in Vincent Street
Saturday —	Choir Practice ¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ CE, 30 July 1929; GN, 20:5, May 1929, p.12.

¹⁴⁷ CE, July 1929.

¹⁴⁸ CE, 27 August 1929; G. and E.Muir, *Jubilee: a brief account of the Cessnock Evangelistic Campaign of 1929*, Cessnock, , n.d. but c.1979, p.7.

¹⁴⁹ Muir, 1979, p.7.

There was some suggestion that Van Eyk's meetings had turned the tide of unrest in Cessnock and prevented an outbreak of violence.¹⁵⁰ But by the end of the year, the lockout continued, culminating in the Rothbury confrontation in the Hunter Valley in December, where one man was shot and others wounded. Socially and politically, the situation worsened.¹⁵¹

Van Eyk continued to campaign in other places. Soon there were Foursquare churches in many parts of New South Wales including Newtown, Orange, Molong, Parkes, Newcastle, Peakhurst, Auburn and Hurstville.¹⁵² A magazine was launched in May 1932 called the *Elim Foursquare Gospel Express*. In September of the same year it was renamed *The Gathering Call*. The initial conference of the Foursquare Churches was held that year at Easter. Van Eyk wrote that 'never in all life's experiences had he witnessed such marvellous scenes as on that occasion.'¹⁵³ The following year, Van Eyk was to describe himself as 'head of the greatest Pentecostal work in Australia.'¹⁵⁴ However, stories about the evangelist's past continued to circulate and he returned to South Africa on 9 August 1933 to bring back his family. When they arrived in Australia in July, 1934, they were given a glowing reception. *The Gathering Call* declared in bold print, 'Welcome to our Principal, To his dear Wife and Family ...'¹⁵⁵

By 1935, additional meetings had commenced in Gympie, Lithgow, Armidale, Brisbane and Toowoomba where '70 Pentecostal saints' had 'remained true to their first love, despite the difficulties' met with Van Eyk.¹⁵⁶ In Gympie, many people were converted; there was also persecution, with rotten fruit being

¹⁵⁰ Eg T.A.Bentley, 'Van Eyk did not realise he was saving Australia from revolution,' personal communication, August 1994.

¹⁵¹ For brief details see Davison et al (eds), 1998, p.563.

¹⁵² GC, October 1932, p.32; February 1933, 79; August-September, 1933, p.136..

¹⁵³ FGE, May 1932, p.6.

¹⁵⁴ GC, July 1934, p.4.

¹⁵⁵ GC, July 1934, p.3.

¹⁵⁶ GC, August-September, 1935, p.88.

thrown at the Pentecostals while they met together.¹⁵⁷ The Lithgow meetings, in particular, were exceptional. In February, 1935, after four weeks of discouraging response, and ‘many days spent in prayer and fasting,’ there was a change in attitudes and ‘a mighty break came.’ Within a few days, one thousand people attended one special rally. There was an influx of converts and some remarkable healings claimed — from tuberculosis, paralysis, severe burns, blindness, ulcers, heart disease, influenza, visual impairment and appendicitis. A week later, 55 people were baptised by immersion in the town hall, which was ‘packed to suffocation.’ Some of these, so impressed by what they saw, came after the official service and requested baptism there and then. Van Eyk could not bring things to a close till after one o’clock the next morning.¹⁵⁸

The evangelists were kept busy night and day, as people called on them for counsel and instruction. Within two months they had purchased and renovated a building for the new church and on 6 April 1935, it was opened ‘amid scenes of delight and joy.’¹⁵⁹ Again, the spirit of Pentecost had proved to have exceptional drawing power.

The 1927 campaign in Perth had resulted in a more established assembly with a partner church at Fremantle. Ten years later, however, there was potential division. The State Administrator, Lieutenant-colonel T.J.Bentley (1899-1937), had asked the pastor, Frederick Hammond, to move to Bunbury and he had refused. Ever the innovator, Van Eyk flew from Sydney. The squabble had become public, and the *Western Australian* described Van Eyk as pouring ‘oil on troubled waters.’¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile Van Eyk began yet another campaign. The newspaper tribute was lavish, to say the least —

¹⁵⁷ M.Nugent, personal interview, November 1990.

¹⁵⁸ GC 3:5 June 1935, pp.72ff.

¹⁵⁹ GC 3:5 June 1935, p.72.

¹⁶⁰ WA Saturday 20 November 1927, p.24; John Bentley, a talented musician, was the first Pentecostal minister to use radio, with a monthly broadcast on 6PR — T.A.Bentley, personal communication, August 1994; personal interview, April 1997; WA 20 November 1937, p.12,25.

Known throughout several countries as 'The Prince of Preachers,' Evangelist Van Eyk ... is acknowledged to be one of the mightiest Men of God this age has produced and whenever he appears some of the largest halls have proved incapable of holding the thousands who flock to hear him.

Brilliant and accomplished, his unique African songs, his magnetic personality, his incomparable command of Prophetic Scripture, his melody from the latest 'electric guitar' producing pure pipe organ effect, his indisputable 'Gift' of Healing, and his definite determination to give God Alone the glory, has [sic] endeared him to all.¹⁶¹

Then followed a strong, but carefully worded invitation to people to bring their sick friends and relatives to the meetings, to witness miracles of divine healing and to hear Van Eyk present 'amazing lectures.' Those who were 'in earnest' would be healed.¹⁶²

Not everyone was convinced. L.G.Burgin, a Churches of Christ pastor challenged Van Eyk to a debate on the subject of healing.¹⁶³ According to Bentley's son, Burgin resorted to sarcasm and personal ridicule and Van Eyk presented a biblical approach in an unruffled manner.¹⁶⁴ At least one other person found deficiencies on both sides. The following week Pastor W.Rhodes Scragg 'reviewed' the event and offered 'a scriptural reply to both debaters.'¹⁶⁵

Death

On the home front, matters were deteriorating. Van Eyk's marriage slid further into decline and he returned to South Africa where he obtained a divorce, leaving his children in Australia. His own health broke down and Hilda Kajewski went to join him. Within a year they were married. Five months later, in July 1939, Van Eyk and his brother were hunting when they were both bitten

¹⁶¹ WA 20 November 1937, p.12; according to T.A.Bentley, personal communication, August 1994, this was the first electric guitar to be played in Perth.

¹⁶² WA 20 November 1937, p.12.

¹⁶³ This took place under the chairmanship of the Rev George Tulloch, of St Stephen's Presbyterian Church on Monday 13 December at the Unity Theatre. A week beforehand, 610 of the 1000 seats had already been taken — WA 11 December 1937, p.26; T.Bentley, personal interview, n.d. recorded; Orr, 1936, p.105.

¹⁶⁴ T.Bentley, personal interview, n.d. Bentley's memory may be inaccurate. He referred to Burgin as 'Burden' and claimed the debate was held in the Trades Hall.

by a tse-tse fly and contracted trypanosomiasis. Van Eyk persistently refused medication, believing that as he had encouraged others to trust God, he should do the same. It was to prove a costly stand. His new bride recalled —

The doctors came every week and tried to persuade him to take treatment, they impressed the seriousness of the disease upon us, and said that it was impossible to live, unless he had injections, but he firmly refused. He said that for over twenty years he had preached divine healing, telling others how they must trust the Lord and that now the test had come to him and he would trust God ... If anyone ever suggested treatment to him he used to say, 'Never! Never! If God doesn't want to heal me, then I'm prepared to answer His call ...'¹⁶⁶

He recovered sufficiently to preach again in a four-weeks campaign in Pretoria,¹⁶⁷ but on 21 December, at the age of 44, he died.¹⁶⁸

Opinions about Van Eyk still vary greatly. Although acknowledging the large crowds that attended his Cessnock meetings and the public baptisms, Alan Walker describes the phenomenon as 'mass-revivalism' and Van Eyk as a 'charlatan in religion.'¹⁶⁹ Bob James strongly agrees.¹⁷⁰

Given that the essence of charlatanism is an intention to deceive, this charge is hardly plausible. There is nothing about Van Eyk's ministry which suggests that he deliberately set about to trick people. Clearly, he himself firmly believed what he taught. The fact that he was willing to die rather than go against his own preaching is the most telling witness to his sincerity. Further testimony of his genuineness was his practice of intense and earnest prayer. Van Eyk would spend hours at night on his knees or prostrate on the floor of his room crying

¹⁶⁵ WA 18 December 1937, p.27.

¹⁶⁶ Hilda Van Eyk letter, 1940.

¹⁶⁷ Hilda Van Eyk letter, 1940.

¹⁶⁸ C.J. Van Eyk, interview in East, essay, 1984.

¹⁶⁹ Walker, 1945, p.59.

¹⁷⁰ B. James, "'Lots of Religion and Freemasonry': The Politics of Revivalism During the 1930's Depression on the Northern Coalfields," in Hutchinson et al, 1994, p.235. James appears to have come to his conclusion without any reference to Van Eyk's ministry in other places.

out in an agony of desperation for the salvation of souls.¹⁷¹ Not that he was without fault. As we have already noted, he was plainly prone to exaggeration. While this may be a weakness, it does not mark him as a deceiver.

Methodology

He was also extravagant in his methodology. Like Jonathan Edwards, he believed that a religion that does not touch the affections is no true religion.¹⁷² He expected people to *experience* God. In Lithgow —

Everywhere people were experiencing the outpouring of the Spirit: in their private homes, away from the meeting places, wondering, marvelling, amazed at what was happening ...

Amidst scenes of the wildest enthusiasm, doubts, misgivings, fears, joys and other mingled emotions on the part of many interested, the Evangelist cried with stentorian voice: 'This is that.' Shouts of 'Glory' met his declarations, during which time many decided for Christ...

Never in the history of the Elim Foursquare Gospel Church, with probably Cessnock as an exception, have we witnessed such scenes of wonder, glory, awe and mighty salvation and baptisms in the Holy Spirit with rejoicings as at Lithgow.¹⁷³

As in Cessnock, there was opposition from some Church leaders and criticism of the extravagant expressions of emotion. But for Van Eyk it was the spirit of Pentecost at its best.

People had very different responses to his ministry. The *Truth* had this to say about one of the Cessnock meetings —

Van Eyk, when saying a prayer, works himself up into a veritable frenzy. Dramatic gasps, sob stuff, and all the well-known artifices of humbugs of this kind are exploited in his appeal to the congregation to turn away from sin.

¹⁷¹ GC 3:5 June 1935, p.72; S.Douglas, quoting W.A.Buchanan, personal interview, 21 November 1989.

¹⁷² J.Edwards, *The Religious Affections* Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, (1746) 1986, pp.27ff.

¹⁷³ 'Mighty Foursquare Revival Scenes,' GC 3:5 June 1935, p.72.

With arms outstretched, and loud Hallelujahs, the evangelist has kept the bulk of the large crowds highly amused with his acrobatics. Dancing in a circle, and at the conclusion of some of his hymns, during which the converts at his signal, frantically wave their handkerchiefs in a circle over their heads, Van Eyk jumps four feet into the air ...

It was all hallelujahs, with a few amens thrown in, but the choir clapped hands and banged tambourines and put it over well.

They got an encore. There was a hankie-waving finale. There was no spare time, the moments being filled in with “hallelujahs” full of fervour from the converts.¹⁷⁴

It is helpful to compare this with a report of the Newcastle campaign, written by a sympathetic reporter —

As one after another was healed, the beloved Evangelist lifted his hand and cried, ‘Friends, haven’t we got a wonderful Jesus?’ Oh, what a storm of applause met this exclamation! pent up feelings broke loose with fervent Amens, Hallelujahs and hand clapping and, yes, tears not of sorrow but of joy and thankfulness ... After two weeks’ ministry on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, with evidence of a flowing intensity in each succeeding meeting, a culminating point was reached on Friday last when, at the first initiation, nearly one hundred people literally rushed to the altar, and falling on their knees cried out to God to baptise them with the Holy Spirit. He truly opened the window of heaven and poured out mighty blessings on all ...¹⁷⁵

Van Eyk was an exciting, vigorous, demonstrative, controversial preacher who believed in an experiential faith. The people who attended his rallies were enthusiastic and fervent. If the emotive language is removed from both reports, especially the first one, there is little to object to — and perhaps much to be thankful for.¹⁷⁶ To suggest that Van Eyk was knowingly manipulative is to read

¹⁷⁴ *Truth*, 7 July 1929.

¹⁷⁵ GC, November-December, 1932, p.41.

¹⁷⁶ One grateful parent took the trouble to write to the *Cessnock Eagle* pointing out that when Van Eyk visited her dying child, it was not with ‘a series of antics’ in which he ‘deluded the grief-stricken parents into believing that being gifted with divine power, he would raise the child,’ as a *Truth* reporter claimed, but that at his own invitation the evangelist simply ‘held a little service at her bedside’ and that ‘as far as antics were concerned, there were none’ — CE, July 1929.

too much into the available evidence. On the other hand, he was not afraid of emotion — it is clear that he saw it as a valid part of religious experience.¹⁷⁷

Flamboyant he may have been, but there is no evidence of the unseemly or dehumanising behaviour that has occurred in other revivalist meetings. Among the ‘French Prophets’, in some 18th Century American camp meetings, and in come recent extremist charismatic gatherings, phenomena such as jerking, falling to the floor, making animal noises, laughing uncontrollably, groaning, going into trances and in at least one case, snake handling, have all occurred.¹⁷⁸ There is no record of such phenomena in the Van Eyk meetings.¹⁷⁹

Theology and epistemology

It is illuminating to read Van Eyk’s sermons. They clearly illustrate his knowledge of Scripture, his understanding of Christian doctrine and his fervent love for Christ. The following extract from a message given at Maryborough on 7 October 1927 makes this clear —

There are thousands of earnest Christians in denominational churches who live an exemplary life but have not yet experienced the fullness of the Pentecostal Blessing; neither do they enjoy the blessing of Divine Healing for the body. Why? Is it because there IS no Baptism of the Holy Ghost? Is it because there IS no healing in the Blessed Name of Jesus? No! A thousand times no! What then is the matter? The simple fact is that these folks have not, as yet, seen that the Word of God promises them healing for their bodies as well as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and that one

¹⁷⁷ This is not to deny that abuses do occur in this area. I have gone on record as alleging that some evangelists do use emotional manipulation. See SMH, 25 February 1995, p.1, although I am reluctant to accuse them of doing this deliberately.

¹⁷⁸ See Knox 1987; I.Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987; I.Murray, *Revival and Revivalism* Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994; G.Chevreau, *Catch the Fire* London: Marshall and Pickering, 1994; Dixon, 1994; D.Roberts, *The Toronto Blessing* Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994

¹⁷⁹ Van Eyk’s approach to the statement of Christ that believers would ‘take up serpents’ is indicative of a common-sense approach to charismata — ‘It was suggested in one of our local papers, that I should drink a dose of *Rough on Rats* ... to prove Mark 16:17 (‘if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them’)... God did not intend us to go about the country as a side show to entertain brainless idiots, but He placed these blessed truths in our possession to be used in time of need. We might as well say: ‘Let one of your leading physicians inoculate you with a deadly disease germ, and then come and have yourself

receives it exactly in the same way as salvation is received or any other blessing promised in the Word ... they do not read the Word sufficiently to understand and appropriate by faith the other glorious promises contained therein ...

So, there on that cruel cross of Calvary, in the open eye of the angel-crowded heavens, whilst men trembled and demons howled, rang out the clear, triumphant voice of Jesus Christ, in those immortal words which have echoed and re-echoed in the lives of countless multitudes, 'IT IS FINISHED.' There he took his stand between the dead and the living, there the plague of death was stopped for every true believer. God so loved the dying world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).¹⁸⁰

James, apparently without reference to any of Van Eyk's own writings, seems to have seriously misunderstood the evangelist when he says, 'Van Eyk comes very close to claiming he *is* Jesus Christ in a second coming and he certainly claims he can work miracles.'¹⁸¹ Even a casual reading of Van Eyk's own words quoted above show this to be absurd. In other writings, the evangelist plainly proclaimed the Second Coming of Christ as a world-changing future event — indeed this was one of his great themes and he preached on it often.¹⁸² In regard to healing, he was always careful to acknowledge that Christ is the Healer, as the passage just quoted makes plain. It is worth recalling the comments on the evangelist's preaching by the Congregational minister at

anointed and prayed for, and see if you will be healed.' — GN, 18:12, December 1927, p.5. The allegation about the rat poison was made in Maryborough — see MC, 4 October 1927, 2.

¹⁸⁰ 'The Curse Removed or The Divine Antidote for Sin, Sickness, Snakebite, and Sorrow' in GN, 18:12, December 1927, pp.3ff.

¹⁸¹ James, 1994, p.236. There is no reason to doubt that Van Eyk claimed, as James alleges, that before he left Cessnock, people would know that Jesus Christ was alive. But this is not the same thing as claiming that he himself was Christ.

¹⁸² eg F. Van Eyk, 'A Telling Address on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ,' GN 18:2 February 1927, pp.3ff; 'Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this Earth' in GN 18:10, October 1927, 3ff; 'The Times of the Gentiles or the Time of the End,' GN 18:3 March 1927, pp.3ff; See also the various sermon titles mentioned above. In one message, Van Eyk suggested very strongly that Mussolini would prove to be the Antichrist and affirmed on more than one occasion that 1934 would mark the end of the age.

Rockhampton.¹⁸³ He might have been talking about that great evangelist of half a century later, Dr Billy Graham.¹⁸⁴

Van Eyk placed strong emphasis on the need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking with tongues. In 1926, at the beginning of his ministry in Good News Hall, he preached on, 'The Far Reaching Results of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.'¹⁸⁵ It was an uncompromising message in which he argued that there was a difference between being in the kingdom of Christ and being in the body of Christ. Those who were in the kingdom were redeemed but only those in the body would take part in the first resurrection. It was through baptism in the Spirit that one became part of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:13). This required consecration and dedication to the Lord. In 1932, Van Eyk wrote a series of articles on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He began in startling fashion —

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the greatest event in Christian history; greater than the crucifixion; of greater import than the resurrection; greater than the Ascension; and mightier than the Glorification ...

The reason? Without it, all the other work would have been in vain.¹⁸⁶

This statement is significant. It was not enough for Van Eyk that people experience the excitement of crowded rallies, of exuberant singing, of fiery preaching, of enthusiastic testimonies and of loving fellowship. The one experience *par excellence* was baptism in the Holy Spirit. In this matter, Van Eyk reflected the distinctive drawing power of the Pentecostal movement. By enshrining spiritual experience in a mandatory encounter with God, the movement ensured that it was neither optional nor ephemeral. It was insisted on: and there was a readily identifiable sign of it, namely, glossolalia.

¹⁸³ 'A noticeable feature of his preaching is the exaltation of Jesus Christ' — GN, March 1928, p.2.

¹⁸⁴ It may be noted that I was personally acquainted with Van Eyk's associate Bert Banton until his death in 1995. The genuineness of his faith and the sincerity of his love for Christ were obvious.

¹⁸⁵ GN 17:12 December 1926, pp.3-7.

¹⁸⁶ FGE 1:1 May 1932, p.3.

Subsequent articles by Van Eyk plainly outlined the Pentecostal position in this regard.

Personal morality

The biggest question mark over Van Eyk is in the area of his moral conduct. In this regard he was rejected by both sinner and saint alike. Reference has already been made to the actions of the Queensland Advisory Council and his response to them. As a result, at the annual conference of the AFM in Melbourne in April 1929, it was unanimously decided to erase his name from the Executive Council and from membership of the Mission.¹⁸⁷

For Philip Duncan, who for over fifty years served as a Pentecostal pastor, Van Eyk's behaviour was a tragedy —

The Evangelist was a man of exceptional gifts, and at times displayed feats of audacity in faith. Numbers were saved and miraculously healed as he preached the true full Gospel message. Assemblies sprang up after his campaigns.

I must draw a curtain over his sad history that finished even more sadly. As Samson he evidenced inspired courage and power, as Samson his end was dismal, but we are not his judge ...¹⁸⁸

There is little doubt that overall Van Eyk has been adjudged guilty in the affair of 1929. And as a minister of Christ Jesus, there is no doubt that he was. But to what extent? Had there been adultery, he would have been dismissed without question. From its inception, arising as it did partly from the Wesleyan tradition, Pentecostalism strongly emphasised holiness.¹⁸⁹ The fact that Van Eyk was asked only to get his family together again before continuing in ministry indicates that it was a case of indiscretion rather than of immorality. There is some evidence that Buchanan, who was as close to Van Eyk as anyone, did not

¹⁸⁷ GN 20:5, May 1929, p.12.

¹⁸⁸ Duncan, *Pentecost*, p.13

¹⁸⁹ See Statements of Faith for the Apostolic Faith Mission, clause 8, the Assemblies of God and the Christian Revival Crusade, clause 8, in Chant, 1984, pp. 354, 358,361..

believe that adultery had taken place, although he strongly urged Van Eyk to change his ways.¹⁹⁰

It is significant that Hilda Van Eyk the alleged partner in the offence, seems to have believed he was innocent. Describing his last days, she wrote —

It is hard for me to realise that my darling has gone. We had such a short time of happiness, only five months,¹⁹¹ and then he went away on that dreadful shooting trip with his brother ...

He lived in the presence of God. Night and day you could hear his voice in prayer or praises to God. Sometimes I'd find him weeping and when I'd ask why he wept, he'd say, 'Oh, Darling, God is so good. His Presence is so wonderful. I'm weeping because I love Him so.' And that's the way he was all through his illness. The last week he was unconscious most of the time, but whenever he came to, his first words were, 'Glory to God'...

He died a hero, being faithful unto death and now he has gone to his reward ... Over a thousand mourners attended his funeral.¹⁹²

Outcomes

For Van Eyk, his ultimate justification was the fruit of his ministry — in Cessnock, the ongoing church spoke for itself.¹⁹³ How convincing this was as a justification may be queried, on the basis of both logic and fact. According to his detractors, in Cessnock there was actually little ongoing support. Reporter

¹⁹⁰ F.Lancaster, personal interview, 18 December 1993.

¹⁹¹ Does this comment suggest there had been no sexual relationship prior to the marriage?

¹⁹² Hilda Van Eyk letter to Marie Allsopp, 14 February 1940. In other respects, there were no questions about Van Eyk's moral and ethical values. One ambiguous aspect of his public ministry was his conflict with the churches in Cessnock. There seems sufficient evidence to suggest that the ministers concerned may have had just grounds for believing that Van Eyk had misled them by not announcing his intention of starting a new church from the outset of his ministry. In every other town where he had ministered, if there was no existing Pentecostal church, he had initiated one. It seems unlikely that he did not have the same plan in mind for Cessnock. But it is probably worth noting that in all the criticism leveled at Van Eyk, he was never charged with financial mismanagement, using his position to make money, manipulating people to give to his work or misappropriation of funds.

¹⁹³ CE, August 27, 1929.

Frank Mattocks claimed that 'those who took him seriously were a very small section of the community, a hundred or so.'¹⁹⁴

Walker indicates that the numbers who remained with the Foursquare Temple were small.¹⁹⁵ Yet according to the 1933 Census figures which he quotes, there were 383 people who belonged to churches other than the major denominations. As Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists and Brethren were already listed separately, and it may be that the majority of these were Foursquare people. It is also possible that some Foursquare adherents were still putting the name of their original denomination in the census return. Walker points out that in 1942, 1,055 attended the various Protestant Sunday services. About half of these were involved in the major Protestant denominations. So the number at the Foursquare Temple may have been significant. Walker points out that 'three of the smaller churches' held regular open air services. One of these would almost certainly have been the Foursquare church.

In September 1930, W.Kay became pastor and the next year locked horns with Van Eyk. There was some dispute over the occupancy of the building.¹⁹⁶ Kay, with some of the people, joined the newly founded Apostolic Church (1929).¹⁹⁷ The original pastor (E.Hooker) was reinstated and in May 1932, reported that there had been serious attempts by 'religious charlatans and parasites' to destroy the work, but they had continued to make satisfactory progress.¹⁹⁸ In July, he could say that hundreds stood for hours listening at open air meetings. The regular services were 'wonderfully blessed' and attendances had 'increased considerably'.¹⁹⁹ Van Eyk used to visit the church regularly during 1932. The results were healthy but there was little of the excitement and fervour of the original campaign.

¹⁹⁴ CE, 19 February, 1946.

¹⁹⁵ Walker, 1945, p.60.

¹⁹⁶ CE 8 July 1931.

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter Ten.

¹⁹⁸ FGE, May 1932, p.9.

¹⁹⁹ FGE, July 1932, p.9.

Len Jones, formerly with the Pentecostal Church of Australia, conducted a crusade in January 1933. Over the three weeks period, 'the Temple was filled to capacity on many occasions.'²⁰⁰ There was great excitement —

It is almost impossible to describe the scenes which followed. Like a mighty gale the Spirit of God swept over the audience. So gloriously present was the Spirit of God that each one, as hands were laid on them, was smitten down, until scores were prostrated all over the floor under God's Almighty Spirit.²⁰¹

Even Van Eyk could rarely report such a demonstration of power. In August 1934, Don Harris, one of the converts from the 1929 campaign, wrote that the church had never been in 'such a good spiritual way' and that despite cold weather they were experiencing 'wonderful attendances.'²⁰² When Van Eyk returned from South Africa for a special celebration in 1934, he was greeted with a 'huge crowd.' Some 200 people attended a welcome tea.²⁰³

What of the long term? Walker claims that —

The final result [of Van Eyk's ministry in Cessnock] was that discredit was brought on all religion, and, by adding further division to the already broken ranks of practising Christians within the town, all were weakened.²⁰⁴

On the other hand, there are many long-standing Christians today who met Christ through those meetings. Bert Banton's wife Edith was one of the first to be baptised in Cessnock. Over 50 years later she was still serving the Lord.²⁰⁵ The Foursquare pastor in Orange, NSW, in 1995 was the grandson of a couple

²⁰⁰ GC, March 1933, p.91.

²⁰¹ GC, February 1933, p.71.

²⁰² GC, August 1934, p.29.

²⁰³ October 1932, p.26; January 1933, p.59; September-October 1934, pp.38,44. Given that there was significant communist activity in Cessnock during the Depression, it is interesting to note that there may have been more people in this small church than there were card-carrying communists in the whole of Australia.

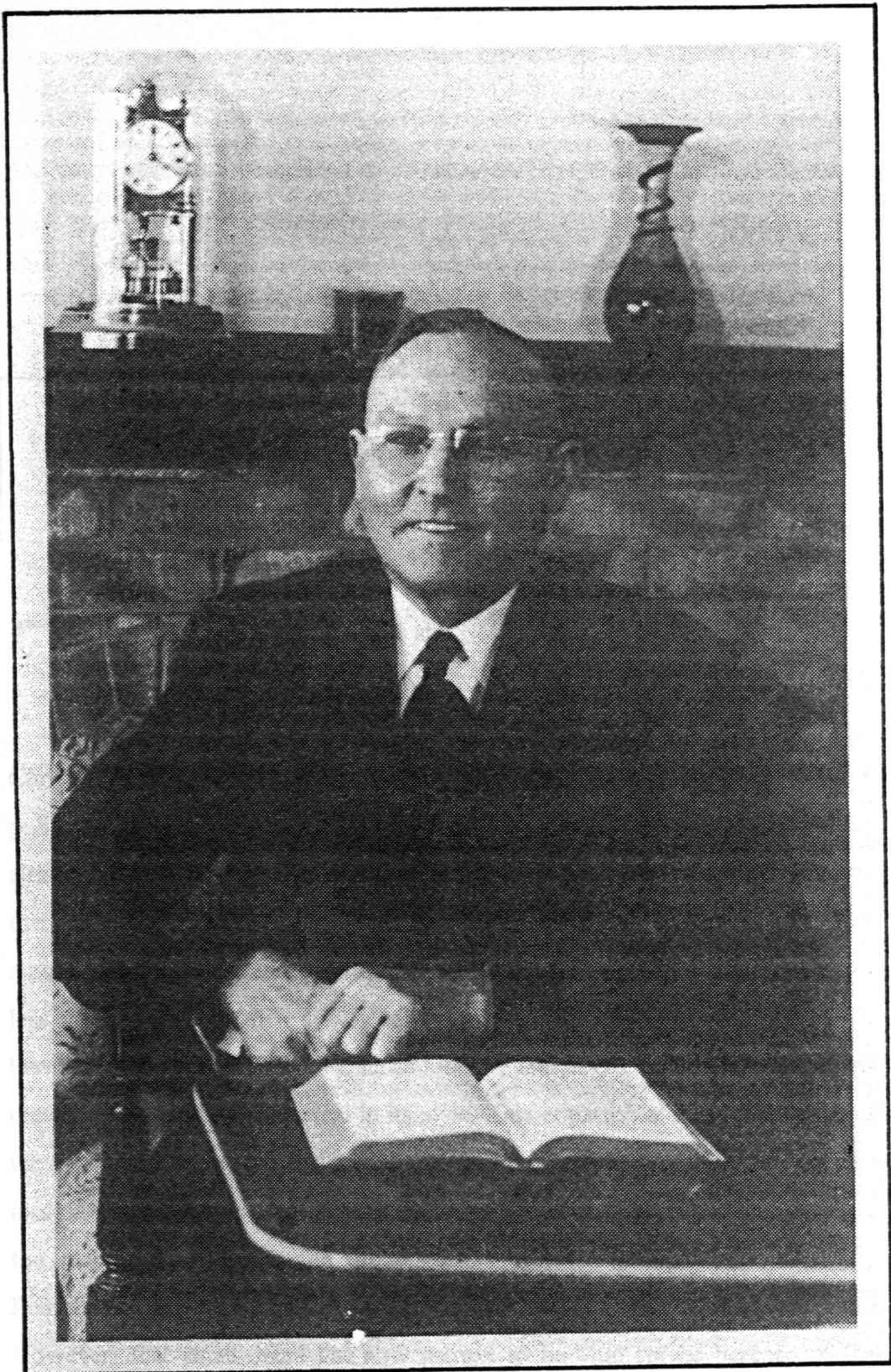
²⁰⁴ Walker, 1945, p.60.

²⁰⁵ Banton, 1984, p.12.

converted at Cessnock. In 1979, George Muir could tell of fifty years service in the church since his conversion there in 1929.²⁰⁶

To what extent Van Eyk was culpable will no doubt always remain an open question. In reality, it has little bearing on the issue of his integrity as an evangelist. The best preachers are but sinners saved by grace, who minister, not because they have earned the right, but because they believe in the truth of the message they proclaim.

²⁰⁶ Muir, pp. 12f. I have personally met other people whose parents and grand-parents were converted under Van Eyk's ministry. I did not always record the details.



Charles Greenwood