

Chapter 8: Psychodynamic Reading of Narratives

The last framework through which the narratives of our selected churches are read involves a psychodynamic explanation for church culture as is involved in organizational psychological analysis. The major focus of this chapter will be to discern the features within the narratives that correspond to the main theoretical variables of neurotic or healthy cultures and leadership styles. Our aim here is to discern whether the preconscious interests that shape the church cultures, their perceptions of leaders and various regressive tendencies, make sense of the narratives by generating plot lines that are cohesive in their sensemaking.

Psychodynamic Features Within Narrative Plotlines

The narratives were read for evidence of instances of the following sorts of features that could retard a group's maturation and impede its functioning:

- (i) Neurotic constellations, (Kets de Vries and Miller)
- (ii) 'Basic assumption' groups or group fantasies and leader 'valencies' (Bion),
- (iii) Idealisation of charisma or the church institution as a transitional object (Gabriel, Brown)
- (iv) Stereotyping projections of characters into familial positions, (Moxnes)
- (v) Adequacy of the church as a holding environment (Stapley, Van Buskirk) or
- (vi) As a supplier of 'transitional objects' (Spero, Hirschhorn, Stapley).

From this reading it is hoped that one can detect evidence not only of neurotic elements within the culture but to ascertain whether these are correlated with the decline of the church organization. Secondly, we also aim to discern whether healthier aspects of the

church culture are to be identified with periods of renewal. As was the case with family systems theory, we would expect that if this type of theory has some validity, and such features are determinative of the psychological culture, then a period of renewal would correspond to the change of culture from a neurotic, distressing or idealising culture, to a healthy holding environment that enables a secure and realistic expression of individuation for leader and member.

Secondly, where such evidence exists, the aim will be to discern the role played in the construction of these neurotic or healthy cycles by the prevailing theological perspective or God image that develops within the churches at these times where that can be discerned. As will be shown below the types of god image and theological perspective of the active portion of the church population correlates and corroborates with the sorts of neurotic culture or basic assumptions of the decline period and the strategies for renewal of the dominant group in the period of renewal. The exact nature of this relationship varies from case to case as will be seen.

Carinia Downs Circuit

The data of Carinia Downs makes conjecture about the nature of leadership follower relationships in the decline period somewhat difficult as very few respondents recalled or mentioned former leaders, focussing instead on the state of the church as a whole. This was partly due to the fact that most of their previous pastors in the past thirty years or so had only stayed for around a couple of years. This feature of Downs life has pronounced psychodynamic consequences for the group. This fuelled the scepticism regarding the possibility of the church to make headway in their mission to the local community and adversely affected their shared sense of self-esteem.

'Decline Period' Depressive Symptoms

The combined recollections of dominant characters in the plots of decline and renewal reveal a combination of legalistic, separated spirituality and a consequent separation from their social environment typical of a 'Depressive Organization' (Kets de Vries: 2001: 167). The persistence of this culture for many years could well be typical of a church culture collapsed within an 'autistic position' underlying the depressive mood. There certainly is fixity in the assumptions of the group concerning the stability of the surrounding community and the religious distribution throughout it. In an 'autistic' position the culture generally is passive and lacking in initiative. The church drifts along with no sense of direction and is constricted by antiquated notions of church and community. Also, corresponding to this, while the total membership was not large enough to foster an extensive bureaucracy "there was not much democracy" within their group processes (Maria). A couple of dominant deacons "dominated the life out of them" (Graeme). The church certainly displayed ritualism in the form of a legalistic approach to the faith, separated from other strands and maintained by the dominant deacons through their intimidating presence. Overall, the culture displayed a resistance to change or any suggestions of stylistic experimentation.

Consequently there was an exit of several active but frustrated members in the 1980's. Some of these returned recently now that these interlocking themes of legalism and separation and rigidity were reduced in the present pastorate. The buoyant mood of the church is attributed to a psychologically healthy leadership. All respondents praised the ministry of the present pastor who has been at 'the Downs' for a decade. A common concern also was expressed regarding what would happen were the pastor ever to leave. This revealed a degree of dependency upon him.

Renewal Period Basic Assumptions

The capacity to identify the basic assumptions or positions inhabited by a group while somewhat speculative, can be estimated through a process of deduction. Firstly, we note that the only theme repeated that has some resonance with a basic assumption group has some resonance to typical 'dependency' *baD*, symptoms. There are no instances of strong conflict within the church that one would associate with a 'paranoid' group with the exception of one particularly violent member who joined the church through marriage to one of the deacons and then left after significant conflict with many parties including the pastor and particularly his wife. However as regards the dependency typical of this position, some expressed concern about what would happen if and when the McLeishes moved on.

Well I think we would have to, and in fact everybody agrees, everybody in the church says you know, "I suppose inevitably they will leave us and when they do we just hope that we can hold things together and hope that we get another minister that is compatible and half as good." (Helen).

Graeme Mcleishe's compatibility is due to the fact that his missionary mentality involves a high degree of adaptability in an endeavour to understand the community within and surrounding the church. Again such a mentality moves in a direction unlikely to foster a fearful 'fight-flight' assumption or firm the boundaries around the group that foster projections.

The pastor himself is not known for a managerial approach to ministry, but is more spontaneous. According to Bion, the church may have responded positively to Graeme McLeishe's leadership due to his own particular 'valency' reinforcing their potential 'basic assumption; that, being either one of a 'utopian' or 'dependency' variety. There certainly are

some members who are astonishingly fulsome in their praise of everything the pastor does and the positives of the church. This could be attributed to a utopian basic assumption if it weren't for the fact that the church had not made concrete movement toward purposeful goals in their ministry. Yet task focussed movement has not been due to a 'management by objectives' approach or a directive style associated with 'competency' culture. Graeme in his early days had engaged the church in a process of goal setting and mission statement creation but to little effect.

But I don't think... country people are into goal setting! Country people hold goals loosely because they know there are always factors beyond their own control. Yes. And they don't have the sense that we are in charge of our own destiny. There is far more a sense of "If we do right, it might just work out right." Uh. And they put it in the hands of the fates. (Graeme)

The new health of the church is reflected in its non-defensive posture toward its cultural context. This shows up in the fact that the church community now makes a valued contribution to this largely non-churched area rather than keeping to itself and narrowly defined contacts around the Sunday morning worship hour. This church is now a 'work group' rather than a 'basic assumption' group. They certainly have not gone the way of paranoid organizations nor appear stuck in a paranoid schizoid position. They no longer have a fearful mentality nor take a polemical stance toward either those within or outside of the church but are open to all comers. There are no cliques or 'in groups' as the pastor facilitates a consensual decision making process that involves all parties. The 'working group' is displayed in their pulling together to rebuild the whole church premises.

It is clear that Graeme's presence has been catalytic of much culture change. It is less clear that this has fostered any prior existing 'dependency' as the group has made real strides to strengthen all aspects of its life, espoused purposes and ministry and fulfilled its decisions including the significant decision to remodel and rebuild its premises.

Is it because of Graeme, or was it in the church anyway? I would like to think it is both. You know we had the core and Graeme has helped that to grow and when the day does come for Graeme to move on it will continue on. (Bill)

In similar vein the normally effulgent 'Harvey' is measured in attributing causes.

Is it the atmosphere or is it God? It is hard to put it in a nutshell. The people just get a whiff of it. They must think that's not too bad you know. Not like the church I remember. I think it is the relaxed theme; non-threatening. Even the church services are not like they use to [be]. (Harvey)

These attributions of responsibility for renewal don't resonate with a 'utopian' fantasy (Bion: 1965) nor do they indicate an unrealistic 'narcissistic projection onto the organization' (Brown: 2000, 106f) as if the group was being used as a regressive hope for a return to the idyllic conditions of the womb. The church as a group displays realistic confidence in its capacity to fulfil its actual goals. The stability evident here reveals a healthy culture that is not dependent upon the pastor for hope and fruitfulness.

One could easily assume in the typical stories recounted, where the former era was contrasted with the present that the past culture was locked into a 'schizoid' position due to the rigidity of its main leaders. One aspect that militates against such typecasting is that the

stories of these legalistic figures and instances of a lack of spontaneity are recounted now in pejorative terms and individuals resented the dominance by the leading families. It is striking however that even some of those regarded as reinforcing agents within this culture can identify that they themselves have changed since the McLeishes came (Howard). Critical incidents such as the influx of newcomers and needy people in need of care have served to soften the church members' interpersonal transactions as well as their attitudes toward the surrounding community. One could hesitatingly explain the former rigidity within the church life due to the shared social experience of perpetual economic vulnerability militating against the capacity to hold dreams or make plans within any degree of confidence. A 'black and white' or legalistic style of faith naturally gives some comfort to people that some aspects of the cosmos are fixed in a fragile social economy whose future is determined by forces outside of the control of the participant. Again, while this could reflect the level of fear associated with a 'paranoid' basic assumption group, *baF*, it is more likely reflective of a wider cultural context that has learned through repeated conscious lessons that livelihoods are indeed precarious. Creativity and longer-term ethereal concerns are relegated in importance to subsistence in the present. This rational response would rule out a pre conscious explanation for the group rigidity and dependency as it simply reveals where the functional priorities of the community lay at that time. Cultural habits alone do not of themselves explain why the group permitted certain very rigid, dominant and rule-bound members to have ascendancy in the church for many years despite the fact that many resented their aggression and control. But in this instance, wider culture realities introduced certain types of persons into the leadership positions within the church and along with that influx came a psychological culture that reinforced the social culture of deference and submission. As Staw (1991) suggested this group symptom is sourced from the psychological make up of those long-term lay leaders. Pastors in their short-term pastorates made little impression upon these rigidities. In fact a

theological perspective of the Gospel interpreted in legalistic separated terms would only serve to reinforce the legitimacy of such an underlying 'basic assumption'.

Pastoral Charisma

The pastoral couple of Graeme and Lisa are obviously well loved by the participants in this study. However this admiration does not have a disabling mythic quality. It was highly unlikely that the couple would ever have filled the symbolic role of having the capacity to have mastery over the environment as with idealized pastors as these 'caretakers', in need of significant care themselves, began their ministry at the church. As already noted they had come from a city situation where their tenure had been cut short by bitter political manoeuvring of an opposition that wanted their removal. Both are aware that they make mistakes and the leadership certainly are not compliantly passive in their presence, but 'fully rounded' character references are common.

I think I loved, still again the acceptance. I find that the people just accept me as one of them. I appreciate the fact that I am not held on a pedestal, they don't expect me to be the one that runs all the women's things or organises all the behind the scenes that ladies do. They never have expected that of me they have just let me be myself. They have enjoyed it if I have been apart of that but not demanded that I be the controlling force. ... And I think people do recognise that the minister, if your minister is a certain way that that will set the tone of your church and so if your leadership expects that the church is to be[similar], If, its naturally open and affectionate, caring, even a little bit forgetful, the church kind of takes on that, that personality too. (Lisa)

It is unlikely that this couple were candidates within the available psychological roles to become primal caretakers in any Freudian sense of Mother or Father figures or Messianic

roles that imply a relative dominance (Gabriel: 1997: 326). This is despite the fact that this is the position or role assumed by deacons and others in the past.

The minister here is the, and when I say 'head' I don't mean that in a dictatorial sort of way. We work together as a team and that's the way it should be. (Harvey).

These folk have set a climate where one can be loved and respected as a whole person without being either idolized on the one hand or feared on the other.

It is also evident that the church life did not just revolve around the pastoral family but many 'characters' and stories were shared about individuals who gave the church its colour.

We have a chap called John who comes from Keogh's Bridge. He doesn't come every week but when he does come he plays the guitar and sometimes Graeme or the worship leader will say something and John will come out with some really dry comment just at the right moment and everyone just fools around. We must have more laughter in our church than anywhere else. (Helen).

The church admires the McLeishes, but not to the exclusion of the appreciation of others or their contributions. There were no instances of people being assigned or complaining about being assigned positions in the family narrative that were negative or locked in. The only negative roles were assigned to the dominance of a couple of former deacons and significant figures in the local church association who represented the interests of the strictly conservative regional church. There were instead, stories of people who in the wider community had negative assignments being welcomed and resituated within the Carinia Downs community as full members (Helen, Gale, Howard).

Holding Environment and the Role of New Theology

The present certainly is an enervating culture that has proven redemptive for more than a few. A sample of members shows the positive impact of the encouragement for people to exercise a ministry or make a visible contribution that was appreciated by church and the wider community alike.

A lot of participation I think a lot of people at the church really enjoy that part and feel that they are all contributors. (Helen)

...

I don't know, I suppose there has been some but not as much as – I suspect it has something to do with about the loveliness of the way decisions are made here, there's a lot of conversation about it... (Harvey)

...

Well in my own case sort of I sort of feel that God has done so much for me, because I used to rush and come into church, sit in the back row and as soon as the church was over I would be out and they would be saying "Are you coming in for a cup of tea?" "Oh not today I don't have time today," because I wasn't good with people. Now I've done so many things. I've led the service a couple of times, I started off Bible reading and then I led the service and now I'm a deacon. I'm in the play. I've been in the choir and I think "I can't believe this. It's not me it's somebody else." It's really brought me out of myself and I think it has done that to quite a few people." (Helen)

Lisa Mcleish recalls the impact of her involving her friends at the church in the local theatrical society.

It gave them the opportunity for a little while to be involved in something that they had never done before. And people saw that the Baptist church was starting to get out

from the walls of the church ... The fact that it had such a strong content that affected your spirit and those in the community sensed that too. And the church just seemed to be on quite a high from having been able to do something like that. (Lisa)

This opportunity to find a role and make an accepted contribution to the life of the depressed surrounding community has great significance for the maturation of the individuals and the health of the community. To facilitate a reparative process the organization must limit its narcissistic tendencies and focus instead upon the value it creates for others rather than on its structure and internal politics. “An organization’s existence is justified only insofar as it accomplishes ends valued by the stakeholders in its wider environment.” (Hirschhorn: 1988, 220-224).

In distinction to the many pastors who led the church since the 1960’s, Graeme McLeishe has also committed himself to stay for a long pastorate and to bring up his family within this community. This reinforces the reliability and consistency of the holding environment within the minds of the community. He will remain accessible but the church has grown less and less dependent upon him as some of the citations above indicate.

The formative impact of the pastor’s preaching and doctrinal perspective should not be underestimated as to its impact upon the emotional state of the entire church. This is evidence that a psychodynamic lens not only is useful to categorise the type of inter-psychic culture within the group but needs to seriously attend to the theological perspective of pastor and people. There is a strong theme in interview or public life that the Pastor’s preaching is both of high quality and relevant to daily life. The preaching of this pastor reflects his appreciation of the distinctives of rural lifestyle. A more psychodynamic interpretation of this however would be that by sanctifying the offering of their daily lives as a calling to ministry, Graeme

Mcleish has given the average member an effective 'transitional object' not only within the gamut of church activities, but the whole plethora of their daily life as an offering of service to God.

The theology I was brought up on was very Christ centred. But it wasn't the Christ whose sandals crunched the sand on the shores of Galilee. It was the Cosmic Christ. And I find that less, ... I find that too spiritual, too remote. I prefer the 'here'. I prefer the voice of the man who says 'come and follow me' or even better as he says to the Gadarene Demoniac to 'Go home!' and be my disciple at home. We have got to stop using the image of men having to leave their job to follow Jesus and look at the other images that talk about the disciple at home and doing the ministry there.

The pastor and others related examples of how typical incidents and stories gleaned from local history spice the content of his sermons. But this is not just for communicative effect but a serious attempt to contextualize the ramifications of the Christian narrative into the ethical structure of this unique local context. No issue cannot be brought into the church worship or preaching that this Incarnational Gospel does not touch. Land usage and environmental concerns, large corporate farming versus localise ownership, quick yielding crops versus long term commitment to better practices, treating children patiently rather than as farm hands, and so forth have all been framed as issues of Christian discipleship from the pulpit. Nothing is too common to be unimportant to God. This aspect should not be underestimated in terms of the impact upon the inter-psychological well being of this people.

The 'holding environment' of this people has become more adequate than that supplied by the otherworldly outlook fostered in the past eras. This was compounded by the impact of these pastors leaving in a steady succession. By virtue of their growing faith, these

members have found a role as well as a firm sense of consistency and meaning that should be supplied by an adequate holding environment. This type of worldview more adequately enables them to incorporate all aspects of their life without having to deny the relevance of their faith or be wracked by guilt for not being able to live out a separated holiness within the relatively fixed rural relational landscape. Even the former guilt-laden obligation to make a 'bold witness for Christ' has been removed by the effective blessing of rural life as a gift from God. Graeme Mcleish certainly rejects such a form of witness as obligatory for the members.

I had one bloke say to me "How could you stand around at a cattle sale and mention Jesus Christ? It would be an absolute clashing jarring social indiscretion, and you violate a friendship and a neighbourhood. (Graeme)

Members are affirmed by the pastor for mixing with their neighbours, even if this sometimes means they miss Sunday worship. Again, this is not a contrived attempt to curry the favour of the members, nor slackness in discipleship but the outworking of a new understanding of the horizontal, social dimension of the Gospel. But the surface manifestations of the ministry of the church are resonating with the preconscious needs and aspirations of the participants in the membership of the church. By his own creative behaviours, both within the local media and social life of the community he has modelled a more adequate way of regulating transactions across the boundaries of the church within the community, neither dissolving them as if the community was itself the church, nor shoring them up through a separated legalism akin to the more 'autistic' bindings of the past.

We didn't just try and come in and change them I think that was reciprocated. And they didn't demand us to be anything in particular and maybe a lot of them, not a lot,

some said to us “We are not like you.” And maybe they wanted to thank us in their own way, for allowing us to be more openly involved in the community. (Graeme)

This is testimony to the maturational power involved in the simplicity of the provision of an adequate holding environment.

Carinia Downs as a Psycho-Dynamic Narrative

The psychodynamic perspective offers a compelling explanation of the positive forces for renewal. It would suggest that there are significant pre-conscious changes in the culture that have contributed to the present positive and productive spirit if not the rigidity and depressiveness of the past.

Better boundary definition promotes healthier perspectives (Hirschhorn: 1988, 34f). The source of this rejuvenation appears to come from the pastor’s modelling of a healthy relationship to the outside environment as much as his preaching emphasis. The pastoral family has shown how it is possible to negotiate the boundaries of the church community within its social context so as to make a contribution that is both meaningful to the non-member and does not compromise the particulars of the members’ faith. This released the church from a rigid, even fearful posture relative to the wider environment. The care and attention to the issues of individuals’ lives and the framing of the faith to include all of their rural life as a potential form of worship or witness has supplied the members with the sort of ‘adequate holding environment’ (Winnicott: 1965a, 228) that has allowed their inner maturational processes to evolve naturally. This once was impeded by a ‘Christ against Culture’ perspective. The destabilising effect of regular departure of short-term pastors was compensated for by a legalistic ‘black and white’ moralising faith. They now have both the

security of a committed long-term pastor, and a worldview that sustains rather than suspects the motives of valued ministry in the local community.

Richer theology produces more integrated lives. This leadership seeks to find all members a role in their own temporal space that makes a contribution within the parameters of a vision of God's Kingdom ideal for a rural community. Without the vision, the leadership actions would not have been realized and the depressive guilt assuaged. The members would have continued to live bifurcated Christian lives juggling joy with guilt and duty, hope with failure to make a positive impression upon their environment. Instead, a rural lifestyle inclusive faith has itself provided a 'facilitating environment' that has enhanced the development of this group's lively personality. It has provided in ecclesial guise the means of maturation defined as "integration, personalization and object relating" (Winnicott: 1965, 223, 234, Stapley: 1996, 146) in the place of bifurcation, de-personalizing and retreat from the boundaries with the environment.

This has also been an affirming experience for the pastor and family. It has provided them and others with firm role boundaries and the 'transitional objects' of mutually valued ministry contributions. This in turn enables relationships to be robust rather than based upon any idealising charisma of church or pastor, nor by demonising the surrounding culture or segments of their own community. People within the wider community and church are no longer de-personalized as 'half objects' to be coerced, or treated as dependents. The narrative has a psychological theme of the reparative potential whereby a more helpful ideology pulls in the same direction as developmental needs. As such this psychological lens suggests that church stagnation and renewal is the indirect result of communal emotional maturity which is

triggered by a compatible theological vision, even if this is one that is only clearly articulated by the key leaders within the community rather than the whole.

Ivy Street

On collecting the rich depth of data from this church, one cannot help sensing that the hey-day of the church under long term pastor Max Grover, with the dominating leadership of elders and deacons from the upper echelons of the business community, built into this church strong themes of secrecy, intimidation and formality that were serving the psychodynamic valency of many who comprised the membership of the church in the last thirty years. The difference with this case from Carinia Downs is that the membership did not seem to resent the domination of these power figures.

This leads to a constellation of themes akin to ‘compulsive’ or ‘suspicious’ groups. The choice between these alternative ‘diagnoses’ is not simple. Moreover there is a strong idealising of both deacons and the organization itself suggesting its importance as some sort of object representation introjected into the heart of the community psyche. Beyond this there is a strong degree of evidence of the church experience being a basic assumption group, sometimes strongly dependency, sometimes a pairing, and sometimes a fight-flight group changing from one to another as anxieties arose.

Decline Period: Changing and Aberrant Basic Assumptions

Bion indicated that the basic assumption under which a group labours will not satisfy the maturational goals of the group as no particular work or cooperative venture can come forth from it. One should expect a shifting from one basic assumption to another. Due to the

peculiar historical features of power and dominance derived from the social factors above this most likely leads us into the decline cycle of the church through the development of a 'pairing-group' assumption. Some of the pertinent features of a 'pairing-group' include its longing for a future hope that never can be allowed to materialise, perhaps in the form of a Messianic figure, and the impact of a rising of anxiety resolved inadequately through schism. A degree of panic set in during the years following the exit of Pastor Max Grover. It is also at this point that there is some evidence at the time of this 'utopian' basic assumption in that the next young pastor resigned and went back to his home state after a short pastorate as he could sense that he was about to become the cause of a 'schism' within the church. He was regarded as "young and impatient" and it was said that he "left under a cloud" (David). The various leaders were effective in negating his capacity to achieve any real 'work'.

The next pastor's recollection of his induction certainly included features typical of 'baP'. He was told after his commencement that he "was the last hope for the church, which wasn't very helpful ah ... because of what we had been through" (James). The church leaders wanted to coopt a 'Messianic leader' to perpetuate its image of the idealized church without having to address major work issues. It is understandable on these grounds of unhelpful charisma, why the church during this time moves into a major schism as predicted by the theory of basic assumption groups (Bion: 1961, 141). A corroborating feature of this is the lack of rational evidence for the charge levelled at James Glover around which the church divided. A church secretary of the time and opponent of the pastor was hard pressed on recollection to supply evidence of the actual "charismatic" flavour that pastor Glover was supposed to have introduced.

There was a lot of leaning toward charismatic influence. But as far as I can remember, that was not dramatic. And I can't remember ... anything specific. ... He

did preach the gifts of the spirit. But I always thought the preaching was reasonably balanced. I could never fault it! (David)

The schism was however unmistakable and began within the leadership and spread to the far points of the church. This became especially manifest when a couple of his supporters, managed to be voted on to the eldership.

And I remember there was a new breed that came into the church who were not of the old ilk. But the old still kept on coming through. The Grover era never left. I can still remember people who were in the elders, they were out of the Grover era and had gone through all of this and now they were on the elders' court. But you had a new breed coming in. So you had the elders split, and you had the deacons split and you had the church split. (David).

This aberrant form of the 'pairing' basic assumption is enacted in political life of the church when after the request of a couple of the milder mannered elders, Pastor Glover, having survived narrow majority votes finally hands in his resignation, only to have virtually fifty percent of the church hand in their resignations at the same church meeting (David, James).

A tantalising proposal by Hirschhorn resonates strongly with this sort of recollection. Hirschhorn relates this to the 'death of a founder' theme, here in equal significance the long-term post war pastor Max Grover.

When a powerful religious or intellectual leader dies, the followers frequently split into 2 groups, each representing a particular side of the dead leader. These schisms are in fact, vehicles for the denial of the leader's death. (Hirschhorn:1988, 94).

The removal of Max Grover certainly sparked ambivalent feelings toward his memory as leader. In the one hand people feel abandoned and sense their dependency upon the leader. On the other they resent his controlling patriarchy and feel not as hemmed in as when “the Boss” was present. The fact that there was little substantive evidence of a charismatic ‘take over’ of the church suggests that the unfortunate pastor Glover was caught up in a cycle of ambivalence that had not been resolved through the short sequence of brief pastorates between himself and pastor Grover’s retirement. Simultaneously, he became the focus of both resentments and projections of undiluted dependent affection.

Another basic assumption appears to dominate after this shock, the *baD*, or dependency basic assumption group. A recurring feature once the church has split is that it becomes increasingly confirmed in the rightness of its mentality and more rigid in its attitudes to possible change. If the schism was a result of ambivalence projected after the ‘death of the founder’, then once the split had been achieved and the pole of the members that had effectively been labelled charismatic had left the church en masse, those remaining would most likely be those who had resolved their own ambivalence and denial of the death by projecting their negative attitudes onto James Glover and charismatics generally. It is no accident that those who are still positively enmeshed with the Grover legacy take the best part of two decades into the present pastorate to acknowledge that “the Grover era in fact was gone” (David). And these same characters are violently opposed to the re-introduction of anything that smacks of a ‘charismatic’ feel even when it comes in the innocuous form of a pastor clapping his hands during the singing of a chorus in a worship service.

At the same time, the church recognised that it was becoming very aged and needs the rejuvenation of youth and younger adults and consequently is very friendly during the

pastorate of the next pastor, the aging Pastor Ray Floyd. He personally made great efforts to reorganize the leadership of the diaconate with portfolios so that more work could be achieved and was fondly remembered by all. One could then be forgiven for assuming that he had managed to transform the church from a basic assumption group, perhaps ‘compulsive’ organization, into a ‘working’ group. But the fact was that a mentality persisted that this was also an opportunity to “get back to the way it was and still have Auntie on the organ” (Amy) as it was in the heyday of Max Grover. Pastor Floyd left the church through failing energy and did not alter the fundamentals of the culture or this conserving of the ‘compulsive’ constellation. The church deacons managed to avoid the implications of the restructure.

He’d brought in the Deacons with their portfolios and he’d brought in things like this that had never been brought in before. Deacons still came in and brought in very little in terms of the management of the church. ... Ah they still hung onto the idea that the church meeting should make all the decisions. (David).

This effectively transferred any important decision to the field of play where dominance and intimidation was most entrenched.

When a leader retreats from the boundaries of their role responsibility, they create a scared world meeting with fantasies either of omnipotence, dependency or defensive denial. “Paradoxically, we are not separated from each other by our roles, rather we lose touch with each other when we fail to hold the roles that may help us collaborate”. (Hirschhorn:1988, 42). The ‘bible’ of this distinctive church tradition still hung heavily over the church until the present pastorate as an alternative form of security now that the pairing assumption had proven destructive and unattainable. The leaders and church meetings still oscillate between a *baD* and *baF* and avoid the implications of their portfolios. Not surprisingly as the data

reveals voluminously, a ready culture of depersonalisation hung heavily over the church. Despite the rational attempts of Pastor Floyd, the group manages to avoid the use of their authority and, fleeing from these boundaries, resort to destructive aggressive behaviour. Intimidating figures still dominated the church meeting and effectively stifled the forward movement toward constructive cooperation in ministry. Instead the leaders made sure the church was consumed with energy sapping rituals and struggling with interpersonal brutality. The leadership simply believed that these traditional rituals, such as the elongated arguments over the minutes to “establish the ‘pecking order’ of superiority” (Clive) and submissiveness actually helped them achieve their work as expected (Hirschhorn 1988: 67).

The passivity associated with *baD* and the fighting spirit associated with *baF* are still evident through to the next era of Clive Crowe especially in the times of decision making in church meetings.

I think things came to the church meeting but the leadership would come into the meetings and say “we think this should happen” and there was a number of people that were highly respected. If [they] stood up in a meeting and said “look this is this situation”.... you know this is how we decided this or this is how we came to this decision blah blah blah ... We want the church to endorse it”. Everyone said “Yes!” (Amy).

Most people find it hard to speak in public anyhow, let alone if you were going to speak in public and get, I’m talking absolutely demolished, demolished like you wouldn’t believe. So, nobody spoke.... people... there were various witnesses and people didn’t... people didn’t enter into discussion. They made statements. And there’s a big difference. In other words, we’re having an issue and so everybody

would make this statement. So It's not, "Look, I think we ought to add this to the debate", it was "This is my first and final comment", and you had all these rigid contributions that left you absolutely ..." ... "And that's what... that contributed to the going nowhere. See, that's what happens in a church that doesn't go anywhere because you have rigidity not only in your structure, but you have rigidity in, in... in your meetings. And rigidity means that you haven't got any consensus to move. So you just keep going up and down on the spot and you get to the end of the meeting and they say "Boy, we thrashed that out". And you say, "No we didn't, we just thrashed it around!" (Clive)

The *baD*, is still strongly evident in Clive Crowe's recollections of his early days in the church with a new twist, also anticipated by Bion, of the 'Specialized Work Group' (Bion: 1961, 141). This group is a sub-group of the larger body appointed to keep the prevailing basic assumption alive so that the larger group can function at some adequate level. They must neither let it die nor let it fly out of control. There is a large amount of data that this is indeed the function fulfilled by the Deacons' or Elders' courts as these reflections clearly indicate. This group fluctuated ineffectually between *baD* and *baF* as frustration with a lack of effective ministry would raise levels of frustrations to levels where there would be a destructive attack on a supposed enemy, or a flight away from the hated object, only then for the deacons to revert back to *baD*. A fixation with distractive details and points of order were used in order to avoid the challenge of decision-making, the supposed role of the group. A selection of such particularly pertinent recollections show the specialized basic assumption functions apportioned to the group and the capacity of the group to alternate around such unsatisfying assumptions.

If you upset this one ... there was all these unwritten ... not only laws, but accepted situations. And everybody knew where the lines were. ... That I would find out my place and that they would know that this is where the control is ... And there was this unbelievable difference between what they were outside of a meeting and what they were inside. They walked in through a door... and they... they took on an oppressive kind of authoritarianism. Which didn't have any boundaries. They could abuse each other. They could abuse me. And it was all couched in ... in Godly sort of terms. It was all ah... "Mr Q"... you know? "You don't seem to understand." And they were talking to each other, um... very oppressive. Most times the emphasis was always suspicious: "Why should we do this? What's the point of entering into that? Why should we spend that money?" (Clive).

As Bion suspected with *baD*, the obsession of the group is with the 'Group Bible', its past history than actual work for which it convened.

It was 'Safety first'. 'Protecting!' There was an overwhelming sense of protecting their past. And protecting what the church was. It was ... [I was the] 'front-man'. So that the view through the shop window would be new and bright, colourful, but "don't change the engine room". Don't... don't upset the balance of what this place is! (Clive)

We see here something of the switch from *baD* to *baF*. We recall the incident when a deacon informed Clive Crowe that he, the Deacon, had taken upon himself the role of opposing any new initiative that Clive proposed since he came four years earlier. Clive further reflected:

I suspected that that kind of mentality was pretty widespread. There was a coldness and a hardness. Not... and it probably seems like I just wanted to do whatever I

wanted to do ... But there was actually a coldness to even consider “What is God really wanting to do?”

Verbal abuse was not uncommon in church meetings especially of the younger member. Despite their natural tendencies the church depersonalised its members as part objects as if in a perpetual schizoid mode. This specialized group would swing from *baD* to *baF* at the very point when the group mentality is challenged and again the tendency to resort to the ‘group bible’ of entrenched tradition.

That issue came up about “That’s not the way we do things around here!” And I made some comment, like, “If something is wrong, at the beginning, it doesn’t matter how often you do it, it’s still wrong at the end.” So I said, “And I’ll just use an example”, I said, “This church has been going since 190x.” I said, “If we started off with an attitude that’s wrong, or we did something that was wrong, back in 190x, and we’re still doing it in 1994”, as it was at that stage, I said, “It’s still wrong”. And one of the guys, the old men, jumped up and he just screamed at the top of his voice. And he said, “You...”, he said, “You wouldn’t know what it was to be a Baptist pastor.” And he said “And, in fact, you’re not a pastor’s bootlace”. (Clive)

The wife of a present deacon recalls the similar typical experiences.

I know when Kevin first started there as a deacon, they had what they called the Officers’ Court. And he used to come home absolutely distraught because of the antagonism and um... you know, just really aggression. And he actually resigned for a while, over that, he went to a few of them and he said, “I cannot serve alongside you, with all of this, what I see as totally ungodly behaviour in you.” And um, you

know, that actually shocked quite a few of the oldies, because some of them perceived Kevin as being, you know, um... in what they saw as their side of the camp. (Joyce).

This sort of destructive attack is indicative of a fight-flight group as the pastor found himself repeatedly treated as a 'part object' or a hated enemy. The group seems to swing from one pole to another by these means, somehow avoiding *baP*, or its aberrant form, the schismatic option, which had led previously to the church's decimation. This speaks of the depth of disturbance of the leadership group. We recall the incident with Elder Ross Stirling's confession of his hatred of Clive Crowe.

What transpires in the church outside of the major political meetings finds its way within the culture of these decision-making spaces. The flight-flight group fantasy was most evident in the area of worship as much as the *baD* in policy making meetings. Many attacked other figures that in their minds represented the progressive changes in the church rather than the Pastor showing signs of some level of transference.

I remember when Adriana first came to the church and she started implementing newer songs and she has a more unique style and perhaps people up the front with a microphone that whole idea was ... you know the older people they hated it. They actually hated her as a person for introducing it. I felt quite horrible about it that they were almost attacking her as a person over this implementation of change. (Amy).

As a whole the church still had a culture that had most of the rigid and formal features of the 'compulsive' organization. The church experienced some cosmetic changes while retaining its conservative theological core convictions. Yet this resulted in such profound anxiety and aggression. This reveals that the church still shows signs of immaturity and had not learned

the capacity to grow through consideration of other viewpoints (Stapley: 1996, 168). To change from a neurotic group felt like disintegration. Most of the animosity fixed upon two issues, the changes to worship and the audacity of the Pastor to attempt to change these symbols of the church's cherished identity, particularly the impersonal tone of morning worship. Most of these refer to conflicts that occur within the deacon's court or the members meeting. This is because these were arenas where the power distribution and the fundamental directions of the church were determined. These experienced extreme levels of conflict after which one or more of the protagonists left.

Connections between Core Values and Defensive Routines

Repeated interviews with the pastors in the church not only confirmed a degree of aggression but a connection between a conservative theological and social position and the brutality.

And so while there has been 'blood on the streets' if I can use that term, ... huh ha, since Clive has been here, there's been a strength of Clive, a degree of maturity to be able to manage this, a bull nosed, bull headedness ahah, ... He's an extremely good orator. ... Ivy Street is still a very conservative church. And because it is so conservative it seems to have a, a bite to it, ... so that if you try to break into that conservativeness you er ...look out for it! (David)

There is something irrational about this culture of aggression that shocks any who confront it suggesting a prevailing *baF* group within the church particularly the politically active leadership group. In the opinion of the pastor at the turning point of the church, the two are related as a defensive strategy to avoid the exposure of unwanted domains of the public and private life of many key individuals within the church.

A selection of quotations from Rev. Clive Crowe reveals this connection between the avid commitment to a social and religious conservatism and an avoidance of the depressive position, particularly in the mentality of the most vocal and domineering members. More and more often he discovered the most aggressive members held family secrets or personal moral failings tightly under the cover of secrecy. These were figures of prominence within the wider Christian community and mission societies.

I could see the fear on their faces when I got close enough. Cold orthodoxy never challenged their dark side. ... There were 'No go zones'. Questions simply lead to more questions. (Clive)

When asked about the interrelationship between conservatism and defensiveness, Clive Crowe posited this process.

The system defends the privacy so if you attempt any change it knocks the whole lot over. Fighting is not fighting but fighting exposure!" It is a cover an incredibly defended identity. For example an idea came up in church to let people get together in twos and threes for prayer is greatly opposed. They said "This place will be devastated. It breeds subversion!" A group of twelve would be too threatening to sit in a small group and pray for these sorts."

This orthodoxy itself was a repressive denial strategy that meant that many figures who were powerful in large settings were threatened in contexts where a degree of intimacy was appropriate. In this case this reinforces that a psychotic lens therefore is more illuminating than a culture lens alone. Conservatism allowed the dominant to attack the positions of non-

conservative outsiders and some within the church were held in suspicion. Occasionally key family members would lower their defensive guard. One wife of a board member revealed:

I lived in terror for twenty-five years that someone would find out. I'm a hopeless drunk!

Religious convictions were themselves used as a cloak for dependencies. Other stories related sexual addictions, family violence as well as other chemical addictions in families and persons thought to be paragons of evangelical virtue. At the time he found the hostility confounding. But now Clive sees the interconnection between culture and defensive strategy.

How come I have been characterised as the devil when I'm trying to open out the place to the Spirit of God? Out of Control lives are held together with a hyper controlled church. So they would attack anyone who dismantled their secure still point. ... Every issue therefore had to come to the church. Every issue "ran the gauntlet". After running through their sense of insecurity meant no 'meat was left on the bone'. ... They said "What we hate is that we used to come to Ivy Street and know exactly what is going to happen. But now we don't." (Clive)

Clive was particularly resented for his relaxed and direct style, particularly his pastoral directness. He received hate mail as had James Glover for months on end. Yet he told some particularly moving stories of people who finally relented in this opposition at the points of breakdown and impending death. One visit in particular to a major opposing deacon in hospital was told. Clive entered the room where the once powerful man sat in pyjamas attached to an oxygen supply. His gasping opening words were "It wasn't worth it." "It never

is” Clive replied. And the two sat reconciling themselves to the impending reality of the deacon’s demise, the irrationality of the hostility now evident to all.

Paradoxes abound that make sense at a level of psychological defence and projection. The irony is these members of note come to church to seek God. But once in their dominating role their orthodoxy is a way of fleeing, “to avoid, to hide from God” (Clive). The major product of the church culture was its strong emphasis upon the orthodoxy of its Bible teaching ministry as opposed to its life changing capacity and its pride at having significant sending out of missionaries. But both of these are convenient ways of focussing away from the actual state of the members’ individual lives and avoidance of something as unpredictable as community. The members could validate themselves without reference to the state of their lives: a justification by the faith held. Focusing on sending away sometimes the most dysfunctional members as missionaries is a curious cultural manifestation of practiced projection and deflects attention from the unpalatable realities and the energy expended on repression. But the “fact was that it is rotten from the core!” (Clive). The sheer fact that despite the allurements of other pastoral placements, Clive Crowe continued to fulfil his pastoral calling to care for these persons ‘while they were doing their worst’ is surely a critical factor in the ability of individuals within the system, to take on a more empathetic ‘depressive position’ as he himself provides a more than adequate ‘holding environment’ that limits the need for regressive reactions from even some of his most ardent opponents.

Renewal Period: The church begins to ‘Work’

The critical issues that we wish to address at this point is whether Pastor Clive Crowe actually helped this group move from a basic assumption group to a work group or just to

another form of aberrant basic assumption. We observe here also how this was accomplished and what relationship if any, this had to the God Image or theological vision.

As noted in the culture chapters above, the change at Ivy Street happened in stages. Individuals could indicate at what point the church reached a ‘tipping point’ somewhere during its sixth to seventh year of Pastor Clive Crowe’s term. There are three distinct types of incident shared by the respondents that attribute the change to psychological factors. One appears to be the recognition by members, despite much of the animosity being swept away into the basic assumption operating behind the doors of the leadership meetings, that a greater consciousness develops within the discerning member of the pastor’s frustration. The levels of animosity had reached critical levels before a couple of factors loosened the controlling grip of the rigid. The power of projective impulses is evident here as the pastor senses that he is losing his natural capacity to trust within the rarefied climate of hatred.

The first was probably after nearly three years. So we had nearly three years of almost no change of leadership. And it was... it was unbelievably difficult working with that kind of mentality.” ... “Because, at one stage, I had two of the four elders who had said that they were now committed to getting me out of the place. This was about, after about two and a half years I’d been here. And at one point, one of the older ladies came. She used to meet with about three other ladies and she said to me, “We have no idea what’s going on, but we want to pray for you.” So I didn’t tell her what was going on, because, to be quite frank, I didn’t know who to trust. Who was who and... And I said, “Look, you’re on the right track.” Please pray.” I think it was, going back, within a month, both of those elders resigned. And even just those two elders out the way, was like the lid just kind of opened out a bit. And ah, some fresh air came in. Because every time one went, I had some significant influence over who

came in. And we started to shift the balance, if you like. I think it took at least another two years after that before the wider leadership began to embrace the fact that we were never, ever, ever going back to that old style of leadership. And that doesn't happen overnight. You used to keep coming back and saying, "We're doing leadership a different way." The intimidation was gone the "this is the way we've always done it" is gone...

He attributes the breakdown of the *baF* and *baD* underlying the 'Compulsive' constellation to answered prayer mixed with an influx of new leaders. It is somewhat remarkable that this is one of the very few references to the role that God played within the renewal of the church and its psychological climate. One of the major reasons for this simply may be that theological differences between Clive and the church were never an issue. He was well regarded by even his opponents as a fine preacher. Indeed this is the reason why they appointed him in the first instance. This struggle is an interpersonal one on a plane that has to do with how he as an object was introjected into the minds of his opponents.

A critical feature in the breaking up of this destructive group fantasy was the capacity that Clive used publicly on more than one occasion to confront inhumane behaviour leading to the movement of a group from *baF* or a 'paranoid-schizoid position' to a 'depressive position'. This is shown in the cathartic incident when Clive invites his former nemesis elder Ross Stirling to be reinstated on the eldership and see this as another critical instance of the pastoral consistency offering an alternative 'holding environment' to the predictable rigidity of Ivy Street orthodoxy. It was noticeable in that account, when his own family situation had to face a moral tragedy that he confessed his inability to cope. At that point Ross moved from a splitting and projection of hatred of Clive to one committed to humble support and service, even though this cost him the approval of his peers. This shows a shifting of positions into

one of new health and maturity. This incident followed a moral failure of an Elder's family that cut across other family lines in the church. Pastor Crowe took necessary action against that member which incensed Ross Stirling.

But he came to my house one day, and he just... and he was, what... seventy two at the time, and he said, "I've never hated anybody in my seventy two years more than I've hated you." And, I reckon, for about seven or eight months, he bore that bitterness until one stage, I thought he was going to die. He was a shadow of a man. He resigned from the eldership, all that kind of stuff. And ah, I won't go into the whole story, but the long and the short of it is that ah... the next time the elections came up for elders, I went and saw him and asked him to deal with the whole thing. But I said, "Believe it or not," I said, I actually need you as an elder." I said, "You're a good man. You're a godly man." And he actually broke down and he just wept ... for about 10-15 minutes. And he just said, "You know I... the worst part about the last nine months, is that I have actually felt like my whole life has been a waste of time. Because after seventy odd years, I saw that everything I stood for didn't prepare me for hardly anything. Certainly not to deal with an issue like this. But" he said, "How did I deal with it? I reverted to hatred, bitterness, anger. And" he said, "to think that I still have just a little opportunity to serve God again!" Now he came back into the eldership, and was there for another three or four years, and, without a shadow of a doubt, has been, in my twenty-three years, the greatest support, encouragement. Because he... he was one of those who moved from that world of intimidation and control and...to becoming a man of immense heart and spirit.

(Clive).

It trivialises the power of this story to only perceive of this as another instance of a pastor as a 'differentiated self', remaining in contact with an opponent without becoming 'emotionally

enmeshed' as family systems lens would have it. It supplies a revealing insight into a view of culture change from within a significant individual within the total narrative. Ross moves from being a coercive user of power through the depression of hopelessness and hatred, to then discover in the kindness and longsuffering of the pastor a new life of heart and spirit. It appears that this person enters a depressive position as he is suddenly able to conceive of the pastor as a whole person rather than an object to be hated. Moreover, right in the midst of this recollection is a revelation. The tormented hater has an image of God in the period of his own intimidation and hate that would imply that he, Ross has "been disqualified" from meaningful ministry. Resigning from ministry only makes matters worse for him. He regresses into a position of undiluted hatred of the pastor and simultaneously feels a distance from God's favour. The offer of fruitful collaborative ministry from God's person in the form of Pastor Clive is held out to him again. This cathartic moment is based upon an affirmation of his worthiness and usefulness within his largely self-inflicted torment. We see here that a transitional object of a welcome for his valued contribution invites Ross to express gratitude to God. Again we note that for a person with developed God representations, personal psycho-dynamic transactions have immediate theological correlates. He is then able to return to the leadership team but not with the same negative agendas as before. Having been both confronted with the inadequacy of status and power as means of addressing life's tragedies he sheds these as operating systems in favour of an empathetic and encouraging role. Given such a dramatic turnaround, it is no wonder that at the same time the culture of the officers' court underwent a significant climate change with such a significant figure changing his allegiances.

The signal of this figure, once a source of dark projections, becoming an advocate for Clive and the sorts of changes happening within the church was met with resistance from his

former confederates in the compulsive organization. But this signalled also the end of the deacons and elders being used as a 'Specialized' group to harness the particular group fantasies of the church. What happens is that Clive and his supporters begin to be valued on their merits rather than their symbolic significance in the emotional theatre of the church. A mature situation is developing (Stapley: 1996, 158).

A similar incident of a move to a 'depressive' position occurred when the wife of the associate pastor did not receive the necessary majority for appointment to the board of deaconesses after political influx of members were brought in to bias the result against her.

Even though they were about five short... like they needed five deaconesses, they actually would not vote these new girls in. And they would rather work with three or four or five less than actually vote. And it was actually a strong protest to say, "We will not allow this change to come into our setting." And I remember that was quite a watershed, because I said to them that night, something along the lines of, I said, "We've finished with our meeting, but we haven't finished. We've only just begun." I said, "When a church can refuse a pastor's wife an opportunity to serve amongst the women, we've actually hit the bottom." I said, "There's only one way we can go from here." I said, "You go home, and all of you who have refused to vote Sharon in as a deaconess", I said, "You'll have to let God deal with that, 'cause I tell you, it *is* going to happen from now." And that was actually a major watershed. And I said, "You can scream in meetings, you can write letters anonymously," and I got plenty of them, "You can do whatever you like. But I think this place, from today onwards, will never be the same again". And I think that was actually a major move, 'cause I think some people actually felt embarrassed ...ashamed.

It is ironic, that if the group was usually operating out of a 'dependency' basic assumption, this has some similarities to the 'depressive' position where the group recognises for once that the individuals with whom it deals are in fact whole persons, subjects and not just projections of their hatred. A mental discrimination seems to occur. Again in the incident of the closing of the later service for the tradition bearers of the church, he confronts that issue also at the point at which the group is most depressed and missing the full human interaction of the cross section of the church. Also with the choir, many of the members confessed that they were really glad that it had folded but had not worked out how to tell the choir mistress without hurting her feelings (Clive, Amy). It would seem through actions such as these that the heroic leadership of the pastor, does not lead them back into a dependency or a charisma based idealisation of himself or the institution of the church. Instead he has the capacity to grow these subgroups through these critical incidents by enabling them to identify empathetically with the persons they normally wound others unthinkingly while in paranoid schizoid position. There was an intuitive sense amongst the group that this process was neither automatic nor instantaneous.

It built up ... momentum. And I remember, up until about the sixth year here, people were always saying, "If you leave now, we'll go backwards. We're going backwards." And I felt that too. I thought, "We're on the verge of something here... But there's enough control to tip us backwards if we don't." And I reckon, into about our seventh year, I think we put all that behind us. Where the leadership itself, right across the board, virtually said, "We are never, ever going back to that." (Clive).

Many factors combine to indicate that the psychological culture of the church has changed fundamentally at Ivy Street. It has changed from a basic assumption, involving a rigid, controlling schizoid position, to one that is more empathetic, flexible and cooperative.

It is pertinent that a youth pastor was appointed nearly five years ago from a Pentecostal background, with demonstrable 'charismatic' emotional expression, and yet is well appreciated by this still conservative evangelical church and one that once was split into schism by the mildest semblance of charismatic fervour. The church has not shifted in its theological convictions yet now can, as this insight of a current missionary of the church attests, judge a person's merits rationally and objectively on the basis of what they actually are achieving rather than what they once would have represented as a human object.

The pastor has a style of leadership also which expects those in leadership of various sorts to make decisions, to be in fact 'W' working groups. Still however, there are aspects of the church life that typify a capacity to move away from real work and fail to meet the responsibilities required for adequate load sharing. Volunteers are often hard to come by, and until a recent major restructuring, the pastors felt that many decisions and jobs still fall onto their desks that should be dealt with elsewhere suggesting a persisting dependency.

This in part has to do with the continued influx of new members. A curious feature that became evident in focus group discussions was that many of new members over the last couple of years shared some common features, particularly being disillusioned by abusive church situations with leaderships. Some of these members were in situations that brutally suppressed the members or placed growth ahead of human need. Some typical responses from such people included these:

In this very area! They are the sorts of places where if you are a Christian you're not allowed to have problems. It's not that way here. ... People have to get into ministry themselves. He doesn't send people on guilt trips. We were looking for a church that

could give us a relational community ... Its laid back from the top down. People feel comfortable with that. People don't come to worship the man.

...

The pastors aren't aloof. They are accessible. They set the temperature and the climate, giving it integrity stability and constancy. Elsewhere we have had such nonsense in the form of 'guidance'. Here it is straight down the line.

...

It's inclusive and caring. But it's still on the way.

One could say that the church has supplied a sufficiently adequate holding environment for many people to develop or recuperate from previous abusive experiences. As a result the most common aspirations that such members expressed were the desires to now be more involved in service within the community and for more formal training in ministry. For instance:

I'd like to be seen and known in the community as a place where people could go if they needed help, advice or just needed to find a friend.

...

We have a lot of concentrated goodness in this church, but we need to let it out.

...

We need some course on finding your feet in this body of Christ.

...

I would really appreciate leadership development. I don't know. But it is needed.

Where individuals are ready to engage their environment, to fulfil the espoused group task and to develop their selves through ministry to others, the holding environment must have

been perceived as adequate and ministry opportunities have served as effective transitional objects.

Ivy Street as a Psychodynamic Narrative

A psychodynamic reading of the recollections from within this church has a strong capacity to explain the major shifts in the church from the former climax period under Max Grover through its decline and rejuvenation in the present pastoral period. Historical reasons and characteristic traits of the leadership fostered a compulsive constellation that, paradoxically, both intimidated the average member yet made them feel privileged to be a member of the church. This was sustained by the frantic visitation program of the pastor who was cast in the model of a benevolent dictator, even protector from external forces. Thus some degree of idealisation of the organization corresponds with the overall dependency fostered of course by this visitation program. The workaday world of hierarchical differences were transposed into the church and permeated the nature of relationships between member and leadership. These also served to structure the culture in the same direction of idealisation-domination.

A dependent group therefore was both anxious and ambivalent about this sort of dominance once Max Grover left. A situation that could only result in a potent primal ‘man-trap’ for any pastor who attempted to move the church beyond this era of denial, guilt and splitting of the Pastor’s memory in a ‘death of the founder’ complication. The leaders that were left maintained the dictatorship but without sufficient quantities of benevolence. The longer-term members willingly suffered this domination by Officer’s Court suggesting an ‘identification with the aggressor’ as a deeper regression into dependency was occurring at a group level.

The evidence suggests then that the current pastor has enabled people to move into the ambivalence associated with the depressive position, transcend the inflated memories of the Grover era and begin to respond toward each other as whole objects. This suggests that he has been able to maintain an adequate holding environment. This has been achieved as he has remained in contact with many rivals and seen them through ‘as they have done their worst’, enabling personal integration to occur on large scale.

It is curious that this type of emotional culture change has been so profound in the space of the latter half of the present pastorate, but this has not been associated with a perceptible shift in theological position, nor was it fought over theological differences. The renewal was not inspired by a particular view of God, Christ or his Kingdom so much as what was appropriate interpersonal ethics for his people. It could be for this reason that the church still lacks a clear definition of its primary task in terms of its function within the wider environment. Different parts of the church are ready to express themselves in significant roles whereas others are still convalescing. Nonetheless the fact that the church appeals to outsiders as a healthy environment and that members have begun to indicate their passion for more risky missional ventures would suggest that the holding environment induced by the current leadership is sufficiently healthy to sustain the development and maturation of the members.

The plot line of Ivy Street at a psychodynamic level does show a high degree of logical cohesion. This cohesion confirms the hypothesis that it is a psychodynamic level that connects with the narrative of the church decline and renewal. The culture was beset by neurotic aspects. The addressing of these aspects accounts for its renewal. Both cultural and theological-convictions buttressed and reinforced this dynamic that was formed by leader-

follower attachments in a former peak period during which much of the church's culture and reputation was forged.

Red Hill Regional Church

Unlike the previous couple of churches this church did not have a history of schism or identifiable factions until recently. It is unlikely that the core of the church regressed to a 'pairing' basic assumption in its former time so as to require such a means of holding together the good and bad aspects of the organization or its pastors. For the vast majority of the members the church culture was shaped for them when their second pastor Clarie Friedman, led the church into a significant and defining growth period concurrent with the development of the housing subdivisions in the surrounding district. He functions for them as the founder of the church as he defined so much that was characteristic of this climax. We confine the references here to that period and beyond. As a result of his thirteen-year ministry, the psychological importance of this figure cannot be underestimated. Clarie looms large in the narrative given by all. We analyse the narrative of Red Hill Regional Church from the vantage points of four distinct shifts in organizational leadership style that each carry with them their own distinct types of dysfunctions.

Former Peak Period Neurotic Constellations

Kets de Vries and Miller's (1984: 43) discrimination between neurotic organizational cultures postulates that the neuroticism of the group leader governs the principal emotional aspects of the whole organization. In terms of their characterisation of the church in the high time of Pastor Friedman, there are two particular options that suggest themselves. Both rely to some extent upon a leader with a tendency toward anger and paranoia. These cultures

include the 'Dramatic' and the 'Suspicious' or 'Paranoid' organization. Sometimes these features appear together in one phenomena. This showed up particularly in his preaching.

I can remember some really strong, long sermons about anti-homosexuals. I would have to say he was fairly anti-Catholic, those sorts of things. ... He was interesting. He was very much a platform orator style of person and felt quite uncomfortable in small group context where he was more vulnerable because of the interaction and that.

(Cyril).

The polemical tone filtered through his vitriolic crescendos during most sermons that one "could set your watch to" (Shane). This in itself does not suggest that the whole culture is neurotic. Not all groups with such opinions are so dominated as this one. It is more the fact that the mentality of the whole church culture revolves around this larger than life figure and lets him set the boundaries of the organization on the basis of such perceived threats from dissenting views. We also recall that Clarie was not averse to bullying out of the church those who were suspected of being charismatics or coming down upon husbands whose wives were "too free with their opinions" (Sandra).

The features of the typical Dramatic Organization (Kets De Vries and Miller: 1984, 21, 33) that typify the Friedman era at Red Hill include that too much power was concentrated in this single person while the leadership alternated too often between a range of strategic options and lacked continuity in their orientation. Participative decision-making appears in name only and "ventures are initiated on the basis of only one point of view" (Kets de Vries and Miller: 1984, 33). Clarie's 'top down' communication style obstructed effective internal communication especially in upward and lateral directions. This resulted in an overly diversified church with a whole range of disconnected ministries, each with their own diverse

goals. Consensus was difficult to garner as a result, and the community instead cohered around his own personal strength.

However the following features are lacking for a convincing 'dramatic' diagnosis. While the church did in fact grow under Clarie it does not appear that unbridled growth was the goal of the pastor or leaders (Kets de Vries and Miller: 1984, 32). Also, there does not appear to be the concern to accumulate other resources or engage in bold risk taking ventures that extend the finances of the church toward perilous limits that one would expect were this the case. There is little evidence that Clarie was motivated by the narcissistic urges that drive dramatic leaders to seek visibility or, to crave attention.

There are some features of the Paranoid Constellation that resonate with the style exhibited by Pastor Clarie. For instance Clarie's phobias and aggressive methods do seem to have engendered a "climate of overall suspicion" (David, Len), particularly toward the leadership that is inherited by later pastors. This is insufficient ground for a diagnosis on its own. But then other patterns suggest a paranoid constellation particularly those generated by Clarie's own reactivity. His ranging persistent unsolicited and sometimes intrusive visitation often seemed to lack any pastoral purpose. This could well have been a way of keeping eye contact and forestalling any surprises. The same could be said of his 'saturation hospitality' as a means of scanning the incoming members. He certainly exploits a network of relationships even after he leaves Red Hill to keep him informed of the goings on within the church. And as one would expect in such a constellation, there is certainly a meandering strategy of leadership that inhibits the competencies of those beneath him. But most importantly, there is definite evidence of a desire to centralise authority in the leadership in his own grasp as befits a person who feels significantly threatened. There is definite

conservatism and a defensive mobilising of energy against perceived threats from the environment, including the rising influx of charismatic Christians and women who may aspire to leadership roles. In short, Clarie meets perceived hostility with hostility, whether in the form of members with divergent ideas, or, subordinates who are not submissive enough for his liking (Terry).

When I think about Clarie's ministry I think of it as very successful while he is at the church but I think he was the sort of guy who was very good at putting people in ministry as long as you did it his way. And when you didn't do it his way he stomped his foot and made you get out. And I think he did a lot of stomping of his foot in leadership. And I think he stomped his foot once too often and they wouldn't take it anymore. (Sandra)

...

He would make it very difficult for them. I suppose there were situations where, I just think of one young fellow who disagreed with him and he basically told him to not come back and in very strong terms. I personally had at one stage I had a fairly major conflict with him on the street and threatened to punch him myself because I was just so frustrated because he had actually yelled at my wife and made me appear very small in her eyes. And he came around to see me to fix it up and I said "Don't you ever do that again otherwise I don't care I will flatten you!" I mean I probably couldn't have, ... I have never threatened anybody before! (Cyril).

In the face of the severe treatment of his staff members and others the whole of the leadership was reluctant to challenge him unless they were unanimously committed to what that entailed. Such a failure to confront this behaviour contributed directly to an unworkable ministry environment (Kets de Vries:1995, 51).

However, there are some features of this constellation that are missing for a paranoid culture in pure form to have arisen. These include the fact that a good deal of analysis does not seem to accompany decision-making as one would expect. Management information systems do not seem to be all that sophisticated during this time. If anything the various departments of the church run in isolation.

There was lots of confusion about who did what in terms of what did the pastor do what did the elder do what did a deacon do? And we knew it then and it was an agenda item on the deacons' agenda for six or twelve months. But we never really got to talk about it. It never really got resolved. It just sort of festered in the background because it was probably too hard for us at that stage. (Len)

There is little sophistication in the budget or the means of controlling the costs and performance of internal operations (Kets de Vries and Miller: 1984, 23) and more importantly, there is little evidence to suggest that the energies of the church were wasted on sophisticated information gathering exercises as one would expect in the institutionalising of suspicion.

Flight and fight are the currencies of coercive power for Clarie. He repeatedly threatens to leave the church as a way of getting his own way within the leadership team (Greg, Neville, Len). This is obviously a means of bolstering his control over the group rather than a genuine ultimatum. It reveals that he must have sensed at least at an intuitive level that the leaders themselves were somewhat dependent upon him or may have believed the church had become reliant on his charisma to continue. Likewise it is noteworthy that in his leaving he is still operating in a fight-flight mode, and spreads destructive rumours of his 'sacking' throughout his more dependent networks of members so leaving his fellow elders and deacons

to face the flack from his supporters. This is despite the fact that his sons leaked later that he had already planned to leave (Shane, Gary).

In the light of these factors a description of the life of the church in terms of a paranoid shared fantasy, a basic assumption, most likely typifies the culture of the church in its growth climax under Clarie Friedman. Again we note that these basic assumption groups operate at a more primitive level and are regressive in nature (Kets De Vries and Miller; 1984, 50). And although one basic shared fantasy may be dominant, remnants of other fantasies may take over in changing circumstances or crises (Kets De Vries and Miller: 1984, 53). For those who disagreed with Clarie publicly, he was able to “make it very difficult for them” (Cyril) even to the point where one younger deacon who did disagree publicly was “told not to come back and in very strong terms” (Cyril). Pastor Friedman’s world was carefully split into camps of friends and enemies.

Also, as expected in a paranoid leader in a *baF* group, Clarie possessed an “insular management style” to go along with a “closed, narrow or rigid way of viewing the world” that does not develop. Sometimes “members of the group act on impulse rather than deliberation” (Kets de Vries and Miller: 1984, 55). Some leaders commented on the lack of follow through in direction such that the courses that were set were “constantly changing from Christmas to Easter!” (Len). However, decision-making processes at leaders meetings reveal more of a tendency to dominate the whole church akin to a Compulsive leader (Kets De Vries: 2001,160).

He would present his view and we would have five minutes to discuss it. He used to speak mostly in the meetings. It was more ‘preaching’ during a deacons meeting and

that was it. And we sat there and listened and some of us were convinced and some weren't quite convinced. But then we in the end mostly agreed with him. (Len)

While it is difficult to identify the whole church as a particular type of neurotic organization, the long time reactivity, conservatism, developed information networks yet undeveloped ministry systems, combined with the persistence of such features across several pastorates into the present favours a 'paranoid' classification.

If this is so then, it also would not be unlikely that there would be individuals and departments within the church who resonated with the pastor's valency, even in the sense of 'identification with the aggressor' (Kets De Vries: 1995, 71). One would have thought that Clarie had the power of granting life and death such was the attachment of his co leaders and followers for many years. But one also detects a more potent display of the features that could be mistakenly associated with a dependency fantasy, or the basic assumption *baD*. That is, even his detractors still accorded the pastor an unnatural degree of 'veneration' so that, as noted above, he was surrounded in his time by subservient second tier deacons. Most of the deliberation was done by Pastor Clarie. Likewise, every time Clarie threatened to resign over a difference of opinion the diaconate would, "go and say "Look its alright. Don't resign. We are sorry that we even brought it up!" (Cyril). This easily reflects the typical paranoid leader's 'need for crisis' (Kets de Vries: 1995, 77). Paradoxically, Clarie at some level may have known that this strategy of crisis making would produce a sense of group cohesion while transferring a burden of guilt onto others. Even one of the most prominent of the former leaders Len Griffiths, a fairly dominant business man, was brought to tears in the very act of recalling the final conflict with Clarie such was the pathological attachment to the leader. The fact that he was shutting out valuable feedback inevitably led to his pathological attempts to

be all things to all people so as to preserve his popular appeal, while at the same time engaging in acts of destructiveness. These characteristics are typical of a leader with a sense of a need to prove their omnipotence (Kets De Vries: 1995, 79, 80).

It is also significant that a few respondents also indicated that once the building program was completed, the size of the church and the complexity of the structural demands were beyond the centralising dominance of the one strong Pastor. He began to show signs of fatigue and frustration. It is not accidental that at this point the leadership feel it is time both to confront Clarie and resist the urge to pursue him, being unimpressed by his usual ultimatum. As the theory expects leadership of the charismatic and autocratic figure persists “as long as the strong leader remains in charge.” As soon as he ceases to mirror the primal concerns of the dependent followers he loses his power (Kets de Vries and Miller: 1984, 61,62). All these features, especially the centralising of the thinking of the group in the leader, resonate with a predominant shared fantasy of ‘dependency’, a milder form of attachment than flight-fight and more directly with the leader’s self than the fear of the leader. Confrontation broke the spell of omnipotence but did not in itself induce a higher level of group maturity. Distressing though the confrontation was, the leaders had “... an absolutely fantastically productive time. It was just chalk and cheese. That was significant because the relationship thing was really holding back all the other stuff.” (Len).

It would appear on the surface that the group wanted to move away from the *baF* and *baD* that characterised their meetings to press on to their real work group function of planning. But another perspective is more compelling. Through finally having a major confrontation with Clarie, as a group, the group began the process of using its own corporate mind rather than depending upon Clarie as had been the case. The spell of the aggressive

leader had been broken over the group and they were able to press on in his absence to attend to the normal tasks of a working group. However, it should be noted that the leadership team, even with the opportunity of the presenting leadership vacuum never was able to enact the first step towards these tasks.

Likewise, as the following year unfolded after Clarie left it is remarkable that despite the initial fears that were stated that the church would not 'be able to go on' without Clarie's dynamic gifts quite a few members were surprised to see just how well the leadership was able to cover for his absence (Sandra). Others rose to the occasion taking on significant responsibilities from administration to preaching. Women were more prevalent in leadership roles.

Well that next year I thought was a wonderful year because people from within the congregation who hadn't had a chance to preach rose up and led the church. (Len).

...

[There was] a sense of freedom I think because people started to realize that "We are not going to fall apart!" that "We do have talent and abilities and gifts in the church. So let's use them!" (Teresa).

It is clear that the church had the capacity to function maturely as this interim period demonstrates. But functioning well enough to survive is not the same as effective leading. Neither, the church nor the leadership addresses the structural requirements, or makes decisive directional decisions during this time. These two features together, the casting of future visions and the euphoria associated with the expectation of a messianic figure to replace Clarie, are to be expected within a typical 'utopian' culture with underlying *baP* which may be described as,

... a form of optimism that seeks to improve and to inspire ...an attitude that fosters intensive collaboration and participative, democratic decision making ... These organizations will have a great adaptive capacity. (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984, 67)

The 'utopian' culture is characterised by the messianic hope that in the future everything will finally work out and members will be delivered from its anxieties and fears.

It almost appears as if participants in such cultures could do without an actual leader. Instead, the group nourishes the illusion that in the future a new leader or new idea will eventually solve all its problems. ... The emotional state can persist only so long as the idea or leader remains "unborn" and unmaterialized. Given the excessive expectations of the group it will be impossible for the idea or person ever to live up to its wants. (Kets De Vries and Miller: 1984, 52).

Therefore if this is the case we must not confuse the euphoria of this interim period as cultural health, but rather as a necessary shift from one unsatisfying basic assumption toward another that is bound in time to dissatisfy as well. It is fine to have dreams and hopes so long as one is not accountable for the production of results born of efforts to see them realized. This emotional state was the perspective that pervaded the climate in the church as the next pastor arrived.

... when we were ... without a senior pastor there tended to be a real pulling together. For a lot of people, they only saw that as a temporary means, sort of a bandaid. So once they got a senior pastor well "We can just step down". (Terry).

It is no accident that the church seeks out another high reputation evangelist to replace Clarie and at the same time steps back to watch him fulfil this type of messianic dream, unaided by the members' assistance. On the arrival of pastor Doug Watson, this enthusiasm and initiative evaporate and the church as a group automatically regresses into a dependent posture as "They were used to being nursed!" (Gary).

A second aspect works against the likelihood that Doug Watson would make significant headway or induce transformational change. As Pastor Watson arrives there seems to be good evidence to suggest that the sort of psychological schismatic thinking that Hirschhorn (1988) identified with the 'death of the founder' is at work and the shock of his departure is still taking its toll. People who had been critics or distant contacts during Clarie Friedman's ministry now bemoan his leaving. Comparisons between Doug and Clarie's abilities were constantly being made. Some segments of the church population still hold a fantasy of 'dependency' and the 'founder' is kept posted of any moves that are being made in the church and the initiatives of the new incumbent messianic figure are checked against the 'living tradition' of Clarie's critique. These folk also transfer their anxieties about the darker sides of Clarie's persona onto Doug, while others begin to bemoan that the church has appointed yet another evangelist "instead of a teacher to feed them".

To reinforce this developing emotional climate Pastor Doug Watson displays a valency for the 'utopian' or 'pairing' basic assumption. Kets de Vries and Miller could be describing this very predicament in their description of this phenomena.

We have observed that the focus is on goals themselves, much more than the means necessary for their achievement. Group tensions appear to be reduced by the sacred anticipation of the utopian future - a future that members are willing to conceptualise,

deliberate on, and work toward tirelessly. But the means of attaining the desired future do not seem well articulated by any powerful leader or any rigidly codified “bible”. ... There appears to be no commitment to particular means, procedures, programs or plans. ... There are not the paranoid attitudes of the fight/flight culture or the charismatic leaders or “bibles” of the dependency culture to predetermine action. (Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984: 66,67)

In like manner Pastor Doug’s vague vision of creating ‘Hope Community’ and wishful alignment with current populist versions of Church Growth Theory, was not even enthusing the leadership group. His ‘utopian’ valency was not so much resisted as ignored. There was one exception in the form of the theological critique of this Church Growth hope delivered by his associate Russel Norris. This criticism served the interests of regression away from responsible community building, hastening the church’s progression into the inevitable stage of disappointment and disillusionment (Kets de Vries and Miller: 1984, 52). The leadership group adopted a passive role, instead, watching on as a perpetually counterproductive bickering between Doug and Russel Norris over theological issues that had little to do with the development of the church was played out. Russell Norris’ theologising polemic suited the purposes of the group. He provided the *baP* with an air of legitimacy by consigning the vague vision of ‘a Community of Hope’ into oblivion and with that avoid the central task of galvanising the church around a clear missional task one should expect from a ‘working group’.

So he came with a fairly general sort of vision. And one of the associate pastors, probably the senior associate pastor if there is such a thing was quite opposed to his vision, didn’t see that as being where they should go. And he was a fairly outright sort of person who could talk fairly well, Russel. And Russel was fairly reformed and

Doug was opposite; Arminian. So whilst there was a sort of a civility to it there wasn't really any power generated out of that and I think the leadership team really became into ... Like it almost became unable to make decisions. And I think that hurt Doug a lot. (Cyril).

This passivity signalled both their conscious disbelief in the vague vision of a “community of light and hope” and also the less conscious sense that the pastor after all was not an able messiah but an impostor. Ironically, Pastor Doug Watson represents the loss of the very hope he intended to infuse into the system. The group is moving away from the boundaries of its responsibilities as a *W* group of leaders as expected in a ‘pairing’ group.

A Third factor dampens the possibility of transformational change. Once this vague ‘vision’ had been swallowed up into the ‘paring’ group, which includes both the leaders and a widening circle of members, the low priority he places in building interpersonal relationships begins to induce a secondary form of resistance to positive change in the form of a growing ‘schizoid’ culture. A few members commented upon the fact that Douglas did not make close friends within the church, and that he preferred to work from home rather than the office. Some still were astounded that he was willing to leave the critical appointments of two associate pastors to the deacons (Neville, Gary). This brings two reinforcing drains upon his leadership authority. Firstly it could have retarded the narcissistic urge of the follower to merge with their idealised leader, although a degree of aloofness can symbolise a paternalistic Freudian ‘father type’ (Gabriel:1997, 326f). But more likely, as anticipated by the theory of neurotic organization, this leadership vacuum encouraged rivalry and the self-interest of various departmental leaders to flourish (Kets de Vries and Miller: 1984, 38f).

This developing 'Schizoid' constellation is further promoted in that Russell Norris was then delegated by the defaulting of Pastor Watson, the role of unofficial ministry team leader. The deacons however never clarified his limits of authority and responsibility. Russel himself then sought to foist his own narrow purpose upon the church in the form of a Calvinistic logio-centric church model centred on the scholastic use of the pulpit. This governed his sense of what the church needed and became the focus of his politics. He was beginning to have an increasing impact through attempting to indoctrinate the student pastors under his charge and ingratiating himself with the emotionally dependent members, both zones where Doug Watson was conspicuous by his absence.

Here we see an interesting connection between the sort of vague future vision associated with and appealing to a *baP* group that would maintain morale while also inhibiting real progress. At the same time the two main pastors divert energy away from the mission at church boundaries by having a supplementary tendency for *baF* that would provide an outlet at the point of the utopian vision becoming unable to sustain itself.

The options in the form of the new theological emphases that were being promoted by Russel and followers were equally unhelpful for the church to take on responsibility. The members were confronted with a worldview characterised by Douglas's Arminian emphasis regarding their responsibility for the evangel, or a deterministic Calvinism that could be construed for passivity and a lack of responsibility for their corporate future.

Then there was also some references that highlighted Doug's difficulty in negotiating the splitting associated with the 'death of the founder' Clarie.

He [Doug] found it I think hard fighting the ghost of the previous pastor and that was really awkward for him, he also was quite a different, he was more a loner and so he would have ideas and he wanted to develop the church into a 'community of hope', he didn't really have strong skills in working with the leadership team and developing support. (Len).

A suggestion was also often made that his competence was not as broad or as dynamic as the dominant figure of Clarie Friedman (Sandra, Gary). It may well be the case that Douglas Watson did not wish to fill the shoes of Clarie's 'messianic' persona involving touches of controlling and aggression that were aspects of that unhelpful stereotype. The more Douglas dominated proceedings the less that would help the church mature. The less he did the less he would be regarded as the sort of leader the church needed and the less support he could depend upon objectively. The disappointment that pervaded the church during Douglas' pastorate was quite palpable.

I wonder if there was a fair bit of feeling that maybe we got the wires mixed up to start with. Maybe Doug had been called to the wrong place at the wrong time. Maybe be it was just that general feeling of disillusionment. I don't know whether that was because we may have rushed into it. I am not sure. Even though there was a two-year break, and there was disappointment in the fact that he was not the be all and end all of everything. Whereas Clarie sort of seemed to excel in so many things, Doug didn't. And he recognised that. (Sandra).

If even positive and committed members are seeking to interpret the pastor's appointment as outside the will of God, the possibility that he can again be viewed within the available psychological scripts as a messianic figure is out of the question. The members desire the

pastor to be a larger than life 'heroic' figure even though this sort of charisma had disempowered them in the past. All these things considered, it appears that Clarie had conditioned the church into a *baP* assumption. This naturally robbed Douglas Watson of the cooperation necessary to forge the vision of the leader into organizational reality. This also speaks of the relative instability of charisma (Gabriel:1997, 320). His leverage as a change agent had evaporated now he was viewed as a failure.

So, Douglas Watson was ambushed from two psychodynamic impulses. Firstly, he was exposed as an evangelist and pastor as not having the necessary charisms to fill the 'wise-man' role (Moxnes:1999, 1439) but being suspected as an impostor, or 'false Messiah' (Gabriel:1997, 335f). He did not directly 'win souls' as Clarie had done by his own pulpit efforts, but urged individual responsibility for relational evangelism from the pulpit. His Arminian theology placed responsibility for church growth squarely in the rational hands of an irrational congregation. He expected their evangelistic confession on paper would be met with the commitment to being a 'W' group in practice. The individual would notionally be eager to take on their role in the task of 'sharing the Gospel', or willing to make such changes to worship according to the current best practice of conference advice. Such responsibility for their destiny was met with resistance from the membership, and passivity from the leadership working hard instead at rekindling a 'utopian' group fantasy.

At the same time he was not able to gain sufficient momentum due to having the projections of both the negative and positive aspects of 'the founder' transferred to him. In the fantasy life of the follower messianic figures are easily the targets for extraordinary hostility and contempt. And this reactivity itself can destroy confidence within the leader (Gabriel: 1997, 335). One cannot have 'part' Messiah's. The projection of the idealized

father/protector figure is either realized or not in the leader and this has little to do with actual accomplishments of the leader. Space for the exploration of creative possibilities, the fundamental resource required by any leader is rescinded by the followers.

Like it almost became unable to make decisions. And I think that hurt Doug a lot. I mean he is caught between seeing the potential and feeling as though it just ended up bogged down and going nowhere. (Len).

Between poorly developed utopian visions, fusion with the Father figures, and failing to expel the 'ghost of the founder', it is no wonder that Douglas Watson lost personal hope for his vision within the church and personally truncated his call period.

One notes that this mutually satisfying separation allowed Doug to pursue this poorly articulated vision at another large regional church where it actually bore fruit. This suggests that there was a unique culture in this church not designed for taking concrete initiative yet paradoxically quite capable of significant positive impact. The double bind that hamstrung Doug Watson would have to be negotiated skilfully by any pastor who wished, on the one hand to be able to provoke enthusiasm for the church's mission, while avoiding triggering the basic assumption of dependency or utopian culture.

Interim Period: Building Dependency During Instability

Once Doug Watson resigns in frustration, the era of Russel Norris as interim team leader begins, during which the church sought out the current pastor. Russel preached a doctrine heavy with a deterministic theme from a classical theological image stressing God's predestination of all things. Such a passionless image was unlikely to ignite another utopian

vision. But it does sit well with dependent fantasies that imply passivity is central to worship of such a Being. This culture suited the personal aspirations of Russel and his followers, who are inclined to step over the boundaries of ethical protocols in order to foster innuendo and suspicion if that would help their cause. Russel's valency finds some welcome space in some parts of the prevailing culture but for varied reasons. It was asserted that his greatest support as potential senior pastor came from the most pastorally dependent members.

And we invited people to write to the church to the committee with suggestions of who should be on the committee and of course all these cronies started writing these beautiful letters, even though the church is probably at that stage, in twelve months, has probably nearly halved its size. It was horrific, you would drive into the car park in the morning and 9 am. You would get a car park right out the front door. But these people couldn't see that. (Gary).

The fact that these supporters wished to reward Russel with more leadership trust despite the dramatic manifest negative impact of his ministry suggests that the nature of their relationship was serving pre-rational needs. The large influx of Calvinistic Presbyterians partially offset the rate of membership decline. If such entrants chose a new community on the basis of caring and charismatic attributes of the pastor they could be liable also to be projecting potentials upon the leader in order to help themselves compensate for the existential deficiencies of their own developmental experiences (Domagalski:1999). In the mean time the major portion of the church had indicated that Russel lacked some essential charisms for the main role.

The efforts of Pastor Russel Norris to thwart the smooth process could be seen in the same light as playing on the currency of dependency. Charismatic leadership and dependent

follower relationships flourish in a period of instability (Wiertier: 2001). The longer Russel could delay the appointment of the next pastor the more he became a necessity to the dependent following he had cultivated 'pastorally'. At the same time, by emphasising God's sovereignty in the growth of the church, he could disarm the 'utopian' fantasy, or the pairing assumption that had been operating and was likely to be fed by a well-credentialed evangelist in David Ross. However, other leaders on the diaconate, could see the actual impact of his narrowly focused agenda which virtually "turned the church into a school" (Shane). They were quite differentiated in openly confronting him with the fact that he would not be nominated for the vacant Senior Pastor position. By identifying the leadership characteristics required for their unique church in its context such leaders could have the opportunity to frame at a conscious level the real skills and roles that the church needed in an adequate leader. In the context of these rational deliberations the church was moving towards the potential for real work group life.

Renewal Period: Breaking Self Defeating Cycles

If the new pastoral era of David Ross was not simply to be a voyage along the domains of fantasy and basic assumptions the pastor would have to have devised means, consciously or otherwise, to address the following issues. He would have to counter the predominance of 'dependency', 'fight-flight' and particularly 'utopian' group fantasies, constructing a 'W' group where the previous pastor had tried and failed. Secondly, he would have to contend with the irrational idealising of the 'ghost of the founder', while at the same time not trusting the alluring positive comparisons with the past leaders which in part would be due the idealising of his own charisma. Instead he would have to find ways of enabling the members of the church to invest something of themselves in the church, or express their ministry with the security of their own firm role descriptions and pressing on when the

homeostatic momentum of the dependency culture resisted the implications of taking on more responsibility. To achieve this in turn, would involve breaking down the entrenched culture of suspicion while breeding trust. This is no small task.

As the new pastor David Ross enters the church he quickly detects several striking features of the church's culture. These include the degree of suspicion that had been generated in recent times and an undercurrent of gossip and misinformation among the active membership. Much of this had been cultivated by Russel who had decided that the new candidate was a "theological lightweight" (David, Terry). In their mind David Ross shared the same viewpoints as the previous senior pastor due to their shared interests in the relevance of church life to 'outsiders' and his ministry philosophy which was broader than the word-centred focus they and the new Calvinistic members venerated. Ironically, this reformation of the church really begins with the fact from the outset David Ross is very clear as to his own rights as the pastor and those of the associates. The fact that at his interview he rebuffs the boundary crossing interrogation of the associate pastor, as a matter of stepping out of his proper role, and insisted on appropriate pastoral dress codes and time spent in the office for the staff signalled to them that he at least would demonstrate an appropriate aggression within the ethical boundaries of his own role and expected them to do the same. Some however, may have taken aggression to indicate they were in the midst of another Messianic figure to fill Clarie's shoes.

But, they were wrong. No more significant culture changing action could have occurred than his confrontation of the fight-flight schizoid fantasy through the public medium of worship and the members meeting. In his "talk before the talk" where innuendo and inaccuracies were surfaced and corrected, and identified as "sin", some could have seen him

as highly confrontational but at the same time, he was making himself highly vulnerable. The fearless openness of his actions to public scrutiny and approval enable the average member to discern that the degree of conflict that would lead to a distortion of the truth and the demonising of the leader's character have more to do with the inner struggles of the accuser rather than actions of the leaders. In the terms of this exploration, the destructive gossipers have settled for an unfortunately highly destructive form of splitting and projection upon the pastor. It was usually the case also that the leaders of the Brigades had an unhealthy ingratiating relationship with the former pastor. We recall the slanderous and distorted nature of the accusations of adultery and the misappropriation of funds. Such internal strategies were a by-product of these persons' incapacity to accept the actual exit of the Messianic figure of Pastor Clarie as much as any act on the part of the leaders and Pastor Ross. They were still looking to manipulate a paranoid leader assuming he shared a paranoid fantasy with them. Instead Pastor Ross fleshed out the boundaries of his role as an ethical model and spokesperson for the espoused values of the organization associated with Jesus Christ that had been forged in the dialogue of the church special meetings. He demanded minimum standards of leadership and clear accountabilities and expected no more of leaders than he did of himself. The only compliance required by the pastor was that the group devised an explicit mission statement and goals that were in accord with those accepted by the whole community. The leadership of all such ministries were required by the church handbook to be members and that was the source of this Pastor's authority and not some intimidating nor an ingratiating presence. The emotionality generated against such reasonable and ethical requests suggests that these ministry groups' deeper agenda was affected by unhealthy paranoid attachments rather than a real task 'work group'.

Other aspects of the new leader's pastoral method, including his theological emphases, do not enhance the former paranoia and sense of attack that was inherent in the culture under Pastor Friedman. One symptom of this has been David Ross' refusal to automatically attack the position of other spiritualities such as the charismatics.

We are less extreme but we certainly haven't embraced the Pentecostal theology. ...
Clarie would've preached against it. David would say "Well this is my view. There are others here who have different views and God bless them. It's all in the Kingdom.
... I think that's positive. (Len).

If the pastor does not make an issue of distinctions he thereby is signalling that he does not operate compulsively under the fear filled assumption that the church is under attack from corrosive outside forces, such as the charismatic movement.

Secondly, as others have noted, there was still a high degree of residual dependency upon the pastors suggesting a 'Utopian' group fantasy persisted. But David Ross instigated an effective process whereby the whole church and then each ministry in turn developed clear mission statements and policies. It would have been easier for the church to adulate a vague optimistic vision that could not be measured or evaluated. This passivity shows up in reluctance to invest any effort in deciding on concrete directions and objective for their future.

And then we worked out what's the purpose for us being here. What are we here?
And I think it was a very different concept from what we had in that previous pastors who had said "This is where we are going. This is *our* vision for the church."... "I think there's a fairly high rate of laziness too. "We don't want to think about those

sort of issues. You just tell us what we are doing and we are happy to sit here and let you do it.” (Teresa).

By forcing the church to dialogue, being willing to accept the product of the mission statement and values of the church despite the fact that “It didn’t go exactly where David thought it was going to go” (Len), David proved both his bona fides as a genuine work group leader rather than a Messianic figure with his own inscrutable vision. His actions proved that he believed in the church membership’s competence to discern God’s leading. Others spoke of this discovery in surprised terms having visited the leadership team meetings (Sandra). Members assumed such dramatic progress required the presence of a strong dominant figure who would be directive and inscrutable as Clarie had been. The assumptions of Pastor Ross as to what constituted strong leadership are ethically not emotionally predicated.

So in a leadership meeting I say “Everything is on the table. You speak it here, then once we make a decision, whether it goes against me or not that’s our decision.” So, there are times at a leadership level, ... where it has not gone my way. But when I get up in public, its got to be as if that was my idea. And then they learn “Well he did on that issue, well I can do it on anything!” (David).

In brief, if the leadership then portrayed a uniform level of trust in the bona-fides of the pastor as a facilitator rather than a forcer of vision for the church they surely would be simultaneously and indirectly dissolving the culture of suspicion that had become typical through the long period of Pastor Friedman and reinforced by the political manoeuvring during Pastor Norris’ interim ministry. Overall these types of actions are attributed to building a different mood within the church.

So I think there is a higher degree of trust in the leadership in that sense. It's still not perfect. But I would see that, ... that has been an element where God's hand has been in a bit of a healing process over a long period of time. Whether it has been individuals healed. I don't know. But certainly as the congregation changes and the level of trust of the newcomers is probably higher than the people who have moved on. But certainly as a corporate observation. (Len).

The mixture of the church has changed but notably the climate of suspicion has not persisted.

David's overall goals through the discussion about the mission, the vision of a regional church model, surfacing the core values of the group and a clearly defined strategic plan has resulted in a broad commitment to real task objectives. The church has become a working group. A secondary consideration of this was directly aimed at deflecting commitment from himself to a cause greater and more transcendent than his own personal charisma. He states the reason behind a long preparation time of congregational discussion and decision-making about fundamental directions in these depersonalising terms:

Because then everything I did needs to be the basis of this is not 'me against you'. I am responsible for the mission, vision and values. So it's something far bigger than me. It lasts beyond me. "The church is bigger than you or me". ... and then with congregational meetings and deacons meetings and me crafting sort of in a combination of all these we came up with mission, vision and values statements which we then took to a members meeting to vote on. So it then becomes concrete. So we legislate it. So this is the church's, not mine, not David's, not the previous pastor, this is the church's vote on it, so when questions come up we will know this is not my view - this is what the church has said. (David).

At the same time, this process in Weberian terms is triggering the signal that the authority within the church will be 'legitimated' rather than 'charisma' based. On that note, the subsequent work done by the leadership team to instigate a trustee governance board structure also spells out a healthy balance between significant trust being vested in the pastor to lead the church and explicit rational grounds by which he is held accountable for results.

Well we started off with what we call the 'circle of empowerment' which was more the members role is to empower the board, the board's role is to empower the senior pastor and the senior pastor empowers his staff, the staff empower the ministers which we see as every member and minister and then again the members empower the board. So it's a process of empowerment, an upward spiral, and so there needs to be a trust level and then the leaders also need to prove that trust too so they are given more trust. So it's a growth of trust over a period. (David).

Through a change of structure the pastor has signalled that he wished to be judged on the present, rational fulfilment of his proper leadership role rather than an emotional connection with the charisma of the pastor and the primal fantasy life of the follower. Consistently with this structure, he has let it be known to the church that a criteria he has set upon himself and his fellow leaders is that they must demonstrate their real commitment to this espoused mission and the current objectives by 'tithing' their income to the church having first place in their giving. A 'utopian' fantasy cannot exist for long in such a culture that demands accountability and expects responsibility for the work of the organization.

As regards the segment of the church that asks for a 'dependency' valency again the present Pastor has demonstrated some cultural re-forming initiatives. While being accessible

David Ross sets limits to the availability of care and as noted, refusing to pursue those who decide to leave the church on convictional grounds.

I think our previous pastors have tried to fall over themselves and made the leadership fall over themselves to keep someone, to pacify them, to help them through. Many people have had issues. They have had counselling for years and years and years. David says “So many counselling sessions ... no significant change ... That’s it!”
(Sandra).

By these effective actions that symbolically break with the leadership patterns of the past pastors, Douglas, Russel and Clarie, David shifts the responsibility for the health of the church to the membership. This is buttressed with the insistence from the leadership for all ministries to devise and declare their goals and purposes in line with the broad aims of the church.

Many members spoke of another cultural watershed in a powerful recent David Ross sermon. The pastor has recently attempted to lay to death the ‘ghost of the founder’ in a recent message. Playing on the analogy between the recent years of preparatory planning and the ancient Israelites preparation to enter the land of Promise, the pastor interpreted the phrase “Moses - My Servant, is Dead”, or variants thereof, over a dozen times during the sermon. Some excerpts make the connection with the sense that the ‘death of the founder’ theme still must have been prevalent in segments of the church. The pastor appears to attempt to both avoid criticism of the previous pastor and that former golden era of growth, but also to just as strongly re-calibrate the church to the presence of God in the present era of the church’s life.

It's a new day now. And if ever we are going to cross the Jordan into the blessing God wants for us we have got to remember that 'Moses my servant ... is dead.

This recurring refrain is, in effect, an invitation for those members who have suppressed their grieving over the passing of that era, to lay the 'ghost' of Clarie Friedman's influence to rest. It is of profound psychodynamic importance that the pastor associates divine blessing with human capacity to grieve. He in effect is attempting to move the resistant aspects of the church into the 'depressive position'.

But that period has passed, 'Moses - my servant ... is dead.' And some of us never enjoy the blessing that God has for us *now*, because we are still wanting Moses to be alive. But God says. "Moses my servant is dead. Now then you and all these people get ready, to cross the Jordan into the land that I am going to give these Israelites." God has something in store, for you as an individual believer; he wants you to live in victory. God has something in store for us as a church family; he wants us to live in victory. He wants us to experience his plan and his presence, his power and his purpose, his fulfilment in our life right now. But, some of us miss out and do not enjoy the present, power and blessing of God. Because we haven't accepted our present reality!" ... "God is always moving ahead, he always has a plan and a purpose and a conclusion, but some of us get in a time warp in our own spiritual journey, in our own spiritual lives or in the life of our church. Just because Moses was here, we feel that Moses always has to be here and it has to be done Moses' way. But a new day has arrived and God is saying "No its your turn now Joshua!" Moses did what I asked him to do. "But Moses my servant is dead". And that was one of the biggest steps sometimes that we can take, in our own lives and in our church lives, to prepare to cross the Jordan into what God wants, and that is to accept our present reality.

Not only are the analogies to Pastor Friedman and Pastor Ross himself drawn in a manner that were striking to the listeners, we see a synergistic theological reasoning here that correlates with psychodynamic factors. It would appear that the theological thrust of the message was cultivated to address the prevailing emotional climate of the church rather than driving the ethos of the church from a purely theological vision. It is a theology that holds together the hopefulness of God's gift, God's victory, with the necessity of human responsibility for the task of the present. This is a symbolic refutation of both utopian hopefulness and fear-bound reactivity.

The difficulty of motivating an ethical commitment to God's mission and manipulating inner feelings of potency and power within the followers is a delicate balance to achieve (Gabriel: 1997, 335). It seems for some that the contrast between the styles of the two effective growth period leaders, Clarie and David do in fact take on Messianic dimensions of alternative 'father figures'. The significance of the belief in the necessity of strong leadership is another instance of this dynamic.

The Mosaic analogy persisted in thinking beyond that epochal message that reveals a tendency towards idealising the charisma of the leader.

Leadership is very significant in the spiritual well being of the church. God I believe led us through a bit of a wilderness to realize we desperately needed him and we needed a plan. And I think that was during the period of when Clarie left and when David came. And to me, that was a wilderness for us. (Cyril).

This ex pastor sees God's hand at work in the life of the church. It is less comforting that this is located in the provision of leaders either side of the 'wilderness'. Again, the large

difference is the vast amount of energy that pastor Ross has poured into devising a concrete rational process where the people's own vision of the church its mission and values, could be broken down strategically into clear objectives for all from the staff to the various departments and ministries. There is constant cycle of enactment, evaluation and organizational learning as a normal part of operating, that has nullified the tendency of the church to 'utopian' fantasizing.

Part of this strategy also has included addressing the mindset of the incoming member through an induction process that may in fact, begin at the point of baptism, or entry into faith in Christ. In this sense the pastor has served the church as a genuine 'Messiah' as he has brought them to express and adhere to their own convictional centre rather than blindly trust, or fear, his own vague and overpowering vision. Membership maturation begins from the moment of faith's conception. The Pastor has instituted a clear set of processes and structures to enable the member to find a place within the total service of the church and training based support to go with it. In fact, most of the available energy of the pastoral staff is invested in the active member in the form of this support.

I put membership with baptism. Like, you get baptised you become a member. So you come into membership and we teach membership class. So that means ministry. Membership means ministry. So you start changing little by little, right from the beginning, the culture. ... and all the new people and have gone through your membership class are looking at these 'whingers' and saying "What's wrong with you? What do you do?" (David).

Alternately, one could interpret this structure in 'object relations' terms. Those provided with a tangible 'transitional object', in terms of a capacity to make a concrete contribution to a

specified role within the organization are less fixated with persecutory fantasizes about others, nor idealize their leadership. They restructure their relationships to internal objects and then are less afraid to scrutinise their working relationships as exponents of this perspective predicted (Hirschhorn: 1988, 131, 133).

Red Hill Regional as a Psychodynamic Narrative

It is clear that these psychodynamic aspects of the church's cultural history have a clear and determining relationship to the twists and turns of the narrative of Red Hill's decline and renewal. All these strategies, not a particular one on its own, move in the same basic direction and address the repressed defences, basic assumptions and primal fantasizing that have served the church poorly as ways of coping with their real situation.

Significant pastoral talent alone is insufficient to guarantee a stable growing community as the *baF* culture that developed under Pastor Clarie Friedman shows. This set up the stage for the seeds of his own demise as his aggression fostered the very dependency that would burn out even his enormous energy reserves. The triggering of *baD* sees the group stand up to him, and his symbolic significance as Messianic figure dissolves in one critical meeting. But this sparks a yearning for another Messiah to 'fill his sandals'. Thus the immature church Clarie had created engages a *baP*, 'utopian' fantasy that was sure to be disappointed by the more limited and personable Douglas Watson. The resistance that comes with the 'utopian' fantasy, combined with his associated inarticulate vision, trigger the inevitable demise of this culture. The church still holds a utopian ideal that a real messiah will eventually descend. This works against the ambitions of the incumbent team leader Russel Norris, who instead attempts through various means to ingratiate into existence a *baD*, and this is supplemented with appropriate world view: classical Reformed theological

orthodoxy with a stress on predestination of all things. His model of the church as a school for dispensing facts does not sit well with the mood of the congregation desiring more dramatic charismatic appeal and charisma.

It may well be that the latest evangelist-pastor David Ross was felt to have a valency that resonated with the prevailing *baP* or, that in his aggression toward Russel Norris and other staff that the church had in fact found a new ‘incarnation’ of the former Clarie! However, his highly differentiated, consensual and legitimated fleshing out of his leadership authority, his clarification of roles, values and church policy have seen the development of an astonishingly transformed work group demonstrated in over two thirds of the members being in active ministry and personal giving rising fourfold in four years. The confluence of personal strategy, theological perspective, the resulting group closeness and responsibility for the mission of the church all point to the conclusion that this is a genuinely renewed culture which serves the maturation of those now working and growing within it.

Conclusion: Relationship of Narrative Plot to Psychological Wellbeing

With the exception of the ‘Stagnation Period’ of Carinia Downs which did not relate any details of a peak period, the narratives above allow for comparison regarding their psychological features since the seeds of dysfunctional culture commence while the church is at a peak during a pastorate that many find the defining period for the church’s unique aspects. Likewise the church had then moved into a decline period, leaving it in a stable though ‘bottomed out’ state, lethargic, conflicted and distressing for segments of the communities within these cultures.

Beginning with the dysfunctional period that leads into decline and further dysfunction, the following issues feature clearly. Firstly, the particular dysfunction is unstable from one moment to the next, from one pastorate to the next through the decline toward the 'bottoming out' phase of decline. As Bion expected, this suggests that group fantasies are inherently self-destructive and unsatisfying and therefore involve oscillations (Bion: 1961: 111). However they do have a capacity to affect the whole group, and for a substantial period of time it may be rigidly located in a particular position manifesting the characteristics of a particular basic assumption.

As regards the various taxonomies utilised, it was only in the situation where the particular basic assumptions had forged a stable long term cultural pattern, particularly through the influence of a long pastorate¹- Clarie Friedman at Red Hill and Max Grover and elders court at Ivy Street - that one is able to have some confidence in locating these cultures in Kets De Vries (2001) taxonomy of 'neurotic constellations'. These long periods allow the church to reflect the neurotic style of the leader for that period. The construct of the 'basic assumption group' or 'group fantasy' however was always fairly clearly discernable in all phases of the decline. One would have more confidence once the neurotic culture moved to a new era to discern moments and periods where regressive anxiety patterns steer the choices, the actions and hence the narratives in particularly dysfunctional directions. The seeds of dysfunction in the form of the particular neurotic constellation are germinating during this period. These give the church its reputation and characteristics for a long period even a decade or more beyond the peak time.

¹ Our other churches showed the same feature, particularly Petersham which installed three pastors in succession trained under the same dominant influence from a para-church Bible teaching ministry with subordinationist views of the Trinity.

Therefore the organizational decline of these congregationally governed communities is not due to some automatic law of evolution or organizational aging process, but stems from an incapacity to handle fears and anxieties when the churches are at their strongest or lead by their strongest figures. This use of this family of theories, which attributes present adult actions to shared individual primal deficits is validated. These 'organizations in decline and stagnation' simply do not provide the kinds of holding environments nor transitional objects that are conducive to mature community formation or the completion of the essential mission of each particular church. And this relates to the compatibility of the group neurosis with the 'valency' of the particular leaders and influential figures within the group at the time.

Another striking relationship concerns the role played by the theological perspective of the group as it relates to the kinds of environment or culture that is forming within each narrative. We should not be surprised at this from the point of view that beliefs, worldviews and values, like anxieties are both carried within the cognitions of individuals and the groups that cohere within churches around cherished, even if not well articulated, theological mental models. In several communities while the contours of a prevailing God image are not clear, a strong bias toward a particular theological perspective prevails.² It also permits the abuse of one polarity subgroup by another and a restriction of the sorts of conflict and dialogue that could induce community discovery and development. It is no accident that the Compulsive culture of Ivy street is violently opposed to any notion of enthusiasm even as innocuous as the Pastor clapping to a rhythmical tune. What is evident within these cultures again is that such

² It is not an unrelated coincidence that in a schizoid culture at other researched churches such as Petersham the church has a view of the Trinity as a hierarchy of dictates from the Father to the Son and no reference to the ministry of the Spirit during the decline of the church. Another church, Forrest Hills, had a strong evidence of utopian culture. At Forrest Hills the emphatic attention of the group is drawn toward God as Spirit and as expected this serves the interests of the group to avoid present responsibility for articulating their purpose or working in a rational cooperative way, by faith in the miraculous interventions of God who would eventually solve all things. This was also the case in another church whose explosive growth correlated with a fascination with the miraculous power of the Spirit, but plummeted out of viability even more quickly due to a similar belief structure where being faithful exonerated the membership from making tangible rational adjustments.

focus upon a single person of the Godhead at the exclusion of the society of the persons is replicated in corresponding ways within the community. Theologically speaking such views do not do justice to a view of God predicated upon the history of the suffering of the Son of God, but speak of a foundationalism born of more classical theological alternatives (Moltmann:1981, 18ff).

The two ways that these theological structures are replicated in the attitudes within the churches are (i) in their attitude toward the outside environment of the community and in (ii) the attitude to insiders or fellow members. As regards the latter, the dysfunctional period shows signs of people being conceived of as 'half objects'. The renewal period corresponds to people connecting with each other in more empathetic ways, entering as it were the depressive position, and responding to the environment in its complexity.

Carinia Downs is somewhat distinct inasmuch as the rank and file member did not articulate any definitive image of God or theological bias with the exception of recalling that the church did have a tendency to view the faith in legalistic categories of taboos and proscriptions, particularly separated attitudes to the cultures. Consequently they did not have a sense that they as a church would ever have an appeal in the district. The religious landscape had reached a static equilibrium. Likewise within the church, the roles are distributed among a few leading families and the average member has no incentive to develop or express themselves in more creative ministry. As a whole the church culture displays an autistic fixedness correlated with the sense that the faith was the province of the pastor and little expectation that the doctrines that flowed from the pulpit had any bearing on life in this aeon. The church does not concern itself with the inhibiting impact of rotating services between church buildings across the river upon the potential newcomer. This correlates with

the fact that the members do not interpret their shared story using Biblical or theological categories. 'Christ over against culture', legalistic attitudes to holiness and dominating deacons all reflect a similar theme of a church bound in its development and dependent upon the pastor and deacons to sustain it. At the very least, the otherworldly focus of the teaching does not do anything to enthuse the member away from the basic position of dependency upon the strong pillars of the church and the professional pastor.

However, unhelpful theological emphases keep the members away from bold exploration at the boundaries of the church - community intersections and from 'whole-object' interactions with each other; characteristics of the 'depressive' position. Most importantly, while the particular theological perspective associated with a particular period of decline cannot be said to cause the neuroses of the leader or the basic assumption of the group, they certainly motivate the group to sustain a culture that corresponds with the basic assumption. The theology of the downward periods largely operates like the 'valency' of the leader. Cherished dogmas within teaching emphasis of the church obviously reflect the endo-psychic interests of the pastor or preacher. However, one could also claim that the valency of the worldview, that has been equally coopted to sustain the particular group fantasy and to resist any move to construct an adequate holding environment from which group development may occur.

As we shift our attention to the period of renewal several common themes are discernable despite the uniqueness of each individual church situation. It is universally the case that each of these churches not only grew in numerical attendance comparable with or beyond the size of their former peak period, but that there is a distinct difference in the psychological aspects of the culture after these changes.

Firstly, the churches experience a movement to a 'Working group' culture whereby the church is able to rearticulate its mission or values in ways that mobilize the bulk of the membership to make a cooperative contribution to that task. That is, the development of the members of the church contrasts most greatly with the former era and this correlates with the formation of the work group.³

With the exception of Carinia Downs, where resistance was minimal, the new period begins with confrontation between the pastor and those who wished to maintain the type of group fantasy that was formerly in place. The distressing aspects of the community life were not uniformly experienced. Some members found the status quo acceptable while others were suffering the cultural patterns of dominance or dependency to the point of considering leaving the church.

Thirdly, the actions of the new pastor in each case are catalytic in the dissolution of the former basic assumption group. The dissolution of the prevailing group fantasy automatically triggers the development of ministry initiative, commitment and moral culture, and with that the morale of the group. With this also there is often a realisation in the consciousness of a sizable segment of the church that the effective group leader or major figures are seriously disordered people. Such was the case at all churches researched and at least the pastor realised this fact regarding the first generation of deacons with whom he served at Carinia Downs. In all cases this results in an exodus of such people from the church, and this hastens the dissolution of the particular neurotic culture or basic assumption.

³ This is particularly evident in Petersham, the fourth church, where from the leadership onwards personal development and ministry training and accountability structures are enthusiastically patronized by the active members.

Lastly, the impact of the pastoral style of the new pastor in the renewal period provides an adequate or strong holding environment. This happens in a variety of ways the most common being the kindness and acceptance of the pastor and church for each other. An 'adequate holding environment' is also provided in the moments of extreme reactivity from those wanting to maintain the old fantasy cultures. The pastor and leadership's capacity to either stand firm for consensual policies or less explicit standards of natural justice induce a stability into the culture that prove these boundaries dependable. Above all, stability is provided through a strong commitment of the pastor to stay through the worst periods of the church's life and commit for the long term. Other pastors institute a process whereby the purposes of the church are more clearly defined as with Petersham, Red Hill that serve to tighten up the fundamental directions of the church and gain commitment to them through the political process. As a result of clarified directions authority and boundaries then preserved in new constitutions or handbooks, members have the opportunity to expect a more stable set of directions and to invest in the future of the church, and at that point find 'transitional objects' through which development and differentiation take effect. That these boundaries are real and operative, is only demonstrated when the boundaries are challenged or invaded by proponents of the former psychodynamic order. From this perspective, the resolve of the pastors in particular not to concede these boundaries and resolutions for the sake of an uneasy transient peace is a critical factor in inducing not so much a grudging compliance, but a palpable confidence in the holding environment and paradoxically, this induces a degree of calmness within the wider culture beyond the resistant.

As with the decline periods the Renewal Period is also associated with a distinct change in theological perspective from one period to another. A range of overlapping perspectives is perceptible. There is a view of God as living and involved, 'incarnationally' or

sacramentally present in the present experience of the congregation. This is a break from either views of God's sovereignty as predominantly one or other person of the Godhead. In the later decline period of Red Hill⁴, God is pure sovereignty, or absolute father. As a result all pastors expressed a belief that their ministry would bear fruit and that people would come to faith. This related to the attractiveness of the message and the sense of liberation from the assurance of the Gospel of unconditional forgiveness. Such a message is matched in the accepting manner of the pastor and the ability to maintain contact with opponents without distress. Opponents and resisters are treated as moral agents with the capacity to decide their own fate.

While it is difficult to make confident assertions about the pre-conscious mentality of a whole group, the psychodynamic perspective does have the strongest connection of the three frameworks with the nature of the changes that characterise and drive each narrative forward to its completion in the present. This suggests a possible theoretical principle: the initiatives of the pastor to foster a more ethical, deliberately transformational ministry, along with the capacity to induce a consensual rather than paternal political process, if supplemented with a more immanent God Image and gracious theological perspective, automatically releases the church into a more empathetic and collaborative partnership. The churches become essentially more adequate human side images of the Triune community. This issue demands further exploration at a theological level and is given further treatment in the final chapter.

⁴ This also was evident at the strongly theologically Reformed Petersham church under the influence of a para church 'Bible Cult'. It is also distinct from the 'overly realized' emphasis on the Spirit in the heyday of Forrest Hills, which does what the Spirit wills without reference to Christ's mission or the Father's will.