

Australasian Pentecostal Studies 26 (2025) 3–26

Reason and the Spirit

The Christian University in British, American and Australian History

Stuart Piggin

Macquarie University

stuart.piggin@mq.edu.au



australasian
pentecostal
studies

Introduction

The bold thesis of this address: In navigating the long journey of the development of Christian higher education institutions into universities, two realities are inescapable:

First, any Christian higher education institution must have a symbiotic relationship with its Christian constituency, whether that be a church, or a denomination (Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Australian Christian Churches).¹

Second, it must satisfy the requirements of the State for academic standards and social and cultural utility.

From these two essential realities, two corollaries follow, the first sobering, the second encouraging. If you do not observe and satisfy these twin realities, you will fail: your doom is writ. But if you do observe them, success is inevitable.

¹ Or a group of like-minded Christians who enjoy conspiring for eternity and are committed to developing Christian Higher Education for that purpose.

The difference between failure and success, however, is that failure is easy, whereas, for all its inevitability, success is very hard work. For Alphacrucis to become a university college, blood, sweat and prayers, were required in abundance. For it to become a university, a superabundance will be required: passion and determination and “hyperfaith”² of David Cartledge dimensions. Galatians 6:9 “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.”

On the proposition that the advent of an Australian Pentecostal University is inevitable, if you were trained in the philosophy of history and historical method at Sydney University, you would have learned that it is strictly *verboten* to argue that anything is inevitable in history. But it will be contended here that there is so much precedent for our two realities that historical proof is the best proof of inevitability that you can get.

1. The University in the Medieval World

As to the first reality, the necessity of a symbiotic relationship between a Christian constituency and the university, there is an ocean of precedent – it almost seems that Christianity is in the DNA of Universities – and not just any old Christianity. The motto of Oxford University, the oldest university in the English-speaking world, is *Dominus illuminatio mea* – these are the first three words of the Vulgate version of Psalm 27, ‘The Lord is my light’. A book on Heraldry dated 1610, states that the Open Book on the Oxford University shield refers to the Bible in general and, because of the 7 seals, to the Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, in particular.³ The three crowns

² Denise Austin, *Our College: A History of the National College of Australian Christian Churches (Assemblies of God in Australia)* (Sydney: APS, 2013), 237.

³ Others claim that the seven seals refer to the liberal arts, which were 7 in number, made up of the trivium of rhetoric, grammar, and logic, and the quadrivium of astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and music.

suggest the university's connection to the needs of the State, representing the three faculties or professions then of cardinal importance to the state: Theology, Physic, and Law. The 1610 book on heraldry further argues that the crowns signify the reward and honour of learning and wisdom. Again evident here is biblical thought in general and (even again) apocalyptic, eschatological theology in particular: The New Testament speaks of the imperishable⁴ crown(s) of joy,⁵ righteousness,⁶ glory,⁷ and life,⁸ which is the heavenly reward of the faithful, whose destiny is to shine like stars forever and ever, Daniel 12:3, another apocalyptic book. The University is to serve the Church and the State. It is to impart that knowledge and wisdom which helps us to make the best of this world and the next.

Cambridge University's motto is: *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra*, [From] here [we receive] light and sacred draughts. "here" being the University (or the Alma Mater, nursing, nourishing mother), with the sun in one hand, representing enlightenment (reason), and in the other hand, a cup collecting droplets from the sky (heaven), representing sacred, spiritual sustenance (spirit). This is knowledge above reason, it comes from the Spirit. On the coat of arms, the lions represent the royal patronage of the University, while at the centre is the cross representing the church and the Christian faith, and in the centre of the centre is the Bible, representing both knowledge (it's a book) and the Christian faith (it's a Christian book).

⁴ 1 Cor 9:24, 5; 1 Pet 1:4.

⁵ 1 Thess 2:19.

⁶ 2 Tim 4:8.

⁷ 1 Pet 5:4.

⁸ Rev 2:10.

So, we have here evidence of the two realities which continue through time, namely the symbiosis of higher education institutions with the church and the dependence of the university on the patronage of the state, the needs of which the university seeks to address.

Of course, the medieval view that all branches of knowledge are complementary to theology, the so-called queen of the sciences, and that all branches of knowledge are interconnected, presenting a coherent, harmonious view of reality,⁹ now commands only niche support. As to the second reality, the requirement on universities to meet the needs of the state, those needs, too, change over time, but, whatever they are, the university will be expected to meet them. Vivian Green, in his Penguin history of universities, is right in asserting of the universities that ‘at all stages of their history their studies have been more or less correlated to the national needs.’¹⁰

2. The University in the Age of the Enlightenment

A major challenge to the medieval view came from the Enlightenment, the most radical thinkers of which denied that theology was even a legitimate form of knowledge. They declared, rather dogmatically for a group who claimed to be allergic to dogma, that metaphysics (the study of who we are and what our purpose is) was an untenable philosophical position. They were the instigators of the age of reason, that is, of reason without spirit. Because the Bible speaks of a world of reason with spirit, it had to go. The modern deconstructionists have gone further: they argue that it is necessary to dispense not only with the Spirit, but with reason as well. They decreed that all metanarratives (grand histories), including the greatest of them, the Bible, are indefensible. Such

⁹ G.R McLean, “Theology and Philosophy: Friends or Foes in the University?” *St Mark’s Review* 210 (2009): 112.

¹⁰ V. H. H. Green, *The Universities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 16.

attacks require a defence, and there have always been Christian apologists ready and hopefully able, to man the barricades. Indeed, the basic reason why the advent of Christian universities is inevitable, as T.S. Eliot observed, is that Christianity is always turning itself into something which is believable. It does that by making itself intelligible to modern minds. To do that it has to have a university presence, for it is in the universities that modern minds do most of their thinking for good or ill.

The route to the modern Christian University is intriguing in that, looking back, you can see inevitability in it. Two factors may be relied on to come to the aid of the Lord's work. The first is Providence, which deftly turns apparently hopeless, terminal problems to good. The second is the annoying Christian propensity to engage in pragmatism when the need arises. Pentecostals are star performers in the art of pragmatism. The Age of the Enlightenment did see the advent of numerous colleges of higher education, in Britain and, especially in America, but, for the most part, they were not the result of the Enlightenment. They were rather the product of the defence of Christians against the radical enlightenment and the development of what is now widely accepted by scholars as the Christian enlightenment, possessed of a world view which, while respecting reason, made room for the Spirit as well.¹¹

¹¹ Then, providentially, at the same time as the radical Enlightenment threatened the Church, a great "work of God", came to the aid of the church. Revivals in Britain and America dramatically increased the number and size of congregations, calling for far more educated ministers of the Gospel, and the number of Christian colleges to train them multiplied dramatically. Geoff Treloar is writing a history of what has become the Australian University of Theology. In an intriguing article, he lists the annual number of licentiates in theology awarded by the ACT, arranged in quinquennial periods. The average annual number during the period, 1945 to 1974 was 63.2. Way out of sync was the quinquennial period, 1960–64, with an annual average of 87.8, on which Geoff comments "This inordinately high number was due to the effect of the Billy Graham Crusade of 1959." In that year, Australia came close to a national awakening. Revival is always THE answer. Geoffrey R. Treloar, "Theological Education in Australia 1964-2020: Intellectual Authority in a Changing Socio-Political Landscape," *JRH* 47.4 (2023), 550.

2.1 *The Universities and the Dissenting Academies in Britain*

In England, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the traditional centres for training clergy, were at a low ebb in the first half of the 18th century. Further, they did not offer places to those, now increasing dramatically in number, who were not members of the Church of England. To supply them with ministerial training, Dissenting academies were formed. Often headed by learned men who had been evicted from the Church of England, the Dissenting academies were said to offer a better education than the moribund universities.

The most astonishingly brainy dissenting academy tutor was Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), discoverer of electricity and oxygen and carbonated drinks, earning for himself the title of “father of the soft drink”, and earning a fortune for J.J. Schweppe, his contemporary. Priestly spent all his life trying to fuse Enlightenment rationalism and Christian theism and came up with Unitarianism which had him branded as a heretic.¹²

A more orthodox dissenting academy teacher was Philip Doddridge (1702–51). His best-known work, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745), became an evangelical classic. It was through reading it that William Wilberforce began the spiritual journey which eventually led to his conversion. The academy at which Doddridge taught in Northampton was opened to the poor through a scholarship scheme – it evolved into New College in the University of London.

But it was the evangelical revival of the 1740s which lent wings to the dissenting academy tradition. As usually happens in the wake of revival, a great need was generated for more qualified pastors to minister to them. Furthermore, these congregations were unhappy with the tendency of the older dissenting academies towards Deism and Unitarianism.

¹² And won him the support of Benjamin Franklin whom Priestley advised on the foundation of the University of Virginia.

It appears to have been George Whitefield's patron, the Countess of Huntingdon, who came up with the obvious solution. In 1768 she founded a new college at Trevecca in Wales. Trevecca College became a new model for theological education, which has been labelled the "Trevecca tradition."¹³ Students received their education in an atmosphere of great urgency produced by pity for the many perishing souls.¹⁴ But trained they had to be. No-one put it better than your own Jim Wallace in the early days of the Commonwealth Bible College. He would say in counselling students "It is better to be trained and not called than called and not trained."¹⁵

2.2 *American Christian Colleges*

Turning to America, from the 1636 opening of Harvard, the first American college, until the late 19th century, Christian higher education, almost without exception, was synonymous with American higher education in general. The nine colleges predating the American Revolution (1775–83) were all religious foundations, and were small (and for the most part still are by comparison with Australian Unis) and elitest (fees, about \$60,000 per annum).

¹³ Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries: The Social Background, Motivation, and Training of British Protestant Missionaries* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1984), 163.

¹⁴ Since they could not expect a long education, they could not engage in such time-consuming luxuries as the study of classical languages. A shorter course, frequently 2 years, and a narrower syllabus with emphasis on theology, preaching and pastoralia characterised a large number of new small private dissenting academies. Their tutors, who were also pastors of churches, were often men convinced of the evils of the older academies, which putting the pursuit of knowledge above that of holiness, encouraged the student "to recommend himself to the great by his literature rather than to the good by his usefulness." The tutor/pastor concentrated rather on producing "plain" and "useful" pastors.

¹⁵ Austin, *Our College*, 70. These newer dissenting academies were soon spread throughout Britain: I found 35 of them trained Congregationalist ministers and missionaries in the first half of the 19th Century and 19 of them trained Baptist pastors and missionaries. These colleges set new standards of efficiency and inclusivity, which slack Oxford and Cambridge eventually had to emulate, and many of these colleges were to morph into university colleges in the 20th C.

They took time to acquire prestige. 64 years after the foundation of Harvard, the Puritan Congregational Minister of North Church, Boston, who went by the name of Increase Mather, was commanded by the General Assembly of his church, to become the President of Harvard, the training ground for the New England ministry. He thought as highly of Harvard as does Trump, but his reason for resisting this call could be similar to that of any successful Pentecostal Pastor today. Why should I, he reasoned, give up preaching to 1500 souls in Boston “only to expound to 40 or 50 children few of them capable of edification by such exercises?”¹⁶ Calls to mind David Cartledge’s response on being asked in 1992 to assume the principalship of the Commonwealth Bible College: “Anyone would have to have rocks in their head to want to live at Katoomba and be locked up in an institution like that.”¹⁷

Again, it should be noted that it was not religion in general that generated higher education colleges in America, but it was a heady mixture of Puritan zeal, Pietist spirituality and evangelical revivalism, such as would gladden the heart of any Pentecostal. Of the nine colonial colleges, the first three were manifestations of Puritan zeal, four were the product of the Great Awakening of the 1740s, namely Princeton, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth. An eighth of the nine colleges, the University of Pennsylvania, claims to be a secular foundation with Benjamin Franklin as principal founder. But, wanting it both ways, it also claims to be established in 1740 as a preaching hall for George Whitefield, the greatest of the Great Awakening’s revivalists.¹⁸

¹⁶ Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York, Harper & Row, 1984), 178.

¹⁷ Austin, *Our College*, 220-1.

¹⁸ Whitefield was a close personal friend of Benjamin Franklin, then a publisher. Though not himself converted, Franklin knew a good business proposition when he saw one and “more than half of the works that Franklin printed during the Great Awakening”, approximately one hundred titles, “had been written either by or about Whitefield.” Jonathan M. Yeager, *Jonathan Edwards and Transatlantic Print Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), xiv; 49; Peter Charles Hoffer, *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Written Word* (Baltimore: Johns

Then the so-called Second Great Awakening 1790–1830 spawned scores of new colleges.¹⁹

The effect of the vital Christianity which produced the majority of American colleges in the 18th and 19th centuries has been put lyrically by one historian as follows:

Its many “iterations react to a dispirited and sclerotic church and direct their impatient energy to redefinition of ancient institutions reaching back both imaginatively and historically to the original sense and inspiration of church order, worship, discipline, preaching, and theology. [They] may also deliver a prophetic critique of the family, the civil powers, the classes in society, the relations of nations and peoples and the stewardship of property. [They] confront a snarled tangle of custom, construal and protected interests, and ... point a prophetic finger at the obscured nucleus of truth within. They are poetic, as Jeremiah and Jesus and Francis were. They break out with singing one-liners that raze institutions to rubble, only to raise them to a life renewed. [They] leave people with a restored sense of purpose, priority, “the point of it all.” [They make] clean sense of the gospel that is ever ancient ever new... it is a deliverance.”²⁰

Hopkins University Press, 2011). The last of these is half a century before the First Fleet, and it feels so different from the Australian experience of apparently keeping religion out of our first universities. But a ninth of the nine colonial colleges, Columbia, does anticipate the Australian experience in one important respect. It was first known as King’s College and it was hoped that it would be opened in 1745, but it was delayed for a decade because so many of its supporters wanted it to be non-sectarian rather than Anglican. New York was by then home to many different Christian denominations, itself a mark of religious vitality, and it made it hard to agree on the one Christian culture for its university. But it was inconceivable that its university should be anything other than Christian.

¹⁹ With the Methodists and Baptists joining the Congregationalists and Presbyterians in starting colleges, best understood as liberal arts colleges The founders and teachers of these mainly liberal arts colleges were mainly Christian, but their students were often unconverted. They found themselves evangelised energetically as well as educated. The college revival became a feature of American Christian life.

²⁰ James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 839.

Here is the Christian college at its best, offering the truth which sets us free, a truth composed of spirit as well as reason, prophetic truth which forges the will and reforms both church and nation.

It must be a source of quiet confidence to those who feel called to work for the foundation of a Pentecostal University, that the religious culture which was so fertile in the seeding of Christian colleges in prodigious numbers was so akin to their own in significant respects: Spirit-led, experientialist, revivalist, prophetic, post- or premillennial, apocalyptic. That confidence can only be increased by the consensus of recent scholarship that those distinguishing characteristics were also the leading characteristics of the first church evident in the New Testament.²¹

The supporters of the Great Awakening were lashed by their critics for their “enthusiasm” by which was meant “pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” Bishop Butler famously said to Wesley that this was “a horrid thing, a very horrid thing.” To which Wesley responded, “My Lord ... I pretend to no extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost—none but what every Christian may receive, and ought to expect and pray for.”²² God’s ministers are called and anointed to be architects and builders of the temple of the Spirit, but they must do so in a way consistent with the Scriptures (1 Cor 4:6)²³ – not going beyond what is written lest they be puffed up, that is become “enthusiasts” – always a hazard of vital religion whether in the first or the eighteenth or the twenty first century.

But surely that hazard is preferable to death. In this life you cannot have vital religion without risking that. Theologian Ernst Käsemann evocatively contends that the first Christian

²¹ Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions for Today* (London: SCM, 1969), 92–96.

²² Frank Baker, “John Wesley and Bishop Joesph Butler: A Fragment of John Wesley’s Manuscript Journal, 16th to 24th August 1739,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 42 (1980): 97.

²³ David Starling, “‘Not beyond what is written,’ Orality, Literacy and the Politics of I Corinthians,” address at the conference of the Society for the Study of Early Christianity, Macquarie University, 17 May 2025.

community was prophet-directed, a vehicle for “enthusiasm” – yes – but also with the gift of the Spirit as the source of exceptional wonders, a pledge of the near return of Christ, and “the ambassadorial authority for its mission.”²⁴ The first Christian community was a new, but logical, combination of apocalyptic thought, eschatological and missionary urgency, charismatic pneumatology, and prone to “enthusiasm” – all characteristics of the communities created by eighteenth-century revivals. The idea of the Pentecostal University, then, is grounded in the historical reality of the New Testament Church, where we see Paul lecturing on these issues for 2 years and 3 months in the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus – was this the first Christian university? And the idea of the Pentecostal University is also grounded in the historical reality of the revived churches of the Great Awakening, when Jonathan Edwards was appointed President of the College of New Jersey, which became Princeton. And it is grounded in the Australian Pentecostal heritage. Out of the revival experienced at Calvary Temple in Townsville, when David Cartledge acquired those 92 acres on the outskirts of the town and had built thereon a Bible College and a Christian school. There Steve Fogarty was converted and filled with the Spirit. And it is also grounded in your own experience of the power of the Spirit in Australia today – driving you on to create the first Australian Pentecostal University.

Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, 1995-2017, observed: “The Azusa Street explosion of Pentecostalism came because, in the economy of Christianity, the charismatic element is essential to Orthodoxy. In any one life, we see only a very small part of the curve of these great historical movements. It’s our duty to try and see more of the curve, and to knit together fragments

²⁴ Käsemann, *New Testament Questions for Today*, 92.

of knowledge and relate them to the whole.”²⁵ It is the God-given responsibility of the Christian University to see more of that curve of the great historical movements and to knit together fragments of knowledge and relate them to the whole.

Instead of this happy outcome, what happened in America was the widespread decline in the confidence of Christian colleges and universities. It is a decline characterised by one historian as “the dying of the Light”. It is a death usually attributed to secularisation, but it is necessary to get more specific in analysing the reasons for the decline. The main practical problem has been the failure to hold to our first principle: the need to sustain the symbiotic relationship with the church community or denomination which birthed it, in particular by:

- relaxing Confessional standards;
- replacing challenging Christian affirmations with popular values of inclusivity and tolerance;
- changing college constitutions to remove members of the host church from college boards of governance;
- limiting the presence of the host church in the academic body to the college head – everybody else could come from other churches or none;
- replacing the community aspect of the college with a preference for individual enterprise;
- allowing academic staff to concentrate exclusively on the development of their own careers rather than loyalty to the college and denomination;
- minimising or eliminating disciplines of prayer and worship.

²⁵ <https://www.philosophyforlife.org/blog/the-bishop-of-london-on-christian-contemplation>, accessed 22 June 2025.

The symbiotic relationship with the host Christian constituency collapses – the college goes on, but its Christianity does not – the light has died.²⁶ It is so reassuring that the risk and moderation sub-committee of the Alphacrucis Council always addresses this danger first at all its meetings.

A second massive and regrettable failure of the American Christian colleges has been put this way by historian of American evangelicalism, George Marsden: “One of the oddest anomalies in American religion today is that there is no major evangelical research university.”²⁷ According to Marsden, the evangelicals had the resources to fund research, but did not value it. By contrast, the Catholics invested in research universities: University of Notre Dame, Boston College, Georgetown University, Loyola University Chicago, and Saint Louis University, and The Catholic University of America, established by the U.S. bishops. Marsden, himself, was appointed to a research position in Notre Dame, and he was replaced at Notre Dame by another evangelical historian, Mark Noll.

In a delightful providence, Notre Dame was to play a crucial role in the development of Christian universities in Australia. That is an exciting story to which we must now turn.

²⁶ The collapse might not always be the fault of the college; it can be the fault of the host denomination: in the year 2000, for example, there were 44 colleges or universities extant in USA which had Congregationalist foundations. Not one of those institutions had been founded after 1926, and of the 44, only 18 retained any links with the United Church of Christ as the Congregationalists are now known. It takes two to tango, and in the dance of church and Christian college, both must be unfailingly faithful to Christ’s mission and loyal to each other.

²⁷ George Marsden, “Why no Major Evangelical University? The Loss and Recovery of Evangelical Advanced Scholarship,” in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America* (eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 294.

3. Australia

The model for the first Australian Universities established in the 1850s was not Oxford and Cambridge, but the University of London. It was the work of philosophical materialists and utilitarians.²⁸

When the bill for the foundation of University College, London, was introduced into the House of Commons in 1825, it was referred to as “the radical infidel college”. The radical infidelity met with resistance. The CofE in 1828 set up another college in London on similar pedagogical principles, but under its control – King’s College, London. The two were given a joint charter as the University of London in 1836. Thomas Arnold resigned from its Senate when it refused to make examination in Scripture compulsory for undergrads.²⁹

The same struggle between the inclusion and the exclusion of theology was found in the establishment of the first Australian universities.

William Charles Wentworth, wealthy pastoralist and MLC, was the chief voice in the formation of the University of Sydney (1850). He insisted that there could be no religious tests for entry to the University and religion itself could not be taught in the university. Wentworth was opposed by Charles Cowper, a prominent Anglican layman,³⁰ who said that education without “sound religious principles ... would be only rearing up more accomplished villains.”³¹ So the churches were allowed to establish residential colleges for the accommodation of the university’s

²⁸ Large numbers of students were to be taught in lectures, not the chosen few in tutorials. Fees were low and the University was more accessible than Oxbridge to the poor. Pride of place was given to the faculty of medicine, so now there was a focus on the practical training of professionals rather than the broad liberal arts training of gentlemen. Students could choose what subjects they wanted to study rather than a narrowly prescribed course of study.

²⁹ A.H. Halsey and M.A. Trow, “The evolution of the British Universities” in *The History of Higher Education* (ed. Roy Lowe; London: Routledge, 2008), 5.82.3.

³⁰ Son of Archdeacon William Cowper.

³¹ Bruce Kaye, “The Idea of a Christian University in Church History,” *St Mark’s Review* 21 (2009): 24.

students, and there divinity could be taught according to the creeds and doctrines of the denominations which established the colleges. This Sydney pattern was duplicated in Melbourne (1853), Adelaide (1874), Tasmania (1890), Queensland (1909) and in Western Australia (1911).

It was not that the churches were too weak to insist on having divinity taught within the University as in Oxford and Cambridge, but they were too divided to come up with an agreed policy on how it should be done. The churches were strong enough to impose their divisions on Australian society. The government sought to use sectarian rivalry to deliver social capital for the benefit of society – from 1836 it subsidised the building of churches and the payment clergy in all the population centres of the colonies – so that in even small communities four churches would be built – Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist, and there would be four ministers supported by the state to help to civilise an ex-convict population. This denominational reality was just the way it was.

It was a reality which survived death. Cemeteries were carved up between the denominations. Take the Melbourne General cemetery. Immediately across the road from the Melbourne cemetery are the University colleges – the University might not have allowed the teaching of divinity within its hallowed walls, but in the colleges the denominational pattern was continued with the building of Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian colleges. They were inspiring structures.

Handsome as these structures were, and symbolic as they were of the power of the denominations, the exclusion of divinity from the universities' degree courses was a problem for the Christian churches. The decision to put religion at the periphery of the university meant that theology was peripheral to academic enterprise. Out of sight, it was soon out of mind. Christianity was no longer a concern of serious minds. It was not lacking serious energy in nineteenth century

Australia, the spirit was strong, but it had no way of demonstrating to the leaders of society that it had a stake in reason or science.

The exclusion brought into play the churches' undoubted capacity for pragmatism. For a hundred years, they tried every possible experiment in higher education allowed outside the university citadel. First, theological colleges were established for all the denominations, minor as well as major. Moore College was an early cab off the rank in 1856. In 1891 Anglicans formed the Australian College of Theology, an examining body calculated to bring all the Australian Anglican theological colleges, except Trinity College at Melbourne University, up to an acceptable standard, awarding Licentiates in theology. At Melbourne, a more localised experiment brought the theological colleges of the different denominations into the one local organisation, the Melbourne College of Divinity. The Presbyterians at Ormond College led the way in trying to reverse the exclusion of theology from the university. They made progress in that the newly-formed MCD was empowered by the State government in 1910 to award degrees, but it was made clear these were not university degrees.

The attempt to have the Melbourne College of Divinity adopted by the University of Melbourne was vetoed by the fiery Daniel Mannix, Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. Again, sectarianism frustrated the degree of ecumenism required to win general and government support.

A further surge in higher education training opportunities consisted of the Bible College movement which trained many lay people in evangelism and most missionaries for service.

It was a messy, confused picture, but it was largely accepted by the churches as the way it had to be. They were therefore totally unprepared for any opportunity to re-enter the University citadel. In the event, they did not have to storm fortress university to gain entrance. They woke up one day to find they had been dropped inside the castle by Providence. Now Providence makes

use of things which are not sacred and people who are not overtly Christian for gospel ends. In 1957 the Russians launched Sputnik. The West took fright and became science mad. In 1961 Prime Minister Menzies established a committee to inquire into the state of Australia's eleven universities with a view to making them of more use to the state, especially in the areas of science and technology.

3.1 *The Martin Report*

The chairman of the committee was Sir Leslie Harold Martin (1900–1983), physicist, specialising in nuclear research which took off after Hiroshima at the end of World War II.³² Martin was friendly, humble in character, and he was trusted by those who mattered, especially Robert Menzies, whose personal views are to be found in the Martin Report which was released in three volumes in 1964.

Chapter 15 of vol II is about theological education. The Martin Committee appointed a sub-committee to report to it on theological education.³³ All the then 59 theological colleges and seminaries replied in full to a questionnaire sent out to them. To quote the Martin Report: 15.3 “The Committee believes that much of the information obtained from the group's investigation has never before been collected and collated in a comprehensive form.” Now that they had gone to all

³² Martin famously declared that there was ‘absolutely no danger’ to Australians from the 1956 nuclear bomb tests at Maralinga. Sir Mark Oliphant, himself a nuclear physicist, maintained that he was a man of honour who would not knowingly have lied to the public.

³³ The sub-committee had six members of whom five were based in Melbourne. Of the five, one was an assistant bishop in Melbourne, but had been warden of St Paul's College in the University of Sydney, and the other four were from the University colleges attached to the University of Melbourne, which means 6 theological institutions were represented directly, and another 53 were represented by them.

the trouble of collecting this data, they thought they should use it. They seem to have been genuinely surprised that the theological education sector was so impressive.

For example, the Committee reports “Of the 246 full-time members of staff in the theological training colleges, 236 have, at least, first degrees, while 203 have post-graduate degrees as well.”

Christian educational institutions must engage with government inquiries if they are to get sympathetic treatment from the state. While our second essential reality was that institutions of higher education must satisfy the requirements of the State for academic standards and social and cultural utility, it almost seems as if the State wants to be satisfied. Once it is fully engaged with the theological education sector, it instinctively wants to understand how the theologically literate can contribute to national well-being, and it wants to make it work administratively since governments don’t appreciate untidy, unfinished bureaucratic arrangements.

The Martin Report noted that all 59 theological colleges were supported financially by their own denominations and the fees of their students. None was expected to be financially self-supporting and yet none had expected to be assisted financially by governments. The Committee decided that theological education deserved more help from the Commonwealth, not for the teaching of the “religious beliefs” of particular denominations, which should remain the financial responsibility of the denomination concerned. But theological students should be encouraged to take university degree courses as part of their training, and this would be a charge on the Commonwealth.

Furthermore, and here was the slowly-detonating bomb: “Universities, and the proposed Institutes of Colleges and Boards of Teacher Education, should consider the provision of courses

of a non-dogmatic character which are relevant to theological studies.”³⁴ That surely is the thin end of a very wide wedge.

The nineteenth-century exclusion of theology from the universities had been reversed. Geoff Treloar, who is writing a history of the Australian College (now University) of Theology, takes up the story: “That a moment of opportunity had occurred was quickly recognised”³⁵ ... “From the time of the Martin report of 1964 theology was recognised as legitimate public knowledge with a justifiable place in public higher education. The Martin report came as a surprise to theological educators who scrambled to take advantage of the new higher education environment.”³⁶

A new bout of sanctified pragmatism ensued. In the late 1970s and early 1980s colleges of divinity sprang up all around the country – in Adelaide (1979), Brisbane (1983), Sydney (1983) and Perth (1985). Their overtures to local universities for a partnership were welcomed especially by the newer universities.³⁷

3.2 *Catholic Initiatives*

Then Providence struck again. To prove that Christianity is not the Liberal Party at prayer, this time Providence used the Labor Party, and it was the Catholics who made the next breakthrough,

³⁴ *Tertiary Education in Australia: Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission*, Commonwealth of Australia, Vol. 2 (1964): 15.143.

³⁵ Treloar continued: “A group of interested persons, clerical and lay, assembled at Morpeth Theological College to consider how this surprising opening might be utilised. The Martin Report and the meeting at Morpeth marked the beginning of the transformation of the place of theology in Australian public education.” Geoffrey R. Treloar, “Towards a Master Narrative: Theological Learning and Teaching in Australia since 1901,” *St Mark’s Review*, 210 (2009): 38, 39.

³⁶ Treloar, “Theological Education in Australia 1964-2020, 541.

³⁷ The ACD, for example, entered into an agreement with Flinders university under which the primary degree in theology could be achieved on the basis of a combination of ACD units with 1/3 of the university’s units. Treloar, “Theological Education in Australia 1964-2020, 544.

this time a development from which there could be no return to a government veto of Christian universities. Since this is the critical breakthrough and because it is so fascinating and instructive, let us tell this story, the story which makes it possible for other Christian churches to do likewise, if they observe our two realities.

Since the end of the Second World War, Catholics had tried hard to establish a Catholic University in Australia. Among the many Americans who found themselves in Australia at the end of the war was a chaplain who was a priest of the Congregation of the Holy Cross which was responsible for the establishment of the afore-mentioned University of Notre Dame which had been established in Indiana a century earlier. That priest just happened to be Father Francis Patrick Duffy CSC (*Congregatio a Sancta Cruce*) hailed in Catholic hagiography as “The most decorated army chaplain in American history” and “America’s favorite priest”. He described how his relationship with Archbishop Norman Gilroy, who was to be created Cardinal the next year, had developed in Sydney and that he was in the habit of eating with him at least once a week. During their talks over dinner, they discussed the Congregation of the Holy Cross and the University of Notre Dame in the United States. Gilroy thought he had to have that in Australia. Duffy was a Professor of Philosophy and all the Christians in Australia at that time, Protestant as well as Catholic, were having trouble with another Professor of Philosophy: John Anderson, at Sydney University, from the 1930s to the 1950s, an “atheist, a freethinking iconoclast who wanted to undermine students’ faith... Parish priests told their bright boys that they might study engineering or medicine, but they must stay clear of arts.”³⁸ Gilroy thought “that it was pointless instructing the brighter students in the faith in Catholic schools if they were persuaded out of faith at the

³⁸ John Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Australia’s Catholic University, 2015), 2.

university.”³⁹ It was not good enough to have a church college attached to the university, when the university itself undermined the church. You had to have a university that supported the Catholic faith – that is a Catholic university. So the Holy Cross fathers sent 2 missions to Australia to assess the possibility of establishing an Australian Notre Dame. They uncovered many obstacles.⁴⁰

Notre Dame’s time had not yet come. But 50 years later it came. 50 years is not a long time in the development of Christian universities. Alphacrucis is in its eighth decade and is not quite there yet. WA needed a tertiary institution to train Catholic teachers and nurses and, from 1986, the project evolved into a full university. Notre Dame as a private university, with the approval of the WA state government, took its first students in Fremantle in 1992. But that was not the breakthrough. Anyone can start a private university if they have the funds to pay for it. But you need a lot of funds – universities are expensive. Notre Dame started with funds raised by WA businessman, Denis Horgan. He pioneered wine production in the Margaret River region and made a lot of money. The Notre Dame planning Committee made him the University’s first chancellor in early 1990. No sooner had the appointment been made than his business became insolvent, and he had to stand down as chancellor. A university to be viable in Australia must get access to government funding.

³⁹ Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 3.

⁴⁰ The Obstacles: (1) Daniel Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, who was busy getting Newman College built in the University of Melbourne, designed by Walter Burley Griffin. Be careful what you build because it will invariably oppose the building of any competitors. Mannix was opposed to the idea of a Catholic University on the grounds of cost. He also believed that taking Catholics out of Melbourne university would make it even more secular. His death in 1963 removed the chief Catholic opponent to the setting up of a Catholic University. (2) The Catholics in the professions in Sydney did not want to see any rivals to St John’s College, (3) the difficulty of funding, and (4) whether the parliament would give the university a charter to grant degrees. (5) Protestant churches declared against the proposal: The Anglican synod declared against the Catholic University, along with dancing, gambling and games of chance on church property. On these matters Catholics had no inhibitions. Spinning wheels at their fates were crucial for fund raising.

3.3 *Australian Catholic University*

A second Catholic University, the ACU, launched in 1992 was the critical breakthrough. This was a government-supported Christian university, opening a door for all subsequent government supported Christian universities. How did that happen? In 1987, the year after it became known that a plan was afoot to establish Notre Dame in Fremantle, the Labor member for Fremantle, John Dawkins, was made Minister for Education in the Hawke Government. He was an economic rationalist after the order of Margaret Thatcher, and it was required of providence that it should exercise exceptional ingenuity to make him an instrument for the birth of Christian universities. Dawkins wanted to put a bomb under the entire higher education industry in Australia to make it more efficient and more useful economically to the State.⁴¹

Dawkins wanted to abolish the distinction between universities and colleges of advanced education, elevating the latter to universities if need be by amalgamation with existing universities. The Catholics had dozens of colleges for the training of priests, but also of teachers and nurses. “Dawkins could not force the colleges to merge or amalgamate but he did control the purse strings.”⁴² In future, institutions that met his test of proper size, namely 5000 students for a research university and 3000 for a teaching only university would be funded as part of a new national system of tertiary education. The religious orientation of these institutions was of no concern to him – only economics mattered. I trust you are able to extrapolate from this this why all the AGA and then ACC local church colleges have to amalgamate in Alphacrucis.

⁴¹ “This crassly utilitarian view of education caused dismay and fear. The religious orders saw themselves as servants of the church and of the faith, not of the economy.” Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 9.

⁴² Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 9.

There was a mad scramble of amalgamations as the newer, smaller state universities sought partners to bulk up their student numbers and therefore income. The state universities were now no longer always averse to a marriage with the Catholics, but the Catholics have always had a thing about the importance of Catholics only marrying other Catholics. The student numbers in their colleges were in their hundreds rather than thousands and they had to work hard to come together in sufficient numbers to achieve a purely Catholic outcome. But that was the aim of the founders of the Australian Catholic University. Brother Ambrose Payne discouraged the heads of the Catholic colleges from amalgamating with local state universities. He argued instead for an Australia-wide amalgamation of Catholic college campuses.

Dawkins hesitated: their Catholicism was not a problem – he had heard and become accustomed to the idea of the projected Notre Dame University in his own electorate: but colleges all over Australia? Subject to the tyranny of distance? How would they be administered? Would not that administration be very inefficient, the unforgivable sin? But the efficiency of his own department was more important than the efficiency of newcomers, and he let it be known that he was adamant that he wanted to write only one cheque for the entire Catholic system.

Then with a Trump-like finesse for inconsistency, he rejected the idea that all these little colleges could be a university because they were without research.⁴³ Dawkins tried to bully the Catholics into settling for the status of an institute or a university college. But the Catholics did not want to accept that because that would mean their new institution would be thought inferior to other amalgamated CAEs which were now to be called universities. In the end Dawkins succumbed to the pressure of Brother Ambrose Payne, backed by Labor politicians. “Consider the

⁴³ Most of their teachers just did not want to do any research and had no time to.

problems I would have faced had I rejected the proposal for a Catholic University.” This was a reference to the right wing of the Labour Party powerful in NSW and still with strong Catholic connections.⁴⁴

Dawkins had put a condition on granting the Catholics university status, namely that they must be sponsored for five years with another existing University so that they would learn the ropes. ANU and Monash said ‘no way’, Griffith and Wollongong flirted with the idea, Griffith needing all the amalgamations it could get to bulk it up, Wollongong because Ken McKinnon, VC of Wollongong, was a darling of the Labor Party, and wanted to see its new economically-streamlined, tertiary education policy succeed. In the end it was La Trobe which took on the role. A DVC of LaTrobe was appointed to manage the sponsorship, and Dawkins paid his salary. He clearly very much wanted it to work. Dawkins had insisted that the new university had to have three faculties. Its foundation colleges were already involved with teacher training and nursing. This gave them the faculties of education and health sciences. To this was added the third faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The second of our two essential realities had been met: the ACU had satisfied the State’s requirements for usefulness and efficiency. But to make it work, they had to satisfy the first essential requirement: the maintenance of a strong symbiotic relationship with the Catholic Church.

Brother Ambrose Payne was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Amalgamation Implementation Committee, which was set up to establish the Australian Catholic University. He had been the principal of the Catholic College of Education 1971-89.

⁴⁴ Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 17.

The Committee was chaired by George Pell, then a newly-appointed auxiliary bishop in Melbourne. He had been the director of the Aquinas College in Ballarat now to become part of ACU. He was also driven by a calling to return the church to orthodoxy in the tradition of “warrior intellectual” BA Santamaria. Pell was by temperament, a bull-dozer like Dawkins. He did not put up with the doubts of the nervous nellys. Neither he nor his fellow founders agreed to promote existing staff to professorships. Only 60 of the four hundred staff had doctorates. New better qualified staff had to be appointed to elevate the new university’s standards. It was a battle royal, a “frenzy”.⁴⁵

Where would theology fit into the new university? It had to be there, but strangely it received a lot of opposition because theology was already being taught in a host of theological colleges and inter-denominational colleges of divinity.

Because the new university was to teach theology, it had to be under the control of the bishops, who traditionally safeguarded theology (canon law), rather than the religious orders which had run most of the pre-university colleges of higher education. That too was a struggle which Pell won.⁴⁶ Cardinal Clancy, based in Sydney, said to Pell: “get the new university’s headquarters based in Sydney, appoint me as Chancellor, and keep me out of conflict with the Archbishop of Melbourne (Frank Little) over these matters.” It was an assignment demanding muscle and political skill and Pell had both.⁴⁷ Apparently, it all went swimmingly. Melbourne did not carry on with its usual, boring anti-Sydneyitis, and Pell reported it was one of the best committees he ever worked with.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 24.

⁴⁶ Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 24.

⁴⁷ Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 26.

⁴⁸ Hirst, *Australia’s Catholic University*, 27.

But it was not a committee which allowed him to be VC, which he had dearly wanted, and he was greatly hurt by the rejection. But he understood the reason. He did not have a doctorate; he was a religious, not an academic. The first VC was Peter Drake, an economic historian and a Catholic. He had been Deputy VC of the University of New England.⁴⁹

ACU began on 1 January 1991 with one professor. It was officially inaugurated at the Sydney Town Hall on 23 April 1992, in the presence of one cardinal, five archbishops, 18 bishops, and the chancellors and vice-chancellors of 20 Australian universities. Greetings from around the world were received from over 200 universities. So that is how it's done.⁵⁰

The third VC of ACU was Greg Craven (2008–21). A brilliant appointment, he was a lawyer with expertise in the Australian Constitution.⁵¹ For his inaugural address, he gave as his subject: “The Idea of an Australian Catholic University.” It must be unequivocally Catholic. “supremely Catholic and supremely a university”, a fused entity, not one to be diagnosed into separate elements. Not only supremely Catholic but defiantly Catholic: its catholicity should not be diminished to please government, the higher education society in general, society as whole or any segment of its community. Why would state and society support such a body? ACU served the university sector and Australian society by being Catholic, an institution working with a distinct intellectual tradition, a beneficial change from the uniformity of secular universities. Dawkins had said how disappointed he was that Aussie unis were so uniform. He wanted them to

⁴⁹ Hirst, *Australia's Catholic University*, 27.

⁵⁰ By then the percentage of Catholics in the Australian population was for the first time greater than the percentage of Anglicans. Anti-Catholicism was no longer an issue. The Australian Catholic University (ACU) was opened on 1 January 1991 following the amalgamation of four Catholic tertiary institutions in eastern Australia: Catholic College of Education Sydney in New South Wales, Institute of Catholic Education in Victoria, McAuley College of Queensland and Signadou College of Education in the Australian Capital Territory. Between them these four represented more than the 20 training institutions.

⁵¹ Craven lectured in law at state universities (Melbourne and Curtin, where he was DVC) and had been Professor of Law at Notre Dame in Fremantle.

compete by being different.⁵² The ACU was that. So, that is how providence and pragmatism did it.⁵³

Conclusion

On 1 October 2033 Alphacrucis was gazetted as Australia's first public Pentecostal University. Present at the wonderful inauguration which was held at the Sydney Cricket Ground, where the Swans had just won the AFL Grand Final two days before, were:

- The 20,000 students enrolled with Alphacrucis
- the pastors of 1200 ACC churches, and the CEOs of 520 Pentecostal Bible Colleges around the world,
- the chancellors and VCs of Australia's 39 other public universities and 5 private universities,
- along with a plethora of Chancellors and VCs of 13 Pentecostal Universities in the USA; 8 in Nigeria, 5 in the UK, 3 in Canada, 5 in Korea including Olivet University which David Cartledge helped to establish, and other Pentecostal universities throughout the world too numerous to enumerate but not to accommodate in the SCG;

⁵² Hirst, *Australia's Catholic University*, 164.

⁵³ Hirst, *Australia's Catholic University*, 111. In 2004, Pell gave property and money to Notre Dame to set up in Sydney if they would offer medicine and law – two faculties ACU did not have. In 2004 also Campion College was launched as a private Catholic Uni. Here theology and philosophy were to be compulsory as were history, literature and science – an intro to the culture of the west, a niche BA as Pell had suggested for ACU. By 2015 had only about 100 students. Hirst, *Australia's Catholic University*, 112 Notre Dame would become a competitor for ACU also offering nursing and teaching. In 2003 John Howard changed the law so that students in private universities could receive government supported places for courses of national priority such as nursing and teaching.

- one PM who declared that the new university would best serve the needs of the state as well as of the church by being itself,
- and one Pentecostal ex-Prime minister who said “I told you so: Australia is not a secular country. It is a free country. This is a nation where you have the freedom to follow any belief system you choose;”
- one ex-Minister for Employment, Education, and Training who said he was thrilled that here was a university competing with admirable efficiency by being different;
- the National President of the Australian Christian Churches, who was such a gifted prophet that he was called Joel, and who spoke of the indissoluble symbiosis which the denomination enjoyed with the college it sponsored,
- and the National/Secretary Treasurer of the ACC who pledged to greet the new university, not with a stream of good wishes, but with rivers of gold,
- and the newly-appointed VC, delivered a rousing address, exhorting all present to work to keep Alphacrucis University unequivocally Pentecostal, ‘supremely Pentecostal and supremely a university, Not only supremely Pentecostal but defiantly Pentecostal’ and the Amen was so loud it was heard in the Anglican synod meeting at the same time, and all 800 there present cheered and cried out with one voice, “It is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.”