Theology in Australian higher education: the ‘Newcastle Model’ brings theology home to the academy

Brian Douglas* and Terence Lovat

Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle, Australia

(Received 16 February 2009; final version received 8 August 2009)

This article investigates the movement of theological education away from diocesan controlled theological colleges in the Anglican Church of Australia into the mainstream curriculum of public universities. Particular reference is made to the establishment of Theology as an area of study at The University of Newcastle. Other models of theological education based on particular hermeneutic interests of Anglicanism are examined. Comparisons are drawn between those institutions seeking to maintain partisan control over theological education and those who cede control, in part or entirely, to the public university. Discussion of some historical material leading to the implementation of the ‘Newcastle Model’ is presented as this relates to church and public policy on Theology in higher education. The article argues that the place of theological education is in the academy or public university since it is there that Theology, like other public knowledge, best develops and maintains a critical intention.

Keywords: critical intention; hermeneutic interests; theological education; theology; university

Introduction

Theological education within the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, Australia, has moved away from the typically exclusive nineteenth/twentieth century model of maintaining a diocesan theological college under episcopal control to a model that sees theological education conducted as part of the mainstream curriculum of the local public university, The University of Newcastle. This is part of a wider trend that sees theology increasingly back where it began, be it in Christendom or Islam, as a core discipline of the local multi-disciplinary academy.

While some theological colleges, normally with particular evangelical hermeneutic interests, such as Moore College in Sydney and Ridley College in Melbourne, still exist within diocesan structures and without any significant affiliation with secular universities, most Anglican theological education in Australia is now conducted with significant involvement by a public university. The degree of involvement varies, with some theological education largely franchised by the university to a church-based consortium and other forms that truly do function as a regular part of the university’s infrastructure. The ‘Newcastle Model’ (University of Newcastle, 2009a) represents the latter option, with Theology established as a normal discipline within the School of Humanities and Social Science in the Faculty of Education and Arts. While negotiated

*Corresponding author. Email: brian.douglas@newcastle.edu.au

through cross-sector working groups with the local stakeholder church(es), the curriculum is approved in the normal way through Faculty processes and staff, ongoing and sessional, are appointed according to routine university procedures.

The University of Newcastle entered into partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle following the closure and sale of St John's Theological College at Morpeth, a diocesan theological college which had operated to train Anglican priests since the early-twentieth century. The Anglican Diocese of Newcastle has provided funding support for the teaching of Theology within the University of Newcastle through supporting the appointment of a Foundation Chair of Theology (the Morpeth Chair) and a Senior Lecturer in Theology (University of Newcastle, 2009b).

This article seeks to explore the emerging trend within the Anglican Church of Australia to conduct theological education within public universities, to contrast this trend with more traditional practice as it still exists and to point to the significance of the trend in its ceding control of theological education by dioceses to the university. The article concentrates especially on the radical implications of the transfer of power denoted by the 'Newcastle Model' as it brings Theology home to where it began in the scholarly academy alongside the other knowledge disciplines.

Background: a legacy of fracture

Treloar (1997, p. 4) argues that the typical model of theological education in the nineteenth-century Anglican Church of Australia was inherited in part from England, with theological colleges being established and controlled by various dioceses, each committed to particular interests, but with no formal connection to the universities (Breward, 1997, p. 8). Indeed, Australia's earliest universities, such as the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne, constitutionally excluded theological education from their curriculum in order to prevent sectarian interests from contaminating academic pursuits (Breward, 1997, p. 8). In the case of Sydney, this action would seem to have resulted, at least in part, from the protestations of Bishops Broughton of Sydney and Tyrrell of Newcastle who alienated both the Senate and the first professors of the University of Sydney by 'trenchantly arguing a case against a "godless university"' (Davis, 1966a, pp. 49–50), an alienation that impelled the constitutional move to ban Theology from the disciplines of the University. In addition, generous bequests, such as that of Thomas Moore in 1856, made the establishment of Moore Theological College in Sydney possible without the need for support from a university. It was Bishop Frederic Barker's decision in Sydney to commit to Moore College that appears to have moved the Anglican Church in Australia to invest its theological education in 'the private, vocational institution, separated from the University'. In Melbourne, Trinity College, a college of the University of Melbourne, was established in 1872 and began the training of ordinands in the context of a university college in 1877, despite the refusal of the University to establish a School of Theology as part of its regular scholarly infrastructure. In other parts of the Anglican Church of Australia, bishops made their own arrangements and some, such as Bishop Tyrrell of Newcastle, tutored prospective clergy themselves (Davis, 1966a, p. 49).

Later in the nineteenth century, diocese after diocese established its own theological college (Breward, 1997, p. 11). The majority of these diocesan theological colleges are now closed but, at the time of establishment, each bishop wanted his own independent college to suit his particular theological style and interest. The proliferation of theological colleges in Australia suited the bishops' purposes but it had serious

effects on the overall standard and quality (Davis, 1966a, p. 48), since colleges competed with each other and often remained disadvantaged by small student numbers and a critical lack of human and physical resources. It might be argued that the failure of the Anglican Church of Australia to cope with secularism has been in part owing to the theological bankruptcy of their ministries and the failure of the Church to develop a rational policy for theological education on a national basis (Davis, 1966a, p. 50). Much of this failure can be attributed to the competing nature of church parties and diocesan structures, each keen to protect and project its own hermeneutic interest.

Exacerbating factors in Australian higher education policy

In addition to the tensions represented by the foregoing competition between the various dioceses, a contributing factor to the difficulty of establishing Theology as a regular discipline in the public university revolves around the historical lack of interest from the Australian Government in theological education (Treloar, 1997, p. 6). The first interest came with the election of the Menzies government, extending from 1949 to 1966. In Menzies' view, the Australian Government should take full responsibility for the nation's university system. He commissioned the Martin Committee to review all of higher education in order to advance his plans. The Martin Report (1964), titled, *Tertiary education in Australia*, included, significantly, a chapter on 'Theological training in Australia' (Martin, 1964, pp. II, 143–155). The recommendations of this report took the Australian theological community by surprise (Treloar, 2007, p. 46). The Report acknowledged a general lack of information on theological training and took the step of inviting a group of representatives from the major Christian denominations to investigate this matter on its behalf (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.1). Information was produced, showing the location of theological colleges and the numbers of staff members and students (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.4) but not engaging in any significant way with the nature of theological education in those institutions, apart from acknowledging that 'within the same church, there is some diversity in methods and standards of training' (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.6). As regards the Anglican Church, variations were shown to exist concerning the nature of the courses undertaken (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.11) and entry standards of students and subjects studied (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.13). No comments were made on the varying parties of the Anglican Church or their particular hermeneutic interests. Neither was any reference made to a critical interest in the existing theological institutions of Australia.

The Report, significantly, used the word 'training' in relation to theological education, acknowledging that the purpose of 'theological training institutions' was to 'train clergy', seeming to assume that the furtherance of religious beliefs was the responsibility of the various church bodies (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.51). The Report also stated that institutions of higher education in Australia, other than theological colleges, might undertake courses in 'comparative religion, theological (including biblical) history, early specialist languages for the understanding of manuscript material and original texts, classical languages and literature, ancient history and archaeology' (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.53). This recommendation represented a significant reversal of the nineteenth-century trend to exclude theological education from public and secular universities (Treloar, 2007, p. 46), since it accepted the principle that aspects of theological education were appropriate to the context of higher education.

It has been argued that this change in direction reflected Menzies' determination to give non-sectarian religion in education a place in public universities on the

grounds that such a link would fortify British civilisation in Australia in the face of Cold War tensions and the rise of left-wing political ideologies. Menzies thought that religion should be an integral part of the work of universities and believed that the Australian Government could facilitate it while, at the same time, assisting in breaking down sectarian division around Theology (Treloar, 2007, pp. 46–47). Geoff Treloar (1997), reflecting on the period following the Martin Report, comments that ‘the attempt to broaden provision for theological training has met with some good measure of success in the thirty years since the Martin Report. A number of denominational colleges did follow the suggestion to affiliate with universities’ (p. 6). The Martin Report, however, seemed to be making a clear distinction between partisan hermeneutic interests, called ‘the furtherance of religious beliefs’ (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.51) and other critical interests for theological education appropriate to a university. This suggests that ‘the furtherance of religious belief’ was seen to have no place in higher education at that time and so was expected to remain the concern of the churches alone in their various theological training colleges.

The fact that the Martin Report advocated that the Australian Government provide assistance to theological students undertaking university courses, but not to those students in theological training colleges, placed a higher value on university-based Theology than that functioning in a church-based institution (Martin, 1964, p. II, para 15.54). Perhaps this view reflected the Australian Government’s resistance to assisting these latter institutions or merely that they were deemed to be pursuing partisan hermeneutic interests that were not seen as appropriate to the impartiality and critical rigour expected of university education. Theological education appeared at this time to be largely as it had been from the beginning of Australian higher education, namely, ‘denominational, sometimes competitive, often sectarian, and in some cases of dubious quality’ (Treloar, 1997, p. 6).

Comment on the Martin Report seems to support these conclusions, with one commentator arguing that ‘the Commission obviously regards religion as standing in a world apart, that is, religion as it reads in this land, the religion of denominationalism’ (Roberts-Thomson, 1965, p. 105). This suggests that, in the view of the Martin Report, theological education was ‘a sectional matter’ which is the result of ‘the image which the Churches have themselves fostered over the years’ (p. 105). Churches, in their pursuit of their own partisan hermeneutic interests, had excluded themselves from being recognised as having any critical intention in their own theological education programs and therefore from having any place in a university environment.

The Morpeth Conference

Following the Martin Report, a significant conference on theological education was held at St John’s College, Morpeth NSW, in 1966, with results being published by the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle as *The Morpeth Papers* (Davis, 1966b). The churches were excited by the opportunities that they perceived in the Martin Report and so met to discuss the possibilities (Treloar, 2007, p. 47). The Morpeth Conference was noteworthy, not only because of the serious and critical way that it pursued debate on the nature of theological education, but also because it did this in an ecumenical context and because it advocated, encouraged by the recommendations of the Martin Report, that theological education should be characterised by critical intention and therefore encompass the kind of disciplinary interest that rendered it having a legitimate place in the public university. Indeed ‘the Federal Government’s perception of Australia’s

early post-World War II needs seemed to herald the dawning of a new day for academic theology in Australia' (Treloar, 2007, p. 47).

The Morpeth Conference, inspired by the recommendations of Martin, was counter-cultural for the times since almost all theological education, including in the Anglican Church at that time, was carried out in diocesan or provincial based theological colleges. The Bishop of Newcastle, The Right Reverend James Housden, said, in the Foreword to *The Morpeth Papers*, that there was a 'need for Christians to re-examine the basis of theological education with a view to its re-establishment as a field of study alongside other disciplines of learning, as well as its application in the training of the ministry' (Housden, 1966, Foreword). The bishop's words were taken up by others who presented papers at the conference. R.L. Sharwood, the Warden of Trinity College, Melbourne, acknowledged that Anglican theological education in Australia was far from satisfactory because the Church had shirked its responsibilities in regard to it, not being prepared to allocate the necessary resources (Sharwood, 1966, p. 4). Sharwood observed that, with Theology excluded from the universities in Australia, theological colleges had been unable to promote it adequately as a scholarly endeavour (p. 7). Ministry training had been substituted for critical intention and, as a result, the theological colleges had become 'sectarian, seminarian and second-rate' (p. 8). Sharwood acknowledged that this was not solely the fault of the churches since the universities had excluded Theology on the grounds that it would lead to sectarian division in the university. Sharwood advocated for Theology to function as a normal critical discipline in the universities of Australia, functioning in such a way that the academic study of Theology would be clearly distinguished from denominational dogma. At the same time, he argued that, where theological colleges continue to exist as separate entities, they too should pursue Theology in an academic and scholarly manner (p. 11).

William Ginnane, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at The Australian National University in Canberra, also presented a paper at the Morpeth Conference. Entitled 'Theology in the University', he argued the case for the inclusion of Theology in the university since it is one of the 'sciences', not in the sense of physics or chemistry, but as an instance of 'systematic human knowledge' and therefore deserving of a place in the institution 'where all sciences co-habit' (Ginnane, 1966, p. 22), that is, the university. He argued that the benefits of such a placement would be both for Theology and for the other sciences, with Theology acting not as some sort of 'supernatural policeman directing the natural academic traffic' (p. 21) but as a dynamic and critical academic discipline, having its own subject matter and methodology, together with standards of academic objectivity and excellence (p. 24). Ginnane argued for Theology as a critical interest 'subject to the canons of criticism' (p. 25), apart from any hermeneutic interest that it might also have, such as that related to vocational training and pastoral ministry. In a university, he argued, it is not necessary for Theology, as a science, to possess agreed doctrine, thus suggesting that any perceived problems of 'denominational' theology were not as great a threat to critical inquiry as they might at first appear (pp. 26–27). In this sense, Ginnane compared the teaching of Theology to the teaching of Philosophy, which did not require 'agreed doctrine', acknowledging that people tend not to agree about doctrines (p. 27). The thrust of Ginnane's argument was that, as long as scholarly endeavour was pursued, Theology could be taught within Australian universities as a critical discipline in its own right without denominational dogma or partisan hermeneutic interest necessarily destroying its critical intention. At the same time, Theology taught in this way could legitimately acknowledge diversity and multiformity as part of its critical intention.

J.G. Tulip, Lecturer in English at The University of Sydney, argued that theological education in Australia had been treated as an exception in higher education, whereas this was not the case in overseas universities where Theology was an accepted part of a university's academic work (Tulip, 1966, p. 28). Tulip criticised the Martin Report because it accepted the *status quo* of theological colleges in Australia and, in so doing, fixed the situation in precisely the form that had created the difficulty (p. 29). Importantly, however, Tulip disputed the distinction between 'dogmatic' and 'non-dogmatic' Theology, arguing that if the universities were restricted to 'non-dogmatic' Theology, this would 'place unfortunate restrictions on the academic freedom and usefulness of those theological studies admitted into a university' (p. 30). This comment represented an endorsement of critical intention for theological education since it argued that Theology in a higher education setting should be able to consider dogmatic theology in a critical manner without the obligation to assent to a particular hermeneutic interest.

Although Stuart Piggin (1997) expresses the view that the Morpeth Conference of 1966 ultimately strengthened the move of theological colleges to link with the universities (p. 37), he was less optimistic regarding the period immediately following on from the Conference. Piggin argued that the 'story of theological colleges in Australia was one of an unromantic, uphill struggle against anti-intellectualism and the paucity of resources' (p. 40). St John's College, Morpeth, is a good example of the difficulty Piggin outlines. With the exception of a few theological students who, in the 1970s and 1980s, undertook a combined BA/ThL degree at both The University of Newcastle and St John's, students had no real link with a university until 1997 when a formal link was made with Charles Sturt University's (CSU) School of Theology in Canberra. In the period between 1966 and the 1990s, St John's College continued as a theological college within the catholic tradition of Anglicanism, concentrating on preparing candidates for the ordained ministry, with numbers of both staff and students remaining small and educational resources limited, resulting in it never achieving the status of granting its own degree qualifications. The Morpeth Conference was therefore not an immediate influence on change, with the traditional approach persisting for most of the next 30 years and, for some, persisting still today in pursuing theological education as a tool for advancing their own partisan hermeneutic interest, rather than as a discipline that could fit easily with the other disciplines of a public university.

Partisan hermeneutic interest and the issue of control

The theological colleges that continue to exist today within their diocesan structures, and without controlling links to secular universities, usually do so because of partisan hermeneutic interests, such as particular expressions of the Anglican evangelical or Anglican catholic traditions. Moore College in Sydney is an example of this type of theological college since it emphasises a particular hermeneutic of Anglicanism, no doubt necessitating some distance from the critical and public focus of a university. Moore College insists on developing within its students 'a broad and deep grasp of the "deposit of faith" as it is set out in the Bible' (Moore College, 2009a). The College Faculty is also required to endorse 'the Protestant Reformed Christian tradition as expressed in the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles of Religion', therefore accepting 'the Scriptures as God's written Word, and as containing all that is necessary for salvation' (Moore College, 2009b).

Under reforms to higher education policy during the Howard Government (1996 to 2007), the Australian Government acknowledged that the management and control of the College is vested by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney in the Moore College Governing Board and, furthermore, recognised the legitimacy of the College promoting its own evangelical hermeneutic interest (Moore College Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) by providing its students with a government loan (FEE-Help). As such, while it offers some postgraduate awards in a measure of partnership with universities (Moore College, 2009c), its core undergraduate awards are offered autonomously, with the exclusiveness of its partisan hermeneutic interest making it unlikely that Moore would ever cede the level of control to a university connoted by the Newcastle Model.

Ridley College in Melbourne, working in the consortium of colleges known as the Australian College of Theology (Australian College of Theology, 2009), also expresses a commitment to the particular hermeneutic interest of evangelical Anglicanism, describing itself as 'an Anglican evangelical college' and affirming that its members 'uphold the fundamental truths of the Christian faith'. Among these 'fundamental truths' is a statement affirming 'the divine inspiration and infallibility of Holy Scripture as originally given and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct' (Ridley College, 2009a). Ridley College is described as 'evangelical in tradition and committed to academic excellence' (Australian College of Theology, 2009). Ridley is governed by its own Board (Ridley College, 2009b) with links to the Anglican Church of Australia but no controlling links from any university.

In the same Diocese of Melbourne, Trinity College Theological School, sited in the Anglican residential college on The University of Melbourne grounds, has an affiliation with the University, while not being controlled by it (Trinity College, 2009a). Trinity Theological School is controlled by both its own Council and a Board that reports to the Anglican Church of Australia in the Province of Victoria (Trinity College, 2009b). Trinity College Theological School states that it exists within 'the Anglican tradition' and that 'it represents a catholic breadth in theology, worship and spirituality' which 'seeks to embody the Anglican way in a critical, reflective and articulate style, in dialogue with the contemporary world' (Trinity College, 2009c). This is clearly a broader focus than that expressed by either Moore or Ridley Colleges, possibly reflecting its closer links with a university. The School also seeks wide engagement with other denominations through the ecumenical consortium of the United Faculty of Theology (United Faculty of Theology, 2009), incorporating Roman Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Church partner theological colleges, which work together as part of the Melbourne College of Divinity (Trinity College, 2009d), itself affiliated with The University of Melbourne (Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009). This wider engagement and affiliation with a university suggests a more critical intention in the theological goals of Trinity College Theological School than is apparent in the overtly partisan hermeneutic interests of either Moore or Ridley Colleges. At the same time, there persists a conscious preservation of autonomy and protection of its particular hermeneutic interest in the catholic tradition of Anglicanism.

Ceding control and the role of the public university

At the same time as some institutions have continued to pursue their particular interests, albeit with public assistance, other parts of the Anglican Church of Australia have lessened the control of diocesan structures over theological education and

entered into significant relationships with public universities so that these universities become the true providers of theological education. In South Australia, Anglican theological education is carried out through an association between the Adelaide College of Divinity and Flinders University, such that students share class attendance between the University and the denominational institutions within the College (Flinders University, 2009). The Adelaide College of Divinity constitutes the School of Theology in that University (Adelaide College of Divinity, 2009).

In Western Australia, much the same arrangement exists between Murdoch University and the Perth College of Divinity (Murdoch University, 2009a). The School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Murdoch is forthright in declaring its critical intention for the study of Theology. The School states that 'theology is critical scholarship. It is not advocacy on behalf of Christianity' and recognises 'that there is something to be gained by open, critical analysis'. At the same time, the School states that Theology can be a 'controversial discipline' that possesses a 'rigorous commitment to open, critical study' and so 'best belongs within the university'. The School acknowledges that Theology has long been part of university study in the major universities of the Western world, in places such as Britain, the United States of America and Germany, and states that 'its failure to find a place from the beginning in the older Australian universities reflected fears of sectarian strife at the time' (Murdoch University, 2009b).

The type of theological education offered in both Flinders and Murdoch universities is founded on the same critical intention expected generally in the scholarship of a public university. It befits the context of ecumenical engagement within the broader context of society and rests on the premise that any legitimate knowledge pursuit is best housed, preserved and safeguarded in the critical, multidisciplinary fabric of the university. The prosecution of particular hermeneutic interests is not the focus of the study and research carried out in these universities.

Towards the 'Newcastle Model'

Significant change in theological education occurred with the linking of St John's College, Morpeth, with CSU's School of Theology in 1997. This School represented an earlier partnership made between the University and St Mark's National Theological Centre in Canberra, dating from 1995. The link with CSU resulted from a major review and reform of the College's operations under the leadership of a new Principal and experienced theological educator, The Rev'd Dr Anne McElligott from New York, in 1995. This appointment was seen to raise the status of the College significantly and to set it on a new direction of theological education with the focus on a more critical interest in theological education for both lay and ordination candidates. From this time, St John's College was able to offer the full range of university degrees from certificates in theology to doctoral studies, as well as specific programs of professional ministry preparation and spirituality programs through what was known as the St John's College Professional Ministry Certificate (St John's College Morpeth, 1995, pp. 5–7).

With the resignation of Dr McElligott in 2002, the College was at another point of review. The questions of where and how the College should operate, which university it should be linked to and whether or not it should continue to operate at all were considered (Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, 2002). The decision of the Diocese of Newcastle not to appoint a new principal with long-term tenure signalled the beginning of a decision to close and sell the College and transfer theological education to

The University of Newcastle. In 2007, teaching of theological education began at this University, with the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle contributing to the cost. The 'Newcastle Model' was implemented. As will be seen below, this decision was consistent with a philosophy of theological education that had been mooted many decades before and that took root in diocesan thinking in the intervening years.

The Newcastle Model represents an instance of radical transfer of theological education from the control of an Anglican diocese to a secular university. The radical nature of the transfer is seen in the fact that Theology now functions alongside the other disciplines of the University, with its curriculum determined and its staff appointed in identical fashion to procedures in all other disciplines. While the Diocese of Newcastle has assisted in the development of the curriculum and in donating funds that have helped in the appointment of vital foundation staff, both curriculum and staffing decisions have been determined by the University using its regular processes. The Theology curriculum functions primarily as part of the Bachelor of Theology but is also available to a wider candidature across a range of other degree programs. Theology staff function as regular members of the multi-disciplinary School of Humanities and Social Science and their employment status is as salaried and conjoint staff, along with all other members of the School and its host Faculty of Education and Arts. In the Newcastle Model, there is no separation of duties or franchise arrangement in the way that Theology functions. It is as much part of the everyday life of the University as any other discipline.

While a recent move, it is worth recalling some of the vision germane to theological education that underpins the history of St. John's Theological College, on which the Newcastle Model now rests. Under the guidance of an energetic group of academics in the 1930s, led by Ernest Burgmann, the Principal of the day, St John's represented an early alternative to the prevailing pattern of the theological education of the day. The theological curriculum that Burgmann implemented at St John's has been described as taking the changing world seriously (Breward, 1997, p. 16). Peter Hempenstall (1993), in his biography of Burgmann, refers to 'the Morpeth mind', the development of which was to be brought about by a four-year program of study, including language, history, science and philosophy, along with the traditional subjects of Theology and Church History (p. 117). Burgmann's bold plans were severely constrained by the shortage of suitable candidates and the lack of episcopal vision. Burgmann also received criticism from within the Anglican Church because the type of theological education he was developing was not sufficiently dogmatic and traditional for those strongly disposed to the Anglo-Catholic hermeneutic (p. 126), nor least of all for those committed to the Evangelical hermeneutic.

Burgmann's plans seemed to advance as he pushed for connection with a university in order to escape the mediocrities of the Anglican system (Hempenstall, 1993, p. 117). While these plans were unsuccessful, Burgmann nonetheless persisted with his vision of what theological education at Morpeth should be like, seeking always to link it more closely with issues of the world of the day and in a scholarly and critical way. Engagement with the local community and the publication of the journal, *The Morpeth Review*, assisted Burgmann's plans, but much of the venture ceased when he left to become Bishop of Goulburn. In *The Morpeth Review*, Burgmann had the chance to express some of his thinking, arguing against what he called 'the party man':

He best serves the whole who becomes most completely personal, and his personality grows in the range and quality of his love. It is in love that life becomes fully personal

and conscious ... the purely party man as a rule becomes an unlovely figure and hardens and narrows with age. When we set a limit to our love we have made a cabin for death in our souls. (Burgmann, cited in Hempenstall, 1993, p. 117)

Herein is a statement of theological intention and critical interest that attempts to move past the hermeneutic of partisanship and embrace a more critical vision of life in an attempt to 'recapture a creative religion, grounded in the spirit of the radical Christ' (Hempenstall, 1993, p. 133). All this was most clearly summed up in Burgmann's vision for St John's College as an Anglican think-tank, where research and postgraduate study would be carried out and where renowned scholars would visit. Burgmann's vision of theological education, embracing a critical intention, stood in stark contrast to the vision that underpinned most theological institutions of the day, firmly wedded as they were to a partisan hermeneutic interest of Anglicanism. Burgmann's vision of theological education was that it could address contemporary issues in society and even spark change (Hempenstall, 1993, p. 135), rather than merely maintain the *status quo*.

Following Burgmann's departure for Goulburn in 1934, the Morpeth mind began to disintegrate. Burgmann's successor, The Rev'd T.M. Robinson, was a conservative English Anglo-Catholic who returned theological education to the prevailing hermeneutic interest of the Anglican catholic heritage – 'the final triumph of Burgmann's ... opposition group?' (Hempenstall, 1993, p. 153). Burgmann's vision had to await the establishment of St Mark's Library in Canberra in 1957, begun with the specific vision of providing a place of theological scholarship in Australia, so fulfilling his vision 'to engage the people of God with Australian society' (St Mark's National Theological Centre, 2009). Burgmann's vision in placing St Mark's Library in Canberra was bold and intentional, proposing a place where theological specialists would generate research to sustain the life of the church and link Theology with the intellectual life of the nation (Treloar, 2007, p. 45). This vision, originally church-based, sectarian and outside the public sphere, has developed into a much broader and scholarly entity called St Mark's National Theological Centre, Anglican in foundation but ecumenical in ethos (St Mark's National Theological Centre, 2009), linked from 1995 with CSU as a School of Theology. The CSU School of Theology aims to express a critical intention for theological education by providing a place for high quality undergraduate and postgraduate study and rigorous research in Theology, while being committed to fostering a scholarly theological community that engages with contemporary society (CSU, 2009).

Conclusion: the 'Newcastle Model' takes Theology home

As suggested, much of Burgmann's vision for St John's College, Morpeth, was advanced when it was linked with CSU's School of Theology in 1997. More recently, this has been further strengthened with theological education now incorporated into the mainstream operations of the University of Newcastle, comprising the heart of what herein is described as the 'Newcastle Model'. The Anglican Diocese of Newcastle has actively supported, including in funding terms, the establishment of Theology as a regular discipline at the University, with the first enrolments into a Bachelor of Theology in the School of Humanities and Social Science in 2007 and the establishment of the Foundation Morpeth Chair of Theology in 2008. With these developments, including the appointment of Professor John McDowell from the University of Edinburgh as the

Foundation Chair, a significant shift in theological education in the Anglican Church of Australia has been further defined. This new definition constitutes an example of the abandonment of the peculiar form that theological education took in Australia from its earliest days, namely, being under the exclusive control of diocesan and partisan theological interests, to being controlled in the way of society's other important knowledge pursuits, namely, in the more critical and public domain of a public university (University of Newcastle, 2009c).

The Newcastle Model encapsulates the notion that Theology, like all knowledge pursuits, belongs firstly to the world rather than to partisan interest groups. It also endorses the appropriateness of a separation between the educational and training functions of Theology in a way that is common to most professional education as it functions in universities. Just as the academic components of Law, Teaching and Medicine are supported and supplemented by practical induction components monitored by the profession in question, so it is with Theology if a student wishes to use it for the purposes of ministry training. In this case, the student will undergo a separate program of training in the practicalities of ministry, organized and run by the diocese in question. Just as many who study Law at University use it for all sorts of educational purposes other than for professional practice, so it is with Theology. Indeed, the vast majority of those studying Theology at Newcastle are not in ministry training. Thus is Theology freed from the necessary burden of ministry training *per se* and so empowered to become what it was at the birth of higher education, namely a public academic pursuit.

Only as a public discipline alongside others can Theology be preserved as a respectable academic pursuit, open to the critical gaze of scholarly rigour and critique, where claims can be sifted and tested in the way of all knowledge claims. Only in this way can Theology function as a knowledge pursuit that helps to lift people's sights away from their partisan interests towards solving some of the wracking theological problems that beset humanity. Theology is too noble a pursuit, with too much potential to address and solve contemporary life-threatening problems, to allow it to function merely to justify the institutional claims of particular forms of religion. The extent to which it can function in the public university as a regular academic pursuit will determine the extent to which it can play its noble role and function in the interests of the entire world community. This article claims that Theology is steadily moving in this direction in Australia, with a particularly potent expression represented by the 'Newcastle Model'.

References

- Adelaide College of Divinity. (2009). *About ACD*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://www.acd.edu.au/campus/about.php>
- Anglican Diocese of Newcastle. (2002). *Anglican encounter*. Newcastle, NSW: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.
- Australian College of Theology. (2009). *Affiliated colleges*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://acttheology.edu.au/colleges.php>
- Breward, I. (1997). Historical perspectives on theological education in Australia. In G. Treloar (Ed.), *The furtherance of religious beliefs: Essays on the history of theological education in Australia* (pp. 8–23). North Ryde, NSW: Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity.
- Burgmann, E. (1993). The Morpeth Review. In P. Hemptenstall (Ed.), *The meddlesome priest: A life of Ernest Burgmann*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Charles Sturt University. (2009). *School of theology: About the school*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/theology>

- Davis, R. (1966a). The Anglican achievement. In R. Davis (Ed.), *The Morpeth papers: A collection of papers read at the Bishop of Newcastle's Conference on Theological Education held at St John's College, Morpeth, NSW, February 14–17, 1966* (pp. 48–52). Newcastle, Australia: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.
- Davis, R. (1966b). *The Morpeth papers: A collection of papers read at the Bishop of Newcastle's Conference on Theological Education held at St John's College, Morpeth, NSW, February 14–17, 1966*. Newcastle, Australia: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.
- Flinders University. (2009). *School of theology: General information*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/theology/information>
- Ginnane, W. (1966). Theology in the university. In R. Davis (Ed.), *The Morpeth papers: A collection of papers read at the Bishop of Newcastle's Conference on Theological Education held at St John's College, Morpeth, NSW, February 14–17, 1966* (pp. 19–27). Newcastle, Australia: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.
- Hempenstall, P. (1993). *The meddlesome priest: A life of Ernest Burgmann*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Housden, J. (1966). Foreword. In R. Davis (Ed.), *The Morpeth papers: A collection of papers read at the Bishop of Newcastle's Conference on Theological Education held at St John's College, Morpeth, NSW, February 14–17, 1966*. Newcastle, Australia: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.
- Martin, L.H. (1964). *Tertiary education in Australia: Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission* (2 volumes). Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Melbourne College of Divinity. (2009). *Institutional relationships*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from http://www.mcd.edu.au/ab_summary.html
- Moore College. (2009a). *Graduate attributes*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://www.moore.edu.au/mission>
- Moore College. (2009b). *Moore College faculty*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://www.moore.edu.au/faculty>
- Moore College. (2009c). *Postgraduate @ Moore*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://postgrad.moore.edu.au>
- Moore College Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Moore theological college*. Retrieved January 23, 2009, from <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/Main/CoursesAndProviders/ProvidersAndCourses/HigherEducationProviders/NSW/MooreTheologicalCollege.htm>
- Murdoch University. (2009a). *Perth college of divinity Inc*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://www.ssh.murdoch.edu.au/theology/perth.html>
- Murdoch University. (2009b). *Theology – what it is and what it is not*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from http://www.ssh.murdoch.edu.au/theology/what_it_is.html
- Piggin, S. (1997). A history of theological education in Australia. In G. Treloar (Ed.), *The furtherance of religious beliefs: Essays on the history of theological education in Australia* (pp. 24–43). North Ryde, NSW: Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity.
- Ridley College. (2009a). *Values and theological identity: Theological heritage*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from http://www.ridley.edu.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=33
- Ridley College. (2009b). *Board/governance*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from http://www.ridley.edu.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=44
- Roberts-Thomson, E. (1965). Theological education in Australia: The Martin Report. *Journal of Christian Education*, VIII(2), 104–110.
- Sharwood, R.L. (1966). Theology and tertiary education in Australia. In R. Davis (Ed.), *The Morpeth papers: A collection of papers read at the Bishop of Newcastle's Conference on Theological Education held at St John's College, Morpeth, NSW, February 14–17, 1966* (pp. 31–11). Newcastle, Australia: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.
- St John's College Morpeth. (1995). *Ministry centre handbook*. Morpeth: St John's College Ministry Centre.
- St Mark's National Theological Centre. (2009). *Welcome to St Mark's!* Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://www.stmarksntc.org.au>
- Treloar, G. (1997). Introduction. In G. Treloar (Ed.), *The furtherance of religious beliefs: Essays on the history of theological education in Australia* (pp. 4–7). North Ryde, NSW:

- Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity.
- Treloar, G. (2007). Burgie's magnificent obsession. In T. Frame (Ed.), *St Mark's turns 50: Theological education on Rottenbury Hill 1957–2007* (pp. 45–53). Barton, ACT: The Council St Mark's National Theological Centre.
- Trinity College. (2009a). *Home page*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au>
- Trinity College. (2009b). *College governance*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/about/governance>
- Trinity College. (2009c). *About the theological school*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from http://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/theological_school/about
- Trinity College. (2009d). *Trinity College*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from http://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/theological_school
- Tulip, J.G. (1966). Theological and tertiary education in Australia. In R. Davis (Ed.), *The Morpeth 0apers: A collection of papers read at the Bishop of Newcastle's Conference on Theological Education held at St John's College, Morpeth, NSW, February 14–17, 1966* (pp. 28–32). Newcastle, Australia: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.
- United Faculty of Theology. (2009). *Home page*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.uft.unimelb.edu.au>
- University of Newcastle. (2009a). *Program handbook, Faculty of Education and Arts, Bachelor of Theology*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/program/11703.html>
- University of Newcastle. (2009b). *Agreement confirms funding for Theology Chair*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/news/2008/12/agreementconfirms-fundingfor.html>
- University of Newcastle. (2009c). *Foundation Chair of Theology announced*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/news/2008/09/foundationchairof-theologyannounced.html>