



# History & Philosophy In Queensland

Dr Neville Buch

## FULLER VIEW FOR TELLING THE STORY OF AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL HISTORY

By Dr Neville Buch, MPHA (Qld), EHA, AHA.

To start, allow me to paint a small story of my recent sojourn to the United States. It was the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, on a cool but sunny morning. I was preparing in the hotel lounge, Palihotel Westwood Village, for the afternoon with the Dean for the School of Theology and Mission at Fuller, Dr. Amos Yong, and Dr. Kirsten Kim, the Paul E. Pierson Chair in World Christianity and Associate Dean of the Center for Missiological Research.

*[After the title slide, on each slide of the first (main) slideshow -- manually click -- is an auto image slideshow. Allow each five secondary slideshows to play on auto as desired, and click out to the first (main) slideshow by back-click to "End Slideshow"). Proceed to each slide as the first (main) slideshow as desired.]*



### FULLER VIEW FOR TELLING THE STORY OF AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL HISTORY

"During the 1940s, Fuller Seminary joined Westminster as a professional school dedicated not only to the preparation of ministers but also to the prosecution of research."

Mark A. Noll (1994). *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company page 219.

"...if this school is to be, it should be the best of its kind in the world. It should stand out first, as being absolutely true to the fundamentals of the faith and second, as a school of high scholarship...particularly the study of the atoning work of Christ."

Charles Fuller writing to Wilbur Smith in 1946, cited in Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe (2012). *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, page 191.



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**Slide 1.**

## Images 1. The Fuller Story

**The Australian Culture**



**The American Culture**

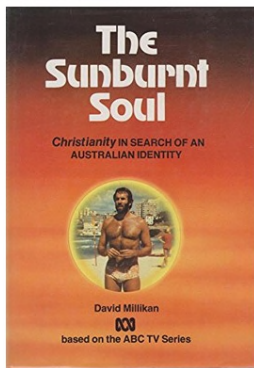
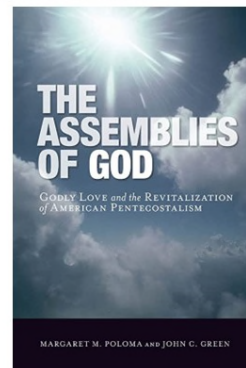


The journey from Westwood to Pasadena gave me sufficient time. In the hour-long drive there, to look around. I walked around and through the famous City Hall and had lunch at the California Pizza Kitchen. The journey along the San Diego and Ventura freeways blew my mind in the landscapes which seem to swallow you up. The wide roads and freeways provide the sense of space, as well as the flatness; and yet there are so many twist and turns through the hills while remaining at the same height. Much concrete and steel, and yet the many, many, palm trees and the hills, seem to give life to the urban machine. Freeways appear like a mass of arteries. And there is much clogging, as well as the racing heart.

My uber driver, the darker-skinned George, gave me a glorious tour which for him was a charge into the normal scene. And I guess it is the stranger who is taken by the unfamiliar, and understand the freedom of foreign travel. After lunch and before the Fuller meeting, I walked up to the place where 30 years ago, Ruth and I stared at the San Gabriel mountains. It is a gigantic presence pressing against the Pasadena landscape on the Foothills Freeway. Unfortunately, my photographs do not do the visual sensation the justice it deserves. You have to be here to see it. Fuller has always welcomed me, and since the last time that I sojourned to the halls of learning in Pasadena thirty years ago.

**Slide 2.**

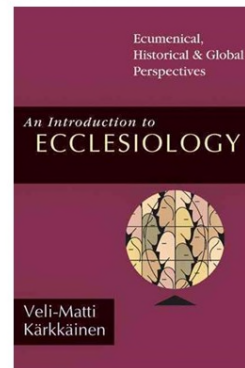
## Images 2. The Literature

**The Australian Culture****The American Culture**

Nothing clearly prepared me for my discussion Drs. Yong and Kim that day than a few recent publications on race and evangelicalism, most formatively Jesse Curtis's *The Myth of Colorblind Christians: Evangelicals and White Supremacy in the Civil Rights Era*. Still, I was almost thrown off my chair in the Dean's conference room when Dr. Yong spoke of "white backlash" among the American evangelical congregations, and whose parents were reluctant to send their children to Fuller. It is obvious that the situation is delicate in Pasadena. Fuller was concerned there were the declining enrolments, and general discussion puts a primary reason down, not to the exploration of political theologies which Yong had published from the 2009 Cadbury Lectures, but from Yong's prioritisation to Asian-American thinking, beginning with the launching of the Korean Studies program with courses offered in the Korean language, in 1992. Something significant had changed at Fuller and it impacted in the Fuller View of Australian Evangelical History. Things had changed since my last visit to Pasadena in December 1991 and January 1992. I had been researching across the whole length of the United States for my Buch's ART thesis, published as the doctorate in 1995. ART stands for the American Revivalist Tradition. I recall in those cooler evenings of January 1992, Ruth and I fellowshiping with the Australian Sociologist, Robert Banks and his first wife, Julie. Both Ruth and Julie were to pass with a brain tumour.

**Slide 3.**

## Images 3. Banks and Oz Theology

**The Australian Culture****The American Culture**

At the time, Robert Banks represented at Fuller the very opposite of Americanised Church Growth thinking. In the late 1980s and early 1990s Banks led an Australian ex-pat group of Fuller students at Pasadena. Of all evangelicals in Australia of his generation, Banks enjoyed the most stimulating career. Banks was a graduate of Moore Theological College, and he completed a Master of Theology at King's College in the University of London and a Ph.D. in New Testament on Jesus' attitude to the Law at Clare College Cambridge University. In 1969, he was appointed as a Research Fellow in the History of Ideas Unit at the Australian National University, and in 1974 he became Senior Lecturer in Ancient History at Macquarie University, Sydney. From his ideas of ancient Christian community, he created and led home-based congregations in several Australian cities. In 1989 he was invited to become Foundation Professor in The Ministry of the Laity at Fuller where he introduced a Master of Arts in Christian Leadership for lay people and a Doctorate in Practical Theology. In early 1999 he returned to Australia, and subsequently became the first Director and Dean of the Christian Studies Institute at Macquarie University.

In the early 1980s Banks had been part of the short lived 'gum-leaf' theology which crystalised around David Millikan's *The Sunburnt Soul: Christianity in search of an Australian identity*, which was a 1981 ABC-TV series as well as a coffee-table book for a broad audience. Banks' home-based churches was given a space at Fuller as advocacy for the Australian innovation in the School of Theology, which contrasted sharply with the Church Growth model of McGavran and his Fuller teachers. There were other examples of the alleged 'Australianist' innovation: Charles Ringma's counter-culture Teen Challenge Inc., Athol Gill's House of Freedom, and the House of the Gentle Bunyip, John Hirst's House of the New World, and David Andrew's Waiters Union. It is difficult to argue what the Australian characteristics were. In many cases, American

patterns of innovations were involved. Nevertheless, the characteristics of Bank's, Ringma's, Gill's, and Andrew's, counter-culture, muted any clear American characteristics for the Australian scene. Nationalistic analysis is a mistake if it parks the thinking too conveniently.



*Figure 1: Slide 1F. 2023-01-31 With my uber driver, George, outside Fuller T.S.*



**Slide 4.**

## Images 4. Yong and Korean Theology

**The Australian Culture? No!**



**The American Culture? Maybe? Maybe Not?**



Amos Yong. Source: Fuller Seminary

What my Fuller paper offers today is a contemporaneous history. Although Amos Yong himself, does not fully align with the Buch 1995 ART thesis, but there is sufficient alignment in the relationship on cultural Americanisation and Yong's concerns on the Evangelical meltdown over ethnicity, race, and politics. The ideological work of Yong is extraordinary and I fear is underread in the pews.

Before Hillsong, there were the Church Growth movements in Australia from Reginald Klimionok's Assemblies of God movement and the movement of Trevor Chandler's Christian Life Centre and Clark Taylor's Christian Outreach Centre. These were developed in the Queensland, but in the latter case of Chandler and Clark there was a passage of the Latter Rain movement, originating in the United States and transferring to New Zealand before arriving in Australia. Frank and Brian Houston's Hillsong movement arose both from American connections and the legacy of the Australian movements. All were based in Americanised Church Growth theoretical development of the 'Neo-Pentecost Megachurch'. Klimionok provided the clearest example of the Church Growth theory and practice. There is a popular misunderstanding of Klimionok connections with the Korean Paul Yonggi Cho. Sociologically, Paul Yonggi Cho presented a mixture of American and Korean worldviews, American materialism and Korean Taoism, held in total contradiction, or paradox logic yet to be demonstrated. The attempt to water-down the ART thesis in defence of the Australian Megachurch model, as separate to its American legacy, "does not hold water."

The criticism of the ART criticism – criticism to the false legitimization in the actual belief and practice – is that it is the historiography which cannot deal with the idea of change in key

doctrines. Religion paradigms always trip up in orthodoxy. ART is a ridiculous ideology in its poor attempt to revive a sociology which has been passed over and will not return.

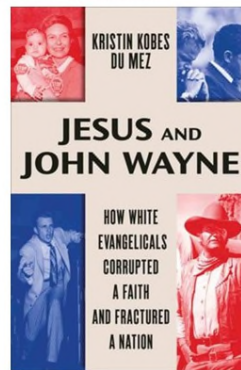
For us Australians, in this ART problem, the solution is a Fuller View for telling our stories, but must be balanced in the critical filters of local, region, national, and global outlooks.



*Figure 2: Slide 1A. 1991-12-31 Ruth at Koinonia Apartment, Fuller T.S.*

**Slide 5.**

## Images 5. The Challenge to Evangelical Crowd Thinking The Better Models for Evangelical Engagement

**The Australian Culture?****The American Culture**

I will concluded by how the Fuller education and view could stand in relation to educational and sociological models for Australian institutions and local pastors.

First, the only Australian distinctiveness has been David Millikan's gum-leaf theology 1980-1987, and it suspiciously had looked like an Australian version of ART. The difference was that the American model anchored in a return to the Puritan heritage, the original sociological vision on the later waves of revivalism which kept reshaping the national mythology in different directions. Australian history never had that Puritan beginning.

Secondly, globally the cultural studies field has been sloppy and expressing too-many shifts in the articulation for the exact nature of *transformations* expected *inter-cultural*. The criticism goes to the School of World Mission – which became the School of Intercultural Studies in the year 2003. From a contemporary theological perspective, revivalistic expectations for any culture was not the transformation desired in proper theology. In this analysis, political theology came to the fore.

Thirdly, in the new century, the neo-conservative intelligentsia – whose cultural analysis had driven the rightist political movements – became more open on the topic of political theology. Yong was astute enough to map the spectrum of political theology and discussed elements which would assist the future of Pentecostalism and Evangelical theology as a whole. It was correctly abstract, open, and comprehensive for evangelical pastors and congregants. The problem lies in both *receptive* accusations of "Woke Ideology", and the Evangelical centralist



attempt to moderate Pat Robertson's Moral Majority and Dominion Theology-Reconstructionism, and so forth, only gave life to the nonsense; and today we have Trumpism.

At the larger scoping of global politics, Fuller in Australia is not a matter of global convergence but a matter of cultural Americanisation which remains largely undigested in evangelical church life. The ART gets alleged legitimatisation in congregational life with an argument that such beliefs and practices have motivations in basic evangelical education. Critical sociology and historiography, however, demonstrate the false justifications that come with the references of David Bebbington's quadrilateral definition *without the knowledge of political theology*. This is why a Fuller View is important.

Thank you.



Figure 3: Slide 1D. 2023-01-31 Neville in Front of Fuller T.S.