Charles Strong and the Australian Church: Radical Hope for a New Nation. Charles Strong's Radical Hope in Northeastern Australia (Queensland)

by Neville Buch, MPHA (Qld) and AASR

Slide 01

I acknowledge the land I am on as Turrbul, Yagurra, and Meanjin, and pay my respects to elders' past, present, and emerging.

In two parts to the paper of two presentations, first I will speak to the legacy of Charles Strong in Queensland beyond 1917, presenting the conceptual schemas of social liberalism and radicalism. Tomorrow, I will do the same with conceptual schemas of social conservatism, and orthodox conservatism. I hope to demonstrate historical change as something very real for the believer's own worldviews.

Outline

- Introduction
 - Faith Archetypes Brisbane 1921-2021
- The historical paradigmatic shifts for faith and belief education (From1921 and into legacy)
 - Conceptual Schemas
 - Institutional Responses
 - Curriculum Framing
- The shifts as the educationalist theories and practice in the government and society (1945-1989)
 - Conceptual Schemas
 - Institutional Responses
 - Curriculum Framing
- Religion, Secularity, and Curriculum (Concluding Remarks)
 - Apologetic Perception and Teaching-Learning
 - Popular Perception

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The focus here is the Faith Archetypes in Brisbane, the locus of decision making in Queensland, from 1921 to 2021. I will be speaking, first to in the historical paradigmatic shifts for faith and belief education. What I mean by education includes the informal functions of popular culture: newspapers, magazines, radio, cinema, television, and social media. Secondly the educationalist theories and practice in the government and society will be considered in these same broad terms.

There are three groupings of the Conceptual Schemas, the Institutional Responses, and finally the Curriculum Framing.

THE HISTORICAL PARADIGMATIC SHIFTS FOR FAITH AND BELIEF EDUCATION

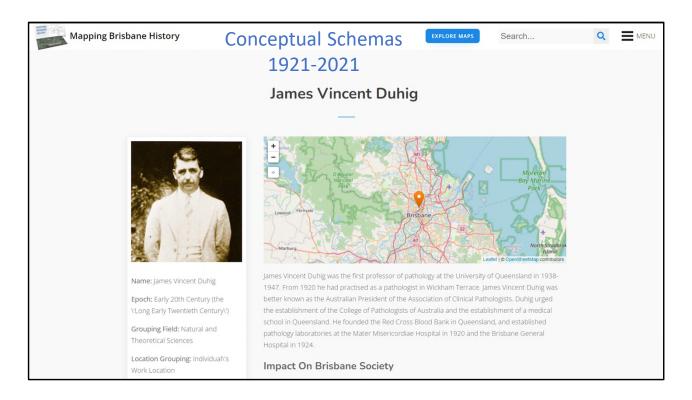
1921-2021

Slide 03

The purpose of the larger paper is to show that the cultural-history war is manipulated by political narratives. It is driven by fear and by apologetic assumptions not needed. Apologetics keeps missing the critical points.

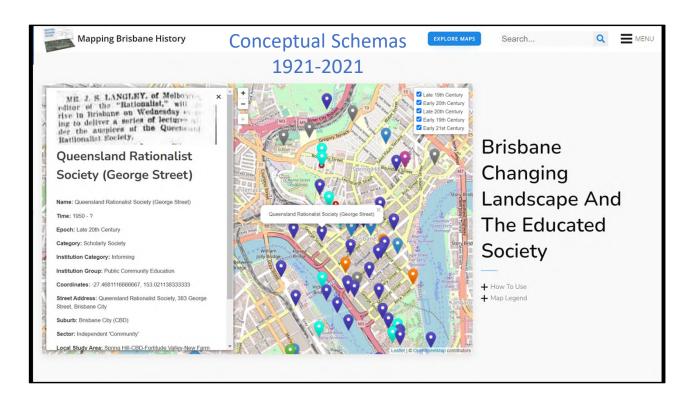
The philosophy I am working with is Compatibilism. The main argument of the paper is that what is missing is the histories in religion and secularity overlaps in common thinking. Hard categories collapse inside personal lives.

The Compatibilist argument challenges the Orthodox Christianity thinking and its illogical distain for what it calls 'heresy.'

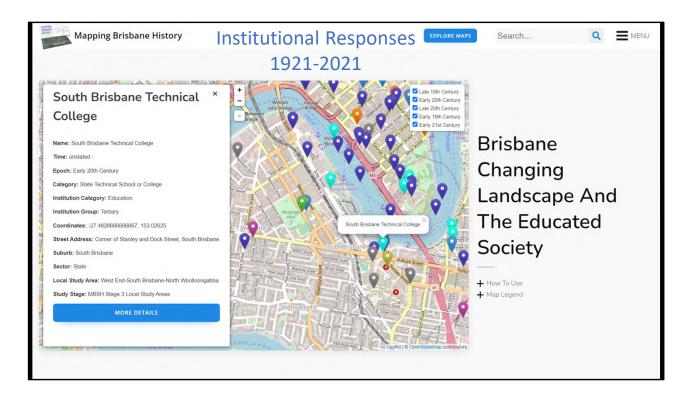


The broad-church narrative suits conservative evangelical thinking when pluralism is required for accommodation, but when orthodoxy is required, the broad-church thinking is dropped or buried. Here the social thinking is focused in either Catholic or Protestant thought. The other religious paradigms are significantly marginalised until after 1989.

Protestant Dissent Christian Thought did not take a bigger sway of the Queensland population until the latter half of the century. The dominant outlook was Catholic Thought or skepticism, and many times a combination of thinking from such schemas. Professor James Vincent Duhig is a wonderful archetype in this regard.

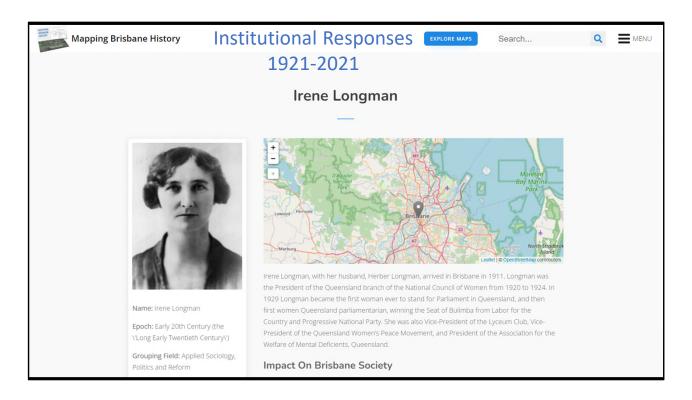


Professor Duhig was the nephew of the Catholic Archbishop, and first professor of pathology at the University of Queensland, and later, the Australian President of the Association of Clinical Pathologists. Significantly, he was the President and Patron of the Queensland Rationalist Society. Duhig, the nephew, had extraordinary impact as an advocate for a society free of religious authority, and do so through his secular activities, such as the arts and social reform. He was the reversing mirror to Archbishop Duhig.



Technical Education becomes the dominant way of thinking in Queensland during the early twentieth century. There are different intellectual influences. The rejection of abstract Idealism with the slaughter of World War I, and the influence of the American school of Pragmaticism on the rise.

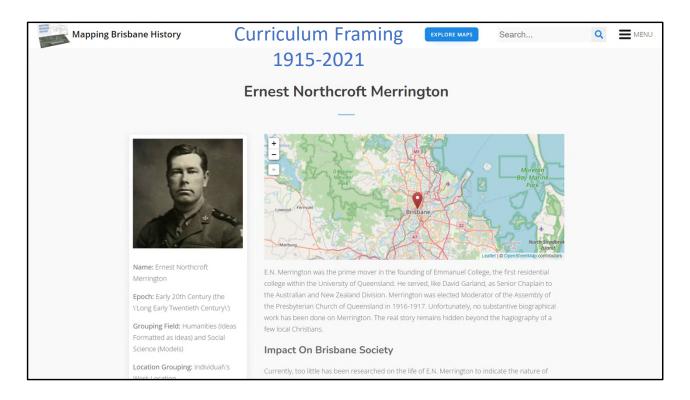
That Christian establishment thinking was quite nuanced, and skepticism was greatly accommodated in the declared orthodoxy.



Mrs Irene Maud Longman, MP, the first woman ever to stand for Parliament in Queensland, and then first women Queensland parliamentarian, winning the Seat of Bulimba from Labor for the Country and Progressive National Party.

Longman was the President of the Queensland branch of the National Council of Women from 1920 to 1924, and also being the Vice-President of the Lyceum Club, Vice-President of the Queensland Women's Peace Movement, and President of the Association for the Welfare of Mental Deficients, Queensland. The feminist Irene Longman was a key worker in the Modernist Social Work Education for Queensland.

Irene with her husband, Herber Longman, were leaders in the Queensland Rationalist movement. Their type of rationalism would today be better described as humanism.

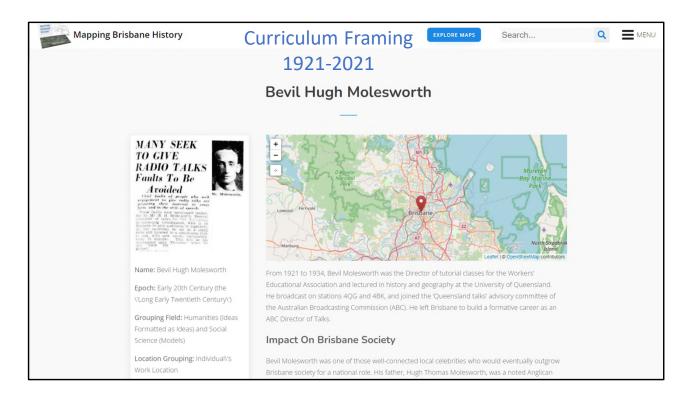


In the history of Queensland education, you find vastly different characterisation. I will speak about the Biblicist Canon David Garland in the next presentation, but the Reverend Doctor Ernest Northcroft Merrington is completely different personality.

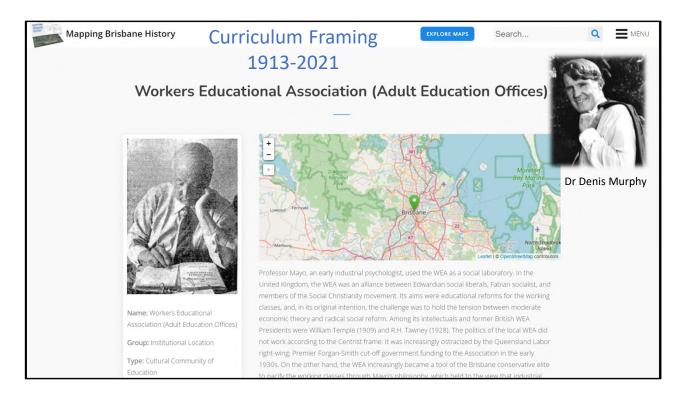
Yet, as World War I Senior Chaplains the characters of Merrington and Garland were very similar.

A medallist graduate of Sydney University, a prizeman at the Edinburgh University, and with his doctorate from the University of Harvard, much of the reading of Merrington is buried by the Christian hagiography.

Merrington as the minister of the City's St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church introduced a Post-Idealist Christian Modernist Education. Merrington was the prime mover in the founding of Emmanuel College, the first residential college and theological centre for the Presbyterians.



Mr. Bevil Hugh Molesworth is a Queensland archetype of the religious and secular cognitive mixing in the early twentieth century. His father, Hugh Thomas Molesworth, was a noted Anglican cleric in the Thompson Estate. Maud ('Mall') Margaret Molesworth, his wife, was the Australasian women's singles tennis champion. Molesworth was the original prime movers in Queensland Adult and Community Education, as the Director of tutorial classes for the Workers' Educational Association.



Molesworth struggled to keep the Workers' Educational Association going, facing off the hostility of both the militant faction in Queensland Labor and the conservative elitist attitudes within the University of Queensland

Those forces would eventually kill off the intellectual adult education program, transformed in the invested interests of the technical colleges. Later the extension programs from the University would attempt a return to a fuller education.

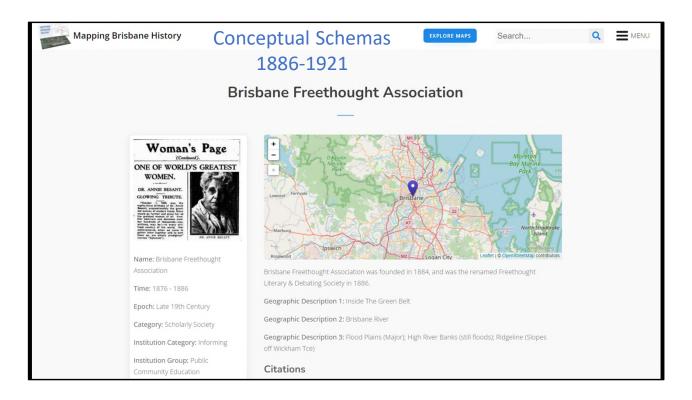
By that time the national broadcaster was moving into the role. Molesworth broadcast on stations 4QG and 4BK and joined the 'Queensland talks' advisory committee of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC).

THE SHIFTS AS THE EDUCATIONALIST THEORIES AND PRACTICE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

1945-2021

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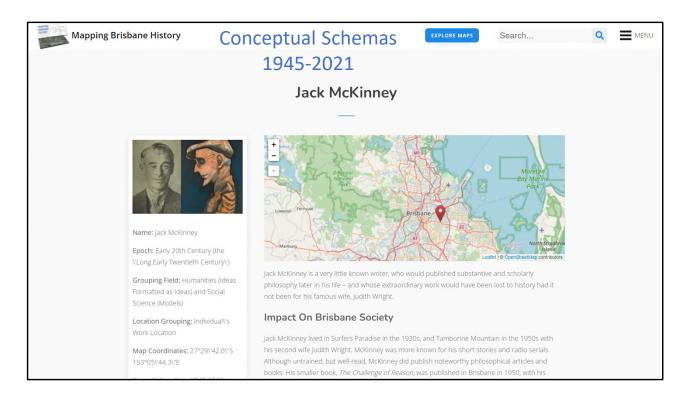
I am now going to speak on the thinking of Queensland Christian leaders who are not normally seen as educators, and the way conceptual schemas and the institutional responses were embedded in educationalist theories and practice in the government and society.



The erroneous perception of the apologists is that the Freethought movement was anti-religious or anti-Christian. The Spiritualist Freethinker Thomas Walker found the Australasian Secular Association, but the argument was about authority in the broader society. The doctrine of freethought was that members of any institutions are not bounded to any dogma.

There is in the Evangelical Left or Reformed counterculture the strands of Freethought.

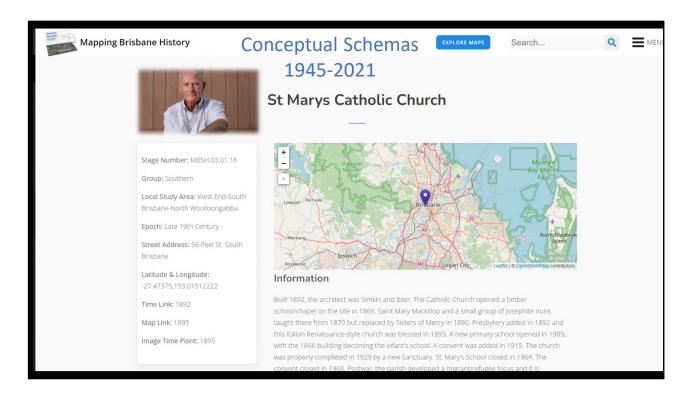
In the early and mid-twentieth century the non-doctrinaire Freethought was fast becoming the social convention, despite of the popular efforts of the apologists, such as the traditional Catholic G. K. Chesterton and Evangelical Anglican C. S. Lewis.



Mr. Jack Philip McKinney is a good archetype of the social, spiritual, freethought attitude. His extraordinary work would have been lost to history had it not been for his famous wife, Judith Wright. Indeed, in 1940 Brisbane, the Founder and Editor of Meanjin Quarterly, Clem Christensen and the romantic couple, Judith Wright and Jack McKinney, formed a freethought flow in literature of environmental spirituality for Australia.

Jack Smart, the distinguished Australian philosopher, and the father of the Australian materialist school, praised the larger McKinney book, called, 'The Structure of Modern Thought' as a 'fresh and original' presentation of the 'striking and important idea that knowledge is an interpersonal thing'.

McKinney out did the local philosophy of his time: from Michael Fletcher, Thomas Thatcher, and William Marquis Kyle. McKinney's wide literature, fiction and nonfiction, has a contemporary humanist quality.



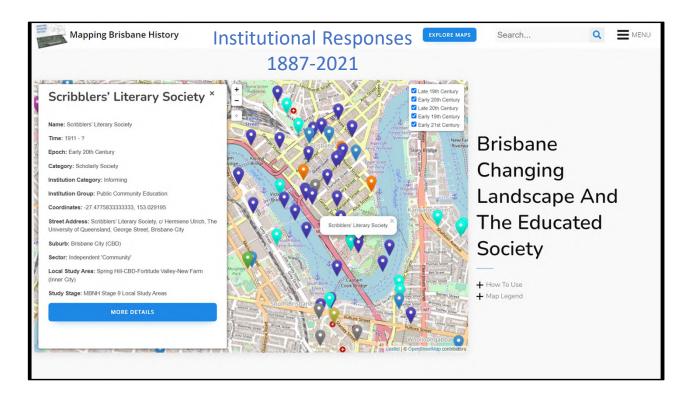
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You see the same humanist quality in the outlook of the shifting and allegedly-traditional Catholic Thought.

It is a long story but to jump into the contemporary history, Reverend Peter Kennedy is an advocate of Liberal-Left Catholic Education, and Christian Multiculturalism.

As the priest and administrator of St. Mary's Catholic Church, South Brisbane, he was removed following complaints that his parish was not observing standard Roman Catholic teachings and practices. His removal drew much media attention and the majority of his 700 parishioners left with him to continue holding services as "St Mary's Community in Exile."

The summary of the complaints from Archbishop John Bathersby illustrate how the apologists are out-of-step with younger Catholics who will be the next generation of leaders. Kennedy was accused of much that the average Catholic young believer takes as common sense or not worthy of polemics.



The earlier histories of literary and social progressivism are there to be unburied. There were literary persons often religious with Compatibilist worldviews.

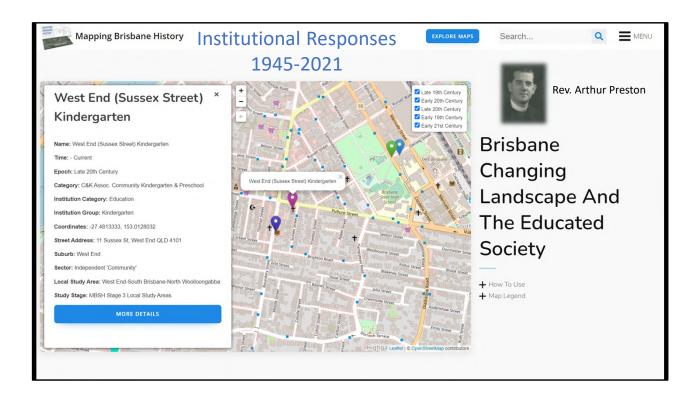
The Brisbane Literary Circle came out of the Brisbane Schools of Arts around 1887, and was led by Sir Samuel Griffith, the former Premier of Queensland, Reginald Heber Roe, the headmaster of Brisbane Grammar School, and Samuel Wood Brooks, the journalist of the Telegraph and the Brisbane Courier.

The Scribblers are a Brisbane writers' club founded in 1911-12. The club read original papers on any subject except religion and politics. Later, meetings became monthly and in 1986, the ban on religion and politics was lifted. Many of Brisbane's most prominent women have been Scribblers.



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Such philosophic "doctrine" is generally adopted in conventionally thinking Queensland. Meanjin's Clem Christensen's direct impact in Brisbane was limited, as he was among the first of the local intelligentsia to flee Queensland. Many bright minds would follow during the late twentieth century, exiled to the southern states during the periods of conservative parochialism from both Labor and the Country-Nationalist governments. Christensen's influence, nevertheless, carried on with his close Brisbane associates, such as Jack McKinney and Judith Wright.



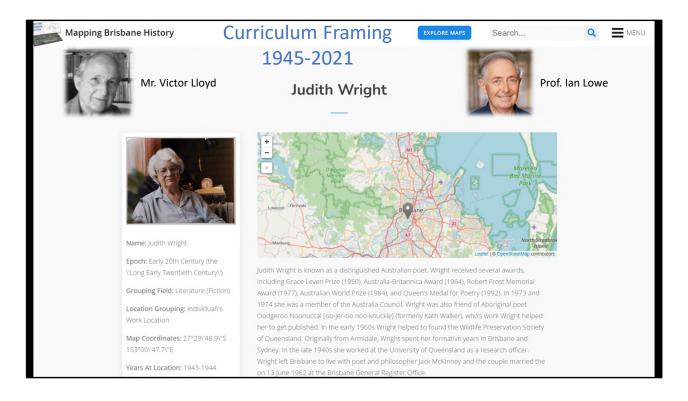
As argued in my doctorate, Baptist Union, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions were caught up a series of battles where the dynamo was the American Revivalist Tradition.

Christian Thought in the congregations and the streets was shifting and the hypoconservatives did not like it.

Reverent Arthur William Preston was the earlier variant of the Evangelical Left thinking which emerged in the early 1970s.

He founded the Blue Nursing Service in Brisbane in 1953 and set up the Lifeline telephone counselling service in both Adelaide (1963) and Melbourne (1971). From 1948 to 1962 he was Superintendent Minister at Brisbane's West End Methodist Mission. He was the State Director of Crusade for Christ (1949-52) and Mission to the Nation (1953-56).

Arthur's son was the Rev. Dr. Noel Preston, a Uniting Church minister, and probably the leading Australian counterculture ethicist of his time. The younger Preston had senior academic positions at Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University in applied and professional ethics. He was the President of the Australian Association of Professional Ethics (1995–97). In the post-1989 era, along with Professors John Wanda and Glyn Davis at Griffith, Preston was a regular public commentator on public sector ethics.



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In the spirit of Charles and Janet Strong, most Australians would be content to read the poetry of Judith Wright or Professor Ian Lowe's The Lucky Country: Reinventing Australia (2016 UQP).

The archetype is Mr. Victor Lloyd, the first President of the Humanist Society of Queensland. Lloyd contributed the chapter on "Rationalism and Humanism" to the bicentennial project 'Many Faiths, One Nation', edited by Dr Ian Gillman, recognising both religious and secular humanism.

Lloyd's work was opposed to the religious positioning of the time, but that humanist polices have become the religious mainstream. Today, Humanist Australia declares that the organisation is neither anti-religious nor pro-religious.

Although social media rages, the flesh and blood world continue with a great distain for the cultural-history wars. The polemic debates ultimately gained a poor reputation. Only the politically invested want the war to continue, but the lesson of the history is that world of Joseph Raymond McCarthy, and the like, are not remember well. Marion, Patricia, and I are arguing that it is the legacy of Charles Strong that is admired and for good reasons



The paper should have shown how the normative categories of religion and secularity has collapsed.

Apologetic Perception misses most of the points to be made, and there is some evidence that is finally understood. Today, I have heard Evangelical apologists renounce persuasion tactics for ennobling listening strategies.

In the end we need to challenge our own perceptions and cognitive or conceptual categories.

Thank you.