

PART III

A Philosophical Critique of Biblically-based Christian Education (BCE) as an educational model in pluralist liberal democracies

CHAPTER FOUR:

Critique of the BCE Model

I. Introduction

In Part I it was argued that Australia is a pluralist liberal democracy in both principle and in many areas associated with formalised education. Having established this, it was then argued there are certain criteria by which the orientation of an educational model could be deemed valid for a pluralist liberal democracy. The ideas that were deemed necessary to satisfy these demands included investigation of one's personal world view, respect for alternative world view positions, both religious and non-religious, respect for the public nature of political institutions and the role of the state, awareness of and involvement in the democratic institutions and practices of the liberal democratic state. However, another of the key ideas that developed out of this section was the argument for the rights of parents to provide a religious upbringing for their children so long as it did not restrict the extent to which children would be adequately prepared to participate fully in pluralist liberal democratic society.

It would seem on the basis of arguments put forward in support of parental rights to provide a religious upbringing for children (see Part I, Chapter 2) that the BCE model has some validity; that is, because of the philosophical commitment to freedom of religious expression within pluralist liberal democracies coupled with the necessity for parents to provide a stable and coherent primary culture for their children, it is quite philosophically tenable that a religious upbringing such as that described in

the BCE model will serve as a valid primary culture. However, it was also noted that in order to be considered valid within the context of a pluralist liberal democracy, such an upbringing must not limit the extent to which it is possible for children to develop critical self-reflection and respect for those of alternative world views. When considered in this light, it is clear a number of fundamental philosophical problems exist for the BCE model.

The following analysis identifies six particular problems with the BCE model and its orientation. Once identified, each problem is related to the criteria outlined in Chapter 1 to determine the extent to which the criteria can be satisfied. Where the criteria are not satisfied, brief suggestions will be made as to how the model might be modified in light of these criticisms; an alternative orientation to the model that seeks to address these criticisms is then developed in Chapter 5.

II. Philosophical issues

There are three main philosophical criticisms to be made, each related to the other. Firstly, there is the question of the epistemic foundation of the BCE religious truth claim. Here it is found that claims to knowledge are founded on the revelation of God through the Bible. As shown in the description of the BCE model in Part II, it is assumed by the BCE writers that the Bible is reliable and valid as the source of all truth. However, it is not at all clear in the BCE writings *how* God actually *communicates* through the Bible and therefore how students might come to understand how God communicates; it would seem appropriate, then, to begin with discussion of revelation as an epistemic foundation for the BCE world view. Secondly, as Wolterstorff (1995) argues, the concept of revelation is preliminary to the more important concept (at least for the Christian) of divine discourse, or *what* God communicates. Because of the centrality of the BCE faith aim, it seems critical to consider not only how but what God communicates as well

as the process by which students can come to understand this communication. Thirdly, if God has spoken through the Bible (and it is a fundamental faith position of those who support BCE that God *has* spoken) and we assume that such a communication can be understood, then there must be consideration of the philosophical status accorded that communication. For supporters of BCE, the issue of “truth” is central to their model, yet it appears there are great problems associated with the notion of truth in the context of a postmodern pluralist society. It is therefore important to give consideration to the philosophical status of BCE truth claims. In doing so, it is important to consider how these claims impact upon the students’ capacity to understand and tolerate other world views. Implicit in such a discussion is the question of how students in the BCE school would relate to those without the BCE concept of “truth”.

Before addressing the details of the critical analysis, it is important to note that it is not the intention of this critique (nor is it possible in the limited space available) to consider presuppositional questions as to the existence of God. Given the nature of the subject material under discussion, it must be assumed for the purpose of discussion that God exists; consideration of the existence of God is a completely different (but not totally unrelated) philosophical issue. It has already been argued that recognition of various alternative world view positions is an important element within the context of a pluralist liberal democratic society (see Part I, Chapter 1, Section IV) and this includes non-religious world views. However, it is necessary to accept the controversial assumption that God exists because of the centrality of this belief to the BCE model. This seems an appropriate position to take given that this analysis deals with questions concerning how students in a BCE school come to acquire and hold such beliefs and the impact those beliefs have on students’ capacity to critically investigate their own and alternative world views.

i. the epistemic foundation of the BCE religious truth claim

This issue relates to the criterion of critical investigation of a personal world view. The BCE model stands or falls on the strength of its claim that 'it is only when [education] is based on reverence for God and belief in the Bible as His inerrant *revelation* that man is able to know the truth' (Friskén 1993a, p.2, emphasis mine). That truth has been *revealed* in propositional form through the texts that have been collected and are organised in the Bible. The term *revelation* is used by most of the writers associated with the BCE model to refer to the Bible: Friskén (1993b, p.10) refers to it as 'inerrant, infallible and authoritative'; Edlin (1994, p.56) refers to the written revelation as having 'divine authority and divine reliability...written to point to Jesus Christ and to reveal God's complete offer of salvation'; Van Brummelen (1994, p.25) calls it 'God's inspired self disclosure'; Fowler (1990, p.17) argues that it is the 'normative authority' for determining how the Christian ought to live. The Bible therefore holds absolute authority concerning what counts as knowledge; as Friskén (1993a, p.1) forcefully argues, 'ultimately truth is not what man discovers but what God reveals. If man's search is wise and accurate, there will not be any discrepancies'. He further argues 'there can be no conflict between what is taught and what the Bible says' (1993b, p.10). If "knowledge" is thus founded on the revelation of the Bible, and if that revelation has such enormous authority, it is appropriate to consider what that revelation is and how it operates

The last two quotes from Friskén highlight two important interrelated issues concerning revelation and its epistemic role in the BCE model: firstly, the relationship between the human and divine messages, or, discourse (Wolterstorff 1995), and, secondly, the "truth" of the Bible. Both the above quotes from Friskén would seem to be in line with Wolterstorff's (1995, p.227) description of inerrantism whereby 'God so moved or guided the human

authors of the Bible that what they said is entirely without error'. Indeed, paragraph 5(a) of the CCSL Confession of Faith (1993) states as much:

We believe in the Divine inspiration the infallibility and supreme authority of the Old and New Testaments in their entirety and that the Holy Spirit so moved the writers that what they wrote are authoritative statements of truth.

It appears that the message of the writer is the message of God and thus understanding the revelation of God is simply a matter of taking the words of biblical texts as meaning exactly what they say.

Swinburne (1992) and Wolterstorff (1995) point out, however, this is not as simple as it at first seems. In fact, to do so defies basic rules of communication that we would otherwise hold for any other type of communication. Wolterstorff (1995, pp.209-211) uses the example of Psalm 93 to argue his point. In this Psalm, there is an obvious geocentric cosmology presented to the reader ("The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty;/the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength./He has established the world; it shall never be moved"). Wolterstorff rightly argues that the world is not literally unmoved; it rotates on its own axis, around the sun and, as part of the solar system, through space generally. The geocentric cosmology revealed in the text is understood to be that 'widely shared among the peoples of antiquity' (p.209). Here is one example where the truth of the text is at variance with what is now known to be the case. In ordinary communication, we would have no trouble in ascribing to the author some sense of being ill-informed regarding cosmology, but we would understand the point being made anyway; we would not invalidate the idea on account of its apparent error (Swinburne 1992, p.167). Wolterstorff argues this is one example where the human significance (or perhaps it could be called "error") of the text is overlooked and the divine significance is understood; it is understood that the psalmist was expressing praise to God for his steadfastness, not making a definitive statement concerning the cosmological position of the earth (the

role of hermeneutics in this process is discussed further below). Wolterstorff and Swinburne argue it is theologically and philosophically untenable to hold that the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible must rest on an assumption that each individual unit (i.e., word, verse, chapter, book) of the Bible is true. However, such a situation is implied in paragraph 5(a) of the CCSL Confession and the other examples included above.

Paradoxically, there is within the BCE writers evidence that the immediate and literal sense of many verses are not to be taken as such. Frisken (1993a, p.6) uses a saying of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew (5:29) where Jesus says it is 'better for a person to remove his hand, his foot or his eye' if it causes him to not stumble in his attempt to follow God. Frisken goes on to add that '*clearly*, Jesus is not talking about maiming children' (p.6, emphasis mine) without justifying why he thinks this is clearly the case. Perhaps he is writing on the assumption that Jesus would not wish such harm on his followers and thus uses exaggeration for dramatic effect or perhaps he assumes that Jesus was enunciating a principle rather than a specific command; either way, there is no sense in which Frisken takes this verse literally. Thus there is the recognition that, despite the strong sense of inerrancy and infallibility, all biblical statements do not hold equal weight. Some are seen as literal, others as metaphorical, whilst others are seen as 'guidelines and wisdom for answers to basic questions about the sort of world we live in and our role in it' (Van Brummelen 1994, p.25). The difficulty for the BCE model comes in determining which is which and on what basis such determination is made.

Because the biblical text is considered the ultimate normative authority, it therefore is the epistemic basis for biblically-based knowledge. However, as already noted, the way in which biblical statements are understood is problematic; it appears there is some degree of hermeneutic authority in addition to the text itself that determines what is to be taken

literally, figuratively, metaphorically or otherwise (this is dealt with in more detail below). Consequently, the basis of determining “truth” becomes problematic. How is it that truth is revealed in biblical texts? How is it that the reader is able to determine the “truth” of the biblical texts? How can we discern whether or not a particular text ought to be understood as a true biblical *principle* or *command* (and thus admitted as carrying with it the specific authority of God), or perhaps, as with Psalm 93, an example of the cultural and empirically limited view of the original author(s)? It cannot be that each constituent part of the Bible (i.e., word, verse, chapter, book) is considered true in and of itself; this has been argued by Swinburne (1992, Chap 10) and Wolterstorff (1995, Chap 11) to be untenable. Rather, as discussed above, it seems evident that some biblical texts must not be understood in a literal sense.

All this suggests that there exists a hierarchy of importance concerning biblical concepts. This hierarchy is predetermined by the world view of the BCE writers without the reasons behind such predetermination being made evident. For example, Frisken (1993a, p.1) writes that ‘an education that is not centred on *Jesus Christ* is not a true education’ (emphasis mine), yet in his paper, *A Christian Theory of Education* (1993b), Frisken refers to the views of W.E.Andersen, R.J.Rushdoony, H.Blamires, J.E.Adams, H.W.Byrne and H.M Morris for outlining much of his theory. Biblical texts that are referred to are predominantly those ascribed to the Apostle Paul (the most frequently cited references are from the Epistle to the Ephesians) whilst only five references are those attributed to Jesus in one of the Gospel narratives. It would appear that, according to Frisken, the interpretive views of other Christians (Andersen, Rushdoony, et.al.) hold great significance for understanding Christian education. Furthermore, it would appear that Pauline christology and ecclesiology is of greater significance for understanding education that is ‘centred’ on Jesus Christ than many of the ideas attributed to Jesus himself.

This clearly reveals a strong interpretive element that exists within the model; the interpreted ideas of other “biblically-based” Christians form a core of intellectual ideas upon which Frisken has based some of his ideas. It may be argued that the ideas of these writers are based on biblical texts and thus their views properly reflect a biblically-based Christian perspective. However, this does not take into consideration that there is an interpretive element in the process from biblical text to Christian educational principle. This seems to support Long’s (1997) view that within such a model ‘the Bible is used cosmetically to support...assumptions assimilated from thematic culture’ and that ‘there is a convenient spiritualising of many of the Bible’s claims’ (1996b, p.12).

Four ideas, then, lead to the necessity of reevaluating the epistemic foundations of the BCE model i) the concepts of inerrancy and infallibility are problematic when given close examination; ii) little or no consideration is given to the general nature and purpose of the Bible as a text; iii) distinction between categories of biblical texts such as ‘principles’, ‘statements’ and ‘commands’ is unclear, as is the process by which categorical assignment of biblical texts can be determined; iv) an undisclosed and unexplained hierarchy exists which permits discernment of biblical “truth”. Given these factors, I contend that use of the concept of biblical revelation as outlined above to derive educational principles is highly problematic. There is little or no distinction between what are philosophically derived, theologically derived or biblically prescribed concepts; for the Christian, the need for obedience is quite different for each of these. It appears that all three are collapsed into one grouping and then given the epistemic authority of biblical revelation. On account of this, I further contend there is a great deal of undue pressure to see BCE as a biblical imperative implicit in these ideas; indeed, Frisken (1993a, p.7) argues that parents and churches should ‘carefully consider what the Bible has to say about the training of children’ and that

involvement in BCE 'should be a matter of obedience to the conviction of the Holy Spirit'. In this situation, the committed Christian is compelled to give obedience to ideas that may not be specifically biblical.

If this is the case, then it is also highly unlikely students will understand any reasons behind why some biblical ideas are considered more important and deserving of special attention than others. It is highly unlikely they would ever consider such issues, given the strong authority attached to biblical statements. It is likely, however, that they will become confused concerning the apparent differentiation of importance between many biblical texts and begin to approach the Bible with the simplistic literalism that was found to be untenable. Furthermore, in the absence of clear guidelines as to how biblical revelation operates, they may retreat into uncritical reliance on the teaching of the church leaders believing that their views have biblical authority and weight (this issue is dealt with in more depth below concerning the hermeneutic authority). This makes it highly improbable that students would undertake a critical investigation into their personal world view and thus at this point it would be difficult to validate the BCE model according to this criterion.

Consideration must now be given to whether or not a more appropriate epistemic foundation may exist. I contend that Swinburne's (1992) and Wolterstorff's (1995) ideas provide the type of philosophical grounding needed for the BCE model to meet the relevant criterion of validity whilst still retaining the strong sense of revelation and authority required to satisfy proponents of BCE. Swinburne (1992, p.118) argues that the 'revelation' of the biblical text is 'the words of Jesus, and the acts of Jesus and the teaching of the Old Testament as interpreted by Jesus and his apostles'; this is in contrast to the position that argues for 'Holy Scripture itself as the original revelation; what was given by God was the Bible' (p.103). In Swinburne's view, the teachings of Jesus and the apostles as recorded in the

New Testament is a record *about* the revelation of God (i.e., Jesus) but is not the actual revelation itself. The text has been recorded some time later than the actual events and thus is subject to the introduction of a number of possible differences to actual events or sayings. It has also been interpreted for doctrine by Church leaders seeking to outline correct dogma and avoid heretical teaching.

Swinburne argues here for a change in the way revelation is conceptualised. The concept of revelation as 'analogy' is one that Swinburne thinks provides a better capacity for understanding the nature and purpose of revelation as well as having better philosophical foundations. He firstly argues that where context implies that the literal sense of the text be accepted, it should be so. However, he goes on to argue that where the literal sense of the text would be inappropriate, a metaphorical interpretation ought to be given; the decision to give metaphorical interpretation follows the same criteria we would apply to any other form of propositional communication such as context, audience, correspondence to empirical observation, cultural presuppositions, genre, etc. He argues that the truth of biblical revelation be understood in terms of the Bible as a whole unit, not necessarily as an accumulation of smaller truth units; in this way, the truth of particular smaller units (i.e., verses, passages, etc.) ceases to create philosophical difficulties such as those demonstrated by Wolterstorff's cosmological example (see above). The compiled revelation, the Bible, is then interpreted through the received tradition of the Fathers expressed in the creeds, for 'creeds are designed to encapsulate the central claims of the faith in as precise a way as possible' (p.193); as such, they provide doctrinal guides to when texts ought to be interpreted literally or metaphorically. Findings from secular inquiries in science and history may 'force metaphorical interpretation on biblical passages which, taken literally, contradict them' (p.185); again, Wolterstorff's cosmological example serves to highlight such a point.

In Swinburne's view, this opens up a whole new dialogical possibility in the attempt to understand what God is communicating. Armed with the presuppositional belief that God has made propositional communication, the Christian is able to use basic literary and linguistic principles as well as insights gained from science and history to discover God's message. The Christian community is thus involved in 'removing the presuppositions of the original message, and applying it to new circumstances and spelling it out so as to answer new questions' (p.221). The Christian community is not engaged in discovering a new meaning to previously expressed propositional communication (metaphor),¹⁵ but is striving to discern and interpret that propositional communication for its own social and historical context and to find more accurate ways of expressing it (analogy).¹⁶ Such an approach to biblical revelation will help the believer move beyond simplistic and naive literalism such as that suggested in the BCE documents.

In considering revelation as analogy, Swinburne is able to remove a number of difficulties associated with simplistic literalism whilst maintaining a strong revelatory status. This should make the analogical approach suitable for advocates of BCE. Consideration of Swinburne's approach is possible given that it is still realist in the sense that it maintains a commitment to a transcendent and immanent personal God who has communicated knowable truth; this should be palatable to advocates of BCE who fear that any move away from simplistic literalism would inevitably mean a move towards theological liberalism. However, as will be argued more forcefully in the next section, greater recognition of the role played by interpretation of

¹⁵ Swinburne refers to this as "metaphor" in the sense that 'knowledge of a wide context - a lot of information about where the token sentence containing the word was uttered, by whom, in what circumstances, against what background of common assumptions - will reveal what is being said' (Swinburne 1992, p.43). This accounts for the largely expositional form of interpretation evident in the writings of Frisken, particularly the references to biblical texts in their original Greek expression.

¹⁶ Swinburne refers to this as "analogy" in the sense that if two words are used in similar sense then they are analogical. A word is analogical 'if it has many of the same synonyms' (Swinburne 1992, p.40). A word is thus said to be used analogically in relation to another word if the two words 'have overlapping predicate schemes' (p.40). In the context of the Christian community, then, there is a search for words analogous to biblical ideas in which to express those ideas within the contemporary context.

biblical ideas must be allowed within the model. Because of this, it must be seen that any educational principles explicated in the BCE model may be interpretive and as such must carry limited authority. They are not necessarily primary *biblical* principles or *commands*; rather, they are secondary principles derived from broader biblical principles and thus the extent to which they can claim scriptural mandate is further reduced. This will be in keeping with the dynamic nature of the biblical message itself. This issue is more fully discussed in the following section.

ii. the hermeneutic authority

This issue again relates to the criterion of critical investigation of a personal world view. It was noted in a) that a number of questions arise concerning the epistemic foundations of the BCE world view, the authority of BCE statements and the process of their derivation. It was noted that significant lack of clarity exists concerning the role of biblical revelation as the epistemic foundation for the BCE model as well as the very powerful interpretive process applied to the biblical revelation.

There is much in the BCE model that would seem to commend it; Frisken (1993c) states 'we will not want to impose a legalistic [doctrinal] system on the child', that 'children...need to be able to seek the truth for themselves', that 'the mind of Christ must never be reduced to dogma that must be accepted uncritically', that 'children who are free to challenge what the school holds true will be free to find the truth' and that 'we do not teach children simply by codifying something and getting [children] to commit it to memory'. Such statements clearly indicate a preparedness to have students critically investigate their own world view. However, Frisken also speaks in the same section about the 'mind of Christ'. He argues that the 'mind of Christ', rather than being a mystical concept, is in fact the attitudes and thinking of the Christian community. Because the Christian community thus possesses the mind of Christ, it acts as determinant of correctly interpreted

biblical ideas; Frisken argues that growth in 'understanding of the mind of Christ...is mediated to the individual by the work of the whole Christian community' (1993c, p.7). A number of questions arise: how is the 'mind of Christ' discerned for contentious topics, particularly in areas where there are no specific biblical texts? can it be discerned by the local congregation? what if the view of one congregation differs from another? what if there is no consensus? is it possible that some interpretations have limited life and must be reinterpreted constantly with changing social and cultural conditions? how is it possible to determine which decisions are limited and those which are not? As with the epistemic foundations of the BCE model, there are few answers forthcoming. Thus the role of the hermeneutic authority of both church and school leaders is unclear and leads to an uncertainty.

Frisken (1993c, pp.5-6) expresses his concern that the church does not always reflect what he believes to be the teaching of the biblical revelation:

we also need to be careful that we do not confuse the Christian cultural heritage, or our church's cultural heritage, with the mind of Christ. Sometimes church-approved values are no more than a Christianised version of the socially approved values of the world.

There is implicit here some notion that the cultural expression of Christian faith (and elements of its heritage, in their various manifestations) may not be according to the "mind of Christ" and thus the believer must be wary of them. This would suggest that the understanding of what are acceptable cultural expressions of biblical ideas is that which is understood by those advocating BCE; not only are they able to discern what are truly biblical ideas and appropriate forms of their cultural expression but they are able to decide that certain cultural beliefs and practices of the Christian faith are not in fact biblical and must be guarded against. This further implies there exists biblical belief and behaviour that is beyond cultural foundation, that there is

a form of Christian belief and practice that can be adopted which transcends cultural identity.

The role of the 'mind of Christ', as argued by Frisken, is to discern what form suitable Christian belief and practice should take. Such an extreme position is untenable on the basis that the interpretive authority appealed to in making such discernment is incorrectly derived. Ideas related to BCE are not expressed as a particular series of strong beliefs, or convictions, about how Christians ought to act; if they were, it could be argued that the ideas are reasonably based. Rather, because the ideas are expressed in terms of the 'mind of Christ' they thus become incontrovertible. Ascendancy into the realm of the divine thus occurs, despite many of the ideas being highly contentious (Judge 1983; Hill 1982; also refer to the analysis of the epistemic foundations above). By evoking 'biblical' authority and 'conviction by the Holy Spirit' (Frisken 1993a, p.7) strong authoritarian ideals are manifest. Consequently, the location of these ideals in strong areas of faith does not encourage active engagement with the ideas for fear of being unbiblical, rebellious against God and biblical revelation, or, worse still, heretical.¹⁷ Students come to assume that correct understanding of the faith is that mediated by the school. The strong authority basis also means that questions pertaining to different hermeneutic understandings of the biblical message are not likely to be realistically considered. There seems little genuine opportunity for students to pursue varieties of Christian responses other than those espoused by the sponsoring church. The question must therefore be asked: to what extent, if any, is it likely that students will undertake a critical examination of the BCE world view? I contend it is likely they will not, based on the belief that because revelation holds an epistemic position beyond question and the 'mind of Christ' has been "discerned" by school

¹⁷ Long (1996b p.12) notes that because of the strong authority attached to "biblical" ideas, 'it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for any person to remain employed in a thematic school if they dared to question the Bible.'

and/or church leaders it is incontrovertibly true. This in turn leads to the conclusion that the BCE world view is authoritarian in its nature. Again this will make critical examination of the view more difficult because there will be a faith value attached to the idea of authority; there is an implied danger that careful examination of the BCE world view may entail a loss of faith on the part of the questioner.

Given the strength of faith belief present in the BCE model, it is understandable that some caution regarding critical investigation will be exercised by those associated with BCE. To their credit, there is evidence of a desire to provide opportunity for critical investigation of the 'biblical' world view (as expressed in the BCE model), but this is not the same as a critical investigation of a personal world view. It cannot be assumed that all students hold to the 'biblical' world view as their personal world view; it is fallacious to assume so. The risk associated with critical investigation of the 'biblical' world view is that while such an investigation may provide students with a deepened understanding of the faith, it may also raise doubts concerning the basis and nature of religious belief within the believer. Frisken (1993c, p.5) believes it is satisfactory to question internal elements of the 'biblical' world view. While Frisken recognises that the personal life views of each student must be respected, it is also obvious that he expects that if students search earnestly for the truth, they will come to recognise that the "truth" is contained in the teaching of the Bible as mediated through the BCE world view. For Frisken and those who advocate the BCE model, it is important that students come to believe that the 'biblical' world view is objectively and demonstrably true, not merely one philosophical truth among a variety of alternatives. Anything less than such a position will be not be a true education, for 'an education that is not centred on Jesus Christ is not a true education' (Frisken 1993a, p.1)

How, then, can the BCE model more adequately address the role of hermeneutic authority such that it will satisfy the critical investigation of a personal world view criterion? I contend that, firstly, students must be shown that the faith position of BCE is based on particular hermeneutic presuppositions which moderate the understanding of the 'biblical' world view. Although students involved in a BCE school are made well aware of some of the presuppositions of some non-Christian world-views (Friskén 1993c, p.6), an investigation of the presuppositions of the BCE world view does not seem to be undertaken. Much is made in the BCE writings (Brinton 1993; Blomberg 1980; Edlin 1994; Fowler 1990; Friskén 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; Peterson 1986; Van Brummelen 1992, 1994) of the fact that education is not a neutral pursuit and therefore it would seem appropriate for the BCE model to make more clear to students the nature of their own presuppositions. An open and honest approach to the interpretive role played by the leaders of the churches and schools involved in BCE is clearly needed. Perhaps a closer implementation of the approach that is already present in the writings would be a beginning, but even this must move further if the critical investigation criterion is to be fully satisfied. Such honesty is in keeping with Wolterstorff's (1995, p.236) observation that 'there is no way to avoid employing our convictions as to what is true...in the process of interpreting for divine discourse'. It furthermore affirms Thiessen's (1993) argument that teaching for faith commitment begins within a coherent primary culture, but must extend towards critical reflection upon that primary culture (see Part I, Chap 2). If the BCE position is a reasonable one, then careful investigation will reveal it to be so and the church and school leadership along with parents ought not be afraid of its critical investigation. Such an investigation may even have the added benefit of deepening students' commitment to their faith (see **c**) below) or it could be helpful in showing non-Christian students there is validity in the school's and their parents' faith position.

Secondly, there ought to be more recognition that the BCE world view exists as one of a number of Christian faith beliefs and practices that correspond with the biblical revelation. The authoritarian construction of the interpretive role leads to an unfounded belief that 'true' Christianity is that which is practised by the BCE school community (Long 1996b, p.9); the negative implication is obvious. The view that 'we...need to be careful that we do not confuse the Christian cultural heritage, or our church's cultural heritage, with the mind of Christ' (Friskén 1993c, p.5) unnecessarily devalues cultural expressions of faith. It neither recognises the diversity of Christian faith expression nor values the spiritual insights other Christian faith traditions may have. The broadening of Christian, or Biblical Studies, to include more phenomenologically based study would help in the demand to satisfy the critical investigation of a personal world view (see below: Chap 3, III, b).

Finally, there needs to be a greater awareness of and appreciation for students who have not accepted the belief position of the biblical world view as expressed in the BCE model. The only explicit reference to this difficult issue is in Friskén's (1993b) paper, *A Christian Theory of Education*. The absence of any specific reference as to how these children ought to be treated seems quite significant. Friskén (p.9) admits 'there is clearly a need for further study into...how [a non-believing] child fits into the biblical view of a person', yet in the absence of any firm ideas, he returns to what is assumed to be safe philosophical ground by stating that 'it is sufficient to say that a Christian school is seen as the parents' response to the biblical command to educate their children in the Lord' and that 'the child, in turn, is required to be obedient to his parents and accept the kind of training they think he should have'. Clearly there is need for this study to be done sooner rather than later. Until such time as it is, the opportunity for unbelieving students within the school to undertake critical investigation of their personal world view will be

slight, if at all present. This obviously represents a serious limitation on the capacity of the BCE model to sufficiently satisfy this criterion for models of education in a pluralist liberal democracy. It would be strongly hoped that these students are given as much opportunity to critically investigate their own world view in a fair and supportive environment, although given the strength of the hermeneutic authority as outlined above, this does not seem likely. Some encouragement, however, can be found in the ideas of Van Brummelen (1994, p.260). Although only brief, they summarise many of the detailed ideas argued for by Thiessen (1993) and covered in Part I, Chapter 2 of this thesis. They are worth reproducing at length as one example of how to deal with the difficult tensions experienced over this matter:

Teachers should challenge students not to give easy or pat answers to difficult questions. They should present non-Christian beliefs and positions honestly and fairly. They should admit that Christians do not have all the answers to social and moral problems. They should admit that they themselves have questions about, for instance, why God allows so much suffering to take place. They should show how God's common grace gives both Christians and non-Christians insights and abilities to create worthwhile and salutary books, economic theories, works of art and music, and technological breakthroughs. They should help them discern the strengths and weaknesses of such phenomena as well as of positions taken by both Christians and non-Christians.

At this stage, there seems little evidence that such positive suggestions are being disseminated throughout material associated with BCE; certainly it does not appear in the philosophical works printed by CCSL. As many of Van Brummelen's other ideas concerning BCE have been referred to in the work of Frisken it is surprising to notice the absence of ideas such as these; one can only speculate as to why this is the case, but this seems a fruitless exercise within the context of this thesis. In the absence of such evidence, it would be hoped that ideas such as these expressed by Van Brummelen may prompt others within schools associated with BCE to investigate further how non-

believers can be encouraged to undertake critical investigation into their personal world view within the BCE school. Evaluation of this suggestion would require empirical research to determine whether or not this was occurring and the extent to which the attempts were successful. The explicit inclusion of ideas such as this into the BCE model would greatly enhance the ability of the model to satisfy the criterion of investigation of a personal world view.

iii. the philosophical status of exclusivist religious truth claims

This issue relates to critical investigation of a personal world view, investigation of alternative world views and the teaching for tolerance of alternative world views. Any religious truth claim that claims to be a participant in public dialogue (as with the BCE view) must be expressed in such a way as to enable dialogue with others outside its own paradigm. Use of words like "truth" and "revelation" are highly contentious and not at all self-evident in society broadly. It is likely that the emphasis on "truth" and "revelation" that exists within the paradigm of the BCE model will lead to an inability to dialogue with those outside the BCE faith community. This is more likely to result in intolerance and to isolate those who adhere to such a view. This further restricts the likelihood of meaningful dialogue with those outside the faith community (such situations are not the stated desire of those who promote the BCE model nor are they considered elements of orthodox Christianity). It is unlikely this will lead to a valid investigation of alternative world views as deemed necessary for education models in a pluralist liberal democracy. It is therefore necessary to consider whether there are ways of expressing the strength and depth of the BCE epistemic foundation while at the same time being able to overcome the difficulties outlined above.

I contend that students are more adequately prepared for entrance into dialogue with other groups in the pluralist liberal democratic society (and

thus to undertake an investigation of alternative world views as well as develop tolerance towards their adherents) if they see their religious knowledge and experience in terms of *faith belief* rather than *truth*. For many associated with BCE, these terms would be synonymous; to say that “*I believe* Jesus Christ was crucified, dead, buried and resurrected from the dead” is to say that “*it is true* that Jesus Christ was crucified, dead, buried and resurrected from the dead” in an objective sense. For those outside the BCE world view, however, these terms are not synonymous. To engage in public dialogue with those outside the BCE world view, some adequate common terminology is therefore required. Contained within the term, *faith-belief*, is a notion of *truth*. To hold to a *faith-belief* is to believe that such a position is true. In a sense, to accept that a *faith-belief* is true is itself a *faith-belief*. In this way, public dialogue on questions of truth is problematic given that the participants do not share the same *faith-beliefs*; all participants will not accept each other's *faith-belief* position as *true*. Consequently, critical investigation of a personal world view and understanding of alternative world views must recognise this in-built limitation. It is inevitable that any world view, religious or non-religious, will make specific claims that are exclusive; as Thiessen argues, ‘to claim that all truths are relative is still to make one exclusive claim, namely that all truths are relative’ (Thiessen 1993, pp.161-162). Once this limitation is recognised, a shift towards a *faith-belief* concept is more reasonable than it initially seems. For this reason, teaching within the context of *faith-beliefs* rather than *truths* will increase the likelihood of the BCE model meeting these criteria.

The use of *faith-belief* in place of truth also makes reference back to the epistemic foundations of the BCE world view; evidence given by theists (including those associated with BCE) for belief in God suggests such a belief is highly probable, but not conclusive or self-evident thus any *public* claim to truth must be recognised as a faith position. Truth claims, then, ought to be

seen within the context of the world view of which they are a constituent part. Evidence offered for the existence of a God and the nature of any communication that proceeds from such a God, if indeed any does, must be understood from within the context of a world view. Yet, paradoxically, it is the world view itself that determines what will count as suitable evidence for the acceptance of the world view (Sweet & O'Connell 1992, p.2); that is, the theistic world view will determine what counts as evidence for the existence of God. In this way, the world view itself can be said to be prior to the evidence given in support of the world view (this is similar to the scientific principle of hypothesis where a theory is postulated and then evidence for or against the theory is collected). However, a world view must have within it the ability to communicate with others outside itself otherwise there is no possibility of dialogue. World views, as Runzo (1989, p.49) argues, 'though incompatible...cannot be utterly incommensurate.'

Two possible objections to this suggestion exist. First, that change from a notion of *truth* to that of *faith-belief* may result in a weakened faith stance and remove any rationale for the existence of schools committed to BCE. Second, proponents of the BCE model may argue such a change results in adopting a relativistic stance and denial of the underlying commitment to their "truth" position. As such, it is a change that would not even be seriously considered, let alone actually integrated into the model. However, it is possible to counter these objections as follows:

a. a weakened faith stance - The nature of world views generally gives rise to strong beliefs. The BCE world view belief structure is that which will determine what counts as evidence in support of basic beliefs, or, what will be considered evidence for the alteration or rejection of basic beliefs. If the world view determines what will count as evidence for claims made within that world view, then contrary evidence will not be considered as strong evidence. It is difficult, though not impossible, for 'epistemic

primitives' (Laura & Leahy 1989, pp.255-257) to alter or change completely because of their foundational nature. Thus a falsifiability principle must be recognised (Wolterstorff 1995, pp.236-239). However, this does not necessarily mean a faith-based world view is more susceptible to revision or loss than others; an atheistic world view will have epistemic primitives that determine what would count as evidence against the atheistic world view and in support of a theistic world view. It is just as difficult for the atheist to become convinced enough of a theistic world view to alter or abandon atheism as it is for the theist to become convinced of an atheistic world view. It is quite reasonable for a position of *belief* to be strongly held while still admitting the possibility of future revision (Runzo 1989, p.51). As to the admission of what would constitute adequate grounds for future revision, Laura & Leahy (1989, p.258) argue it is impossible to 'specify in advance the conditions whose fulfilment would lead [theists] to give up their belief in God.' Thus it seems this first objection can be countered.

b. a relativistic position - There are three important points that help remove fear of a relativistic position being adopted. First, an analysis of the term *faith-belief* indicates it contains a commitment to the *faith-belief* position as true. It is impossible to have *faith-belief* in a proposition or series of propositions that are known to be not true; it may be possible to entertain the notion of their not being true, but this is not *faith-belief*. A valid *faith-belief* must be based on reasonable evidence, and as Schubert (1991) argues, the evidence for reliability of ancestral testimony as the basis for belief in God is 'compelling', but not conclusive (cf. Swinburne 1992, Wolterstorff 1995). Because the BCE *faith-belief* position is based on such ancestral testimony, that is, the biblical record of the Old and New Testaments, it is reasonable to maintain that any notion of *truth* they contain is 'compelling'. If this is so, then it is reasonable to adopt the *faith-belief* position as true, even though the evidence is not conclusive or self-evident. Thus the use of the term *faith-belief*

does not *necessarily* introduce a relativistic position. Second, any *faith-belief* position will, of necessity, be exclusivist.¹⁸ It is a basic condition of any truth claim that such a claim will exclude particular groups (Thiessen 1993, pp.161-162). Competing *faith-belief* positions will therefore continue to disagree as to what constitutes the “truth” and thus may not be interested in ‘converting’ to other belief-positions. The use of *faith-belief* as a descriptive title need not change the substantive exclusive nature of the BCE world-view.¹⁹ Third, the emphasis in this critique is on provision of a way to engage in dialogue with those *outside* the community of faith. It is concerned with finding a more adequate way of communicating between adherents from (often radically) different world-views. As such, the emphasis is on changing *how* to express *faith-belief* ideas, not changing the substantive ideas themselves.

III. Curriculum orientation

In the previous section it was argued that the philosophical foundations of the BCE model were problematic. It was argued that confusion and uncertainty regarding the role and function of the biblical text exist due to the strong sense of revelation and epistemic status accorded that revelation. It was further argued that the blurring of biblical authority and hermeneutic authority produces philosophically based educational ideas that appear incontrovertible. The lack of opportunity to undertake critical self reflection was seen as a major deficiency in the BCE model. In this section three main

¹⁸It must be noted that there are varying degrees of exclusivism. ‘Strong’ exclusivism is that which views all contrary views as substantively wrong, while ‘weak’ exclusivism holds to its belief but admits that there may be a possibility of error. In this context, the use of ‘weak’ exclusivism is implied and is more suitable to the notion of *faith-belief*. The weaker view of exclusivism is a consequence of the critique advanced in Section II; for advocates of ECE to accept a weaker view of exclusivism, the critique of the epistemological foundations would also need to be accepted.

¹⁹ Some may object that exclusivist *faith-belief* positions ought not to be supported in a pluralist liberal democratic society by virtue of their exclusivity. This seems a difficult charge to sustain for three reasons: i) pluralist theory depends on the existence of autonomous diverse groups; ii) liberalism demands that no one individual or group of individuals shall be prevented from pursuing their own concept of the “good life”, provided it does not restrict the opportunity for others to do likewise or result in situations of injustice; iii) the statement is itself an exclusivist statement. It is often not the concept of exclusivism that is objectionable but the basis on which the exclusion is made, particularly when it is religiously or politically based.

criticisms are made of the curriculum orientation of the BCE model. Here it is argued that a technical emphasis (after Habermas) produces a curriculum orientation directed towards control of student understanding of theological dogma and the authority of the Bible, parents and teachers. This control manifests itself through a lack of opportunity for understanding and respecting world views different to the BCE world view as well as a failure to adequately consider issues related to the nature of faith development. Consequently, serious deficiencies are identified with the curriculum orientation of the BCE model. As with criticism of the philosophical foundations, suggestions are put forward for consideration as to how to address the curriculum orientation criticisms.

i. a technical curriculum orientation

This issue relates to the criterion of a critical investigation of a personal world view. The predominant orientation that exists is what Habermas has called a technical one (Grundy 1987), meaning that there are strong elements of institutional or teacher control in curriculum design, emphasis on knowledge acquisition and correct dogma, as well as strong authoritarianism. Moreover, the curriculum orientation does not encourage critical insights. Rather, it involves application of predetermined 'biblical' principles. Any notion of critical insight that does exist is to be understood internally to the BCE world view (Friskin 1993d, p.4); that is, students are to 'think about their values and go to the Scriptures with an open mind, honestly seeking to understand its teaching'. Here again the focus on the Bible gives little explanation as to *how* it is meant to help students arrive at answers to these difficult questions. Although it seems there is an emphasis on being 'relevant to students lives' (Friskin 1993d, p.4), the overwhelming message is control and use of authority. The language indicative of the technical orientation is clearly seen in the following: the word 'training' is used much more than 'education' or 'nurture', teachers are seen as 'gifted' by

God and thus, by implication, powerfully entrusted with God's work, 'there can be no conflict between what is taught and what the Bible says' (Friskén 1993b, p.10), teachers teach 'with the assurance that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible and authoritative Word of God' (Friskén 1993b, p.10). In attempting to answer the question "what makes a good teacher?" Friskén argues for:

- * effective planning and lessons,
- * setting and achievement of objectives,
- * an ability to maintain order and to establish a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere,
- * a willingness to help students and provide positive reinforcement and encouragement,
- * the ability to provide a variety of activities, actively monitor work and make students think. (Friskén 1993d, p.2)

The teacher is the one who controls and directs the class learning environment. The results of such teaching are to be assessed in order that 'students...can take informed action to improve performance' (Friskén 1993d, p.6). The teacher will have 'a clear idea of what he wants to happen in the classroom' (Friskén & Pollard 1993, p.5).

Yet, paradoxically, there is within the model many references to ideas that suggest an emancipatory orientation, particularly the strong emphasis on community and such teachings of the Christian faith as equality and justice. However, there are two significant limitations to achieving an emancipatory orientation. Firstly, most of the reference to equality and justice operate internally to the BCE model; concern for BCE community members is of prime importance. The building up and encouragement of the BCE community is the first priority; should these effects flow beyond the community, this is welcomed, but not striven for. As Friskén (1993c, p.2) states, 'although the Church [and the BCE community] does not primarily exist to transform society, it does so as a byproduct when it is living and growing and being perfected in love'²⁰ The insularity of this position means

²⁰ This statement is problematic in itself. It is evidence of the criticism in Section II of this chapter that confusion of hermeneutic authority and biblical authority elevates the former to the level of the latter.

that the BCE school is less likely to be concerned with issues beyond its immediate environment. Such strong elements of a technical orientation make it more difficult for the practical and emancipatory aspects of the BCE model to adequately inform the work of the BCE school. Such lack of consistency (and particular emphasis on the technical orientation) is likely to produce desire for conformity and acquiescence rather than an attitude of critical reflection and action. At worst, it is likely to reduce issues of critical social importance to a trite, superficial level. An example of this can be seen in the details of *Effective Christian Schooling* (Friskens 1993d). Under the heading "The Nature and Task of a Christian Community School", there are forty four identifying points. Of these, eighteen explicitly refer to theological assumptions or statements, twenty refer to the role of parents, church leaders, teachers and the State as responsible authorities, three refer to how children are perceived (again from a theological perspective) and three relate to what children are expected to be as a result of this educational process. Two of these are 'equipped' for service and responsible 'disciples' (Friskens 1993d, p.8). Only one out of forty four points gives specific reference to what action is involved: 'The Christian student should be *informed* about and *concerned* about issues such as (1) poverty - injustice - misuse of the environment; (2) the needs of all people for the gospel; (3) world events that are happening and will affect his life and his future.' (emphasis mine).

There is cause for concern regarding the emphasis in this list. An obvious imbalance in the identifying points indicates there is a central emphasis on theological ideology as well as with division of authority roles; there are very few of these points that actually relate to children, how children learn, what children learn or what children are to become as a result

Here, Friskens makes a declarative statement to the effect that the Church's primary task is not socially directed but internally directed. Such a position may be strongly debated by those of a more Reformed theological persuasion within both CCEL and, more likely, CPCSL. See Blomberg (1976; 1980), Schaeffer (1990, pp.186-187) and Van Brummeler (1994, Chap 3). It also verifies Long's (1996b, p.14) observation that there are 'foundational differences that exist between [thematic] schools despite their common language.'

of having been educated in such a school. Such an imbalance adds further weight to the argument that the BCE model demonstrates a technical orientation more so than a practical or emancipatory one. There is obviously a great need to find ways of correcting this imbalance. Failure to do so will perpetuate this strong authoritarian technical orientation. I contend that in such a situation it is unlikely students will undertake critical investigation of their personal world view further reducing the ability of the BCE model to meet this criterion.

ii. opportunity for understanding and respecting alternative world views

This relates to the criterion of validity of alternative world views and active teaching for tolerance towards alternative world views. There is little (if anything) in the BCE model that leads students to a serious consideration of any social or cultural appreciation of alternative world views. Investigation is undertaken from a *theological* perspective only; different world views are assessed for the extent to which they correlate with or differ from the BCE world view. This produces a diminished understanding of other world views as it does not take into consideration any of the phenomenological understanding; this is particularly so of the other major world religions and Christian faith traditions other than those represented in any particular BCE school. Any reasonable attempt to understand alternative religious faith positions ought to include at least some study of their phenomena; to leave such a study out reduces religion to a philosophical and intellectual pursuit only. Furthermore, students end up with little or no idea of how these religions (as well as other non-religious world views) contribute to their contemporary pluralist liberal democratic society. It is difficult to see how such an investigation can be considered one that leads to understanding, nor is it likely to lead students to an appreciation that other religious and non-religious positions still make positive contributions to public society.

More positive social effects are likely to result if students are given opportunity to more fully and fairly investigate alternative faith positions.

I contend that the study of faith be approached with two goals in mind. First, the stated goal of BCE, development of Christian faith, and second, an appreciation that broadens the concept of biblical studies into one more closely related to phenomenologically based religious studies. Such an approach would still actively seek the development of faith within students along similar lines to those argued for by Thiessen (1993) in Chapter 2 of this thesis and hopefully incorporate the criticisms outlined above concerning philosophical foundations. As such, it is hoped it would be found suitable to advocates of BCE, given the centrality of their faith aim within the model. In addition, it is hoped that a program involving phenomenological investigation of alternative belief systems, including non-religious world views, would result in greater understanding of what it means for adherents of those beliefs to have faith (Wiebe 1988), rather than a theological understanding of why Christians may not accept those positions as true. Within such a program, it is hoped that students would be led to an appreciation that other religious positions still make positive contributions to public society (Macedo 1995). It seems more likely that tolerance of others would result from such a program. This is a particularly important criticism given that a literalist approach regarding the *people, history* and *culture* of the Bible and the historical community of faith is the one favoured within the BCE world view. The literalist approach of the BCE model discerns theological truths via the phenomena of the historical and cultural Jewish nation, the life of the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the activities of the early Christian church as recorded in the New Testament. Failure to consider adequately the phenomena of alternative world views is problematic. To do so is to be guilty of misrepresenting alternative world views as philosophical systems only, not cultural and social identities in their own right. It is

interesting and encouraging to note that inclusion of a more phenomenological approach is increasingly seen as a necessary one by those who advocate similar models of education to CCSL (Van Brummelen 1988, pp.102-103; Edlin 1994, p.62). It is hoped these ideas find currency amongst those associated with CCSL also.

iii. stages of faith development

Initially this does not seem to relate specifically to any of the four criteria discussed in Part I; on deeper examination, however, it is clear this issue is related to the criterion of critical investigation of a personal world view. Within the BCE writings, and particularly those published by CCSL, there is little clear expression of how faith develops or appropriate consideration of what adjustments may be made to faith development at different stages. This seems quite problematic given the centrality of faith development on the general aims of the model. Furthermore, it is inappropriate to have the same expectations of, or use the same methods for a range of students as broad as 5 to 18 years old. A lack of understanding as to the *nature* of faith development may lead to the creation of unrealistic expectations on the part of students. Without a clear indication of *how* faith develops teachers may also end up with unrealistic expectations of students. This results in students giving learned dogmatic responses to issues of faith rather than honest ones; in this sense, there is an indirect link to one of the four criteria for educational models, that of critical investigation of a personal world view. The reduction of faith understanding to dogmatism reduces the capacity for students to undertake critical investigation of their personal world view; the encouragement, or even tacit approval, of such a situation is regrettable and is to be repudiated. A greater appreciation of the nature of faith development would help in altering teacher expectations of both cognitive and affective elements of faith as well as the relationship between the two.

There needs to be more work done and disseminated within CCSL regarding the nature of faith development and its relationship to the BCE model. I would suggest an initial response should involve an investigation of Fowler's model of faith development. Within the context of the formal educational setting, a consideration of Fowler's stages of faith development may give insight into how to generate better teacher expectations. Using Lovat's (1989; cf. Groome 1980 pp.66-73) table summary of Fowler's theory, it can be shown that Fowler's ideas are worthy of closer examination by those associated with BCE. The use of Fowler's ideas is not intended to be a prescriptive recommendation; rather, it is intended to serve as a beginning point for those associated with BCE to pursue their own critical thinking on the nature of faith development.

Lovat (1989, p.43) summarises Fowler's stages as follows:

Stage 1: (0-4 years) *Intuitive-Projective Faith* - imitative, fantasy-filled, copies language and actions of close adults.

Stage 2: (5-8 years) *Mythic-Literal Faith* - begins to express stories, beliefs of community and to act out expected rituals.

Stage 3: (9-13 years) *Synthetic-Conventional Faith* - begins to be influenced by wider network; peer group's attitudes very important: may begin to copy activities and expressions of other-than parents and school.

Stage 4: (14-19 years) *Individuating-Reflexive Faith* - crossroads: either one stays where one feels secure (i.e. with a copied faith) or one begins to make own choices: only with the latter decision, will faith continue to develop.

Stage 5: (20-32 years) *Paradoxical-Consolidative Faith* - lives out own commitments and beliefs in a way which respects the commitments and beliefs of others.

Stage 6: (33-40 years) *Universalising Faith* - one is truly oneself, identity is complete: one is comfortable to be-for-others, a total commitment to change the world.

There are a number of positive insights that Fowler has given concerning faith development; the most important for this present study is his emphasis on the transition from dependence to independence in the believer. These ideas bear great similarity to those of McLaughlin (1984), Hobson (1984) and

Thiessen (1993), as discussed in Part I, Chapter 2, who argue for a developmental move from a primary culture, or an initiation phase, to autonomy, or a liberation phase. This adds weight to the need for the BCE model to address the changing needs of students' faith development.

In the early stages of faith, there are strong elements of identification with those of the child's primary culture, the most obvious of which is copying. As children develop, they begin to incorporate copied actions and language from those other than their parents, school or church leaders. This obviously has major implications for how faith development ought to be approached. It reinforces the need for teachers differentiating their expectations regarding students' faith response. Because a student may manifest language or actions deemed inappropriate to their faith expression (Stage 3) the teacher will need to recognise this not necessarily as a rejection of the faith, but as part of synthesizing other influences into their faith experience. The way a teacher responds to such a situation will have an impact upon the continued faith development of the child; either the teacher can recognise this not as a loss of faith but as part of the move towards the Stage 4 "crossroads", or, the teacher can seek to admonish, correct or discipline the child so that they will manifest behaviour deemed more appropriate for the child's faith. The first response is in keeping with the necessary criterion of critical investigation of a personal world view because the child is given opportunity to explore not only the views into which they have been initiated (i.e., the Christian faith of their parents) but also starts to consider how these differ from other views they may experience at this stage.

In the Stage 4, the critical phase of choice is most strong. It would seem more appropriate at this stage to provide increasing opportunity for critical investigation of the child's personal world view as well as for investigating alternative world views (as has been argued above). For the longer term faith development; according to Fowler, the decision making

process that occurs during this stage will help determine whether or not more mature and firm faith eventuates. To remain with a 'copied faith' (Lovat 1989, p.43) will not produce a faith prepared to 'change the world' (p.43). In the context of Christian rites of passage, this stage can be likened to a "conversion/baptism" experience or, in the case of some denominations, a "confirmation" or "affirmation" ritual in which believers make a public declaration that they have adopted the faith of their parents as their own. Through this experience, believers signify that a choice has been made to live by the teachings of the faith for reasons known only to themselves, not simply because it is what they have been brought up to believe.²¹ Similarly, within the context of the school it seems crucial to provide opportunity for choices to be made in a meaningful manner. As Peshkin's (1986) study demonstrated, the social pressure that exists within religiously-based schools does, to some extent, predetermine the range of possible faith outcomes.²² A conscious effort to recognise the changing needs of faith at different developmental stages is therefore required to permit maximum opportunity for students' faith to continue its development into the next stage.

It is worth noting that Fowler suggests the capacity to live by one's own commitment does not exist until Stage 5, which he identifies as beginning at approximately 20 years old. Because the stated aim of BCE is to have students "grow up into Christ", it seems that the marks of that maturity identified by Frisken (1993b) are more consistent with Fowler's Paradoxical-

²¹ This is not to assume that parental pressure or expectation does not play a significant part in any decision to undertake any of these rituals. Indeed, it may not be possible to remove this type of influence at all, given the strength that resides in the primary culture. Furthermore, the capacity to change basic presuppositions of a faith position easily seems limited given the strength of their epistemic importance (see Laura and Leahy 1989). For the purpose of the present argument, the influences impacting upon the intentions of the believer undertaking baptism or confirmation are recognised but an assessment of how those intentions (and the pressures placed upon them) impact upon the principle of religious choice is beyond the scope of this present study. Furthermore, the impact of varying pressures (parental, peer, church, school, etc.) upon any decision making process is a sociological question requiring empirical research which again is beyond the scope of this present study.

²² Note Thiessen's (1993) critique of Peshkin's (1986) analysis. Thiessen argues (pp.195-198) that the same negative outcomes generated by total institutions, such as the Christian school, are equally applicable to a State administered public school system.

Consolidative Faith stage. Obviously this has significant implication for teacher expectations. If the aims of the BCE model are more indicative of a stage of development that may be beyond most students during their formal school years, a reassessment of expectations is required. Focus during the secondary years would then be better served by investigating different expressions of the Christian faith from an experiential/phenomenological basis rather than from a doctrinal basis. This would serve to make the decision making process of Stage 4 more meaningful.

The above discussion indicates there is great need for more work to be done in this area by those who advocate BCE. Acknowledgement of the *importance* of faith development is required, but so too is the *development of a theory of faith development* and its implications for the teaching process in BCE schools. Until this is done, the likelihood of unrealistic teacher expectation of students' faith response is high as is the likelihood that students will not undertake critical investigation of their personal world view. This then represents a significant limitation for the BCE model to satisfactorily meet the criterion of critical investigation of a personal world view.

IV. Conclusion

It has been argued in this chapter that several major deficiencies exist in the BCE model. Having isolated these deficiencies, suggestions have been made as to how the BCE model may be adapted to meet more adequately the criteria identified in Part I, Chapter 1 for evaluating the orientation of educational models in pluralist liberal democratic societies. On the basis of the above analysis, the BCE model will need to be adapted if it is to be considered a philosophically valid model according to these criteria. In the following Chapter, I contend that these deficiencies may be addressed through incorporating the orientation of the Christian religious education model of Thomas Groome and Jeff Astley (to be defined in Chapter 5 as

Christian Praxis Education, (or CPE) without necessarily undermining the unique rationale held by those who advocate the BCE model. This is because the orientation of the Christian religious education model has many philosophical similarities to the BCE model, but also incorporates philosophical ideas similar to those outlined in this chapter. Demonstration of how the Christian religious education model can satisfy the BCE rationale as well as the criteria of validity for models of education in pluralist liberal democracies now follows in Chapter 5.