CHAPTER FIVE
From Biblically-based Christian Education (BCE) to Christian Praxis Education (CPE): Some Possibilities

I. Introduction

It has been the central aim of this thesis to examine the philosophical validity of the BCE model within the context of a pluralist liberal democracy such as Australia. Firstly, it was argued that four criteria can be identified by which it is possible to evaluate the orientation of models of education within a pluralist liberal democracy. These four criteria, a commitment to the ideals of pluralist liberal democracy a critical investigation of a personal world view, an investigation of alternative world views and active teaching for tolerance towards alternative world views, identify broad philosophical ideals necessary for models of education. It was further argued in Chapter 1 that these criteria are indicative of a particular orientation to education rather than act as prescriptions for curriculum content of educational models; consequently, many varied models of education may be considered valid within the context of the pluralist liberal democracy despite considerable content difference. Secondly, it was argued in Chapter 2 that within the context of a pluralist liberal democracy parents have a philosophical right to provide a religious upbringing, including the right to provide formal education from a religious perspective. It was argued that philosophical problems exist for educational models that do not include the orientation evident in the criteria argued for in Chapter 1 even though those models may be expressions of parental desires to provide a religious upbringing.

In Chapter 3, the BCE model was outlined followed by a critique of the model in Chapter 4. This critique found a number of significant philosophical difficulties that prevented the BCE model from adequately meeting the criteria argued for in Chapter 1. A problematic epistemic foundation for the BCE religious truth claim, a strong hermeneutic authority and the problematic philosophical status of the BCE exclusivist truth claim were found to restrict the likelihood of students investigating their personal world view and alternative world views; consequently, respect for and toleration of alternative world views was not considered likely within the BCE model. On the basis of these arguments, the validity of the model was found to be questionable. Furthermore, it was argued that the technical orientation combined with a failure to address faith development issues were likely to work against the establishment and development of deep faith commitment, the primary aim of the BCE model, thereby diminishing the extent to which the model can meet its own stated aims. Thus a dilemma exists for those who advocate (and are philosophically entitled to do so) the BCE model: is it possible to construct an educational model capable of satisfying the four criteria argued for in Chapter 1 and which also meets the strong faith aims of those who advocate BCE? Or, is it possible to overcome the philosophical difficulties identified in Chapter 4 without diminishing the centrality of the faith aim of BCE?

I contend that it is possible to meet the criteria for educational models in pluralist liberal democracies while simultaneously meeting the needs of a faith based, faith oriented model. In addition, I contend that it is possible to meet these demands as well as enhance rather than restrict the development of genuine faith. In this chapter, it will be argued that a Christian Praxis Education (hereafter as CPE) orientation can satisfy the demands of the four criteria and the needs of a faith based educational model like BCE. Furthermore, it will be argued that a CPE orientation is more likely to

effectively achieve the goals of BCE, that is, the development of genuine and committed faith. In order to demonstrate this, the orientation will firstly be described. Following this description, reasons will be presented for how the orientation can satisfy the demands of the four criteria. Reasons why this orientation may be acceptable to advocates of the BCE model will then be presented for consideration along with reasons for how the orientation adequately addresses the criticisms outlined in Chapter 4. Finally, suggestions for why the CPE orientation may promote genuine faith more than the current BCE model will be given for consideration.

It is not the intention of this chapter to provide a comprehensive educational model or philosophical framework. Rather, this chapter is intended to identify a possible way forward for advocates of BCE. If the analysis of the model argued for in Chapter 4 is accepted, then advocates of BCE must address these issues; it is untenable to leave such difficulties unresolved. Furthermore, this chapter is not attempting to provide a replacement model for BCE; rather, it is intending to present a different perspective, or orientation, on the issue of faith education within the constraints of a pluralist liberal democracy. The goal for advocates of BCE remains the same: the faith development of children and the preparation for their entrance into the broader pluralist liberal democratic society of which they are a part. The CPE orientation provides an alternative perspective on this task. It is hoped the ideas presented in this chapter will promote discussion and further thinking about these issues by those who support the BCE model. The suggestions below, then, are offered by way of stimulus for further work, not as new prescriptions for implementation.

II. Christian Praxis Education as an orientation

i. Defining terms

The term *Christian Praxis Education* (CPE) has been chosen to identify a philosophical orientation towards a faith education model such as BCE. The model is informed by Groome's (1980) and Astley's (1994) Christian Religious Education as well as Hobson and Welbourne's (1997) insights into Transformative Christian Education. On their own, either of these terms is unsatisfactory to describe the central ideas in the CPE orientation, particularly when considered from the perspective of advocates of the present BCE model. In order for them to consider a different perspective, it is important to provide a name for such a perspective that fairly represents the aims of the present BCE model. If the name implies aims other than those found in the BCE model, it is not likely to be given opportunity for consideration by them. Groome and Astley's Christian *Religious* Education is not likely to be fairly considered as a term because of its implied emphasis on phenomenological elements rather than issues of belief and truth. An emphasis like this would not be accepted by those advocating BCE and thus the inclusion of such a term in a descriptive title is, at best, misguided; at worst, it is likely to turn BCE educators away from considering the orientation at all. Hobson and Welbourne's *Transformative* Christian Education comes closer to being acceptable. The concept of transformation is strongly present in the BCE writings: within the writings there is an emphasis on personal transformation through *growth* and *maturity* as well as an emphasis on the transformed life of the BCE community. However, I contend that the inclusion of the term transformative would not be understood in the way intended by Hobson and Welbourne. Advocates of BCE would understand the use of such a term as essentially theological, that is, the sinner being transformed into being like Christ, the young Christian being transformed into a more mature Christian, the sinful community of

faith being transformed into the loving community of faith, whereas Hobson and Welbourne follow a similar line to that of Groome and Astley and see broader societal transformation as a central idea as well. As such, the use of *transformative* within the descriptive name suffers from different conceptual understandings between advocates of BCE and the broader religious and philosophical community. It therefore seems an inexact term to use; debate amongst advocates of BCE about Transformative Christian Education is likely to have more time and energy spent on conceptual analysis of the term than on finding educational strategies and methods for its implementation.

I contend that Christian *Praxis* Education is a more appropriate term to express the particular orientation for four reasons. First, the term *praxis* firmly identifies the orientation as one concerned with transformation in a continual sense. Because the act of being transformed is perpetual, that is, not a completed action, it is appropriate for a model of education that emphasises growth. This constant state of transformation is an integral part of the orthodox Christian position that "now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (I Corinthians 13:12). The Apostle Paul here clearly indicates the belief that imperfect knowledge exists until the Christian is in God's direct presence (i.e., after death). Thus the constant transformation that is central to praxis is an appropriate concept to have identified in the descriptive title. Second, the term *praxis* uses knowledge that leads to action; it is not interested in stagnant cognitive knowledge but in knowledge that transforms both the individual and society. This represents a similar concern to that expressed in the BCE model, particularly Frisken's views on service to others within the BCE community and the wider community. Because the term clearly reflects the active rather than the passive, it reflects a concept that is central to the goal of the BCE model. Third, the term *praxis* exists within a strong notion of community. It stresses the role of the whole

community in determining what counts as social knowledge. This seems similar to the strong communitarian ideas present in Frisken's writings and thus its use as a descriptive title seems quite appropriate. Fourth, its combination with *Christian* emphasises the particular faith orientation of its nature. It also helps counter a possible objection that because of the association with neo-Marxist ideology and elements of liberal theology, the term praxis has connotations that would be unsuitable to advocates of BCE. The term CPE represents an orientation and not a new model of education; therefore, it does not specifically represent dogmatic content. Rather, it represents a particular perspective that can be brought to bear on issues of content and methodology within the BCE model.

ii. A Christian Praxis Education orientation

The CPE orientation takes its central features from the work of Thomas Groome's (1980) Christian religious education. This section will use Groome's (1980), Astley's (1994) and Hobson and Welbourne's (1997) ideas to construct the CPE orientation. This section is not intended to provide an extensive description of the CPE orientation but is intended to provide some basic philosophical foundations for such an orientation. The development of a full account of an orientation like CPE would require more space and time than this current study allows; it is hoped that a future study related to BCE would seek to develop a more coherent and detailed account of the CPE orientation and its application to BCE.

The central element of the CPE orientation is that of *praxis*. Groome (1980) argues that a *praxis* approach serves as a satisfactory epistemological base for achieving the aims of his Christian religious education. He argues that a purely cognitive orientation will not effectively achieve the goal of Christian religious education, the development of faith, because a purely cognitive orientation gives rise to a "from theory to practice" dichotomy. This in turn raises the speculative intellectual orientation to a level of

(seemingly) greater importance than other forms of knowing. Within the context of Christian religious education, an undue emphasis on propositional dogmatic theology arises in which the lived experience of the believer appears to be devalued (Groome 1980, pp.152-162; Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.41). However, *praxis* resists a purely cognitive orientation to knowledge in favour of a relational orientation. It is consciously located in its own social and historical reality, so that 'knowing arises not from one's own inward speculation, but from intentional engagement with and experience of social reality' (Groome 1980, p.154). Yet it is not without cognitive content, for practical wisdom is the mind set of praxis; *phronesis*, according to Aristotle, is 'a true state, reasoned, and capable of action with regard to things that are good or bad for man' (Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, quoted in Groome 1980, p.154). It takes into account general ethical principles, but also the circumstances of a particular situation before discerning what is wise action. Groome argues that a praxis way of knowing also reflects both the Hebrew and early Christian concepts of knowing God, which is the primary aim of both his Christian religious education and BCE; as such it is thus an appropriate epistemological base.

There are five main elements that constitute the CPE orientation; the first relates to the faith nature of the orientation while the remaining four relate to the concept of praxis as briefly outlined above. First, its aim is the development of active, committed and lived experience faith. Groome (1980, p.34) states that the 'purpose of Christian religious education is to enable people to live as Christians, that is, to live lives of Christian faith.' In defining his notion of Christian religious education, Astley (1994, p.9) provides more specific goals than Groome. He describes Christian religious education as:

> the process whereby Christian learning takes place...in the sense of a person's learning to be Christian. Broadly speaking, it is the adoption and deepening of his or her Christian beliefs,

> attitudes, values and dispositions to experience and act in a Christian way.

Groome specifies three dimensions of *faith* as it relates to Christian religious education: i) faith as believing ii) faith as trusting; iii) faith as doing. *Faith as believing* includes both illumination of the soul by God's grace upon a series of 'stated beliefs about which we come to conviction and to which we give our assent' (Groome 1980, p.61) as well as that series of belief statements. Faith is not intellectualist alone in the sense that the believer can simply acknowledge the truth of dogmatic or credal statements; it must also include an active trusting. Astley (1994, pp.149-154) identifies this active trusting as the difference between *beliefs-that* ('beliefs about such objects of belief as the world, human beings, the church, the last things, Christian ethical norms, and the nature and activity of God and Christ.' p.150) and *beliefs-in* which 'embraces *both* beliefs-that *and* certain attitudes' (p.152) towards the belief-that. *Faith as trusting* involves the fiducial/affective element of human nature. It is a:

> relationship of trust and confidence in a personal God who saves in Jesus Christ. And the trust finds expression in loyalty, love and attachment. Because God is faithful, we can commit ourselves with confidence and trust (Groome 1980, p.61).

But faith as trusting cannot permit the believer to forsake doing good works or from being responsible for their deeds. Thus the third dimension of faith is required. *Faith as doing* is the performative element of faith, 'loving God by loving one's neighbour as oneself' (p.63). In this sense, the doing is the faith response, not the response to faith (where faith is considered in only its cognitive and/or fiducial elements). Groome echoes the ideas of the Apostle James on the interrelationship of faith and deeds (James 2:14-26) when he states that 'without the response [of loving God by loving one's neighbour as oneself] there is no Christian faith' (p.63). The faith aim of the CPE

orientation sees all three elements as essential, co-existent and of equal importance. Development of *faith*, then, is to be seen as the development of all elements equally, not the development of one or two at the expense of the other(s). As Groome clearly states, 'while [the three elements] can be distinguished for the sake of clarity, they cannot be separated in the life of the Christian community as if any one of them could exist alone or have priority over the others' (p.65).

The second element of the CPE orientation is that it recognises the socio-historical nature of faith and the faith community. Although the primary aim of the CPE orientation is the development of faith, there is the recognition that the development of such faith is not an individualistic, ahistorical experience; it is developed and experienced in a community that is socially and historically locatable, a community that is to some extent determined by those factors.[23] The CPE orientation denies that faith is essentially "otherworldly" directed; it 'is both this- and otherworldly' (Groome 1980 p.94) directed. Because of this, it recognises that historical forces have in part shaped our present reality for both good and bad. It takes into account that the culture and historical period into which we are born affects our dispositions and attitudes, including our faith beliefs (Astley 1994, p.204). But the CPE orientation does not merely *recognise* these factors and leave it at that; it *begins* with that recognition in order to undertake critical reflection about those influencing factors.

The third element of the CPE orientation is that it is critical in its vision of the past and present in order to have a future orientation. It questions the 'taken-for-granted assumptions of the socially-constructed realities of the church' (Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.38) as well as those of society

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[23] Groome (1980, Chap 1) develops a complex notion of the present that encompasses what he terms the present of things present, the present of things past and the present of things future. He summarises this notion thus: 'It is the historical self and society that are reflected upon, since our present action is the consequence of our past and the shaper of our future. By reflecting on present action, we can uncover the "pasts" that have brought us to such action, and raise to consciousness the "futures" in that action by becoming aware of its likely or intended consequences." (p.185)

generally. It seeks to uncover the roots of unjust social and political structures and seeks to 'promote the justice, peace and freedom for all that is the promise of God's Kingdom' and to 'develop structures capable of promoting the values of the Kingdom [of God]' (Groome 1980, p.48). It draws on the development of critical social theory 'to generate critical knowledge and to integrate this with the determination to act towards transforming practices that are unjust or inequitable' (Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.38). But it does so in the knowledge that the underlying assumptions of some critical theorists are themselves inappropriate for *Christian* praxis and must themselves be critically interpreted through the Christian tradition (Groome 1980, p.168; pp.173-177). The critical reflection must eventually 'lead back always to lived Christian faith with the consequence of human freedom' (p.175). The way in which the critical reflection is able to be directed towards lived Christian faith is in the shared dialogue that exists within the Christian faith community, which is the fourth element of the CPE orientation.

This fourth element of the CPE orientation focuses on the dialectical process between members of the faith community as well as between the faith community and its history. The dialectic involves critical reflection on the present and the past in a thesis/antithesis/synthesis structure so that what is good from the past may be held on to and (if necessary) reinterpreted for the present and future, and what is not good is removed. Groome refers to this as '*affirming*, *refusing* and *moving beyond*' (Groome 1980, p.196, emphasis in original); he also emphasises that the 'dialectical relationship [must be] positive and creative, not negative and destructive' (p.196). This relationship sets the past and the present in shared dialogue so that a better future possibility may be imagined. It is 'a creative and shaping activity that gives intentionality to the future as it arises out of the present and the past' (p.186). But what is the 'past'? It is a critical understanding of our own experiences as individuals, as members of a faith community, as members of a faith

tradition; Groome uses the phrase 'Christian Story' to signify *'the whole faith tradition of our people however that is expressed or embodied'* (p.192, emphasis in original). The CPE orientation therefore seeks to begin in the lived experiences of the faith believers. It brings these stories into dialogue with the Story. The stories of believers are critically reflected upon in the light of both the Story and the Vision (i.e., the Kingdom of God and the lived response of believers to the teaching of the Kingdom) so that future action might be creatively imagined. It is only in light of the Story and the Vision that authentic Christian Praxis Education can exist; anything less will not be *Christian* Praxis Education.

The fifth element of the CPE orientation is that it is a continual process. The Story is not yet complete ('and it will not be so until the final coming of God's Kingdom', Groome 1980, p.194) and so the community of faith is constantly changing. Continuity takes into account the belief that God is still active in the world (thus rejecting a deist approach) and is working with the community of faith to bring His Kingdom into fulfilment. On account of this, continuation of praxis is important because the faith community is constantly reappropriating the Story for itself in the light of changing social and historical forces and thus praxis is needed to avoid becoming dogmatic. Because society broadly is constantly changing, the faith community must engage in continual praxis to ensure that the fight against injustice and oppression continues in a meaningful manner. Finally, because there is no one accepted expression of the Christian Story, continual praxis is needed so that 'no one version can be imposed on a group of students as the only or final expression' (Groome 1980, p.194). To do so would be to diminish 'the richness of the whole [Christian] tradition' (p.194).

Having sketched the basic orientation of Christian Praxis Education, it is now necessary to consider the extent to which the orientation is able to

satisfy the requirements of educational models in a pluralist liberal democratic society.

III. The socially-critical orientation and Christian Praxis Education

The above description of the CPE orientation shows that it takes a critical stance. This suggests a conceptual similarity between the CPE orientation and the socially-critical branch of educational philosophy. If the CPE orientation can be located definitely within the socially-critical orientation, and if the socially-critical orientation itself can demonstrate an ability to satisfy the criteria for educational models in pluralist liberal democracies, then it is reasonable to argue that the CPE orientation can meet these criteria also. Thus the task of this section is to demonstrate that there are significant similarities between the CPE orientation and the socially-critical orientation, and that the socially-critical orientation can satisfy the criteria for educational models in pluralist liberal democracies as outlined in Chapter 1. If these criteria are able to be satisfied by the CPE orientation in this way, then the dilemma will be partly resolved; it will remain to be seen whether or not the CPE orientation can be found satisfactory to advocates of the BCE model.

In order to demonstrate the similarity between the socially-critical orientation and the CPE orientation, the socially-critical orientation model, as outlined by Kemmis, Cole & Suggett (1983) is examined. Linkages that demonstrate the similarity between the two orientations are made throughout. One aspect of the model, that of *praxis*, is developed to demonstrate further similarity between the two orientations. Having demonstrated the similarities between the two orientations, this section concludes with a discussion of how the socially-critical orientation (in its broadest application) is able to meet the criteria for the validity of educational models within a pluralist liberal democratic society.

The description of the socially-critical orientation outlined by Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983)[24] takes the view that 'all social structures must be critically understood in relation to a more general social philosophy (and view of social organisation) and a more general moral philosophy (and view of individual actions in its social context)' (Kemmis, Cole & Suggett 1983, p.15). In seeking to explain exactly what is meant by the social philosophical perspective of the model, they state that the interest of the model is in 'understanding, informed action and questions of social justice and the critical development of the culture' (p.16). The moral philosophical perspective is based on the notion of 'self reflection: critical thought capable of informing action' (p.16). In this sense, the model attempts to operate in a coherent and consistent manner; the individual moral philosophy is aimed at producing individuals who are concerned and desire to act in order to make society better, that is, more understanding of others and more just. Here is the first point at which there is immediate similarity to the CPE orientation. There is a central concern for the creation of a society that is both understanding and just; the individual Christian committed to a CPE orientation is one who is committed to the values of the Kingdom of God. Peace, justice and freedom are key elements of the CPE orientation, and an education that incorporates the CPE orientation seeks to educate individuals who are critical of social structures that prevent the existence of peace, justice and freedom for all (Groome 1980, pp.47-48).

There is a focus on social elements in the socially-critical orientation that derives from the view that 'our views of education, and hence of schooling, have their justification in views of society and the proper role of education for participation in the life and work of society' (Kemmis, Cole and

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[24] Although the immediate context for their work is significantly different to this study (it derives from a study of the problems associated with the transition between school and work), its focus on relationships within public and/or social constraints means the orientation has much more application than is at first evident.

Suggett 1983, p. 8). With this as a starting point, Kemmis, Cole and Suggett note firstly that the 'socially-critical orientation sees society as problematic' (p.15) and in need of improvement. This improvement can be facilitated by those who have such improvement in mind and are committed to acting to effect such change. But this improvement is difficult to achieve without some critical reflection to isolate social structures and practices that are unjust and oppressive in order to then consider action to improve such situations. Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983) believe that critical reflection is not possible when orientations to knowledge, the curriculum and school structures take 'the present social and economic framework of society more or less for granted' (p.15) or consider that 'through the present economic and political structures of society individuals may make or mar their chances for personal fulfilment' (p.15). The need for societal change requires that education 'concerns itself with critical understanding, critical evaluation, and informed commitment to the improvement of society' (p.15). This view os society as problematic is also assumed by the CPE orientation. It is clear that, while there is much that is good in the received Christian traditions, much is in need of being removed or transformed. The CPE orientation'affirms what is true in present experience, recognises its limitations' (Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.42) and seeks to imagine creatively a better future where justice and freedom are the predominant values. The '*affirming, denying* and *moving beyond*' (Groome 1980, p.196, emphasis in original) dialectical relationship further demonstrates the critical nature of the CPE orientation.

This critical element of the socially-critical orientation is understood in a social context and a central concern of the orientation is *community*. Community orientation is the most important social concept involved with the orientation. It exists as a concept regarding the school classroom, the school institution and the non-educational wider social community (Kemmis, Cole and Suggett 1983, p.17). The *operation* of community is also a central

element to the socially-critica orientation. It is 'collaborative interaction: common work, common langtiage (communication) and joint participation in decision making' (pp.15-16) tha t marks a socially-critical school. Obviously a central element of 'participation in decision making' (p.16) is negotiation. This is vital to the well-being of the community as it is the mechanism by which 'different self interests are recognised and placed in a common framework' (p.16), although it is recognised that it will not always be possible to negotiate all matters. Where this is not possible, such negotiation may indicate 'where common action cannot be taken, or where barriers must be broken down before common action can continue' (p.16). All members of the community, if they are committed to the ideals of the socially-critical orientation, will engage in what Kemmis, Cole and Suggett call the 'most important element' (p.16), that of self-reflection. Self-reflection is intended to bring critical reflection upon not only the individual and their own input to the community but also upon the community itself. In this way, the community is constantly learning because it is continually engaged in reflecting on ways of improving itself and its members. The emphasis on community is also very strong in the CPE orientation, but it has a different focus. In the socially-critical orientation, it is self-reflection for the benefit of the community that is central in the CPE orientation, it is self-reflection within the community but also within the context of the Story and the Vision of the Kingdom that marks the Christian element of the orientation. For the CPE orientation, it is not enough to be simply self-reflective; it must always be in the light of the Story and Vision. In this way the CPE orientation does demonstrate similarity to the socially-critical orientation, but because of its faith orientation, it will not permit any type of reflection; it will seek self-reflection that is rooted in the Story and Vision of the Kingdom of God and its values.

Because of this difference, it may be possible to argue that the CPE orientation is not able to be located satisfactorily within the broader socially-critical branch of educational philosophy. However, it is when questions are raised concerning the use of concepts such as "good" and "improvement" in the work of Kemmis, Cole and Suggett that these objections can be countered. So, within the context of Kemmis, Cole and Suggett's ideas, what is the good and in what sense can there be social improvement? In order to answer this question it is necessary to turn to other work by Kemmis and the work of Grundy. In doing so, the notion of *praxis* becomes much more significant and thus further similarities can be identified between the socially-critical orientation and the CPE orientation. It is on account of the *praxis* element that the CPE orientation can maintain its position within the broader socially-critical orientation.

In *The Action Research Planner*, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p.5) give the following definition:

> Action research is a form of *collective* self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

The cycle of planning, action observing, reflecting and revising the plan asks the action researchers as a group to 'judge whether effects (and issues which arose) were desirable' (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988, p.13). The intention of such reflection is 'to build communities of people committed to *enlightening* themselves...and ..*emancipating* themselves'(p.23, emphasis in original). Thus the notion of good is that which arises from the self-reflection and action of the community and that produces benefits for all members of the community. However, such enlightenment and emancipation does not equate to relativistic notions of the *good*:

> *Action research is not individualistic.* To lapse into individualism is to destroy the critical dynamic of the group and to risk falling victim to the fallacious liberal notion that all educational practices and the values which they purport to realise are equally defensible. (p.15, emphasis in original)

This is a similar qualification to that made by Crittenden (1982, p.22) who argues that 'if a practice of a cultural group exploits or undermines the human dignity of any of its members ..it should not be tolerated'. It is evident that some social sub-groups do not have world views that are in the best interests of the wider community. On this basis it could not be argued satisfactorily that the values of the CPE orientation are those to which Kemmis, McTaggart and Crittenden refer. The ideas of justice and freedom from oppression that are central to the CPE orientation would not permit such a criticism.

Grundy (1987) has produced a study in which the philosophical basis of both action research and the socially-critical orientation can be best understood by considering the concept of Habermas' emancipatory human interest. A brief overview of Grundy's ideas will clarify the nature of the emancipation element of action research as well as the emphasis on social improvement that is found in the socially-critical orientation. It also indicates ways in which action research and the socially-critical orientation, and thus the CPE orientation, can meet the needs of education in a pluralist liberal democracy.

Grundy (1987) begins her discussion by arguing that knowledge is socially constructed and is therefore different from time to time and place to place. As such it must be open to revision and reconstruction as societal and historical changes occur. Underlying this, however, are the structures of knowledge itself, that is, the very way in which knowledge is conceptualised. Grundy argues that the work of Habermas in identifying fundamental human interests has resulted in a deeper insight into the nature of knowledge itself. Habermas' argument is based on the assumption that

humanity is a speech maker and, on account of this, is committed to notions of true, false and differentiation between the two in order to communicate. Accordingly, humanity is naturally interested in rationality which, as Habermas suggests, is an interest in survival that manifests itself through ordering life such that it can be known and experienced. Following from this, Habermas suggests that the very structure of knowledge constitutes what counts as knowledge. He argues that knowledge is constituted by three interests: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. By *interest*, he means 'three types of science by which knowledge is generated and organized (sic) in our society' (Grundy 1987, p.10). The interests also 'shape what we consider to constitute knowledge and determine the categories by which we organize (sic) that knowledge' (p.10). In this sense, then, the fundamental interests 'do not merely represent an orientation *towards* knowledge or rationality on the part of the human species, but rather constitute human knowledge itself' (p.10).

In each of the three knowledge-constitutive interests there exists a relationship between the form of the knowledge and the power of the knowledge. In the technical interest, control and mastery are all important. Survival skills and the need for self-preservation are properly basic orientations to life. Habermas equates this interest with the empirical sciences where 'knowledge consists of certain theories about the world which are grounded in our "positive" observation and experience of the world' (p.11). Accordingly, Grundy argues that the technical interest is 'an interest in control and the technical exploitability of knowledge' (p.12). The action deriving from this, according to Grundy, is instrumental and law governed and thus has control as its central element; those who control knowledge and its constitution will have power over any who wish to use it; as argued in Chapter 4, the BCE model serves as an example where this type of orientation is evident. The practical interest is oriented towards 'understanding the

environment so that one is able to interact with it' (p.13). Grundy points out that with such an interest comes moral compulsion; it is no longer a question of what *can* be done (i.e., technical control) but rather what *ought* to be done. Thus the practical interest is 'an interest in taking right action ("practical" action) within a particular environment' (p.13) In order to know what is right action, one must understand what is needed in a given situation and the manner by which this understanding occurs is through interpretation and interaction with other subjects. The subject is able to interact with other subjects in the environment to come to consensual agreement about what action is needed. Grundy is careful to argue that 'an interpretation depends upon *agreement* with others that such an interpretation is *reasonable*' (p.14, emphasis mine). Thus the practical interest is more oriented to power sharing and cooperation than is the technical interest; knowledge is shared and consensually constructed to help all subjects know what is right action.

The emancipatory interest which informs the socially-critical orientation of Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983) as well as the action research model of Kemmis & McTaggart (1988) is considered by Habermas as a fundamental, or pure, interest Habermas argues that because people are by nature rationally oriented, 'interests which are stimulated by reason are more fundamental than interests which are stimulated by inclination or desire' (p.16). Emancipation is '"independence from all that is outside the individual"' (Habermas, J., 1972, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, London: Heinemann, quoted in Grundy 1987, p.16), or, autonomy. Thus the emancipatory interest is concerned with being free from the control of others. Paradoxically, the autonomous individual exists within a complex societal context in which the freedom and independence of the individual 'can never be separated from the freedom of others' (p.16). The individual engages in an act of emancipation when self-reflection enables 'liberation from dogmatic dependence' (Habermas 1972, quoted in Grundy 1987, p.16). The

emancipatory interest with freedom is neither ontological in the sense that it is 'an inalienable aspect of human nature' (p.18) nor is it transcendental in the sense that it exists independently of humanity in a metaphysical sense. But, argues Grundy, it is transcendental in the sense that it exists through human interaction via speech, the communicative tool that separates humanity from other creatures.

Grundy argues that the emancipatory interest leads to the development of critical theories 'about persons and society which explain how coercion and distortion operate to inhibit freedom' (p.18). These theories seek to investigate current elements of inequality and injustice, reflect on how action might be taken to improve the situation, and ways to implement such action. Within the context of the societal group, investigation, reflection and action are seen as negotiable and cooperative, involving all of the community and having the welfare of the whole community at heart. It involves empowering the individual and groups to 'take control of their own lives in autonomous and responsible ways' (p.19). Individuals are not free, however, to pursue their own freedom to the detriment of the wider community; this is one way in which the emancipatory interest demonstrates a strong commitment to the social group and its improvement. The tension that exists between the needs of the autonomous individual and the responsibility an individual has to the community is what gives the emancipatory interest strength; improvement is always for the benefit of the whole community, not merely the strong or most vocal. The emancipatory interest, then, is an interest in critically evaluating the needs of the individual and the community through self-reflection to empower the community to take action to emancipate individuals and the community from oppression, inequality and injustice.

By this definition, the CPE orientation is one that must be considered emancipatory. As one of many orientations within the emancipatory domain, the CPE orientation does seek to investigate current elements of inequality

and injustice, reflect on how action might be taken to improve the situation and ways to implement such action (Groome 1980, Chs 3 and 5; Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.45). It recognises both that 'freedom of choice is essential for human dignity' (Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.43) as well as that the community of faith (i.e., the social group) are those in whom the transformation must begin. Because the community of faith is committed to the values of the Kingdom, there will be a committment to emancipate individuals and the community from oppression, inequality and injustice. It seems reasonable, then, to maintain that the CPE orientation has many similarities with the more broadly defined socially-critical orientation.

Grundy (1987, pp.101-114) argues that the emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interest manifests itself through *praxis*, that is, through action and reflection. Grundy argues there are five central ideas to the notion of praxis:

i. action and reflection
ii. praxis takes place in the real, not an imaginary or hypothetical world
iii. praxis exists through interaction
iv. the praxis world is constructed, not natural
v. although praxis seeks to make meanings, they are socially constructed, not absolute (pp.104-105)

Praxis seeks to identify those ideological hegemonic domains that keep people enslaved or oppressed, and thus not free, as well as those that are presented as natural. It then aims to show other ways by which humanity may understand its history and societal relationships. This operates by reflection on insights gained through the development of critical social theorems. If the reflection enables the group to affirm these insights for itself, Grundy argues that 'the process of enlightenment' (p.112) has taken place. The resulting enlightenment alone is not enough, however. The group must reflect on how to act in the future in light of this new knowledge. Merely following what others have suggested is not appropriate, for, as Grundy

argues, 'there is no freedom in simply following what has been determined beforehand, even if one ascribes to the particular theory being implemented' (p.113). This is a particularly important point when considering a faith community and its ideology. Whether or not a student subscribes to the ideological view favoured by the school, there is an important consideration concerning how the student has come to accept the view. The CPE orientation supports the concept that 'there is no freedom in simply following what has been determined beforehand (Grundy 1987, p.113). However, it also recognises that much happens to the religious learner that is beyond direct choice. Astley (1994, p.204) argues that the 'forces of religious enculturation and intentional Christian religious education' impinge more on any choice a student might have than might otherwise be admitted. To be truly critical, then, the CPE orientation 'needs also *to evoke in [the student]* a desire for critical exploration and critical discovery - a love of criticism' (Astley 1994, p.213, emphasis in original). Praxis, including Christian praxis, includes a notion of free choice based on critical reflection about how the world is and how it ought to be. As always, the emphasis is on social freedom as well as individual freedom. In this sense, then, praxis is the practical outworking of the emancipatory interest.

The emphasis on critical self-reflection and social improvement in the socially-critical orientation is an emphasis on the notion of praxis. Having established a link between the emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interest, the notion of praxis, the socially-critical orientation and the CPE orientation it is now necessary to consider the extent to which a socially-critical orientation can meet the needs of a model of education for a pluralist liberal democracy as outlined in Chapter 1, Section IV. There it was argued that the following ideals are necessary to any perspective from which to construct an educational model appropriate for a pluralist liberal democracy:

i. a commitment to the ideals of pluralist liberal democracy

ii. a critical investigation of personal world view

iii. an investigation of alternative world views

iv. active teaching for tolerance towards alternative world views

Consideration of these ideals in light of the socially-critical orientation will demonstrate the appropriateness of the orientation. It must be kept in mind that these ideals do not provide prescriptive form or content for educational models within a pluralist liberal democratic society but represent a perspective from which models may be considered.

i. a commitment to the ideals of pluralist liberal democracy

Reference has already been made to the elements of democratic ideology apparent within Grundy's (1987, p.16) presentation of the emancipatory interest. Because ideas such as freedom, autonomy and emancipation are central concerns of any democratic society, the emancipatory interest evident in the socially-critical orientation immediately suggests the ability of the orientation to satisfy this criterion. Furthermore, *emphasis* on such ideals within the emancipatory interest supports the argument that the socially-critical orientation is able to satisfy this first criterion of an educational model for a pluralist liberal democracy. Other explicit ideals of the orientation reinforce this ability: the strong community involvement emphasises the *role* of all participants; the 'shared responsibility' and 'democratic structures' (Kemmis, Cole & Suggett 1983, p.12) aim to give participatory *power control* to all involved in the school community; the negotiation and consensus process; the orientation requires all participants to be engaged in the process of working for societal improvement.

These same ideals are reflected in the CPE orientation as described earlier in this chapter. In regards to satisfying the criterion for commitment to the ideal of *democratic* society, Groome (1980 pp.48-49) argues there is a requirement for the Christian community to be committed to working 'to promote the justice, peace and freedom for all that is the promise of God's

Kingdom' and that 'all Christians who choose to live their lives according to God's intentions, the Kingdom, share in this social responsibility.' Because of the 'this- and otherworldly (p.94) focus present in the CPE orientation, there is the recognition that engagement with present political and social structures is necessary. It is through involvement with these political and social structures that the Christian community is able to contribute to peace, justice and equality, that it 'must live in opposition to sin, both personal *and social*' (p.94, emphasis mine). The CPE orientation is further able to satisfy this first criterion of being committed to the ideals of *pluralist liberal* democracy because of its belief in the intrinsic value of all human beings (Groome 1980, pp.83-88). Astley argues that the difference between 'characteristics' and 'distinctives' of Christianity enable it to be committed to the pluralist nature of society. He contends that 'very few [Christian educational ideas are] distinctive of Christianity in the sense that they are not shared by any other religious or secular viewpoint (Astley 1994, p.17). He goes on to argue that many of the attitudes and beliefs of Christianity such as love, trust and hope 'will always be found in what is truly Christian, but it cannot be argued that they are unique to Christianity' (p.17). Thus the CPE orientation can accommodate a pluralist element to society and thereby satisfy this first criterion.

ii. a critical investigation of personal world view

The emancipatory interest evident within the socially-critical orientation can satisfactorily meet this particular criterion because of its strong emphasis on critical self-reflection. Critical self-reflection is required so that the individual may discover societal and historical forces that seek to oppress and limit freedom both for the individual and society. The socially-critical orientation requires constant reflection and analysis to avoid becoming 'uncritical, doctrinaire or habitual' (Kemmis, Cole & Suggett 1983, p.16). This consistent self-reflection is one of the strengths of the socially-

critical orientation and one that ensures a continued relevance of models derived from the orientation to wider democratic society. The critical self-reflection is also aimed towards the benefit of the wider community; any benefit that is gained from authentic critical insight contributes to the betterment of society. The constant critical self-reflection with the goal of societal improvement is surely a worthwhile goal for any model of education in a pluralist liberal democracy. The desired student outcomes of a socially-critical orientation as outlined by Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983, p.11) are worth quoting here in full for they emphasise the critical self-reflective element and link this to the communitarian emphasis of the orientation. They argue for the development of:

> A critical and constructive co-participant in the life and work of society, who sees self-actualisation in a social context, who pursues the true and the good in transforming and being transformed by society, not purely individualistically.

Thus emphasis is given to both the intrinsic value of the individual and the instrumental value of the individual's contribution to society.

iii. an investigation of alternative world views

By its very nature, the socially-critical orientation will provide opportunity for an investigation of alternative world views because of its central aim to 'help students and communities to understand the structures and values of our society and culture, and to evaluate them' (Kemmis, Cole & Suggett 1983, p.15). By seeking to understand other communities, students will be engaging in action that is investigative of alternative world views. In critically reflecting together about how society can be improved, students from different world views will necessarily be involved in considering the relative merits and problems of other world views, including structures within those world views that may be unjust and oppressive. In considering any forms of oppression that may exist within society, it will be necessary to critically evaluate the world views (and factors that influence them) of all

members of any particular group. It is fair to assume that within the context of a pluralist liberal democracy, any such group will contain some element of diversity. Such investigation is certainly within the intention of the criteria being considered here.

A possible criticism here is that it is possible for a small socially-critical orientated group to be homogeneous in its cultural composition. It may be argued that a homogeneous group would not have sufficient capacity or desire to recognise and investigate alternative world views. Two responses to this are necessary. First, it does not follow that any homogeneous group will necessarily be opposed to investigation of alternative world views simply on the basis that these views are different from their own. It may well be that such a group is committed to investigation of alternative world views whilst maintaining commitment to their own and not wishing to change their own. Second, even within such a group, it is probable there will be enough difference of opinion and outlook that will necessitate consideration of alternative perspectives. In the instance that this is not the case, it would be highly improbable that such a group would wish to undertake a critical self-examination. It could be assumed that such groups (particularly those of a religious nature) would be more concerned with maintenance of homogeneity, stability and received traditions and wisdom more so than critical self-reflection and societal improvement.

iv. active teaching for tolerance towards alternative world views

It would seem at first observation that the socially-critical orientation does not promote the concept of tolerance towards alternative world views because its central aim is societal improvement. This would seem to imply that a community committed to a socially-critical orientation would be intolerant toward those who do not see the need for societal improvement. If this were the case, then the socially-critical orientation would not be a satisfactory model for a pluralist liberal democratic society. However, such

an analysis is derived from an inadequate understanding of the socially-critical orientation.

The goals of the socially-critical orientation are sympathetic to central ideals of pluralist liberal democracy: freedom, equality and respect for all persons. Because the critical element of the orientation is intended to identify oppressive elements, its emphasis is on the creation of a society in which all citizens are free to pursue their own understanding of the good. As a community, the socially-critical orientated group aims to provide the conditions under which individuals may act for the good of the individual and the community. In this sense, toleration of alternative world views is acceptable to the socially-critical orientation to the extent that any world view is not itself contrary to the nature of pluralist liberal democratic society. Therefore there is no obligation to tolerate world views in which oppression is a central element, those in which equality and respect for others are not central ideals. In this respect, then, the socially-critical orientation is legitimate in seeking to improve elements of society that may hold to views such as these, rather than to tolerate them. Important elements of the socially-critical orientation such as 'its notion of community, including the learning community, its collaborative character, its use of negotiation, and its aim of critical self-reflection' (Kemmis, Cole & Suggett 1983, p.16) point more towards a structural operation than moral imperatives. Thus it is quite possible to have alternative world views within this context and, as such, they ought to be tolerated, unless they are contrary to the fundamental principles of pluralist liberal democratic values. Indeed, such a position is considered a central element of liberal democratic theory (Horton 1993, Chap 1).

IV. Christian Praxis Education and BCE

The above analysis demonstrates that a socially-critical orientated educational model is able to satisfy the criteria for model of education within a pluralist liberal democratic society. If this is so, then it is reasonable to argue that an educational model that is both religiously based and that operates from within a socially-critical orientation is also able to satisfy these criteria. It has been argued in Section II and III above that such an orientation exists. It has also been argued (Chapter 4) that there are significant difficulties with the BCE model as outlined in Chapter 3 of this thesis. I contend that through the development of a BCE model that incorporates the CPE orientation it is possible to meet the demands of both the faith aims of the BCE model and those of education in a pluralist liberal democracy. I further contend that to do so would address the difficulties identified with the current BCE model in Chapter 4. This section will attempt to provide reasons for why the CPE orientation is recommended as a solution to the current problems with BCE as well as reasons for why the CPE orientation is recommended as an acceptable orientation for advocates of BCE. I contend that the CPE orientation is well suited to achieving these goals for the following reasons:

i) it is firmly located within the Christian faith and has a faith aim.

This is of primary importance for advocates of BCE. The CPE orientation is clearly identifiable with the Christian faith community and its central aim is undeniably the development of committed lived Christian faith (Groome 1980, p.34; Astley 1994, p.9; Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.37). There already exists a great deal of theological diversity within schools associated with BCE (Long 1996b, pp.15-23) but all are firmly located within an acceptably broad understanding of the term Christian. Although there is an obvious faith aim, many who advocate the BCE model may not agree with the particular theological perspective evident in the CPE orientation and the reasons for this are complex and difficult to discern (Long 1997). Nonetheless,

it is clear that the CPE orientation does possess a very clear faith aim and as such it is recommended for greater consideration and application; any willingness to (adapt and) adopt an aim similar to that represented in the CPE orientation will be reflective of particular theological inclinations amongst the various advocates of BCE and as a result of theological debate. Nonetheless, it is possible that many will still not consider the CPE orientation, despite its strong faith aim.

ii) its underlying assumption is that Christian faith is active faith.

This is of critical importance in whether or not advocates of BCE would be prepared to consider the CPE orientation. The critique in Chapter 4 indicated that a shift was required in the way biblical revelation was approached if the model was to be more philosophically well grounded. There it was argued that Swinburne's concept of 'analogy' retained a strong sense of realism that would be imperative for advocates of BCE. It was also argued that because the Bible was not the 'revelation' of God but was about the 'revelation' of God, Jesus, the role of interpreting that revelation must assume greater importance for knowing what God is saying. Initially, advocates of BCE may object that this moves (unacceptably) towards a theologically liberal position where any interpretation is permitted, but this is an incorrect understanding of both Swinburne's and Wolterstorff's ideas as well as the concept of Groome's Story. Swinburne (1992, p.175) argues on the assumption that:

> God was the author of the Bible in the sense that he was its sole author. He ensured that the message of each of its sentences was as it was, while allowing it to be expressed in the styles of its various human authors and compilers.

There is no doubt that the Bible remains strongly central to his thinking. However, he also recognises that because the Bible is a unique collection of very diverse writings, there is a complex interpretive function that must be applied to the Bible. He states that self-referential interpretation (i.e.,

interpreting Scripture only in light of other Scriptures) does not address the complexities inherent in such a diverse anthology as the Bible; what is needed, argues Swinburne, is a short guide...providing disambiguation and publicly seen by the intended audience to do so' (p.177). Such a guide exists, argues Swinburne, in the creeds of the Church and the teaching of the Church. It was to the *Church* that the teachings of Jesus were given and entrusted through the Apostles and their successors. Prior to the compilation of the Bible (and particularly the New Testament), the creeds and the apostolic teachings were the benchmarks of orthodoxy. Thus the Bible (once compiled) was interpreted in the light of the creeds and apostolic teachings. This dialogue (which Swinburne (p.178) argues existed up until the fifteenth century) was to avoid heresies and misunderstandings of central Christian doctrines. It bears similarity to the CPE notion of shared dialogue in the sense that both *Scripture* and the history and tradition of the Church are important in coming to know the truth. The use of the shared dialogue approach of the CPE orientation is thus able to overcome the difficulties identified in the analysis of the BCE model.

But why would such a position be considered by advocates of BCE? It is important to note that Swinburne's and Wolterstorff's ideas actually *strengthen* the role of the Bible to faith by recognising the mediating role performed by the Church's interpretive function. This is very similar in expression to Frisken's concept of the 'mind of Christ'; for Frisken, it is the Church who discerns what the Bible means for contemporary Christian living. Where the arguments of Swinburne and Wolterstorff have merit is in the open admission that the message of the Bible involves both the communication of human authors and the communication of the divine author and that interpretation is required to discern both. I contend that their views represent a stronger emphasis on the Bible; there is more emphasis on knowing what *God* is communicating rather than simply what the *Bible* says

God is communicating. Wolterstorff's (1995, pp.227-229) ideas go beyond the difficulties associated with the strong inerrantism while retaining a strong commitment to the idea that God does communicate through the Bible. It is hoped evaluation of ideas such as those argued for by Swinburne and Wolterstorff would be critically considered by advocates of BCE. It is hoped this would be done in order to overcome the difficulties identified with the BCE model in Chapter 4.

iii) it is focused on learning within an active faith community.

Frisken makes a great deal of learning within the context of a faith community. He attempts to build a concept of faith that finds expression through action in the community; it is a form of action that seeks the interests of all, that seeks to encourage and uplift all, that seeks to do good works for all. The identity of the individual is understood in relation to the community; the gifts and talents of the individual are given for the edification of the whole community, not the upbuilding of oneself. In this regard, the BCE model and the CPE orientation are on common ground: it is relationally-oriented. Both recognise the value of learning faith within the context of the faith community in an experiential way. However, the CPE orientation seems to have a more unified concept of faith as doing. Whereas Frisken (1993c, p.2) argues that 'being is fundamental rather than doing, but doing is the natural consequence of being', Groome (1980, p.63) argues that 'the faith is in the doing' and that 'the faith is the response, and without the response there is no faith'. This seems a stronger notion than Frisken's; it also removes the dichotomy that develops between theory and practice. It is hoped that such a strengthened notion of faith as doing might be explored by advocates of BCE.

iv) it seeks to critically investigate a personal world view.

Two of the central criticisms of this thesis has been that the BCE model is based on problematic epistemic foundations for its religious truth claim

and that it utilises a strong hermeneutic authority. These two criticisms were found to restrict the likelihood of students investigating their personal world view and alternative world views. It was argued that without some change to the epistemic basis of the BCE it would remain difficult for the model to satisfy these criteria. The CPE orientation is more able to overcome these difficulties by virtue of its use of praxis. As outlined in Section II of this chapter, the epistemic basis for praxis is relational in the sense that it is consciously located in its own social and historical reality, so that 'knowing arises not from one's own inward speculation, but from intentional engagement with and experience of social reality' (Groome 1980, p.154). It 'avoids the dichotomy of a theory-to-practice approach which is a one-way approach' (Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.41) like that of the BCE model as analysed in Chapter 4. The relational element finds expression in the shared dialogue of praxis which requires critical reflection as a beginning point. It is this element of critical reflection that enables the CPE orientation to satisfy the criterion of investigation of a personal world view. Because the shared dialogue requires critical remembering of one's past and present it will of necessity mean an investigation of one's constructed personal world view.

It is critical that advocates of BCE address this issue. The analysis of Chapter 4 argued there exists an inability of the BCE model to satisfy the criterion of critical investigation of a personal world view; to fail to address this is unsatisfactory. It has been argued that the CPE orientation is able to satisfy the criterion, but it must also be satisfactory to advocates of BCE. I contend that the CPE orientation can do this on account of the centrality of faith. Groome (1980, p.191) makes it clear that the use of praxis as a way of knowing is not distinctively Christian; it is only 'when the Story and its Vision are retold and our own stories and visions critiqued in their light' that we have education that is uniquely Christian. Furthermore, Astley (1994, p.17) argues that many aspects of Christian education are not unique to

Christian education. The difference between what is 'distinctive' and 'characteristic' of Christianity is often confused. Astley argues that many Christian ideals (love, peace, joy, etc.) are *characteristic* of, but not necessarily *distinctive* of Christianity. He argues that differences between the two concepts are often confused. Thus the critical reflection element of praxis must always be seen in light of the Christian Story for it to be truly Christian. This safeguards the praxis process from the limitations identified by Groome (1980, pp.168, 174-177). Furthermore, the goal of Christian praxis is the development of lived Christian faith, not just greater self-awareness or political involvement. Because the reflection is always directed back towards the Christian Story and its Vision, it represents a possible way forward for advocates of BCE.

v) it gives opportunity for investigation of alternative world views.

Another of the criticisms made against the BCE model was its inability to satisfy this criterion. It was found that any investigation of alternative world views was given from a theological perspective only and thus it was recommended that phenomenological study ought to be included. The CPE orientation encourages active engagement with those who represent different expressions of the Christian faith as part of the dialogue process. Within the context of the BCE school this represents a recognition that the local community is not necessarily homogenous; within the context of CCSL, this represents the fact that 'most of these schools were established as part of the ministry of local evangelical churches of different denominations' (CCSL 1993, i). This aspect of the CPE orientation may even help positively reconstruct a context in which 'the various [theological] traditions have difficulty in cooperating for any length of time with each other outside the financial sphere' (Long 1996b, p.14). Because the shared dialogue process operates with each participant critically reflecting on their own experience and sharing this with other participants, there is opportunity for those

involved in praxis to recognise alternative expressions of the Christian faith, thereby partially satisfying this criterion.

Because the CPE orientation also seeks to engage with those outside the community of faith, there is opportunity to recognise that a range of alternative world views exist. However, unlike the BCE model's primary emphasis on a theological approach to those outside the community of faith, the CPE orientation focuses on the *lived experiences* of those outside the community of faith. Praxis always starts in the present lived reality and this must translate into those outside as much as inside the faith community; this reinforces the recommendation that study of alternative views within the BCE model ought to include more phenomenological elements. Its relevance is more fully discussed in the following paragraph. It seems, then, that concerning this criterion, the CPE orientation can accommodate recognition of alternative world views both within and outside of the community of faith. It is not that the BCE model is incapable of recognising alternative world views at present, it is rather that the CPE orientation can do so in a way that moves beyond a purely intellectualist theological understanding.

vi) it enables teaching for tolerance of alternative world views.

Again, there are two distinct elements to this criterion. First, because there are many differing theological traditions within the community of faith, the CPE orientation recognises that tolerance is required. The orientation recognises that because 'there are many versions, all combining to make up the common Story of Christianity' (Groome 1980, p.194), critical reflection is required to draw out and appropriate what is good and true in these traditions. The element of tolerance towards these different expressions of Christianity is implicit in this notion. Such a notion is expressed in Frisken's concept of the 'mind of Christ which will be expressed in the thinking and the attitudes of the Christian community' (Frisken 1993c, p.5). Of the two ideas, that of the CPE orientation seems closer in intention to the criterion of

teaching for tolerance of alternative world views and is thus recommended for further consideration by advocates of BCE.

Second, an emphasis on emancipation and a commitment to social action that exists within the CPE orientation directs the community of faith towards engagement with those outside the community of faith. Such a position recognises that not all who seek emancipation and social action do so within the context of a community of faith; as Groome points out in his analysis of the praxis concept, others have humanistic and/or political reasons for engaging in praxis. In the struggle against injustice and oppression, the community of faith will be engaged with those who, although they do not share the theological basis for the struggle, share many of the same values: justice, equity, forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, peace, etc. Despite these differences, the CPE orientation can tolerate the differing world views because of its respect for all humanity. This does not necessarily represent a relativistic position, though, because the CPE orientation has as a basic belief position that 'the fullness of human freedom is realized (sic) in perfect union with God; Christians will necessarily desire that all humanity live in obedience to the ruler of the Kingdom, God, but they will not attempt to force this situation. Rather, it represents a belief that 'freedom of choice is essential for human dignity' (Hobson and Welbourne 1997, p.43); because of the nature of world views, the CPE orientation will maintain the belief that its own understanding of reality is true (see Chapter 4, Section II, iii on exclusivist religious truth claims), but it will engage in dialogue with and respect the views of others who are likewise searching for genuine truth.

Because of the exclusivist nature of any belief position, many associated with BCE may find it difficult to accept such a position as outlined above. Nonetheless, it is hoped that work will be done into how tolerance of alternative world views can be further incorporated into the BCE model.

vii) the nature of praxis is continual.

The process of growing in faith is never complete. The CPE orientation emphasises this continuity through the use of praxis. Because the nature of praxis is forward looking, there can never be a sense in which the community of faith has become perfected. Groome states that 'no one interpretation of our Story is ever its complete and final meaning' and that 'we can always return to it to find truths that were not recognize (sic) before because the "breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph 3:18) of it can never be totally known by us' (Groome 1980, p.197). CPE is thus never completed but is a lifelong process.

An orthodox Christian position is that "now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (I Corinthians 13:12). This recognition of imperfect knowledge means that some continuous transformation is required within the community of faith. Frisken remarks that the 'educational process...continues until each [believer] attains the "unity of faith" which presupposes knowing what is believed and the "knowledge of the Son of God"' (Frisken 1993b, pp.7-8). The process of praxis is suited to this purpose as it does not presuppose that the final attainment of these goals is possible; rather, it recognises that continual '*affirming*, *refusing*, and *moving beyond*' (Groome 1980, p.196, emphasis in original) is required. This is also similar to Van Brummelen's (1988) notion of *transcendence*. In his four phases of learning, he argues for this last stage to move beyond disclosure and reformulation of information. He states that 'during transcendence theoretical reflection becomes reflective action' (p.56). Furthermore, learning in this phase seeks to have students 'respond to what they have learned. They apply concepts and principles in their own unique ways, often in what for them are original situations' (p.56). This need for transcendence that Van

Brummelen identifies can be met through the use of the praxis approach of the CPE orientation.

These ideas have begun to explore the relevance of the CPE orientation for the BCE model. This section has attempted to identify points of commonality that already exist between BCE and CPE, to demonstrate how aspects of the CPE orientation can satisfy advocates of BCE, as well as to suggest ways in which the CPE orientation moves beyond the limitations of the BCE.

V. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to bring the major strands of this thesis together. It has argued for the acceptance of a Christian Praxis Education, an orientation to Christian education that draws on the Christian Religious Education work of Groome and Astley as well as Hobson's and Welbourne's Transformational Christian Education. In arguing for its acceptance, emphasis has been placed on how the CPE orientation is able to satisfy the criteria for validity of educational models within a pluralist liberal democracy as well as how the orientation might be considered acceptable to advocates of BCE. It has not been the intention of this chapter to outline a series of prescriptions for implementation; rather, these suggestions are intended to promote critical discussion and debate on how the difficulties identified in the critical analysis of BCE (Chapter 4) might be satisfactorily resolved.

The following brief chapter draws some conclusions and seeks to outline some specific future directions for advocates of BCE to consider.

Conclusion

I. Introduction

The central argument of this thesis has been that within the context of a pluralist liberal democracy such as Australia, it is philosophically valid for parents to provide an upbringing (and thus formal educational experiences) for their children from a religious perspective. The BCE model as outlined in Chapter 3 is an attempt to do this, but does not meet the criteria of validity for a number of reasons. Incorporation of the CPE orientation will permit the BCE model to more adequately satisfy these criteria as well as address the other philosophical difficulties identified in this study. It has further been argued that the CPE orientation can enhance the ability of the BCE model to achieve its own stated faith aims. It is now up to advocates of BCE to reflect on these findings. If the CPE orientation as outlined above is accepted, or used as a beginning point for further critical reflection amongst advocates of BCE, it will reflect a preparedness to search for a better future for BCE. It is hoped that this critical analysis will function as the first phase of an approach to solving the problem. It is hoped that a praxis approach can be implemented to continue this work. This will require affirming what is good and worthwhile in the BCE model, denying what is not (this thesis has been an attempt to begin this process) and moving beyond the present into a better future for those associated with BCE. This work is offered as an attempt to begin this process.

The author of this current work wishes to draw attention to a very recent publication by many associated with CPCSL as an attempt to begin a similar process. *The Crumbling Walls of Certainty* (Lambert and Mitchell 1997) is

subtitled *Towards a Christian critique of postmodernity and education* and is directly relevant to many of the ideas discussed in this thesis. Although there has been little time to critique and incorporate ideas from this book in terms of this thesis, some brief comments are required. Chapters cover such issues as the place of a Christian world view within a postmodern philosophical world (thus touching on issues of exclusivism), discussion of how a Christian world view can be better understood by students (thus related to a critical investigation of a personal world view) as well as ideas related to educating for world citizenship. The value of such a text is not that it provides coherent answers to a number of these issues, but it is in the fact that those associated with CPCSL are beginning to address seriously these issues. It is hoped that those associated with CCSL may find both useful insights within this text as well as courage to begin some honest hard thinking about their own educational theory and practice. It is further hoped that future study into the theory ande practice of BCE addresses the issues raised in this anthology.

II. Recommendations

The development of a full account of an orientation like CPE requires more space and time than this current study has allowed; it is recommended that a future study related to BCE seeks to develop a more coherent and detailed account of the CPE orientation as well as its application to the BCE model. Related to this, it is recommended that more empirical work into the nature of the BCE model be conducted to isolate both the positive and negative aspects of the model in practice.

Of fundamental importance to a faith-oriented model of education is the development of a coherent theory of faith development as well as consideration of how faith development impacts upon the work of BCE. In the absence of any clear beginning point at present, I would suggest an initial response involve an investigation of Fowler's model of faith development.

Advocates of BCE could identify issues and concepts from Fowler's work that could serve to inform the development of their own theory (or perhaps an adaptation of Fowler's). As has been argued, 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. Of particular need is the development of the role of the non-believer in the BCE school.

One of the major criticisms of the BCE model was that it took too theological and dogmatic in understanding of both its own faith position as well as of alternative world views. It is recommended that a more phenomenological approach to the study of faith be included. It has already been noted that such a position 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). Perhaps one of the regular CCSL conferences might begin some of this work.