The Development of Themelic Schools in Australia

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Declaration

This thesis is the result of research undertaken at the Faculty of Education, University of Western Sydney, Nepean. The work in this thesis and conclusions drawn are my own work and include nothing which is the outcome of collaboration. No part of this thesis has been submitted for another degree at any other institution.

Signed: __________________________

Date: ____________________________
Abstract

The Development of Themelic Schools in Australia

This thesis investigates a new kind of conservative Protestant schooling that emerged in Australia after 1962. I have called these schools “themelic” (a term based on their use of the Bible) to emphasise their particular theological tradition in education. Themelic schools developed out of a reaction to secular humanist trends which emerged after World War II.

In 1996 there were approximately 300 themelic schools with 60,000 students. It is my argument that these constitute a system of schools which warrants greater research. The groups of schools identified in this collection are Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd, Christian Community Schools Ltd, Accelerated Christian Education, Light Educational Ministries, independent themelic schools and themelic home schools. Tertiary interests in teacher education which have also developed in this theological tradition are the University of the Nations (YWAM), the National Institute for Christian Education, the Institute for Christian Tertiary Education, Christian Heritage College, Christian College of Tertiary Education, Tabor College and Westminster College. The Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) represents the majority of these schools, providing financial services and a significant lobby group in Canberra.

The research integrates historical, philosophical and theological work with a considerable methodological basis in oral history. This integration is conditioned by the nature of the schools themselves and the way in which Christian philosophy and theology is woven into their story. The history of these schools and definition of their identity embraces theological and philosophical discussion. The research seeks to introduce the schools, clarify their theoretical positions, evaluate their theological and social position and offer criticism and recommendations regarding their educative value.

The thesis argues that themelic schools are misunderstood by those inside and outside of the system but proposes that they can be understood when explained theologically. Research into similar schools in the USA, Britain and Canada is explored to assist this purpose. One of the central arguments of the thesis is that the themelic system is a
system of fear and confusion. The motifs of this system are the inerrancy of the Bible and the language of “Christ-centredness”. The thesis argues that the themelic system is a collaboration of numerous conservative Protestant theological traditions which have not been involved in the process of schooling in Australia before World War II. This collaboration incorporates a considerable diversity of traditions, the extremes of which are discussed in detail. Whilst these traditions come together to form a new process of schooling the thesis argues that themelic schools are characterised by schism because many theological and educational differences remain hidden. The thesis demonstrates some of these differences with a collection of case studies and argues that all these schools share a common language, characteristics and fundamentalist epistemology.

The final part of the thesis explores psycho-social issues in the themelic system which are educationally problematic. The thesis argues that the themelic system is laden with numerous contradictions which have not been addressed and that the schools are reactionary, authoritarian and educationally limited. Some recommendations are made that address organisational and language issues. Though the criticism offered by this thesis is sometimes negative the intended outcomes of the thesis are positive so as to help these schools establish better environments for education.
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To my children, for their understanding and flexibility.

To my wife, Helen, for her endless understanding, patience and forbearance in love, I dedicate this thesis.

Robert D. Long

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Chapter 1

A New Phenomenon of Christian Schools in Australia

1.1 Introduction to the research

... teachers and education experts are living in a fool's paradise: they seem to believe that when they have labelled something as stupid, irrational, ill-informed and anti-professional they have, by that labelling, weakened or destroyed it.¹

This statement by Henry Mayer formed part of the foreword to a case study of the MACOS/SEMP controversy in Queensland in 1978. As will be demonstrated in this thesis the MACOS/SEMP controversy was a watershed in the development of a new system of Christian schools in Australia. The MACOS/SEMP controversy exposed the beliefs and actions of a group of Christians who, as Mayer rightly recounts, were being dismissed by educators. Mayer had enough insight to realise that this group of Christians and their sympathisers would not go away but were capable of significant action.

It is my concern that Mayer's warning still has not been taken seriously. There has been very little research or other material published on the fastest growing system of non-government schooling in Australia since the 1960s. What research has been done is by and large by postgraduate research students (see below, p. 26ff) and this has rarely been taken up by established scholars. Concomitant with this is widespread indifference, confusion and lack of understanding regarding the identity and uniqueness of a new phenomenon of Christian schools in Australia. Most of the recent work published on this topic in Australia is simplistic and further confuses the picture. This work will be explored in this chapter.

The overall purpose of this thesis is to describe and analyse this new schooling system, explain its development, offer constructive criticism of its position and make some

positive suggestions about how its schools could improve. This thesis will argue that these schools are best understood by their ideological and rhetorical commonality rather than their subcultural commonality. It is my contention that the most suitable context in which to understand these schools is not in a general historical trend of private/church schooling in Australia but rather through a contextual survey of conservative theological Protestantism, particularly theological fundamentalism.

Indeed, these new Christian schools wish to be known to be different from the traditional church (Arnoldian) school and use the term "distinctive" or "distinctives" to mean distinctively more Christian in educational practice than the church school tradition.\(^2\) I will argue that there is little curricular difference between these schools and all other schools; rather, the difference is one of epistemology, hermeneutics and management. A detailed examination of the impact of these differences upon students is not within the scope of the thesis. The thesis argues that the maintenance of a fundamentalist epistemology has serious implications for the establishment of openness in education and the possibility of effective management of persons.

I will argue that this system of schools has added another element to the structure of education in Australia. In order to discuss this collection of Christian schools, I use the label "themelic", from a Koine Greek expression (root - themelios)\(^3\) used in the New Testament which appears in the biblical language used by these particular schools to justify their position. The term literally means "Christ is the foundation". The term "themelic" refers to a new kind of conservative Protestant collaboration that has emerged as Christians of many Protestant theological traditions have begun to establish low fee schools in Australia in a common system. The use of the term "themelios" will be explained in Chapter 3.

After World War II, many conservative Protestant denominations established evangelistic associations in response to changing social trends in Australian society but these "fellowships", as they were known, were separate from the denominations and from each other. In 1973 Dr Leon Morris, a prominent Australian and international evangelical theologian, commented:

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Up till now there has been no way of uniting evangelical effort. But if evangelicals generally link up to form a strong alliance their voice will be heard far and wide.4

It is my thesis that conservative Protestantism has united through collaboration in the establishment of themic schooling.

The schools in this category are mostly affiliated with the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS), Christian Community Schools Ltd (CCS), Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd (CPCS) and the Christian Schools Association of Queensland (CSAQ). Also in this category are some non-affiliated schools and home school groups which are small in size but significant in number. All themelic schools, through their formal associations, subscribe to the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible and understand this to be foundational to their identity as Christian. There are approximately 300 of these schools across Australia, with 60,000 students. This represents more than one-third of the Protestant school population and 8.5% of the non-government school population. This group makes up the themelic system of schools.5

The term “themelic system” refers to all the schools defined by the characteristics which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Any system comprises both content and processes and is complete in itself, and often has a life of its own which is more than the sum of the lives of the individuals within it. Systems contain within themselves entire worldviews which are expected to make sense of all that happens within the systems. They explain experience and validate actions.

My perspective on this new generation of Christian schools emanates from experiences as a teacher in government schools for many years, a theological student/minister in a conservative Protestant denomination, the vice-chairman of a regional committee to

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establish such a school, a consultant for the Inter Church Commission On Religious Education In Schools (ICCOREIS) (NSW), a teacher in a CPCS school for seven years and a regional representative on a CPCS national curriculum committee. These experiences have helped generate hypotheses and questions that preoccupy the mind of a friendly critic with a theologically liberal perspective.

1.2 Thesis structure

The thesis has three parts. The first seven chapters of the thesis address the system of themelic schools and their theological nature. The present chapter explores past attempts at explaining these schools through a literature review and explains the thesis structure. Chapter 2 clarifies the overall purpose, research questions and methodology of the thesis and concludes with a brief history of Arnoldian schooling, because a comparison of schools patterned on the work of Thomas Arnold and those of the themelic system is important throughout the thesis. Chapter 3 discusses further the term “themelic” and the two dominant symbols of themelic identity: an inerrant Bible and “Christ-centredness”. Chapter 4 describes the collection of schools in the themelic system and relevant religious associations. Chapter 5 introduces a theological framework for understanding these schools. Chapter 6 introduces diagrammatical tools for analysing themelic school differences.

The first six chapters lay the foundation for a collection of case studies in Chapter 7. The case studies serve to bring together discussion of the history of the themelic system and its theological dynamic. Throughout the first six chapters the thesis introduces various diagrammatical and descriptive explanations of themelic identity which are consolidated by the case studies. The case studies provide further tools for use in the attempt to understand themelic identity in the analysis that follows.

The second part of the thesis explores issues of identity and causality. Chapter 8 explores the foundations and characteristics of fundamentalist epistemology in the themelic system. Chapter 9 discusses the nature of the themelic awareness which has been generated through events and movements in Protestant Christianity in Australia since World War II. Chapter 10 seeks to explain causes of themelic development.

The final part of the thesis investigates aspects of themelic school identity which are
problematic. Chapter 11 explores contradictions in the themelic system. Chapter 12 looks at the reactionary nature of the themelic system and the socio-psychological factors at work in it. Chapter 13 discusses the practical outworking of themelicism in school management. This part of the thesis explores issues which have considerable bearing upon the possibilities for establishing education in these schools. Chapter 14 concludes with some conclusions and positive recommendations.

1.3 The search to explain a new system - Literature review

The purpose of this section is to explore efforts of scholars in Australia and overseas who have contributed to the endeavour of explaining this system of schools. The religious and theological expressions used in this chapter are clarified in the glossary at the end of the thesis. A full explanation of these terms is provided in Chapter 5. Brian V. Hill, noted Australian educator and evangelical Christian comments:

...and their logic was so much "in house" that it wasn't easy to capture that for the general Christian witness in Australia and make it work in wider circles. I think that's still the case and I'm sad about it but in the meantime this sector has also become statistically significant and there's swinging national figures of something like 2 to 3 percent and that has to be taken account of. It is rather surprising that it doesn't get more of a mention in national theorising. The mainstream is uncomfortable with it and doesn't mention it much but it is a significant political factor which people ought to take into account.6

These words of Hill effectively capture the situation regarding the identification of this group of schools in Australia. It is surprising that this system of schools does not get greater mention in national theorising. As Hill observes, such theorising is discouraged by the particular dynamic of the schools themselves. However, it seems that academics on the outside are not so much uncomfortable with themelic schools as bewildered and confused by what they encounter in them. Scholars and contemporary researchers outside these schools, such as Connell, Prideaux, Speck, Anderson and Marginson, have been unable to determine the nature of these schools with clarity.7 I will argue

6 Interview Brian V. Hill 23.11.93.
that their work has tended to confuse the situation.

The thesis argues that even those on the inside of themelcic schools have been unable to explain themselves, as was the case with the supposed Christian school bicentennial celebrations by CCS in 1993. Themelic schools entered the fray in 1962 against Catholic, Arnoldian and government systems while sharing structures common to all three. In the light of some similarities between these schooling models, it has been difficult for themelic schools to establish a margin of differentiation. Other models, such as Montessori schools, Steiner schools, progressive schools, ethnic schools and non-Christian religious schools seem to fare better with more clearly established “distinctives”.

The themelic school tradition, after more than 30 years of life in Australia, still does not have a clearly defined place and this constitutes a problem for it and for the wider education community which wishes to deal with it. By “a clearly defined place” I mean an established and recognised position on the schooling horizon in Australia so that all those involved with themelic schooling understand where they sit in the overall picture of things and others understand them. It is simply inaccurate and confusing to assimilate these schools to the Arnoldian pattern of schooling, just as it is misleading to label all schools in this system as militant fundamentalist. Hill recognised a problem in defining themelic schools in 1982 in a paper for the Journal of Christian Education, deciding to name these schools “small alternative Christian schools, mostly Protestant”.8 Such labels still allow the outsider the liberty to group these schools with all other conservative Protestant schools.

The temptation for themelic schoolers and academics both inside and outside the system has been to think that one particular tradition in this system of schools is characteristic of the whole. This happens, for example, when academics classify all these schools as fundamentalist because they have observed a few schools using the American Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system. For those educators outside of the themelic tradition, there is no end of confusion regarding themelic school identity, because they do not usually have the theological understanding to analyse the driving dynamic. Whilst a sociological analysis of these schools is helpful, it is my argument that such analysis does not expose the central identity of this system of schools.

In my examination of the Australian context I will discuss the special contributions of two evangelical Christian academics, Brian. V. Hill and William. E. Andersen to the themelic movement. I will also discuss contributions made by scholars from the United States, Canada and Britain in establishing an understanding of similar schools in their countries. Researchers in other countries vary in the label they give to these schools. It is my view that the coming together of conservative Christian traditions into a themelic schooling system is more pronounced in Australia. For the purpose of consistency, I will refer to similar schools under discussion in other countries as “themelic schools” even though the researchers themselves use such other titles as “evangelical”, “fundamentalist”, “reformed”, “charismatic” or “new Christian schools”. Some of these terms which are used in the initial discussion of this chapter are explained comprehensively in Chapter 3. Shorter more accessible explanations are provided in the Glossary.

1.4 Recent confusion in academia

Anderson has recently argued, from a sociological perspective, that the growth of the private school sector has destabilised the Australian system, and that:

... the private sector has grown over the years in response to two long-standing characteristics of the state public education systems - the limited development of academically selective secondary schools and the growth of large centrally controlled educational bureaucracies.

It is my contention that Anderson’s explanation for the development of the private sector of schooling in Australia does not provide an adequate explanation of the origin and growth of themelic Christian schools. These schools have not started and grown for entirely the reasons that Anderson puts forward.

Anderson’s typology of private schools tends to gloss over this substantial new development in non-government schooling and fails to take account of its ideological nature. Anderson rightly says that schools seek to maintain a particular subculture. This new generation of Christian schools does foster a unique subculture but my contention is that this is only indirectly one of their characteristics. The essence of these

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9 Anderson, D., op. cit.
10 ibid., p. 217.
schools is their ideological and rhetorical commonality rather than their subcultural commonality. Anderson's understanding of the Christian Community School system is an example of how the unity and breadth of this new movement can be misrepresented. He states:

Christian community schools have been by far the fastest growing group under the government's New Schools Policy, followed by ethnic schools. Together these two groups accounted for approximately one-third of all the places which were sought in the funding rounds 1986 to 1990.\textsuperscript{11}

It is unfortunate that Andersen has overlooked the CPCS schools whose growth has accelerated at a similar rate so that they outnumber the CCS schools in student population and number of schools. Further substantive detail of these associations will be explored in Chapter 4.

It is hard to credit that so little research has been published on such a significant development of schooling in Australia, a movement of schools that is larger than the Department of Education in the Northern Territory or the Department of Education in the Australian Capital Territory. At its current growth rate of 8.5% per annum this system of schools will be larger than the Tasmanian government system by 1997.\textsuperscript{12} There are already three times as many themelic schools as Anglican schools and, at the current rate of growth of enrolments, the themelic student population will outstrip the Anglican system student population by the year 2000. It is significant that the Australian Bureau of Statistics does not know of this system of schools in its calculations yet lists details of the Anglican system.\textsuperscript{13} Why has such a significant system of schooling, a rising star, been overlooked? Why has such a large system of schooling been so misrepresented and poorly comprehended?

The dismissal of this group of schools is common among academics. Anderson confirms this when he states that:

\textsuperscript{11} ibid., p. 229.
\textsuperscript{12} These calculations were made using 1995 themelic school directories, DEET register of gazetted non-government schools and McLennan, W. \textit{Schools Australia 1994} Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1995.
\textsuperscript{13} McLennan, ibid, p. 4.
In Australia, it appears that the registration of non-government schools by the states is now less perfunctory than it has been and that some practices regarded as objectionable, such as the Australian Christian Education curriculum, have all but disappeared.\textsuperscript{14}

The truth of the matter is that the Australian Christian Education (properly called the Accelerated Christian Education system) curriculum group is growing with 45 schools and more than 2,000 home schoolers using its material.\textsuperscript{15} ACE schools have an individualistic pedagogy based on textbooks and students learning in isolation. Inaccurate labelling and the dismissiveness of teachers and education experts have done nothing to help establish an understanding of one of the fastest growing education movements in Australia since World War II. Mayer's prophetic perception about "the fool's paradise" for educators has been realised as teachers and academics continue to be indifferent towards these schools. It is clear that whilst academic educators have basked in the imagined demise of what Mayer described as "stupid, irrational, ill-informed and anti-professional"\textsuperscript{16} the opposite has happened. Now that the size and growth of this system of schools warrants attention, the academic community has been found wanting.

The work of Speck and Prideaux\textsuperscript{17} also exemplifies the failure of academics and educators to explain this new paradigm in schooling. Speck and Prideaux, whilst labelling these schools collectively as "fundamentalist", have no explanation of why these schools have survived without the same highly voluble, public and accepted militant fundamentalist presence in Australia as in the United States. Their claim that the general ethos of fundamentalist schools is one of quiet conservatism\textsuperscript{18} runs counter to much of the established research on how militancy constitutes a foundation for fundamentalism.\textsuperscript{19} It is confusing to equate the practice of themelic schooling with the fundamentalism of The Loyal Regiment of Australian Guardians\textsuperscript{20} or The League of Rights, even though they have been characterised as "Christian fundamentalists".\textsuperscript{21} It

\textsuperscript{14} ibid., p. 223.
\textsuperscript{15} Interview F. Risser 17.10.92.
\textsuperscript{16} Mayer, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{17} Speck, C. and Prideaux, D., Fundamentalist Education and Creation Science \textit{Australian Journal of Education} Vol. 37, No. 3, 1993, pp. 279-95.
\textsuperscript{18} ibid., p. 279.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Canberra Times} 5 May, 1995, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Canberra Times} 4 May, 1995, p. 1.
is misleading to equate themelic schooling with groups such as the Branch Dravidian at Waco, Texas or with fundamentalists who harass and picket abortionists in the United States. Whilst themelic schoolers quite often share an epistemology and hermeneutic which are fundamentalist, their general behaviour is not fundamentalist. Themelic schoolers are certainly not fundamentalists in the popular pejorative use of the word. This will be explored in Chapter 7. The claim by Speck and Prideaux that these Christian schools were established initially in the 1970s\textsuperscript{22} is simply inaccurate and highlights the complete misunderstanding in general of the nature and history of these schools.

Speck and Prideaux make only one mention of CCS and CPCS schools in their paper and concentrate on the curriculum, philosophy of ACE schools and the Creation Science Foundation (CSF). CSF is a group which believes in the literal biblical creation story. Whilst the findings of Speck and Prideaux on the ACE system are reasonably accurate, their overall account of what constitutes a fundamentalist curriculum completely overlooks the major sectors of the themelic group of schools. The number of students in ACE schools constitutes barely 8\% of the themelic school system. The largest themelic school groups of CCS schools and CPCS schools are brushed aside with only one reference by Speck and Prideaux.

1.5 Confusion within the themelic movement

In 1993 CCS organised “The Bicentennial of Christian Schooling in Australia 1793-1993”\textsuperscript{23}. An exploration of the events and celebrations planned for this occasion serves to highlight the differing perspectives amongst themelic schools, particularly the differences between CCS schools and CPCS schools. The bicentennial celebrations of CCS also serve to draw out the distinctives of themelic schools in comparison with other Christian school models, particularly the Arnoldian tradition, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. This comparative investigation also exposes the ways in which themelic schools are different from other Christian private school patterns established in previous eras in Australian history. It is my contention that any ideological or historical comparison of modern themelic schools with private schooling established in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries rests upon very tenuous grounds. In many ways, such a comparison distorts and confuses the distinctiveness of the themelic model.

\textsuperscript{22} Speck and Prideaux, op. cit., p. 279.

CCS believes that the first Christian school in Australia was established by the Reverend Richard Johnson on 25 August 1793 at the dedication of the first schoolhouse.24 Although CCS acknowledges the existence of education prior to this date, there is a clear effort to identify CCS with Johnson’s school and the colonial pattern of schooling on which it was modelled. Johnson’s evangelical motivation to establish moral, religious and secular education of the First Fleet generation of children is particularly noted.25 At the same time CCS wishes to maintain that this first attempt at Christian schooling was very different from CCS schooling and also from modern Anglican schools.26

What is clear is that this historical anniversary provided an opportunity and justification for CCS to announce and publicise its existence to the wider community,27 which in itself testifies to the nature of the CCS schools. CCS schools with their strong Baptist, evangelical and charismatic traditions had found an opportunity to have a “rally”. One of the central characteristics of this tradition is its charge to “witness” and promote the gospel.

The major event in the “The Bicentennial of Christian Schooling in Australia 1793-1993” sponsored by CCS and the National Alliance of Christian Leaders (a title which is abbreviated by them to NaCl, as in the chemical composition of common salt, and which they relate to Jesus’ comment about being salt of the earth in Matthew 5:13) included a “march of witness” on Friday 17 September where students, parents and staff marched from the Sydney Domain to a rally and symbolic reenactment of the founding of the first school at the Sydney Opera House via Johnson Square. Students in uniform, floats, banners, bands and placards helped to make this a major media event. The rally on the steps of the Opera House, a “service of thanksgiving”, included combined choirs and bands, a prominent celebrity host, politicians and a talk by the winner of the Richard Johnson Sermon Competition. A prayer breakfast and commemorative book and documentary video also helped to engender further

25 ibid., p. 9.
26 ibid.
community attention to CCS and their schools. CPCS schools were not committed to this venture because they did not understand the development of themelic schooling as a continuation of the colonial religious school tradition. The stated purposes of these events were to:

1. Celebrate God’s faithfulness and to thank Him for those who have laboured before us in Christian education.
2. Remind Australians that our society is founded on Christian beliefs based on the Bible.
3. Celebrate 200 years of Christian education in Australia and to highlight to our community the vital role of Christian schooling in the training of young Australians.
4. Remind government at all levels of the important contribution Christian schooling has made and is making to Australia through its educative efforts and to emphasise that education should not be based on pragmatic or economic expediency.
5. Draw attention to the ongoing need for Christian education today and to challenge parents, teachers and church leaders to become involved in Christian schooling.
6. Challenge all involved in Christian schooling to commit themselves to the vision on which their school was founded and to teachers in particular to manifest that vision in their teaching.

R. J. Frisken, the visionary founder of CCS, states that the tradition of Christian schooling in Australia has developed in several phases. In the first phase, which Frisken calls “the Christian church faces the problem of the rising generation”, he identifies Johnson’s evangelical status, support from the church and religious societies, the Christian status of most of the early teachers and the moral piety called for by the Reverend Samuel Marsden in appointing a schoolmaster to emigrate from England as somehow being precedents common to modern Christian (themelic) schools. The second phase, “denominational rivalry and state attempts to bring compromise solutions”, recognises the strong influence of the Church and Schools Corporation in the early development of schools in the 1820s. Frisken recognises that in this phase the seeds were sown for the future foundation of a state system. He draws attention to the Irish national scheme, making careful note that under this scheme the Bible would be “severely censored”. Frisken asserts that the gold rush era brought in a new wave of

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28 Frisken, The Bicentenary ... op. cit., p. 2.
29 ibid., p. 1.
irreligion and democratic demand for public education. In the third phase, “the 1880 public instruction act and the principle of religious neutrality”, Frisken surveys the beginning of secular education in Australia and the corresponding response of some churches to establish private schools which originally had a strong Christian base. Frisken asserts that in time these schools have lost, through a sacred/religious dichotomy, their potential to present Christianity in a holistic and relevant way. Frisken’s survey highlights the remnants of a Christian base that still remained in state schools in the 1960s in primary school curriculum and was manifest in such traditions as school prayers, hymns and Scripture classes in N.S.W. Many of Frisken’s perspectives are gleaned from Allen S. Roberts’s small pamphlet Australia’s First Hundred Years: The Era of Christian Schools. Roberts states in his preface:

It is not widely known that education in Australia was first established not by government, but by the Christian church. In this brief survey, the history of Australia’s Christian day school movement is traced from its colonial beginnings to the year 1880 when government education officially began. The survey reveals that the Bible-based church-related school in early colonial times was remarkably successful in meeting the academic and spiritual/moral needs of the younger generation of that day. It also shows that when certain principles undergirding this Christian school movement were disregarded, Australian education began to lose its dynamic. It suggested that this Christian dynamic can and must be restored to Australian education today.

This perspective reveals several factors worth noting for later discussion concerning the distinctives of themelic schooling and differences between themelic models. The idea of “Bible-based and church-related” education particularly appeals to the CCS school tradition; the simplistic approach of Roberts and of the CCS movement to history would not appeal to the more scholarly tradition of the CPCS school movement; the concept of revivalism more common to the evangelical tradition present in this perspective would not appeal to the CPCS school model; the idea of an accepted and understood general “deterioration of education” in themelic schools is related to the heightened awareness of a secular perspective in education, and a naïve and narrow understanding of “successful” education is revealed that is unrealistic about historical context and transposition.

30 Frisken, R. J., Historical Perspective on Christian Schools Lecture notes (no date).
31 Roberts, A. S., Australia’s First Hundred Years: The Era of Christian Schools Old Guildford, C.E.S. Print, 1980.
32 ibid.
Several simple factors have been overlooked in this perspective, which smacks more of wishful projection than of good historical method or sense. The assertion that the first schools in Australia were uniquely themetic schools and therefore somehow comparable passes over some very significant facts, namely:

1. Johnson, other clergy and the affairs of the church were payrolled by the state.

2. The early schoolmasters were put on the payroll of the N.S.W. Corps.

3. The early schools set up by the London Missionary Society were directly funded by the colonial government.

4. The general interest in, and some funding of, education in the 18th century was also generated by considerable philanthropic, but not necessarily Christian or evangelical, interests.

5. In the period of the first settlement of Australia, the Church of England was the established national church. The early schools did not have to compete in a pluralistic or a denominational market.

6. The motive of social transformation for the convict class was an important factor in the establishment and modification of educational practice. In 1792, 80% of the population were considered criminals, including the first school teachers, who were mostly women.\(^{33}\)

7. Governor Phillip set aside 1,000 acres specifically for schooling, as well as contributing grants and administering fees.\(^{34}\) Such grants of land were awarded to the church under its state church monopoly.

8. The concept of evangelicalism and fundamentalism after the 1920s, which is present particularly in CCS schools, is significantly different from the idea of an evangelical (missionary) of the 18th century.


9. The notion of education and schooling in the 18th century was primitive and is not wisely compared to the educational context of the 20th century.

10. The changed nature of society, politics, technology, anthropology, psychology, theology, science and ecclesiology over a period of 200 years prevents any real comparison, especially with themelic schools.

The rise of themelic schools simply cannot be understood within this kind of comparison.

The appropriate context in which to understand the development of themelic schools in Australia is not a general historical trend of Christian private/church schools but conservative theological Protestantism, particularly the development of theological fundamentalism after the 1920s. One of the marks of a themelic school is its existence in contradistinction to the traditional church school model which is more influenced by Arnoldian traditions and values than by the unique quest to establish and maintain an inerrantist biblical education against a trend of secularism and humanism. CCS cannot have it both ways. They cannot hope to claim the same origins as Arnoldian schools and at the same time reject Arnoldian school development\textsuperscript{35} without creating some confusion.

1.6 Research in Australia

The first substantial research into themelic schools was conducted by David Charles Jones at the University of Melbourne.\textsuperscript{36} Jones’s short thesis of approximately 100 pages is limited to the time of highest growth in themelic history 1975-1981, and focuses on ACE, CPCS, CCS, Christian Community Colleges (CCC) and some independent themelic schools. Jones incorrectly gathers CCC schools of Victoria in the themelic group. I will explain in Chapter 4 why this group should not be grouped in the themelic system. For the moment, it will suffice to say that the ecumenical character of CCC schools warrants their exclusion. Jones’s thesis is a helpful start to research but fails to analyse fully the theological dynamic at work in these schools. Jones identifies

\textsuperscript{35} Brinton, S., Humanism and Christian Education in What is Christian Community Schooling?: Introductory Lectures Wentworthville, CCS Ltd, 1993, pp. 1-11.

correctly the reactionary characteristic of themelic schools. In his conclusion he states:

It is a return to tradition and a revival of fundamentals which animates the three main movements behind this recent growth in new Christian schools.\(^{37}\)

In his thesis, Jones sets out the reasons for themelic schools’ rapid growth. He cites the level of funding after the Karmel report and the rise of secular humanism as the primary reasons for themelic development in Australia. He correctly acknowledges the difference between what he calls “traditional church schools” and “new Christian schools”, what I have labelled in this thesis “Arnoldian” schools and “themelic” schools. Citing Mol\(^{38}\) and Hill\(^{39}\) Jones argues that themelic schools started because the “non-denominational church schools” were ineffective in standing against liberal humanistic philosophy or in establishing stronger Christian consciousness in their students.\(^{40}\) This is supported by my research reported in Chapter 9. Prohibitively high fees were another factor mentioned as a cause for themelic people not taking the Arnoldian option.

With the support of Norman’s study\(^{41}\) Jones argues that themelic schools are motivated by “specific educational philosophy or tradition”,\(^{42}\) yet does not adequately explain what this new tradition is. He identifies the way that biblicism, evangelicalism and reformed theology have influenced these schools but does not create a comprehensive map that can help distinguish one themelic school from another. Evangelicalism emphasises preaching about salvation, the proclamation of God’s “saving work” on the cross and man’s choice to personally trust in Jesus for eternal salvation. The reformed tradition finds its roots in the theology of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin and is characterised by its emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the sanctity, veracity and priority of the Bible in practical piety and theology. There is no attempt in the thesis to define the educational and pedagogical implications of holding to

\(^{37}\) ibid., p. 93.
\(^{40}\) Jones, op. cit., pp. 17-19.
\(^{41}\) Norman, M., Small Schools Study Canberra, Australian Schools Commission, 1980.
one particular theological tradition over another and the thesis is clearly limited to Jones's knowledge of Victoria.

In recognising the disadvantages of themelic schools, Jones identifies the danger of separatism, of becoming "garrison schools with a siege mentality", as his major concern. Such concerns are explored below in Chapter 11.

There have been numerous other research projects undertaken on themelic schools at the Master's degree level. Recent studies by Cowling, Oswald, Gordon, Barnett, Hewitt and Davies venture some way in providing a basis for establishing an understanding of these schools. Cowling's research is similar to that of Jones and provides a brief historical review of the development of the three major kinds of themelic schooling, CPCs, CCS and ACE schooling. Cowling's research is limited to New South Wales.

To date, the scholarship which comes closest to a thorough and clear analysis of these schools is that of Oswald of the University of South Australia and Geoffrey Maslen whose home state is Victoria. Oswald's paper delivered to the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA) Conference in Adelaide in 1990 entitled *The Growth of the New Low-Fee Paying Protestant Independent Schools in South Australia: 1972-1989* serves as a useful starting point for any outsider wishing to explore and understand these schools. Oswald's work is important for several reasons. First, he recognises the difference of themelic schools from other non-government school models and some of the causes for their development, although he sees their principal defining characteristics as being their fee level rather than any difference in tradition or

theological and epistemological foundation. Second, he intentionally groups the schools together in a comparative study. Third, Oswald provides statistical and demographic data and makes some projections about possible future developments. He shows that themelic schools in South Australia are mostly located on the fringes of population growth in medium income level areas. Fourth, Oswald establishes that these schools are not to be grouped with other modes of Protestant schooling. Fifth, he establishes the diversity of doctrinal positions in themelic schools.

The difficulty with Oswald’s research is that it does not really discern the theological distinctives of the themelic tradition. Oswald’s thesis is that the uniqueness of the themelic tradition is determined by fees. Whilst it is true that themelic schools are low-fee paying schools, this is not the main factor determining their identity. In fact, the reason the fees are so low is theological. Fee structure is tied strongly to the theological dynamic of the themelic schools and the psycho-social forces at work in them. Themelic zeal enables parents in the schools to make considerable sacrifices for themselves and their children; parents are prepared to go without many of the accepted facilities associated with a good education because of their commitment to the themelic perspective. Oswald’s research also confirms that those outside the system have difficulty understanding themelic distinctives. This thesis endeavours to identify and elucidate these distinctives.

Maslen ends School Ties with a chapter titled “Full Gospel”. In this chapter Maslen discusses numerous Christian schools that have developed in the “Bible belt” in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs. Maslen incorrectly associates Seventh-day Adventist and Lutheran churches with this group. Both of these theological traditions have established quite separate school systems. Despite this Maslen notes that his collection of schools “evoke the sense of zeal and dogma of born-again Christians of the American Deep South”. He perceptively states:

Indeed, while the Coca-Cola culture has successfully invaded Australia’s commercial markets, American fundamentalist evangelicalism has found an equally receptive audience among the families of Australian blue-and white-collar workers.
He correctly notes why these groups have been established:

... they have turned to opening Christian schools whose intentions are to fight "the liberalism, modernism and secular humanism of the state education systems".  

Many of the schools Maslen examines have pentecostal origins with the term "Full Gospel" occuring in the name of the sponsoring church, hence he labels this phenomenon the "Full Gospel" school. His research occurred at the height of thematic expansionism in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Maslen noted that one of these Full Gospel schools had a principal who was an old boy of Melbourne Grammar School. Maslen comments that at this school there was an "odd, hybrid" of ACE overlaid with the trappings of an independent school. This concurs with a similar observation I make later in the thesis, that inconsistent amalgams of schooling traditions related to the origins of principals in themelic schools often dictate the trend of some themelic schools into the Arnoldian model. This creates confusion and tension within the themelic movement which was established in competition with and opposition to the Arnoldian schooling model. The relationship of themelic schooling to the Arnoldian model is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The majority of Maslen's final chapter is consumed by a discussion and educational assessment of the ACE system which, like Speck's and Prideaux's work, is thorough and accurate, highlighting the lack of openness and presence of dogma. However, he also grasps neither the presence of other models nor the existence of a collaboration of various theological traditions in the construction of a new schooling system. He rightly notes the low-fee, small-school, parent-governed structure of these schools and their preoccupation with biblical inerrancy. He does not suggest that there is a spectrum of theological and educational positions within this new group of schools and makes no mention of CPCS, CCS or other associations in the themelic tradition.

Davies's research project investigates aspects of leadership in themelic schools. He makes it clear that

... many Christian schools appear to operate within an organisational structure that fits the classic bureaucratic, hierarchical model.  

Unlike some other researchers from themelic schools he at least defines what he means by "biblical principles". However, he does not clarify what he means by "Christ-like".

53 ibid.
54 Davies, op. cit., Introduction, p. i.
He notes that the espoused biblical notion of "servant leadership", that is leadership that is egalitarian, is in conflict with the authoritarian structure of the themelic school. This conflict between authoritarianism and egalitarianism in themelic schools is exemplified by a themelic school principal who explains the merits of a Machiavellian leadership model in a Christian journal.\textsuperscript{55} I shall return to Davies's work in my discussion of management in themelic schools in Chapter 12. For the moment, it is important simply to note Davies's attempts to define common themelic expressions.

The work of Gordon, Barnett and Hewitt is important because their studies make it clear that staff at themelic schools are unable to establish what a "Christian perspective" is. Their studies show that the notions of competency, care, moral value, excellence and individual attention are touted as being distinctively Christian whilst at the same time assuming that the reader understands and agrees on what "biblical principles" are. Their studies show that, apart from the overt use of the Bible and prayer in the classroom or discussion about creationism, there is no really distinctive curriculum in themelic schools. The fact that each researcher assumes but does not explain what a "Christian perspective" or "teaching Christianly" is reflects the depth of the problem in establishing an understanding of these schools. Hewitt makes it clear that whilst teachers were able to articulate what was not Christian about other models of schooling they were not able to articulate or work out how to teach their own particular idea of the Christian perspective.

1.7 Publications from the reformed perspective

In 1979 Cummings edited a collection of essays published in America on behalf of the Christian Education Association (CEA) as a theological justification for Christian (themelic) schools.\textsuperscript{56} The CEA represents those North American schools which have reformed (Calvinist) origins. A notable contributor to the collection was N. K. Weeks, an Australian currently lecturing in the History Department of the University of Sydney. His book *The Christian School: An Introduction*\textsuperscript{57} came out of his work with


Sutherland Shire Parent-Controlled Christian School in the south of Sydney.

Weeks's position tends to represent the more dogmatic elements of the themelic movement. His book does not really explain themelic schools but is rather a polemical work which strongly polarises Christian and non-Christian positions on schooling. The book's emphasis is on human depravity, "training" and "instruction", "being ruled by Scripture" and authority. The format of the book is prescriptive and leaves little room for movement. The logic of Weeks's position is best discovered in his discussion of rationalism, romanticism and, in particular, his attack on the philosophy of Dewey:

The general rationalist hope is that man can come to understand the root of all his problems. With that knowledge he can correct those problems. Thus man becomes, through knowledge, his own saviour. Since the school is the place where knowledge is conveyed, it has tremendous significance for the rationalist. It is his church.

The publication of the essay collection *No Icing on the Cake* in 1980 marked an important point in the history of themelic school development in Australia. Emerging from the reformed tradition, it sought to provide a credible apologetic for themelic schools. Whilst the book does not fully explain the character of the movement, it nonetheless explores a reformed theology of themelic schooling and its implications for school and curriculum development. The reformed tradition provides the most credible scholarship on themelic schooling in Australia, most notably in the foundational joint work of Douglas Blomberg and Stuart Fowler at Mount Evelyn Christian School, which is one of the most creative and innovative schools in the themelic movement. Fowler is the founder of the Association for Christian Scholarship (ACS), the Institute of Christian Education (ICE) and Antithesis Educational Services, and currently is a lecturer at the National Institute of Christian Education (NICE). He has been one of the most well qualified and articulate theological voices in the themelic system. Blomberg has been one of the most qualified and articulate voices on curriculum, his main contribution being the idea of an "integral curriculum".

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58 ibid., p. 84.
59 ibid., p. 22.
Blomberg’s work on an integral curriculum for themelic schools is founded upon a philosophy of the cosmonomic idea. This point of view stresses the integrality of creation when lessons focus on concrete things, and the approach focuses on the way in which God’s laws (ethical codes) govern all creation. It follows that, once something is introduced to a class, its relationship to mathematical laws, geometrical laws, physical laws and historical laws et cetera is explored. The purpose of schooling in this view is to expand the child’s experience of the creation. Such an approach forces the student continually back to the Bible as the central resource, and lesson programmes may resemble what is more commonly known as a “thematic approach”.

1.8 The special relationship of Hill and Andersen to themelic schools

It is impossible to discuss the growth, development and search for identity of themelic schools in Australia without a discussion of Brian V. Hill and William E. Andersen. Andersen and Hill stand in a special relationship to the development of themelic schools in Australia. As academics their knowledge of educational philosophy, history and psychology enables them to be critical outside observers. As evangelical Christian teachers they are also able to sympathise with the practical and theological dynamic of themelic schooling although neither has taught in a themelic school. It is also important to note that Australian themelic schooling has developed in the lifetimes of both Hill and Andersen.

Hill is Professor and former founding Dean of the School of Education at Murdoch University, Western Australia. Andersen was formerly Senior Lecturer in Education at Sydney University, and remains active in education and counselling in retirement. Hill and Andersen both stand outside the themelic system in a special way. Both have been instrumental in the work of the Australian Teachers’ Christian Fellowship (ATCF), especially as focal persons on the editorial team of the *Journal of Christian Education* (JCE). Hill was an associate editor, then editor for 10 years (1977-1986), and continues as an associate editor, Andersen was the founding associate editor of the journal in 1958 and continued in this capacity till 1988. Their influence on the journal as contributors and visionaries has been as significant as the Christian influence they

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have extended through their teaching. Indeed, for seven years Andersen conducted a course at Sydney University at Master's degree level in *A Christian Theory of Education*. The popular support this course enjoyed was directly attributable to Andersen's integrity, scholarship and personal warmth. In 1985, the year in which the present writer did the course a contingent of themelic school leaders as well as influential people from other Christian school traditions attended.

Andersen's career at Sydney University began in 1961 and continued until 1988. He has always been active in evangelical work at all levels and has maintained a hectic schedule of speaking engagements and case load in personal counselling. His work includes a long standing involvement in Inter-School Christian Fellowship (ISCF), Evangelical Union (EU) and Scripture Union (SU), including in the role of International President and, in the Australian Christian Forum on Education (ACFE) Inc, formerly the Australian Teachers' Christian Fellowship (ATCF), and the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES). He has also lectured on an honorary basis in several theological colleges and has published over forty journal papers as well as chapters in books.

From 1961 to 1963, Hill was a staff worker for the Schools and Camps Committee for Scripture Union and a student at Sydney University. During those years Andersen and Hill developed a close friendship and worked closely together in evangelism. Hill's Master's thesis was supervised by Andersen.

Hill's and Andersen's strong commitment to the Bible supports a substantial empathy with the sentiments of the themelic movement. As well-qualified and experienced educationalists, they have offered the themelic system thoroughly researched and constructive criticism. As sympathetic critics, they have each made their mark on the themelic movement but in different ways. Each has offered his own different criticism of themelic schooling. As a result Hill is perceived unfairly as a provocative adversary whilst Andersen is seen as a somewhat kindred spirit. Hill's approach, whilst academically sound and legitimate, provoked the ire of some of themelicist leaders whose negativity towards Hill was focused by a publication in which Hill sought to encourage healthy debate about Christian schooling. The response of these leaders confirmed the reactionary and insecure nature of themelicism, and their perceptions are
reflected in the fact that, while Andersen has been a keynote speaker at many conferences encompassing most thelemic theological traditions, Hill has had much less contact with thelemic schools, and the system has been less welcoming of him.

Such differing perspectives on the motivation of the two educationalists may stem from differences in their personal styles. Andersen, who is the older of the two, takes an active role in pastoral counselling and has formal qualifications in psychology and counselling, whilst Hill has placed a major emphasis on the publication of written material which analyses Christian education at more of a remove.

The influence of Hill and Andersen on the thelemic movement has been tempered by the way each of them is perceived by those in the thelemic movement. The perceptions relate to location, style and personality. Hill’s physical isolation in Perth, Western Australia, has somewhat limited his exposure and hence has limited opportunity to clarify understandings with the majority of thelemic schools, which are located in the east. Living on the eastern seaboard in Sydney, New South Wales, Andersen has more ready access to a larger number of Christian people and institutions and has had greater personal exposure to thelemic schools. The style and focus of Hill and Andersen in Christian education, which have also affected the way in which they have been perceived by people in thelemic schools, have been generated by Hill’s and Andersen’s doctoral work. A selection of their work in the *Journal of Christian Education* highlights the difference in their interests.

Andersen’s contributions have tended to have a more philosophical and pastoral focus than Hill’s. Andersen’s work on the biblical concept of a person\(^{64}\), the Christian concept of maturity\(^{65}\), the Christian model of an educated person\(^{66}\), the place of community in education\(^{67}\), models of Christian involvement in schools\(^{68}\),

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\(^{67}\) Andersen, W. E., *From Gospel Into Education: Exploring a Translation* *Journal of Christian Education* Papers 79 April, 1984; and Papers 81, October, 1984.

\(^{68}\) Andersen, W. E., *Models of Involvement in Contemporary Schools* *Journal of Christian Education* Papers 78, Nov., 1983.
establishment of a biblical view of education\textsuperscript{69} and attention to a theology of family and childhood\textsuperscript{70} reflect these interests. As acutely philosophical as Andersen, Hill has tended to focus on Christianity as a cross-cultural activity,\textsuperscript{71} Christian education and the Christian notion of “mission”,\textsuperscript{72} history of education and the application of Christian faith in context,\textsuperscript{73} Christian responses to pluralism,\textsuperscript{74} direct assessment of the role of Christian schools\textsuperscript{75} and the ethics and morality of schooling from a Christian perspective.\textsuperscript{76}

Hill’s openness to multiculturalism, diversity, values education, pluralism and his thoughtful work on ethics led some thematic people to believe that he was theologically liberal/relativist. Before ever meeting Hill, the present writer was advised by a thematic school principal (who had also never met Hill) that Hill was opposed to thematic schools. On another occasion, the suggestion that Hill could be a keynote speaker at a regional conference was met with expressions of anger and rebuke. It is not the case that Hill is an enemy of thematic schools. Hill was concerned about any school, perhaps thematic schools more than most, which was not sensitive to the needs of the child in education, especially when the child was captured in the compulsory modern school setting. He is greatly concerned about the need for educators to behave ethically regardless of the school system.\textsuperscript{77} A particular concern of Hill’s is the high level of


\textsuperscript{75} Hill, B. V., Christian Schools Issues to be Resolved Journal of Christian Education Papers 75, Nov., 1982.

\textsuperscript{76} Hill, B. V., Approaches to Teaching the Bible: Mental sets and Teaching Contexts Journal of Christian Education Papers 89 and 90, 1987; Moral Education: Learning and Doing (pt 1) and Teaching (pt 2) Vol. 11, No. 3, 1968 and Vol. 12, No. 1., 1969; Compulsion in Education Journal of Christian Education Papers 52, August, 1975.

\textsuperscript{77} Hill, B. V., Values Education in Australian Schools Australian Education Review No. 32. Hawthorn, ACER, 1991.
conformity in themelic schools, which seems out of kilter with the notion of a voluntary Christian response to the love of God.

Hill’s criticism of the inwardness of themelic schooling and his honest attempt to stimulate dialogue with themelic schoolers in the pages of the *Journal of Christian Education* in 1978 ended up as a costly experiment for both Hill and themelic schools. They had cut themselves off from a Christian of immense ability in the field of education. Hill had to bear the hurt of misunderstanding and could contribute to themelic concerns only as an outsider.

In the following discussion Hill’s and Andersen’s reflections from interviews are quoted at length and serve to highlight themelic school characteristics and how themelic schools ought to be identified. Hill’s story of the 1978 incident is worth quoting in full because it serves as a lens to focus on the educational weaknesses of the themelic system and confirms his perception of themelic schools as places unable to cope with criticism - as conformist, separatist, closed, insecure and intolerant.

At one stage, I think it was about ‘76 when I was responsible for editing the *Journal of Christian Education*, I felt concerned at what seemed to be a hiatus between those Christians who were convinced that God wanted them to operate in the mainstream and to try and be a Christian testimony there and those who were committed to a strategy of withdrawal in order to set up an alternative prototype schooling system. The latter in particular I felt were so justifiably enthusiastic about what they were doing that they were also corralling themselves from the mainstream and entering into an “in house” discourse which kept everybody in the club happy but didn’t have the impact it deserved to have on the open market of ideas in our secular pluralistic society. So although I hadn’t previously written on this theme to any extent before the only thing I can think of having done before was a chapter in an early book called *Called to Teach* where I was mainly directing my critique to the traditional independent schools and that was back in about 1971. I thought, here was a need that could be met perhaps by drawing the people in that discourse into the pages of the *Journal of Christian Education*. If they weren’t going to provide articles by direct invitation then perhaps they could be stimulated to respond to a stimulus article that I would write and I did called *Isn’t it Time we Deschooled Christianity?* Now I didn’t think that in that article that I was ruling out any options but I was stressing the point that we needed to question the way

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78 Hill, *Isn’t it Time ...* op. cit.
we were doing things and why we were doing them in both the state and Christian schools sector. Probably I was saying in that article more about the Christian schools sector in particular because of this perceived difficulty that their discourse was "in house" and others weren't able to benefit from it and to some extent they were talking themselves into indefensible positions on the grounds that a simple appeal to Scripture without chapter and verse was considered to prove the case when it was more complicated than they suggested. I then arranged for that article to be offered to respondents who were bound to have different ideas - Catholic, Christian school, traditional independent school. The traditional independent school sector didn't yield fruit. We had two from the Christian school sector and the Catholic sector, sister Carmel Levy. She said an astonishing thing in her article because she said, Catholics haven't ever claimed that their school system is something justified by scripture, and that almost took her out of the debate as far as that issue was concerned.

We published all those articles in a subsequent issue and I would have thought that that was sufficient evidence since the editor arranged for that to be done that the editor was not trying to be an enemy of the cause but I was quite surprised that the resistance and criticism that that aroused and the way in which subsequently I found a lot of people in the Christian school sector viewing me as pretty directly an enemy. Just because I asked questions and particularly questions about the supposed clarity of the Scriptural mandate that they were leaning on.

As I have said many times the Bible does not use the word "school" in its contemporary sense nor even does it invoke the concept of education in its contemporary sense in what it says about teaching and learning. It does have a lot to say about parental responsibility, about the responsibilities of the body of Christ to help nurture its members and their families, their households but it is not possible to follow a straight line of logic from those sorts of affirmations to the endorsement of the captive audience, that is, the compulsory curriculum and institutionalised form of teaching that we call schooling. In those circumstances one has to say Scriptural mandate whatever it is, is at a more general level. The question is how do we deal with the cultural relativities of our own time and place in working that through. We will have to develop a logic which is perhaps based in some instances on Scriptural principles but must also invoke a number of other issues, developmental issues. What we know from empirical research in learning, issues of ethics and of cultural difference will all modify the argument. We should not be surprised if in that process sincere Bible believing Christians will diverge in the way in which they apply those general Scriptural principles as in fact they do, but that possibility I find is not willingly accepted by folk who are pushing hard in the Christian school
sector, indeed I suspect that one of the reasons is that in that sector you have to fight for existence.

Any suggestion or criticism is a betrayal of the war that you are engaged in against cultural pressures, financial pressures and I appreciate that, but I think that it’s rather important that people in that milieu stand back from time to time and accept that some of their practices should be subjected to criticism on ethical grounds, on general educational grounds and so on. The convenient thing is to paint all activity in the state school sector as evil and black, the schools as atheistic and materialistic and then you don’t have to reason whether that context actually could offer even to Christian children or children of Christian parents some opportunities for growth considering that they eventually have to make their peace with pluralistic society.\textsuperscript{79}

Hill’s story could be told over and over by others, as indeed it has been by many of the persons interviewed for this thesis. One of the strongest fears of themelic schoolers is not from atheists or academics outside their system but from critics within and Christians who express some sense of critical insight into the themelic mode of schooling. The psychological reasons for this will be discussed in Chapter 11. Hill’s story illustrates a general mentality of fear in themelic schools, particularly the fear of criticism. Any who disagree become “the enemy”. Hill also draws attention to the hermeneutic of themelic schooling which is founded in a naive realist epistemology. He points out the confusion which results from such a hermeneutic. Hill’s story illustrates the separatist and closed nature of the themelic system. Hill was still viewed as the enemy in themelic schools in the mid-1990s.

On the other hand, Andersen’s work is quoted throughout the pages of CCS training manuals and his influence on the lives of prominent CPCS personnel is openly stated. Whether from the outside or within, Hill and Andersen have been the conscience of themelic schools since their inception. Their comments, publications and teaching have helped temper the drift of the movement towards extremes.

Andersen and Hill agree that the primary concern for the Christian in education is juggling nurture versus exposure - what Christians refer to as being in the church and being in the world. Both emphasise the need for Christians to contemplate everything Christianly: that everything should be thought through from a biblical Christian point of view. This is the language used by people in themelic schools, yet the outworking that it describes is very different from what Andersen and Hill advocate. Themelic schools

\textsuperscript{79} Interview Brian. V. Hill 23.11.93
tend to emphasise a closed approach which is influenced by reformed theology and separatism; the idea of thinking Christianly proposed by Andersen and Hill is quite different. The view put forward by Andersen and Hill was proposed by the founding editor of the *Journal of Christian Education* and former Head of the Department of Education of Sydney Teachers' College, Dr Anna Hogg. Andersen expressed it this way:

Anna's policy was to be able to view the whole of education from a Christian point of view. So we didn't ever conceive Christian education as being exclusively that education which is given in a Christian school but rather, how education might be conceived from a Christian point of view and therefore how some of that might be achieved in state schools, how some of it might be achieved in Christian schools and so on. So from the very beginning through people ... in Inter-Varsity Fellowship and Anna Hogg in education was that very broad base way which we came.\(^{80}\)

So it did not matter whether a person went into politics or law or whatever: they should be energised to do the same thing in that sphere: first, seek to clarify the sphere of involvement and then ask what, if anything, the Bible has to say about the sphere.

The next task is to try and conceive the whole of that sphere biblically. When Andersen went on sabbatical for 12 months to the University of Illinois in 1979 he discussed this idea with people interested in Christian education there. When he explained the policy of the *Journal of Christian Education* and his own interest, they were amazed.\(^{81}\) Christian education for them meant setting up an alternative school; they had never dreamt of a broad view of Christian education such as Andersen's. Like their counterparts in the United States, thematic people in Australia tend to think of Christian education as the setting up of an alternative. A difficulty is that thematic schoolers use the same terms as Andersen and Hill but interpret them to mean separation, not integration.\(^{82}\) This is to be understood in an ontological and organisational sense. To make a distinction between the two views of what "thinking Christianly" is the perspective of Hill, Andersen and the *Journal of Christian Education* may be defined as "Christian integrated holism".

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\(^{80}\) Interview William E. Andersen 21.8. 92.

\(^{81}\) ibid.

\(^{82}\) Weeks, op. cit., pp. 3-15.
It is worth noting that the work of the *Journal of Christian Education* was at its height, in numbers of subscriptions and level of interest, when themelic schools were at their strongest rate of growth. While the movement was busy building, counting heads and wrestling with all the dynamics of rapid expansionism, the ideas being offered by the journal and by Hill and Andersen were being filtered through the preoccupation with internal interests and the opportunity for dialogue and working together was not fully realised. It was not until 1984 that Andersen was invited to address a CPCs Education in Focus national conference. His paper *Education and Schooling: A Christian View* reflects a Christian integrated holism which troubles the rigidity of reformed theology and its preoccupation with dogmatic doctrines of Calvinist origin.

Because of the existence of such rigidity Andersen and Hill are sensitive to the possibility of indoctrination in themelic schools and have been critical of the themelic emphasis on nurture over exposure. Hill has addressed this in publications; Andersen more so in person. Andersen took part in the opening ceremony of the first CCS school at Regent’s Park in 1976, and warned of the problems of insularity and indoctrination in the themelic system of schooling. As recently as the CCS Summer Convention in 1993, Andersen was stressing this problem. Andersen describes the problems of inwardness, tokenism and indoctrination with a personal example:

I suspect that increasingly Christian schools are becoming very much like any other kinds of schools and the reaction to that is to see themselves as distinctive, to make some explicit Christian reference in all the lessons that are given. Now, someone, I won’t involve her, someone very close to me, has been a teacher in these schools and she’s told me that she’s given, what she thinks are good, adequate lessons. However, sometimes the lessons been criticised because there has been no mention of something specifically Christian in them.

Well, does there have to be some mention of something specifically Christian in a lesson that’s Christianly given? My answer would be no. There doesn’t have to be, they might have the liberty to do so which in some ways state schools haven’t, though even that is not fully the case, but they’ve got more freedom to do it if it’s relevant and very often it is

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relevant. But feeling you’ve got to put the rubber stamp on every lesson and say something about Christ however relevant or stretched it might be, seems to me to be a very poor accommodation to the demand to be specifically Christian. One has to get down to a much deeper level of what it is to be specifically Christian than that as sort of a shop window kind of reaction.  

Andersen makes it clear in this testimony that the themelic school can be preoccupied with the cosmetic and the obvious rather than deeper and more difficult issues of Christian faith. He expressed his reservations about the themelic stress on conformity in this way:

Along with Brian Hill, I’ve had some reservations about some of the ways in which Christian schools could go which I felt were educationally and spiritually difficult. It depends ultimately on the Christian maturity of those who are setting up the system and then those who are actually administering and executing it. Now if you get Christians with small minds into these categories who have avoided everything that might be offered in the whole world of culture, in the world of literature, history and so on and so forth, then any attempt to give value to non-Christian literature, music and so on will seem to be a betrayal. And they will run their schools like that so the important thing is for every pupil to know exactly what the orthodox position is and to make every attempt to get them to accept it.

This has not meant that Andersen and Hill do not see any place for a Christian school as an alternative: they do, but their warning is that it has to have a presence different from what is currently offered. Andersen makes this plain in his response to the possibility of a Christian tertiary institution:

I could never see any very strong justification for Christian tertiary institutions. Now I’ve been prepared to modify even that, one has to be prepared to modify things as one gets older. I’ve had a look at some of the products both of Wheaton and more particularly Calvin College in America and I can admire some of those products and they can put out some very well rounded people. So I have to admit that there can be Christian institutions which can do a good job holistically considered - the folk that come through. But when I have another think I say to myself there can only be a limited number of those in the world and they must be seen as exceptions and

85 Interview William E. Andersen 21.8.92.
86 ibid.
basically I still stand by what I’ve always thought and that is, that certainly
by the latest when you get to university or college you are on your own and
you have to battle with things. Goodness me, how long do you go on in
life being sheltered?

It is important to note here how Andersen expresses his view: he attempts not to isolate
the listener. This is more than mere diplomacy. Andersen’s style is a gentle style, even
when he speaks critically, and this has played a part in his ability to influence themelic
schools.

Hill’s books deal with many aspects of Christian education and not just alternative
schooling. His Choosing the Right School\textsuperscript{88} is the book which best assesses the
themelic school option. Two things which this book does particularly well are to chart
the diversity of private school types in Australia and to assess their strengths and
weaknesses. Hill notes several characteristics of themelic schools which are important
for this study: conformity, narrow vision, a homogeneity that rules out an adequately
pluralistic education, the controlling of knowledge through curriculum censorship, the
possibility of being a total environment, problems of education quality and ethical
problems related to assumptions made about evangelism and education.\textsuperscript{89}

The particular problem of fundamentalist hermeneutics in Christian schools generally
and themelic schools especially is addressed by Hill in The Greening of Christian
Education.\textsuperscript{90} In the chapter Content: Bible and Life Hill particularly addresses the
state of mind of the conservative Bible reader. His argument supports a later point of
this thesis that a psychosociological disposition forms part of the themelic mentality.
According to Hill’s six mind types (magical, devotional, analytical, neutral, sceptical
and hostile), the themelic approach to the Bible is magical and devotional.\textsuperscript{91}

Hill’s assessment of Christianity and the context of Australian education, education
history and the nature of schooling and teaching, ought to be mandatory reading for

\textsuperscript{87} ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} ibid., p. 130.
those in themelic schools. His scholarship and holistic perspective have been squandered by themelic schools in their short history. In response to the present writer’s question about the establishment of tertiary themelic institutions, Hill said:

I have to confess that I’m very concerned where Christians attempt to complete the cradle to grave kind of protection of the learner from outside influences and ideologies. My perception is that Jesus didn’t try to do that, that he dealt with people as members of a pluralistic society in which they had to consider their options. He did not try to use his charisma to prevent them from considering those options, simply following him uncritically. I’ve said quite often that any attempt to hire a director of Christian Education by an American church would certainly knock Jesus out in the early stages of short listing because he had so many failures. People turned on their heel and left when they really grasped what it was he was asking of them in the context of the society in which they were and, if they showed too quick a tendency to follow him uncritically, then he’d put obstacles in their way to make them think what it was they were committing themselves to and whether they could sustain those, given the kind of world they were living in. I take heart from that, to urge that we regard the development for the capacity of transcultural critique, an ability to interrogate one’s own cultural conditioning, even one’s religious conditioning, as part of the task of educating Christians in the modern age; that they are not going to be robust enough unless they’ve done that, to cope with the modern age. They might be able to maintain their moral position within the Christian fold but then will they even be able to communicate with people in the wider world? Then will they understand the world views that lie so much behind their behaviour or the lack of integrated world views that lie behind so much behaviour if they have been carefully shepherded and husbanded in an allegedly Christian view of the world?

Hill notes several important issues: the problem of “cradle to grave” education in a pluralistic society, the domesticated nature of themelic theology - that is, its inability to be critical or scholarly so that the radical nature of Christianity itself is watered down - and the necessity for a broad and robust environment rather than a sheltered environment for education to take place in.

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93 Interview Brian. V. Hill 23.11.93
1.9 Research in the United States

In 1976 Nevin and Bills\textsuperscript{94} completed a study on the segregationist nature of Christian schools. In 1980 Ballweg\textsuperscript{95} and Gleason\textsuperscript{96} completed PhD theses on the Christian Day School movement in North America. Ballweg claimed that religious conviction was not the primary factor motivating parents to enrol their children in a Christian Day School. Gleason found that the battle for the Christian school, particularly in the courts in the United States, was a “faith battle”. Seifert,\textsuperscript{97} Reese,\textsuperscript{98} Parsons\textsuperscript{99} and Carper and Hunt\textsuperscript{100} completed a number of brief descriptive studies of “new evangelical Christian schools” in America in the mid-1980s finding that the schools were separatist, driven theologically by conservative Protestant ideology and independent in character.

There is a great deal of similarity between these schools and themelic schools in Australia and they will be discussed in the following three sections of the chapter, because many similarities can be extrapolated from the work of these scholars and applied to themelic schools in Australia. In most cases, the work of these scholars confirms the findings of the present writer’s research. These researchers do not use the term “themelic”. They tend to use “Christian”, “Christian Day School” or “evangelical” to refer to these schools. It is clear from the work of these scholars that such schools do not have the same level of ecumenical crossfertilisation as the themelic schools in Australia. The schools of similar type in the USA tend to be more parochial and more limited in interchange, owing to demographic and historical circumstances.

The three most comprehensive and recent studies of themelic schools in America have

been published by Peshkin\textsuperscript{101}, Rose\textsuperscript{102} and Bollar Wagner.\textsuperscript{103} All three scholars undertook participant observation research in a small number of schools, making predictions and conclusions about the movement as a whole. A brief discussion of the relevance of these studies to the present thesis follows.

1.10 Separatism and the themelic school as a total institution - Peshkin

In 1986 Alan Peshkin examined the life of Bethany Baptist Church and its school, Bethany Baptist Academy (BBA) located in Hartney, Illinois. Peshkin classifies BBA as a fundamentalist school. BBA is affiliated with the American Association of Christian Schools. Peshkin draws on Goffman’s concept of the “total institution”\textsuperscript{104} in order to “assault” the school. The classical “total institution” - the monastery or prison - controls nearly every aspect of people’s lives. Peshkin found that the BBA was far from being an all-encompassing “total institution”. Like Bollar Wagner’s work, which will be discussed in section 1.12, Peshkin discovered that BBA and schools like it

... are fraught with compromise with the American popular culture that surrounds them. The Christian alternative school is not as alternative as it could be.\textsuperscript{105}

Peshkin’s work converges in some respects with my own findings about similar schools in Australia. Both studies suggest the label “fundamentalist” is misleading. Peshkin found that there is a diversity of schools within the one common view of biblical inerrancy; schools “gatekeep” through a vocabulary of belief;\textsuperscript{106} they constitute “a rising star”; and that they claim an exclusive understanding of truth which militates against any real notion of comprehensive or openness in education. He notes that the underlying dynamic of the schools is theological\textsuperscript{107} and that their view of education is

\textsuperscript{105} Peshkin, op. cit., pp. 277-299.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid., pp. 41-48.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid., p. 259.
characterised by a fundamentalist notion of the enemy, of a fight against a literal Satan.\textsuperscript{108} This aspect of themelic schooling in Australia is explored in Chapter 12 of this thesis. Peshkin’s study confirms the thesis that themelic schools are best understood theologically. The fundamentalist hermeneutic which undergirds these schools justifies the belief in a literal Satan/enemy and a simplistic, either/or way of thinking. Peshkin refers to their reactionism thus:

\textit{... it simultaneously links believers together and separates them from nonbelievers. In its defensive capacity, the academy shields its students and beliefs from competitors by promoting the dichotomies not only of we and they but also of right and wrong. We follow God’s Truth in God’s preferred institutions; they are the unfortunates of Satan’s false, dark, unrighteous world.}\textsuperscript{109}

Peshkin makes it quite clear that Bethany indoctrinates its students according to Snook’s definition of “indoctrination” as “teaching an ideology as if it were the only possible one with any claim to rationality”.\textsuperscript{110} Thus Peshkin concludes:

\begin{quote}
The true believer’s inflexible, inexorable doctrinal yardstick, which so readily sorts out right from wrong and good from bad, is the basis for an incivility which both denies and defies the social complexities of our society.\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

and

\begin{quote}
I do not see how Bethany’s ideal of Christian schooling from kindergarten through college can avoid promoting intransigence, since students neither learn the habit of compromise nor grasp its necessity in a diverse, complex society. Furthermore, I do not see students learning that dissent and compromise are critical attributes of healthy democracies, rather than unwelcome guests in the house of orthodoxy, the sort who ungratefully take your food, molest your children, and set fire to the upstairs bedroom.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

Peshkin’s observation that BBA and schools like it are compromised by, and merge with, their surrounding culture tends to make the application of the terms

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{108} ibid., pp. 218-56. \\
\textsuperscript{109} ibid., p. 282. \\
\textsuperscript{110} Snook, I., \textit{Indoctrination and Education} London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 76. \\
\textsuperscript{111} Peshkin, op. cit., p. 290. \\
\textsuperscript{112} ibid., p. 296.
\end{flushleft}
“fundamentalist” and “total institution” inappropriate for these schools. What characterises these schools is a fundamentalist hermeneutic and epistemology alongside an uncritical acceptance of certain social and cultural norms. They are schools for “right words” and “in house” speech. The relationship between the school’s fundamentalist epistemology and the general behaviour of its community is quite incongruent.

1.11 The evangelical monolith doctrine - Rose

Rose studied two evangelical communities and their schools in upstate New York: the Covenant community, which is charismatic, and the Lakehaven community, which is fundamentalist Baptist. Rose’s thesis is that the monolithic nature of evangelical schooling threatens religious and educational pluralism. She notes that the purpose of these schools is to enclose children within the trinity of family, church and school. Evangelicals hope to win their children over to Christ before they are seduced by the world. She observed that language of “the battle” is constantly used to explain the theological dynamic at work in these two schools.

Rose explains that evangelical schools are reactionary and separatist. She wants to make it clear that evangelical doctrine is monolithic but not the schools themselves. She notes that their organisation is characterised by a high degree of supervision, formalisation, centralisation, conformity, routinisation and tradition. This concurs with the Australian context. She says:

Dependent upon a high degree of ideologocal consensus, the church, family
and schools join together to clarify and reinforce one another in their
socialising roles.113

She notes that evangelicals tend to advocate a pro-family platform and stand against women’s rights, affirmative action, birth control, abortion, children’s rights and any progressive educational materials that in any way diminish the traditional sex role norms as historically understood. This is supported by Ballweg who found that the basic motivation for evangelicals to enrol their children in schools was moral and social.

Rose, with reference to Ballweg, notes the evangelical school as a rising star with statistical growth of 630% over the period 1965-1982. The number of these schools in

113 Rose, op. cit., p. 16.
the United States has grown at the rate of two per day since 1960. By 1988 these schools comprised 20 per cent of the total private school population in the United States. Rose also notes that each school in itself is quite small, with an average enrolment of between 100 and 150 students. These Christian schools in the United States are gathered in three major associations: the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS), founded in 1972; the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), founded in 1978 from a merger of several small associations; and Christian Schools International (CSI), founded in 1920, with a primarily reformed focus.

Rose notes a high level of political activity accompanying the formation of these associations. She states that ACSI spent US $375,260 in legal defence of Christian schooling between its founding in 1978 and 1982.\(^\text{114}\) Three things need to be noted here with reference to thematic schools in Australia. The first is that no similar legal battle has happened in Australia, where there has been a relatively smooth coexistence of thematic schools with the state. The second is that there is a much greater mix of theological traditions in Australia in the one national association. Thirdly, the formation of thematic school associations in Australia has not been primarily for political reasons.

Rose stresses the driving theological dynamic of the evangelical school much more than does Ballweg.\(^\text{115}\) People enrol their children in these schools for reasons of belief rather than social or moral imperatives. She notes the centrality of authority, paternalism, compromise with surrounding culture, separatism and conformity as being dominant characteristics. These correspond with the dominant features of thematic schools in Australia.

One of Rose’s interesting conclusions is that, instead of being truly alternative, the thematic school is perhaps grooming a new kind of compliant employee who will tolerate the boredom of the computer work station or other mundane job, particularly in Christian schools which are more rigid in curriculum, as is the ACE system. In other words, this kind of school will produce willing, diligent and unquestioning workers. She concludes:

\(^{114}\) ibid., p. 38.

\(^{115}\) ibid., p. 40.
Perhaps this is one of those moments in history when progress means deterioration of culture. Just as fastfood and the rule of McDonald’s over the American eating culture seems like a parody of culture - or the triumph of commercial non-culture - so the development of ACE and its counterparts seems like the ascendency of religious non-education.  

It is worth noting that, in Australia, ACE is the only group which keeps comprehensive statistics on the employment of exiting students. The director of ACE schools in Australia, Floyd Risser, presented in an interview a thorough set of statistics on the rate and place of employment of graduating ACE students. The majority of graduates presented in this set went into jobs not requiring high critical ability. The majority were employed in trades and jobs which required mechanical skill and commitment to product rather than service-centred skills. Though it is not a purpose of this thesis, it would be an interesting class analysis to explore whether ACE schooling maintains intergenerational social class reproduction.

1.12 Schools of compromise - Bollar Wagner

Melinda Bollar Wagner studied a collection of schools in an area she names the “Southeastern Valley”. The schools, people and area are given pseudonyms to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in her research. Bollar Wagner tells the reader that the area she studied is the home of the four most prominent televangelists in the country Jerry Falwell (Virginia), Pat Robinson (Virginia), the Bakkers (North Carolina) and Jimmy Swaggert (Louisiana) and, an area in which the Central Intelligence Agency recruits frequently. Bollar Wagner establishes that these schools are supported by conservative Christians who believe the Bible is literally true. According to their ideology, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is necessary in order to be “saved” or “born again” and have eternal life in heaven.

Bollar Wagner confirms that a taxonomy of these schools and their supporting traditions is quite complicated. She states:

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116 ibid., p. 212.
117 Interview Floyd Risser 17.10.92.
To develop a taxonomy of these groups is a process of unpacking a box, within a box, within a box.\footnote{118}

and:

In general, evangelicals are taken to be more conservative than the liberal mainline churches and less conservative than fundamentalists. Evangelicals are more likely to embrace ecumenism; fundamentalists are viewed as more separatist and exclusive. Charismatics believe in the gifts of the spirit, such as speaking in tongues and spiritual healing, as do the older Pentecostals. Fundamentalists believe that, although these gifts were used in Biblical times, they are not meant for human use today. Some Holiness churches are Pentecostal, and some are not.

Holiness churches, which grew out of the Wesleyan Methodist tradition, disagree with the fundamentalist Baptists (and with the new charismatics), who believe that once you have taken on a personal relationship with Jesus then you are saved, and nothing you can do can prevent you from going to heaven; this is called “security of salvation” or “eternal salvation”. Wesleyan and Holiness churches believe that your behaviour can “backslide” to the point that you would again become “lost”. As one teacher at a Holiness school said to me, after ascertaining that I wasn’t a Baptist, “Well, you know Baptists believe that you couldn’t do anything to harm your salvation. And you know that just doesn’t make sense. That can’t be true” (field notes CCCA 5/6/87). The Wesleyan and Holiness beliefs allow for humankind’s fall from grace, and also for its perfectibility. The evangelical Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) holds to a Calvinistic doctrine of “total depravity” of humans and “unconditional election” by God to a saved state (Field Notes 7/22/89).

Those are the basics. There are many other more subtle doctrinal differences to be found within the conservative Christian milieu.\footnote{119}

Importantly, Bollar Wagner emphasises the driving theological dynamic of conservative Protestant schools and discusses the notion of ecumenical evangelicalism which is fostered through the intermixing of groups in para church organisations, although this is less pronounced in the United States than in Australia. Her research indicates that the differences between various kinds of conservative Protestant schools are best understood theologically. In her work she explains school differences and similarities theologically.

\footnote{118}{Bollar Wagner, op. cit., p. 12.}
\footnote{119}{ibid.}
Bollar Wagner's study of "the Christian Walk" or Christian culture engages the ideological boundaries of the conservative Christian view of the self. She sees this as the key to understanding the ways in which choices are made in evangelical schools. The conservative Christian view of the self is founded in Christocentrism or "Christocentrism". This view understands that everything has being insofar as it participates in Christ and emphasises that any priority placed upon the self is anathema to the centrality of Christ. This view understands the love of self as the source of sin. It is a view which originates in the spirituality of St Augustine and is explained in detail by Taylor elsewhere.\textsuperscript{120} Bollar Wagner's exploration of the metaphors used to describe Christocentrism in these schools resonates with much of the language common to themelic schools in Australia. Christocentrism is intended to stand in contrast to collectivism, which smacks of socialism/communism and individualism which is understood as selfishness.\textsuperscript{121} What often results is a Christian individualism immersed in collective rhetoric. In conservative Christian circles, sin is often conceived as anything that places "I" in the centre of life. This is often explained by using the configuration of the word "sin" to emphasise the point, as in "sI\textsuperscript{n}".

Bollar Wagner's main finding is a surprising gap between belief and behaviour. Whilst confirming that these schools hold strong beliefs in Christocentrism, authoritarianism, inerrancy, moralism, conformity and separatism, she states that they nonetheless make substantial compromises with the surrounding modern culture. With reference to the findings of Hunter,\textsuperscript{122} Bollar Wagner suggests:

\begin{quote}
Some of the compromises made with Christian schools could be seen as reactions to an increased need for marketing in a culturally pluralistic society.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

However, the strongest reason for this compromise, she suggests, is the driving conservative Christian view of the self, a lens through which conservative Christians evaluate the cultural material available to them. It is this lens that makes the conservative Christian read the Bible as yielding specific ideas about human nature and

\textsuperscript{120} Taylor, C., \textit{Sources of the Self} Oakleigh, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 127-142.
\textsuperscript{121} Bollar Wagner, op. cit., p. 242.
\textsuperscript{122} Hunter, J. D., \textit{American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity} New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1983.
\textsuperscript{123} Bollar Wagner, op. cit., p. 213.
relationships with the divine. For the conservative Christian, the self is the “bondslave of God”. This view highlights the necessity to “die to self” and give one’s own will to God. What results is a selective concern for language about the self without concern for wider implications. Bollar Wagner comments:

This ideological bedrock lays the foundation for the content of the curriculum. It affects the desired relationship between teacher and student. It is a factor in determining what behaviour is acceptable within the school walls (and - in the case of some schools - outside the school walls); it influences the methods of discipline used when those behavioural norms are overstepped. At the same time, it leads to conflicts which signal, perhaps, compromises yet to be made ... Thus it is clear that each Christian school has not taken its founding church’s ideology and fashioned it into a school. While they have done some of this, they have also borrowed from education culture and have been drowned in the surrounding popular culture.\(^\text{124}\)

Bollar Wagner argues that conservative Christian schools have not established a new alternative structure in schooling and, with the support of Lockerbie,\(^\text{125}\) she suggests that any claim to a distinctively Christian philosophy of schooling is considerably weakened by this level of compromise. In other words, the gap between the rhetoric of the ideology and its practical outworking limits and tends to cancel out the statements of a Christian philosophy, in this case a Christian philosophy of schooling. This transposition has been thoroughly explained by Mol in the Australian context and by Ellul, the Christian sociologist.\(^\text{126}\)

1.13 Reformed schools in North America

In 1978 Kranendonk published Christian Day Schools, which describes the activities of reformed Christian schools and the International Union of Christian Schools (IUCS). The slim book is little more than a treatise on reformed theology and the mechanics of the IUCS. It would appear that Kranendonk emphasises IUCS in order to draw attention to the diversity of the movement beyond the United States. The IUCS

\(^{124}\) ibid., pp. 211-212.


represents those schools throughout the world which are reformed in origin. The headquarters for the IUCS is located in Michigan, which because of its geographical centrality in North America, is best able to service schools in the United States and Canada. The IUCS is assisted by two independent Christian education foundations: the Christian School Educational Foundation (CSEF) in the United States, and the Canadian Christian Education Foundation Inc. in Canada (CCEF).

In 1986 Harro W. Van Brummelen published a comprehensive history of the development of Dutch Calvinist Christian schools in North America\textsuperscript{127}. These schools were represented by the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS) which became Christian Schools International (CSI) in 1978. Mechielsen describes CSI as a “sister organisation of more than 400 Christian school communities in North America”.\textsuperscript{128} Van Brummelen describes himself as a “Kuyperian Calvinist”. Kuyperian Calvinism is Calvinism in the tradition of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), who advocated “anti-revolutionary” political views which he called “Christian democracy”. Kuyper emphasised the autonomy of various social spheres, each having its own God-given rights and “common grace”. Van Brummelen traces the roots of these schools back to the rise of Calvinist schools in the Netherlands in 1844. Deenick’s study of CPCS Ltd schools in Australia makes it clear that CPCS schools share the same foundation as Van Brummelen’s schools in North America/Canada\textsuperscript{129}. There is little doubt that these schools pioneered the development of themelic schooling.

Van Brummelen has made numerous trips to Australia as a keynote speaker for various themelic school systems. His book \textit{Walking With God in the Classroom}\textsuperscript{130} has become a best seller in themelic schools. It is a book with a practical emphasis which “Christianises” some recent ideas on teaching and learning, thus making the various theories on teaching and learning more palatable to the themelic teacher because they are not expressed by a humanist in a humanist framework. As such, the book seeks to define what it means to teach “Christianly”. The popularity of the book exposes the

\textsuperscript{127} Van Brummelen, H. W., \textit{Telling the Next Generation} Lanham, University Press of America, 1986.


narrow view of education and truth held by themelic teachers in general. A cynic might believe that any idea could be marketed to these people if it had the appropriate number of Bible verses attached. Much of the theory, research and experience in education and teaching which are debated by non-Christians tends to be unknown to the average themelic teacher because of the necessity to express such ideas palatably in Christian language. In my research this has been clear through interviews, conversations with participants at themelic school conferences, observations of trends in Christian publishing and recent tertiary developments associated with themelic schooling.

Van Brummelen informs us that these “Calvinist-inspired” schools form the largest non-Catholic school system in Canada. A reading of his history confirms the prominence of the Bible, authority, patriarchy, conformity, separatism, tradition and reactionism in these schools.

1.14 Research in Britain.

Studies by Deakin,131 Rowlands,132 Hughes133 and O’Keefe134 are critically examined by Ian Lambert, who completed his PhD thesis at the University of Cambridge in 1993.135 In comparison to these previous studies, Lambert’s work represents the most comprehensive study of themelic schools in Britain. Lambert, an Australian who had taught in a themelic school in Australia prior to undertaking research in Britain, now works for CPCS in Australia as a lecturer for the National Institute of Christian Education (NICE). Lambert calls his collection of schools “new Christian schools”. The scope of Lambert’s dissertation encompasses three schools, using ethnographic methodology with broader inferences being drawn about the movement as a whole.

Lambert establishes several important differences between British themelic schools and schools in Australia and North America. Firstly, themelic schools in Britain have

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strong origins in “charismatic restorationist renewal” and the “house church movement” which developed in the 1960s. The emphasis of this tradition is on restoration of New Testament Christianity with a theology similar to that of the Disciples of Christ in the USA. Secondly, the movement in Britain, which started in 1969, later than in Australia, is unfunded by the government and is much smaller. These schools formed an association in 1988 which incorporated the Christian Schools’ Trust (CST) and the Christian Schools’ Campaign (CSC). Thirdly, these schools appear to be far more open, theologically and educationally, and more self-critical than their counterparts in Australia and North America.

Lambert explains the development of these schools as being due to parental pressure for involvement in schooling and reaction to secular humanist influences in society. The schools Lambert studied are Bible-centred, “Christ-centred”, nurture-centred (protective), reactionary and separatist. They have these characteristics in common with the themelic schools of Australia.

Lambert’s study adds two important dimensions to the continuing evaluation of these schools. Firstly, he addresses the five most common objections directed at the establishment of such schools: indoctrination, hindrance of the development of autonomy, decisiveness and intolerance, misappropriation of government funds for religious purposes (though not funded the threat of such a possibility is an objection) and parents’ rights to religiously determine a child’s education. His argument is a particularly helpful apologetic for the themelic school perspective. Secondly, Lambert, like Van Brummelen, uses the cultural taxonomy of Niebuhr to situate these schools on some kind of cultural grid. Niebuhr’s fivefold categorisation uses the following models: “Christ against culture”; “Christ of culture”; “Christ above culture”; “Christ and culture in paradox”; and “Christ the transformer of culture”. Each one of these positions represents the relationship of each Christian tradition with its surrounding culture. Lambert does not necessarily seek to classify the schools in his collection according to each model, but explains that each school reflects a tension of competing models within its organisation.

1.15 Conclusion

Chapter 1 has explored attempts in Australia and overseas to define themelic schools and has shown that the level and volume of research in Australia has been much less than in the United States - which is understandable, given the disparate lengths of time
these schools have been in operation. Some preliminary research has been undertaken in Australia but the general picture of the nature of these schools and where they fit on the education map is confused and vague. Despite the differences between countries, such as the strong tradition of militant fundamentalism in the United States and the more open approach of schools in Britain, there are some common characteristics which other researchers have discovered and which support aspects of the present thesis. There has been a drive in both Australia and overseas to establish conservative Protestant Christian schools which share an emphasis on biblicism. In these schools, evangelical, charismatic and reformed influences are clear, as is compromise with the surrounding culture, and the driving dynamic is theological, with the characteristics of separatism, paternalism, conformity, moralism, authoritarianism and reactionism as recurring themes.
Chapter 2

Research Purpose and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the purpose and methodology of this thesis. The choice of methodology is directly related to the research purposes and questions, the nature of the schools being investigated and the arguments developed through the thesis. This chapter explains eight purposes for undertaking the work, related questions, problems to be investigated and thesis methodology. The purposes of this thesis are to address the lack of research on themelic schools, clarify their nature, provide a critique, explain the place of fundamentalism within themelic schools, address the lack of criticism within themelic schools, offer reasons for themelic school development, question the themelic vision of education and form conclusions and recommendations about educational directions.

The central questions of this thesis are: Why themelic schools? Why have they come about? What has generated this new schooling system? What has contributed to its development? What is it about the culmination of certain factors that led people to start alternative themelic schools? What are themelic school characteristics? What kind of education do themelic schools offer? What was the idea which energised the demand for separation? What was the basis of this reaction and separatist ideology? What difficulties have arisen which need to be addressed? If the movement has a collective theology and epistemology does it have a collective psychology? In other words, are there common psychological factors which particularly undergird themelic momentum?

The central problems to be investigated by the thesis concern misunderstanding and miseducation. This thesis establishes that themelic schools are misunderstood, both inside and outside of the themelic system. They are misunderstood at school, bureaucratic and academic levels. This is a problem because the notion of education implies learning, understanding and knowledge. The current status of research on these schools in Australia confuses understanding, inhibits learning in and outside these schools, disseminates misinformation and makes the possibility of communication difficult. In themelic schools there is confusion about characteristics, the meaning of
language held in common, the purpose of schooling and scholarship. The thesis investigates six issues related to these problems: the translation of theological characteristics to an educational setting, the relationship between belief and educational policy and practice, the thematic climate of reactionism, hidden agenda, paradoxes, hermeneutics and criticism. These purposes, questions, problems and related issues will be discussed in this chapter.

### 2.2 Purposes of the research and research questions

Despite a little recognition by educators and academics that the development of these schools makes all other growth in the public and private sectors of education in recent history pale into insignificance,⁠¹ there has been no comprehensive assessment of thematic schools as a whole. Research on this area of schooling in Australia is scant. Why has this been so?

The first purpose of this thesis is to address the lack of research on thematic schooling. The second purpose concerns the provision of clarity and explanation. This thesis attempts to clarify and explain, for an educational audience which seems to be dismissive, the nature of a new phenomenon in schooling, by proposing that the underlying dynamic of thematic schools is theological. Lack of recognition of this dynamic helps explain the misunderstanding and dismissiveness. The nature of thematic schools is constituted by a naive realist epistemology of a fundamentalist variety. Reactions to this seem to contribute towards the dismissiveness noted by Mayer. That the doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible, which is the foundation of all thematic school formal associations, is the reason for the dismissiveness and indifference of most educationalists and academics, is confirmed both by Mayer and by analysis of the perspective presented in recent recent research by Anderson, Speck and Prideaux.⁠² Chapter 5 argues that their analysis addresses surface issues only and provides a distorted picture of these schools.

It seems the moment that many educators come in contact with elements of theology in schools, particularly elements of fundamentalism, and fail to understand them, they

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² Speck and Prideaux, ibid., pp. 279-95; Anderson *The Interaction of the Public ...* op. cit., pp. 213-36.
presume that they are insignificant. Perhaps there is also an unconscious fear of fundamentalism and indifference is felt to be the best strategy or coping mechanism. Such responses may have led academics in the past unintentionally to distort and exaggerate the character of these new schools. If so, this further inhibits productive dialogue between the schools themselves and the wider academic, school and bureaucratic community. The purpose of this thesis to clarify the nature of themestic schooling ought to help bridge such gaps.

The theological dynamic of conservative Protestantism which energises themestic schooling is described by Hunter.

Theology has long occupied a central place within Protestant culture, perhaps the central place. The Protestant Reformation was, at the heart, a theological protest, which reverberated throughout northern European culture in the sixteenth century and thereafter. The Reformation established a precedent, for since that time articulation and rearticulation of the substance of Protestant belief (as opposed to defining religious and moral authority [Catholicism], achieving particular spiritual experiences [Hinduism and Buddhism], or maintaining the cohesion of the religious community [Judaism]) has been the paramount task of the Protestant community. Protestantism's emphasis on belief is unusual in this regard. It seeks to distinguish itself - indeed, it achieves its very identity - principally through the substance of its theological tenets.3

Themesticism, the coming together of conservative Protestants in the process of schooling, shares a fixation on theology with Protestantism in general. The intensity of interest in theology in themestic schools is related to what Melucci calls "reflexivity";4 that is, the tendency of the schools to ask themselves explicit questions about their identity. The conceptual framework of this thesis is based upon the fact that theology is the basic building block with which themestic schools use to shape their expectations and calculate the benefits and costs of their actions. Lambert, Rose, Peshkin, Bollard Wagner and other researchers of similar schools in Britain and North America reviewed in this and the preceding chapter, confirm this.5

In seeking to clarify the theological dynamic and general characteristics of themelic schools denominational descriptors have been intentionally avoided since a church/denominational definition of themelic schools would be misleading. Themelic schools are not so much the activity of a particular set of denominations as the product of a theological mindset across many Protestant denominations. The sponsoring denominations (less orthodox Protestant) behind the development of themelic schools tend to be Baptist, Churches of Christ, Reformed Church of Australia, Assemblies of God, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, Christian Missionary Alliance, Brethren and independent evangelical and charismatic groups. The larger orthodox Protestant denominations such as the Anglican, Lutheran, and Uniting Church of Australia do not, with a few exceptions, sponsor themelic schools. The differences between the orthodoxy and unorthodoxy in the Christian church are historical and hermeneutical. The orthodox denominations have a longer history and tend to be less literalist with the biblical text.

The 1983-84 Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS) and McNair Anderson surveys\(^6\) show the difference between mainline and other conservative Protestant denominations with regard to the seriousness with which members take their theology. Compared with Catholics and Anglicans, conservative Protestants attend church more often, participate more in voluntary church work, pray more, read the Bible more, take the Bible more literally, are more masculinist in church practice, believe twice as much in supernatural powers, hold strongly to orthodox Christian beliefs and believe more strongly in teaching religion in the home.\(^7\) It is from this group of Protestant theological traditions that this system of new schools has developed.

The third purpose for undertaking this research is to provide a critique of themelic schools. Themelic schooling in Australia is new and unique, and as yet has not been fully analysed, especially from historical and theological perspectives. This thesis endeavours to provide a historical and theological critique in order to represent correctly the unity and breadth of this new movement by detailing the theological differences in themelic schools.

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It could be argued that concentrating on the entrenched patterns dividing the theological landscape, as is done in this thesis, masks the cultural factors that have always been at work in theological discussion. Such is not the intention of this thesis, rather this thesis aims to address questions of cultural importance as part of a theological discussion.

Behind the common expectations, language and epistemology of themelic schools stands a diversity of Protestant theological traditions. Chapter 6 provides a context in which these schools can be critiqued, by showing how themelic schools stand in relation to each other, thus enabling valid comparisons to be made between schools in various systems. This thesis argues that each theological tradition in themelic schools has a profound effect upon much of school policy and practice and that these policies and actions can be better understood in the context of the grid. The critique provided by this thesis will show the connection between theological tradition and school policy and practice.

Most of the critique will deal with the most demonstrable extremities of the themelic movement. Chapter 6 gives a perspective on these. The bulk of the movement tends to bear a subtle relationship to the sentiments of the extremes. That is, whilst officially disclaiming the extreme it nonetheless has considerable sympathies with the essential concerns of that extreme. Such empathy is exemplified by the way the extreme end of the themelic school movement does not trust government. Extreme groups refuse government funding, registration and equate the state with a literal devil whilst other more moderate groups accept funding and give theological justification for trusting the state. However, all themelic groups agree on a perceived problem of humanism in the government system of education and speak a similar language on the evils of humanism because it places its trust in the human self and not God. Any system that does not trust in God first, according to themelic argument, promulgates atheism and immorality and is not to be trusted.

The three strongest theological traditions in themelic schools are the fundamentalist, evangelical and reformed. The term “fundamentalist” reflects an historical,

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epistemological and hermeneutical understanding. "Fundamentalism" was first coined between 1909 and 1912 in twelve volumes of a publication entitled The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth edited by R. A. Torrey and A. C. Dixon. The books were sponsored by wealthy Californian laymen who distributed them without cost to over three million church leaders and students around the world. The fundamentals of faith defended by Torrey and Dixon concerned the Bible (its inspiration and authority), Jesus Christ (his deity, virgin birth, miracles, substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection and personal return) and such topics as the reality of sin, personal regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer and the obligation to evangelise. In May 1919 a conference convened in Philadelphia resulted in the formation of a group called The World Christian Fundamentals Association. "Fundamentalism" was first used in a social context to describe the movement that opposed the teaching of evolution in schools in the USA in the 1920s.

The use of the term "fundamentalist" by some scholars to describe the themetic system of schools does not capture their variety. Overt forms of classical or militant fundamentalism are present in a small part of the themetic system. The fundamentalism that does exist in themetic schools is mostly epistemological and hermeneutical and therefore reflects the historical understanding of the term. Despite this, many academics refer to this collection of schools with the label "fundamentalist". This thesis claims that this is because educational academia has made an inadequate account of the development of these schools. The term "fundamentalist" is understood in popular usage as a pejorative designation and through the media has moved considerably from its historical meaning. In the daily news the term is used to refer to political and religious extremists. This thesis argues that the simplistic application of this label to these schools has assisted the process of dismissiveness and continues to perpetuate a distance between the schools and academia. This is supported by research in psychology which suggests that the process of simplistic labelling is designed to create distance and dismissiveness. In some ways, the use of the term "fundamentalist" is convenient and easy but it is a term most themetic people reject as an accurate description of their activities. Whilst some themetic people seem content to accept that their beliefs are fundamentalist, they are reluctant to use the term because in the popular understanding it conjures up notions of militancy, violence and irrationality. Themetic people would want to refute these three connotations and therefore reject the use of the term. This

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thesis supports their claim that themelic schools are not places of violence, militancy or irrationality. The term “fundamentalism” will be used in this thesis in its historical theological sense.

Fundamentalism is usually understood as a version of evangelicalism.11 “Evangelicalism” throughout this thesis refers to the North American and British expression of theologically conservative Protestantism. It is an umbrella term for a theological tradition covering a variety of religious and denominational traditions. All those who display conversionism (stressing conversion or being “born again” to Christ), activism (usually evangelism often labelled “witnessing for Christ”), biblicism (giving the Bible preeminent authority) and crucicentrism (the centrality of the crucifixion of Christ) are evangelical. Australian evangelicalism has been profoundly shaped by American and British evangelicalism.12

Evangelicalism differs from the reformed tradition in its emphasis on the ability of persons to take part in the Christian conversion process. This emphasis on the ability of persons to take part in the conversion process is known as Arminianism (named after Jakob Arminius 1560-1609), and stands in contrast to the reformed (Calvinist) perspective which emphasises the sovereignty of God’s election of persons to salvation. Calvinism has its roots in the work of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and John Calvin (1509-1564). Calvinists emphasise human depravity and inability to take part in the conversion process. The historical division of conservative Protestants into factions based on these traditions is crucial in understanding what has happened in their collaboration in themelic schooling. Historically, Arminians and Calvinists have not cooperated because their doctrines of salvation, which are foundational to their Christian identity, have been so diametrically opposed.

A more comprehensive list of definitions of theological terms appears in Chapter 3. This list of theological traditions provides a framework for understanding the diversity within themelic schools and the domain of ideas that characterise them. This thesis refers to this domain of ideas as “themelic mentality” or “themelic mindedness”. This

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thesis maintains that there a tension in this meeting of conservative traditions in themelic collaboration. On the one hand the schools share a common language and seem to cooperate across a broad spectrum of traditions in various aspects of schooling but on the other hand misunderstand the nature of their own development and the things which are still divisive in their evolution.

Recent research has categorised all these schools as fundamentalist, in a pejorative sense.¹³ The fourth purpose of this thesis is to show that this misrepresents themelic schools. Whilst this thesis maintains that there is a dominance of fundamentalist epistemology in themelic schools, it also argues that other commonly accepted elements of fundamentalism, such as strong, militant, violent and aggressive social and political action, are not present. Indeed, themelic schools are very selective about what areas of the curriculum and school policy receive their zealous attention. Despite the maintenance of exclusivist and separatist language in these schools, there is a great deal of compromise with the surrounding secular culture.

The fifth purpose of this thesis is to address the issue of criticism within themelic schools. To date there has been no substantial self-criticism in the themelic system. Themelic schools have tended to be inward looking and insecure about criticism, and this has not encouraged an internal scholarly assessment of their development. Externally, there has been a lack of effort by themelic people to embrace the wider academic community, and this is one reason that the growth, development and distinctiveness of the themelic tradition are simply not known in the broader academic climate.

Although the overall aim of this thesis is to examine critically the history, theology and philosophy of themelic schools, a critical context is provided in which these schools might examine themselves. Not only do government and academia misunderstand such schools but also the themelic school movement does not sufficiently understand itself. This is partly because of the movement’s inability to criticise itself from within and partly because it has not yet developed a critical understanding of its own history. My purpose is to contribute to such an understanding.

The sixth purpose of this thesis is to discuss the causes of the growth of the themelic movement. Themelic schools as a new system of Protestant Christian schooling have added another element to the structure of education in Australia. It is important as a part

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¹³ Speck, Prideaux, and Anderson, op. cit.
of this history to establish the way in which government policy in education since World War II has assisted the growth of these schools. The suggestion by Oswald that post-Karmel Report funding is the major cause of themelic school development\textsuperscript{14} does not adequately explain the themelic system's growth from 1962-1973 and its lack of growth from 1973 till 1978. The growth of the themelic system is much better explained by an understanding of the theological dynamic which permeates these schools. Themelic schools are started for religious reasons - to promote their students' Christian salvation and moral development and to offer alternatives to the secular humanism which dominates the government system. Educational and financial reasons are secondary to the religious zeal which motivates themelic christians to commence schools. This hypothesis is supported by Taylor\textsuperscript{15} and research into the development of similar schools in North America.\textsuperscript{16}

The seventh purpose of this thesis is to address the nature of education in themelic schools. This will be addressed within a discussion of themelic reactionism, separatism and what I term "themelic contradictions". It was government education policy in the period of rapid change of the 1960s and 1970s which alarmed the founders of many themelic schools and excited them into action. The call to go "back to the basics" of the four Rs (reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and religion) by the proponents of themelic schools was a reaction against decisions made about school architecture, coeducation, religious instruction in schools, sex education, scrapping examinations, values education and many more structural, curriculum and societal changes which were made over this period. The reaction, however, is to more than educational policy. Conservative Christian responses to social and cultural trends in the same time period contributed greatly to the parental demand for themelic schools. It would be interesting but difficult to measure the effect that such developments as the contraceptive pill, the cold war, women's liberation, rock and roll, the space race, gay liberation and the hippie movement had upon the minds of conservative christians. A clear example of a change


\textsuperscript{15} Taylor, L., The "Drift" to Private Schools: Religion is a Big Factor Queensland Teachers Union Professional Magazine Vol. 5, No. 2, 1987, pp. 3-6.

in society which offended conservative Christians is the rapid and accelerated expansion of literature sympathetic to homosexuality between 1960 and 1980. The work of Clyde and Lobban\textsuperscript{17} makes it clear that there were only three books of homosexual content directed at an adolescent audience predating 1970. From 1962 to 1979 thirty books were published for adolescents which were sympathetic to homosexuality. From 1986 to 1988, thirty-five books were published. Conservative Protestants, particularly the extreme groups like Fred Nile's Festival of Light (FOL), believe such trends have produced the need to withdraw children and protect them from influences deemed harmful.

Government and secular society, swayed by the climate of change, underestimated the resolve of conservative Christian people. Government and education policy makers, in their willingness to embrace change, assisted themelic people to create a new educational system. An account of how conservative Protestants reacted to social change and government education policy will answer questions about what energises this schooling movement. Such discussion may offer a constructive contribution to future deliberations over education policy. However, such a discussion will describe but not explain the energy and logic behind the reactionist and separatist elements themselves. This is the purpose of the theological analysis of the thesis.

Whilst it could be said that themelic schools are just another set of private schools, this is not their self-understanding, nor is it proposed by this thesis. They see themselves as standing apart from all other schools, including other private schools. There were many new trends in society and education during the 1960s and 1970s and these schools wished to stem that tide and provide an alternative.

The themelic system of schools began self-consciously as a contrast and "countersign" to the trends in government and non-government schools already in existence. The idea of a countersign jells with the notion of a counter-culture and effectively captures the reactionary/separatist character of these schools. The countersign in Christian understanding also takes up the evangelical demand to "witness" or testify to one's faith.\textsuperscript{18} To use conservative Christian jargon, in many ways themelic schools believe


they have been “called” to contradict the “signs of the times”. Indeed, the rhetoric of the conservative Christian is coloured by language about “separation from the world”. The maxim of II Corinthians 6:14 “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” is a Bible verse used to support such a view. There is a sense in which this creates a nexus between reaction and creativity. The beginning of an alternative system of schooling is viewed by themelic school visionaries as a creative act. Whether the uniqueness of this system of schools is creative and contributes to education in Australia has yet to be researched. Simply speaking, themelic schools were founded as a reaction to the context of educational and social developments after World War II.

It was Brian V. Hill who first noted in 1978 that this new schooling phenomenon began with a hubristic attitude.\textsuperscript{19} Now the movement has reached a point where its numerical growth has begun to level off and in some themelic schools the hubris is being blunted by a developing sense of confusion. As this movement embarks in earnest on teacher and graduate education, gaining approval to award degrees through higher education boards, there is a need to probe again the motivations for beginning these schools, since the same possibilities of hubris, insularity, narrow-mindedness and miseducation are possible in a new context.

\subsection*{2.3 Issues to be investigated}

This thesis addresses several issues related to the problems of miseducation and misunderstanding. The first issue is translation, interpreting the meaning of a theological dynamic for educational practice. This is a problem because themelic schools are misunderstood, because there is a chasm between the world of theological methodology and educational practice. Themelic schools bridge both worlds thus creating a difficult situation for educators without a theological background, indeed religious/theological ideology is often considered in Australian education and Australian history in general as a realm best left alone.\textsuperscript{20} Conway has identified and articulated the widespread indifference of Australians towards religion and the church.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{19} Hill, \textit{Is it Time?} \textit{...} op. cit., p. 18.
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Indeed, the outstanding characteristic of 70 per cent of Australians at all cultural levels is their religious illiteracy - their abysmal ignorance of what they are so ready to dismiss.\textsuperscript{22}

The argument that Australians have always been characteristically indifferent and antagonistic toward the church is supported by Grocott’s history of convict NSW,\textsuperscript{23} Harris’ evidence in his history of Aboriginal missions,\textsuperscript{24} the contemporary social analysis of Mackay\textsuperscript{25} and contemporary Christian writers such as Wilson,\textsuperscript{26} Smith,\textsuperscript{27} Breward\textsuperscript{28} and Hutchinson.\textsuperscript{29}

Clark, who labelled religion in Australian society as “the Kingdom of Nothingness”, expressed the general feeling of historians towards the church and religion in Australian society when he said

\[ ... \text{for me it was then a confidence trick to persuade the simple-minded that their God would let them suck their favourite lollipop through all eternity.} \textsuperscript{30} \]

The tendency has been to describe religious developments in education in a sociological, political or chronological way. This is the case with historical work by Turney,\textsuperscript{31} Barcan\textsuperscript{32} and, more recently, Connell.\textsuperscript{33} Theological decoding is a necessity on two levels: first, to bridge the gap between themelic schools and outsiders; and, second, to enable themelic schoolers themselves to deal more effectively with government institutions. Trying to explain the nature of these schools to a sceptical educational

\textsuperscript{22} ibid., p. 207.
\textsuperscript{24} Harris, J., \textit{One Blood} Sutherland, Albatross, 1990.
\textsuperscript{25} Mackay, H., \textit{Reinventing Australia} Pymble, Angus and Robertson, 1993.
\textsuperscript{26} Wilson, B., \textit{Can God Survive in Australia?} Sutherland, Albatross, 1983.
\textsuperscript{27} Smith, J., \textit{Advance Australia Where?} Homebush West, ANZEA, 1989.
\textsuperscript{28} Breward, I., \textit{A History of the Australian Churches} St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1993.
\textsuperscript{29} Hutchinson, M. and Campion, E. (eds.), \textit{Re-Visioning Australian Colonial Christianity} Sydney, Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{30} Clark, M., \textit{The Quest for Grace} Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{32} Barcan, A., \textit{A History of Australian Education} Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1980.
community in a way that offers both criticism and hope is a difficult task, but one which will benefit themelic schoolers by clarifying definitions and promoting greater recognition of the system and therefore, more meaningful dialogue at all levels.

This thesis also explores the problematical relationship between belief and educational policy and practice in a particular group of schools. The thesis proposes that some elements of dogma in these schools lead to miseducation and unproductive conflict. This claim is familiar to these schools and is made using the language and theological imperatives of the themelic movement itself. The thesis does not question the right to establish an alternative school nor does it question the good intentions of people in themelic schools. What it does questioned is the claim of themelic schools that their vision of education and schooling is “distinctively Christian”.

Themelic schools have endeavoured to establish institutions of a “truly Christian” educational nature, but the educational problems of indoctrination, hierarchicalism, intolerance, insularity, elitism, isolationism and irrelevance can and do occur in these schools, and such educational problems contradict the claim of “educating Christianly” made by the proponents of themelic schools. For example, the idea of separation is in itself anti-educational because it implies cutting oneself off from dialogue and realms of knowledge in other sectors of the educational community.

A third issue this thesis investigates is the possibility of establishing educational practice in a climate of reactionism. It is within separatist self understanding and reactionary development that many of the educational problems of themelic schools reside as well as the struggles they have with each other. Reactionism, fuelled by fear and confusion, inhibits the ability of themelic schools to embrace change. This theory is crucial in understanding the substantial criticisms this thesis makes of this system of schools. The reactionary nature of themelic schooling will be addressed in Chapter 12.

Another relevant trend was a general shift in the spheres of influence of certain religious traditions in Australian churches which saw a shift from the more conservative and reserved evangelicalism of England to the more fundamentalist and active evangelicalism of the USA. This trend is well documented by Parker34 and this had its

part to play in the shift of Christians to develop themelic schools. In many ways, the developing influence of the USA on Australian Protestantism matches the economic sector’s change.\textsuperscript{35} This is confirmed by the work of Buch.\textsuperscript{36} In particular, the influence of the flood of American evangelical publications into Australia after 1978 is worth noting.\textsuperscript{37} This influx of American evangelicalism went hand in hand with the reactionism of themelic schooling. Hill comments

I think that this is one of the signs that the Christian school movement is far more beholden to American ways of approaching problems than Australian ways or for that matter British, in that America is a place of extremes; and they are violent extremes, not only physically but psychologically. The inerrancy debate has been a dreadful example of the way in which people who could have worked together in fact pulled apart when they found themselves in the dominant position. Liberalism was discredited by the way in which American society developed in the 1950s and 1960s. The evangelical world had the ball at its feet and it happened in this country too. If they could have worked together, they could have been immensely plausible and credible to that society. Instead, this debate developed and other schisms also developed, some of them along racial lines; and they are a divided cause with many of the evidences of their activity earning discredit in the public eye. I think particularly of television evangelists.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to the reactionism of conservative Protestants to social change was their perception that the larger, more orthodox church denominations had declined in power and influence on the moral life of Australia. This was another contributing factor which stirred themelic reactionism. It is my view that reactionism in themelic schools poses the greatest threat to their claims to establish Christian education or distinctively Christian education, and that themelic schools do not constitute the “radical distinctives” they would like to claim. Much deeper theological, psychological, philosophical, and historical issues need to be explored in order to understand themelic distinctiveness. In some cases, the things which these schools claim as distinctive, such as the primacy of the Bible, the dogma of inerrancy and the symbols of “teaching Christianly”, seem to militate against the establishment of a Christian education.


\textsuperscript{37} Buch, ibid., and Interview Paul Boots 16.11.94.

\textsuperscript{38} Interview Brian. V. Hill 23.11.93.
A fourth issue which this thesis seeks to address is that of clarification of hidden agenda in the themelic school system. Hidden agenda in communication inhibits understanding and creates confusion. This is a problem in themelic schools because they do not have a critical sense of their own history nor the capacity to be self-critical. The dearth of research within their own ranks is evidence of this. Those who have set out to research these schools have found the task extremely difficult. As we have seen, the problem of trying to establish the distinctiveness of themelic schools has been noted by Lambert, Hewitt, Gordon and Barnett. Lambert’s observations of similar schools in the UK are telling:

At the moment, I am writing a chapter of my dissertation on each of the schools aims. Although it would appear to be a quite simple task - asking people involved in these schools what their aims are, or reading the stated aims on each school’s prospectus - I assure you it is not! It has proved to be the most exhausting and frustrating task. Why? Because no-one could really tell me, with any great consistency what the school’s aims were ... many of the school aims were religious in nature, as one would expect, and were couched in language that often made them vague rather than specific.

Lambert suggests two reasons why such a problem occurs. The first is what Cambridge philosopher, Terry McLaughlin, calls “edu-babble”, what in effect is imprecise and platitudinous rhetoric which is characteristic of much educational discussion. An example in themelic schools might be terms such as “educating Christianly” or “a caring school”. The second is the fact that as the schools have “hijacked” fundamental Christian principles and transposed them into a schooling context they have assumed the same meaning as if the school is a church. Lambert’s work suggests that such a process does not develop into educational aims:

There are enormous assumptions in the language used in schools, and the members of your communities are not even sure what is implied by the many religious terms transferred into educational aims and practices.

A third reason, which Lambert does not discuss, which poses a problem in determining themelic identity, is the number of issues related to themelic school practice that are

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40 ibid., p. 11.
buried or hidden in their language and practice. The theology of authority in themelic schooling is supported psychologically by a mixture of fear, conformity, confusion and insecurity. This will be discussed in the case studies in Chapter 7. One teacher who had taught in the CCS system (including a year in the head office) and had been a principal in a CPCS school described the themelic approach to authority as "phariseeism" (referring to the authoritarian legalistic mindset of the pharisees in the New Testament):

... it permeates it from beginning to end, from the top to the bottom. They are more concerned about looking good, about following rules than following Christ. They pick out isolated verses for what they want to do. ... Teachers are there as servants and this is a very interesting point. This comes from scripture which says "if you want to be first you have to be a servant of all". But before that it says "do not lord it over others as the gentiles do". I have heard the second part of that verse at almost every conference I've been at in Christian schools, they always quote that but they never quote the beginning of it.\(^{41}\)

Further evidence is threaded throughout the Chapters in the second half of the thesis which supports the claim that themelic schools operate by a theology of authoritarianism. This disposition is strengthened by an epistemology which is based on the dogma of biblical inerrancy and in turn supported by a philosophy of naive realism. This is explained diagrammatically in Figure 1 (on the following page).

An understanding of the psyche of themelic schools, which is the discussed in the final chapters of the thesis, is of paramount importance for anyone who wishes grasp the degree to which fear dominates these schools. So much of what undergirds themelic momentum is difficult to unearth. The themelic school is immersed in a complex and circular set of theological, philosophical, psychological and historical understandings. This circular set of understandings defines the themelic "mentality". The situation is not obvious to outside observers. Even those familiar with conservative Protestant Christianity have difficulty in understanding the nuances of themelic schooling. On the surface it has a simplistic "either-or" logic all of its own,\(^{42}\) which is quite misleading. Discussion in Chapter 6 of "layers of operation" endeavours to clarify this.

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\(^{41}\) Interview Mark Tindall 14.8.92.

Most publications which seek to justify the establishment of themelic schools incorporate a demonstration of simple “either-or” logic. Hill calls this interrelationship:

... a closed circle which both hinders your ability to appreciate where other people are coming from and reduces your capacity to communicate with them because you won’t be using their categories of thought even critically. You’ll just be using your own vocabulary and when they disagree with you you will say that’s because they are unredeemed.

As I shall show, Hill has articulated the heart of the matter. The hypothesis of a closed circle is an excellent way of explaining themelic foundations. I shall argue that the

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44 Interview Brian. V. Hill 23.11.93.
policy and practice of themelic schools are enmeshed by an unbroken circle of
assumptions, symbols, emotions and language which are rarely questioned or
understood. Indeed, to criticise any part of this circle or policy dependent on it
threatens themelic identity. This adds to the problem of determining distinctives
(discussed in Chapter 3 and 10) because much of what lies on the surface (espoused
theory) in themelic schools is scaffolded by this complex circle of beliefs and
dispositions (theory-in-use). An explanatory discussion of espoused theory and
theory-in-use (which are employed in the diagram) is undertaken shortly in section 2.4c
in this chapter.

What the diagram attempts to show is that underneath what outsiders observe in
themelic schools is a circular and interdependent set of dispositions which condition
themelic policy and practice. Each disposition is strongly linked to the other so that an
attack on one is understood by themelic schoolers as an attack on all the others.
Criticism of themelic policy and practice is interpreted as an attack on the dispositions
on which they depend. This thesis seeks to address the relationship of this circle to
themelic school policy and practice. The diagram The Themelic Circle (Figure 1.)
endeavours to clarify this relationship.

Policy on creationism in themelic schools is as an example. On the surface nearly all
themelic schools declare a strong policy on the belief in a literal six day creation and
condemn the teaching of evolution. This is most obvious in the teaching of Science and
History but is also observed in policy on Sunday activities and (male dominated)
leadership. Figure 1. helps to represent how the real agenda which lies much deeper is
disguised by the policy. The driving mentality and energy behind creationism policy is
rooted in emotions of insecurity and socio-psychological factors, a philosophy of naive
realism, a fundamentalist hermeneutic and related theological symbols and language.
The analysis of researchers like Speck and Prideaux (who rightfully attack the
educational weaknesses of creationism) is valuable but does not really get below the
surface. This thesis attends to the problem of this hidden aspect of themelic schooling.
It presents agendas hitherto unanalysed by those inside or outside the system.

One of the claims of themelic schools is that of distinctiveness from the traditional non-
government school model which is more influenced by Catholic self-identity and
Arnoldian traditions and values. These new themelic schools claim to be distinctive
because of their unique quest to establish and maintain a "biblical" education in the face
of the trends of secularism, pluralism, humanism and modernity which were perceived
to have infected the school environment, government and non-government progressively after World War II. There is a hidden tension in thematic schools arising from competing demands: on the one hand to maintain levels of excellence and credibility and, on the other hand, to satisfy the need for low fees to enable thematic Christians to enrol their children. Thematic schools feel compelled to ensure that the perceived “mistakes” of Arnoldian schools are not repeated, that their schools do not drift down the wayward path to secularist and humanist values. The difficulty they have in maintaining such a stance amidst many competing values in society is a major problem for them.

A fifth issue this thesis explores is the difficulty encountered in attempting to explain paradoxes in thematic schools. The thesis maintains both that thematic schools operate on an epistemology which is (historically) fundamentalist and that there is a consistency of practice which is not (popularly) fundamentalist. Historically fundamentalism is associated with biblical literalism and rigid Protestantism. This thesis argues that a distinction can be drawn between the popular understanding of fundamentalism as a movement, and a fundamentalist epistemology (and hermeneutic) at work in another movement. This thesis proposes that thematic schools as a whole are not fundamentalist in the popular sense of militant and political extremes. In thematic schools most of the language used by its proponents is fundamentalist in the historical sense in that it reflects rigid biblical literalism. Even the most extreme end of thematic schooling that refuses government funding and is cultish in organisation is not militant or political in the popular understanding of the term. Chapter 8 discusses the fundamentalist epistemology of thematic schools.

A sixth issue to be examined is related to hermeneutics, particularly the conflict between the dogma of inerrancy and the possibility of establishing educational practice. The dogma of inerrancy, and the philosophy of naive realism which supports it, enforce dogmatic, simplistic and singular claims to truth, claims there is only one understanding of what is true. This understanding has been revealed to those who claim knowledge of inerrancy and infallibility.

It is the claim to absolute knowledge of truth without error in the Bible that causes significant problems for the establishment of education in thematic schools because the dogma itself is a mechanism of exclusion. It elevates the protectors of the known truth
to the position of exclusive interpreters of the Bible as revealed without error. Inerrancy proposes a singular “one only” hermeneutic and naively supposes that any other interpretation of the same biblical text is in error. Indeed, despite the overwhelming evidence of diversity through dozens of denominations and contradictory creeds and research to the contrary, the dogma of inerrancy supposes that the Bible contains no error. To make matters more difficult, many themelic schoolers use the term “inerrancy” and “infallible” in a variety of ways. In many cases, the terms are used as gatekeepers but do little more than give primacy to the Bible.

The dogma of inerrancy is a tool of indoctrination which rules out any idea of openness, diversity or dialogue in education. An epistemology which locates truth in a naive understanding of an infallible Bible creates an environment which has serious educational consequences for many areas of school life. One of the difficulties in establishing themelic identity is related to the way this dogma is treated. In themelic schools a mutual understanding of the dogma of inerrancy is presumed but never clarified. This thesis explores the the doctrines of inerrancy/infallibility and the conflict these create for claims made about education.

Having worked in and with themelic schools I have experienced their potential strengths and weaknesses. From my perspective as a critic I do not accept the dogma of inerrancy as Christian or educative; rather, the reverse. Inerrancy leads to closed-mindedness in the face of criticism and naivete about diversity, truth and hermeneutics. Such qualities do not augur well for a system that claims to found education on the New Testament story of Jesus who, in my understanding, had a style of openness and tolerance which proposed different attitudes to learning, knowledge and the growth of people.

In an effort to weaken the dogma of inerrancy this thesis asserts that the doctrine of inerrancy has its own history, which has been adopted into the themelic perspective and alleged to be Christian. Since I argue that a Christian education has greater potential without the dogma my criticism strikes at the very foundation of themelic schools. On the one hand the potential is created for themelic schools not to listen to the criticisms of this thesis and on the other hand, the risk of not presenting this critical perspective may incur the indifference of an academic community which is sceptical of religious/theological discussion.
The dogma of inerrancy is at odds with the notion of diversity of understanding and the establishment of a pluralistic educational environment. The growing pluralism in society during the 1960s has opened up the education market and created new market demands, actually fostering growth of non-government and alternative schools with contrary views on pluralism or even anti-pluralistic views. The themelic schools’ claim to exclusive knowledge of truth and absolute rightness, encapsulated in their commitment to the dogma of inerrancy and infallibility, pits them against the educative value of pluralism.

A final issue to be investigated is the climate of criticism in themelic schools. There is some criticism in themelic circles, but it tends to be shallow and focussed on moral and internal Christian philosophical issues. The inability of the majority in the themelic movement to pose significant and comprehensive criticism of schooling and education in general has meant many aspects of schooling have been accepted without question as good. The resultant passive acceptance by the movement of many structures and processes has militated against its own goals. Themelic schools have tended to be critical of “the other” and the philosophy of secular humanism that allegedly govern public schooling rather than being critical of schooling itself. Perhaps the most profound lack of criticism concerns the theological assumptions brought to the educational context.

2.4 Methodology

The methodology of this research is historical, theological and philosophical. The historical method of the thesis is descriptive, analytical and critical. It seeks to map a new movement in schooling that has not been fully described before, analyse the position the movement holds in relation to schooling trends in general and offer criticisms of that position. It includes oral history gleaned from interviews with key individuals in the themelic school movement and the testing of hypotheses developed during my employment for seven years in a themelic school. The theological and philosophical method is concerned with more abstract and generalisable considerations.

The methodology of this thesis involves movement from an analysis of social structures to collective attitude, from ideology to theology, policy and story. The idea of a social/critical and psycho/critical history captures this movement.
2.4a Ideology and mentality

Ideologically, themelic schools are new and different from previous forms of schooling in Australia. In proposing that they share an ideological character I address the nature of the ideology that generates themelic momentum. By “ideology” I mean a worldview and disposition in faith/belief. I use W. E. Andersen’s definition of “ideology” which relies on the work of Talcott Parsons:

An ideology is to be understood as that synthesis of beliefs within a culture which (not withstanding its degree of inner consistency, its degree of command of social allegiance, the degree of sophisticated social understanding of its social ramifications, nor its rational adequacy as an interpretation of reality), defines answers for a society to problems of the meaning of reality, and tends to commit such society to action consonant with these.  

This thesis examines themelic ideology in order to establish what view of the world is held by the proponents of themelic schools.

I also use the concept of “mentality” to examine themelic thinking. The notion of a mentality originates in the Annales school of history-writing and refers to the psychological realities underpinning human relationships, basic habits of mind, long term trends and analysis of attitudes. It is a purpose of this thesis to uncover the mentality or psyche of themelic schooling. The “history of mentalities” or the Annales school of history which is associated with Lucien Febvre, Georges Lefebvre and Marc Bloch, first emphasised this approach to historical study through a journal established in 1929 now known as Annales: economies, societies, civilisations. In this thesis I use this approach, which places more emphasis on analysis than on narrative or the chronicle of events. The Annales school is interested in long-term structures and trends and believes that history should be more integrated with other disciplines. Some American scholars have referred to the Annales view of history as Psychohistory or the History of Ideas. Spaull labels this history as “the New Social History”. It is

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concerned with the ideas of the everyday as well as those of the philosophers, with concepts and with mental structures in particular. For Annales historians, problems of culture are essentially problems of worldviews and their interpretation. This interest in deep structures leads most Annales historians to abandon conventional narrative as the primary technique of historical writing.

The Annales school of history tends to focus on the shaping and development of ideas in a specific context, on analysing the "mental equipment" available to people in their time and place. Historians such as Bloch are interested in the historical character of collective psychology and point out the differences of mind in separate times. Febvre is interested in changes in the human psyche in time and human response to the environment.

In speaking about mentality this thesis seeks to map out the mental horizons of themelic schools. Two major dispositions of the themelic mind will be pursued, fear and confusion. The argument which begins in Chapter 3 establishes the power of these dispositions and culminates in Chapter 13.

2.4b Justification

I shall show that in themelic schools Christianity is institutionalised in principles for life conduct and understanding the world. These principles are immersed in biblicism and founded in conservative Protestantism. Foundational to themelic schooling is a Christian construct for organising society, usually as a moralistic system (teaching that behaviour is objectively good or bad, according to clear and universal definitions of "good" and "evil"). The reading of the Bible to find justifications and arguments for this Christian worldview is an ideological exercise just as is the process of making curriculum decisions. I would argue that the social and spiritual orientation of persons determines their being as much as does their material or class outlook. This is educationally significant. In themelic schools the justification for actions is articulated through biblical imperatives. At a much deeper level these imperatives are supported by a complex web of assumptions about the world, self-identity and knowledge. To uncover these assumptions one must explore the psychospiritual dimensions of the themelic school movement. It is at this level that many educational and miseducational directions are taken.
The force of an ideology is conformity and the establishment of an orthodoxy. In Christian theology the force opposing ideology is prophecy - the questioning identification and criticism of structures and trends which shape the way we think and live. Prophecy is also understood as predicting the future but it is in the former sense that this thesis seeks to be prophetic. My own view is that Christianity was originally an anti-ideology. It sought to oppose the establishment of a new orthodoxy. The idea of iconoclasm which is threaded throughout the stories of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is intended to oppose idolatry, religionism and fads. The idea of revelation which is foundational to Christology, of receiving knowledge outside of accepted structures, sets up a mechanism which allows emancipation, free choice and reflection.

Much of the development of themelic schooling was and is associated with a concern with what is considered wrong in society. Themelic schools gain their identity because of the things they recognise that they do not do. The idea of being set apart, sanctified and holy dominates the character of themelic thinking, of being “not of the world” as the New Testament writers emphasise. The difficulty is that the Bible also requires Christians to be “in the world”. This tension is not understood well by themelic schoolers and results in contradictions and confusions which are the subject of Chapter 11.

Given the difficulty of understanding and balancing both these requirements the themelic person inclines to the more conservative option. The things that are interpreted as “worldly” have historically been subjective and moral in character: the process of separation from “the world” has been highly selective and cultural in nature. “The world” as the enemy will be discussed further in Chapter 12.

The degree to which this mindset of fear conditions the practice of themelic schooling depends on the theological heritage of the school or its staff. Selfrighteousness often results from this fear - a sense of having “arrived” because one has not been stained by “the world”. This is most evident in the middle class fixation in themelic schools with a selective and sexually preoccupied moralism. This has been well argued by the

48 John 18: 36; 1 Corinthians 2: 12; Galatians 4: 3; 6: 14; Ephesians 2: 2; Colossians 2: 20; James 1: 27; 4: 4; 2 Peter 1: 4; 1 John 2: 15.
Christian sociologist Jacques Ellul.⁵⁰ The insecurity generated by a disposition to fear, fighting the enemy and constantly defending oneself against “the world” and criticism helps create a sectarian spirit and a tone of superiority not only from one themelic school to another but within the themelic school itself, in relationships between children, parents, teachers and, executive and administrative staff.

The theological and philosophical emphasis of the thesis is generated by the themelic schools themselves, for this is how they explain who they are and what they do.

2.4c A framework for analysis and critique of themelic theory and action

The Annales method of doing history, because it is a psychosocial analysis of history, allows the historian to connect more of the action of something to how people make sense of that action and construct meaning. As well as the Annales method of history I will also use the ideas of Argyris and Schon,⁵¹ to provide a structure which assists the analysis of actions and meanings. Argyris and Schon argue that theories of action exist on two levels: espoused theories and theories-in-use. Theories are vehicles for explanation, prediction, or control depending on whose viewpoint is taken. When someone is asked how they would behave under certain circumstances, the answer they usually give is their espoused theory of action for that situation. The theory that actually governs their actions is their theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible or congruent with their espoused theory. This is generally inferred from observation of their behaviour. The individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility or incongruity of the espoused theory with theory-in-use. We cannot learn what someone’s theory-in-use is just by asking them. We must construct their theory-in-use from observations of their behaviour. Argyris and Schon’s work has established that people’s behaviour is often incompatible with the theories of action they espouse.⁵²

The evaluation of the extent of internal consistency in themelicism, that is, the consistency among the governing variables of themelic theory that are related to

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assumptions about self, others, and the behavioural settings, will be discussed in Chapter 11. Congruence, as explained by Argyris and Schon, is the matching of espoused theory and theory-in-use; that is, one’s behaviour is consistent with one’s espoused theory of action. Another aspect of congruence is allowing inner feelings to be expressed in actions: when one feels happy, one acts happy. These two aspects indicate an integration of one’s internal and external state: a lack of congruence between espoused theory and theory-in-use may precipitate a search for a modification of either theory since we tend to value both espoused theory (image of self) and congruence (integration of doing and believing). Argyris and Schon state that there is no particular virtue in congruence, alone; however, in Protestant Christian language congruence between one’s statements of “faith” (espoused theory) and one’s “works” (theory-in-use) is considered to be foundational for Christian wholeness. This is supported by biblical imperatives. Therefore a discussion of incongruence in themelic school practice exposes a situation which is internally problematic, requiring change. The ability to change and learn is fundamental to education.

The following table highlights the hypothesis that the theory-in-use is incongruent with the espoused theory in themelic schools. The incongruence illustrated by the table will be demonstrated throughout the thesis. It ought to be noted that the incongruence I attribute to the themelic system is made through observations, interviews and examination of themelic school documentation and that my understanding is not necessarily shared by all proponents of themelic schooling.

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### Comparative Table of
Themic Espoused Theory And Themelic Theory-In-Use

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Espoused Theory</th>
<th>Theory-In-Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are different from Arnoldian schools which have become secular and remote (we are distinctive).</td>
<td>They are different, but incongruent with many of their claims, they drift to the model they reject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are uniquely Christian in schooling.</td>
<td>They merge in with surrounding culture, and are concerned with right speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are Christ-centred - Christ as Lord of the school (God’s schools).</td>
<td>This depends on meaning, many aspects of Christian value are missing in curriculum and management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are Bible-centred.</td>
<td>They are selective in biblical use, naive realist in epistemology which regulates their assumptions prior to reading the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are lay-parent managed in partnership with teachers.</td>
<td>The partnership is unequal, without political equity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We adhere to biblical imperatives - love, faithfulness, truth, justice, mercy &amp; community.</td>
<td>They are in congruent regarding church and Christian ideals. This creates confusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are Christian in all things - staffing, pedagogy, leadership, management, hermeneutic.</td>
<td>There is confusion in drawing lines between roles. Schisms are frequent. Tone is dominated by compliance and authoritarianism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are not fundamentalist.</td>
<td>They are not fundamentalist in the popular sense of word but fundamentalist in epistemology (naive realist).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are a new Christian collaboration in schooling.</td>
<td>They are a new collaboration in schooling but can only cooperate until theological traditions clash. They are united against their enemies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are not reactionary.</td>
<td>They are reactionary in opposition to their enemies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We provide a truly Christian education.</td>
<td>Indoctrination is the principle guide in education. Critical thinking is discouraged, compliance is encouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are Holistic - We aim to educate for all of life.</td>
<td>They are insular, sectarian, compartmentalise faith and gate keep themelic culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argyris and Schon ask the question; what is an organisation that it may learn? This is the challenge of any work which makes recommendations to schools as this thesis does. With specific attention to themelic schools, the question ought to be: how can an organisation which has constructed a discourse on an inerrant/infallible interpretation learn? What processes would promote themelic school development and allow it to proceed with greater educational potential? What kind of learning ought to be encouraged? These questions will be addressed in the drawing together of recommendations in Chapter 14.

Argyris and Schon make it clear that organisations learn from inquiry. “Inquiry” is not used here in the colloquial sense of scientific or juridical investigation but in a more elementary sense of the meshing of thought and action that comes from doubt and the resolution of doubt. Inquiry in this sense is made more difficult in the themelic school setting because of structures for the denial of doubt. There will be little opportunity for learning if doubts are not brought into the open and structures supporting dogmatism are not altered. This is the task of researchers in and outside the themelic school movement. Research is not likely to occur in any substantial way unless funding is provided.

Argyris and Schon list the kinds of changes that are mediated by lessons drawn from inquiry.

a. interpretations of past experiences of success or failure;

b. inferences of causal connections between actions and outcomes and their implications for future action;

c. descriptions of the shifting organisational environment and its likely demands on future performance;

d. analysis of the potentials and limits of alternative organisational strategies, structures, techniques, information systems, or incentive systems;

e. descriptions of conflicting views and interests that arise within the organisation under conditions of complexity and uncertainty;

f. images of desirable futures and invention of the means by which they may be achieved;


g. critical reflections on organisational theories-in-use and proposals for their restructuring; and

h. description and analysis of the experiences of other organisations.\textsuperscript{56}


\textsuperscript{56} ibid., p. 17.
Such a list could be helpful when drawing up strategies for research of themelic schools. Many possibilities for further research are suggested elsewhere in this thesis.

Argyris and Schon, relying on Ashby's work, describe two ways of learning, single-loop and double-loop learning, which are applicable to the themelic school organisation. Single-loop learning is an instrumental learning that changes strategies of action or assumptions underlying strategies in ways that leave the values of a theory of action unchanged. Changes do occur but the values and norms of the organisation itself remain unchanged. Single-loop learning is primarily concerned with instrumental effectiveness: how best to achieve existing goals and outcomes whilst keeping changes within the range specified by existing values and norms. Double-loop learning refers to learning that results in a change in the values of the theory-in-use as well as in its strategies. The double-loop refers to the feedback loops that connect the observed effects of an action with strategies and values served by strategies. In single-loop learning, the field of constancy is maintained by learning to design actions that satisfy existing governing variables. In double-loop learning the field of constancy is changed. Double-loop learning does not supersede single-loop learning.

The process of inquiry for single-loop learning is significantly different from the inquiry of double-loop learning. Double-loop inquiry tends to lead to restructuring of organisational norms and very likely a restructuring of strategies and assumptions associated with these norms. If schools are to engage in this conflict and change, the outcome must be productive rather than defensive. Currently the process of settling conflict in themelic schools could hardly be described as single-loop learning. Conflict which ends in power play or stalemate rarely produces for either side a new sense of the nature of the conflict, its causes or consequences or its meaning for the organisation's theory-in-use. Argyris and Schon observe that single- and double-loop learning is complicated by organisational size and complexity. The size and structure of the themelic system at this stage augurs well for the possibility of double-loop learning.

The distinction between double-loop learning outcomes for organisational theory-in-use and double-loop learning in processes of organisational inquiry is correlated with the distinction Argyris and Schon make between first- and second-order errors. First-

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58 ibid., p. 28.
order errors in organisation theory-in-use are illustrated by dysfunctional processes and products. Second-order errors that arise in the processes of organisational inquiry, such as the failure to question existing practices, allow first-order errors to arise and persist. Double-loop learning in organisational inquiry comprises the questioning, information gathering and reflection that gets at second-order errors. This kind of questioning is the basis of what Christians know as “prophecy”.

Prophetic thinking shakes foundations and challenges ideologies, questions second-order errors and challenges existing practices. The purpose of prophetic intervention in Christian groups is to bring accountability so that the community might learn and grow (be educated).59 This is quite important because the Christian idea of learning and growth is corporate and organisational rather than individualistic, a theme covered comprehensively by Andersen which was discussed in the opening chapter. At the core of the Christian idea of growth is Argyris and Schon’s notion of “double-loop learning”. I will return to this necessity to learn and grow throughout the thesis drawing together specific areas for attention in the final recommendations in Chapter 14.

In this thesis discovery of the themelic theory-in-use will allow a greater integration between history, narrative, social science and practice.60 Following Argyris and Schon, Robinson explains that a theory of action has explanatory and predictive power because it tells us why the actors behave as they do and how they are likely to behave in the future.61 Theories-in-use are derived from evidence of how people actually behave through observation and recording.

This thesis examines “espoused” theories of action that are inferred from statements of intent, narrative accounts that do not report actual speech and how people say they behave, or would behave and proposes that there is an incongruence between themelic espoused theory and themelic theory-in-use. It is this incongruence which sparks the constant themelic search for “distinctives” and clarification of identity. This thesis


argues that themelic incongruence contributes to confusion and causes fear. It is my contention that the use of oral history (discussed in the following section) assists the investigation of a process of mediation between espoused theory and theory-in-use. This is why the method of oral history has been pursued in this thesis. The methodology of this thesis has used traditional tools of historical analysis of written texts. However, it has been through oral accounts that constraint structures (discussed shortly) which govern themelic theory of solving problems have been best uncovered.

Problems are defined by Robinson in two ways: as a gap between an existing and desired state of affairs (negative sense) and as a puzzle or challenge to be solved (neutral sense). Problems in the negative sense are inadequate solutions to problems in a neutral sense. When problems in the neutral sense of a goal to be achieved are inadequately solved, the result is a problem in the negative sense. There is considerable theoretical and practical value in knowing how the latter are solved, and how those processes may yield solutions which are themselves judged to be problems. Nickles’s constraint inclusion account of problem solving is helpful for these purposes. He defines a problem, in the neutral sense, as:

... a demand that a certain goal be achieved plus constraints on the manner in which the goal is achieved, i.e., conditions of adequacy on the problem solution.

The more knowledge we have about the constraints imposed upon the possibility of a solution the more sharply and completely can we formulate the problem and understand it. A distinction is made by Robinson between well-structured and ill-structured problems; a distinction which reflects the degree of specification of relevant constraints, rather than the constraints themselves. A problem is ill-structured when it lacks criteria for solution adequacy, when the means for reaching a solution are unclear. Well-structured problems have clear solution criteria and definable procedures for reaching solutions. In themelic schools the possibility of establishing a Christian education is constrained by numerous conditions; for example, the doctrine of

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62 ibid., p. 25.
64 ibid., p. 111.
inerrancy, naive realist epistemology and psychosocial factors which engender fear and confusion in schooling. In themelic schools espoused theory is declared in many statements about “distinctives”, supposedly, distinctively different Christian approaches to education in comparison to other approaches to education. This thesis proposes that themelic schools are distinct and different but not distinctive in the themelic sense of the term. It will be argued that themelic schools are neither distinctively Christian nor educational. What will be argued is distinct about themelic schools is themelic language, naive realist epistemology, a psyche of fear and confusion and, policies and practices which emerge from these.

Themelic theory of action is a theory of control, because it specifies how to achieve particular purposes under certain conditions. The themelic theory of action is reactionary and is discussed in Chapter 11. The reactionary nature of themelic actions is evidence of a perceived loss of control, particularly in education in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Evidence and discussion of this perception will be addressed in Chapter 10.

2.4d Oral history and interviews

The strength of the method of oral history is its capability to uncover psychosocial history which tends not to be represented in officially sponsored histories sponsored by corporate bodies. In themelic schooling Deenick has recorded some of the history of CPCS which does little more than record names, events and dates.\(^\text{66}\) Oral history tends to privilege the interactive nature of history searching for the story behind events and dates to the nature of people and analysis of their behaviour. Oral history maintains this search for interactive history with just as much emphasis on historical skills, rigors of scholarship and history as a field of inquiry as more conventional approaches to history. The evidence that oral history provides elevates the credibility of private reflections. Oral history tends to highlight and validate the subjective and interpretive nature of all historical inquiry equal to the objective concerns of historians.

In various places in the thesis, I integrate a diversity of thinking from various disciplines; namely, theology, philosophy, history, psychology and sociology. I am convinced that the *Annales* method of history, which incorporates this kind of

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integration, is a key to developing informed critical reflection at both espoused theory and theory-in-use levels. In themelic schools there is virtually no concept of a critical history, nor does it feature in themelic conferences or journals. The belief that critical history is irrelevant is a distinctive of themelic schooling. Jacoby refers to the suppression of critical history as a form of "social amnesia".  This thesis argues that the climate of separatism, fear, confusion and conservativism in themelic schools necessitates for educational reasons that an *Annales* analysis of their history be presented. Chronological or descriptive history alone tends to focus on the so called "facts" of history without significant criticism or analysis. An uncritical history would be unlikely to raise the issues that these schools need to address. Given the themelic story, such a history is timely and ought to be written.

The absence of a critical history exerts a form of control by those in authority upon a group, in this case the staff of themelic schools. This kind of control is a form of control which not only manipulates consciousness but also saturates and constitutes the daily experiences that shape behaviour. A founding member of a themelic school expressed in feminist language similar concern about the way themelic schools exert a particular form of rule by describing the ideology in themelic schools as a "controlling mythology". Such a controlling mythology does not entertain the idea of a critical history. The fear of criticism in themelic schools is discussed in Chapter 12. The absence of self-criticism and historical critical research in themelic schools jeopardises the opportunity to establish educational practice. Forces are exerted in themelic schools through a culture of positivism which maintains a fear of criticism. In Chapter 7 the way in which the culture of positivism dominates themelic schooling through a fundamentalist epistemology is discussed.

### 2.4e Collecting data

The two main methods used to gather evidence for this thesis have been textual analysis and interviews. Other aspects of historical method such as archival work, collection of data, comparison, interpretation, documentation and explanation have been pursued as complements to these primary methods. Whilst I am aware of other methods employed in examining evidence and text, such as "discourse analytic", I have chosen to use the more conventional tools of oral historical analysis because of its relationship to the

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68 Interview Lynlea Rodger 30.8.94
Annales perspective on history. Whilst some mention is made of discourse analysis in Chapter 14 with relationship to themelic language the primary focus of the thesis is upon the Annales view.

Much of the evidence in my research had to be gleaned from oral sources because there is such a dearth of published research on these schools in Australia. As a method of gathering evidence, oral history is both exciting and problematic. Oral history presents any form of material, relating to the past, which has been gathered from the spoken word. The two major components of oral history are collection and interpretation.

Having worked in a themelic school for seven years one could be tempted to assume that one's experiences were common to all teachers in these schools. Yet there is a diversity of experiences gathered in the research which accounts for the complexity of the themelic system. Experience in the CPCS sector has provided the author with the insight to probe in depth during the collection process and to test hypotheses. In this sense my subjectivity has been a bonus providing me with knowledge and questions needed to investigate these schools comprehensively.

Being an insider and outsider has enabled me to understand both perspectives. My experiences on the inside of the themelic system provided me with a knowledge of whom to contact and interview. As an outsider I have been able to observe the silence of academia and understand the degree to which both perspectives are confused about the other.

In this respect the methodology of this thesis shares something with ethnographic research: through participant observation processes have been observed and meanings have been analysed in an inductive way which has helped to construct the hypotheses of the thesis.

The board of CPCS provided funds for tapes, microphone and recorder. I approached this particular group of themelic schools because of their history of relative academic rigor and openness, and because of my familiarity with executive staff through working on the CPCS National Curriculum Committee. As part of this arrangement I agreed to establish an oral history collection with CPCS archives so that the tapes could be accessed in future as in a public library. The process of signing the tape over to me for my research and to the oral history collection archive involved the signing of an
“interview release form” which is attached to this thesis as Appendix 1.

The interview format was structured by providing the interviewee prior to the interview with a list of themes (Appendix 2) they might like to explore during the interview. There was no set questionnaire so that the form could provide a sense of comfort and control for the interviewee and not be prescriptive. Some of the respondents relied heavily upon the themes in order to focus whereas others ignored the device and were eager and quick to relate their stories. The interview technique in itself is an opportunity to gain qualified answers and gather complex information. On several occasions the interview proved to be cathartic for some, allowing them to work through some traumatic experience. I was aware of this aspect of interviewing and endeavoured to minimise its intrusive possibilities. Minichiello labels this approach to interviewing as a “focussed” or “semi-structured interview”.69

The merits and disadvantages of the interview technique are effectively assessed by Richard M. Jaeger in *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*70 and Victor Minichiello et al. *In-Depth Interviewing*.71 I was aware of my own ethical responsibility as an oral historian. I recognised and endeavoured to control my bias by clarifying my intentions with the interviewee through the various written forms I had developed and a pre-interview appointment/discussion.

The interview was constructed with an informal atmosphere through the selection of time and place of meeting, the use of tea and coffee, sitting with the interviewee in a non-threatening manner, the placement of the tape recorder, the drawing out of life story material and through preparatory meeting of the interviewee if possible. I endeavoured to find a quiet place but this was not possible sometimes which was frustrating. If the mix was right then an “in-depth" interview resulted with the interviewee relating to me in an uninhibited way. Most interviews were of more than an hour’s duration. Some interviews were longer than two hours.

Nearly all interviewees were known to me or could be connected through a mutual acquaintance. Some had known of me through church work or had known of my

71 Minichiello, op. cit., p. 65.
family who have been influential in church work (my father and brother are clergymen). Those who were suspicious could be easily comforted through the offer of contacting a person whom they trusted or respected, and who could provide a reference. In most cases the fundamental requirement of interviewing technique to settle the relationship with the interviewee and develop rapport was not necessary. On most occasions I was able quickly to empathise with their testimony or identify people in their story. My knowledge of Protestant theology, ecclesiology and church history at a personal and theoretical level enabled an understanding of the terminology and nuances within each theological tradition.

My probing and prompting usually related to my knowledge of the person's circumstance and history as well as of the development of themelic schools in Australia. Some interviewees were keen to have their stories recorded and were relaxed and comfortable. A few were sceptical, cautious about my motives and guarded with their words. Some would not sign the rights of the tape to my research at once but would do so later after they had viewed how I was going to quote them. Some were apprehensive about the storage of their tape with CPCS and gave permission for their story to be used but not kept with CPCS. On several occasions it became apparent that body language (although I was not able to analyse this specifically) had inhibited the interviewee from opening out on some points. Some interviewees requested that the tape be stopped for "off the record" confidential information whilst others asked for some words to be taped over. I respected such requests.

The selection of interviewees involved a number of considerations:

1. Interviews of all the significant founders of the movement. (The only omission in this was Dr Upsdell who lives in New Zealand. I achieved his participation by correspondence).

2. A wide variety of personnel representative of all models of themelic schooling.

3. A wide variety of staffing positions and relationships to the themelic school: principals, executive staff, board members, teachers, parents and ex-students, ex-principals, ex-teachers, ex-parents and ex-board members. I did not endeavour to interview current students because I assumed the climate of demand for obedience in themelic schools could have placed students in a compromised position regarding their ability to be critical. I ensured that the interviewees represented both positive and negative views
about themelic schooling.

4. Maintenance of a sound ethical basis for research by ensuring that the interviewees and their positions would give diverse angles on the same subject matter in the same way that triangulation maintains credibility in ethnographic research. The reasonably large number of persons interviewed, listed in Appendix 3 also contributed to this.

2.4f Analysing the data

The main challenge in the oral history aspect of my research was to collect and analyse data in a way that gave a fair and ethical overview of a total system. The foundation for effective interviewing and analysis of oral data is understanding people. My training in Pastoral Psychology, church experience, experiences with people in a variety of occupations and wisdom gathered over time have assisted this understanding. Minichiello calls the interpretation of others knowledge about some state of affairs as “intentions” ascribing to the word a technical sense. An intention is any of those natural attributes showing “aboutness” - beliefs for example, are all about some state of affairs. They are about the world outside our minds. So, for instance, when one believes that it is cold outside, the proposition that it is cold outside has added to it the mental attitude of belief. To specify the whole intention, both the attitude (here, the belief) and the proposition (here, the sentence about being cold outside) must be given. Examples of intentions are belief, fear, hope, desire, love, hate, doubting, elation, depression, pride, sorrow, acceptance, amusement and disappointment.

The position of the oral historian is that testimonies are texts which can be analysed. Minichiello comments

When we were interpreting a text, we tried to give the text as much overall consistency and intelligibility as we could. When it comes to assessing overall behaviour, including the “texts” that people utter, we try to give a global interpretation of both their behaviour and their speech. This interpretation attributes to them, of course, Intentions. That is, we explain them and their behaviour by postulating theoretical entities, abstract things which cannot be directly seen. We know these theoretical entities only by their effects: they have a place in our theories of how the world works.

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72 ibid., p. 23.
The theoretical entities involved in explaining people, then, are what Minichiello calls "intentions". By looking at "mentalities" we endeavour to capture the range of the intentions and explain them rationally and historically. Minichiello explains the use of principles used in giving the best possible intentional explanation of a person’s given behaviour. The list is not comprehensive but is offered as a guide to the kinds of consideration needed in understanding people. It was these kinds of principles, including assumptions made about spirituality, which have been applied to the sifting of oral text. The following citation is made without Minichiello’s references to other researchers and authors.

*Rationality*. Construe the person’s behaviour so as to maximise the rationality of his her beliefs, desires and actions. Maximise the mutual consistency of beliefs, desires and actions; and maximise their compatibility with what is known and valued in the surrounding culture.

*Centrality*. Assume that some of the person’s beliefs are more central than others, that is, more firmly held and adhered to in the face of contrary evidence.

*Cultural Commonality*. Assume as much overlap as possible between the person’s beliefs and those of his or her culture.

*Methodological Commonality*. Attribute as much commonality as possible between the person’s beliefs and your own.

*Cultural Semantics*. Translate or interpret the person’s words so as to give maximum fit between the person’s language and the person’s culture.

*Methodological Semantics*. Translate or interpret the person’s words so as to give maximum fit between his or her language and your own.

*Intentionality*. Construe the person’s behaviour as far as possible as intentional, meaningful and voluntary.

*Truth-telling*. Maximise the person’s truth-telling, both to you and to others.

*Social Context*. Assume that the person’s behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal, is given meaning by his or her social context.

*Ideals*. Maximise the similarity between the person’s underlying aims or ideals and those of his or her culture.

*Self-directedness*. Maximise the selfishness of the person’s behaviour.

*Creativity*. Minimise the originality of thought and action attributed to the person.74

With such principles in mind the data was analysed primarily as evidence and for correlation with historical and socio-psychological findings about themelic schools.

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74 ibid., p. 36.
2.4f Limitations

The cost of coding over 100 hours of interview data was prohibitive. I was unable to secure funding to transcribe all the data and did not have time to transcribe all the data myself. The way the data that was transcribed was analysed related to the interview process. Much of the interview was taken up with telling of stories, authenticating context and personal reflection. This enabled the interviewee to become comfortable and in many cases proved to be cathartic. The data I transcribed and actually used were selected according to their direct relevance to the thesis. This depended on my observations, analysis and selectivity. The data selected for use in the thesis were located through reviewing the tape and fieldnotes. The fieldnotes were not extensive and were often just jottings that helped save time in reviewing the tapes. Sometimes the data from one interview simply substantiated the story of another interviewee and were cited in the thesis as a support without direct quotation. The purpose of the interview did not warrant a complex coding system such as NUD.IST. Minichiello observes

For data to become meaningful for analysis, the researcher has to identify common themes and/or propositions which link issues together, and ground the analysis in the informant’s understandings and in scientific translations of it.75

The care given to my analysis and ethical considerations are related to my personal knowledge of the themelic system of schools. The advantage of being seen and experienced as an insider cannot be underestimated.

2.5 New Life

New Life newspaper is the longest running evangelical/reformed style paper in Australia and warrants special mention. New Life, which was first published in 1938, has taken a positive and comprehensive interest in the development of themelic schools ever since they were founded in 1962. For this reason, it is a valuable measure of many issues relevant to themelic schooling and is quoted extensively in sections of the thesis.

75 ibid., p. 248.
2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has stated the research questions and purposes of the thesis and the problems it seeks to investigate. The methodology of the thesis is historical, theological and philosophical with particular use of oral history in supporting the theological, philosophical and educational arguments of the thesis. The methodology reflects two specific interests recurring throughout the thesis: socio-psychological reasons for themelic school development and the mentality (psycho-historical) of themelic school policy and practice.
Chapter 3

Understanding Themelicism

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a general introduction to the theological dynamic of themelic schools. Its claims are general and are supported in detail in subsequent chapters. This chapter gives an expanded explanation of the term “themelic”, describes the central motifs of themelic schooling, lists themelic characteristics and argues that a new schooling tradition has been created. The central motifs of biblical inerrancy and Christ-centredness are discussed with brief reference to theological fundamentalism, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8. A review of Arnoldian schooling is conducted to clarify the difference between themelic schooling and the model of schooling with which it is most often mistakenly associated. This builds upon the meaning of the term “distinctive” which was introduced in Chapter 1.

3.2 “Themelic” schools

As stated earlier, the name “themelic” has been chosen to identify these schools. It is based upon the schools’ own use of the term “Christ-centred” to distinguish them from other Christian schools which are either Catholic, Protestant denominational or ecumenical. In an effort to characterise these schools and maintain consistency, the writer has used their terminology, gleaned from interviews and documents. Most themelic schoolers are happy with the description of their schools as Christ-centred or Christian. However, to use the name “Christ-centred schools” could imply that other models of Christian schooling were not centred on Christ, which is an inference to be avoided - even though many themelic schoolers would be comfortable with such an assertion. A reading of any of the passages of the Bible which the proponents of themelic schools use to justify their position shows the repetition, in the original Koine Greek texts, of the word “themelios” and this repetition has led the writer to adopt it as a defining term for these schools. It is not helpful to use the word “Christian” for these schools only, because of the variety of other schools which claim the same description.
The term “themelios”, meaning “Christ-centred”, is used in the New Testament (NT) in Romans 15: 20, 1 Corinthians 3: 11, Ephesians 2: 20,21 and 2 Timothy 2: 19 in reference to elementary foundations or teachings “in Christ”. The use of the word implies a deep Christological and ecclesiological content and, in the New Testament, Christ and the church are always the subject to which “themelios” refers. Kittel explains:

The church or community is a house which is built by God or Christ, and which is constantly to be built with God in Christ by the community and its leaders (oikia). Christ is the foundation of this house, as He is the Head of His church.¹

This emphasis on Christ and church is crucial to an understanding of the mentality of themelicy schools and the seriousness with which they guard their separatism. yet I shall argue, the emphasis on theological language and theological justification in themelicy schools leads to a confusion of the roles of church and school. The blurring of the functions of church and school in the themelicy model causes stress and problems which will be discussed in detail later in Chapter 11.

What is true of “themelios” is also true of the verb “themelion”, and Hebrews 1: 10 uses the term literally to mean “to provide with a foundation”.² Building upon this foundation is known as “edification” (oikodomeo), and is the NT term which comes closest to the modern idea of education and carries with it the notion of being wholly developed into “Christlikeness”. This has been established by Andersen’s work, which has already been referred to in the opening chapter. The goal of this upbuilding is maturity (teleios), or being complete in Christ as individuals and as a community.

In Christian thinking, Jesus Christ becomes the prototype of the educated person, as referred to in Ephesians 4: 15. It is in the person and work of Christ that the educated person par excellence is to be found. The source of Christology is the Bible,

² ibid.
particularly the New Testament. Christlikeness refers to fullness of being or becoming completed like Christ. Christlikeness means the embodying of selfless (agape) love for others. It projects a messianic kingdom and lifestyle that is based upon selfless service and embraces and honours humanity in its weakness and suffering. This is the general drift of the espoused theological theory in themelic schools but is far removed from the theory-in-use. Theoretically, this theology has consequences for economic, political, ethical and relational dimensions. Most themelic schools do not really embrace these dimensions but tend to espouse the theology using it as a gate keeper and a justification for separatism. This is discussed further in Chapter 12. The talk of providing a Christ-centred foundation in themelic schooling implies that other groups have either lost or never had such a foundation.

Whilst most themelic schoolers are not familiar with the term “themelic” they would agree with such qualifying comments about the term, but not with a broad understanding of what this term implies for Christian education. It is simply inadequate to claim such terms as “educating Christianly” or “teaching Christianly” without qualification, as do those in themelic schools. Even when themelic schools talk of Christlikeness or Christian education, they are very selective about the aspects of Christianity they teach and take literally. The incongruence of their position that is, the chasm between their espoused theory and theory-in-use, creates a tension in themelic schools which tends to marginalise critics, scholars and educators and has been known to create enormous stress on employee/employer relationships as incongruities are exposed in practice, with resultant general confusion about roles at all levels. These matters will be explored throughout the chapters in the second half of the thesis, particularly Chapters 12 and 13.

The term “themelic” avoids the pejorative connotations of the popular use of the term “fundamentalist”, which is most often equated with blind/rigid political extremism and militancy. Historically, the term could be used for these schools because of their

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4 1 Corinthians 13: 12.
emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible, but this is not the way the term is understood today. There is a significant gap between the activities of the themelic school and the activities of fundamentalist cults. The popular use of the term “fundamentalist”, particularly in the media, has made the historical use of the term difficult. None of the people interviewed for this thesis was content to be described as a fundamentalist. Historically, this has not always been so. In the USA where the term first originated, groups of Christians were quite happy to be known as fundamentalists - those who stood upon the “fundamentals” of the evangelical Christian faith. The words “fundamentalist” or “fundamentals”, however, are not a part of themelic language and so ought to be rejected as descriptors. When the term “themelic” was explained to many interviewees, the majority were happy with such a label for their particular position.

Peter Crimmins, the Executive Director of the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS), recently commented that there was no noticeable difference between the education delivered at a themelic school and that of other Christian schools. He claimed that the distinguishing factor was the level of Christian commitment of the staff in these schools, as compared with staff in other Christian schools. Proponents of themelic schools tend to make comparisons with other models of Christian schooling with the use of a qualifying adjective: for example, “truly Christian”, “really Christian” or “fully Christian”. Mr Crimmins’s comments in this regard used typical language to describe the relationship of themelic schools to other Christian schools.8

By way of summary, the following list of descriptors may be helpful in qualifying the application of the term “themelic” to a school. The substantiation of these descriptors and evidence for their inclusion in the list is something which will unfold more in following Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, and the list is included in the current discussion to draw together the elements covered by the term “themelic”. A themelic school is said to be:

2. Christ-centred, particularly in ethos and curriculum.

8 Crimmins, P., Lecture Critical Reflections on Teaching, Learning and Schooling, Faculty of Education, University of Canberra, September 25 1995.
4. A confessor of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible directly, or indirectly through formal associations.
5. Interested in and consciously confessing a Christian world view with relationship to schooling, which is perceptible as a common piety.
6. A school that is “God’s school”.

This list is important because it provides qualifying descriptors which, taken together, delineate the schools in the themelic system. These descriptors are the subject of the following discussion.

The term “Christian school” on its own does not help narrow the field of schools in this study although, in themelic school circles, there is an understanding that the term refers to them and that other schools that claim the title would be better known as “church schools” or “independent schools”. Themelic schoolers see a qualitative difference in the use of the word “Christian”. Embedded in their use of the word “Christian” is an understanding and assumption of a zealous commitment and fundamentalist biblicist theology. An examination of the titles of non-government schools in Australia reveals that 3% of all non-government schools use the word “Christian” in their school name, and 98% of the schools that use “Christian” in their school name are found in the themelic group of schools.\(^9\) This is significant because other church/religious schools tend to use the names of patron saints or denominational or other religious words in their school names.

The use of the term “Christ-centred” is the term most referred to in themelic school language as a school descriptor. The use of this expression is misleading because the thing that themelic schools are most centred on is the Bible. This is most detectable in themelic statements of faith and publications. Themelic schoolers understand the term “Christ-centred” to mean “centred on Christ through the Bible”. Further discussion of this expression occurs in a later section of this chapter.

\(^9\) Department of Employment, Education and Training, Address List of all Non-government Schools, Data Services Section, Schools and Curriculum Division, 1994.
The use of the expression "God's school" is important for themelic schoolers because it indicates that the school is something which was started and is maintained supernaturally. It is important for themelic schools to attribute the success and functionality of their school directly to God rather than to a denomination or group of church people. The expression is most observable in times of prayer in themelic schools, particularly in prayers of request.

3.3 Theological traditions in a common themelic system

One reason for the development of a new schooling tradition in Australia is a growing trend of Protestant denominational disintegration in recent Protestant church history. For the past thirty years, the church has experienced a growing levelling effect with regard to denominational loyalty. Young churchgoers are less interested in the traditional belief issues related to denominational identity and tend to "shop around" more than before. This thesis argues that the pedagogical dynamic, the pragmatic and utilitarian business of running schools, has altered and combined theological traditions, thus forming a new Christian tradition/paradigm which is most observable in the work of themelic schools. The collaboration of conservative Protestant Christians in a new schooling system and its causes will be discussed in Chapters 9 and 10. The trend of growing collaboration of Protestant traditions has brought with it some unusual combinations of theological perspective, at time making theological amalgams which have traditionally been considered improbable.

Though the language and terminology used in themelic schools is often the same, it is important to understand the various theological traditions which exist side by side, occasionally enabling a genuine degree of openness, plurality and tolerance but, more often than not, becoming the cause of rigidity and conformity on the one hand and conflict and schism on the other. This is because the protagonists of themelic schooling share the same dogmatism. It is important to understand the differing strands of themelic schooling from a perspective of theological traditions rather than of denominations. Indeed, the claim that a themelic system exists is based upon the cross-
pollination of traditions within the group of schools by means of pedagogical influences.

The difficulty that the various traditions find in cooperating for any length of time with each other - outside the financial sphere, as is the case in postgraduate education - is evidence of the foundational differences that exist between these schools despite their common language. Once themelic schoolers have to operate outside their common discourse of reaction against modernism, secularism and government coercion in education and their common agreement reflected in the language of “Christ-centred learning”, there is little other agreement, owing to the rigid manner in which each of these school organisations develops, interprets the Bible and holds dogmatically to its own particular theological tradition. There are many unstated theological assumptions and differences in social background that exacerbate these differences. A clear distinction needs to be made therefore between themelic language and the theological traditions that exist in the themelic system. This is the purpose of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and the development of a grid for themelic school analysis.

In the course of this thesis many theological and educational terms will be used in relationship to perspectives within themelic schools. It is the purpose of Chapter 5 to define these traditions. Throughout this discussion of theological differences, it must be remembered that there are three important symbols which serve as markers for all themelic schools. The first is the doctrine of inerrancy, which has already been introduced and the others are the centrality of the Bible and the language of Christ-centredness. The prominence of these three symbols cut across all theological traditions in the themelic system.

3.4 The centrality of the Bible, biblical inerrancy and Christ-centredness in themelic schools

Hunter’s work explores the way in which theological criteria determine the range and the limits of acceptability common to orthodoxies. Such criteria provide a test for group membership. Those who adhere belong; those who do not adhere entirely or on particular key points do not belong. Referring to Protestantism, Hunter comments:
Orthodoxy, strictly speaking, is a theological matter, not a moral or ritual matter as it is for some other faiths. Indeed, the history of conservative Protestantism in twentieth-century America has, in large measure, been the history of the effort to maintain the purity and integrity of its theology.¹¹

While all ideological systems or world views maintain boundaries of one sort or another, Protestant orthodoxies are

... often distinguished by the narrowness with which these lines are drawn and the strictness with which they are enforced.¹²

At the heart of the defence and maintenance of themelic schools is the insistence on the intrinsic faultlessness of the Bible and supporting symbolic Christian language. In the Articles of Association for the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS), Christian Community Schools Ltd (CCS), Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd (CPCS) and Christian Schools Association of Queensland (CSAQ), the stated beliefs affirm a conservative, evangelical and theologically fundamentalist position.¹³ Each statement of faith affirms the inerrancy and/or infallibility of the Bible.

The language of Christ-centredness serves as a marker for themelic schools and often simply means “being like Jesus”. This language - which is rarely, if ever, qualified - is interpreted according to the various theological traditions that exist in themelic schools and therefore allows each tradition to claim a level of uniformity and agreement. In some ways the use of the term is like a shibboleth in that it helps gate-keep against Christian traditions which would reject the themelic idea of schooling.

Perhaps the most sensitive issue for themelic schools concerns the Bible. All traditions within themelic schools are preoccupied with the centrality of the Bible and its supposed

¹² ibid., p. 20.
relationship to all aspects of life. However, on the majority of occasions, the Bible is used cosmically to support the assumptions assimilated from themelic culture. The revolutionary messages of the Bible regarding politics, economics, history, social justice, technology, poverty and management remain largely ignored. Apart from the heavy influences of fundamentalist literalism within the movement, there is a convenient spiritualising of many of the Bible’s claims. Examples are the incongruence of such phenomena as school fees, unequal staff rates of pay, unequal working conditions, oppressive and exploitative management, unequal representation of employees and the nominal discussion of the poor and disadvantaged in the curriculum with the thrust of egalitarian and social justice imperatives in the New Testament and the prophets in the Old Testament. These will be discussed in Chapter 11.

Though themelic schools are preoccupied with a literalist hermeneutic and claim the primacy of the Bible, their interpretive treatment of it is very selective, protecting a kind of Christianity concerned mostly with using the right words and conserving traditional middle class morality. The biblical perspective of political theological traditions such as “movement-based Bible study”,\(^{14}\) liberation theology and historical-critical approaches to the Bible are rejected. This makes it very difficult for outside observers to understand what goes on in themelic schools, for what they hear masks much of what happens in classrooms.

Whilst most of the language and epistemology of themelic schools is fundamentalist in character there is an interesting departure from the pattern of fundamentalist language and epistemology when one examines what actually happens in classrooms. The pedagogy practiced in themelic schools is considerably out of step with espoused fundamentalist language. It seems that the closer one gets in themelic schools to the reality of real life found in the microcosm of the pluralistic classroom the more the sharp edge of fundamentalist language and belief is softened. This will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 as part of the discussion of themelic character. The simple fact is that most classrooms in the themelic system have a content and teaching style very similar to that of any government school. What really matters to themelic schoolers is the way the

Bible is added to the curriculum and interpreted in the life of the school. Despite the plethora of hermeneutical positions that abound in the movement, there is a common, naive belief and interpretation based upon the Bible’s supposed objective veracity.

The common ideology of these schools is disguised in their priority of educating “Christianly”, or educating for “Christlikeness”. The concern to establish a foundation “in Christ” is predicated on an understanding that Jesus Christ is “the Word” incarnate and that the Bible is also “the Word”. The idea of “the Word” is used interchangeably for the Bible and for Jesus Christ.

If “the Word” is not central to the life of a Christian school, then it is thought that somehow the foundation of Christianity has been eroded. In reality, the centrality of the written word, the Bible, is what matters most in themelic schools. For some themelicists, particularly from the reformed theological traditions, the Westminster Confession stands as a beacon of authority. To doubt the Westminster Confession’s understanding that the Bible is the inerrant word of God is equal to the supposed sin of doubting the Bible’s veracity itself. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for any person to keep their job in a themelic school if they dared to question the Bible.

The authority of the Bible is the symbol most defended by the themelic movement. The Bible is pre-eminent in most themelic publications. The quickest way to enrage the themelic protagonist is to criticise the Bible. On most occasions when the term “the Word” is used, it stresses a biblical context rather than a personal reference to the person of Jesus. Such an interpretation disguises intentions and allows various traditions to work side by side. In themelic schools, the terms “biblical” and “Christian” are used interchangeably. The lack of clarity on this issue alone generates a confusion in themelic schools because the Bible is used to justify every action, from the corporal punishment of children and disciplining of teachers to construction of the curriculum. What eventuates is an irregularity of practice which does not match espoused theory. An example of this commitment to the Bible and its inerrancy was inadvertently highlighted by columnist Mike Gibson in the *Telegraph Mirror*. In late 1995 the Carr government in NSW proposed to ban the use of the cane in all schools. Gibson quotes Frisken, the executive director of CCS in a draft

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policy on the subject:

I found that giving corporal punishment to the younger students out of a real concern for their wellbeing, and a love for them as individuals, was almost inevitably a time of character formation and growth for them.\(^{17}\)

Gibson responded:

Now, I have read a few quotes recently that unsettled me, but I have found none as repugnant as the words of Mr Friskin. Let me go further than that. The words of Mr Friskin make me feel sick to my stomach. I mean, here is a man who declares that the reason he used to belt boys with the cane was because of his “love for them as individuals”. That’s the sort of comment you would expect to hear from some wacko charged with child abuse. I did it because I loved them, the defendant said. It’s the sort of comment you would expect to hear on 60 Minutes, when Richard Carleton is interviewing some crackpot running a weird religious cult ... I can only say how sorry I am for those boys unfortunate enough to be in the care of schools that practice his philosophy.\(^{18}\)

Gibson would be unaware of Friskin’s and CCS commitment to the dogma of inerrancy. He would be unaware of the themelic commitment to an infallible Bible. The themelic commitment to corporal punishment hinges on an inability to shift on the foundation of inerrancy. Themelic schools advocate corporal punishment because of biblical imperatives which speak of the justification of wrath and how the use of the rod imparts wisdom and love.\(^{19}\) Christians who are not literalists deal with such passages of the Bible through contextualising the text and placing the text in its cultural setting. Themelic biblicist thinking understands such a perspective as unChristian and “liberal”. What Gibson would not know is that many themelic schools more extreme than those of CCS advocate beatings for male and female students and various forms of abuse of staff in the name of biblical love. The disposition of anger and authoritarianism in themelic schools will be discussed in Chapter 12. On other issues such as curriculum, Year 12 assessment, school marketing or management the same rigid interpretation of the Bible is not adhered to.

\(^{17}\) ibid.

\(^{18}\) ibid.

\(^{19}\) Proverbs 13: 24; 23: 13; 29: 15.
According to thematic understanding, a shift in the supposed Christian foundation of society was perceived in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s - a shift away from an absolute standard and from what is understood in thematic circles as the verifiable truth of biblical revelation. The shift in schooling standards and Christian practice coincided with the shift in theology in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s to a more “liberal” approach to the Bible and with the parallel movement in society to a more relaxed attitude to morality. The term “liberalism” in conservative Christian circles usually refers to reductionist and historical critical approaches to the veracity of the Bible.

It is important to note that in each of these groups’ statements of faith, the first and foundational affirmation concerns the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. The doctrine of inerrancy states that the Bible contains no errors because, it is argued, the Bible is God’s direct revelation to the world. The theological fundamentalist does not accept that reliability and ambiguity can coexist when the author of the biblical text is God. The fundamentalist does not believe that the human authors of each book in the Bible played any more a part in the writing of the text than that of a scribe.\(^2\)\(^0\) For the fundamentalist there is no understanding that a reading of the Bible involves any form of mediation. As author Robert Horn states it is *The Book that Speaks for Itself*.\(^2\)\(^1\) In the face of thorough Christian scholarship, the more conservative evangelical view tends to interpret the word “infallible” to mean trustworthy and to prefer the use of the term “inspired” to describe the status of biblical revelation.

The dogma of inerrancy reveals the real priority of the thematic system. It is with this assumption that many miseducative pedagogical and poor management choices are made, because this dogma affirms that there can be no truth and reliable knowledge other than what concurs with their interpretative claims of the Bible. Such a belief allows the fundamentalist to believe in a literal six-day creation story against all the scientific scholarship and collected evidence. The fundamentalist proclaims science to be in error and the Bible alone to be true. Some scholars locate the key to fundamentalism in statements of inerrancy and infallibility alone.\(^2\)\(^2\)

The use of the term “thematic” accommodates the fact that a fundamentalist epistemology is only one part of thematic school tradition, just as fundamentalism is

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recognised to be a version of evangelicalism.

Themelic schools constantly reiterate the centrality of "the Word" for all life and education. Education without the centrality of "the Word" is deemed not fully Christian. People in themelic schools dismiss traditional Arnoldian Christian schools, many established with strong evangelical charters, which tend not to emphasise the Bible as much as they might once have done, and which are perceived as governed more by elitist sentiments associated with high fees. For themelic schools, other Christian school models lack this centrality of "the Word".

It is important to understand that themelic schools claim not to be Arnoldian. Themelic schoolers reject Arnoldian principles especially the way in which Arnoldian schools embrace liberalist and humanistic ideas, and this is their motivation for keeping school fees low. One of the promotional slogans of themelic schools is making Christian schooling affordable for all Christians. Most themelic schoolers would not believe they had assimilated to the surrounding culture. Themelic schools do not share the history of Arnoldian schools, and have a totally different raison d'etre. A brief review of Arnoldian schooling will assist further comparisons and allusions.

3.5 The Arnoldian tradition - Arnoldianism

If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful,
truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman,
and a Christian, that's all I want. 23

When Thomas Arnold became headmaster of Rugby in 1828, the school, like most of its fellow English public schools, was in a shaky state. The curriculum was narrow; the moral tone was low; discipline was slack; academic results were poor; and the accommodation and board were bad. 24 During the next fourteen years, Arnold was able to establish a new spirit in schooling which rapidly spread to other schools. His influence was carried beyond the shores of England to the colony of Australia during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The most important aspect of Arnold’s vision was his pursuit of the objective moulding of his student’s characters into those befitting “Christian gentlemen”, and his belief that the chief need of a school was a healthy moral and religious atmosphere. The question of school tone was vitally important for Arnold. For the achievement of these things he looked firstly to the personality of the teachers and, secondly, to school chapel services as being of great significance in the life of the school. His sermons were a focus for inspiration. Arnold thought of the school as a Christian community and his sermons applied to the everyday life of the boys rather than to the teachings of the church on dogmatics. The practical aspects of his teachings were uprightness, honour, industry and honest service. He entrusted much of the tone and government of the school to the senior students (preposters or prefects) and focused his influence upon them. Arnold also recognised the importance of sport and team games for building character and school tone.25

The main agents of this tradition were ex-students and teachers who had experienced English Arnoldian schools. The common endeavour of the early Protestant schools in Australia to adopt the Arnoldian model gave the colonial schools a degree of uniformity of purpose, spirit and organisation. Very few colonial schools, Catholic, Anglican or state, escaped this influence.

The fervour with which this model was pursued is well documented.26 Most of the colonial schools, like their English counterparts, made the extra effort to promote a corporate spirit and sense of community by introducing a variety of activities, objects and rituals designed to build up group identification such as school colours, uniforms, mottoes, songs, magazines, clubs, trophies, awards, houses, army cadet units and old boys’ associations.

The first school established in this tradition in Australia was the King’s School Parramatta, which opened in 1832. Sydney Grammar School followed in 1857. Next came Hutchins School and Launceston Grammar School (1846). A year later, St

26 Turney, *Tradition and Innovation ...* op. cit., pp. 132-65
Peter’s College began in South Australia; and Scotch College the first non-Anglican church school in Australia, began in Victoria in 1851. In the 1850s and 1860s, after much pressure from Catholics and Nonconformists, the colonial legislators decided to provide funds for Anglican and non-Anglican schools. Scotch was the first school to be established under this policy by the Presbyterian church, followed by Melbourne Grammar (Anglican) (1856), Geelong Grammar School (Anglican) (1857) and Bishop Hale’s Grammar (Anglican) School, Perth. The Methodists came into the market with Newington College, Sydney (1863), Wesley College, Melbourne (1866) and Prince Alfred College, Adelaide (1869).

The growing awareness of this uniformity of purpose resulted, in 1891, in representatives of a number of these schools forming an athletics association and deciding upon a common name. “Great Public Schools” (GPS) was chosen because the name “Public Schools” was not possible under the Act of 1866 which gave this name to state elementary schools. The first ten GPS schools were King’s School, Sydney Grammar School, Newington College, All Saints College, St Ignatius’s College, St Joseph’s College, Cooerwull Academy, Sydney Church of England Boys Grammar School, St Stanislaus’s College and St Patrick’s College. It is not surprising that Protestant schools founded in the twentieth century sought to continue the English public school tradition. Carey Baptist Grammar School opened in 1923 as a school

... whose whole life shall be pervaded by the spiritual atmosphere; where the student shall find himself in the constant presence of noble personalities, motivated by the highest Christian devotion to self-sacrifice, where the best ideals, social, intellectual and religious, will be enunciated.\(^{27}\)

The aim of the school was

... to turn out Christian gentlemen who will regard purity of life as an ideal to be sought and to be attained, and who will keep their minds, words, and deeds clean and unstained.\(^{28}\)


\(^{28}\) ibid.
The first headmaster, H. G. Steele, a product of Scots College in the University of Melbourne and of Oxford University, was like-minded. A year later, in 1924, the Presbyterians founded Knox Grammar School in Sydney. The influence of the principal in such schools is crucial to an understanding of this model.29

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) made an analysis of the relative contributions of the three types of school in the Australian system at matriculation level in 1960.30 Those results make it clear that the schools of the Arnoldian tradition achieved a highly disproportionate number of elite achievers in terms of academic measurement, usually measured on tertiary entrance scores.

A plethora of terms has been used to describe these schools: “private schools”, “independent schools”, “corporate schools”, “church schools”, “exclusive schools”, “elitist schools”, “prestigious schools”, “Greater Public Schools” (NSW) and “Associated Public Schools” (Vic.). For the purposes of this essay and because of the evidence of their link with the Arnold tradition, these schools will be referred to as Arnoldian schools.

Adherents to the thelemic tradition believe that many of these schools which had begun with evangelical and broad Christian charters have forsaken their initial cause,31 that they have become schools more for the ruling or monied class and that their philosophy is now directed by those interests. Brian Hill explains it more logically and historically as the acceptance of an ideology inherited from centuries of Christian schooling of educating the elite in order to command the key positions in society as part of the evangelisation of the culture.32 The concern about elitism and declining religious influence was expressed very well in 1968 by John McClaren, a teacher and lecturer with a Presbyterian background. He commented:

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31 Interviews with Peter Frogley 27.3.92; Robert Frisk 5.6.92; Jack Mechielsen 20.11.92; Alan Mullaly 5.6.93; John Hoffman 6.1.94
32 Interview Brian V. Hill 23.11.93
Proud, aloof and privileged, the independent schools remain a series of communities for the status-seekers rather than a part of the overall system of education. The independent school system has developed as an institution for maintaining the privileges and recruiting to the members of the more affluent professional, managerial and rural classes.\(^{33}\)

They had:

... subordinated their ostensible religious aims until they have become merely a kind of genuflection in the direction of well-bred decency, a code in which loyalty to the sovereign rates well ahead of any unbecoming concern with the ways of the Almighty... the chaplain operates a spiritual dispensary which, like the best metropolitan hotels, combines the most elegant of traditions with the slickest of service.\(^{34}\)

Encel, referring to McClaren, confirms this perception that the Arnoldian model

... leads, among other things, to a depressing failure to experiment with new ideas and methods, when the private schools are ideally placed because of their resources and their oft-proclaimed "independence" to do so.\(^{35}\)

Encel’s exploration of data in the 1960s supports the tag of elitism and Christian mediocrity which has been given to these schools by themelic school founders.\(^{36}\)

Turney establishes a characteristic of Arnoldian schooling which has important implications for the future development of themelic schooling. Turney argues that Arnoldian schools are structured so as to limit innovation.\(^{37}\) This is anchored in the demand for conservative character building, gentlemanly standards and leadership qualities (embodied in school cadet corps) which have become their raison d’etre.

\(^{34}\) ibid.
\(^{35}\) Encel, op. cit., p. 163.
\(^{36}\) ibid., p. 154-59.
\(^{37}\) Turney, op. cit.
It is worth noting the recent efforts of the Anglican Church of Australia to set up a federation of low fee schools on a similar pattern to themelic schools.\textsuperscript{38} A conference was conducted on 12 November, 1994 in order to propose a federation of Anglican low fee paying schools. In his address to the conference, The Most Rev. R. H. Goodhew, Archbishop of Sydney, made the point that 80\% of Anglican young people attended state schools and that

The movement of our society away from an exclusive commitment to
Christian faith and values, makes it imperative that we offer some Christian alternative.\textsuperscript{39}

The Archbishop made it clear that a review of the Anglican schooling system was necessary owing to the opposition expressed by groups in a pluralistic society to accepted Christian traditions such as Easter and Christmas. He proposed the development of a federation of schools on the basis of a need for availability, for all Anglicans to receive a Christian education.\textsuperscript{40} Other sentiments expressed in \textit{Southern Cross}, the newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, concern the elitist nature of Anglican schooling and the ability of such schooling to be relevant or affordable for most Anglicans in a pluralist society.\textsuperscript{41}

Moves to establish this group of schools have been accompanied by assurances from the government of Category 10 funding. The funding arrangements for government and non-government schools are defined in the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) \textit{Commonwealth Programs for Schools 1994 - Administrative Guidelines}.\textsuperscript{42} There are twelve funding categories which apply to non-government schools. These categories are calculated by a formula which defines the Education Resource Index (ERI) rating of each school. The Commonwealth's general recurrent

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Proposal for the Establishment of Low Fee Schools} Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, submission to the Bishop-in-Council, 2 December, 1994.
\textsuperscript{39} ibid., p. 31.
\textsuperscript{40} ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Cotterill, J., Anglican Schools Out of Reach \textit{Southern Cross} Vol. 1, No. 5, June 1995, p. 2.
grants program funds non-government schools with this formula on a sliding scale (1-12) at the two levels of primary and secondary student enrolment.\textsuperscript{43}

Though the intention of Archbishop Goodhew’s proposal may not be to discredit the Arnoldian tradition, it does by implication comment upon the relevance of Arnoldian schooling to the late twentieth century. The aim of the proposal is to develop the “church as school”.\textsuperscript{44} The emphasis on Christian spiritual matters and mission as key components of this venture seems to be an effort to re-establish such declining elements in Anglican schools. This proposal gives weight to the themelic claim (and one contributing cause of their development) that the Arnoldian system has been in a declining Christian state in Australia. It is not the purpose of this discussion to assess the Christian status of the Arnoldian school but to note that themelic schools expect Arnoldian schools, as church schools, to be more zealously Christian and faithful to their Christian church roots.

Despite the efforts of some to classify themelic schools in the current two tiered system of education which was established in the 19th century, the rise of the fundamentalist/modernist conflict of the 1920s and the emergence of USA and British evangelicalism in the 1930s and 1940s have greatly altered the equation. These two theological developments are at the heart of the themelic school story, a point which will be discussed fully in Chapters 8 and 9. Changes in the nature of society from 1870 to 1970 make any comparison of themelic schooling with other forms of church schooling a dubious procedure. This thesis contends that the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s helped the establishment and development of themelic schools that do not fit neatly into the accepted two-tiered system. These schools understand themselves to be different from both tiers of the currently accepted system. They are different in ideology, fee structure, school size, organisation and tone. Mayer\textsuperscript{45} observes that much of the energy committed to separatist movements in schooling is motivated by fear, and such an observation is well supported by Barr.\textsuperscript{46} The motive of fear, in

\textsuperscript{43} ibid., Table 2.2 p. 14.
\textsuperscript{44} ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{45} Mayer, op. cit., p. iii.
itself, differentiates between themelic schools and schools in the Arnoldian school tradition.

One of the strongest themes in the commentary of themelic schoolers is the fear of slipping into this Arnoldian trend themselves. Those who fear the shift from a themelic orientation to an Arnoldian orientation readily find examples of schools which have “changed over”. Although the definitional difference is subjectively articulated and difficult to establish, Arnoldian changes tend to occur in themelic schools that have policies of open enrolment and an emphasis on high numerical growth. Principals, parents and teachers in large themelic schools tend to point to a time in their history when the themelic distinctive was clearer, particularly before the school expanded to secondary schooling. Principals of small themelic schools, some with policies of limited growth, tend to be critical of Arnoldian tendencies in large themelic schools.47

Themelic thinking is not antagonistic toward Arnoldian schooling; it is more disappointed by its shift of emphasis from the Bible than by anything else. However, such disappointment only focuses on the most overt difference between the systems. At a much deeper level there are fundamental philosophical differences which are associated with those whom each group seeks to serve. The disagreement between the National Council of Independent School Associations (NCISA) and the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) in 1993/94 over policy on financial accountability to the Commonwealth government highlights the fundamental difference between the systems. It is important for the purpose of this thesis to establish quite clearly that Arnoldian schools and themelic schools differ in history, ethos and raison d'etre. The tendency of some educators, bureaucrats and themelic schoolers to bundle themelic schools in with the Arnoldian tradition is confusing and misleading.

47 Interviews Mark Tindall 14.8.92; George Windsor 9.3.93; Bob Stunnell 19.3.94; Geoff Bowser 5.12.94; David Baskerville 7.5.93; Ross Henshaw 5.5.93; Ray Tiller 6.5.93.
3.6 Conclusion

The theological and ideological characteristics and forces which have been discussed in this chapter, and which have sometimes worked in strange combinations, are the foundation for the themelic type. These forces, working in the hearts and minds of conservative Protestant Christians, provide the motivation to establish a kind of schooling which will dispel their fears and confirm their theological perspective.

The characteristics of these schools have now been discussed in a general way. The next chapter will introduce this collection of schools in an historical overview.
Chapter 4

The Themelic School Collection

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the historical development of each model of themelic schooling in its historical context. Each model tends to be most evident in one particular themelic school association. Together they form the themelic system. The theological traditions set out in Chapter 5 are mingled in the various models, and so it is difficult to predict whether a CCS school is of a particular stripe or a CPCS school is of another.

4.2 Christian Parent Controlled Schools

On 25 July 1954, a meeting of parents that would change the profile of non-government schooling in Australia was held in the Youth Hall at Kingston, Tasmania. At this meeting it was decided to form an association to mobilise for the foundation of the first Christian parent-controlled school in Australia. This school started in 1962 in the suburb of Kingston on the southern outskirts of Hobart, Tasmania. The story of this new kind of school begins with Dutch post-war immigration.

In 1947 there were 2,174 Dutch-born residents in Australia. From 1947 to 1961, 125,000 Dutch nationals arrived in Australia as permanent and long-term settlers, representing an average influx of 9,000 Dutch migrants per year. In the post-war period 30% of all Dutch migrants came to Australia and during the 1950s they were the second largest national group to settle in Australia, representing 10% of the migrant intake and only being exceeded by the Italians with 16%. A sharp decline in the number of arrivals started in 1961.¹

On October 1958, Mrs Adriana Zevenbergen became the 100,000th Dutch immigrant to arrive in Australia.\(^2\) Census figures record that the number of Dutch-born persons in Australia peaked at 102,083 in 1961. Census records for 1961 show that 216,695 persons claimed to be first generation Dutch origin.\(^3\) By 1981 this number had settled to 96,044, forming the fifth largest non-English-speaking, overseas-born group in Australia.\(^4\) Of this group, 39% were members of the Catholic Church and 40% were Protestant: either Dutch Reformed\(^5\) (Nederlands Hervormde, NHK) or Christian Reformed (Gereformeerde Kerk, GKN).\(^6\)

Dutch migration to Australia reflected the ideologies and social organisation of post-war Dutch society, which was structured in “blocs” along religious lines. Dutch life was compartmentalised into these blocks or pillars (zuilen) which reflected the world view of those groups within the country.\(^7\) Each bloc maintained its own network of institutions at a national level. Political parties, trade unions, the media, education, emigration and settlement were all split along bloc lines. Each bloc had large offices in Australia and parallel offices in the Netherlands in order to recruit, select and process Dutch migrants. Each of the blocs also sent to the host countries “facilitators” (usually priests or ministers) who formed the nuclei around which Dutch groups settled in Australia.

The largest numbers of Dutch-born persons settled in Victoria and New South Wales, although in some places like Tasmania, where fewer Dutch-born settled, they still made up the largest non-English speaking group.\(^8\) It is important to note that the Dutch-born were not concentrated tightly in metropolitan areas like other migrant groups. They were to be found in virtually every local government council area. In general they tended to disperse in metropolitan fringes and adjacent country areas.\(^9\) This is the

\(^2\) Deenick, op. cit., p. 22.
\(^3\) Jupp, op. cit., p. 356.
\(^4\) ibid.
\(^5\) The word “reformed” is used in upper case to signify the name of the denomination or church and lower case to signify the tradition of theology which is much broader than denominational title.
\(^6\) Deenick, op. cit., p. 22.
\(^8\) Jupp, op. cit., p. 356.
\(^9\) ibid.
case in Victoria, where the Dutch were located in Knox, Lillydale, Dandenong, Frankston, Berwick and Springvale. In New South Wales, the Dutch settled in Colo, Penrith, the Blue Mountains, Blacktown and Warringah. In South Australia, they settled in Noarlunga, Willunga and East Torrens. In Tasmania, the Dutch established a strong settlement in Kingston, the only authentic “Dutch Settlement” in Australia, the now defunct Little Gronigen. Little Gronigen was founded in 1950 by seven politically conservative families who had worked together in the Dutch Resistance.

The importance of this settlement pattern and the relevance of this dispersion of Dutch Reformed church people to future growth of the system is relevant to a comment made by the executive director of Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd, Mr Jack Mechielsen, on 27 June 1992 at a regional conference in southern NSW, where he spoke of his vision to establish “Protestant parochial schools” in every region in Australia.

Initially, many members of the NHK sought affiliation with the Presbyterian Church of Australia, as their advisors had recommended. They were encouraged to have their own congregations within that denomination and NHK ministers were sent out to pastor these groups. After a while the partnership became unworkable, for cultural and doctrinal reasons. As Deenick says: “Dutch bluntness, lack of polished manners, language barriers, loneliness, and cultural traditions were part of the problem”. However, they dismissed the Presbyterian Church as “a hollow vessel in which but a few traces of Calvinism are left”. The first two Dutch Reformed churches were formed in 1949 at Penguin and Ulverston in Tasmania. Many of the families had worshipped with the Methodist church but left because “the preaching of the word and the religious education of their children caused them much concern”. The first synod with nine delegates (four ministers and five elders) gathered in the small flat of the Rev. and Mrs Hoekstra to institute the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) as a denomination. This was a new experience for these delegates because they represented

10 ibid.
11 Deenick, op. cit., p. 29ff.
12 Jupp, op. cit., p. 358.
13 Deenick, op. cit., p. 29.
a diversity of reformed backgrounds, “but there was a unity in the shared vision for the future”.14 By 1954, there were thirteen congregations of Reformed Churches of Australia and a theological college established in Geelong; by 1985, there were 40 congregations with a membership of 9,940.15 A number of periodicals (Trowel and Sword, Nurture and Spectrum) helped to define their position in the wider community.

On 25 July 1954 the first meeting of parents to establish a “Christian Parent-Controlled School Association” was attended by 50 people, all either Dutch or of Dutch descent. They heard a lecture by a Mr Hofman (who was to become the first principal of the school they would establish) about the possibility and necessity of Christian Education in Australia. Even though the roots of Christian Parent Controlled Schools lay in the Dutch Reformed Church, these “schools right from the start were constituted and designed to be owned and operated by Christian parents from a range of denominational backgrounds”.16 The twenty-fifth anniversary school publication states that the first association wanted “their children to attend a school that gave them a God-centred, Christian education in preference to a man-centred, humanistic education they were receiving in government schools.”17

The first association of parents brought the Dutch Reformed tradition of Christian schools with them from the Netherlands where Christian schools were numerous and an accepted part of the education system of that country. It was the Dutch statesman Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876) who led the struggle against the Dutch “liberals” for equality with State schools, especially in finance. Under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper Groen’s political initiatives were realised. By 1889 the liberals had lost government control and a coalition of Protestant and Roman Catholic forces legislated the first subsidies for non-government schools. By 1917, Christian schools were fully funded by the state. This tradition was the foundation of CPCS schooling.

14 Deenick, op. cit., p. 34ff.
15 Jupp, op. cit., p. 358.
A block of land was purchased in July, 1956 overlooking the Kingston township for 675 pounds. Association members tithed one pound a week and donations were received so that the land was paid for in twelve months. Loans and gifts were also sought from the Netherlands. It was estimated that a three classroom block would cost 10,000 pounds and that recurrent costs would be 5,000 pounds which included salaries and loan repayments. Voluntary labour was used to reduce the costs of building. The name of John Calvin was chosen as the school's name. The principal, Mr Hofman, had been selected and a foundation stone was laid on 19th November, 1960. The school officially opened on January 20th, 1962 and ten days later seventy seven students and three teachers commenced work on their first day at "Calvin School". The name of the school was changed to "Calvin Christian School" in 1963 and the constitution was revised. The church creeds were also replaced by an Educational Creed. In the first two years of the school there was no government funding. It was not until May 1964 (in the first year of the Menzies government) that the Commonwealth reintroduced funding for non-government schools through scholarships and capital funding. This marks the reintroduction of State aid to non-government schools since it was abolished in the 1870s and 1880s. Individual states followed the Commonwealth Government lead and introduced state funding to non-government schools over the next three years. The Tasmanian government introduced a per capita subsidy in May 1967.18 Tasmanian government assistance was introduced in 1967 and amounted to $10 per student.

Other Christian school associations were set up (in areas reflecting Dutch migrant dispersal as mentioned earlier) in 1954 at Mt Evelyn (Vic.) and Wollongong (NSW). In 1957 associations were set up in Blacktown (NSW), Brisbane (Qld), Perth (W.A.) and Dandenong (Vic.) in 1959. In the first yearbook of the Reformed Church of Australia (RCA) in 1956, most of the 20 churches listed had a representative for the local Christian school "association".

The foundation of the Christian Parent Controlled model of schooling is the local association. The local association of parent members governs the school through its elected representatives and an annual general meeting. CPCS is a registered company (NSW) and acts as a national association for the local associations. The first stage of

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setting up a school in this system is to form an association. Sometimes an association can exist for many years before a school commences.

The method of school government that was adopted was a “parent-controlled” model, based on the Dutch Reformed understanding of parental responsibility and Abraham Kuyper’s view of sphere sovereignty and “common grace”. Kuyper’s influence upon Dutch Reformed Christian schooling is foundational to an understanding of Christian Parent Controlled schools. Kuyper was a Dutch Calvinist theologian and political leader who was attracted by the “anti-revolutionary” political views of the Calvinist theorist Groen Van Prinsterer in 1869. He became the leader of the “Anti-Revolutionary Party” in 1867 after Groen’s death. Elected to parliament in 1874, Kuyper and his party drafted a program calling for state aid to religious schools, extension of the suffrage, recognition of the rights of labour, reforms in colonial policy, and a revitalization of national life. Its theoretical basis was the idea of the autonomy of the various social spheres, each of which had its own God-given rights. Through various coalitions, the Anti-revolutionary Party reformed as the Christian Historical Party, sweeping Christian democracy into power and establishing Kuyper as Prime Minister in 1901.

The underlying philosophical difference between CPCS schools and other themelic Christian schools corresponds to the difference between Calvinism and Anabaptism. In school government, CPCS locate final authority in the parents through the association and the council elected from that association. In CCS, final authority rests with the church and the leaders of the church, namely the elders. Whilst such an Anabaptist tradition is separatist by nature, the Calvinist tradition tends to acknowledge the divine ordination of the state as set out in Romans 13. These differences and their educational implications are discussed in Chapter 5.

The Reformed Church of Australia, in the tradition of Kuyper, was the first body to promote themelic Christian schools in Australia. Parents were constantly urged in the

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Trowel and Sword to commit themselves to Christian education. The clergy of the RCA formed a vital vanguard for the movement. At the 1958 ministers conference, schools held an important place on the agenda.

As a prominent spokesperson for CPCS schools and an RCA minister in the 1970s, Arent DeGraff, reported on that conference:

We are all agreed, there was no need to argue the principles, everyone was convinced that such schools had to come, where our children, not just during some religious hours per week, but in the course of all subjects, also science, biology, history and Social studies, could be impressed with the Kingship of Christ and the Sovereignty of God in all spheres of life, this being our children’s Covenant God! ... One thing stood out, Christian education all day long is one of the most important pillars of the Christian Church.20

Such statements exemplify the influence of Kuyperian theology on the CPCS schooling movement.

In 1967 there were 3 CPCS schools in Australia with 221 students. By 1980 there were 20 CPCS Associations and 6 schools with 1,101 students. In 1995 there were 72 CPCS schools with 20, 296 students and 1,961 staff.21

In promotional material in 1994, CPCS listed seven characteristics that together form the basic appeal for their schools:

* Parents have their say.
* The Scriptures are the central directing principle.
* Schools that every parent can afford.
* The Christian world view of the home is reinforced.
* The school and home form a partnership.
* Each child is treated as a person with valuable gifts.
* Students are prepared by learning about the world, its ugliness and its beauty, in the light of God’s word.22

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20 Cited in Deenick, op. cit., p. 241.
4.3 Early non-reformed interest in themelic schools

As early as 1955 there were signs of others outside the reformed tradition starting themelic schools. A group called the Christian Educational Fellowship (CEF) was formed by Dr J. Upsdell, the Rev. E.T. Brailey and Murray Hogben in order to establish interdenominational Christian schools in Australia and a Protestant missionary teaching order, based upon the Roman Catholic model.

Dr Upsdell, a medical practitioner with the Bush Church Aid Society and the Flying Medical Service at Wudinna, S.A (1951-1955) was the driving energy behind the idea of founding a themelic school. This group produced a small booklet, A Call to Christian People: For a New Approach to Christian Education. Armed with the booklet and tracts, Dr Upsdell travelled extensively around the country, endeavouring to win support for the establishment of fellowships (interdenominational associations/groups) and representatives in each state of Australia. In the process, he attracted the attention of the Dutch Reformed schools through their National Union of Christian Schools and the National Association of Christian Schools in the USA, neither of which he knew existed.23 Owing to the “parent controlled” concept - which Dr Upsdell considered put “the teacher too much at the mercy of the parents prejudiced by their own children in disciplinary and other matters” - their “rigid theological position”24 and their preoccupation with creationism, he sought no further close association.

Dr Upsdell has stated that using terms such as “missionary teaching order” was a “tactical error” in nomenclature because it conjured up visions of “poverty, celibacy and obedience” which he had not intended. In hindsight, given the state of Protestant/Catholic relations in the 1950s, it is little wonder that his concept fell on sceptical ears. Dr Upsdell had intended that this group of teachers would form a missionary society and that this society would provide the security, superannuation, presumably from the giving of the church, for teachers who had left the employment of the state. Dr Upsdell had thought in terms of the functioning on the model of the

23 ibid.
24 ibid.
Bush Church Aid Society. The name of Upsell’s group was later changed to the Fellowship for Christian Education (FCE), to save confusion with the Child Evangelical Fellowship, an evangelical para-church organization which believes in the evangelization of young children.

Dr Upsell did manage to enlist some financial and moral support in Victoria in the persons of Mr and Mrs Gilbert Bell. Land was purchased in 1962 with donations from Adelaide and Sunshine (Vic) but the school was not started. In 1982 the land purchased was sold enabling the beginning of two schools associated with the initial vision of Dr J. Upsell at Sunshine and Belgrave Heights. The FCE itself never gained sufficient support and continues now only as a financial body to assist the starting of Christian schools.

4.4 Accelerated Christian Education

In the early 1970s Accelerated Christian Education, a USA based group, began to explore the Australian scene to measure levels of interest in their brand of schooling, and the response was significant. In late 1976 Accelerated Christian Schools (ACE) started in Australia with considerable energy. As many as 100 schools were formed over the next five years and used ACE material. Many of these schools were quite small. ACE was already well established in the USA and was able to supply ready made curriculum documents and a system of schooling that was available without all the cost and facilities required by CPCS schools.

Under the ACE system, students are placed in cubicles for most of their learning each day and progressed through “paces” (booklets on each unit of work). These schools did not necessarily need teachers but could operate with supervisors and monitors. The first ACE school was Mountains Christian Academy in Blackheath (NSW) which was started in 1976 as a High School. Seven other ACE schools were started the next year. Some ACE schools have changed from this system to a more conventional school system after becoming more established.

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25 Correspondence Dr J. Upsell 7.1.93.
In 1992 there were 45 schools using the ACE system or a modified ACE system in Australia.\textsuperscript{26} ACE also runs the largest centre for Christian home schooling in Australia called the Australian Christian Academy. The centre, located at Strathpine, Queensland, supplies more than 2,000 students in home schools with curriculum materials, resources and guidance. ACE also manage a distance education centre through Maryborough Christian Academy which is part of the Australian Education Foundation (AEF). ACE Australia Ltd and AEF Ltd have the same board of directors and some doubt has been raised about the integrity of their operations.\textsuperscript{27} The growth and development of the home schooling aspect of ACE services and schools is an interesting one and highlights the complexity of endeavouring to dismiss this model of schooling and the kinds of people interested in it. Some academics have been tempted to presume that groups like ACE have declined in number and have somehow lost credibility.\textsuperscript{28} But the evidence is to the contrary and suggests that interest in ACE has not diminished but is simply less observable.\textsuperscript{29}

It has been the ACE system that has attracted most concern and derision from government educational bodies and there is some confusion among people unfamiliar with the biblical Christian schools about the differences between the various models adopted in achieving a “Christ-centred education”.

A similar system known as LIFEPAC also started in 1976/77 operating in large pentecostal groups in Adelaide and Melbourne. These schools have since accepted a more conventional structure with Christian teachers teaching the recognised state syllabus with a biblical subject added to the curriculum. In 1992 LIFEPAC operated primarily as a support base for home schoolers and also supplied ACE schools with some Home Economics curriculum materials.

4.5 Christian Community Schools

In 1974 the Christian Community School movement (primarily Baptist in foundation) began with the “vision” of two trainee Baptist pastors in Sydney (NSW), Peter Hester

\textsuperscript{27} Marritt, F., ACE and AEF \textit{The Family School Magazine} Vol. 7, No. 4, 1993, pp. 2-7.
\textsuperscript{28} Anderson, D., op. cit.
and Robert Frisken. With the encouragement of David Magill (church secretary) they began to discuss the adverse influences of what was happening in state schools. Hester, a trained Mathematics teacher, and Frisken, a trained Geography teacher, spoke together about a “truly Christ-centred school founded on Biblical principles where Christ would be Lord.”\textsuperscript{30} The school would be a part of the ministry of the local church in partnership with the home in “training” the children.\textsuperscript{31}

Encouraged by the Rev. Dr Vic Eldridge, Lecturer in Old Testament at Morling College, the Baptist theological college in Sydney, they approached Lidcombe-Berala Baptist church about the use of their property, which had facilities available and able to be modified for classroom use. The buildings were made available without cost and an interim committee was set up for the establishment of a Christian Community High School, David Magill being the founding chairman. Other Baptist churches assisted the project by providing playground space (Regents Park Baptist Church) and releasing Bob Frisken from many of his pastoral duties in order to plan for the school.

During 1975 Frisken worked through many of the theoretical and theological foundations for Regents Park High School. He has written much of the philosophical framework which is used for teacher induction into the CCS system. Much of that material is adapted directly from the thinking of Dr W. E. Andersen and is modified by Frisken’s own particular concerns.

The system devised as the basis for the school functioning and curriculum direction was known as GIFT (Grouped, Individualised, Focused, Teaching) and was developed by Frisken as an adaption from the Accelerated Christian Education model.\textsuperscript{32} More has been said earlier about the significance and thinking of W. E. Andersen, and it is important to note that Frisken saw no incongruity in mixing W. E. Andersen’s theorising with the structural philosophy of ACE. Whilst Frisken has been happy to merge the thinking of the two, Andersen would be far from happy about such a merging. Frisken’s design incorporates many of the ACE structures but implements

\textsuperscript{31} ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Interview Peter Hester 23.9.93
them with greater flexibility. Each unit of the curriculum is called a “measure” and this provides the teacher with the theological framework for teaching the subject. The element of curriculum control is most evident with each “measure” providing resource sheets, worksheets and structure for each unit of work for each subject and at each school year level. The “measure” tends not to have all the limitations of the ACE workbook program, and allows the teacher to present the content of the course according to a large degree, to their own professional discretion. The “measure” is not a comprehensive curriculum document, as the ACE “paces” are.

The Frisken strategy for ensuring a “Christ-centred” curriculum was based upon the principles for Christian growth set out in the New Testament book of Ephesians.\textsuperscript{33} Summarised in point form these principles are:

1. The primacy of the Bible.
2. The rejection of a secularist/humanist world view.
3. The central authority of the local church.
4. Parental responsibility administered through the church.
5. The school viewed as a church “ministry”.
6. Teachers are gifted “charismatically” for the equipping ministry of the church.
7. The church, parents and teachers form a three-way partnership in community.
8. Growth into maturity and personhood is growth “into Christ”.
10. Preparation for life.\textsuperscript{34}

The teachers and students were directed in their teaching and learning in this system by “measures”, or modules that explain how to teach a concept, subject or unit of work.

\textsuperscript{33} ibid. These principles are stated despite the fact that there was not a canon of the Bible or modern notion of schooling at the time of the writing of Ephesians. Such difficulties do not concern the themelic hermeneutic which tends to see the Bible as universal and beyond time.

from a Christian perspective. These measures ensured that the curriculum was taught in a biblical and Christ-centred way. Unlike the CPCS structure of parent association and management, CCS has a management system that is more church based and is usually under the guidance of an eldership or board elected from the membership of the sponsoring church. This is the key to the CCS system. When questioned about labelling these schools, Bob Frisken preferred that they be known as “Christ-centred curriculum schools” rather than “fundamentalist”, “parent-controlled” or “church” schools.35

In 1976 Regents Park Christian Community High School started with 14 students in year seven. A similar school was started at St Mary’s in 1978. By 1980 there were 4 CCS schools with 300 students and 6 CCS schools with 500 students by 1981. In 1995 there were 79 CCS schools with 16,393 students.36

4.6 Independent themelic schools

In addition to the CPCS schools, CCS schools, early independent non-reformed schools and ACE schools, there are numerous independent themelic Christian schools that seek no formal affiliation with other themelic schools. The measurement of the development of these schools is an onerous task, since government records consider all Protestant schools in one group and themelic systems keep records of their own. In addition, there are 30 or more themelic schools not funded by DEETYA and therefore not gazetted. Many of these schools are too small to receive funding or else refuse funding and/or registration. Some independent themelic schools join either of the established systems for affiliation strength or the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) for financial reasons such as insurance, workers compensation and superannuation. There are a small number of themelic schools that maintain their autonomy out of an Anabaptist fear of government regulation. Some refuse funding and registration because of their Christian reconstructionist approach. They have fought education departments in the courts, mostly winning their appeals.

35 Interview Robert Frisken 5.6.92
Sometimes the independent themelic school expresses a particular Christian theological position, such as a compulsion to maintain a pentecostal ministry within an independent pentecostal church. Peter Frogley and Light Education Ministries (LEM) often have close associations with these schools, supporting them with materials, legal advice and courses.

4.7 Light Educational Ministries

LEM first began in South Australia as Australian Christian Schools, knowing little of other themelic school movements. In the early 1970s the founder, Peter Frogley, was a state high school teacher and decided that students could be taught in a school with God as the central factor. Like many people in other themelic movements, he reacted to the “secular humanism” dominating the state school system. Frogley thus represents a typical response of a theology/ideology to social trends. The fear of secular humanism will be discussed in Chapter 10. Frogley, like the other pioneers of the movement towards themelic schools, was aware of church denominational schools but believed them to be Christian only in origin and not significantly Christian theologically or philosophically. The perception of many Christians at this time, reacting to the social developments of the 1960s and 1970s, was that society was going the way of the Devil.

Frogley started Fountain Centre Christian School at Booleroo Centre (SA) and began LEM through a magazine attacking the philosophical foundations of secular education. People interested in LEM were loosely associated through conferences and common vision beginning in 1978. The prominence of this movement became public when Fountain Centre Christian School contested the legality of registration in the Supreme Court of South Australia, in line with LEM’s separatist policy of not seeking state funding and refusing registration by the State Education Department.

In 1990, after a protracted legal battle, the court ruled in favour of the Fountain Centre Christian School. A similar story can be told for the Croydon Baptist Academy in Victoria, involving Frogley’s guidance, assistance and counsel based on experience in

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37 Interview Peter Frogley 27.3.92
the case of Fountain Centre Christian School. Soon after the Fountain Centre case was settled, LEM and Frogley moved to the ACT where they operate a school and home schooling resource centre on the site of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) at Watson, ACT.

LEM supplies and counsels 200 families that home-school their children. LEM tends to favour a reconstructionist and “back to basics” view of the world which is demonstrated by its commitment to Spalding Phonics.\(^{40}\) The Spalding language program emphasises the “laws” and “rules” of language. It is a mechanistic approach to the learning of language through learning phonograms as the minimal speech unit.\(^{41}\) It suits the reconstructionist tradition because it operates on a set of absolutes. As a reading program it offers security to the teacher. Teachers in the reconstructionist tradition express relief at discovering the mechanics of “how to” teach reading.\(^{42}\) There is next to no emphasis in the Spalding program on reading for meaning. The *Writing Road to Reading* brands the contemporary emphasis on reading for meaning and learning by immersion as “this catastrophe” and as an “instructional disaster”.\(^{43}\) This runs contrary to contemporary research and practice in literacy.\(^{44}\)

4.8 Thematic home schools

The growing drift of students and families into home schooling since the mid 1980s is not exclusive to thematic Christians. The trend started in the tradition of alternative schooling popular in the 1970s. The commencement in 1981 of the Christian Family School Association (CFSA) by Valerie and Frank Marett in Werribee, Victoria, has

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\(^{41}\) ibid.

\(^{42}\) Interview Anneke Kruik 25.4.95; Greg Brian 3.3.95.

\(^{43}\) Spalding, op. cit., p. 10.

provided a resource to hundreds of families who home-school in the themelic tradition. CFSA publishes a quarterly journal, *Family School*, writes curriculums and supports home schoolers through correspondence.

Many themelic home schools throughout Australia operate in a loose network and use curriculum material from the USA.\textsuperscript{45} The growth of themelic home schools is difficult to document and analyse because of the loose nature of grassroots support groups and networks. Organisation has been intentionally loose to minimise opportunities for investigation by government authorities.

Themelic home schools exist because of negative perceptions of formal schooling and of formal themelic schooling’s emulation of its government counterpart. The themelic home schooling view of parental responsibility goes beyond the CPCS model of parental responsibility, giving parents direct responsibility for teaching their children with no intervention of any institution or delegation to others. This is not generated out of a general anti-institutional philosophy, like that of Ivan Illich; many home schoolers still attend institutional churches. Neither is it motivated by the deschooling philosophy of Holt, Illich and others: they are understood to be humanists.

Themelic home schools are mostly set up and operated by people at the fundamentalist extremes of the themelic movement. Harris states:

\begin{quote}
Education is always a battleground......there is a war going on.\textsuperscript{46}

The enemy army has already made its intentions clear. One of its more articulate writers revealed those intentions in *The Humanist* magazine.\textsuperscript{47}

Public schools and Christian schools are religious rivals.\textsuperscript{48}

The Children’s Crusade in the Middle Ages was a disaster. Children were slaughtered or sold into slavery. A similar slaughter is taking place today as Christian children march into public schools to take them for Christ.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45} Material from the Advanced Training Institute of America (ATIM); ABEKA materials from Pensacola University, ACE materials; LIFEPAC materials and material from Bob Jones III University.


\textsuperscript{47} ibid., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{48} ibid., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{49} ibid., p. 11.
Many Christian parents have moved into themelic home schooling for the following reasons:

1. The view that themelic schools have given in too much to the demands of the state.
2. Continual critical pressure placed upon ACE schools by Christian and non-Christian academics and education bureaucrats. Harsh criticism from other themelic school quarters has been common.
3. The more literal/fundamentalist biblical understanding of parental responsibility regarding the nurture of children.
4. The ease of acquiring materials from the USA.
5. The financial attraction of schooling at home.
6. A disenchantment with the idea of schooling in itself.\(^{50}\)

Despite the insular perspective of home schooling, the children of themelic home schools gain the benefits of learning in a small environment, with individual attention by caring parents. Nor, it seems, does this disadvantage these students when it comes to tertiary entrance or employment.\(^{51}\)

4.9 Christian Community Colleges, Victoria

Christian Community Colleges (CCC) cannot be classified as themelic but could be confused for Christian Community Schools because of their title and protestant origins. They were founded in 1974, arising from several peculiar concerns about the Victorian Education Act. The ecumenicity of the 1970s, trends to alternative schooling, restrictions in access to schools by the church, local community needs and a response to more humanistic (Deweyan) approaches in state schools were all reasons that Highview Christian Community College began. The founding visionary and principal of this


\(^{51}\) Interview and records maintained by Floyd Risser (Australian ACE coordinator) 17.10.92.
ecumenical school was John Lever.

Soon several CCC schools were started, with numerous orthodox Protestant denominations and Catholics forming the basis for the schools. After the Karmel report and increased funding for Catholic schools, CCC schools have become Protestant ecumenical Christian schools. They do not use the terminology of “Christ-centred” education and, by virtue of their ecumenicity, stand in contrast to the evangelical/reformed Protestant traditions which reject such a notion. Whilst CCC schools serve the church they are not “faith formation schools” nor are they an arm of the church; hence they should not be regarded as part of the themelic collection.

**4.10 The fee structure of themelic schools**

One of the features of themelic schools is their commitment to a low fee structure. The emphasis has always been on the availability of Christian education and the ideals of themelic schooling rather than on facilities, resources or educational excellence. CPCS promotional material states that

> It is also the responsibility of the association to see that, as far as it lies with the school community, Christian education is not priced out of the range of Christian families.52

Most themelic schools also have some mechanism for educating children of Christian parents who are not able to pay the full fee. In CCS schools this tends to take the form of a rebate after an interview with the principal. In CPCS schools a sliding fee scale according to family income is a structure for accommodating poorer parents. Fee reductions are often made for the enrolment of additional children in a family. Fees also vary between secondary and primary schools.

The average fee for one primary child in a CPCS school is $1,609 per annum.53 The highest fee rate for any CPCS school is Trinity Christian School (TCS) Wanniassa,

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53 These calculations were made using the CPCS 1995 school directory.
ACT which, in 1995 had a fee structure of $1,580 p. a. per child (primary) and $2,100 p.a. per child (secondary) on the lowest family income scale ($30,000 p.a. and under) to $2,520 p.a. per child (primary) and $3,220 per child (secondary) on the highest family income scale (more than $60,000 p.a. and over). Unlike those of most non-government schools, this fee structure is means tested and fees are paid on a sliding scale. This is not unusual in themelic schools. Themelic schools without a sliding scale often have other ways of making allowance for low income. Aside from one or two schools in Victoria and Queensland, most themelic school fees do not exceed $2,000 per child per annum. By way of comparison with TCS it is worth noting that in the ACT several other Arnoldian type schools have fee scales which are double that of TCS and that other themelic schools in the ACT have fee scales under half that of TCS. That costs can be kept so low is a result of considerable sacrifices by parents and staff. Most themelic schools do not have specialist elective subjects or facilities which require the same financial demands as an Arnoldian school. The bottom line for a themelic school is not the educational facilities or opportunities it provides but the conviction to “educate biblically”. Most themelic schools are small, are supported by a zealous community and use a great deal of voluntary labour for ancillary functions in the school. Such comparisons become more meaningful in the case studies in Chapter 7.

Oswald found that

... these new schools offer low-fee structures, and are located in outlying city “growth” suburbs, or low-to-middle socio-economic areas.\(^5\)

Comparison of fee structures is an important measure of difference between themelic and Arnoldian schools. Themelic schools often justify low fees theologically, or in terms of not excluding any child from a Christian education.

4.11 Associations and Tertiary Developments

4.11a The Australian Association for Christian Schools

Representatives of the two largest themelic school systems, CCS and CPCS, met in March 1985, to coordinate conferences. At this meeting a national association was


formally discussed. In April 1985 formal consultations took place, a concept of membership was accepted and a steering committee set up. A statement of affirmation was agreed to in September, 1986. A chairman, Jack Mechielson of CPCS, was selected and an executive officer, David Magill of CCS appointed in December 1986.

The association was formally launched in July 1987 in a general media release and in the groups’ journals, Growing Up (CCS) and Nurture (CPCS). Contact was made with all known themelic schools at the time and 24 applied for individual school membership in addition to existing CCS and CPCS schools. David Baskerville (Calvary Temple College, Qld) and Gary McFarlane (Northside Christian College, WA) were elected as members on the council representing individual member schools. The association began to give assistance to member schools in handling accountability to the Commonwealth Government. In August 1989 AACS appointed a part-time executive officer and set up a national office in Canberra. In 1990 the Executive Officer, Peter Crimmins, began to lobby for the AACS in DEET and other relevant government departments, meeting politicians and department heads.

In February 1988 it was agreed that a superannuation scheme be provided for member schools and a certificate of membership was designed. In the first newsletter of the Association, Tidings, AACS offers member schools the following employee services: a superannuation fund, a school sickness and accident plan, an insurance scheme and government liaison services.

The centralised services of a national office and executive officer to negotiate and lobby in the capital city have given the growing themelic school movement greater political credibility and access to government departments. This is crucial to an understanding of these schools and their distinctiveness. Whilst most themelic Christian schools are fundamentalist in theology and rhetoric, their cooperation, openness, flexibility and pragmatism in financial and political spheres does not reflect such a rigid foundation. Indeed, the more “right wing” themelic schools believe such drive for credibility with secular institutions unnecessary and remain independent, rejecting the association. The reasons for this are theological and will be explained in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In the first year of AACS there were 139 member schools, and 194 by 1995. This
excludes some ACE schools, the Christian Schools Association of Queensland (CSAQ), numerous independent themelic schools and themelic home schools.

AACS was incorporated with a ratified constitution in late 1990; thus AACS was now exempt from sales tax and stamp duty. An affiliation fee of $1 per student per annum was set with individual membership slightly more. By 1995 the superannuation scheme had 4,068 members, 146 sponsoring schools, $23 million under management and paid out $1.5 million in benefits. AACS had also developed close associations with the National Council of Independent Schools Association (NCISA) the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), Jewish Day Schools, Lutheran Schools and Seventh Day Adventist schools to further strengthen their position with government agencies such as the Program Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC) and the Non-Government Schools Funding Review Committee (NGSFR). By 1991 AACS had formed a Christian Schools Consultative Group with Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventist Schools in order to present a united front to government.

Perceiving a shift in decision making from DEET to the Australian Educational Council (AEC) during the Dawkins era, AACS sought stronger links with the AEC, to which it did not have ready access. It is interesting to note the differences within themelic schools as they responded to several government reports in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the Finn,\textsuperscript{56} and Mayer reports.\textsuperscript{57} Significantly unlike other themelic Christian schools, CPCS prepared responses in the form of discussion and occasional papers. The other schools, which are clearly less academically and politically astute, tend to confront political issues only when it becomes clear how policy will impact directly on their schools. It is fair to say that the CPCS school system has a much broader vision when it comes to education and government policy. Their inclination to scholarship and publishing, especially in the philosophy of education, and to academic excellence and deep enquiry comes from the reformed tradition. The energy and interest of AACS actions directed towards political matters is generated more by CPCS than by other groups within AACS.


\textsuperscript{57} Mayer, E., Committee Chair, \textit{Employment Related Key Competencies: a Proposal for Consultation} Melbourne, Mayer Committee, 1992.
In 1987, AACS sought ways to formalise its relationship with Commonwealth Education Minister Dawkins and his department, but with little success. In 1992 AACS was received formally by education minister Beazley in two separate meetings. AACS, through the CSCG, met the Commonwealth shadow minister for education, Dr David Kemp and welcomed the opposition policy to repeal the New Schools legislation. The 1991 Annual Report for AACS draws attention to the favourable elements of the Opposition Fightback package, particularly the zero GST, the abolition of the New Schools Policy, the doubling of capital grants to non-government schools and the promised recurrent grants to non-government schools.

To my knowledge these schools made no public response to the ethical issues in the so-called Fightback package, in contrast to other Christian institutions which debated the moral outcomes of the Liberal Party 1993 election strategy (the nature of the 1996 election campaign and the guarded strategy of the Liberal Party did not elicit such stark contrasts as did the 1993 campaign which was for more polarised and overtly ethical in its implications). Themelic interest in the Liberal Party and economic rationalism suggests, as argued in Chapter 12, that themelic schools are by nature politically conservative and anti-socialist.

4.11b Christian Schools Association of Queensland

The CSAQ began on February 1989 and had 49 associated member schools with 10,500 students in 1992. It has a similar function to the AACS, but tailored regionally to the needs of Queensland. As of 1995, CSAQ has not become affiliated with AACS.

The CSAQ chairman’s report for 1989 states:

Clearly the governments, and in particular, the State Department of Education, have found it easier to relate to CSAQ than a disparate collection of schools. The Christian Schools movement has been recognised as a distinct stream within independent education. CSAQ is not a threat to AISQ (some of our schools have dual membership), but the point has been made that the Christian Schools viewpoint is often distinctive.58

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58 ibid., p. 2.
The number of themelic Christian schools per head of population in Queensland is much larger than in any other state and, because of parochial sympathies, tends to warrant this separate association. The conservative Bjelke-Petersen government in Queensland assisted this development.

The CSAQ has representatives on at least 18 governmental and educational bodies\(^5^9\) and requests are made for the response of CSAQ to government papers and reports. This is exceptional when compared to the situation of themelic Christian schools in other states which do not enjoy such wide acceptance and recognition.

Whilst the CSAQ does not have a statement of faith for association like that of the AACS, it is clear that only themelic schools would feel comfortable in the association. The other denominational Christian schools use the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland (AISQ) to represent their needs. The strong emphasis on a biblical apologetic and “prayer warriors”\(^6^0\) would not appeal to AISQ schools. Despite this fundamentalist rhetoric, there is no evidence of the aggressive zeal typical of fundamentalism in the methods of CSAQ and its relationship with government.

In 1995 the executive director of CSAQ, Mr Alan Mullaly, took up a position as principal of Kings Christian School, Reedy Creek on the Queensland Gold Coast. With Mullaly's change of position, it seems likely that schools affiliated with CSAQ will merge with AACS, owing to administrative constraints of maintaining the CSAQ operation. CSAQ publishes a journal on an irregular basis through the Christian Outreach College, Toowoomba.

4.12 Current tertiary developments

The sentiments of Peter Frogley explain why themelic schools have ventured into tertiary education. In response to a question about differences between themelic schools and Arnoldian schools, Frogley stated:

\(^{5^9}\text{ibid., p. 12.}\)

\(^{6^0}\text{ibid., p. 15.}\)
I think the major difference has come about through the introduction of teachers' colleges. They are a twentieth century invention. When many of those private schools began I would envisage that most of their staff members were either from a religious order or were certainly very strongly committed as Christians. Whereas you would find today there are other than Christians teaching in those schools. Now if we accept the notion that there is a biblical framework of thinking and a non-biblical framework of thinking then to embrace a biblical framework of thinking means that you need to one know God personally. Two know the word of God as it applies to life. Now my observation is there are not a lot of people who have even considered that as a possibility. Now if you are a teacher and you haven't worked through that then by default you'll teach from an ungodly perspective. You may feel godly, you may even be singing godly songs while you are doing it but what you are doing will be ungodly because you have not thought it through from a biblical perspective. As nice as many of those schools may be and as dedicated as the teachers may be that doesn't make them Christian. Now they would obviously find that offensive for someone to say their school was not a Christian school because their definition of Christian would suit their school. Is all in the eye of the beholder. The other side of that debate is that some parents want that sort of schooling for their kids and that's fine but there's a sense in which we are trying to create an awareness in Christian parents for the need for their Children to be trained in godliness.61

In other words themelic schoolers perceive a problem with the roots of education in preparation of teachers. The National Council of Institutes for Christian Education expressed it this way:

It needs to be kept in mind that the majority of our teachers, including those in leadership positions, receive their initial education in traditional teacher training institutions that are not oriented towards Christ-centred education.62

This idea carries through into the argument that there can be no neutrality. Therefore all education is either black (humanist) or white (Christian). So the argument to establish

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61 Interview Peter Frogley, 27.3.92.
themelic schools spreads to universities. The real champion of this perspective is Rousas Rushdoony (Christian reconstructionist), although evangelicals and fundamentalists who embrace his ideas tend to express their concerns in less dogmatic ways.

The following overview gives an indication of the movement of themelic schools into the arena of tertiary education.

4.12a Institute for Christian Education

Fifteen years after the first CPCS school began and one year after the first CCS school commenced, some Victorian CPCS schools discussed postgraduate study from a themelic perspective. The schools at Mount Evelyn, Donvale and Endeavour Hills, in response to a proposal by the Reformed Theological College at Geelong to form an education faculty, began the Institute for Christian Education as a separate body. The ICE was governed by Christian Parent Controlled Schools Inc, the Association for Tertiary Education (RTC) and the Foundation for Christian Scholarship (interested teachers from associated schools, academics, researchers and theologians). At that stage there were 13 themelic schools in Australia with 1,844 students. The first course (Graduate Diploma in Curriculum Studies) was offered in 1979 and the first graduates exited in 1982. Later, a Masters in Education and some external studies courses were offered.

4.12b The Institute of Tertiary Christian Education

The establishment of The Institute of Tertiary Christian Education (ICTE) in 1985 was the result of rapid growth in CCS and CPCS schools in NSW. It offered a part-time postgraduate diploma in Christian Education. Some other undergraduate courses were offered through the Guild Centre at Sydney University. In 1992 the ICTE became the sole institute for CCS schools and the interests of CPCS schools in all states were

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amalgamated into one institute, the National Institute for Christian Education (NICE), to serve the needs of CPCS schools.

The ICTE continues to offer professional development for staff of the CCS system with a postgraduate diploma in Christian Education (unaccredited), intends to offer a graduate diploma and a Master of Arts (Christian Education) degree and is seeking accreditation through the Australian College of Theology. A distance education program was started in 1992 and a summer school introduced. An annual conference is also a focal strategy in the professional development program of CCS schools. The closure of the Guild Centre by Sydney University meant that ICTE could not offer undergraduate courses. The ICTE has also decided to publish a journal “to promote scholarly discussion” in addition to the Growing Up journal which serves as a CCS newspaper. CCS schools appoint state coordinators and chairpersons of state regional committees for further professional development. A central resource centre is located in Sydney, and printing of curriculum material and texts is also done there.

4.12c Christian Heritage College

Christian Heritage College (CHC) began in 1986 to train teachers at undergraduate level. Founded by the Christian Outreach Centre (an independent charismatic church), this institution is the “first stage of a long-term plan to establish a Christian university”. CHC began without accreditation but gained accreditation for a Diploma in Teaching in 1988. CHC is currently awaiting final approval from the Queensland Minister of Education for accreditation of their other courses. These courses (B.Teach. and B.Ed.) have been monitored and moderated by the Queensland Teacher Education Board review panel since 1992. CHC offers courses within the framework of a themelic worldview and is specifically designed to prepare teachers for these schools.

4.12d The National Institute for Christian Education

The National Institute for Christian Education was conceived at a meeting in July 1990 of the National Council of Institutes for Christian Education (NCICE), a CPCS governing body which is responsible for professional development. Through this

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66 CHC began with a close relationship with Christian Heritage College SanDiego USA. Christian Heritage College brochures for B.Teach Mt Gravatt, 1992.
initiative the CCS and CPCS movements parted ways over professional development and ICE was included in NICE. The first NICE courses (Graduate Diploma in Curriculum Studies, Bachelor of Educational Studies and Master of Educational Studies) were offered in 1993. As part of the NCICE national strategy on teacher training, the NCICE began an Induction and Mentor course in 1991 in order to “train teachers to teach from a Christian perspective”.\textsuperscript{67} In response to the introduction of the Training Guarantee Scheme CPCS set up regional gatherings and ongoing school based study with particular emphasis upon assisting new staff to CPCS schools to adjust and understand the distinctiveness of teaching in a themelic school.

NICE also started The Christian Teacher’s Journal in February 1992 to:

... affirm the Lordship of Christ in Education ... challenging them to a fuller understanding of their task and responsibilities, raising issues critical to the development of teaching and learning in a distinctive Christian way.\textsuperscript{68}

This publication compliments the Nurture magazine which is more a school and parent newspaper. In addition to these activities, CPCS schools operate a central “clearing house” for curriculum and professional development material and a national curriculum committee.

4.12e The Christian College of Tertiary Education

The Christian College of Tertiary Education (CCTE) began in 1988 as a development of the Australian Christian Correspondence School (ACCS) Yackandandah. The Australian Christian Correspondence School has a loose association with themelic schools from a free church or Brethren foundation and conducts professional development for staff associated with these schools. The interest in a Christian Teachers’ Training College (CTTC) began in 1982.\textsuperscript{69} By 1995 CCTE was still awaiting accreditation and had no intention of starting until that accreditation is awarded.

\textsuperscript{67} Circular to members 3/91 26th February 1991 appendix A
4.12f University of the Nations (YWAM)

Youth With A Mission is a large international para-church evangelical mission that has youth as its specific target. In association with the University of the Nations (YWAM) in Hawaii, YWAM Australia began offering courses in Education in 1992. Even though the University of the Nations is a degree-granting institution, it is not accredited by any accrediting agency or association recognised by the United States Commissioner of Education. A similar situation exists in some Australian theological colleges such as the Christian Missionary Alliance College at Warramanga, ACT.

LEM is an educational arm of YWAM activities in Australia, and Peter Frogley is its director. In 1992 YWAM Australia began a campaign to establish a University of the Nations campus at their headquarters in Watson, ACT., with an appeal by the director of this project, Tom Hallas, for donations towards the first stage ($1.2 million) proposal in 1992 for a building to house the College of Education. The current YWAM (15 acre) site at Watson, formerly a Sacred Heart monastery, already accommodates the Australian International Christian School and Light Education Ministries.

The long term plan is to build four full colleges of the University of the Nations. These are College of Christian Ministries, a College of Counselling and Health Care, a College of Education and a College of Humanities and International Studies.70

Frogley is central to this whole development. He became convinced of the need for themelic education in 1972, and began a themelic school in 1978 at Port Pirie, South Australia but soon found himself with his family in Hawaii at the YWAM international headquarters. There he undertook the Crossroads Discipleship Training School. In 1979 he acted as the principal of the International Christian School in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Before leaving Hawaii, he had a “vision” to establish Light Educational Ministries.71 Frogley soon returned to Australia, where he was principal of the Fountain Centre Christian School, at Booleroo Centre, South Australia, for 10

71 ibid., p. 6
years. In that time he came to the notice of the South Australian Education Department over his refusal of government registration and funding. In 1990 he moved to the YWAM site at Watson and became the principal of the themelic school there. In his newsletter, Frogley states that:

Indeed, the training programme of Light Educational Ministries has now become the embryo of the College of Education of the University of the Nations.

In June 1992, the University of the Nations offered two master’s degree courses in Education. Reorientation in Education 1 is a course to “initiate the reorientation of the Christian teacher for teaching in Christian schools” and Reorientation in Education 2 “continues the re-orientation of the Christian teacher for teaching from a Christian perspective”. These courses are offered on a live-in basis at a cost of around $2,800 each. In addition, YWAM offers an undergraduate Elementary Teacher’s Training Course apprenticeship-style training following the Discipleship Training School or the Crossroads Discipleship Training School.

YWAM Australia also offers to their followers three-month Christian education courses in Lausanne, Switzerland in collaboration with the Arc-en-Ciel Christian School, with the participation of the Association of Christian Schools International (ASCI) and the College Daniel of France.

4.12g Westminster Hall (University)

Westminster Hall was founded in 1993 by Mercy Community Church, Kingston Tasmania. Westminster Hall is founded upon the doctrines of the Westminster Confession which include the infallibility of the Bible. In 1993 there were seven students enrolled. The application form for admission, prospectus and the official magazine The Torch, clearly own the title of university. The visionary behind the

72 ibid.
73 ibid.
institution is Douglas Stewart Duncan, who likens Westminster to Regent University in Norfolk, Virginia, USA, which began in similar circumstances in 1970 but now has a student body of 8,000. Westminster Hall offers a degree programme in Education, as well as 9 other degree programs.

Westminster Hall

... plans to stay independent of Government funding and thereby free of Government controls. It is entirely dependent on fees and the generosity of God's people. 76

The staff at Westminster Hall are voluntary and well qualified. Regarding accreditation, the prospectus declares:

No universities in Australia are "accredited" per se. Credibility and acceptance of degrees is given by professional groups such as AMA Australian Society of CPAS, Bar Assn etc, upon perusal and evaluation of courses. All degrees are academic qualifications only, however, the staff of Westminster University will be making every endeavour to ensure its courses gain the highest acceptance by professional bodies without compromising Biblical integrity. God has promised: "Him that honours Me, Him will I honour". 77

Westminster University has made applications for membership with the Transnational Association of Christian Schools USA and South Pacific Associated Bible Colleges.

The first issue of the The Torch makes it clear that Westminster is part of a cosmic battle. Using the imagery of an ICBM, the founder and chairman, Pastor Duncan, equates the stages of the rocket and warheads to ministries of the university, 78 quoting the New Testament justification:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God. 79

76 Equity Partnership Scheme pamphlet, Westminster Hall, 1993.
77 Prospectus, Westminster University, 1993, pp. 3-4.
79 II Corinthians 10: 4.
This fundamentalist rhetoric of "the battle" places Westminster towards the extreme right of the themelic school movement.

4.12h Tabor College

Tabor College began as a vision from the Lord. In 1978, Dr Barry Chant was a member of a pastoral team in a large church. He began to sense that the Lord was calling him to resign and set up a teaching ministry. This was confirmed by prophecy in June of that year and then in Sweden, he had a vision of a Christian Education centre where everyday Christians from all denominations could come to receive teaching from the Word of God and training in the power of the Holy Spirit.80

Tabor College began as a multidenominational charismatic theological college in Adelaide in 1979 through the influence and vision of the Rev. Barry Chant. Tabor began in two transportable timber-framed classrooms at Glenunga High School (South Australia) with an enrolment of 35 students. A second campus was opened in Melbourne in 1988 with further campuses in Perth and Sydney in 1992. In 1991 government accreditation opened up the way for AUSTRUDY and ABSTUDY approval, and enrolments increased.

Initially, the college prepared candidates for church ministry, but this base broadened with the establishment of a Bachelor of Arts (Biblical Studies) program. In 1994 the Adelaide campus of Tabor was boosted by the recognition of their BA programme by the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia. This meant that students could undertake the majority of their teacher training at Tabor and enter the SA teaching service by completing a graduate diploma at a university. The path ahead would seem possible for Tabor to establish their own graduate diploma programme and complete the process, thus essentially enabling students to study at a themelic teachers college/university.

Tabor's student body numbers in 1994 were over 1,200 which makes it a very significant Protestant college in Australia. Its potential to "scoop the pool" in the market for the training of teachers for themelic schools is very strong.

4.13 Conclusion

Themelc schoolers think of Jesus Christ as the Lord of their school.\textsuperscript{81}

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.\textsuperscript{82}

This and other favourite Bible verses grace most of the publications and documents of themelc schools. Acceptable and common language about being “in Christ” and being “in the Word” is central to a themelc understanding of education. The themelc view of education is Christo-centric and focused on the centrality of the Bible as the basis for clarifying all knowledge. Themelc schools began because they felt that a foundation had been lost and needed to be put right, the foundation being more committed zeal for the Bible and Christ as the centre of being.

The identification of these schools is based on their own belief that they stand in contrast to the government school system, Arnoldian and other church schools by their Christ-centredness.

Most themelc schools are incorporated in the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS), which is made up of Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd (CPCS), Christian Community Schools Ltd (CCS) and a number of individual member schools. According to Peter Crimmins, the Executive Officer for AACS, the growth rate of AACS at 1995 in student numbers was 8.5% and for schools, 5% per annum. Research indicates that, to date, themelc schools make up more than 7% of the non-government school sector, 41% of the non-Catholic non-government sector. The largest collection of themelc schools outside of AACS is the Christian Schools Association of Queensland (CSAQ) which has more than 11,700 students and 44 schools. In addition, there is a significant number of themelc home schoolers and independent themelc Christian schools.


\textsuperscript{82} Ephesians 4: 15.
What began in 1962 with 77 students had grown to 738 students in the ten years to 1973. Whilst non-government schooling generally decreased between 1966-76, themelic Christian schools grew by 100%.

In the next ten years enrolments in themelic schools increased to 11,000 students in 100 schools. Collectively, in 1996, there were more than 300 themelic schools in Australia with an estimated enrolment of 60,000 students. This thesis argues that themelic schools constitute a system in infancy. It is worth noting that themelic schools in the Northern Territory are paid by the federal and territory governments as a system of schools and similar moves are being considered in Victoria. This chapter has documented the separate history of each themelic group and has also shown that through the development of themelic associations and their activities that the schools are systemic.

In addition to the seven systems of themelic schooling, there are seven corresponding tertiary institutions in Australia which complete the circle of themelic education from cradle to grave.

It is interesting to note that approximately 51% of these schools commenced in the period 1979-83, the five years after the MACOS and SEMP controversy in Queensland. This controversy, whilst primarily a political phenomenon peculiar to Queensland, nonetheless affirmed many suspicions about state schooling in the minds of conservative evangelical Christians. The time period and the case in question act as a watershed for the movement of themelic Christian schools. This idea is investigated in Chapter 10. In Chapter 5 I commence an analysis of the theological foundations of themelic schools.

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83 Maslen, op.cit., p. 29.
84 This data is composed using themelic school directories and investigation of independent themelic school records.
Chapter 5

A Theological Framework for Clarifying the Themelic System

5.1 Introduction

It is not a simple task to predict accurately the character of any themelic school. Themelic schools vary according to the make up of parents, teachers, principal, school history and the dominant theological tradition. In some themelic schools a consistency of theological tradition is maintained by a sponsoring church association which may legislate through its charter which beliefs and dogma are acceptable. Another themelic school might vary in character from year to year. Some themelic schools might be moving from one tradition to another, and the tension of this movement might be displayed in school policy. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a list of dominant theological traditions in themelic schools as a framework for understanding the variations between among school types. These traditions will be used in Chapter 6 as one axis of a grid (Fig. 5), which can be used to plot the various operations in themelic schools. The use of the grid in case studies discussed in Chapter 7 will clarify the differences of themelic schools.

5.2 Theological traditions in the themelic system

Themelic schools share a language which often hides from the outside observer deeper differences between them. Themelic pedagogy and curriculum are not dissimilar from those in classrooms in other systems. However, there are significant differences in attitude and management which will be discussed in Chapter 13. The theological dynamic of themelic school identity underpins these, and must be understood by inside and outside observers for dialogue and understanding to be established. The following explanation of nine theological traditions provides a spectrum of tags with which the observer can identify nuances within the themelic collection.

5.2a Reformed

The word “reformed” is used to distinguish the Calvinistic from the Lutheran and Anabaptist traditions which also claim a direct heritage from the Reformation. It can refer to this tradition (lower case) and also refer to the churches established within the
tradition (upper case) such as churches which are members of the Reformed Church of Australia (RCA).

The reformed perspective is characterised by its emphasis on the sanctity, veracity and priority of the Bible in practical piety and theology. The dominant theological themes intertwined in this tradition are traditions of the covenant, creation, election and sovereignty/authority. Historically, the reformed perspective shares many common principles and methods with the evangelical but does not make evangelism its primary focus.

The reformed tradition starts with the theology of Ulrich Zwingli (1458-1531), the first reformer in Zurich. Zwingli advocated a far more radical break from the past than did the reform movement which originated with Luther. Zwingli developed his own theology within the environment of a Swiss city state. The key figure in this tradition was John Calvin of Geneva (1509-1564) who, in his biblical commentaries, pamphlets and especially in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* developed its theological framework. Calvinists, whilst basically agreeing with each other and resembling each other in many ways, have certain differences produced by historical and even geographical circumstances.

Calvin drew up the first reformed catechism in 1537 and rewrote it in 1541. Even more important to this tradition is the Heidelberg Confession of 1563. The Helvetic Confessions (1536, 1566), the Gallic Confession (1559) and the Belgic Confession (1561) also set forth reformed calvinistic doctrinal positions.

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1 The doctrine of election usually refers to the divine and unconditional choice of persons for salvation.

The reformed idea of covenant holds that God entered into an agreement with Adam at creation, promising him eternal life if he upheld the divine commands. To remedy the failure of Adam God entered into a second agreement with Christ on behalf of the elect. The elect have assurance of salvation because of their faith in Christ.

The idea of sovereignty/authority is established by the omnipotent divine decree from God as King and judge.

The importance of God’s action in creation is intertwined with the three previous stated doctrines.


The Thirty-Nine Articles (1563) of the Church of England illustrate the impact of reformed theology on Anglicanism. The Westminster Confession (1646) also embodies the reformed tradition, particularly for the Presbyterian and more independent denominations which have their heritage in the Reformation. The reformed tradition seeks to distance itself from all traces of Roman Catholicism.

Influenced by both anabaptist separatism (which represents more radical reformers who were disappointed with the compromises made by the initial reformers) and Calvinist themes of predestination, the more non-conformist reformed groups are distinct from other non-conformist arminian (freewill) independent and evangelical groups.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century there has been a growing stress upon the importance of Christian scholarship in this tradition. Abraham Kuyper was influential as were Herman Dooyeweerd, D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, J. H. Bavnick, James Orr, J. Gresham Machen, Cornelius Van Til and Pierre Marcel.

5.2b Evangelical

Writing in the context of the United States, Marsden explains the difference between the fundamentalist and the evangelical by reference to the degree of anger expressed and felt by each group.\(^4\) This anger corresponds with the ability of the evangelical to compromise and tolerate a diversity of theological positions. The fundamentalist is angry about the violence done to theological “fundamentals” by those who trivialise or compromise the supposed absolutes of the Bible. The fundamentalist is a militant subtype of the evangelical. A fundamentalist is an evangelical who believes their cause is supported by God and becomes a crusader, a jihad, against the infidels.

The term “evangelical” simply comes from the New Testament Greek word for gospel (euangelion), meaning “good news”. The proclamation of this good news through God’s “saving work” on the cross and man’s need to trust personally in Jesus for eternal salvation is central to the evangelical tradition. Evangelicalism, like fundamentalism, is transdenominational and has increasingly become a tradition that

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gives its adherents an identity over and above denominational affiliation. There are no
lists of membership as in a denomination and no one organisation represents the vast
variety of groups that fit the title.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the terms “fundamentalist” and “evangelical” could be
used interchangeably but, by the end of the 1950s, the words began to have distinct
meanings that reflected the difference in how fundamentalists and evangelicals related to
society.

Carl Henry, a prominent evangelical spokesman, expressed the dilemma this way in
1948:

Evangelical Christianity is once again, as in the early days of church
history, a minority movement in a universally antagonistic environment -
that much is certain. What is not so clear is.... is evangelicalism’s only
message today the proclamation of individual rescue from a fore-doomed
generation? Or has this evangel implications also for the most pressing
social problems of our day?5

The choice facing the movement in this period was between cultural relevance and
cultural separation. The evangelical tends to drift towards relevance and the
fundamentalist towards separation.

As Kenneth Kantzer, the editor of the evangelical magazine Christianity Today
expressed it, he “doesn’t like to see evangelicalism identified with the extreme political
right”.6 After World War II Australia was less influenced economically and culturally
by the UK than by the USA. This was noticeable in the church.7 Evangelicalism in
the UK has a strong orientation toward personal piety, that has grown out of
Methodism. UK evangelicalism is generally more conservative and politically less
active than its counterpart in the USA.8 Growing evangelical and fundamentalist
influence of the USA after World War II has been profoundly felt in themelic schools in
Australia.

5 Cited in Marsden, G. M., Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New
6 Larson, R., “God and Politics” From Sea to Shining Sea Chicago Sunday Times March 2,
1980.
7 Parker, D., Fundamentalism and Conservative Protestantism in Australia 1920-1980
8 Noll, op. cit., pp. 365-88.
The extreme of the evangelical tradition condemns all public schools as centres of secular humanism and thus unfit for Christian children. Indeed, the extreme right uses the term “secular humanism” to attack anything about Australian society that violates their sense of propriety.

5.2c Fundamentalist

The term “fundamentalist” was first coined in popular culture in the 1920s to apply to the movement against evolutionism in public schools in the US, most publicised in the famous Scopes trial. Since then, fundamentalism has come to be equated with fanatical belief, with emotional and unreasonable people of militant fervour crusading for exclusive truth and “the right way”. Carnell refers to fundamentalism as orthodoxy “gone cultic”.

Historically, Protestant fundamentalism is the result of a coalition between “Princeton theology”, dispensational premillennialism and the Keswick movement. The chief contributions of the “Princeton school” (Princeton Theological Seminary) were its support of the credibility of Christianity by appealing to external evidences and the “citadel view” of biblical inspiration, in which inerrancy is assigned only to the original documents written in the hand of the authors of the Bible or their amanuenses. Dispensational premillennialism had its origins in a British sect, the Plymouth Brethren, founded in about 1830 by J. N. Darby. Darby had an amazing influence upon American churchmen in the late nineteenth century. Keswick is a holiness movement that started in the UK in the mid-1870s with the objective of promoting a deeper Christian life, or sanctification. Typical of the new emphasis was the displacement of the concept of the eradication of sin by a concept of power to maintain the condition of the deeper Christian life. At American Keswick conferences the emphasis was on personal experiences and “victory”, with the practical results seen in enhanced devotional life and zeal for missions.

The term “fundamentalist” was first coined by Curtis Lee Laws, editor of the conservative Baptist journal The Watchman Examiner, in reference to the unique

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10 Keswick is the name of the place in the English Lake District where the annual summer conference settled from the Moody-Sankey revival which originated in 1875. Local “Keswicks” or Keswick conventions spread through an enthusiasm for missions. Supporters come especially from evangelical Anglicans.
American Protestant phenomenon that developed gradually between 1879 and 1925. Laws characterised fundamentalists as those who "do battle royal for the fundamentals".  

"Fundamentalism" has since become a pejorative reference to any cultural or subcultural form of rigidity and dogmatism. It is a common experience to be called a fundamentalist by those who are theologically to the left of you. Pinnock suggests that fundamentalists must be the last minority in our permissive society which one can safely ridicule without fear of rebuke or defamation. In fact, the use of the highly emotive term outside its proper historical setting should be discouraged because it does not bring enlightenment but many forms of confusion and discrimination. The use of the term "fundamentalism" by the media in particular usually implies political extremism.

Quebedeaux warns:

For far too long it has been the fault of mainstream ecumenical liberalism to lump together with pejorative intent all theological conservatives into the worn fundamentalist category.

I address this distortion by using the term "themelie", conceding the presence of certain aspects of historical fundamentalism in some schools but not labelling the entire themelie movement fundamentalist. A new term accommodates the numerous theological traditions at work in this new generation of Christian schools, including the tradition of fundamentalism.

The one fundamentalist history of fundamentalism is George W. Dollar's *A History of Fundamentalism in America* published by Bob Jones University Press in 1973. According to Dollar:

Historic fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes.

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15 Dollar, op. cit., p. 15.
John R. Rice, a revered fundamentalist and mentor to the televangelist Jerry Falwell, wrote:

It is generally understood that the fundamentals of the Christian faith include the inspiration and thus the divine authority of the Bible; the deity, virgin birth, blood atonement, bodily resurrection, personal second coming of Christ; the fallen, lost condition of all mankind; salvation by repentance and faith, grace without works; eternal doom in hell of the unconverted and eternal blessedness of the saved in Heaven.16

In addition to zeal in defence of the Bible and related fundamental doctrines, which are the distinguishing traits of Christian fundamentalism, there are other traits that fundamentalists share with similar fanatical mass movements such as facism, nationalism, communism and nazism. All mass movements irrespective of the doctrine they preach generate intolerance, fanaticism, enthusiasm, fervent hope, blind faith, blind loyalty and hatred. However different in doctrine and aspiration, these movements draw their adherents from the same type of humanity; they all appeal to the same mentality, the mind that wants control and certainty cemented in dogma.17 This will be covered in detail in the later chapters of this thesis. Historically, fundamentalists have demanded a strict behavioural code which involves the avoidance of bar-room vices such as drinking, smoking, dancing, card playing, immodest dress and any sort of sexual licence.18 The fundamentalist is not a conservative in the traditional sense of the word but is by and large a reactionary.19

It is difficult to clarify a set of official doctrines of the fundamentalist movement even with the help of the famous five-point statement of the fundamentals presented by the first historian of the movement, Stewart Grant Cole, which are:

1. The Inerrancy of the Bible
2. The deity of Christ
3. His virgin birth
4. The substitutionary atonement of Christ
5. Physical resurrection and bodily second coming of Christ20

19 Swift, op. cit., p. 4.
These were similar to the “five points” drawn up by the Presbyterians in response to “higher criticism”\textsuperscript{21} of the Bible in 1910, the only difference being Cole’s fifth point on eschatology substituted for the Presbyterian point on the authenticity of the miracles. These were not meant to be exhaustive but became rallying points for fundamentalists against the infiltration of Darwinian science, higher criticism and secular commercialism into the ranks of the church around the turn of the century.

The unique tenets and influence of fundamentalism upon the thelemic school movement will be discussed in Chapter 8.

5.2d Anabaptist/Separatist

The anabaptist tradition stresses a more radical reformation than that of Zwingli, Luther and Calvin. The anabaptists were disappointed with these reformers, indeed with all the Protestant churches. They were united in their opposition to any church officially related to the state. They have been referred to as the “Left Wing of Reformation”.\textsuperscript{22} Franklin Littell distinguishes four types of anabaptist: denominations including Swiss Brethren, South German Brethren, Hutterites and Dutch Mennonites; Anti-Trinitarians; Spiritualisers and revolutionary prophets.\textsuperscript{23} The educational ideas of the tradition revert to the doctrine of separation (Absonderung). As worded by the Schleitheim confession (1526):

\begin{quote}
... all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who have come out of the world, God’s temple and idols, Christ and Belial; and none can have a part of the other.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

Separatism is the touchstone of anabaptist thinking. There is a palpable sense of “over-againstness” toward the rest of society. The anabaptist society is a society that is set apart, unable to commune with other groups. The reformed tradition, by contrast,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{21} The term “higher criticism” is also known as “literary criticism” and is used in a pejorative sense by conservative Christians and refers to the school of thought which began with J. G. Eichhorn (1787). Higher criticism is most associated with theologians like Rudolf Bultmann who applied historical and literary criticism to demythologise the text of the Bible.
\textsuperscript{24} Schleitheim Confession, Article 4; emphasis mine. in Leith, op. cit., p. 282-91.
\end{footnotesize}
seeks cooperative relationship between church and state.

The anabaptist tradition has tended to view higher education as unnecessary, indeed as dangerous. Education is to be directed toward the preservation of the Christian community as an expression of discipleship; whereas for the reformed tradition, education is directed toward the reformation of Christian culture. These differences are most apparent when adherents to the different models of themelic schools seek to cooperate in matters of ideology, higher education and politics. In the area of economics, the differences are less pronounced.

5.2e Pentecostal

Pentecostalism is an evangelical charismatic reformation movement which usually traces its roots to an outbreak of “tongue-speaking” or glossolalia in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901 under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham. Pentecostals believe that the experience of the 120 disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), known as the “baptism of the Holy Spirit”, should be normative for all Christians. Most pentecostals believe, furthermore, that the first sign of “initial evidence” of this second baptism is speaking in a language unknown to the speaker.

Pentecostalism sprang from the worldwide holiness movement which had developed out of nineteenth century American Wesleyan Methodism. Dating from the mid-nineteenth century, the holiness movement endeavoured to preserve the original thrust of Methodist teachings which emphasised sanctification and perfection as taught by John Wesley. A parallel movement with a similar thrust was the British Keswick movement the teachings of which on the victorious life are distinguished from holiness thought primarily by their context in reformed theology. The connection with the evangelical movement in the UK is worth noting. The concern with being “filled” with the Holy Spirit, Wesleyan “second blessing”, arminian revivalism, “higher life”, sanctification, witnessing, miracles, divine healing and the premillennial second coming of Christ all receive emphasis in this tradition. All of these expressions reflect a priority on belief in the supernatural intervention of God in the life of the Christian, usually through the direct activity of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis in this tradition is on the transcendent aspects of godly living and on the spiritual realm at the expense of the real and everyday aspects of Christian living. Pentecostalism values spiritual experience and
demonstrations (manifestations) of spiritual power as litmus tests of Christian regeneration.

The Assemblies of God, formed in 1914, based their theology on Durham’s teachings and soon became the largest pentecostal denomination in the world. William H. Durham was a pentecostal Baptist pastor from Chicago who rejected the Wesleyan holiness position on sanctification. It was from the non-Wesleyan influences of pentecostalism that fundamentalism was born.25

Pentecostalism in Australia is worth exploring because of its late emergence on the themelic school scene and its growing dominance in the field of themelic tertiary education.

Sixty years of pentecostalism in Australia have seen the emergence of five major denominational groups in the set: The Assemblies of God (the largest), The Apostolic Church, the Christian Revival Crusade, The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel and Christian Outreach Centres. There are also numerous independent pentecostal groups and churches. The pentecostal tradition has a historical wariness of affiliation and union due to theological speculation and a general tendency to form congregations around a charismatic leader. The research of Gillman and Kaldor, neither of whom is pentecostal, is instructive.26 In 1984 there were 900 assemblies with a membership of about 90,000. Though this number is small compared with the millions of Anglican and Catholic members, their growth is worth noting. From 1972 to 1984 the pentecostal movement grew by 200 per cent. Over the period 1961 to 1981 the pentecostal based church accelerated numerically and beyond the national population rate while every other Christian group including the Catholic church, declined.27

During the five-year period from 1976 to 1981 (the time of fastest growth of themelic schools) the pentecostal movement increased by 87 per cent.28 In the period 1988 to 1993 pentecostal based groups have come to govern nearly half of the themelic schools, particularly those affiliated with Christian Community Schools Ltd, which has recently


brought about a change in the character of CCS schools. Many pentecostal schools, mostly in Queensland, have remained independent.

5.2f Charismatic

Pentecostalism entered a new phase after World War II with the appearance of “neo-pentecostalism” in traditional churches. The term “charismatic renewal” designated in the early 1970s the difference between the older, more separatist pentecostal movement and the experience and theology characteristic of the pentecostalism developing in the mainline churches. The charismatic does not insist that their experience should be normative for all true Christians and therefore tends to be less isolationist. The charismatic “experience of the Spirit of God” tends to sit more comfortably with the theology and emphasis of the denomination of which one is a member.

5.2g Neo-evangelical

The neo-evangelical, like the charismatic, represents a less extreme option within the evangelical tradition. Neo-evangelicals hold their evangelicalism lightly, in reaction to the perceived extremes of fundamentalism, and do not wish to alienate people from Christianity by dogmatism. Cultural relevance is important to neo-evangelicals and they tend to be convinced by historical and literary arguments about the Bible and Christian history. Fundamentalists and evangelicals would label such a perspective wishy-washy or backslidden, compromised and weak.

5.2h Liberal

Theological liberalism is also known as theological modernism by conservative Christians. It represents a shift in theological thinking that occurred in the late nineteenth century in Germany. Liberalism is an elusive concept because there are many schools of liberal thought. Generally, the term “liberal” is used by evangelicals to refer to Christians who don’t share their view of Scripture and doctrine. Liberals maintain that Christianity must be understood within its cultural context and that literal conclusions about the Bible are based on erroneous assumptions. Liberalism rejects religious belief based on authority alone and places the Bible and Christianity under the microscope of critical, reductionist reasoning. The supernatural and infallible arguments of the evangelical and reformed traditions are denied by liberals. Liberal thought tends to
emphasise divine immanence which is known subjectively rather than the objectively stated transcendence that is insisted on by the evangelical and reformed tradition.

By the 1960s, liberal theologians were challenging the traditional concept of God for a secular age as in the “God is dead” debate sparked by John Robinson Bishop of Woolwich, and gloried in the God who comes to people in the events of social change.29 The evangelical recognised and feared the influences of relativism and Marxism in the position of the liberal.

5.2i Puritan

Puritanism is a loosely organised reform movement which originated in the English Reformation of the sixteenth century. The name comes from a drive to “purify” the “Church of England” by those who felt that the Reformation had been incomplete.

The theological roots of puritanism may be found in continental reformed theology, in native dissenting traditions dating back to John Wycliffe and the Lollards, but especially in the theological labours of first-generation English reformers. From William Tyndale the puritans took on an intense commitment to the Bible and a theology which emphasised the covenant; from John Knox they absorbed a dedication to thorough reform in church and state; and from John Hooper they adopted a determined conviction that Scripture should regulate both ecclesiastical structure and personal behaviour.

Puritanism generally emphasises four basic convictions: personal salvation is entirely from God, the Bible provides the indispensable guide to life; the church should reflect the express teaching of the Bible; and society is a unified whole.

The puritan believes in an Augustinian and Calvinist doctrine of original sin, depravity and salvation through God’s grace received by faith (justification) and testified in good deeds (sanctification).

5.2j “Scientific” Creationism

Christians differ in their understanding of the mode of creation. A creationist is simply a believer in creation. In contrast to a relaxed understanding of creation (neo-evangelical and liberal) stands “scientific creationism” or “creation science”. “Scientific creationism” is a position founded on the literal interpretation (biblicism) of the biblical

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account of creation and the application of rational, positivist, “scientific” methodology to biblical evidence. Scientific creationism examines all scientific evidence in the light of creationist evidentialism. The enemies of the scientific creationist are evolution and relativism. Scientific creationists think in either-or terms: Christian compromise with the idea of evolution is perceived by the creationist as “theistic evolution” and anti-creation. Scientific creationism is embodied in Australia in the Creation Science Foundation Ltd which is based at Sunnybank, Queensland. Their journal is Creation Ex Nihilo. Founded in 1978 by Ken Ham, the Creation Science Foundation is widely accepted in the thelemic school movement.

The fact that “scientific” creationism is its own distinct tradition is confirmed by Plimer. Plimer’s work, Telling Lies for God,30 effectively discredits the position of “scientific creationism”. Professor of Geology at the University of Melbourne, Plimer correctly identifies “scientific creationism” as a subset of fundamentalism. However, his lack of theological training and research into the nature of fundamentalism has resulted in a rather emotive and polemical work which does not establish a clear understanding of the tradition. Both Archbishop Peter Hollingworth, who wrote the foreword to the book, and Plimer identify the strong involvement of “creation science” in thelemic schools.31

The development of scientific creationism also accentuates the search of the reformed and evangelical for rational credibility. Philosophically, scientific creationism finds its roots in Scottish Common Sense teachings and Baconianism,32 more commonly known as naive realism. Naive realism, Baconianism or biblical empiricism asserts that truth is learned only empirically. It asserts that “the facts” can be known directly. With the Bible at hand as a compendium of facts the naive realist feels there is no need to go any further. All that needs to be done is to classify the facts and deduce some general law upon which the facts can be arranged. The relevance of empirical philosophy to themelic schools in general will be explored in Chapter 8. The philosophical disposition of naive realism supports the fundamentalist fixation on biblical inerrancy best exemplified by the Princeton school of theology.33 Naive realism allows the

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31 ibid., pp. x, 276.
33 Marsden, op. cit., Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism pp. 122-81.
fundamentalist to discount any notion of mediation between God and the reception of the biblical text. It accepts *a posteriori* that the Bible is God's exact word and is supported by psychological factors which demand security, control and absolute certainty. These psychological factors will be discussed in in Chapter 12. The naive realist position assures the fundamentalist of the righteousness and authority of their cause.

Marsden establishes clearly the foundation of Kuyperian Calvinism and both British and American evangelicalism in the "Didactic Enlightenment".\(^{34}\) The liberal Christian perspective argues that the Bible is a pre-scientific text that needs to be rescued from the biblicism of fundamentalism and empirical assumptions.\(^{35}\)

The reason scientific creationism is included as a separate tradition in themelic schools is that its adherents are highly organised as a group, financially well administered and autonomous. Although scientific creationists could be classified as fundamentalists, it must be remembered that their primary concern is not the Bible but the doctrine of creation. Scientific creationists believe that belief in Christianity fails if the doctrine of creation is undermined, and they make sure that themelic school libraries are well stocked with their materials and keep a watch on the science curriculum.

### 5.2k Christian Reconstructionism

The roots of Christian reconstruction extend back to opposition to Presbyterian liberalism and the perspective of Cornelius Van Til of the Princeton school which, strictly Calvinist, believes that "the elect" know and have the ability to understand life in the light of God's laws. Themelic schools are seen as a necessary step in preparing a citizenry that understands God's laws. All of life must come under the rule of God. The emphasis is on correct training, correction and God's lordship. Reconstructionists criticise and hope to undermine institutions that they see as usurping God's rightful place, the chief among the institutions being the modern state. They look to the Old Testament and the model of Israel for teaching on blessing and cursing. The most published reconstructionists are Gary North, Samuel Blumenfeld, Otto Scott and

\(^{34}\) ibid., pp. 126-34.


Christian reconstructionism focuses on the Old Testament covenant.\(^{36}\) Reconstructionists extrapolate from the Old Testament covenantal relationship between God and Israel and project that sense of relationship to all nations in the present. The key issue of the covenant has its roots in Presbyterianism, and Christian Reconstructionism extends the tenets of Presbyterianism to its natural conclusion. The prominence and example of Abraham Kuyper and Kuyperian government in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century or Calvin's Geneva in the sixteenth century would best represent the kind of developments that Christian reconstructionism values. The right not only to exist in the state but to Christianise it is foundational to Christian reconstructionist assumptions. Though the literal Bible figures prominently in their reasoning it is in fact the prominence of the covenant itself that precedes the Bible in their thinking. Christian reconstructionists are preoccupied with the Old Testament and the original setting up of the covenant, so that even Jesus is perceived as only carrying out covenantal demands.

Christian reconstructionism, fortified with righteousness through justification by the doctrine of covenantal "election" and armed with an infallible/inerrant Bible used like a dictionary, seeks to establish God's rule on earth over humankind. The result is a push to establish Christian control and legislation which risks Christian totalitarianism.\(^{37}\) The most militant group of reconstructionists in the themelic school movement have been Mrs Rona Joyner and her groups, the Society To Outlaw Pornography (STOP); the Committee Against Regressive Education (CARE) and the Association for Community Tutorial Services (ACTS). Numerous appeals are made in the pages of the journal of these groups, *Stop Press*, to be alert for actions of government that resemble the actions of Hitler and Stalin. The use of historical images of dictatorship in emotive

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\(^{36}\) The covenant of the Old Testament refers to the promise of God made with Abraham and the children of his son, Israel. This covenant was sealed in the Torah or Law which is outlined in the Pentatuch (first five books of the Bible), particularly the Old Testament book of Exodus. The old covenant stands in contrast to the new covenant which was announced through Jesus Christ and heralded a new promise made to humankind through the work of Christ on the cross. Reference to the old covenant in the context of this discussion on reconstructionism indicates a fixation on law and legalism rather than grace and love. The contrast of the old covenant to the new is the subject of the New Testament books of Romans and Galatians.

ways illustrates the manner in which this tradition views the non-Christian state. The Australian government is frequently referred to as Nazi or socialist.\textsuperscript{38}

The thoughts of Christian reconstructionism also flow freely in the pages of \textit{Light of Life}, the education journal for LEM as well as in \textit{Stop Press}.\textsuperscript{39} The works of Gabler, North, Rushdoony and Blumenfeld are popular sources for LEM.\textsuperscript{40} The work of Rushdoony and Van Til, in particular, are used to a lesser extent as sources in the other less extreme themelic school systems. The idea of being “over-and-against” something else, whilst a general themelic sub-cultural characteristic, is most pronounced in the Christian reconstructionist sector. The Christian reconstructionist view takes the proposals of light versus darkness and state versus secularism to its extreme. Christian reconstructionists are particularly politically oriented and aware of how the government/state dominates their will. Mrs Joyner has run for parliament as part of the Call to Australia Party (Fred Nile group). The Christian reconstructionist view supports groups such as the League of Rights.\textsuperscript{41}

5.3 Different traditions but a common themelic system

The traditions discussed so far do not exist in themelic schools in an entirely uniform fashion. My thesis is that there is a synthesis that allows for the discussion of a common collection of schools and a common themelic tradition. It is my argument that the entry of these theological traditions into the life of schooling and the convergence of the traditions in the common mission of schooling has created a new themelic tradition. This is why the idea of a “themelic thinker”, the “themelic mind”, “themelic person” and themelic system is discussed in this thesis. The themelic mind is concerned with schooling and its theology as distinct from considerations of the church and its theology.

Themelic school schisms have often related to the inability of themelic schools to make distinctions between church and school and theology and educational philosophy. Many staff struggle to cope with the stress arising from the role conflict inherent in

\textsuperscript{41} Interview Peter Frogley 27.3.92
these confusions. The themelic classroom practitioner must juggle the ideals of the espoused extremes of the movement with the reality of themelic theory-in-use in their day-to-day teaching. The more extreme the theological tradition the more staff need to maintain cognitive dissonance as a coping mechanism. The themelic system is characterised by theologically idealistic administrators and parents, remote from the classroom, who maintain unrealistic expectations of teachers. The classroom practitioner who must address the diverse educational needs of their students and colleagues each day is far less concerned with the impracticalities of simplistic dogma. Further complication arises from an approach to knowledge which tends to devalue the evidence of the sociology and psychology of institutions. (See Chapter 11.)

The evidence for this convergence and commonality is best perceived in the articles of association for AACS and CSAQ and the development of an educational creed in most themelic schools.

Themelic schools are not exclusively fundamentalist, reformed or evangelical. The categorisation “themelic” can be made because these schools share a great deal across their various traditions and histories but it must be recognised that general predictability is limited. Each themelic school must be assessed by its own claims and by the people who make up that institution at any given time in its history. For example, whilst all themelic schools prize the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, not all of them fear the validity of questions posed by literary and historical criticism of the Bible. This pattern can change according to the dominance of a theological tradition in a Christian community, the changing of board/council personnel or staff, and the general context of Australian social development.

The proposal of a themelic paradigm in Christian schooling is a response to the increasing blurring of the approaches in the theological groups that make up the themelic paradigm and their current ideological synthesis which is evident in increasing staff and resource interchange in the 1990s. The themelic synthesis is most powerful as a grassroots trend. It is the laity which tends not to accentuate distinctions and theological differences. The idea of themelic collaboration is least evident in systemic executive operations where interests in maintaining small empires and hegemonic power limit the relaxation of boundaries.
The influences of the Billy Graham movement, para-church movements, the charismatic movement and Koorong Books Pty Ltd have contributed to this merging trend of theological traditions in themelic schools, a phenomenon which must not be underestimated. All have had a significant impact on the development of “a common themelic perspective” in Christian schooling. Their ideological union as a Christian people’s movement rather than a church or denominational movement has occurred as Christians of various persuasions have associated for mutual benefit in schooling in an age of declining Christian resources. As Christian people have cared less about denominational loyalty in the late 1980s and 1990s a blurring of the activity of themelic schooling has occurred. (See Chapter 9.)

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the dominant theological traditions at work in themelic schools. I have proposed that these traditions still wield individual influence within schools in the themelic system. Despite these differences, the majority of themelic schools agree on foundational language and have a common vision. The principles and practices which they hold in common are more numerous than those on which they differ. Whilst this chapter has provided a theological framework the next chapter provides a graphical translation of this framework for navigating these differences and commonalities.
Chapter 6

Mapping Themelic School Difference

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to use the theological types introduced in Chapter 5 to identify relationships between themelic schools and to explain variations within individual schools. Diagrams are developed and merged to construct a grid. In the grid one axis is constructed from discussion of theological traditions in themelic schools and the other axis from discussion about operational layers in schools. The grid is applied using case studies of selected themelic schools. The case studies provide examples of theological traditions operating in schools to enable comparisons of one school with another and support characterisations of themelicism made in the thesis.

In this chapter five diagrams will be introduced. Each diagram is introduced with detailed explanation following.

References to persons, organisations and locations in this chapter are made through pseudonym to protect professional and personal confidentiality.

6.2 Theological traditions - a diagramatical explanation

The diagrams introduced in this chapter illustrate the complexity of themelic school difference within and between schools. Differences are theological and are often disguised by a common language about Christian education and biblical inerrancy. That it is simplistic to dismiss all the schools with the common pejorative label “fundamentalist”, will be apparent through these diagrams. However, noting the four dominant theological traditions in themelic schools - fundamentalist, evangelical, charismatic and reformed - does not fully identify the variations within the themelic group as a whole. Ecclesiastical and theological factions within a school can cause considerable variation, confusion and contradiction in policy and practice. Views on biblical literalism, have implications for school policy and administration concerning
school discipline, class management, curriculum decisions and staff relations, as the case studies in the following chapter illustrate.

The following points need to be kept in mind when looking at each diagram.

1. The theological traditions that are left of centre represent a more relaxed attitude to the subject of the diagram, while the traditions on the right are the more extreme and dogmatic in relationship to the subject.

2. The vertical lines represent a time scale so that the time frames of theological traditions may be determined.

3. The lines of association from one tradition to another represent theological and historical origins; that is, the roots of a position and its dependence on a tradition which precedes it.

4. The wider line of the reformed tradition represents its dominance in publications in themelic schools.

5. The arrows directed towards the themelic school label indicate a merging and collaboration on issues related to schooling.

The first diagram of this chapter (Figure. 2) illustrates how each theological tradition relates to the other regarding Bible literalism (biblical empiricism).
The diagram (Figure 2) *The Relationship of Theological Tradition to Biblical Literalism*, illustrates the diversity of each tradition in relation to the dogma of Biblical inerrancy, the core concern of every thematic school. The spread of traditions shows a range of such relations from tight to loose. This is particularly important when thinking about matters such as curriculum because strength of adherence to the dogma of inerrancy has important implications for decisions about the nature of truth, knowledge and education. The inclusion of the label "pietism" (holiness) in the diagram indicates the main origin of evangelicalism. The dotted line joining the anabaptist tradition to the reformed tradition is meant to indicate a broken relationship of sorts. The anabaptist tradition is also known as the radical or left wing of the Reformation,¹ because
historically it denounced the baptism of infants, the state and violence. In issues such as non-violence and subjects like peace education the anabaptist perspective is radical and more politically left of centre. In themelic schools emphasis on peace education and non-violence is weak; hence, in each diagram, the anabaptist tradition appears on the right because of its emphasis on separatism. If the subject of the diagram were to be themelic tradition in relationship to peace education, then the anabaptist tradition would appear on the far left with the neo-evangelicals.

The second diagram of this chapter (Figure. 3) illustrates how each tradition relates to the other with regard to relations with the state and/or government.

Figure 3.

Relationship of Theological Tradition to the State

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The second diagram (Figure 3) *Relationship of Theological Tradition to the State*, illustrates the way themelic schools respond to government. On the subject of relations with the state themelic schools which are dominated by reconstructionist or anabaptist thinking tend to resist registration, refuse funding and understand the government education system as "the enemy". The neo-evangelical themelic school, on the other hand, would tend to emphasise cooperation with the government system and have an approach which was more tolerant, pluralistic and open to diversity.

The reformed theology of "sphere sovereignty" (giving authority to various spheres of rule) drives the shifts from right to left with regard to themelic school relations with government. Hence schools sharing the language of inerrancy can differ and have problems in cooperating when it comes to working with the state. At a school level, indeed, reformed schools can associate more readily with other government schools when responding to government directives. They can perceive the value of the government system, unlike schools which see the state as the anti-Christ. Most themelic traditions however, whilst not in agreement with the reconstructionist fear of the state, understand and sympathise with expressions of anti-state, anti-humanist orientation and use reconstructionist language.

The third diagram (Figure 4) shows how each tradition functions in relation to each other pedagogically.
The third diagram (Figure 4) *Relationship of Theological Tradition to Pedagogy*, illustrates how each tradition relates to the other in its attention to teaching. More dogmatic schools understand the Bible as the only relevant resource for curriculum development and classroom practice. The reconstructionist position, for example, produces materials for the biblical teaching of mathematics and reading. The traditions at the other end of the scale are more progressive in curriculum development and teaching, consulting every resource at their disposal.
6.3 Reflection on diagrams

Not all ACE, CCS or CPCS schools are the same: the policy and practice of a themelic school depends on the theological dominance of the chairperson of the board/council, the principal, the make up of the governing council, influential clergy, staff dynamics and the relationship of church groups to the school. Whilst the language of inerrancy remains consistent in themelic schools, the way in which such dogmatism is worked varies greatly. Theological differences and the importance which conservative Christians ascribe to justifying themselves theologically also explain the history of considerable schism in themelic schools.

The above diagram illustrates the shift of the fundamentalist and pentecostal traditions from intellectualism because of their greater fear of modern critical thinking. These traditions have emphasised the emotional side of life at the expense of scholarship, whereas the reformed tradition emphasises scholarship more than all other conservative Protestant theological positions and is particularly suspicious of emotional and fanatical elements of pentecostal, fundamentalist and charismatic traditions. Most of the publications on Christian schooling, Christian apologetics or a Christian philosophy of education come from reformed publishing houses. Themelic schools in the fundamentalist, pentecostal and charismatic traditions are less academically rigorous and more didactic in teaching strategy.

The theological traditions form one axis (x axis) of the grid which is developed later in this chapter. The details of the diagrams and the application of the grid will become more apparent in the case studies in Chapter 7. Before the grid is applied, it is important to discuss the other axis of the grid. Since the theological dynamic of themelic schools must be situated in a context, the variations in the operations of schools are represented on the other axis (y axis).

The ways various theologies influence and confuse the operations of themelic schools make it difficult for outsiders to understand them. Although observers may form a superficial impression of a school the real driving forces of the school may be buried in private meanings and subtle nuances of theological language, including that used in policy statements. A theological interpretive framework may assist the observer to detect some of these driving forces. Academics, educators and bureaucrats who have been on registration panels for themelic schools have often been perplexed and unable to
explain what they have observed. The following account of an outside observation relates to one of the schools in the case studies.

6.4 Outside observations - A confounding experience.

A representative example of this expression of perplexity comes from Ms Carol Smith, a union official. With the union industrial officer, Mr Richard Jones, she had been called by a staff member into Zepheniah Christian School (ZCS) to negotiate with the principal, Mr Adam Isaacs, and chairman of the council, Dr Ezekiel Law, regarding a list of alleged improprieties, including allegations of harassment and victimisation. As will become apparent in the case studies, ZCS is one of the themelic schools which are more relaxed than others in most areas of theology, educational policy and practice. Ms Smith, a lecturer at a Catholic university and a teacher for more than 30 years in non-government and government schools, commented about her experiences:

I've never met anything quite so closed as the kind of wall of silence I met in this Christian school.2

Ms Smith explains her initial visit:

I came into the school with the industrial organiser to talk with the principal about a situation that existed in his school and which was controlled by legislation, industrial law. We came to inform him, the then principal, that there were things by law happening in his school that were quite wrong. It seemed to me that the principal was taking no cognizance of the fact that he was treating his staff in ways that were unlawful. He needed to know that. Whenever I have been in a school in that situation before I have found that principals generally cooperate when one brings them information that they weren’t totally aware of. After all, as an educator you can’t always be on the ball about industrial law and legislation and so on. In the past, principals have been open to hearing this, even if they then go away and get their own legal advice. But that wasn’t the case in this school. It seemed to me that there was quite a significant difference in the approach of this principal. The others in the meeting were the deputy principal and the then chairman of the council. Both the principal and the chairman seemed to me to be firmly of

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2 Interview Carol Smith 28.4.95.
the opinion that the outside world and the law that governed other people had really nothing to do with them.\textsuperscript{3}

Ms Smith in this instance has noted the separatist nature of themelic schools. Ms Smith was bewildered by the encounter and unable to articulate the belief that could explain such a perspective. She said:

This was quite a different experience to the ones that I had had in other Christian schools. I had to go to a number of Catholic schools and Anglican schools. The other thing I noticed about this school was that the staff were kept in the dark. They were amazed to know that they had rights ... It just astounded me that people had come to believe or been encouraged to believe, I am not sure quite which, that staff didn't have rights, that there was some all powerful law that governed them and that all powerful law only existed in that school.\textsuperscript{4}

This characteristic of secrecy will become more apparent in the case study. Smith further commented:

It didn't seem to have anything to do with any kind of real moral way of thinking. I was thinking about this experience that I had had. I was thinking about the openness and honesty of endeavour and the striving for knowledge and understanding of the human condition that I had encountered in other Christian schools. Even though they made mistakes and didn't quite get it right there was always that kind of trying hard to get better at what you were doing. That seemed to underlie their kind of theological belief that made them behave like that. I don't quite know what the difference was but it seems to me that there were two kinds of theology working here. In Catholic and Anglican schools I'd been in, the theology that they practised had to do with God's love and forgiveness. This made them try very hard to get things right, whereas the sort of theological belief I met in the Christian fundamental school seemed to be an impenetrable barrier which nobody could pass, including the staff! It was kind of a secret situation ... a bit like a cult. I left the school in quite a stunned state. It

\textsuperscript{3} ibid.
\textsuperscript{4} ibid.
seemed to me that this sort of impenetrable philosophy, of how the world is structured, or the small portion of the world that they allowed themselves to exist in, they had constructed to suit their theological theory and so that is the world as far as they are concerned. The theological construct within which they live is just this little kind of cylinder ... I can’t ... it is the state I was in ... I couldn’t work it out. I couldn’t give it words.  

It is interesting that Ms Smith grasps for an explanation here and expresses a perception of fundamentalism. Outsiders, like Ms Smith, are most bewildered when they encounter a themelic system under challenge because, according to most criteria, especially school appearance and surface documentation, things seem out of place, the hidden agenda comes to the surface in a climate of defensiveness and stress. With respect to the education at the school, she commented:

It worried me because I felt that if this kind of tight-mindedness was being transferred to children, that worried me; the children maybe not allowed to be opened to all sorts of possibilities and thoughts. It is totally against my way of thinking about education. It didn’t seem to matter to them what injustice they may cause to people in their employ, in so far as law and legislation is concerned, as well as that sort of moral injustice. People should have the right to freedom of speech, for example, and their teachers didn’t really understand that they had the right to freedom of speech. They were astounded when I talked to them about their rights to think they could possibly go to the principal and say “I have a grievance”.  

Ms Smith notes here the manner in which submission and obedience are manufactured in themelic schools. She also comments on the theological language of themelic self-justification:

It seemed to me that none of this, what I had to say, was of any consequence according to this sort of hierarchy that existed. This was not what God wanted to happen. So often they would say “God doesn’t want you here” ... that was just too much for me. They seemed to even twist things just to try and make us go away ... They seemed quite ready to debate without any real logic or knowledge of the law ... It seemed to me that they had some kind of

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5 ibid.
6 ibid.
In response to “How would you describe this school to outsiders?” she replied:

I think I would immediately say it’s frightening ... It is so against my understanding regarding God’s love and forgiveness and understanding and human frailty. None of that seemed to exist. When the debate turned to things like that it was almost as though the only way that God behaved was in that “fire and brimstone state”. The only way they expressed God was by using God as an element of fear ... It seemed to me that they were prepared to use the Bible and the “word of the lord” and theology in whatever way they could to control people. That also seemed to do with their need for power. And if anyone questioned anything they did, then their lives were manipulated. And having to speak to people from the teachers union made these men very angry. The whole of that two hours or so was a really angry kind of exchange. There was quite a deal of shouting back and forth ... The then chairman seemed to me to be a very manipulative man. He was the sort of person who would debate anything and with no kind of logic. That was a very frustrating, destructive and useless kind of way of behaving for better understanding between management and staff and that is what we were there for.8

Although Ms Smith was not able to articulate what energised this situation, she had expressed the force of rigid reformed theology within the school, particularly in the chairman of the council. The theology which Ms Smith encountered emphasises lordship, mastery, authority, submission, control and sovereignty. Though she was able to articulate the basis of fear in this experience, she was not able to grasp the reason why unionism was feared nor why the Bible was such a focus of themelic thinking. A discussion of various layers of operation in themelic schools will throw light upon the perplexity experienced by outside observers and provide a context for the application of the grid in the case study.

7 ibid.
8 ibid.
6.5 Layers of operations

Every institution has more than one tier of operations, and some ways of operating are more observable than others. Often the things we are most able to observe are not the real factors which determine the functioning or language of the institution. The things which a school espouses is not necessarily their theory-in-use. The researcher/observer who encounters these schools needs a guide to the variety of conflicting things that go on. The following diagram (Figure 5) endeavours to explain these layers.

Themelic schools have a layer of language, rhetoric and expressions which gate-keep for the movement at a shallow mode of operation, these are rarely, if ever, clarified. On the surface this language appears to be much like any other religious school. However, the language in themelic schools is interpreted according to the deep seated ideas described as “the themelic circle” in Chapter 2 (Figure 1.). It is these that really determine how the school functions, this is their theory-in-use. The design, buildings and layout of most themelic schools are not significant. Most themelic schools are not well equipped, their buildings are conventional, and little thought has been put into the relationship between educational philosophy and design, even when the funds are available.

The next thing one tends to observe is the staff, teachers and their teaching. It does not take long to find out how and why the school started. It is quite difficult to find out how the laity who manages the school (discussed in Chapter 13) or the leadership (executive staff) really think because much of themelic schooling is concerned with right words and right appearances. At much deeper layers of operation, one usually encounters the guiding hermeneutic, psyche and epistemology which drive the school. These layers together comprise the nature of the schools which is also contingent upon ethnicity, class, gender and church tradition. The frequency of schism and industrial problems in these schools (which is rarely understood or discussed by the schools’ proponents) is conditioned by the conflict among persons who have invested their being in various layers of operation without adequately understanding, clarifying or communicating any distinctive difference in activity. The following diagram (Figure 5) clarifies these layers of operation.
The diagram uses shade to indicate the depth of the more determinate operations in the school (theories-in-use) compared to those which are merely espoused and lying on the surface.

**Observation Of Themelic Policy & Practice**

**Figure 5**

This diagram indicates that more hidden the layers of operation determine the life and policy of the school. For example, a school might choose not to employ women in promotional/executive positions - not as written policy but as an assumption of the leadership because it is an outworking of what is preached from conservative church
pulpits with regularity. On the surface, the outsider views the school’s policy as antiquated and inequitable. At a much deeper level, the language of the policy is reinforced by a complex web of hidden psychological and hermeneutical beliefs. So it is not the policy or the language of the policy but much deeper seated beliefs about authority, hermeneutical authorisation and power that are the problem. Even the most observable matters, such as school uniform, timetable, classroom design, playground surveillance and school performance procedures, are shaped by much less observable beliefs which are enmeshed in the “themelic circle” (Figure 1).

Suitable ways of gathering information about themelic schools varies according to the layer at which the information is transmitted or received. The language used at a grassroots school level is often quite different from the thinking generated at the level of systemic leadership. The thinking at a systemic leadership level is often far more progressive, pedagogically, philosophically and theologically. Whilst this applies to many if not all school systems, it is made more complex in the themelic school by the contradictions of themelic theology and language. Themelic schools often use common unspecified themelic language and share a fundamentalist epistemology. At grassroots school level there is a clear disdain for theological/philosophical consideration, and information gathered at this level is conditioned by the pragmatic demands of everyday school life.

Peshkin notes:

In theological and other ideological terms, conservatives do not constitute a single group predictably united behind the same leaders and causes, but they do share a common view of biblical inerrancy that joins them together as fundamentalists.⁹

Peshkin is right: there is unity and diversity within this group of schools but, in my view, the commonality is much more complex (as is the diversity) and not exclusively fundamentalist. Themelic schools are formally united by the doctrines of inerrancy, infallibility and the shibboleths of language, as well as by formal association in political

⁹ Peshkin op. cit., p. 25.
will and financial security. They are united less formally in shared understandings of schooling and in reactive belief in the necessity for interventionist schooling. At a deeper, more theological and ideological level, the traditions of the themelic composite move apart.

Some of the researchers discussed in earlier chapters, who rightly group these schools together as a different set, find it difficult to understand the differences which cause the failure of the schools to cooperate in certain areas. Without a reasonable understanding of both theology and the history of education, the task of establishing understanding is more difficult again. Perhaps the best place for the outsider to start in developing an understanding of these schools is their unity in reaction against social trends, as explained in Chapter 12. At this stage, it is more helpful to develop some techniques to assist the understanding of the outsider. The theological framework has already been introduced as a tool for understanding. The next section of the chapter explores layers of operations in schools combined with the theological framework to form a grid which will assist in the identifying the characteristics of themelic schools.

6.6 Developing a themelic grid

Using the two kinds of diagrams introduced thus far, it is possible to create a grid that identifies the relationship of a school’s operations and its theology within the themelic school system. In the following diagram (Figure 6. Themelic Grid), the y axis highlights the ways in which the community might observe themelic schools through their operations. The x axis indicates the various theological traditions which influence the policy and practice of themelic schools. This means that a themelic school can espouse a fairly relaxed view at one layer of operation which is more determine by one particular theological tradition and yet have a contrary theory-in-use in another which is determined by a more rigid theological tradition.
The grid depicts the variations within a theological tradition as they influence a school. Up and down each theological stripe there are variations in schools according to its operations and the theology that dominates that layer. For example, in the evangelical tradition, there is considerable variation over such issues as corporal punishment, unionism and text censorship in schools. Statements from various sectors of the tradition seem to contradict one another on these issues. In CCS schools, for example, statements made by the central bureaucracy seem to be at odds with the thinking in schools, which seems more educationally progressive in many respects. In CPCs schools the opposite is apparent. The leadership in the CPCs bureaucracy seems more progressive educationally than the laity or grassroots level of their schools. The grid
moves to the left (more relaxed) or the right (more dogmatic) according to the theology that is dominant in the school.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced two diagrams and merged them into a grid which will be used in Chapter 7 to establish themelic school differences. The grid will enable comparisons between schools and will provide some measurable indicators of difference. In Chapter 7 the grid is used in case studies of themelic schools, with a school’s position on the grid assigned on the basis of its position in relation to the nine layers of operation.
Chapter 7

Case Studies of Themelic Schools

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, four themelic schools are examined and their relationships to each other plotted on the grid introduced in Chapter 6. The data have been collected from documents and interviews. Pseudonyms have been used. The schools are located close to each other and, together, represent the themelic system in a microcosm. The schools were selected because of their theological diversity and physical/historical relationship to each other.

7.2 Applying the grid - Four themelic schools

The following case studies anchor the discussion of the thesis thus far in a real context. Themelic schools in this area represent the full spectrum of themelic schools throughout Australia. In order of commencement date the schools are Zepheniah Christian School (ZCS), Hezekiah Christian School (HCS), Ezekiel Christian School (ECS) and Leviticus Christian School (LCS). There was an Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) school in the same area until 1991, located in a Brethren Assemblies church. This group was quite small and members now home school their children through a common “learning centre”.

Three of these schools, ZCS, HCS and LCS, are members of Australian Association of Christian Schools which has the doctrine of inerrancy of the Bible as the first point in its statement of faith. As part of a fundamentalist parachurch ECS also has the doctrine of inerrancy in its perspective. All schools use the same language of “Christ centredness” and “teaching Christianly”, find their raison d’etre in contrasting themselves with humanist state education, maintain a pre-eminence of the Bible in pedagogy and have developed school-based curriculum. The majority of the teaching staff could easily transfer from one to the other and, in several cases, this has happened.
The schools share a language but differ in the particular theological traditions dictating decisions about school policy and practice. Historically, these schools have endeavoured to collaborate, associate and cooperate on various issues but this has always been short lived. In practice, some of the schools have been threatened by the others, have disputed the others' particular Christian emphasis and have been highly critical, even envious, of each other's achievements. Quite often, this takes the form of petty jealousy and gossiping about the theological perspective of the other. In some cases, the accusations made about one another are related to a struggle to attract enrolments.

The squabbling ethos is sustained by an underlying fundamentalist epistemology which tends to absolutise one's own position in relationship to others and fosters a tone of superiority and self-righteousness. Their common cause has been damaged as they have thrown away opportunities to establish credibility in the community, rationalise and share resources, establish a common senior secondary school and learn from each other. This trend has been exacerbated by amateurish management practice, intolerance, separatism, educational inexperience and theological arrogance, as the case studies will show. It is pertinent to note that at the time of writing this thesis all four schools in the case studies were in the throes of internal schism.

The case studies are arranged so that the progression of discussion matches the diagram of themelic layers introduced in Chapter 6. The discussion moves from the most obvious layers of operation to the least observable. Once the discussion is concluded, the grid will be used to emphasise characteristics and make comparisons.

If a claim were to be made that these schools are not representative of the wider themelic situation it could be levelled in two areas: the school curriculum development and socio-economic representation. All themelic schools in the region are free to develop their own curriculum. Whilst the socio-economic representation of income earners and tertiary qualified parents in this zone is higher than the rest of Australia, the low-fee emphasis of themelic schools and their unique draw on conservative Protestant clientele minimises this possible objection.
7.3 Zepheniah Christian School (ZCS)

Zepheniah Christian School (ZCS) is associated with CPCS and is funded at category 8. In 1995 ZCS had approximately 670 students. Fees are paid on a sliding scale according to income. For example, the lowest fee (family income under $30,000) is $415 primary and $525 secondary per student per term. The highest fee (family income $60,000 and over) is $635 primary and $805 secondary per student per term. Enrolment is open to Christians and non-Christians except there must be a “clear majority” of Christian parents in each year level.

7.3a Language

ZCS has produced two documents to introduce to the school, a Prospectus and a Vision Statement. The Prospectus provides an outline of the history of ZCS, its philosophy, government, curriculum, discipline, enrolment and uniform policies and other logistical matters. The Vision Statement states beliefs and expectations regarding school purpose, mission, curriculum, staff, children, parents, society and school community. The school’s logo symbolises the social and spiritual growth of young and older children. The concern for overt Christian and biblical messages is exemplified in the choice of logos and mottos in all themelic schools.

The Prospectus states the school’s philosophy:

The purpose of all Christian education is to nurture and encourage an active outworking of truth, love and justice. This is achieved as people respond to the rightful claims of God over His creation and discover that man’s identity, freedom and salvation can only be found in knowing and serving Christ. The Bible is therefore needed to provide true knowledge of God and His Son and to be the measure against which human knowledge and wisdom may be tested.¹

It ought to be noted here that the enemy, secular humanism, is implied and the central authority of the Bible is affirmed. In the Vision Statement the school’s purpose is explained:

¹ ibid.
... to provide a school environment with a Christian dimension, supporting parents in their task as prime educators.

Parents have the primary right and responsibility for the nurture and teaching of their children.2

The centrality of parents as "prime educators" undergirds the reasoning behind parental government of the school in the CPCS pattern which emphasises the complete authority of the parents over the school, the school being fully lay/parent controlled.

Every aspect of the Vision Statement is expressed in theological terms. The mission statement, for example, explains that all school matters are to be decided recognising the Bible's authoritative teaching. In the curriculum:

All conclusions, theories and activities will be open for review by students and teachers, especially in the light of God's word.3

From the statement, it is clear that the teachers have an awesome responsibility, yet the parents have all the power to decide policy and priorities. The dominance of reformed assumptions in pedagogy and epistemology in the school is made plain:

Neither children nor teachers are intrinsically good or wise.4

Children are created in the image of God but, being human, have fallen from grace and are unable to achieve righteousness nor true knowledge in their own strength.5

self-centredness is destructive.6

What a contrast the gospel is to the world's emphasis. Popular magazines and talk-back radio have spread the concept of self actualisation. It seems to me this is little more than a new code - word for ME - FIRST philosophy.7

2 ibid.
3 ibid.
4 ibid.
5 ibid.
6 ibid.
7 School Chairman, Parent Bulletin 4.3.93.
Such statements are founded in reformed theology concerning human depravity, sin and revelation. From such a perspective, the ideas of self-esteem and self-actualisation are viewed as sinful. In ZCS, values such as harmony, obedience and agreement are given theological significance:

Obedience to legitimate authority is important and pleasing to God.  

All members of the school community will seek to work in harmony thereby honoring the Name of Christ.  

Gatekeeping language is threaded throughout the text:

We will seek distinctly Christian viewpoints and understandings to be presented in all teaching.

Christ’s leadership of His people is the model of leadership.

God is the leader and Lord of this school.

Staff will present the Gospel faithfully, support the teaching of Christian parents and pray for faith and growth in all the children.  

Such statements are so vague as to be fatuous and open to the most deceptive manipulations. But the vagueness serves to buttress the power of the school’s government which has the sole right to interpret the statements, and even the questioning of what such statements might mean is interpreted as rebellious and disobedient. The strength and power of the parent body is a continuous theme in these publications.

7.3b Pedagogy

The teaching at ZCS varies but is generally progressive and in touch with educational developments. The school accepts student teacher practicums from the local regional university and the Australian Catholic University. Indeed, the high school’s history, music and technology areas have a reputation for scholarly, creative and innovative work. The primary school likewise has a reputation for its work in reading and science.

The progressive and scholarly aspects of ZCS are the focus of regular attack from

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8 Prospectus, ibid.
9 ibid.
10 ibid.
fundamentalist extremists in the parent community on the grounds that such aspects are theologically liberal or morally irresponsible.

7.3c Staffing

The teaching and ancillary staff are predominantly evangelical even though the history of the school, through the parents who established it, is reformed in theology. The evangelically generated emphasis in the school on tolerance and diversity has meant that, theologically, the staff represent every colour of the Christian rainbow, including Catholic which has troubled the dogmatic fringe in the parent community and other themelic schools in the region, particularly the new Leviticus Christian School, which is less than five kilometres away.

The school tends to advertise staffing positions openly but has a history of “in house” employment and choosing the kind of staff who will be compliant and obedient. The school treasurer explains:

Unfortunately some of the theological dispositions you come across is that they often have a predisposition to saying we all must agree. If you don’t agree then there is somehow a drama.\(^{11}\)

This disposition has created a history of staff management which has been amateurish and unprofessional. The staff meet two mornings before school for “devotions” which usually amounts to 35 minutes of prayer, singing, worship and sharing biblical teaching.

7.3d History

ZCS commenced in 1979 with eight students and one teacher. ZCS was founded through the energy of some Anglicans, particularly Rev. Bloggs, an evangelical clergyman. The founding parent body was evangelical and neoevangelical, hence the school tends to have a more open approach to education and contact with the world than the other themelic schools in the region. This is evident in the open enrolment policy, evolution/creation policy which legitimises the value of both theories, sport activities

\(^{11}\) Interview School Treasurer 26.7.94
with neighbouring state schools and a progressive approach to most secondary curriculum areas.

The first full school year was 1980 with 38 students and one teacher. The school began in two unused rooms at the back of a state high school. In 1983 the school moved to its present site, with just under 100 students and five staff and, a neo-evangelical was appointed principal. By 1986 the school population was 400 and the school experienced its first major schism. The source of the schism related to questions of management, personal difference and theology. Throughout its development the school community has been plagued by the zeal of reformed hyper-Calvinists and fundamentalist Baptists. The last schism in 1993, when the school population was 650 was due to issues of managerial incompetence, theology and personal difference. During this period a number of staff resigned and the central problems of the school were not addressed, the problems having been dismissed by the management through personal and theological rationalisation.

7.3e Leadership

The executive of the school has always been predominantly evangelical and educationally progressive. Since 1988 the school executive has hosted an annual regional conference on pedagogical issues. The calibre of the speakers and programs reflects a high level of diversity and scholarship.

7.3f Management

Membership of the school council is restricted to parents elected at an annual general meeting (AGM) from the association’s membership, and there are nine parent representatives on council. The principal and staff of the school have no power to vote on the council but can be association members. To be a member of the association of ZCS one must subscribe to a statement of faith which is broadly evangelical and quite ambiguous. This means that the dominant theological tradition at that school tends to fluctuate with every AGM, as does the version of the history of the school which those council members acknowledge.

The lay community has always been dominated by a small, vocal and zealous group of individuals who regard themselves as the watchdogs of Christianity in education. This is evident in attempts to censor library books, continual letter writing and complaints about Christian standards in the school, demands on staff dress codes, regulations about working on Sunday and the prohibition of “games of chance” (gambling) in the
school's constitution.\textsuperscript{12}

The founding principal departed the school in 1989 under suspicious circumstances and a fundamentalist faction then sought control of the school. By the early 1990s some of the original founders were less involved in the school and a new emphasis and a more conservative direction began to develop particularly under the influence of the new chairman of the school council, Dr. S. Berkhof. The chairman, a scientist, with a strange combination of theology which is reformed and fundamentalist, was sympathetic with groups that had long wanted the school to be more theologically rigid and dogmatic. His oppressive influence upon the history of the school in the later 1980s and early 1990s must not be underestimated. This stands in contrast to the educationally progressive influence and constraining of fundamentalist theological influences by the founding principal and school chairman.

The political history of the school is one of constant struggle of a small reformed element seeking to control the school. The majority of the parents refrain from political action within the school and enjoy the quality of education and nurture/pastoral care their children receive. Parents who were interviewed were oblivious to the power struggles that went on in the council and school committees.

7.3g Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic of the school is strongly influenced by evangelical and fundamentalist views of the Bible. The literalism of the Bible and its unequalled authority are paramount in the life of the school. The most tense issue in the school's history have been generated by disagreement over Bible usage.

7.3h Psychological factors

The school, particularly some sectors of the parent body and executive staff, has always been characterised by fear, stress, anxiety, insecurity and authoritarianism, generated by dogmatic elements in the lay parent body and council who are conditioned by a reformed preoccupation with submission, authority and loyalty. In many ways, the ideas of vigilance, surveillance, arrogance, mistrust, guilt, confusion and policing have been a model set by the council and principal. This is clear in the following statement which was issued in a circular in the school at a time when many questions were being raised by staff about the school's management:

\textsuperscript{12} ibid.
... we ask for loyalty and submission to the executive and council decisions. Without that the school will become dysfunctional. As a matter of urgency you need to search your hearts and determine if you are able to offer that loyalty and acceptance of the prerogatives of the management team.  

Schism, criticism and disagreement are interpreted by the leadership and management of the school as attacks by Satan on the life of the school. The response to conflict and threats to authority by guilt centred language about repentance and necessity for self-examination. Self-examination is something others, not the management, need to do.

This is something we all struggle with from time to time - we all fall short. Our motivation is not always “for the glory of God”, even though we may be able to rationalise it as such. We all find these lessons hard. Let us all remain open to the Holy Spirit as he nudges, prompts us to “get our motivation right” and so moves His people towards Christlikeness, and let us also encourage our children to join us and “do all for the glory of God” - to do things for the right reasons.

Many of the statements in school documents which refer to discussion, consultation and dialogue are made within the context of reformed credalism and tradition which holds exclusive authority for the high offices of church. What this means is that positions of authority and management are viewed as “ordained” and beyond examination. Calls for mutual self-examination become tools to coerce staff into further guilt and self-doubt. This dynamic is explored in Chapter 13. It ought also be noted how the word “Christlikeness” was used in the text as if such an expression is unproblematic. It serves as a good example of the way such expressions are used in the themelic schools. In this case, Christlikeness implies that people are Christlike if they have their motivation right, and are obedient to authority.

7.3i Epistemology

The theory of knowledge which dominates the school is fundamentalist (naïve realist).

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13 Council Announcement for Staff, 13.9.93.
14 Principal Parent Bulletin 12.8.93, 11.8.94.
15 ibid.
7.3j Culture

The school culture is predominantly evangelical, middle class and Australian. There are no programs in the school for ethnic minorities, disabled, poor or delinquent children.

The information discussed in the previous nine sub-sections can be plotted as follows on the grid.

**Zephaniah Christian School**

**Policy & Practice**

**Figure 7.**

The grid illustrates two clear groupings or factions within the school, which explains the recurrence of schisms that are generated initially by theological differences. Given the assumptions of the grid, it is clear that the more determinant and less observable forces within the school are fundamentalist and reformed. The hidden nature of this
often unspoken dogmatism serves to undermine the substantial quality of espoused pedagogy in the school.

The grid also shows the different views and levels of interest of the council and principal on the one hand and the teachers on the other.

The entry in each box of the grid indicates the degree to which the school is dogmatic or relaxed in that area of school policy and practice. This means that at ZCS one is more likely to encounter a greater sense of theological openness than one would encounter in Leviticus Christian School (LCS) or Ezekiel Christian School (ECS), which will be discussed next. ZCS espouses a relaxed view of pedagogy and educational perspective similar to that of Hezekiah Christian School (HCS). Some of these comparisons are most visible on the final diagram (Figure 11) in this chapter.

At ZCS the evangelical and more relaxed theological approach enables the school to be quite vigorously involved in all curriculum areas with all other non-government and government schools. ZCS competes with neighbouring government schools in zone sports and debating whilst the other thematic schools in the study do not. The evangelical approach to fellowship with “the world” is one of healthy interaction. “The world” is not seen so much as an enemy to escape from but a place in which to witness. Being “worldly” in a dogmatic understanding means to be contaminated, compromised and defiled by relationships with things humanist and non-Christian. When ZCS selects teaching materials it is content to adapt and use material from most sources in its pedagogy. Its teaching methods are progressive and most staff keep up to date with developments in the broad educational sphere. The more dogmatic view tends to see that all curriculum must be made Christian and convey a uniquely constructed Christian worldview.

The diagram helps to illustrate an incongruence between espoused theory and theory-in-use. It also indicates that at the classroom level there is a more relaxed approach to the students of the school where the dogmatism of some of the school’s authorities (which is indicated by ideals expressed in hermeneutics and epistemology) is tempered and more humane. This incongruence has major implications for the ability of this community to learn in any significant way (double-loop learning) which, according to Argyris and Schon, is limited by size. The continual focus by the management of the school on numerical growth and development has constrained opportunities for
learning. Past attempts at restructuring organisational norms in the school have been met by the authorities with vigorous closemindedness and denial. This was most apparent in a pseudo-review which was implemented after the last schism which skirted around significant issues.

7.4 Hezekiah Christian School (HCS)

Hezekiah Christian School (HCS) was commenced in 1980 by the parish council of Hezekiah Uniting Church. HCS is a K to 10 school, associated with AACS and funded at category 8. Fees are paid on a sliding scale according to income: for example, the lowest fee (family income under $12,500) is for $180 primary and $280 for secondary per student per term. The highest fee (family income $30,000 and over) is $540 for primary and $640 for secondary per student per term. HCS has an open enrolment policy. In 1995 HCS had approximately 425 students and 40 staff.

7.4a Language

Compared with the other themelic schools in the region, HCS has the least dogmatic stance, which clearly reflects its charismatic history. The reformed preoccupation with control and conformity with credal correctness is not as present as it is in ZCS or LCS. Staff at HCS do not have to affirm a statement of faith in order to be employed unlike those at ZCS or LCS do.

The aim of HCS is

... to provide a safe place for girls and boys to be discipled in the Christian faith.16

The pentecostal and charismatic emphasis of the school logo is immediately obvious to any conservative Christian and, unlike many themelic schools, HCS has no motto. HCS has adopted Jeremiah 9: 23,24 as a school Bible verse:

Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who

16 Interview Ex-teacher, Ex-parent, Ex-principal 3.3.95.
exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord.\textsuperscript{17}

The HCS educational philosophy is stated clearly in the \textit{Prospectus}:

The educational philosophy of the School is based on the recognition that God is the giver of all truth, that we are His creation made to give honour and glory to Him, and that our relationship with God is totally dependent upon the sacrificial life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The School aims to educate the whole person, that is, to integrate the spiritual, mental, social and physical aspects of education from a Christian perspective so that each student will develop a personal relationship with God and be challenged to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of life.

The school acknowledges that, under God, parents are the primary educators of their children.\textsuperscript{18}

Three key points need to be extracted from this statement. First, the overall theology of the statement resonates with the statements made by other themelic schools and supports the thesis of a guiding theological dynamic for all themelic schools. Second, the language of the statement fits with statements made by other themelic schools, using similar phrases and words. Third, the school confirms the prime authority of the parents in education. This last point is important because it would seem from such a statement that HCS and ZCS would agree in the area of school government, yet this is far from the case. The parent controlled models used by CPCS schools and the parish-based management of other themelic schools are very different even though they use the same language. HCS and ZCS are good examples of this. How difficult it must be for the outside observer who hears the same language but encounters vast differences in management.

The aims stated in the HCS \textit{Prospectus} compared with the other themelic schools seem quite ordinary and are far less dogmatic theologically:

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{The Holy Bible} New International Version, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1984.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Prospectus} HCS, 1995, p. 1.
Pupils of all ages are challenged with educational courses that extend their academic capabilities, and prepare them for each subsequent stage of their education. By the time pupils leave the School having completed Year 10 they are well-prepared for life at college, or their chosen vocation. The School aims to produce students who can read and write competently, can reason and make considered decisions, and who have social graces. Students are challenged to become creative leaders and innovative thinkers who reflect the imagination of God, their creator.

The School is also strongly committed to a physical education programme for both primary and secondary. All pupils are introduced to a variety of different games and exercises, and each is challenged to develop and maintain a reasonable level of physical fitness.

Each student is challenged to achieve excellence in their work and play, and to do their best at all times. They are challenged to develop habits and characteristics in their lives that will make them fruitful and responsible citizens.¹⁹

The statement of aims stands in stark contrast to those of other themelic schools in the case studies: it does not concern itself with excessive and explicit theological emphasis. This reflects a charismatic nature, which is more interested in the spontaneity of the spirit, than control through rationalisation. The charismatic type tends to look for control through the charismatic leader rather than the legislation of dogma. This is open to abuse because relationships are founded in the dependence on egoism in management.

7.4b Pedagogy

The majority of the teaching in HCS is conservative and traditional. The classes and many demountable rooms are set up in formal, didactic patterns. The experiment of a "family class" with Mr Bracken stands out as a significant educational risk compared with what most themelic schools attempt. Mr Bracken, once principal of ECS, past chairman of a themelic school and regional director of home schooling through a parachurch group, is an educator who continues to question the validity of institutionalised education. The fact that Bracken finds a home at HCS and that the school accommodates this venture illustrates the way that the school operates. Compared with

¹⁹ ibid. p. 2.
the other schools in this case studies, HCS takes far greater risks and is prepared to be more critical of educational practice, in general, than other themellic schools.

7.4 Staffing

For many years the teachers at HCS were required to be members of Hezekiah Uniting Church, but not now. One might expect the usual signs of charismatic and pentecostal influences to be overt in the school, but this is not the case. The selection process of HCS, like ZCS, is rigorous with vigorous interrogation regarding Christian commitment and awareness. It is not uncommon for prospective staff to be quizzed for several hours by executive and council staff in an interview. The length of time of the interview may not be unusual but most staff interviewed at the school mentioned that the questions usually involved a rigorous examination of theological and personal matters, which the staff thought was improper. The level of mistrust in these schools is high, which is evident in the number of people who try to get in some position to exercise control over staffing. For example, in ZCS the interview panel for principal selection after the schism of 1993-94 numbered 12 persons.

More recently, HCS has moved away from the strong expression of the charismatic tradition. The idea of the “freedom of the spirit” is present but the overt expression of speaking in tongues is not. Bracken claims that in his last four years experience he has seen no sign of such overt activity in the school, in assemblies or worship times. The charismatic emphases on healing and “prayer counselling” - a dubious method of counselling children through confession, auto-suggestion and exorcism - are not evident either.20 The assumption of such a perspective presumes that all behaviour, good or bad, is spiritually determined. Therefore, in school discipline, a naughty child would be disciplined through prayer and counselling so that the child might be “released” from the “evil spirit of disobedience”. Surprisingly, these practices have been more evident at ZCS where the restrictions and pressure of reformed checks and balances have been much stronger.

HCS was commenced as a missionary endeavour, and that is reflected in the school’s wage and fee structure.21 HCS accepts quite a number of students who cannot pay

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20 Interview Ex-teacher, Ex-parent, Ex-principal 3.3.95.
21 Interview Principal 28.2.95
full fees at even the lowest scale. The sacrifices made by the staff, including wage structures, and the sacrifices made by the school in general for the sake of these children, emanate from the evangelical missionary ethos of the school. The staff meet every morning before school for “devotions” which usually includes 35 minutes of prayer, singing, worship and sharing biblical teaching.

Bracken commented:

I think the people do their best, they are motivated the best they can be from their experience of God. But I think it is insular again. We don’t get out there and find out where everything is at.  

This frank assessment captures the separatist mentality at work in most themelic schools. Whilst Bracken has made this comment of HCS it is equally applicable to all themelic schools. Schools like ECS do not want to find out “where it is at” because the thought of accepting the validity of the humanist world is most rejected by the reconstructionist tradition. The more dogmatic one becomes about the evils of humanism, the less one can see any value in the government system. In HCS the fear of the humanist system is the least pronounced of the schools in the case studies but the busyness of endeavoring to provide the big school experience and big school opportunities is very taxing. In fairness to many overworked and stressed themelic teachers, they do not have the time to find out “where it is at”.

7.4d History

HCS arose from concerns in the Hezekiah Uniting Church in the 1970s particularly under the influence of the Rev. Horace Northham. HCS was opened in 1980 in the church hall with 29 children, from K to 6. The first teacher was Mrs Josephine Steering. In 1982 the school moved to its present site. There have been five principals, all of whom have been charismatic or pentecostal in orientation, although the current principal embodies an interesting combination of charismatic and reformed traditions.

The experience and influence of Mrs Steering on the life of the school is particularly worth noting. Steering was brought up in Goulburn in a working class environment,

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22 Interview Ex-teacher, Ex-parent, Ex-principal 3.3.95.
trained at Wagga Teachers College and has had considerable teaching experience in the NSW and ACT education departments, as well as teaching in Arnhem Land (NT) on an Aboriginal mission for 14 years. Steering’s considerable experience and struggles in teaching over these years stand in stark contrast with the experience of many people in leadership in themelic schools who are inexperienced. The themelic system and its accelerated growth have created a vacuum for inexperienced people to rush into, which in itself has created enormous problems in management. This has certainly been the case in some of the schools in these case studies. In Steering’s case, the influence has been far more on the pragmatic matters of teaching and schooling and less on the theological deliberations and distractions which preoccupy the other managers of themelic schools in these case studies.

7.4e Leadership

The executive of the school throughout its history has been charismatic and evangelical. The thinking of the school, through the influence of Steering, has been particularly focused on the day-to-day issues of schooling.

7.4f Management

Until late 1995 the school was managed by the parish council of Hezekiah Uniting Church (HUC) and came under the authority of the Synod of the Uniting Church of Australia (UCA). The parent body is predominantly evangelical and charismatic. It might be more helpful in the case of HCS to say that the laity are not reformed and do not have the rigid focus on life which tends to accompany this theological tradition.

The last schism which HCS faced was not actually in the body of the school but had to do with a split in the church, and the church split reverberated in the governance and tone of the school. HUC is a charismatic church and extraordinary in the UCA tradition. A pastor of this church and a majority of the congregation broke away forming a new independent pentecostal church called Doxa Ministries. The split was theological and personal relating to UCA doctrine which was considered theologically liberal by the break-away group. This group sought administration of the school which was granted by the UCA synod in late 1995.
The size of the school and parent body help HCS maintain informality and spontaneity at many layers of operation. This spontaneity is a particular emphasis of the charismatic tradition.

7.4g Hermeneutics

The governing hermeneutic in the school is influenced by fundamentalist and charismatic theologies. The charismatic tradition, unlike the reformed tradition, does not always require biblical affirmation. The charismatic framework is far more personal and experiential. In case of HCS, the particular emphasis of council and executive personalities is far more important than the rigidity of inerrancy and reformed claims of biblical authority.

7.4h Psychological factors

The charismatic tradition does not have the rigid emphasis on inerrancy nor the accompanying fears. It tends to have greater fear of spiritual than cognitive, intellectual matters. The language of “spiritual warfare”, about demons, the devil and having a spirit of some particular persuasion is far more common than in other themelic schools in these case studies.

7.4i Epistemology

The theory of knowledge which dominates the school is fundamentalist (naive realist). In charismatic terms the absolute certainty of knowing is certified by the text of the Bible and also by direct revelation by the Holy Spirit through people, usually manifest in demonstrations of authority through expressions of ecstasy ( Healings, speaking in tongues, “words of knowledge”, prophecies). On the one hand the charismatic person does not deny the inerrancy of the Bible but on the other, is not troubled by inconsistencies and contradictions with the biblical text that are supported by their assumptions about spiritual authority. Even though the rigor of the reconstructionist and reformed preoccupation with the biblical text is absent, charismatic epistemology is nonetheless naive realist. The naive realism of the charismatic generates confusion because it is founded in dual platforms (the inerrant text and the inerrant direct revelation by the Holy Spirit).
7.4j Culture

The school culture is predominantly middle class but many enrolments are from low socio-economic background. The significance of the middle class to the culture of evangelicalism has been noted by church historians/diagnosticians\(^{23}\). The significance of middle-class evangelicalism to themelic school demographics has been established by Oswald.\(^{24}\) In the case of HCS, the policy of accepting such a high proportion of subsidised low socio-economic enrolments is exceptional in comparison with most themelic schools. The school also intentionally accepts a small number of difficult/delinquent students who have been through the government system, but it has no specific curricular arrangement for them.

The grid below illustrates a considerable level of consistency across the layers of school operations. This stands in stark contrast to ZCS which is clearly more factional in structure. The size of the school seems to have a bearing upon this as well. Perhaps the consistent charismatic emphasis on spontaneity and informality would be lost if HCS were to double in size. The grouping of epistemological and hermeneutical determinants in two groups reflect the emphasis on dual inerrancies (Bible and Spirit) in the school. The overriding mode of knowing in the school would still be placed upon how one “feels about” rather than how someone “thinks about” an issue. The history of schism in the school emanates more from the emphasis placed on egoism in management rather than disputes about theology and dogma.


\(^{24}\) Oswald, M., The Emergence of New Low-Fee ... op. cit., 1990.
Some of the double groupings on the grid indicate the historical relationship of fundamentalism and charismatic theology as sub-sets of evangelicalism. Such double groupings are common in themelic schools as will be indicated on other grids. This highlights a further confusion as people attempt to fluctuate between theologies in search of certainties. It is relatively easy to have an amalgam of even three traditions because of a person’s or school’s theological history.
7.5 Ezekiel Christian School (ECS)

The Ezekiel Christian School (ECS), is an independent K to 10 school, which commenced in 1985. It refuses government funding. ECS is a ministry of an interdenominational para-church organisation (which has an emphasis on evangelism to youth, cross-cultural evangelism and ministry training) and Sunshine Ministries (SM), a Christian resource centre. The parachurch group headquarters functions much like a commune. The base provides food for all the staff, including the staff of SM and ECS, most of whom are housed at the base where everyone spends their time together. It is an intense commitment eliciting experience with every facet of life shared at the same place.

The student population of ECS varies depending on the movement of people in and out of the adjoining para-church group college. In 1995 ECS had 75 students and 4 staff. The fee scale is two tiered: for para-church group workers the fee is very low and for others about $500 per term. The current director of SM is Mr David Hopperly who was the previous principal of the school. ECS does not have an open enrolment policy, as Bracken (previous principal of ECS) stated:

... because we agreed (verbally) with the education department to only take para-church group students. I don't know what the policy (now) is but I have heard it stated "that we don't have any Philistines here".25

It would be hard to imagine that parents would want to send their child to an unfunded school with a firm reconstructionist perspective if they were not already convinced of the validity of that perspective. In the same way, other themelic schools, whilst claiming an open enrolment policy, selectively obstruct student attendance through fee mechanisms, theological statements, staff selection processes and hidden messages about values. Whilst the espoused theory is that the enrolment policy is open, the theory-in-use is that it is open only in themelic terms. Some themelic schools like to emphasise the diversity of denominations that are represented in their student and parent body as a way of dispelling criticism from the community of cultism. This has been the case with ECS and more recently with LCS which has been refused registration and funding of its high school. Whilst on the surface there appears to be a diversity of

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25 Interview Ex-teacher, Ex-parent, Ex-principal 3.3.95.
denominations represented at the school this masks the real trend in Protestant collaboration that has developed over the past thirty years which will be discussed in Chapter 9. The truth is that there is conformity across denominations and underlying commonality in theological tradition which denominational tags do not pick up. Hence an enrolment policy can appear to be open and diverse when it is not.

7.5a Language

Unlike the other themelic schools in the region, ECS has a very low-key approach to documentation and comprehensive statements. Their Prospectus, for example, is simply an A4 sheet of paper, contrasting with ZCS and HCS which present themselves in professionally produced booklets, while LCS issues a 36-page document. The language in ECS documents is nonetheless the same as that of the other themelic schools in the region. In some respects, the language of ECS is less extreme than that of the other themelic schools but their practice is more separatist and dogmatic.

The school’s logo is the same as that of the para-church group.

In the Prospectus ECS confirms a very simple three point statement of faith (the parent para-church group has no formal statement of faith as such). The statements are reformed and reconstructionist in meaning. Education is defined as follows:

a) Education is an unfolding of God; His character, His nature and His creation.

b) Education is a two-fold process:
   1) input of information, comprehension and skills through the teacher and the Holy Spirit;
   2) output of information, comprehension and skills from the student.

c) All education is spiritual. We view the sacred/secular dichotomy, which is so pervasive in society, as being destructive of the church’s mission.26

However, this is not something that is signed, as at ZCS or LCS. Again, the charismatic influence tends to shy away from such processes such as creeds and

affirmations. The *Prospectus* emphasises a back to basics approach:

The basic learning skills of reading, writing and maths are of utmost importance.27

Like all other thematic schools ECS stresses the primary responsibility of parents as educators of their children. The school omits the words “inerrant” and “infallible” from its statements about the Bible although the effect is much the same: the Bible is to be neither contested nor questioned.

The brief handbook for parents, which outlines details and procedures, could easily come from any other school, except for the statements about teacher responsibilities. These are:

Maintaining a positive and Godly school tone is one of the teacher’s most important responsibilities.

1. ORDER AND OBEDIENCE
   a. To ensure student’s work in an atmosphere of order, under obedience.
   b. To ensure an outworking of order, consistency and regularity in accordance with the rules.
   c. To ensure students have a “vision” for themselves as a part of the school community, which will produce a healthy, Godly school tone.

2. RESPECT FOR PEOPLE
   Obedience and respect is demanded at all times with proper addressing of teachers and peers.

3. RESPECT FOR PROPERTY
   a. Possessions are an extension of the owner; thus disrespect of property is disrespect of the person.
   b. There is to be a godly order for moving about the school to ensure this respect for persons and property.28

27 ibid.
The consistency of key words in the reformed tradition, such as obedience, authority and sovereignty, is foundational to much of the language in ECS documents and to communication by the leadership of the school.

7.5b Pedagogy

The classroom design and practice in ECS are traditional. Demonstration and instruction are the primary strategies of teaching. The reconstructionist theology in the school directs curriculum choice into areas of a more traditional nature. An example of this is the emphasis in the school and SM on the Spalding phonics and reading program which is rooted in the necessity for absolutes in learning. Hopperly claims that the school is not reactionary and, in his response, reinforces the strong emphasis on didactic learning strategy in the school. He commented that:

Many people would see our schools as reactionary to the modern education. We’ve endeavoured to studiously avoid that, of adopting something because that’s what they used to do but of adopting something because it seems to be consistent with scripture. So for example, if you talk about rote learning, I would say, “Yeah, great!” because God has created children to have a desire to learn that way at a particular age in their development, say in their primary years particularly. There is demonstrated great delight in children in parroting stuff. Now, people have assumed that they just parrot stuff without understanding, but I would dispute that. By and large the kids understand what they are parroting because it’s not just parroting that they are doing. The teacher has talked to them about it and explained it. Its the same old deal: when I went to school we learned our tables by parroting them but I practically knew my tables; it was never an issue. It was there because you had that information. There is a significant base of knowledge that each child needs to have which is often best gained for example by rote learning. Many modern educational theorists would say that’s not the way you go about it. I’d say I’m not terribly fussed with what modern educational theorists say. I’m worried about one: what is consistent with God’s word and what is consistent with the character of the person, in other words, the way God has made the person to develop, that flows out of his creative genius. And thirdly: what is going to work for the child; what’s going to enable the child to be successful in those various areas.  

Despite this claim that ECS tries not to be reactionary it is clear in Hopperly’s response that he reflects back to his own learning as a model. When asked if the psychology of

29 Interview Principal, 27.3.92
childhood had much to do with pedagogy he replied

... it does in the sense that you throw most of it out. There is some legitimacy to it but the problem is it has all been attacked from a humanist - evolutionary standpoint. So the basic premises are wrong. Some of the things that people observe may be right but it's not good enough as Christians to embrace something because it's observed. We need to see whether that's consistent with scripture.30

Much of the pedagogy is directed by Hopperly, who founded SM, and has considerable influence on many other independent themelic schools and themelic people through his writings in a regular journal.

The school's curriculum documents follow 12 key learning areas: Language, Maths, Science, History, Geography, Art, Music, Physical Education, Manual Skills, Commercial Skills Christian World View and God's Plan. Every part of the curriculum document is saturated with Bible verses and theology. An example of some statements made in the documents are:

Language communicates thoughts which are intrinsically religious ... To read and understand the Bible is basic to any Christian language curriculum for it is the divinely inspired word of authority to all men. Language is best understood by appreciating and learning the rules by which it works.31

Mathematics is the study of God's orderly design in and rule over His creation as expressed in number, quantity, structure and space, and of all relationships between these ... It is not a "neutral" field of knowledge nor should it be presented in a secular fashion ... Mathematics reminds us that God is sovereign, orderly, infinite, eternal, unchangeable and omniscient.32

God has created an orderly world with consistent display of values which are absolute ... Christian art will, therefore, be purposeful, in the same way that God was purposeful in creation. In that light there is little place for the nihilistic art that has become popular in the twentieth century and which has infiltrated art teaching. Allowing a child to "do his own thing" leads to an impoverished art style. If a child is not taught principles of art he will be lacking in aesthetic awareness.33

30 ibid.
Geography is the setting of God's great story, which needs to be understood, that we might understand God's foreknowledge and providence.\textsuperscript{34}

In curriculum content, there appears to be little variation from approaches in any other government or non-government schools. ECS curriculum documents endorse the traditional divisions of school curriculum and each subject tends to explore subject content which is very similar to other schools. This is affirmed in the school's \textit{Prospectus}. It is clear, however, that ECS expressions of an overt theological nature are much stronger than in any of the other themelic schools in the region.

Interestingly, the commercial skills curriculum, typing and word processing, does not have the same overt theological statements as in the other subject areas. It is also interesting to note that many of the definitions of each subject are taken from Webster's 1882 \textit{Dictionary}. This is significant in that it epitomises the reconstructionist concern to return to a golden age. The reconstructionist equates modernism with theological liberalism and moral relativism. The inference in quoting old texts and documents is that modern developments have abandoned ways that were "tried and true".

\textbf{7.5c Staffing}

All staff at ECS have come into the school through para-church group courses or SM courses. Contacts are made through conferences and meetings, support for the cause and perspective are understood and teachers are employed through an informal process. There is no need to sign an affirmation of faith as in other themelic schools as there is no school written criteria or statement of faith. As Hopperly states:

\begin{quote}
I understand and support those who would tend to be of a reformation basis who like their statements of faith and so on, and I applaud that. However, my own thrust tends to ignore that to a large degree, perhaps to our detriment. But it seems to me the more you try to define everything to the final degree the more you become exclusive in what you are presenting and the more dogmatic you have to become to defend that particular perspective. And I'm not sure that's the best way to go in the practical outworking of it.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Art Curriculum} ECS, 1995, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Geography Curriculum} ECS, 1995, p. 2.
Whilst we would embrace a fairly strong statement we haven’t really gone to the trouble of preparing it and debating the wording and so on. We chose our staff on the basis of knowing the people.\textsuperscript{35}

The selection process is relationally based and quite personal. Staff are non-salaried and receive financial support as missionaries. Teachers at the school are paid as missionaries, which means that they have to raise some of their own income through their own church support structures. They do not receive a wage and their stipend of sorts is well below any idea of a teacher’s award wage. Some staff are formally credentialed whilst others are not. The registration board has expressed concern at the ratio of uncredentialed to credentialed staff. Formal credentials are not necessary. Mr John Abels, the current principal, commented:

I think it is quite legitimate to call teachers ministers who are performing a Christian service, particularly here where we are part of a Christian organisation. In lots of ways the Catholic system had it right with their teaching orders.\textsuperscript{36}

At ECS teachers are understood to be “disciplers of disciples” as much as teachers of knowledge. The role of the teacher in the school is always explained relative to Christian relationships.\textsuperscript{37} Students undertaking study with the para-church group also participate in the teaching program of the school.

\subsection*{7.5d History}

The personal history of the founding principal of ECS, Mr Gary Bracken, gives an insight into the history of the school and the nature of themelic synthesis. Bracken, brought up as a Methodist and trained at the Anglican Moore Theological College (reformed evangelical), Sydney, was ordained as a congregational minister. He joined the Baptist church not long after, had a charismatic experience, became involved with a para-church group, joined the Churches of Christ and now meets in an independent home church. In many ways, Bracken embodies the synthesis of the themelic movement.

\textsuperscript{35} ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Interview Principal 27. 2.95
\textsuperscript{37} ibid.
Bracken had enrolled in a para-church group School of Evangelism course in the early 1980s. As part of that course, he had had to review his world view and view of education. Urged by the director of a parachurch group to start a school, he responded. He contacted one of the para-church groups international “visionaries” for Christian schooling, Mrs Helen Fraser, travelled to the para-church group headquarters in the USA where he struggled with Fraser to develop a curriculum for the new school. The director had heard of an educator called Brian Rocket who had developed an education system in the USA, and Bracken spent some time researching Rocket’s work. He developed a thematic curriculum at the school, based on Fraser’s and Rocket’s, work over the next five years. The thematic units began at Genesis chapter 1, and themes followed the chronological structure of the Bible passage. For example, “In the beginning” gave the idea of studying time; “God created” - creation energy; “the heavens” - space; “the earth” - matter and so on, with each theme being explored in various curriculum areas.

After ECS, Bracken taught at other themelic schools in the region as well as organising a home schooling network and resource agency called the Christian Correspondence Home School Institute. He currently teaches as a permanent staff member of Hezekiah Christian School where he has pioneered the family class.

The school began as a primary school with approximately 25 children. People who come to a para-church group headquarters in the region to do short courses (3-6 months) or longer courses (12 month-24 month) usually live on site and enrol their children in the school.

In 1990 David Hopperly and the SM team (approximately 8 people) moved from interstate to the current site after a legal battle to keep their school open. After a term, Bracken left ECS and Hopperly became the new principal. Hopperly later left the parachurch group at the invitation of the director of Hesed Christian Centre, a charismatic church in the region, to be their minister. Hesed Christian Centre is affiliated with the a large charismatic group called “Mathetairs” in another state. Mathetairs began schooling in 1979 using an ACE styled curriculum called “Life Pak”. Hesed is a curious mixture of conservative charismatic emphasis and reformed/reconstructionist theology.
Over time, the school has built up a more stable situation with many more students travelling to the campus. David Abels, who had been involved with the work of SM since 1984, travelled to the para-church group headquarters in 1990 with David Hopperly, hoping to continue study and research. David Abels became the next principal of ECS in 1992. In 1995, 60 of the 75 students enrolled were regular students. The predominant support for the school comes from the para-church group’s families and from the Hesed Christian Centre.

### 7.5e Leadership

The school is registered and has produced documentation of its courses but, on the whole, does not see the necessity for any accountability to the state. The principal, David Abels, and the director of SM, David Hopperly, who were involved in the court battle over registration of Monument Christian School, which was their previous school in another state in the 1980s, believe that Christian education is compromised if it is controlled by and answerable to the state.

### 7.5f Management

ECS provides an interesting study of themelic synthesis. ECS is a curious mix of evangelical, fundamentalist and creationist theology which originates in the roots of the para-church group, and reformed, reconstructionist and charismatic theology from David Hopperly (SM). The para-church group and SM have assisted in fostering this synthesis at ECS.

The school is governed by a small board, made up of the principal (David Abels), the director of SM (David Hopperly) and the director of the para-church group. The school is responsible to a parachurch group and its managers under the direction of the regional director.

### 7.5g Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic in the school is a curious mixture of fundamentalist, reformed and charismatic theologies. Such combinations are rare in themelic schools. In many ways, the thinking that follows from the combination of these perspectives defies logical
analysis. Much of the thinking and language are spasmodic, obscure and difficult to predict, in clear contrast to ZCS, where the dominance of reformed theology is predictable, and HCS, where the dominance of charismatic theology is consistent.

7.5h Psychological factors

Despite the extremist language of reconstructionism which is threaded throughout SM and ECS material, it is not a place where fear is apparent. Hopperly’s and Abels’s personal demeanours are very gentle and persuasive, yet it should not be forgotten that both took on the state registration board in a protracted court battle and would be prepared to do battle with the regional education department if it were necessary. This is more consistent with the idea of righteous anger which seems to dominate the school. Fear of humanism and criticism are also present, particularly in the documents published by SM and ECS.

ECS is not threatened by other groups and does not feel that it has to compete with them. Indeed, Hopperly asserts that the dynamic of the large institutional school robs the themelic vision of its integrity. The tone of ECS is one of super-confidence and certainty. There is a high level of trust amongst staff and no anxiety over accountability, as in other themelic schools. This is because the selection process tends to weed out any great diversity of perspective and maintains a uniformity in practice.

7.5i Epistemology

The theory of knowledge which dominates the school is fundamentalist and reconstructionist.

7.5j Culture

The majority of the children in ECS come from low socio-economic families. As far as schools go, government or non government, it is the most under-resourced school I have ever observed.
It is clear from the grid that there is a spread of theological traditions throughout the life of the school. The size of the school and the small team of administrators ensures that the potential for schism is kept in check. It is clear also that the school has made quite a transition from its historical base yet remains firmly within the sphere of a para-church group. The possibility for conflict in this area will always remain a possibility at the school. Evangelical and charismatic theologies have traditionally been opposed to the rigidity of reformed and reconstructionist perspectives, which is clearly demonstrated in the inability of LCS, ZCS and HCS to cooperate with ECS. In this respect, ECS exemplifies the thesis of themelic synthesis and its ability to function in a small setting. In larger settings like ZCS and HCS, the amalgam of theologies and working together of these traditions is less pronounced and more factional.
The grid indicates two groupings with not dissimilar points to the discussion about espoused theory and theory-in-use for ZCS. It does seem clear that there is a loosening up of dogmatism the closer one gets into the classroom and the real world.

7.6 Leviticus Christian School (LCS)

Leviticus Christian School commenced in 1991. It is associated with AACS and the Presbyterian Schools Association (PSA) and is funded at category 6. LCS has approximately 75 students. Fees are paid on a fixed schedule, $495 for primary and $620 for secondary per student per term. A building fund levy of $320 is also a part of the fee structure.

7.6a Language

The Leviticus Christian School *Parent Handbook* describes the school as "the handmaiden to the church". The prospectus was prepared by Rev. Charles Royal, a Presbyterian minister. The purpose of LCS is described as

... the pursuit and dissemination of true Christian scholarship in all areas of the school’s curriculum and interest, so as to establish a truly Christian world view in all disciplines of life...by precept and example, to confront students with the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ so that in God’s appointed time, they might come to exhibit the fruits of true repentance and faith in Christ, confessing Him as Lord and saviour.

Such strong theological imperatives are woven through LCS documentation. The necessity in such statements to qualify descriptions with such modifiers as “true”, “truly” and “real” is noteworthy because it allows a certain group or an individual to interpret what this true interpretation is and thereby builds into the statements a capacity to manipulate and exercise authority in an arbitrary fashion. LCS has an “educational creed” which is full of unexplained and gatekeeping statements. The second point in the educational creed at LCS concerns the Bible, which states:

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40 ibid.
The Word of God written, is the power of God unto salvation, the truth that
enlightens our understanding and the only infallible authority for all our
activity, including the education of our children. In revealing that the world
in its origin, gracious preservation and ultimate restoration is the purpose of
creation, the Scripture provides us with the true key to the knowledge of
God, ourselves and the world.\textsuperscript{41}

The rigidity of the creed is confirmed by the closing statement

\textit{All terms used in this section must be defined in terms of the Reformed
Confessions of Faith and particularly the Westminster Confession of
Faith.}\textsuperscript{42}

The driving force of many of the statements made in the handbook is submission,
particularly submission to confessions of faith or other dogma. Such a necessity to
police obedience and submission is characteristic of the reformed extreme. The energy
for this perspective was generated from the school’s formation, particularly through the
influence of persons who were immersed in reformed and reconstructionist theology.
This will be discussed fully in the section on LCS’s history.

The school crest and description reflect authoritarian excess, with constant emphasis on
rule and an imperial understanding of Christianity. The school’s logo demonstrates an
effort to cover as much theology as possible in the symbols it uses. It is cluttered with
both apocalyptic symbols and Bible verses. In the crest, the symbols illustrate the truth
that all the Scriptures are summed up in Christ” and the burning bush because “In this
form God appeared to Moses, representing the covenantal relationship that God has
with His people, to be their God and to call them His people (Exodus 3:1-12).” The
school’s motto is “For God as King and Promise”.\textsuperscript{43}

Of all the themelic schools in the case studies, LCS’s documentation is the most heavily
weighted with biblical quotations and theological imperatives. This is most pronounced
in LCS because of the dominance of reformed and reconstructionist theologies in the
school. As in most themelic schools the LCS leadership responds to criticism as if it
were persecution, as a sign that what one is doing is right: the more the themelic

\textsuperscript{41} ibid., p. 4-3.
\textsuperscript{42} ibid., p. 4-4.
\textsuperscript{43} ibid., p. 2-2.
framework is criticised or "pushed", the more particular elements of themelic schooling
retreat into language about the battle against spiritual forces of darkness. When
something bad comes their way, many themelic schoolers believe it is an attack by the
devil on what they must be doing well. Therefore, an attack by Satan on the work of
the school is interpreted as confirmation of rightness. In the context of some criticism
of LCS by the broader community, the chairman offered the following consolation

Paul tells us how to live up-right Christian lives, how to handle anger, how
to have good family relationships and good relationships between employers
and employees. Paul then reminds his readers to be strong in the Lord, for
our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces, for
which we need the full armour of God.44

This thinking is consistent across all the schools in the case studies. The expression of
such thinking varies according to the presence of evangelical and neo-evangelical
persons in the institution. It is interesting to note that schisms in themelic schools are
not examined rationally or professionally because of this underlying assumption made
about the source of conflict. Therefore schools in conflict or schism need not
investigate the running of the school because all problems are interpreted as an attack by
Satan on the life of the school. One helpful construct for understanding this situation
has been offered by Leon Festinger and his work on cognitive dissonance. This will be
explored in Chapter 9.

7.6b Pedagogy

The LCS handbook states that "The Scriptures form the foundation for the curriculum at
Leviticus Christian School" and that "Leviticus Christian School has deliberately
pursued a direction which is different from many other (including Christian) schools."
This is supposedly reflected in areas such as curriculum and teaching. The handbook
explains

Much of the so-called teaching occurring in schools today involves the
teacher "facilitating" a group of children who are presumed to be mature
before their years. Through this approach children are encouraged to develop
a world view which is based solely upon their educational experience.
Although superficially appealing, such an approach is dangerous in that the

44 Chairman' Report to members of the Association, LCS, 1990.
purposes of God are ignored and God’s word is excluded as an authoritative source of truth. This approach encourages truth to be seen in relative (ie secular) terms rather than absolute terms.\footnote{ibid., p. 4-2.}

This kind of thinking resonates with the reconstructionist language of ECS. It is therefore of little wonder that in the planning stages of LCS the council sought to consult with SM and ECS regarding curriculum and teaching directions. In addition to this, LCS also sought and consulted the work of Pelagius Christian School, a themelic school in the south of a large city with a reformed and reconstructionist tradition.\footnote{LCS Minutes of Council 2 August, 1988.} Pelagius Christian School is particularly influenced by the thinking of an academic historian at a prominent university who is also a notable figure in CPCS schools, known for his strict reformed understanding of schooling and education. His thoughts have been published and are valued by those who are strictly reformed in tradition.

At LCS, the curriculum:

... adopts a Biblical method which emphasises the teaching of precept upon precept. Many schools today seek to promote learning by means of an integrated approach that sets the student on a “course of discovery”. In such an approach students find “knowledge” wherever it is found. Typical of this approach is an emphasis on themes rather than subject areas. However, at Leviticus Christian School the approach adopted is to build precept upon precept. Curriculum content is therefore built around pillars of truth that are defined in definite subject areas. The curriculum at Leviticus Christian School is not simply interested in sheer volume of knowledge to give it legitimacy but the content is selective to build structures of truth, so that students are given tools to be servants and stewards within the world (both physical and spiritual) to which they will be progressively lead into. An example of this is the way in which Leviticus teaches children to read and spell. Rather than presenting children with endless spelling lists, children learn the structure of the English language including the basic element of words. They learn the 74 sounds of the English script, called phonograms and they sight the associated letters that go with the sounds.\footnote{Parent Handbook LCS, 1993, p. 4-3.}

This illustrates several aspects of LCS’s approach to schooling and learning. The first is that such a view is plainly a “back to basics” approach. The second is that such an
approach is poorly researched. The wealth of research into the development of language indicates that such an atomistic approach only suits certain kinds of learners at best and does not support the notion of reading for meaning. The third is that this approach rests in a kind of intellectual arrogance which, by undeclared or blindly accepted assumptions, presumes that truth and knowledge as absolutes are known by a process of dissecting and didactic teaching. The language program, as an example, is the Spalding program. The Spalding program is based on the necessity for absolutes in pedagogy. Spalding is particularly emphasised by SM and ECS.

It is worth noting that the founding committee and later council for the establishment of LCS had only one educationalist, Mr John Bright, who was the treasurer and resigned before the establishment of the school. Bright explains that his experience and expertise were totally dismissed in the process of setting up the school in preference for theological imperatives.\(^{48}\) Dr. S. Berkhof, a scientist and the chairman of ZCS, also worked on developing the curriculum.\(^{49}\)

It is interesting to note that some sound educational statements which were in the draft prospectus were omitted from the final prospectus.

7.6c Staffing

The handbook makes it clear that only Protestant teachers will be employed in the school. Such statements do not occur in the documentation of ZCS, HCS or ECS. Such explicit statements of exclusion give a clear indication of the tone and ethos of LCS.

The first teacher of LCS, a former teacher at Pelagius Christian School and committed Christian of reformed persuasion, Susan Pink, was hired in circumstances which are quite common in themelic schools.\(^{50}\) Positions in themelic schools are often not applied for by the prospective employee but the school lobbies and applies for them.\(^{51}\) The idea behind this is that the school finds the person most suitable for the position and ethos of the school, usually someone who is submissive and obedient. This was the

\(^{48}\) Interview Board Member, Secretary 29.4.95
\(^{50}\) Interview Ex-teacher 25.4.95
\(^{51}\) Interview Ex-teacher 3.5.95
case with the first staff member to be employed at LCS. The themelic Christian who is looking for divine guidance is often convinced through this process that God is at work in the situation. This often heightens their disappointment when the employment ends up being hurtful and destructive. The dynamic of such a predicament not only raises questions in the mind of the employee about the mentality of the school but raises problems for them about the mind of God.

In themelic schools, the teacher-as-servant is a common descriptor of the teacher role in the school. The language used to explain the teacher’s role in the school is “ministry” and “calling”, which denotes an expectation of sacrifice and selfless commitment. Many of the teachers who leave the government system and enter a themelic school are quite naive and blindly trusting because of the idealistic theological language which is used to describe what themelic schools do. Job description and remuneration are often not clarified in the themelic school. The naive and sincere Christian teacher usually serves the school in trust that the leadership of the school is competent and Christian. In themelic schools where staff have no formal association, union or representative power, a host of misunderstandings and conflicting messages are communicated in theologically idealistic language. After the enthusiasm settles and the day to day issues of operating in school come to the surface, the teacher often realises that they are without power in a dynamic of parental and church rule, with little or no mechanisms for appeal or participation in the management process. Pink explains:

... reflecting back it was the first of many half-truths or deceptions or disguised truths or whatever. I was told I would be one of three teachers ... I was told I would be the teacher, the only teacher.⁵²

Pink was led to believe she would be teaching a kinder class and ended up teaching a single composite K to 5 class. Much of this came about because of the way management in themelic schools becomes convinced of the rightness of their project. Once management is convinced that God has “ordained” or “blessed” the idea of a themelic school, they often proceed to overestimate the enthusiasm of others for it. It is not so much a question of intentional deception but a combination of incompetence and blindness in the face of uncritical assumptions. The conscientious themelic Christian wants to trust and believe and have faith that God will prevail in the face of evidence to

⁵² Interview Ex-teacher 25.4.95
the contrary. Indeed, themelic Christians tend to revel in miracles when something works against the odds in the life of a school. Much credit is given for the intervention of God, projections are made about blessing and the action is attributed to the faith of the staff.

Pink’s story highlights a major problem in lay management of a themelic school. Pink comments:

One of the difficulties I had was working against the council members. It was in silly things, really silly things like them opening my mail. I found that a huge issue because I don’t see why my mail should be opened by any of them … and council members having expectations that were unrealistic. As I reflect on it now I think I’ve just been an object I’ve never been a teacher in the school. I’ve never been a person.\(^53\)

During her first year, it dawned upon Pink that she was the head teacher, managing a school in its registration year, run by a council, an employing body, which had no educational experience. Pink commented:

I had to teach the council the sort of things they needed to do … I felt they were working against me … the emotional expectations were incredible. Nobody else in their right mind would do this … I felt that I had done something that was superhuman and all they wanted was more … there was no formal anything, no job description, nothing. I was dog’s body, I had to do everything. I had to make sure the cleaning was done, do the administrative things, train a new teacher … all the phone calls that came into the school. I was paid less for teaching six grades than I was being paid to teach one grade at Sutherland … and they’re my two happy years.\(^54\)

These comments are the result of a staffing procedure which is all too common in themelic schools. To understand this, one must grasp the nature of the reformed theological dynamic which energises it.

7.6d History

It is significant that there was a schism in the school council before LCS was commenced. This tendency for schism is characteristic in the corporate psychology of

\(^53\) ibid.
\(^54\) ibid.
fear and insecurity which dominates themelic schools. Its source is most often a preoccupation with theological correctness, which prepares the ground for many undisclosed assumptions about the running of a school. The rift which occurred in the council at LCS reflected a similar rift in the sponsoring Presbyterian church, which ultimately collapsed.\textsuperscript{55} Bright explains:

There were a number of people who has also withdrawn from the membership beforehand as well. The reason behind that was a mixture of political and theological. People felt that they weren’t being told the truth. Some people were being lied to. I certainly expressed it, others just resigned and left. Things got worse, money was spent when we didn’t have the money to spend. There was no accountability. When they were brought to task over it the person concerned managed to avoid the meeting. Subsequently it was never brought up again … When they questioned what was happening they were often abused. The line tended to be one of, “you can’t criticise this, this is God’s work”. “How dare you criticise me”. “We are the ones who know what God wants us to do”. So it was one of denigration.\textsuperscript{56}

Gallagher, a past council and Presbyterian church member, previously a manager of a contracting business, explains why he resigned from council:

To get the funding, I had a lot to do with funding, I felt they were, what was being written down wasn’t quite true. I used to challenge the other members of the council about it. I don’t think they could say it because it was not true. They made out that they had heaps of support when they didn’t have it. It was like they were trying to pull the wool over somebody’s eyes. They had no assets whatsoever. Well I confronted them with a criticism at one time. I asked the question, I can always remember this, I said what happens if we apply for funding, get the funding, start a school and we can’t pay our bills and we are looking at bankruptcy? And the answer to that was, the government will bail us out.\textsuperscript{57}

The driving force behind the establishment of LCS was the Rev. Charles Royal who

\textsuperscript{55} Interview Board Member, Secretary 29.4.95
\textsuperscript{56} ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Interview Board Member, Treasurer 27.4.95
would eventually become the school’s first principal. Royal had previously been a
council member at ZCS and had left after a factional split in 1986. Initially, it was
thought that LCS could collaborate with ZCS in order to set up the first year 11 and 12
themic college in the region, which was to be named Nomos Senior Christian
College.58 Bright describes the intended relationship of LCS to ZCS as a “sister”
school.59 This did not eventuate. The differences between LCS and ZCS, despite a
common language, were simply too great. Many of the reformed, reconstructionist and
fundamentalist parents that had been part of pressures at ZCS moved their allegiance to
LCS. The relationship between the two schools reflected the factional history of ZCS,
with people of reformed tradition fighting with people of evangelical tradition. It is an
illustration of the way themelic schools seem to have so much in common yet simply
cannot cooperate at deeper layers of operation. Gallagher and Bright commented that
ZCS was being constantly criticised by focal people in the LCS council. The criticism
was always theological language and always amounted to the fact that ZCS was not
biblical enough.60 This is often the basis of themelic factionalism and finds its source
in the use of common but rarely clarified expressions.

The school commenced in 1991. Ironically (the minister condemned Catholicism
publicly!), it began in an old Catholic school, moving the following year to their current
site. After the first head teacher was removed and the first principal resigned in 1995,
the school employed a retired themelic school principal as an interim principal.

7.6e Leadership

The school council at LCS must have nine members, six members from the local
Reformed church and Presbyterian church (three each) and three from the parent
association. The parent handbook describes the system of government in the school as
a “representative democracy”.61

To be a member of the parent association, one has to subscribe to the school’s
educational creed and “the great historic Confessions of Faith”, namely the Westminster

58 LCS Minutes of Council, 30 April, 1990, Item 6.7.
59 Interview Board Member, Secretary 29.4.95
60 Interview Board Member, Treasurer 27.4.95
61 ibid. p 1.2
Confession, Belgic Confession, 39 Articles, Augsburg Confession and Baptist Confession of 1689. The Parent Handbook, in response to the question "what is its foundation?" states:

In the world of humanist thought the German philosopher Hegel last century introduced the idea of synthesis. Instead of holding contradictory statements in antithesis, Hegel brought them together in synthesis. When black and white are synthesised, for example, the result is grey. Truth became relative rather than absolute. This notion is all-pervasive across the entire society that is dominated by the humanistic worldview.62

Such thinking is clearly adapted from the work of Francis Schaeffer.63 In such circumstances it would be safe to assume that a fundamentalist and reformed epistemological tradition dominates the life of the school.

The particular theological tradition at the school generated an approach to leadership which is autocratic and arrogant. Bright explains:

I was also responsible for the building committee. I found that I'd be seeing the architect on Saturday on a regular basis, on a Saturday morning. We'd line up various items in terms of plans for the building. I'd speak to the builder that they had proposed and I'd find by the time the following week had occurred, next meeting would come around quite a large number of the plans we had made had been altered by Charles Royal. He would not leave things alone and when I tried to do something about it nothing was done. Other people on the committee just sat and considered it disloyalty because he was the minister ... if you dared to criticise the line that they were going to take, it didn't matter what it was you were deliberately isolated within the committee and I found that within the church as well.64

Bright commented that those who were employed were Christians and were expected to do such work for nothing because they were sympathetic with the project to start a themelic school.65

62 ibid. p. 42.
64 Interview Board Member, Secretary 29.4.95
65 ibid.
7.6f Management

The strict and closed enrolment policy ensures that the laity of the school conforms strictly with rigid reformed and reconstructionist dogma. Children of non-Christian parents are not admitted to the school. This is the theory-in-use of the school. Whilst the school espouses an open enrolment policy and emphasises the diversity of denominations in the school in the face of deregistration of their high school by DEET this is far from reality. The reason why the school fails to get the numbers needed for high school registration is because of the narrow and insular ethos of the school.

7.6g Hermeneutics

The governing hermeneutic in the school is fundamentalist, expressed in reformed and reconstructionist language.

7.6h Psychological factors

The school, particularly some sectors of the parents and council, has been characterised by fear, stress, anxiety, insecurity and authoritarianism throughout its history. These have been generated by dogmatic elements in the lay parent body and council who are conditioned by a reformed preoccupation with submission, authority and loyalty. When someone is not submissive in themelic schools, aspersions are cast upon the quality of the employee's Christianity. Pink describes her treatment as abuse, confirming the perspective of Ronald M. Enroth's book Churches that Abuse\textsuperscript{66} which she had read and found comfort in. Pink commented that Enroth had had it right and had described the way she was treated with accuracy.

Enroth makes seven pertinent points about churches that abuse, and Pink confirms them from her experience in a themelic school. First, abusive churches are fanatical, they push the edges of sense. Second, they focus on authority and power. Third, they manipulate and control people through fear, guilt and threats. Fourth, they view themselves as special, as exceptions to common law and accepted norms of working relationships. Fifth, they foster rigidity in life style and epistemology. Sixth, they discourage questioning. Seventh, they make leaving painful. They are unable to set up structures which allow disagreement so that the thought of leaving is interpreted as disloyalty and betrayal. This perspective is reinforced by many others.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{66} Enroth, R. M., Churches that Abuse Michigan, Zondervan, 1992.
\textsuperscript{67} Interviews with collection of Ex-teachers and Principals
Pink comments:

... the parents don’t know what has gone on and have been told lies and a slanderous letter has gone out to them and they have said we know you, we don’t believe it.\textsuperscript{68}

Strategies for dealing with dissent are met with indignation and righteous anger. Themelic people are not prepared to believe that those in authority could possibly be corrupt or wrong. When letters and circulars are disseminated to parents and staff about problems, this mindset is exploited to the full.

Pink was eventually dismissed from LCS for requesting time off due to stress. She commented:

At the middle of that year I wrote to council and said I was having real difficulties, I needed time off. I asked for six weeks leave. I said I felt my need was so great that if they didn’t give me time off I would have to resign. Meaning that was the import of my need. They saw that as me threatening them. So I went away, and this is where it became more like a cult than a school. I was not to walk on school property or speak to any of the teachers in that time ... It took me a long time to realise how wicked they were ... that whole code of silence is very much used by abusers.\textsuperscript{69}

Whilst Pink took the time off and visited her parents and family to recuperate, the council had arranged a contract for her return. A number of meetings followed which Pink commented on

... all of that time I’m undermining men’s authority and I’m undermining council’s authority. I’m just trying to survive as a person. The meeting was bloody but there was only one person who was massacred and that was me ... but there is this pseudo-Christian mentality that covers it ... the key matter was that I did not respect due authority ... I did want to respect authority but it’s very hard when you’ve got a fool running a school which is a place for people.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{68} Interview Ex-teacher 25.4.95
\textsuperscript{69} ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} ibid.
Gallagher described the school as secretive and fearful.\textsuperscript{71} A similar story is told by Mr Macintosh about ZCS.\textsuperscript{72}

7.6i Epistemology

The theory of knowledge which dominates at LCS is fundamentalist (naive realist).

7.6j Culture

The closed membership and enrolment policy of the school ensures a strong reformed, fundamentalist and reconstructionist character in the culture of the school.

\textbf{Leviticus Christian School}

\textit{Policy & Practice}

\textbf{Figure 10.}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Surface Observable} & \textbf{N\textsuperscript{VE}} & \textbf{Ev} & \textbf{Ch} & \textbf{Pe} & \textbf{Ref} & \textbf{Fun} & \textbf{Cr} & \textbf{An} & \textbf{Rec} \\
\hline
\textbf{Less determinate} & & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Espoused} & & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Theory} & & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Language} & & & & & LCS & & & & LCS \\
\hline
\textbf{Pedagogy} & & & & & LCS & & & & LCS \\
\hline
\textbf{Staffing} & & & & & LCS & & & & LCS \\
\hline
\textbf{History} & & & LCS & LCS & & LCS & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Leadership} & & LCS & LCS & & & LCS & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Management} & LCS & LCS & & & & LCS & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Hermeneutics} & LCS & LCS & LCS & & & & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Psych factors} & LCS & LCS & LCS & & & & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{Epistemology} & LCS & LCS & LCS & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Thematic Layers}
\item \textbf{School Culture}
\item \textbf{Less observable}
\item \textbf{More determinate}
\item \textbf{Theory-in-use}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{71} Interview Board Member, Treasurer 27.4.95

\textsuperscript{72} Interview Ex-teacher 31.10.94
It can be seen from the grid that LCS’s operations are tightly grouped in two areas. The connection of reconstructionist and reformed theology creates an extremely rigid environment which is characterised by conformity. The multiple characters in each of the layers indicates the blending of fundamentalist, reformed and reconstructionistologies. It can be seen that there is a loosening of dogmatism the closer one gets to the classroom which has been consistent throughout these case studies although, in the case of LCS the extent to which pedagogy is relaxed is still on the right of the diagram and far more rigid in comparison to ZCS or HCS.

The two groupings in the grid indicate a clear gap between espoused theory and theory-in-use. This does not augur well for the school’s ability to double-loop learn despite the school’s size. Indeed, the smallness of size of ECS and LCS seems to assist the maintenance of cohesion around a smaller and more powerful core than the larger schools.

### 7.7 Comparative analysis

The following diagram (Figure 11), a comparative overview, highlights the differences between the themed schools in the case study. The diagram shows similar structures in ZCS and HCS in the areas of language, pedagogy, staffing, leadership thinking and laity thinking; and ZCS and LCS share strong ties in hermeneutic and psychological factors. LCS and ECS share strong ties in theology, hermeneutics and psychological factors. HCS tends to stand on its own as a bastion of charismatic/pentecostal interests. All themed schools share the same fundamentalist epistemology. It is not unusual therefore to find that the schools have some level of exchange in these areas.

The diagram indicates that LCS has the strongest and most consistently dogmatic approach to themed schooling compared with the other themed schools in the case studies. ECS and HCS share some similarities in charismatic emphasis, particularly in history, staffing and laity thinking. ECS and LCS have worked together in the area of theology and policy formation because they share similar reconstructionist/reformed theologies. LCS uses ZCS resources (buildings and staff) in the areas of technics, food studies and textiles for financial reasons. ZCS and HCS have had a very low level of exchange over the years, sometimes with classes going on camp together, staff
exchanges or assistance in the area of financial management. ZCS has extensive exchange with all non-government and government schools in the region in most curriculum areas, which reflects the dominance of evangelicalism in their profile. The three other themelic schools keep to themselves, with very little exchange with other government and non-government schools in the region. One reason for this exclusiveness is the sheer busyness of small schools attempting to do big school business. Another reason is that ECS and LCS do not exchange with outsiders for theological reasons. There is no firm relationship at all of LCS and ECS with HCS. LCS and ECS because of their theology tend to view HCS and especially ZCS as having compromised with “the world”. This will be explored in Chapter 12. The overall history of these schools reflects a profound lack of mutual cooperation and affinity in practice. The real agreement between these schools is one of language and leadership style. Despite this the following diagram places the four schools in two clear groups. The two smaller schools ECS and LCS share a more rigid theology and have cooperated on writing curriculum. The two larger schools ZCS and HCS have cooperated in staff and class exchanges and joint class activities.

The diagram (on the following page) shows a strong grouping of all schools in epistemology, hermeneutics and psychological factors and this reflects the basic fundamentalist approach where all the schools have the most in common. Hence the importance of understanding fundamentalist epistemology, as addressed in the next chapter.
### Case Studies

**A Comparison**

#### Figure 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themaic Layers</th>
<th>Theological Traditions</th>
<th>School Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>N/Ev ▲ Ev * Ch Pz Ref Fun Cr An Rec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>▲ *</td>
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<td>Hermeneutics</td>
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<td>Epistemology</td>
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**Key**

- ZCS ▲
- HCS *
- ECS □
- LCS †

*Less observable
*More determinate
*Theory-in-use

*More Relaxed
*More Dogmatic
7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced diagrams as tools for understanding the differences among and within themelic schools. The diagrams have been used to develop a grid which combines the theological dynamic at work in themelic schools with their layers of operation. The case studies and grid provide a useful reference point for those outside themelic schooling to make comparisons with other non government school models. The next chapter will explore other ways of explaining these schools in Australia and overseas.
Chapter 8
Themic Schools Under the Influence of Fundamentalist Epistemology

8.1 Introduction

The greatest possibility of miseducation in themic schools stems from the quest for security and certainty in fundamentalist epistemology. In this chapter I explore this epistemology and its influence in themic schools. I also look at where confusion causes conflict, and how this fits with the generally accepted claims of educational theory and pedagogical practice. Naive realism undergirds this epistemology, as is evident in themic curriculum statements. I employ the theory of cognitive dissonance to suggest an understanding of how themic people handle this confusion.

At a practical level, themic schools are far removed from the extremes of militant fundamentalism. Most themic schools, however, use fundamentalist language to describe their activities. This language is important to themic schoolers because it reassures them that they are being faithful to their convictions. Yet while themic schools use fundamentalist epistemology and a fundamentalist hermeneutic as a structure for interpreting knowledge, they are rarely fundamentalist in relation to the surrounding culture. Mostly they merge comfortably with it. Themic school administrators and teachers are usually quite pragmatic about day-to-day school management which, indeed, tempers the effects of fundamentalist hermeneutics and epistemology. Most themic schools, except for those most influenced by reconstructionist and anabaptist traditions, calculate their numbers carefully as any other school to get their due funding. They accept without question the modern structure of schooling and curriculum, following the government syllabus. The curriculum is not very different in content from that of state schools other than for its inclusion of a smattering of Christian or biblical language. The claim of some that themic schools are different in curriculum lacks supporting evidence. Most of their activity is the same as at other schools. The real differences lie in how themic schoolers talk about
themselves and how they shape and manage professional and personal relationships, and create a school culture.

In order to understand this difference between what is said and what is done, we need to discuss the guiding concerns and principles of fundamentalist epistemology.

8.2 Roots of themelic schools: the evangelical fundamentalist context

Wills, like Mayer who was quoted in the opening of the thesis, draws attention to the way in which fundamentalism seems to catch intellectuals by surprise.

In a time of reviving fundamentalisms around the world, some Americans have rediscovered our native fundamentalisms (a recurring, rather than cumulative, experience for the learned). It seems careless for scholars to keep misplacing such a large body of people. Nonetheless, every time religiosity catches the attention of intellectuals, it is as if a shooting star has appeared in the sky.¹

Since World War II the increases in technology, urbanisation, social mobility, universal education and higher living standards have obscured the presence of a subcultural group of people in Australian society, namely themelic Christians. That these people with a conservative Protestant history and sharing a fundamentalist theory of knowledge, have come together to influence the process of schooling is now being recognised by scholars. Robin Gill comments:

The theories of secularisation which typified the 1960s seriously misled both sociologists and theologians and reduced their ability to predict or understand the rise of fundamentalism.²

Recently, the noted social researcher Hugh Mackay stated:

The turbulence of the past 20 years has led to a craving for simple certainty which can lead, all too easily, to the delusion that simple certainty is justified - even when it is not. The present climate of instability and

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insecurity creates the very real danger of gullibility and, in turn, leaves the way open for a dream run by fundamentalists of all kinds - religious, environmental, political, cultural, astrological and economic.\(^3\)

Mackay bases his argument on evidence gathered for *The Mackay Report*\(^4\) and notes several characteristics of the fundamentalist position, namely:

... belief in a number of absolute propositions or principles which while not capable of being proven, appear self evident to those who believe in them and form the basis of a complete (and generally static) system of belief ... they are generally anxious to assert the wrongness of alternative points of view and, wherever possible, to try to recruit converts to the rightness of their position. Fundamentalists tend to have a low tolerance of ambiguity, an impatience with the notion of compromise, and an unwillingness to accept the possibility that there may be some legitimate grey areas between the extremes of black and white.\(^5\)

... subtlety, complexity, ambiguity and mystery are unwelcome intruders into their cozy fortress.\(^6\)

... do experience a powerful sense of purpose.\(^7\)

Gill perceives two general features of fundamentalism, the cognitive and the sociological. At the cognitive level, fundamentalism can be seen as a series of movements committed to scriptural absolutism. At a sociological level, it can be seen as a series of countercultures, as movements consciously opposed to the pluralism and relativism that appear to accompany modernity.\(^8\) These two features are intimately related: scriptural absolutism is upheld as a counter to modernity and defines the varying countercultural forms that the fundamentalist assumes. In the field of education the undiluted quest for orthodoxy fetters creativity and imagination and threatens the ability

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\(^4\) *The Mackay Report* is a continuous program of qualitative research which began in 1979 through the Centre for Communication Studies established by Hugh Mackay in 1975. Mackay has published 66 Mackay Reports up to the end of 1992. Mackay Research also publishes an occasional series of syndicated market research reports. Under the series title *Marketscan*, these reports explore consumer attitudes, values, motivations and aspirations as they apply to specific markets.

\(^5\) ibid., p. 244.

\(^6\) ibid., p. 247.

\(^7\) ibid., p. 248.

\(^8\) Gill, op. cit., p. 22.
of themelic schools to educate, by enticing them to indoctrinate.

It is my contention that since the 1950s, when the influence of the church was considerable, many conservative Christians have moved, as church influence has declined, from a comfortable neutrality in society to an increased involvement, particularly in themelic schooling. Whilst the more orthodox church has been gradually losing numbers and enthusiasm, the themelic movement has been laying foundations which confront the very root of what themelic people perceive to be the "problem", the socialisation and homogenisation of children through schooling.

8.3 The Characteristics of Fundamentalism

It is instructive to know the roots and characteristics of fundamentalism in America and, indeed, its strong influence on themelic schooling in Australia. It is also true that the Australian Protestant context is shaped by a British influence which has longer historical roots in Australia than its American counterpart. Added to this amalgam of influence upon Protestant Christianity in Australia is the particular impression made by the Dutch and reformed (Calvinist) theology upon themelic schools. The themelic composite is a common ideology derived from several historical/theological traditions.

For the purpose of examining the influences of fundamentalism on the character of themelic schools it is instructive to explore the work of Marty and Appleby in the Fundamentalism Project, sponsored by the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences. With the help of Marty and Appleby, Parker, Spong, Barr.

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12 Spong, *Rescuing the Bible* ... op. cit.
Boone, Cohen, Marsden and Ammerman, I have constructed a list of common characteristics usually attributed to historical fundamentalism. In the list, characteristics which have implications for a fundamentalist theory of knowledge and practice have been italicised. Throughout the consideration of these characteristics, the diagrams and discussion of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 which emphasised the variation and degree of extremes in the themelic system ought to be remembered. The generally accepted characteristics of fundamentalism are discussed below.

1. **Extremism**, whilst not objectified in individuals or institutions, is a precondition for breaking away from what is understood to be wrong. Extremism is seen as an ideal typical impulse characteristic of the separatist or sectarian spirit. This is not understood by fundamentalists as separatism but as refusing fellowship with unbelievers, as not being yoked with unrighteousness, or as not communing with darkness. The degree of extremism varies, depending on the theological tradition that dominates each themelic school.

2. **Religious idealism** is a central characteristic, for the transcendent realm of the divine is made normative for the religious community. This alone provides an irreducible basis for communal and personal identity which is perceptible in the way fundamentalists respond by a habit of mind. The fundamentalist believes that only an identity founded on the fundamentals can remain free from erosion and corruption, impenetrable and immune to substantial change and aloof from the vicissitudes of history and reason.

3. Identity is understood as ontological, as rooted in the very nature of being in relationship with God and therefore beyond the reach of human temporal and spatial considerations and the relativising force of history. Born-again Christians understand their life to be a participation in “a new creation”: having “put on

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Christ" by the "renewing of the mind" (Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 2:16) and
they enjoy the benefits of a new status as "righteous servants of the Lord". The
fundamentalist understanding of such Bible passages, tempered by separatism,
leads to *exclusivism*.

4. *Revealed truth* is depicted as a unified, knowable and undifferentiated
whole.

5. An intentionally *scandalous disposition* is espoused. The fundamentalist
does not expect the outsider to understand the transrational claims of the believer
because those beliefs are a stumbling block.\(^{18}\) Indeed, the "natural man",
according to the Bible,\(^{19}\) cannot discern the things of the spirit of God.

6. *Opposition to historical consciousness*, especially if it is interpreted and
translated by modernists into foundational principles of relativism. This partly
assists the fundamentalist to maintain immunity from absorption of relativist ideas.
Fundamentalists reject the proposition that our belief and practice are historically
conditioned and contingent. Were fundamentalists to concede that the human
mind conditions and limits the truth of revelation, their truth claims would stand
for nothing and they would be susceptible to tests of relative adequacy and
foreign criteria of evaluation.

7. Whether rhetorical or actual, an extremism exists that serves as *a litmus
test to separate true believers from outsiders*. This is evident in a *vocabulary of
belief* and a stereotyping of non-believers.\(^{20}\)

8. There is a *claim to privileged access to absolute truth* and an associated
rejection of all forms of hermeneutics, with the insistence that the fundamentalist is
correct. *The primacy of truth* is crucial to fundamentalists. They see their
existence as a bulwark against error and theological compromise.

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\(^{18}\) 1 Corinthians 1: 23

\(^{19}\) 1 Corinthians 2: 14

\(^{20}\) Peshkin, A., *God's Choice: The Total World of a Fundamentalist Christian School* Chicago,
9. The understanding of an either/or identity of elect and reprobate allows the fundamentalist to divide the world into kingdoms or provinces of darkness and light. This is coupled with an intense personalism. Individuals feel they have known God, not through priestly intermediaries but directly. This gives a feeling of certainty for what God wants for them and the world. This guidance is often gained from reading the Bible for advice, resulting in an extreme form of what Hill calls a magical approach in thinking. Thus, whilst intensely individualistic, this guidance results in high absolutist moral expression.

10. A position of no compromise with other doctrines or practices is adopted and an insistence on the purity and integrity of their doctrine.

11. The repudiation of secular scientific notions of progress and gradual historical evolution allows fundamentalists to reject humanistic notions of science and evolution in particular because they allegedly contradict the Bible.

12. Dramatic eschatology shapes their identity. Scenarios of the apocalypse are invoked to justify various programs. Fundamentalism is basically messianic and apocalyptic.

13. A consciousness of a particular historical moment is matched to the Bible with an extraordinary interpretation of time and space. The predominance of premillennial dispensationalism in the history of the fundamentalist movement is evidence of this. This doctrine, revived by J. N. Darby and C. I. Scofield holds to the literal rapture (taking up to heaven) of believers in the clouds in order to escape a literal tribulation in the end times. Dispensationalists interpret history through dispensations or ages, as determined by their biblical framework.

14. Fundamentalists name, dramatise and even mythologise their enemies. Dualistic readings of the Bible allow renderings of a metahistory which provides fundamentalists with a cosmic enemy. They tend to think in polarities. This gives activities an apocalyptic urgency and fosters a crisis mentality, which helps to justify missionary zeal and extremism. Belief in a literal devil and demons

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21 Hill, Greening ... op. cit., p. 130.
22 Marsden, Understanding Fundamentalism op. cit., pp. 39ff.
assists in locating a cosmic conspiracy by the enemy and all non-believers are perceived to be accomplices, either consciously or unconsciously, in the work of Satan. However, fundamentalists are often more afraid of Christians who deviate than they are of pagans or atheists, because such behaviour casts greater doubt on their own convictions, especially due to the doctrine of inerrancy. One of the most visible qualities of fundamentalism is its tendency to split into quarrelling subunits who contend with each other over minor theological issues.

15. An orientation of contrast against other cultures is evident. The identification and elaboration of the enemy is often the initial step in the rhetoric of negation. Fundamentalists need to name and locate the enemy, an urge which is evident in anti-Communist, anti-Catholic, anti-ecumenical and anti-New Age polemics.

16. Fundamentalists set boundaries, protect the group from contamination and preserve its purity. This is done through the maintenance of gatekeeping language and processes of indoctrination.

17. Turning the nation around is the goal of the fundamentalist. Fundamentalists yearn for a theocratic state. This is the Calvinist extreme most pronounced in reconstructionist language.

18. A totalitarian impulse is evident in the mobilisation and organisation against the enemy. Fundamentalists seek to replace existing structures with a comprehensive system.

19. Fundamentalists are selectively traditional and selectively modern. They select carefully, from the plethora of doctrines, practices and interpretations that are available in the Christian tradition, those that suit their subculture.

20. They employ ideological weapons against a hostile world. The Christian fundamentalist doctrine of biblical inerrancy is the 19th century construction of Princeton theologians who legitimised its formulation and development as necessary, given the advent of Higher Criticism.

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21. **Charismatic and authoritarian male leadership is idealised.** Fundamentalists repudiate traditionally rationalised notions of religious leadership, institutionalised religion and the scholarship associated with it.

22. **An envy and resentment of modernity is coupled with a shrewd exploitation of its processes and instrumentalities.** One of the contradictions of fundamentalist behaviour is their use of technology to evangelise.

23. Fundamentalists are institution builders with a comprehensive plan for society. Alternative para-church institutions were formed in the 1930s and 1940s in the face of embarrassing public defeats at the hands of theological liberals. These independent agencies became the organisational replacement for ineffective denominational affiliation.²⁴

24. **A rationalistic assertion of the truth** which comes about by the objectification of revelation. There is a curious and perhaps awkward imitation of the perceived empiricism of the enemy (secular rationality). The style of fundamentalist apologetics is a prime example.²⁵ Even though fundamentalism has a religious basis, in its anxiety to secure credibility in an empirical position it tends to rob Christianity of mystery, imagination, mysticism, complexity, ambiguity and situational character.²⁶

This list serves as a useful benchmark or ideal type in establishing the extent of fundamentalist dominance of themelic schooling. As a benchmark, this list allows the reader to determine the extent to which characteristics of fundamentalism govern a given situation.

Take an example, in the area of curriculum. Some themelic schools accept the standards dictated by the government regarding curriculum, texts and examination requirements, particularly for the final year of high school. Such a situation is perceived by

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²⁴ Parker, op. cit., pp. 345ff.
fundamentalists in a themelic school as a compromise. The notion of compromise is not a fundamentalist characteristic. The fundamentalist tends to censor books and reject government curricula and denies any validity to government standards. Themelic school library committees and curriculum committees are often battlegrounds for fundamentalists, behaving as watchdogs.

The themelic schools which tend to use their own texts or material from ACE or similar American resources are more fundamentalist than others. Even so, in some themelic schools such as CCS schools, there are texts (units or “measures”) developed for the younger ages. In CCS schools there is little or no developed standardised curricula for the senior years. As a benchmark, the characteristic of no compromise helps determine to what extent a particular themelic school has a fundamentalist attitude to curriculum.

In themelic schools, English and Science attract the most attention from fundamentalists. Often books with a high level of violence are overlooked whilst a nursery rhyme book with a mention of a witch is rejected. It is important to understand that fundamentalists are preoccupied with sexual, moral and occult material. In school discipline policy, one school might cane and hit children in accordance with a literal understanding of Bible passages and these schools could be deemed fundamentalist in discipline policy. Another themelic school might adopt the Glasser system\(^{27}\) (progressive withdrawal of students) or Rogers’ discipline system,\(^{28}\) which both have a humanist basis. The same schools might then seemingly contradict their stance on discipline in other areas such as school management. One may operate a fairly egalitarian notion of management and allow staff to have considerable freedom where the other might police the staff and maintain authoritarian structures of management.

It can be seen that the characteristics of fundamentalism do not predict the features of all themelic schools in any consistent sense. As shown in Chapter 7, the degree to which a school reflects fundamentalist characteristics is determined by the dominant theological tradition in that school, particularly through persons on school councils or executive staff. What is consistent in all themelic schools is a fundamentalist epistemology and hermeneutic rooted in the doctrine of inerrancy. Most themelic schoolers are biblical literalists and this allows the more extreme elements of fundamentalist thinking to hold sway in the running of the school.

\(^{27}\) Glasser, W., 10 Steps to Good Discipline Today’s Education Nov. - Dec., 1977.

\(^{28}\) Rogers, B., You Know the Fair Rule  Hawthorn, ACER, 1990.
8.4 The influence of fundamentalist epistemology

J.D. Hunter states:

... the great pretence of fundamentalists, of whatever stripe, is their conviction that what they espouse and what they seek to promote is a basic, unaltered orthodoxy.\(^{29}\)

Hunter argues that, because fundamentalism strives so hard to maintain a continuity with the past - that is, with orthodoxy - this continuity is broken in the very effort given to keep it from breaking. He calls this “the final irony”.\(^{30}\) This attempt at orthodoxy is reflected in the history of the reformation, restorationism and revivalism in the “free church” traditions. Each of these movements in the history of the Protestant church emphasises the quest to rediscover a purer form of Christianity and a stronger sense of infallible truth.

Epistemologically, the attempt to maintain an orthodox continuity has generated an unorthodox position because its epistemological position dictates an atemporal and ahistorical stance which is antithetical to important elements within a much longer tradition of Christian orthodoxy. For example, the fundamentalist position tends to ignore the element of mystery in religious knowledge and the life of faith, the necessity for a certain hermeneutical pluralism, questions of existentialist epistemologies and a healthy tolerance of ambiguity.

Fundamentalism has also become unorthodox owing to its uncritical adoption of rationalist thought. This has happened with respect to its claims to knowledge. Setting Protestant fundamentalism within the context of modern thought is not new: Marsden has shown this association.\(^{31}\)

8.5 The features of modernity

The focus of this section of the thesis is historical and philosophical. I aim to show that Protestant fundamentalism, in its view of knowledge and truth, has been shaped by its


\(^{30}\) ibid., p. 70.

supposed opposite, modernism. The epistemology of fundamentalism is much closer to the tenets of modernity than fundamentalists would ever care to admit. (See also Chapter 11.)

Murphy and McClendon define the modern era as "the age of scepticism, reductionism, individualism and the flight from (traditional) authority". 32

Scholars such as Taylor, Norris, Lehman and Berger tend to treat Descartes and the Enlightenment as the beginning of the modern era. 33 They refer to three central philosophical ideas to construct a three-dimensional conceptual "space" of modernism: epistemological foundationalism, atomism or reductionism and the representational-expressivist theory of language. Murphy and McClendon define the three-dimensional modernist conceptual "space" making a grid with these three theories as axes - epistemological, linguistic and metaphysical. On each axis is a positive and negative pole; epistemological foundationalism is opposed by scepticism; atomism, by collectivism; and representationalism, by expressivism.

Epistemological foundationalism is the view that knowledge can be justified by only finding indubitable "foundational" beliefs upon which it is constructed. 34 It argues that at some point one must reach a belief that needs no further justification. Atomism or reductionism is an attempt to understand reality by reducing it to its smallest parts. 35 Murphy and McClendon argue that reductionism has assisted in the justification of ontological individualism which is exemplified in the social contract theory of government. 36 This theory asserts the equality and integrity of individuals before their agreement to enter society. Society is viewed as a collection of individuals united for mutual benefit. This argument is significant, given the claims thematic schoolers make

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32 Murphy, N. and McClendon, J., Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies Modern Theology April, 1989, p. 192.
36 Murphy, N. and McClendon, J., op. cit.
against modernism and it is worth remembering when investigating themelic strategies of management. This thesis argues that themelic schools share much in common with the modernism they claim to reject. The representationalist-expressivist theory of language (positivistic empiricism) argues that language must gain its primary meaning by representing objects or facts to which it refers; otherwise it merely expresses the attitudes of the speaker. The fact-value distinction requires that all ethical discourse, classified as non-factual, be merely expressive.

Murphy and McClendon’s argument is that any departure from this space that does not regress to pre-modernist space can be deemed postmodernist. Whilst it is not the purpose of the thesis to enter the debate about postmodernism it is important to note that conservative Christians perceive the theory of postmodernism as a danger.\(^{37}\) This is because the scepticism of postmodernism attacks the basis of foundationalism. Both theories are concerned with the same view of knowledge, absolutes and certainty.

Harvey Cox makes the point that it comes as a shock to scholars who begin to examine Protestant fundamentalism believing it to be a religion of educationally irrationalist and moronic people only to find that, rather than despising science and rationalist discourse, they in fact tend to place considerable confidence in both.

Quoting Professor Benjamin Warfield of the Princeton school, he writes:

\[\text{It is the distinction of Christianity that it has come into the world clothed with the mission to reason its way to its dominion. Other religions may appeal to the sword, or seek some other way to propagate themselves. Christianity makes its appeal to right reason, and stands among all religions, therefore as distinctively “the Apologetic religion”. It is solely by reasoning that it has come thus far on its way to kingship. And it is solely by reasoning that it will put all its enemies under its feet.}^{38}\]

Cox explains that this respect for reason has been attributed to fundamentalism’s having been unduly influenced, as many “anti” movements are, by its opponent. That is to

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say, its determination and fanatical combat with modernity have forced fundamentalism to "fight fire with fire". Perhaps this occurs as a psychological mechanism of engagement in polemics and adversarialism. That is, the nature of polemical discourse generates in people the adoption of the other's framework as the basis for that discourse. This has been explored by Harris\textsuperscript{39} and Wing Han Lamb\textsuperscript{40} in their assessment of the Peter Cameron heresy incident. Cameron was declared a heretic and excommunicated by the NSW Presbyterian church in 1993 and since then has been a crusader against fundamentalism. Harris and Wing Han Lamb conclude that Cameron has adopted the discourse of the fundamentalist (certainty, control, righteousness, crusading) in his battle against his opponents. In a similar way, in a conscious "battle" with modernity, fundamentalism has become defined by it. The polarity of fundamentalism, with its sense of "other", marks it as a stance. This is crucial when considering espoused theory and theories-in-use in themelic schools. What themelic schools espouse is a significant break with the surrounding culture, modernity, secular humanism and rationalism. What is in fact their theory-in-use resembles the discourse and framework of their supposed "other".

Research by social psychologists, particularly the work pioneered by Bruno Bettelheim\textsuperscript{41} names this process as "resocialisation". Bettelheim's study showed how prisoners in Dachau and Buchenwald adopted the values and behaviour of their Gestapo guards.\textsuperscript{42} Studies by social psychologists indicate that this identification with one's other is exacerbated when one is under threat or stress.\textsuperscript{43} The idea of functioning out of one's inferior function or one's opposite under stress (as a part of a discussion of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and themelic leadership) is explored in Chapter 13.

The epistemology which most influences themelic schools is naive realism or empiricist biblicism, which stresses science and reason, the dominance of technical reasoning, the

\textsuperscript{39} Harris, H. A., Where Love and Reason Fail: Fundamentalist and Liberal Intolerance examined with Reference to Peter Cameron's Heresy Trial St Mark's Review No. 164, 1996, pp. 2-9.

\textsuperscript{40} Wing Han Lamb, W., Beyond Tolerance: on Describing a Fundamentalist St Mark's Review No. 164, 1996, pp. 10-15.


\textsuperscript{43} Mann, L., Social Psychology Sydney, John Wiley and Sons, 1973, p. 10.
emphasis on certainty within faith and within its objectivist apologetics, the view of knowledge as an edifice and the “absolute conception of reality” that is believed possible.

8.6 Protestant fundamentalist epistemology and Scottish common sense realism

Marsden refers to Protestant fundamentalism’s commitment to reason as “inductive rationalism” which explains fundamentalist reaction to evolution and Darwinianism and its commitment to an inerrant Bible as a storehouse of knowable infallible truth. Marsden documents the threads of Baconian philosophy and Scottish common sense realism that developed in fundamentalism through the Presbyterian church and Princeton University in the 19th century, culminating in the foundation of Protestant fundamentalism in America in the 1920s.

Marsden refers to this epistemology as Scottish common sense realism. Its place in the history of Christianity is quite recent.

Scottish common sense philosophy said that the human mind was so constructed that we can know the real world directly. Scottish common sense realism was well suited to the prevailing ideals of American culture in the 18th century. This was not entirely accidental, since the American nation and Scottish realism both took shape in the 1700s. This philosophy was, above all, democratic and anti-elitist. In the 1800s it was the dominant philosophy taught in American colleges. For evangelicals, this philosophy correlated faith, learning and morality with the welfare of civilization. Two premises were absolutely fundamental: that God’s truth was a single unified order and that all persons of common sense were capable of knowing that truth. Such a view of common sense stands in stark contrast to the notion of common sense philosophy developed in the 20th century, which viewed the claims of metaphysics to be in conflict with common sense.44

The champion of this philosophy, Thomas Reid (1710-1796), answered the scepticism of David Hume and the interposing “ideas” of John Locke by stating that only

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philosophers and madmen would take their ideas seriously and that the implications of their doctrines were absurd. Reid made it plain that everyone in their right mind believes common sense truths such as the existence of the real world, cause and effect, and the continuity of the self. Everyone does believe in a real world, he argued, and there are not intermediary ideas which are the reality. Humeans, he stressed, like all others, duck when they go through a low doorway. Based on the right sorts of reliable evidence, we are justified in believing the facts of the past with virtual certainty, he claimed. He argued that courts of law rely upon this form of knowledge and such common sense, he claimed, was the surest guide to truth. The democratic implications of such a philosophy had a strong appeal for a people’s government. As Thomas Jefferson recognised, it provided one basis for a new democratic and republican order for the ages. Scottish common sense philosophy appealed to Americans in the 19th century because it provided a firm foundation for a scientific approach to reality. In a nation born during the Enlightenment, reverence for science as the way to understand all aspects of reality was nearly unbounded. Evangelical Christians and liberal figures of the Enlightenment alike assumed that the physical universe was governed by a rational system of laws guaranteed by an all-wise and benevolent creator. The ability to know and depend on these laws became the sure rock on which Christians based their empirical structure. The strongest bastion of this school of thought was Princeton Theological Seminary in the 19th century.

Marsden comments:

Baconianism appeared everywhere in the writings of the Princetonians, just as it did among American scientists of the era. The Princeton theologians saw themselves as champions of “impartiality” in the careful examination of the facts, as opposed to “metaphysical and philosophical speculations” such as those of German Biblical critics.

German “higher criticism”, which was championed by F. C. Baur and the Tubingen school, attacked this idea. They argued that the fear of relativity, existentialism and evolution is grounded in the fear of uncertainty. The necessity for certitude was challenged by higher criticism, relativity, evolution and existentialism. Charles Hodge,

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45 ibid., pp. 192-93
46 Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American* ... op. cit., pp. 111-12.
the leading nineteenth century exponent of "Princeton theology", confirmed this in his *Systematic Theology* when he stated:

> The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man. It is his storehouse of facts.⁴⁷

Hodge was educated at Princeton and later became a lecturer at the Princeton seminary. His own theology was that of the Westminster Confession and scholastic Calvinism. His influence through his writings, particularly his three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1872-73), spread way beyond the Old School Presbyterian circles.

Scottish common sense philosophy assured Christian people that they could discover unchanging truths in the storehouse of the Bible. Common sense philosophy, in contrast to most philosophy since Descartes and Locke, held that the immediate objects of our perceptions were not *ideas* of the external world, but (as the *Princeton Review* put it) "we are directly conscious of the external objects themselves".⁴⁸ The same principle applied to memory: what we remember is not the *idea* of a past event, but the past itself. The important aspect of this principle for the fundamentalist mind is the notion of reliability. The idea of the Bible containing points of view, of being conditioned by varying hermeneutical principles, is anathema to the fundamentalist and the general run of the mill themelic school. It is simply believed that the "facts" of the Bible are not contestable.

This school of theological thought also insists that the Westminster Confession represents, as as closely as humanly possible, the system of doctrine contained in Scripture. Criticism of the Westminster Confession in reformed themelic schools is understood as an attack on Scripture.

J. Gresham Machen, the Princeton lecturer in New Testament, who is still quoted in some themelic school circles, followed Scottish common sense realism in his approach to history. Whilst others of the historical-critical school were debating the illusion of "facts" and hermeneutical changes according to time and perspective, Machen was arguing for the unshifting place of facts. The good thing about facts for Machen was

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⁴⁸ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American ...* *op. cit.*, p. 113.
that they did not change. Certainty was essential. Machen, taking the extreme position, argued that events were inherently significant depending on the significance God gave them. So, in order to know a fact, we also need to discover its significance. In the case of scriptural events, this significance was discovered via revelation. Facts were not open to interpretation. For Machen, historical interpretation was understood to be the effort of discovering facts and their significance as revealed. Humans therefore do not create meaning; they find it. He was so sure of this sense of discovering truth that he took exception to the notion of “interpretation”.49 At the turn of the century numerous books testified to the notion that revelation was knowable and certain. The idea that Christianity was universally provable and self-evident was popular.50

This position illustrates the denial of variations in interpretation by a fundamentalist epistemology, an epistemology that dominates thematic schooling. This is evident in the thematic view of history as well. In the 1991 CPCS Curriculum Summit Wilson states:

From a Christian perspective, history is the study of the ways in which people have responded in the past to the divine mandates given at the genesis of human history to rule over and care for creation in just and stewardly ways that also contribute to the building of reconciling, personal human communities.51

It is important to note this view of divine mandates, which undergirds other comments like the espoused rejection of positivistic approaches. What results is a Christian positivism which rejects humanist positivism. While the rhetoric endeavours to accommodate problems of positivism, thematic schools are nonetheless founded on assumptions of absolutism and certitude. At the same Curriculum Summit, MacFarlane makes it perfectly clear that:

The Scriptures occupy a foundational place in Christian parent controlled schools. As a movement we confess in our basis, our statement of faith, that the Scriptures are the “only absolute rule for all faith and conduct and

49 ibid., p. 192.
therefore also for the education of our children at home and at school."

God Who reveals Himself in the works of His hands (Romans 1:20) and supremely in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3), speaks to us through His word which is God inspired, God breathed, His revelation to us. God has chosen to communicate in this special way with the people He has created through words written down by human writers, forming God’s very word ... The Bible is God’s word on spelling, chemistry, netball and politics because it focuses our faith in Christ Who is Lord of spelling, chemistry, netball, politics and the whole creation.52

It is because the themelic view believes the Bible to be God’s literal word that it also presumes the Bible must be inerrant and infallible. With this in mind, it is no wonder that the themelic view of history is static and follows the philosophy of Scottish common sense realism. At the same Curriculum Summit Mechielson makes it clear that a Christian worldview is a Bible worldview, and the two terms are used interchangeably.53

The view of reason implicit here is a narrow, instrumental one. This is the kind of reason that Francis Schaeffer, the popular evangelical apologist of the 1970s, proposed in The God Who is There and Escape From Reason.54

Schaeffer, a popular reference point for themelic readers, proposed:

In this setting the Bible sets forth its own statement of what the Bible itself is. It presents itself as God’s communication of propositional truth, written in verbalized form, to those who are made in God’s image.55

Schaeffer proposes that Christianity after Kierkegaard abandoned the “authority of reason” and embraced the relativism of existentialism, what Schaeffer calls “the leap of faith”.56 Schaeffer claims that the doorway to the “line of despair”57 was opened by

55 ibid., p. 267.
56 ibid., p. 51.
57 ibid., p. 54.
Christian thinkers, such as Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, who had given up a unified view of knowledge. The problem for Schaeffer was not only their liberal view of the Bible but what he termed their "divided view of truth". The solution to this dilemma for Schaeffer is a return to the authority of reason and the logical singularity of truth. It is not difficult to understand why Schaeffer has such an appeal for the themelic mind.

Marsden makes the point that this position is highly suited to one strand of contemporary culture: the technological strand or mechanistic strand. It is like technological thinking in that it does not wrestle with basic issues of presuppositions or the ends of reason. In addition, themelic schools under the paradigm of a fundamentalist epistemology do wrestle with the presuppositions of others but are incapable of wrestling with presuppositions of their own. When it comes to themelic thinking, truth is a matter of true and precise propositions that, when properly classified and organised, will work. There are supposedly no loose ends, ambiguities or historical developments. Everything is neat and systematic.

Neville, adopting Jungian typology as a tool to assess education and schooling, likens this approach in learning to the myths of Prometheus (technocrat, engineer and instrumentalist) and Apollo. In describing Apollo, he states:

> It is the myth of logic, rationality, detached observation, scientific enquiry, spiritual enlightenment, obviousness, understanding exactly what is what. Durand suggests that this myth took hold of European culture in the seventeenth century and has maintained a grip ever since.

According to Neville, the Apollonarian perspective is all about control. The need for

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58 Karl Barth (1886-1968) is one of the most famous theologians of the 20th century. His understanding of scripture was coloured by Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard and he stressed the hiddenness of God in his writing. His most comprehensive work is the thirteen-book (four-volume) *Church Dogmatics* Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1957. Reinhold Niebuhr (1893-1971) was on the faculty of the Union Theological Seminary (UTS), New York for 32 years. A polemician and scholar concerned for Christian social relevance, his most famous work was *Nature and Destiny of Man* Vols. 1 & 2, London, Nisbet and Co, 1943. Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was an associate of Niebuhr at UTS concerned with the relation between theology and philosophy. His greatest work was his *Systematic Theology* Vols. 1, 2 & 3. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957, 1963.

59 ibid., p. 55.

60 ibid., p. 280.

control is a fundamental response to being threatened. Themelic schools are anxious about the loss of control and understand the faith of spiritual enlightenment as certainty and assurance. Describing Prometheus, Neville says:

Prometheus is heroic in his mission of making man master of his fate, and is dazzling in his inventiveness. Yet he is often mean-minded, amoral, obsessive in his materialism and careless of the future. When Apollo or Prometheus control the classroom the teaching may be either good or bad within its own terms. From the Psyche perspective it is incomplete, however competent it is.62

Whilst Neville addresses the issue of schooling in general he is right about the manner in which the psyche or soul-perspective is devalued in our society and, this is the case in themelic Christian schools. Commenting on this view of learning Neville says:

It is intellect which dominates schooling. Every body gets a recognition not allowed to soul. The specifically soul-making subjects - literature, drama, music, the visual arts and tactile arts - are progressively ‘de-souled’ as the child proceeds through school. The primary teacher may read a poem or story or show a picture because it may nurture or enrich the children or 'stimulate their imagination'. Moving up through secondary school, there is less and less time for such luxuries. When it comes to the public examinations which dominate secondary schooling, there can be no marks for being grabbed by a poem or painting or sonata, unless this translates into a motivation to analyse the artifact thoroughly and competently.63

The prominence of this situation in themelic schools has several causes. The first is the dominance of fundamentalist epistemology throughout the themelic system. The second is the level of parent participation in the themelic schooling process, which tends to develop around their own conservative experiences of schooling. This translates into the curriculum being dominated by the maths and sciences and a growing emphasis on computing. Themelic schools like most other schools are adopting the use of computers as low as the kindergarten grades, without any real analysis of the problems associated with such an approach to learning.

Themelic schooling is schooling that “has all the answers” because of an inerrant and

63 ibid., p. 10.
infallible Bible. The key to learning in themelic schools is teaching and revelation. Once the truth has been revealed through faith via revelation, it is a matter of simply imparting those truths and is all a matter of successful transfer. Neville comments that the ways of Apollo and Prometheus are "behind all kinds of rigid and dogmatic fundamentalism".

Neville exposes the problem of such a position:

As a teacher I give in to the urge to label things, to make them clear, to make the occasional categorical statement that "this is the way things are!" I become a devotee of Apollo, finding and proclaiming the truth about things.

On the other hand, I have come to believe that we learn very little by being told the answers to questions we have not asked. Learning originates in the actions of the learner, not in those of the teacher. A great deal of what we learn we learn by sort of absorption, or we just 'pick it up' through experience, as we go along, without the need for teaching. It is only in schools that we abandon this natural way of learning. We tell children (or adults) things and expect them to remember them. I believe we tell them largely in vain. The learning they do has little to do with our telling them.

The emphasis on direct teaching in the more dogmatic extremes of themelic schools is understood as essential because of the necessity to impart infallible truth. Indirect teaching methods are not popular in these themelic schools. Some models of themelic schools such as the ACE system, CCS and home schools have clear, directed, prescriptive learning strategies which leave no concept of doubt in the learning of the child. Indeed, the concept of doubt is anathema to this mindset. Set texts, set curriculum and a set style of teaching ensure this. The word used for education in these sectors of the themelic school community is often that of "training" (following the wording of Psalm 22:6) and this is used interchangeably with other words such as "schooling", "learning" and "teaching".

The nature of inerrancy and infallibility as themelic doctrines generates a model of truth

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64 ibid., p. 14.
65 ibid., p. 12.
as correctness in themelic schooling. Precision is upheld as the yardstick for spiritual truth. Relativism, or truth measured against a "movable standard" offers nothing but a meaningless abyss for the themelic mind. It is important for the themelic person to "get it right", with a right view of God and of human nature. This approach is very closely allied to Baconian and Common Sense realism, which gives the conviction that human beings are capable of positive knowledge based on a sure foundation. If rationally classified, such knowledge can yield a great deal of certainty.

The search for certainty and indubitability in rational argument in themelic schools has led to a heavy emphasis on propositional belief and cognitive faith. The effect is a certain character in the life of faith in which ambiguity and sensuousness are discarded. A certain cognitive 'dryness' results as the themelic believer is encouraged to appropriate faith with a kind of disembodied reason that yields certainty. There is also a rejection of tradition, liturgy, sacramental life, ambiguity and mystery. A 'tight' notion of truth has led to a 'tight' notion of faith as almost being equivalent to verifiable knowledge and assent. The effect this has upon other areas of themelic school life such as school management and curriculum development is discussed in Chapter 13.

Another themelic perspective that reflects modern Enlightenment views is the belief that there is not a plurality within what is true. Enlightenment universalism is far from being inclusive, for it presumes that, if truth is one, falsehood is varied and multiform. This argument is convincingly refuted by Janet Martin Soskice, the Oxford theologian. She shows how this was the view of Enlightenment religion and epistemology and how this required the positing of the disengaged, disembodied ego that possessed a kind of God's eye view. In themelic schooling, this is called one's Christian worldview or a "biblical worldview".

In the light of recent developments in epistemology, a stance like this is no longer tenable. Soskice understands this new epistemological modesty that has resulted as

67 ibid., pp. 10-11.
68 ibid., p. 13.
70 Van Brummelen, Walking With God ... op. cit., pp. 85ff.
providing a foundation for “theological perspectivalism”, the thesis that “the truth may look different from here”. Soskice argues that if the Christian theist cleaves to the conviction that truth is in a person, that is, in the narrative of God as person, rather than in a meta-narrative and in claims to truths which are but approximations, then she can retain the idea of the unity of truth, grounded as it were in the divine, while embracing a variety of perspectives.

Soskice’s alternative epistemology seeks to address the problems in both fundamentalist foundationalism and postmodernist scepticism. This alternative seeks to avoid the damage caused by a fundamentalist epistemology. It is an epistemology that abandons the notions of absolute and propositional certainty, the idea of the one truth and an absolute conception of reality. It avoids the possibility of being that relies upon the knowing subject as a disembodied, ahistorical, god-like, objective creature unable to recognise the disability of their own minds.

By contrast, to claim that one’s perspective on truth is timeless is to attempt to find a theological language with an authority which is determined from some objective place. To locate that authority in an infallible, inerrant Bible simply gives that “objective” place a justified name. In reality, the subject presupposes an objectivity that is unaffected by culture, language and history.

The recognition that “truth may look different from here” contrasts with the hubris we find in themelic schooling, conditioned as it is by a fundamentalist epistemology and fundamentalist hermeneutic. What results from this thinking is a peculiar themelic logic that compartmentalises Christian schooling and reduces critical awareness.

8.7 Themelic logic and cognitive dissonance

Role conflict is prominent in themelic schooling. The conflict created by principals acting in the role of clergy, clergy dictating educational policy, schools taking on the role of church, management using theological language to manipulate staff, gender reconstruction in patriarchal terms, staff with conflicting roles in church-school life and parent, student, staff relational conflict exacerbated by theological imperatives are all discussed in Chapters 9, 10 and 11. As a preliminary to this discussion it is important
to understand how the themelic person maintains their belief in a fundamentalist epistemology, a fundamentalist hermeneutic and conservative Protestant Christian values and views of teaching, learning and schooling.

In this role conflict the psychological model of cognitive dissonance is extremely persuasive. Gill comments:

...cognitive dissonance theory has at its centre a very straightforward premise, namely that someone with strong convictions is hard to change...it is not difficult to observe that many of us become most dogmatic about those values and beliefs that guide us, but for which we have the least objective evidence.\textsuperscript{71}

Cognitive dissonance theory is concerned with situations which confront groups holding strong convictions with clear and undeniable disproof of those convictions. The theory maintains that even when groups are confronted with falsifying evidence they seem to respond with increased evangelistic fervour. Hull describes techniques used to reduce the ambivalence of cognitive dissonance as "the attempt to alleviate the feeling of self-criticism and discomfort caused by the appearance of conflicting beliefs".\textsuperscript{72}

Festinger, Riecken and Schachter's work \textit{When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World}\textsuperscript{73} was the first attempt to describe the dynamic of cognitive dissonance. Although the authors were aware of a lack of detailed empirical evidence needed to demonstrate their theory, they proposed five conditions which seem necessary for dissonance to occur.

1. A belief must be held with deep conviction and it must have some relevance to action, that is, to what the believer does or how he behaves.
2. The person holding the belief must have committed himself to it; that is, for the sake of his belief, he must have taken some important action that is difficult to undo.

3. The belief must be sufficiently specific and sufficiently concerned with the real world so that events may unequivocally refute the belief.
4. Such undeniable disconfirmatory evidence must occur and must be recognised by the individual holding the belief.
5. The individual believer must have social support.74

In addition to these circumstances, Hull refers to three kinds of cognitive dissonance: dissonance that occurs within the belief system itself, conflict between a system of belief and an alternative system and reduction of belief owing to criticism by significant parts of society that hold those beliefs as trivial, irrelevant and expressions of immaturity.

In the case of themelic schooling, the doctrine of inerrancy, criticism of Creation Science from the scientific community and the fear of secular humanism serve as examples of dissonance issues. In the case of the Creation Science debate, the falsifying evidence of Plimer75 and Sperring76 is most convincing. In response to Plimer’s book, Ray Tiller, assistant principal of a themelic school, makes the following comment:

Finally, it became obvious to us that the real issue behind this debate has ultimately not got much to do with the credibility of various scientific theories; it is rather a resurgence of the age-old debate; God versus no God; authoritative Bible versus book of cultural anachronisms. Admission of the existence of God as Creator and the authority of the Bible places mankind in the awesome position of responsibility to an established and superior moral order; but humanist mankind still..."take counsel against the Lord and against His Anointed (saying): Let us tear their fetters apart and cast their cords from us!" (Psalm 2)....debate on this issue is central to our understanding of Christian education.77

Carl Wieland, the director of the Creation Science Foundation commented:

74 Gill, op. cit., p. 38.
The fierce struggle about creation/evolution is really not about what the Bible means but over what the Bible is. Tiller’s and Wieland’s responses illustrate the way thematic schools deal with conflicting evidence. The inability to juggle falsifying evidence with theological dogma is common to thematic schooling. The dominant epistemology and hermeneutic of thematic schooling do not allow for diversity of belief or grey shades of knowledge. All of this is highly relevant in understanding how thematic educators can maintain convictions that are at odds with the cultural pluralism that surrounds them. It is not the purpose of this thesis to make all of Christianity dependent on evidence nor to discount the validity of faith or belief, but it is desirable to make a distinction between “explaining something” and “explaining something away”. In the case of cognitive dissonance, it is the emphasis on “explaining something away” which is problematic for the establishment of education in thematic schools.

The stress associated with cognitive dissonance in thematic schools is dealt with by individuals by the provision of psychological consistency rather than logical consistency. Most argument for the establishment of a thematic school is structured in this way.

The small booklet written by Arthur Jones provides an excellent example of this psychological consistency as thematic logic. Jones’s introduction lists twelve separate biblical references in the first 22 lines of his work in order to establish the authority of the “great commission”, the commission by God to evangelise the world. The force of the argument in the introduction leads the reader through a series of texts which reinforce the idea of the absolute rule of God over all of life. The introduction ends with these question:

Do our children receive that kind of instruction in school, or anywhere else?
If not, are we not disobeying the Great Commission?

The argument then develops through a series of questions beginning with “Do we really

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80 ibid., p. 1.
believe that ...". The things that one ought to believe are the omniscience of Christ, God's supreme authority, God's power through predestination, revelation of knowledge of God through Christ and salvation through Christ's atonement. The argument proceeds

If these awesome and winsome claims are true, ought they not permeate the core curriculum in every school? ... If the way of Christian discipleship is the way - the only way - of true human life, then how can we permit our children to be educated according to other visions of life? Are we not handing them over to miseducation? Which is the real world? Is this the world of the Bible - created and designed for a real and revealed purpose? Or is it the modern world of scientific paganism from which God and divine purpose are rigorously excluded? What do we really believe?81

Jones's argument makes many assumptions about the validity and meaning of texts, the meaning of "the great commission" and what it is to be educated and Christian. The key propositions in the argument are not directed at scholarly enquiry but hinge upon responses to guilt, questioning faith, commitment and belief. It is essentially a psychological argument based upon unquestioned assumptions in fundamentalist epistemology. As is often the case in themelic argument, Jones takes an excursion through history to find the place where things supposedly went wrong. It is a search for a Christian utopia, for perfect Christianity, hence the emphasis on restoration and revivalism.

If we want to come to grips with education, a critical knowledge of our history is vital. The trends and conflicts in educational theory and practice, are tied to trends in the history of human thought. If we do not recognise and critique these trends, then we will become captive to one idolatry or another.82

The use of such a history supposedly authenticates the previous argument regarding what has gone wrong with the world. The historical discussion traces several trends in thought that have assisted in separating the world into the sacred and secular dichotomy. Jones argues that the secularisation of the world since Greek dualism and the development of post-Enlightenment humanism have been the major cause for the

81 ibid., p. 2.
82 ibid., p. 3.
supposed decay in society and education. Jones comments

Throughout Christian history, effective revival has been inseparable from
the renewal of community life and the reclaiming of education for
Christ.\textsuperscript{83}

The idea of decay is pursued through the use of a tree-like diagram which shows a
progressive flow from Greek Paganism - which Jones calls "cosmos-centred
humanism"; Renaissance-labelled "God-centred humanism"; Enlightenment - "man-
centred humanism"; scientific materialism - "nature-centred humanism"; and
postmodernism - "self-centred humanism". Any form of humanism, according to the
logic of this argument, is evil and sinful. The argument proceeds to investigate the
"secular conquest of western education". The conclusion of Jones's argument states

We are living in disobedience in our church life and theology as much as we
are in our public life and "secular" affairs. If we are to bring the sciences
/disciplines and education under the lordship of Christ, then we must shake
off our apathy and begin to live as those who really believe the Word of God
and the Gospel of Christ.

In thematic thinking, the desired result from such an argument is stronger evangelical
fervour and greater commitment to thematic schooling.

\section*{8.8 Conclusion}

The epistemology which governs the thinking of most thematic schools is theologically
fundamentalist and philosophically naive or direct realist. The framework for assessing
the nature of knowledge and education is narrow and singular in perspective. The full
scope of innovative and creative Christian fluidity is not available to the thematic mind
and this tends to work out in a conservative pedagogy. The individual teachers and
schools which seem to break this paradigm are rare in the thematic system and are
usually out on the margins.

In the thematic tradition there are many strange blends of forces which become evident
in educational practice and school administration. The presence of strong pragmatist
and utilitarian elements in the system make strange bedfellows with fundamentalist
epistemology, creating tremendous tension in schools. The record of this divisiveness
in thematic schools and this tension are the subjects of Chapters 10, 11 and 12.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{83} ibid.}
Chapter 9

The Construction of a Themelic Awareness

9.1 Introduction

Before the 1950s the idea of conservative Protestant collaboration was not strong. Most of the para-church activities undertaken by the denominations were separate from each other.¹ The collaboration of theological traditions in the process of schooling is unique in Australia where the development of church schools has been denominational. This new collaboration is best exemplified in the work of AACS which expands each year. This chapter discusses some forces influencing the coalescence of conservative Protestant theological traditions in Australia and documents movements before and beside themelic schools, complementing their development. I explain the factors which have contributed to convergence in conservative Protestantism, which has assisted the development of themelicism. Although the movements discussed in this chapter do not represent the full extent of themelic collaboration, they nonetheless indicate some trends in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in the convergence of conservative Protestants. This convergence has stimulated themelic schooling.

9.2 The Australian psyche and Benthamite utilitarianism

The blend of theological traditions in the themelic school may be due partly to the uniqueness of the Australian psyche, which has been accepted historically as utilitarian and practical. This psyche enables Australians to achieve collaboration in a practical lowest common denominator. Historians have long been convinced that the Australian psyche has been influenced by isolation, the size of the continent, the spread of population and the ideas that dominated Australian settlement. Some historians characterise it as “Benthamite”. Conway noted the distinctiveness of Australia as a Benthamite society.

¹ Parker, op. cit.
Even as late as 1831, at the age of 82, Bentham greatly influenced educational and social planning in the development of the Australian colonies.2

This presumably happened through movements in early colonial history such as Chartism. Collins3 argues that Chartism provided the direct connection for Benthamism to enter the colonies through such people as Henry Parkes, a central character in NSW politics and in the achievement of federation. Hancock noted that within ten years after the discovery of gold that practically the whole political programme of the Chartists was realised in Australia.4 He argues that other native-born architects of Australia’s political institutions and constitutions like Alfred Deakin were no less indebted to Benthamite utilitarianism. Johnson clearly documents Bentham’s influence from England to the colonies.5 Others such as Pike,6 Greenwood,7 Horne,8 and Collins support such a view. White names utilitarianism as “Australia’s national faith”.9

A “Benthamite society” is a society whose dominant ideology conforms to the essential character of Jeremy Bentham’s political philosophy. Three aspects of his philosophy are crucial: utilitarianism, legalism and positivism.

Bentham sought to reconcile the pursuit of individual interest with the greatest common happiness. The principle of utility provides a rational mechanism for calculating this reconciliation. Bentham’s system established the necessity of education, health and welfare as in the individual interest. It is hostile to the doctrines of social contract because utilitarianism measures social order by what it does to people. It is the people who count, and their suffering is real; it is not something to be explained away as something suitable given the “fallenness” of the human condition. Although it is a

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theory based on individual interests, it rejects ideas of natural rights.

The rationalist assumptions of Bentham's philosophy are politically secular and instrumental. There is no deistic or divine basis for human contrivances, no messianic mission or return to a classical ideal. Utility sets its own limits on imagination and reality.

The second aspect of Bentham's philosophy is legalism. Legislation is at the heart of Bentham's theory of government. Bentham's legal theory provides the categories by which his extraordinary classifications of institutional forms and functions are organised. His theory is a theory of law and government rather than liberty and opposition.

Positivism, the third major aspect of Bentham's philosophy, is the natural corollary of his rationalist and legalist assumptions. He divided speculative thought into fact and value.10

Collins draws attention to the more recent consensus approach of Bob Hawke in the 1980s which translates into utilitarian philosophy. Hawke's projection of himself as the national architect of consensus is founded in his deep seated concern for the suffering and disadvantage of the oppressed.11 That this concern is utilitarian is argued by d'Alpuget12, Hurst13 and Hawke's own Boyer Lectures.14

Fabian socialism's relevance to the gradual attainment of egalitarian goals through legislation is founded on the utilitarian ethic. The rightness of an action and legislation is justified in terms of its contribution to the general good. Race Matthews attributes the general popularity of recent Australian Labor Party leaders such as Bob Hawke, Bob Carr, Don Dunstan, Gough Whitlam, John Cain, Neville Wran, John Bannon and Bill

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12 ibid., p. 171.
13 Hurst, J., Hawke Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1980, pp. x-xi.
Hayden to their Fabianism. Matthews defines the purpose of Fabianism as “the abolition of poverty through legislation and administration” and describes Fabians as “the Jesuits of Socialism”. Collins argues that the central features of the Australian political system and industrial relations exhibit a utilitarian character. He states

The utilitarian psychology in Australia legitimises the pursuit of interest, while the dominance of the ideology negates the possibility of a genuine battle of ideas.

The observation that Australians have a talent for bureaucracy, which is evident in the levels at which we are over-governed, reflects Benthamite assumptions. The popular conception of politics as confined to the narrow sphere of electoral and ministerial activity also reflects a Benthamite influence. Collins proposes that compelling proofs for a political proposal in Australia are the twin standards of efficacy (will it work?) and plurality (have you got the numbers?). Collins also observes the influence of Benthamite utilitarianism on the intellectual climate.

The universities, which have codified and certified useful knowledge, have been mostly post-Darwinian creations: the particular scientific paradigm they have enshrined has reinforced the tendencies of utilitarianism. Empiricism has been a natural enemy of speculative thought; positivism has reigned, almost without challenge, in science, law, philosophy, history, economics, and the social sciences.

Collins argues that the “engineering” character of Australian tertiary education is most evident in the professional separation from humanities and social sciences achieved by economics and law. The autonomy of law and economics faculties, he argues, has been to the detriment of each and at the cost to all since they supply the bulk of graduates who chiefly govern the nation - the former in the legislatures and the courts, the latter in bureaucracies, private as well as public.

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16 ibid., p. 10.
17 Collins, op. cit., p. 152.
18 ibid., p. 155.
20 Collins, op. cit, p. 156.
21 ibid.
Whilst there are other philosophical dispositions which justify consensus it is my argument that Australia as a Benthamite society has helped cement the coming together of conservative Protestants in themelic schooling. Collins also notes Benthamite utilitarian influence in the religious sphere:

Religion, too, has been compatible with the dominant ideology rather than resistant toward it. To be sure, the colonial inheritance was Irish Catholic as well as Anglo-Scots Protestant. Yet in matters of faith, the fundamentalism, or theological positivism, of each is more striking than the sectarianism that divided them, while in questions of politics the Irish liberator and the English Chartist could make common cause. (Did not Daniel O’Connell pay homage to Jeremy Bentham, the friend of Francis Place?)

It should not be surprising that the Benthamite ideology is compatible with Australians’ conventional sense of identity - that myth of national character that depicts them as practical, sporting, fairminded, and egalitarian. For these are a people proud in their pragmatism, sceptical of speculative and abstract schemes, wedded to “common sense”.

It is my contention that this utilitarianism in the Australian character has had an effect on the ability of various conservative Protestant groups to collaborate in the process of schooling. Indeed, this drive of Australians to be utilitarian has been evident even in causes of schisms in themelic schools. The utopian and idealistic thinking of themelic protagonists tends to clash with the utility of educationalists who are focused primarily on the process of running a happy school.

The majority of themelic schoolers reject the extremist aspects of militant fundamentalism. Despite the militant flavour of themelic language, most parents in themelic schools want their children to be happy, cared for and succeed at school. How do we know this? The schools themselves at a practical level resemble the rest of conservative schooling in Australia. There is no militant political movement in themelic circles, no radical or revolutionary curriculum, no change in school organisation and management, no real change in consumerist, materialist or technological focus and no alternative ethic or morality at a social, political or economic level. The vast majority of themelic schools are conservative middle-class schools serving middle-income

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22 ibid.
23 Hewitt, op. cit.
Australians by educating their children in a particularist, biblicist epistemology.

This explains why there is confusion and incongruity among the theological claims of various themelic groups on the processes of running a school. Although idealist themelic thinkers would like to believe that it is the theology of the movement which directs decisions in themelic schools, this is not always the case. The very pragmatic and utilitarian demands of running a school are often in conflict with the idealism expressed in themelic language.

The drive for practicality and utility in the Australian psyche emphasises a lowest common denominator approach to practice, which assists conservative Christians in Australia to work together, especially at the grassroots level of movements. There have been several major Protestant movements since World War II which have also fostered the collaborations which are the focus of this chapter. These are the Billy Graham crusades, para-church movements, the charismatic movement and Koorong Books Pty Ltd. It is the purpose of this chapter to show how these forces have contributed to the phenomenon which I term "themelicism".

9.3 Billy Graham and the signs of the times

In May 1959 the American evangelist Billy Graham led a crusade in Australia “to bring Australians closer to God”.24 During that visit he and his associates preached to at least 3.5 million people who attended meetings all over Australia with more than 142,000 people making “decisions for Christ”. On the final day of the crusade, May 10, a total of 150,000 attended the meeting,25 greater crowds than attended the grand finals of the Victorian Football League. Even though the major meetings were in Sydney, all other capitals and many regional centres were covered by his associates, with Graham conducting the last night of several major city campaigns.

Invited by the evangelical Archbishop of Sydney, the Very Rev. Howard Mowll, and a committee broadly representative of church leaders, Graham enjoyed tolerance, hospitality and cooperation from most mainline denominations, including the Catholics.

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25 Daily Telegraph Monday, April 22, 1968, p. 3.
Graham had exceptional evangelistic exposure to the Australian public as well as significant impact on the life and theology of evangelical churches, through practices such as the use of women as trained counsellors at his meetings, the admission of women to the “men only” stand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground for the first time, and Graham’s willingness to hold silent on some issues of church dogma. The elevation of the role of women was a watershed for many churches which attracted strong condemnation from extremist fundamentalists.

In 1968 Graham returned to Australia for another crusade series at the invitation of the Archbishop of Sydney, the Very Rev. Marcus Loane. Despite the bitterly cold conditions attendances had increased by 30,000 on the 1959 visit. The impact of the event would be difficult to overestimate. Many meetings in succession exceeded 60,000 people, there were significant traffic jams, extra buses and police services required, wide press reports and solid TV coverage. Each rally was broadcast by radio to at least four states and 137 towns by landline. The total cost of the crusade, $220,000, was met before it was over. During the course of Graham’s visit, the local churches visited one million homes and distributed 1.5 million leaflets in the Sydney area. (Graham returned to Australia again in 1979 but the response was down markedly on his first two visits).

Graham’s visits received a little scoffing from liberal Christians and general condemnation by sceptics as manipulative events that emotionally conned people into conversion. Despite the shadow of questions and scepticism, the crusades did help bind together the evangelical, fundamentalist and reformed elements across the denominations as never before. This new consciousness was not strictly an ecumenical consciousness because of the evangelical nature of low church Sydney Anglicanism and the absence of some official denominational support but rather a kind of “themelic” consciousness which had no intention of embracing unity with Catholicism or high church Anglicanism, even though the number of evangelicals and fundamentalists had grown in these sectors by the visits of Graham and his team. The year after Graham’s visit church attendances in Australia increased by 7%.  

Graham’s main message was one of repentance and conversion. This was always

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26 Crowley, op. cit., p. 378.
28 Parker, op. cit., p. 414.
sought within the context of preaching on contemporary topics such as the breakdown of traditional Christian values in modern society and the rejection of the Bible and biblical values.\textsuperscript{29} He blamed the divorce rate and deterioration of society in general on career women who did not stay at home.\textsuperscript{30} He condemned sex outside of marriage and blamed the general permissiveness in society on the breakdown of the home and traditional family. The former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, was quoted by Graham as an advocate of traditional Christian family values. Graham raised the awareness of the public to these issues. It was Graham’s preaching which provided warning signs for the church to be on the look out for promiscuity and permissiveness. Armed with Graham’s signs, conservative Christians were drawn together as they sifted through the evidence to confirm Graham’s assertions. This is evident through a survey of the pages of \textit{New Life} in the years that followed Graham’s visit.\textsuperscript{31}

On special “youth nights” Graham spoke on the problem of hippies, problems of youth and television. He called lust and materialism the gods of the age. On Thursday 25th April, Mr Graham spoke to over 57,000 people at the Sydney Showground about the threat of nuclear holocaust and communism.\textsuperscript{32} All these issues in Graham’s preaching served as “signs of the times” for the second coming of Christ, which was the topic of his sermon on the seventh night of the crusade. The point of evangelical preaching on the second coming of Christ is to be found ready and converted at that approaching moment.

Graham spoke and wrote about the enemies of Christianity in general terms. The enemies of the Christian were the devil and “the world” (or worldliness).\textsuperscript{33} The way to victory over the enemies of Christianity was greater consecration. This over-againstness shares commonality with fundamentalist language of the battle. It was then

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Daily Telegraph} April 23, 1968, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Daily Telegraph} Wednesday, April 24, 1968, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} Friday 26 April, 1968.
left up to evangelicals and fundamentalists to locate and name the enemy in specifics of day-to-day living.

For the themelic mind, the “signs of the times” abounded. Particularly for the premillenial dispensationalist and prophetic literalists, the 1960s and 1970s seemed to provide every fulfilment of biblical prophecy for them.34

9.4 Prophetic Consciousness

One of the best selling books of the 1970s in the evangelical church was Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*35 but the consciousness of the end of the world spread much more widely than concerns of evangelical groups. The chasm between the East and West was being measured in units of inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs); discussion of World War III scenarios was common. Movies like *Fail Safe* (1964) fed on fears generated by the Cuban missile crisis and real possibilities of nuclear war. The popularity of *The Day After* (1983) illustrates the willingness of the public to contemplate catastrophism a decade later.

Christian movies such as *Distant Thunder* and *Thief in the Night* did the rounds of the churches in the 1970s, cashing in on the same secular mood yet reinforced by a strong tradition of biblical millenarianism. Though the roots of evangelicalism and fundamentalism are closely linked to millenarianism,36 the 1960s and 1970s experienced a much wider and general belief in the end of the world as was evidenced by the “survivalist” movement.37

The creation of the state of Israel in 1949, the size of the Chinese army, ICBMs, the space programs of Russia and the USA, the formation of the European Economic Community, changing weather patterns, the World Council of Churches, pollution, the

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35 Lindsay, H., *The Late Great Planet Earth* Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1970.


six day war and the capture of Jerusalem (particularly the site of the original Temple) by the Israelis were all signs that seemed to confirm assumptions for the evangelical/fundamentalist mind about prophetic trends in the 1960s and 1970s. Fundamentalist groups such as Jewish Evangelical Witness (JEW), which believed the lost ten tribes of Israel were Britain and the United States of America, equated Western democracy with righteousness. Myriad authors such as Don Stanton and Stan Deyo received significant exposure in evangelical and fundamentalist circles using numerology, news reports and pseudo-scientific gobbledygook to convince readers that all the changes of the 1960s and 1970s were the success of satanic conspiracy.38

In conservative Christian terms, a prophetic consciousness draws attention to the interrelationship between what is happening now and the forecast of what is supposed to happen later, in the end. The conservative Christian idea of the prophet is characterised by preaching against trends in society and calling for repentance and conversion. A prophetic consciousness in the conservative theological tradition tends to focus on immorality as a sign of God’s disapproval and judgement. Typically, the Bible stories of Noah and the great flood, Sodom and Gomorrah and the image of Armageddon serve as examples.

With the impending end of the millennium and the currents of rapid change in the 1960s and 1970s, it is historically understandable that millenarianism (also known as chiliastic) was revived.39 The historical coalescence of puritan piety and hope with prophetic expectation, evangelical revivalism and missionary fervour is particularly worth noting in relationship in the context of desire to found themelic Christian schools.40 It is this


39 Cohen, op. cit.

consciousness which often provides the energy for conservative Christians to act.

It is worth noting that four early founders (Frisken, Hofman, Frogley and Updell), representing four strands of themelic Christian schools, were missionaries and mission focused. John Hoffman, the founding principal of the first CPCS school, clearly understood themelic schooling as a missionary activity.\textsuperscript{41}

9.5 Para-Church Groups

Para-church groups are interdenominational, ecumenical groups that develop for a particular purpose, usually to focus on a particular field of Christian service, such as overseas missions, home missions, beach missions, school evangelism and church support services. Para-church groups have grown in number and strength in Australia since the 1930s. There are five areas of para-church agency which have made contributions towards Protestant ecumenism: missions, student movements, Bible colleges, special interest groups and aid agencies.

The first para-church group in Australia, in 1795, was the London Missionary Society (LMS) founded by Anglicans, Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Missionary societies have also been known as faith missions because they “look to God” alone for financial support. LMS was the pioneer of many other missionary societies to follow, such as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF), the United Aboriginal Mission (UAM), the Aboriginal Inland Mission of Australia (AIMA), the Bible Society in Australia (formerly the British and Foreign Bible Society), Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT), Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade (WEC) and the Asia Pacific Christian Mission (APCM). In 1993, there were 61 different missionary agencies in Australia: WBT, WEC, Operation Mobilisation (OM), Christian Missionary Society (CMS), Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML), Australian Baptist Missionary Society (ABMS) and APCM each registered more than 100 staff.\textsuperscript{42}

The second kind of para-church group focuses on students, such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), the

\textsuperscript{41} Hofman, J., \textit{The Missionary Calling of a Christian School} personal papers and lectures, 1972.

\textsuperscript{42} Anon., \textit{On Being} May, 1993.
Australian Student Christian Movement (SCM), Inter Varsity Fellowship (IVF), the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES), Scripture Union (SU), Youth for Christ, The Australian Christian Forum on Education (previously the Australian Christian Teacher’s Fellowship - ACTF) and more recently Youth Alive. The work of SU deserves particular attention because of its involvement in schools through the Inter School Christian Fellowship (ISCF) network, beach missions and training programs.

The network of staff in themelic schools of ex-beach mission workers is particularly interesting. In Trinity Christian School, Wanniassa ACT, for example, there were a significant number of staff and numerous parents in the late 1980s who knew each other from beach mission days. Interviews with principals and staff at other schools confirm this was also the case in their schools. In many instances, people at one school knew of other principals and staff through beach mission. SU emphasises evangelism in government schools and has tended to be less interested in the drive to establish separate conservative Protestant Christian schools.

The third area of para-church group activity that has helped develop a conservative Protestant ecumenism has been Bible colleges. In 1992 there were 136 post-secondary Christian training institutions in Australia. The largest individual theological group was the 21 charismatic and pentecostal colleges. Of all 136 institutions, 66 were interdenominational or non-denominational Bible colleges and the remaining 49 were denominational institutions. Approximately 10 of these institutions would be sympathetic with liberal theology and the sentiments of higher criticism. The remainder would be best classified as conservative Protestant.

The development of the Bible college in Australia started in the late 19th century. The Bible college movement, originating in the USA and Britain, developed in order to combat the influence of higher criticism and liberal theology in the church. New Life credited the Bible college movement with being “part of the answer of God to those forms of destructive criticism of the Scriptures which have undermined the faith of many”. Bible colleges are known as practically oriented conservative Protestant institutions which emphasise the centrality of the Bible to learning, spiritual training in the pietistic tradition and the equipping of missionaries, evangelists and lay workers for service.

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The fourth group of para-church agency which has influenced the development of a conservative Protestant ecumenism has been special interest groups. Some of the most influential have been the Keswick movement (emphasis on holiness and piety), Navigators (memorisation of scripture), Gideons (distributing Bibles to schools, hotels, motels and prisons), Festival of Light (conservative Christian moral concerns), the Creation Science Foundation (anti-evolutionary organisation), the Inter-Church Trade and Industry Mission (ITIM, chaplaincy in industry), Zadok (interest in Christianity and Australian society), Christian Businessmen’s Association (Christians in Business), Christian Women’s Conventions International (women’s interests in conservative Christianity) and the Gospel Film and Video Ministry (audio visual Christian resources). These groups, with the exception of Zadok and ITIM, are conservative Protestant and maintain a view of biblical inerrancy.

The fifth para-church group is Christian aid agencies. The largest conservative Protestant agency is World Vision. Others include Freedom from Hunger, Austcare, Foster-Parents Plan, Community Aid Abroad, Save the Children Fund and the Christian Children’s Fund.

### 9.6 Influence of the Charismatic Movement

The third movement which has influenced the coming together of conservative Protestant theologies in Australia has been the charismatic movement which gathered momentum in the 1970s. Between 1972 and 1984 the growth rate of pentecostal and charismatic churches was 200 per cent.\(^{45}\) The charismatic movement is a less dogmatic form of pentecostal revivalism and is tolerated within established churches. The word “charisma” is from New Testament Koine Greek meaning “spiritual gift”. In previous times, such displays of revival had been rejected by the mainline churches. This new movement is not as extreme as the pentecostal movement, which tends to make signs of spiritual endowment conditional for salvation. The charismatic movement places an emphasis on signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The movement accentuates behavioural display in worship such as hand clapping, audible spontaneous statements, shaking, speaking in tongues, dancing, jumping, hand raising, various forms of enthusiasm and an emphasis on celebration, extroversion and healing.

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It has affected all denominations in the Christian tradition, including the Catholic church.

Theologically, the charismatic movement is quite shallow; that is, it places little emphasis on thinking through issues or making rational sense of beliefs. Even so, charismatics read the Bible and Christian literature more than more orthodox Christians, claim a greater sense of God's calling, believe more strongly in creationism, divine judgement, eternal life, and the real activity of evil spirits than any other conservative Protestant group.\(^{46}\) Charismatics are a powerfully zealous group who claim direct revelation as justification for their actions and have a level of energy and enthusiasm for the beliefs which other religious groups envy. Charismatics have an all or nothing emphasis on commitment to their faith and a lower rate of nominalism than other denominations.\(^{47}\) Whilst orthodox denominations place worship and education as the primary functions of the church, charismatics place conversion as the primary function. This enthusiasm for evangelism translates into the setting up of schools. Of all Christian groups (other than Catholics), charismatics have the highest percentage commitment to schooling per head of church attendance.\(^{48}\) The importance of this group for this thesis is the distribution of charismatic energy across conservative Protestantism generally and the way this distribution has assisted in breaking down traditional denominational barriers.

Various service organisations were started to accommodate the diversity of charismatic renewal, as it was also known. One such organisation was the Temple Trust, later called Vision Ministries. Founded in 1972 by Alan Langstaff, a Methodist minister, Vision Ministries organised conferences and networks of charismatic clergy and lay people across the denominations. It was not unusual to see clergy and lay people as well as Catholic priests and nuns joining hands with Protestants as they worshipped at these conferences. In 1979 Vision Ministries held a conference in Sydney called "Jesus '79" with 15,000 people in attendance.\(^{49}\) A magazine, Vision, and Vision Bible College were established. Harry Westcott, another Methodist minister, became the new

\(^{46}\) Kaldor, Views ... op. cit., 1995.
\(^{48}\) ibid., pp. 28-31.
chairman in 1981. Westcott was also responsible for the founding of O'Connor Christian School, Lyneham ACT. In 1984 there were 15,000 people on Vision’s mailing list.

Another charismatic service organisation was the Logos Foundation which no longer exists. However, the Logos Foundation was a strong force behind the establishment of ACE schools in the 1970s and 1980s. Logos was started in 1969 by Howard Carter, a former Baptist minister. Logos started a magazine called Restore, which had a circulation in 1984 of 11,500. Logos also established a correspondence Bible service with a wide distribution of teaching tapes and materials.

In Queensland the work of Trevor Chandler (Christian Life Centre) and particularly Clark Taylor (Christian Outreach Centre) was an impetus to the commencement of themelic schools. Taylor appeared regularly on television, and his church had 10,000 members in 1984. Other large independent charismatic groups, such as Life Ministry Centre in Ringwood, Victoria, Bethesda Christian Centre in Adelaide and Rhema in Perth, all started schools.

Another service organisation was the House of Tabor which was started in 1979 by Barry Chant and Dennis Slape, two pentecostal ministers. They held conventions and networked with people of charismatic interest across the denominations. By 1984 their conventions were attracting up to 4000 people. The House of Tabor also published a magazine, Impact, (later named Australia’s New Day), and started a bible college. Barry Chant conducted talk-back on Adelaide radio and soon became a representative of the movement. Chant’s academic ability, writing and theological sense of balance enabled him to cross many denominational boundaries and earnt the charismatic movement a great deal of respect. By 1994, the House of Tabor had become the largest theological college in Australia with more than 1000 students in four capital centres.

The strongest gathering of separate charismatic churches and schools is in Queensland. Whilst the cross-denominational charismatic influence has been strong, individual charismatic groups and schools have been injured by conflict, corruption and immorality in the ranks of charismatic egocentric leadership. Of the dozens of

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50 ibid., p. 227.
charismatic groups, 46 magazines and colleges that have commenced since the 1970s, only the House of Tabor has endured into the 1990s with any intellectual integrity.

It is worth noting that the rapid growth of themelic schools in the 1970s and 1980s coincides with the acceleration of charismatic church growth. Most orthodox denominations developed at a rate of one or two percent at this time, the Baptists at 9.25 percent, the Catholics at 8.7 percent and the charismatics/pentecostals at 87.9 percent.\textsuperscript{51} The “mega-church” concept also developed under the charismatic influence.\textsuperscript{52} These larger charismatic churches had congregations large enough to start their own schools.

In the recent documentary \textit{Stand Up For Jesus} Phil Ruthven of Ibis Business Information noted:

\begin{quote}
I think we are going to see for example most of the Christian churches come together over the next 30 years. You are probably going to end up with one Christian religion.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

On the same program, the Rev Greg Beech, a recent convert to the charismatic phenomenon and advocate of the “Toronto blessing” (holy laughter), commented on how he had access into all denominations when once such cross-denominational activity was prohibited. He said:

\begin{quote}
That would have never happened 20 years ago.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{quote}

Father Emmet P. Costello on the same program also confirmed this by saying

\begin{quote}
Thank God all that bigotry has all but disappeared. Let’s face it. We’ve all got to unite. United we stand divided we fall.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

The journalist who documented the program called the phenomenon of charismatic

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{51} ibid. p. 224.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Kaldor, \textit{Who Goes Where...} op. cit., p. 166.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ruthven, P., \textit{Stand Up For Jesus} \textit{Sunday} WIN television, April 15, 1995.
\item \textsuperscript{54} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{55} ibid.
\end{footnotes}
theology "induced ecumenism" - what I have termed "themelicism". The argument of this thesis is that, whilst there is a coming together of conservative Protestants in schooling, there are however much deeper underlying divisions which a lowest common denominator approach to unity tends not to address. So conservative Protestants have come together in a common task to establish schools but this amalgamation has been naive and poorly understood, and this is one of the contributing factors behind the high level of confusion in themelic schools. I have already referred to the clash of idealists with those who are more utilitarian and practical in running schools. This will be investigated more fully in Chapter 13.

9.7 The Influence of Koorong Books Pty Ltd

Koorong Books Pty Ltd (Koorong) began as a family business in a room under the home of Bruce and Olive Boots in Koorong St, Eastwood, Sydney. Boots, a veterinary surgeon, had a strong understanding of reformed theology and began by importing books as a private lay ministry, a hobby for himself and a few friends in the late 1960s. Throughout the development of the business in the 1970s and early 1980s, he maintained his veterinary practice.

As the business developed in the 1970s, the family took over the role of day-to-day business as the turnover increased. Boots had various Presbyterian and Baptist congregational experiences and started his own Reformed Baptist Church in the early 1970s. The current manager, his son Paul Boots, describes Koorong’s humble beginnings as a family hobby that “happened” from an “incipient” beginning to a full business.56 The direction of the business strengthened as it moved to a small shop in West Ryde in 1978.

Craig Ashhurst, who was an employee at Koorong books for over 10 years from 1979 to 1989, describes the early days at the shop:

... it was small enough, that often in the afternoon, Paul and I would walk outside and sit at the bus stop outside and chat’ cause there weren’t any customers and there weren’t any customers for a couple of hours. In time things changed. Not only did they build out the back to the laneway, the single shop from they originally had but they took over another couple of

56 Interview Paul Boots 16.11.94.
shop fronts and built them back to the street. So it sort of quadrupled or whatever in that period as well as the additions of Melbourne and Brisbane etc.  

When Ashhurst began at Koorong Books, Boots was the only permanent staff member. Most of the stock was reformed theology. The intellectual nature of reformed theology is quite different from what is best known as evangelical “popular” theology, which has historically been intellectually shallow. Bruce Boots had most of the say about what material was stocked in the early days. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, for example which is a reformed/puritan publishing house, did not have an outlet in Australia at the time, which concerned Boots. In some ways, Boots started the hobby of bookselling just to provide access to that kind of publisher. Koorong Books grew at a faster rate than many other Christian bookshops at the time. The family structure and ministry organisation of the company ensured they were able to undercut the prices of other Christian bookshops. This means that the family and friends as helpers in a ministry offered their time and labour at little or no cost. This kind of financial and personal sacrifice is a common expectation in conservative Protestant groups and themelic schools especially if the activity is deemed a ministry for God. All founders of themelic schools who were interviewed spoke of sacrificial levels of energy given to the school in personal and financial terms by founding parents and teachers.

Koorong Books was able to provide an outlet for alternative reformed theology and intellectually rigorous Christian material. It was able to expand because it was not involved in what other denominational Christian bookshops were obliged to do, such as support denominational missionaries and various related forms of ministry. Not being an arm of any church, it did not have any church allegiances. Ashhurst explains:

I think it had the advantage that it didn’t fit in any box. It didn’t really matter what it stood for. I’d say “conservative evangelical” would fit but it meant that someone could meet there and they didn’t have to say “I’m a Baptist here and you’re on Baptist territory”. It was very much that they could sit, they could chat and they could sort of retire to their own corners if you like. 

57 Interview Craig Ashhurst 31.10.94.
58 ibid.
Koorong Books, by establishing bookstalls at Christian conferences and meetings such as the Katoomba Convention (a Christian summer school for evangelical Christians) were able to increase its market share. A bookstall basically allowed a group to take out as many books on consignment as they wanted for 30 days. Ashhurst explains:

Now that meant things like Katoomba Convention where you had 4000 or 6000 young people and they would send up 40 or 50 boxes of stuff and sell up to $5000 or $6000 worth of books. This meant that if you did one thing you used Koorong books. If you did beach mission, beach mission had a book stall and that was Koorong book stall. Eventually Scripture Union tried to take some of that back and make restrictions on how and when you could use Koorong but I think it was still known that if you wanted to get your hands on some stuff Koorong was the place to go. I think that created a greater amount of cross fertilisation away from the denomination in the area where people were saying, “If I want to achieve this what’s the structure I can use and where are the resources for me?” They didn’t have to rely on the denomination for that.\(^{59}\)

Paul Boots, trained as a school teacher at Macquarie University and taught for two years at Mount Druitt High School before he entered the business in a full-time capacity. In similar language to themelic claims of being “God’s schools”, Boots could say: “All of the family would still think it is God’s business”.\(^{60}\)

Paul Boots described Koorong as “rooted in the mainline evangelical/reformed tradition”, as a business that “tries to stay biblical”. He claimed that the Koorong family business “has no great strategic plans”; they just “see what happens”.\(^{61}\) The business was viewed as a “ministry”. Ashhurst explains:

We had one guy where we had discovered a letter addressed to Martyn Lloyd Jones from some guy in Saudi Arabia, who was a Bedouin and had become a Christian and didn’t have any Christian literature. I found that in some packing and I showed it to Mr and Mrs Boots, Paul’s parents. They said “fine” and packed up five boxes with all of Martyn Lloyd Jones’ stuff and a whole lot of other things and shipped it off to this guy with a letter saying

\(^{59}\) ibid.

\(^{60}\) Interview Paul Boots 16.11.94.

\(^{61}\) ibid.
It's all yours for free". They got known for having a genuine concern for getting books out whilst still being a sensible business.62

Boots commented that the original vision of his father was to enlighten the church with reformed theological material. Whilst he stated that the business had no particular policy other than just selling quality Christian products at a cheap price with good service, it is clear that the service Koorong Books provides plays a role in mediation, bringing together Christians of various denominations, and breaking down denominational barriers. Koorong Books had a role in the conservative Christian community which far exceeded its function of selling books. It enabled the networking of conservative Protestants in a way which complemented para-church associations. Ashhurst comments:

... So many people would come in and it would be more than just buying a book. I would then particularly be introducing people to each other and there was a lot of stuff going on where Paul was doing it in a much larger fashion. People were brought in touch with each other. It provided a networking base. It eventually got to be known that we'd have people often coming in on a Thursday night who wouldn't necessarily be buying a lot but would be coming in to meet with people and talk. It became second nature that if you had a beach mission or a camp you got books. It had a huge impact on the interdenominational aspects of church that we were not denominationally driven. So you weren't looking at one denomination making overtures to another denomination. You were looking at neutral ground where people were going somewhere outside of their denomination for ideas and cross-pollination.63

Koorong did more than just sell books; it served as an initiator of reformed theological thinking. Ashhurst stated:

I was going and visiting churches and taking various types of Christian literature and explaining to church loads of people: "This is what a concordance is", - "this is what this book is"; "This sort of book exists". We'd be getting heaps of people saying, "I never knew that Christianity had something like this to help me". So once they got hooked, if you like, then they kept on coming back. They'd then pass it on to others. These days if

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62 Interview Craig Ashhurst 31.10.94.
63 ibid.
something comes up a group will just say, "Duck down to Koorong and have a look".64

As the business expanded, Boots began to expand the number of publishing houses which were stocked. As already discussed through the research of Parker and Buch, there was a growing influence of Americanisation on the Australian church. This has also been documented in Joan Mansfield’s work on movements in Christian songs and Christian entertainers.65 In Christian bookselling there was a clear shift from English publishing, which was more expensive to American publishers. Boots said about this shift that:

The globalisation of American culture and the Americanisation of Australian culture became more developed ... you see the same thing in our market. In the years since I’ve been in the business I think we’re much more, the consumer is much more, attuned to the American product than what they were even ten years ago or twenty years ago. Probably our book selling/publishing has been largely British, or more British than American, it is now much more American than British.66

However, in Koorong’s case, this decision to stock American books is not entirely financial. Koorong Books has a stocking policy which is theologically motivated. Through the development of Koorong Books, the more reserved British approach to conservative Protestantism has given way to stronger expressions of American fundamentalist, evangelical and reformed theology. Whilst it is true that theologically liberal texts do not have a broad following in the Christian book market, it is not because they are published in England or Europe and are significantly more expensive. The decision to stock American “pop” theology and fundamentalist reformed/evangelical theology has been taken by Koorong at the expense of developing a broadly educated and critical Christian community.

The Americanisation of Christian book selling, theology and singing complements other developments in Australian Christianity, in particular, the conservative American

64 ibid.
66 Interview Paul Boots 16.11.94.
Christian emphasis on founding themelic schools. Lambert’s work already discussed in Chapter 1 emphasises that the founding of these schools is not a feature of British conservative Protestantism. It is my argument that the influence of American Protestantism and the development of themelic schools in Australia go hand in hand. Other scholars have documented this trend in the church\textsuperscript{67} and society.\textsuperscript{68}

Koorong’s ability to flood the Christian market with books of a particular type ought to be noted. The books on the shelves of Koorong were not books that entertained a plurality of Christian thought. As a part of Koorong’s “high view of scripture” it does not stock such publishers as Fortress, SCM, Orbis or SPCK press, which were theologically liberal or critical of the Bible in nature. So the Koorong influence which assisted the coming together of conservative Protestants was not a thinking convergence in a critical sense. The Christians who walked away from a Koorong store were reading books which were predominantly fundamentalist in epistemology. This is significant, given the manner in which other Christian booksellers have closed in the capital cities over the past 30 years, leaving Koorong with more than half of the market share nationwide. This movement in Christian book market share has made Koorong Books one of the most influential evangelical/reformed institutions in Australia. As Koorong Books expanded in the 1970s and 1980s, conservative Protestants were being increasingly intellectually fueled with the kind of theology which perpetuated themelic schools.

In other words, Koorong has encouraged particular directions such as the increased Americanisation of the Christian literature market. It has increased the contribution of reformed thinking to the conservative Protestant theological conversation. It has assisted in networking Christians together and initiated dialogue among various conservative theological traditions.

The Koorong store has expanded at regular intervals since 1978. In 1994 Koorong purchased a three-storey hotel across the railway line at West Ryde and moved into their new 2,800 square metre premises at a cost of over $3 million. In addition to its capital city stores, Koorong has several warehouses in Sydney. Koorong has expanded to most capital and some regional cities in Australia through the talents of employee Colin

\textsuperscript{67} Banks, R., The Yanks are Coming - Again Zadok Perspectives No. 51, 1996, pp. 20-21.
Shepherd, who started a new shop in each capital city. In 1995, Koorong employed over 200 staff (over 100 full time equivalents) and turned most of the profits back into the company, consistent with the Boots's original vision. It is the largest Christian bookseller in Australia and one of the largest mail order booksellers in the world.

The new Koorong building which opened in 1995 has a coffee shop in order to regain some of the dialogue and interactivity that it lost in the old store which became cramped for space. It currently has more than half the market share of a $35 -$40 million industry and by international standards are one of the largest booksellers in the world, 70% of Koorong sales are books and Bibles. It sends out catalogues to more than 150,000 individuals, churches and theological colleges throughout Australia. Most themelic schools have an account with Koorong and purchase many of their books through them.

9.8 Conclusion

The emergence of a conservative Protestant collaboration in schooling has been made possible by several movements in Australia since 1960. This chapter has surveyed the influence of four major movements upon the convergence in conservative Protestantism: the para-church movement, the Billy Graham crusades, the charismatic movement and Koorong Books Pty Ltd. These movements complement and strengthen the development of themelic schooling.

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70 Interview Craig Ashhurst 31.10.94.
Chapter 10

Changes in Education - Reasons for Themelic School Development

10.1 Introduction

It was not until 1978 that the real burst in growth of themelic schools began. In the five-year period after 1978, over half of the 300 themelic Christian schools that existed in 1995 had commenced. Why did themelic schools grow at such a rapid rate? What factors converged in order to excite such phenomenal expansion? What are the consequences?

There is little doubt that funding brought about by the Karmel Report enabled the non-government sector of Australian schooling to expand and develop, but this does not explain why themelic schools expanded at a rate many times that of the national average of any other non-government school system. In *Reshaping Australian Education,*¹ Connell graphs the percentage change in enrolments for government and non-government schools between 1964 and 1981 and this graph shows two things: extraordinary growth in the non-government sector between 1978 and 1982 and a steady decline in enrolments in the government sector over the same period. Despite the dramatic presentation of the graph, Connell does not ask where in the non-government sector this growth occurs. The question ought to have been: Why didn’t Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic, Uniting, Seventh Day Adventist or other religious and independent systems of schooling expand at the same percentage rate as the overall growth trend during this time period? A thorough investigation of themelic school records indicates that the bulk of growth in the non-government sector over this period was in themelic schools. What can this tell us about the schools themselves, the educational and bureaucratic community in which this has occurred and the academic community which has not investigated it? What can be learned from this research?

The purpose of this chapter is to explain why this group of schools expanded at an extraordinary rate between 1978 and 1982. The MACOS controversy of 1978 is examined, because it is a watershed in themelic school growth. Discussion of the work of Mrs Rona Joyner and her lobby groups highlights the fundamentalist reconstructionist extreme at work. Mrs Joyner and her groups contrast with the majority of themelic schoolers, who are not activists. The discussion of Mrs Joyner and her work supports my argument that the themelic system of schools is not fundamentalist in a militant sense.

I will argue that a dormant themelic community was agitated into action in 1978 by monumental changes of a practical and ideological nature to the education system, in particular in the area of religious and moral education.

10.2 Back to basics

Increases in funding to non-government schools after 1973 appear on the surface to give a tidy account of why themelic schools grew rapidly in the late 1970s. Researchers like Oswald, who were discussed in Chapter 1, have suggested that Karmel funding accounts for the growth and development of themelic schools.\(^2\) There are, however, several other factors which relate more to an understanding of the ideology and culture of themelic schools than to simple economic explanations, which have some, but only limited validity. The basic explanation is ideological. The changes in education in the 1970s set up a situation for an ideological clash played out in the MACOS/SEMP controversy. The new educational ideological factors of the 1970s which were thought by themelics to be represented by such educators as Dewey, Bruner and Peters. Considered positive by most progressive educators at the time, these acted as negative pressure on themelic people. Some of these factors will be discussed further in a Chapter 12 on the enemies of themelic schooling.

Whilst there were many other changes at this time that had their effect on themelic people, the following factors directly related to schooling. Changes in government education legislation according to themelic people seemed to foster the increased

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development of traditional enemies of their disposition, such as greater openness to secular humanism and general sympathy for ethical relativism. A continued climate of political anxiety over Communism/Socialism exacerbated by Cold War and post-Whitlam conservativism heightened themelic concern about atheism. Concerns were heightened by strike action by teachers and students in schools (particularly Victorian schools) during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Changes to the government school system in moves to comprehensive schools, more coeducational schools and "open-plan" schools disturbed conservative themelic people. Some of these changes created greater distance between the parents as stakeholders of education and educational bureaucracy. Large open-planned schools and the philosophy of open planning concerned themelic people because they seemed to foster excessive freedom and what appeared to be chaos.

Increased moral permissiveness in society perceived in trends in fashion, the arts and media concerned themelic people who saw these changes approved by staff who conformed to these trends. Changes in government schools in curriculum reconstruction and indirect/process teaching methods concerned themelics because it appeared to approve an indirect subversion of authority threatening the place of teacher as director and dispenser of truth. The implementation and trial of new curriculum and pedagogical practice such as MACOS and SEMP in Queensland confirmed themelic concerns about the influences of humanism in schools. This was reinforced by the drive to outlaw corporal punishment in schools which in themelic thinking is understood as biblical and godly.

The declining strength of the church and the inability of churches to lobby successfully to halt changes like Sunday trading and the growth of gambling created the desire in themelic people to find alternative avenues of strength. The move in several states to discontinue Religious Instruction (RI or Scripture teaching as it was also known) in government schools seemed to reinforce the growing ineffectiveness and irrelevance of the church to mainstream trends in Australian society. The last two events of this summary are the concern of this chapter.
The fundamental concern of the thematic school founders was about the changes made in education in Australia and changes in society. The familiar patterns of schooling after World War II had altered radically and this worried conservative Christians. This position of concern is sometimes referred to as part of the “back to basics debate”. Brodinsky assesses the demands of back to basics advocates.3

1. Emphasis on the four Rs of reading, writing, arithmetic and religion, especially in the elementary grades. Most of the school day is devoted to these skills. Phonics is the method advocated for reading instruction. (It is particularly worth noting at this point the manner in which Spalding Phonics dominates the pages of Light of Life the journal for Light Educational Ministries).

2. In secondary school, devoting of most of the day to traditional subjects taught from “clean” textbooks, free of notions that violate traditional family and national values.

3. At all levels, the teacher to take a dominant and controlling role, with no nonsense about pupil-directed activities.

4. Methodology to include drill, recitation, daily homework, and frequent testing.

5. Report cards to carry traditional marks and numerical values.

6. Discipline to be strict, with corporal punishment an accepted method of control. Dress codes regulate students’ dress and hair styles.

7. Promotion and graduation dependent on mastery of skills and knowledge demonstrated through testing.

8. Elimination of ‘frills’ such as non-traditional sports and sex education.

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9. Elimination of elective courses.

10. Banning innovations. No new curriculum reconstructions such as new maths, language arts and instruction through media. Emphasis on facts rather than concepts.

11. Elimination of anything outside the basic curriculum such as career guidance, driver education, drug education.

12. Patriotism to be put back in schools including a general emphasis on love of country and God.\textsuperscript{4}

Whilst all of Brodinsky’s descriptions capture the themelic feeling about education it should also be pointed out that the greatest anxiety and strongest reaction to elements of these demands are reflected in the concerns of the more extreme right wing of the themelic school movement. Nonetheless, Smith and Knight note that the underlying success of groups like STOP, CARE and ACTS rely upon the passive support of other less extreme themelic groups.\textsuperscript{5}

A call for a return to a “golden age” when academic standards were higher and moral principles surer is a common theme in the back to basics debate.\textsuperscript{6} To many “progressive” educationalists, the notion of “back to basics” seems absurd and comical. The reality is that the call for “back to the basics” is quite serious, which is evidenced by the success of Mrs Joyner’s STOP, CARE and ACTS groups. Mrs Joyner and her groups were instrumental in raising the consciousness of the themelic community in the late 1970s and early 1980s, resulting in the banning of MACOS and SEMP by the Premier of Queensland, Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the Queensland Cabinet in February 1978.

\textsuperscript{4} ibid. p. 522.
This marks a significant point in the history of themelic school development. To dismiss this episode as an isolated or regional incident peculiar to Queensland fundamentalists reflects a profound misunderstanding of the nature of the themelic school community. This dismissiveness on the part of academics, bureaucrats and educators has led to the current confusion in Australia about the nature of these schools.

Though many people of themelic persuasion rejected the extremes of Mrs Joyner, they were nonetheless agitated and excited into action by her and sympathetic to her perceptions. Support by way of finance and letters came from a broad spectrum of mainstream denominations. It was her work which helped focus the attention of themelic people on the common enemies of the themelic community at work in the state education system in the 1970s and 1980s.

Before looking at the MACOS/SEMP controversy and its importance as a watershed in the history of themelic schooling, it will be instructive to explore the organisations of STOP, CARE and ACTS and the work of Mrs Rona Joyner.

10.3 The activities of STOP, CARE, ACTS and Mrs Joyner - a fundamentalist/reconstructionist case study

At the extreme right of the themelic movement is the fundamentalist/reconstructionist position. The work of Mrs Joyner and her groups illustrates the activities of that position.

In 1971 the Society To Outlaw Pornography (STOP) was founded; in 1972 the Committee Against Regressive Education (CARE) was formed as an affiliated body and the Association for Community Tutorial Services (ACTS) was added as an auxiliary group in 1982. Mrs Joyner has been the director of these groups for over 20 years. Her husband has been treasurer; other members of her family have assisted in various
capacities. Mrs Joyner initially started STOP and CARE because of books her children were bringing home from her local school library.

With a peak active membership of 5,500 in 1982, these groups had significant lobbying power, especially in Queensland. All three organisations stemmed from the Christian conviction that:

1. GOD'S NAME must be hallowed in Australian society, since this country belongs to Christ;
2. CHRISTIANS must be the nation's conscience for righteousness, to prevent sin being our disgrace.
3. THE FAMILY must be protected from godlessness in society; and
4. CHILDREN must not be subjected to negative affective education, anti-Christian sex and human relationships and Marxist social engineering in the classroom.8

STOP, CARE and ACTS began as little more than personal lobby groups for Mrs Rona Joyner, an enthusiastic, energetic and polemical activist who favours the path of Christian reconstructionism. Christian reconstructionists are warriors against secularism.

Following reconstructionist ideology, Mrs Joyner, through STOP, CARE and ACTS has campaigned in the following areas since 1971, often in conjunction with the Festival of Light (FOL) and the Call to Australia Party (CAP). The following activities give a clear understanding of the nature of STOP, CARE and ACTS and the reconstructionist perspective. It should be noted that most themelic schoolers would not support the militancy of many of these actions.

1. Censorship of material deemed anti-God and anti-family, including school texts, magazines, films, video and audio media. Through lobbying the Queensland Film Board of Review, STOP claims to have helped ban at least 40 books and magazines from distribution. Through media publicity and petitions, STOP was able to secure an Education Department

investigation into school text placements which resulted in greater community consultation.

2. STOP, CARE and ACTS have always taken a stand against the teaching of evolution in public schools.

3. From 1972, STOP and CARE have opposed all forms of education about sexuality in schools.

4. STOP, CARE and ACTS have opposed values clarification exemplified in books such as *Value Clarification as Learning Process*,\(^9\) and were able to ban this as part of the MACOS/SEMP campaign. Describing values clarification, as “the satanic basis for Sex Ed”,\(^10\) Mrs Joyner acknowledges that it is still widely used in core subjects in secondary schools. *Stop Press* says the problems with Values Education are the destruction of nationalism, individual responsibility, order and the creation of a humanist “world view”, group dependence, situational ethics and chaos.\(^11\)

5. Intervention in the employment of teachers who were homosexual, pro-drugs or pro sex education.

6. Through constant petitioning, STOP and CARE were able to achieve a parliamentary inquiry into education in 1978.

7. During 1983-84, STOP, CARE and ACTS initiated public campaigns against several parliamentary bills (the Education Act Amendment Bill; the Intellectually Handicapped Citizens Bill; the Family and Community Development Bill; and the Mental Health Bill) achieving amendments and delays. On several occasions, Mrs Joyner and her party had lengthy (up to three-hour) meetings with the ministers concerned.

8. Since 1972, STOP, CARE and ACTS have attacked any form of Satanism in schools. In 1984, education minister Powell banned occult themes and

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such material from schools.

9. Since 1986-87 Mrs Joyner has been campaigning against what she labelled “New Age” programmes in schools. She has been against Hinduism, the One World Religion movement, Positive Thinking and Relaxation programmes. She claims to have had these things removed from TAFE courses and government departments. Of particular note is her effort to ban the book *100 Ways to Enhance the Self Concept in the Classroom* because it supposedly promoted Hindu and occult beliefs and rituals.

10. Since 1972, Mrs Joyner has been working for the inclusion of creationism in the science curriculum in schools. She has worked against UNESCO’s Treaty to Centralize Education because of its “anti-God and social engineering curriculum”. The Australian Education Council are also opposed because of their centralising effect on education.

11. STOP, CARE and ACTS campaigned for a referendum in 1985-86 on the proposed Australia Acts, petitioning the Queen, the Premier and Attorney-General. Mrs Joyner publicly attacked Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the Attorney-General over this matter. Mrs Joyner described the “secrecy ... manoeuvres” on the constitution by the Australia Acts as conspiratorial. The fear of the Australia Acts was due to anxiety about losing appeals to the Privy Council. The Acts were deemed a socialist manoeuvre to “centralise total power and deprive us of the protective right to access to the monarchy”. Mrs Joyner and her lobby group campaigned for state rights and against republicanism, fearful of centralisation as a socialist strategy for control.

12. Since 1981 STOP, CARE and ACTS campaigned for the “right to school children at home”. In 1983 Mrs Joyner began ACTS and started a Community Academy at Woody Point and Narangba. At these places, Mrs Joyner taught cursive writing, claiming to have improved some cases of dyslexia which had been aggravated by learning to print too early. The

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13 ibid.
general curriculum at these schools was based on ACE materials.

13. Since 1987, STOP, CARE and ACTS attacked the social welfare system and social workers because of the subsidies and pensions given to homeless young people and single girls. Mrs Joyner claimed that the state was "kidnapping" the children of parents and that it prevented their rescue.\(^{17}\)

14. Since 1972, Mrs Joyner campaigned against university groups she believed to be Marxist and socialist, such as the Australian Union of Students.

15. STOP, CARE and ACTS campaigned against the visits of leading American educators such as Dr W Glasser. Mrs Joyner opposes Glasser, Reality Therapy and "Third Force Humanist Psychology" because they supposedly condition the minds of children. STOP, CARE and ACTS also opposed the work of Kohlberg, personal development courses and human relationships education (which Joyner claimed was heavily funded by the tobacco industry).\(^{18}\) In fact, in her submission to the Select Committee on Education in Queensland Mrs Joyner rejects by name nearly every prominent educational and psychological theorist over the past 30 years.\(^{19}\) It is Dewey in particular who is blamed the most for the so called "demise of education".

16. Mrs Joyner and her groups have continued participation in a "back to basics" campaign and the opposition of "uniform mediocrity" in state education.\(^{20}\)

17. STOP, CARE and ACTS have given unqualified support for ACE themelic schools which refuse registration such as Capital Christian School (ACT), Norman Park (Qld) and Canaan College (Vic).

18. STOP, CARE and ACTS support the Moral Majority (a fundamentalist

\(^{17}\) ibid.


\(^{19}\) Anon., Submission to the Select Committee on Education in Queensland Margate, 1978, point 29, p. 3.

political lobby group from the USA) and the Right to Life Association (an
Australian anti-abortion group with a strong Catholic power base).

19. STOP, CARE and ACTS support the reintroduction of the death penalty
for the crimes of rape and abortion.\footnote{Joyner, R., Voting pamphlet \textit{Queensland's Defender of Family Freedoms and Moral Values} no
date.}

20. STOP, CARE and ACTS reject multiculturalism in education.

\textit{Stop Press} has often served as a vehicle for the analysis and criticism of government
legislation and the organising of opposition to government initiatives. In the July 1989
issue, Mrs Joyner called on “all caring parents” to boycott state schools. In that same
issue, Mrs Joyner states:

\begin{quote}
In 1987 Qld was the only state without Sex Education and the only state
without sexual harassment in schools. In 1989 with Sex Education girls are
being harassed in Qld also.\footnote{Joyner, R. (ed.), \textit{Stop Press} Vol. 18, No. 2, July 1989.}
\end{quote}

This illustrates the simplistic nature of the approach of STOP, CARE and ACTS. The
questions of many complex social and moral dilemmas are claimed to be simplistically
solved by Mrs Joyner and her lobby groups.

This is evident in many black-and-white statements declared throughout the pages of
\textit{Stop Press}, such as:

\begin{quote}
Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if
everyone is for it.\footnote{Joyner, R. (ed.), \textit{Stop Press} Vol. 11, No. 5, May 1982.}
\end{quote}

Following the MACOS episode, Mrs Joyner declared:

\begin{quote}
Children don’t go to school to learn to think. They go to learn how to read
and write and spell correctly.\footnote{Gold Coast Bulletin 9 March 1978.}
\end{quote}

Despite this, Mrs Joyner has claimed that she is not a fundamentalist because she allows
a variety of interpretations concerning the Bible.25

The work of STOP, CARE and ACTS and Mrs Joyner began to be less effective by the late 1980s and early 1990s, owing to: the change in Queensland to an ALP government; the loss of Joh Bjelke-Petersen as a sympathetic ear and kindred spirit; gradual changes in Queensland society due to the demise of the Petersen era and links to corruption with Petersen through the Fitzgerald Inquiry which his credibility and Mrs Joyner’s support base; general changes in Australian society as a conservative reaction to the 1960s and 1970s, tending to reverse the extremes of that era and Mrs Joyner’s advancing years which became too great a demand on her energy.

The heady reactionism against the changes of the 1960s and 1970s and a membership of 5,500 had waned by 1993, when Mrs Joyner discontinued the work of STOP and CARE. However, her influence on themelic school development has been significant. She also founded two schools, teaching in both of them without qualifications or school registration and refusing government funding. Just as significant, and interrelated with the work of Mrs Joyner, is the force of the MACOS controversy itself as a cause of themelic schooling.

10.4 MACOS: a watershed in the development of themelic schools

Like the Scopes trial in the USA, the MACOS/SEMP controversy, although not equivalent national exposure or intensity, nonetheless serves as a significant national event which marks the watershed of themelic school development in Australia. Like the modernist/fundamentalist fights of the late 19th century and early 20th century in the USA, the MACOS/SEMP controversy illustrates a reaction against modernity, humanism, evolutionary theory and the rapidity of social change in an urbanised society.

The MACOS/SEMP controversy exposes the roots, the guiding principles and the apologetics of the themelic school movement in general. The MACOS/SEMP controversy marks the beginning of explosion of themelic schooling in Australia.

MACOS is a commercially distributed primary school social studies course which is

taught to students of around the age of eleven. Conceived by Professor Jerome Bruner, a noted cognitive psychologist, the MACOS course is guided by a pedagogical model based on Bruner's research into how children learn.

MACOS asks three questions: What is human about being human beings? How did they get that way? How can they become more so? The course was marketed in a "pack" which was popular in the 1970s. The pack includes everything from teachers' guides to audiovisual resources. Units of study in the pack are sequentially arranged, focusing on salmon, herring gulls, baboons and a remote human group, the Netsilik eskimos. Each unit explores ideas such as life-style, social interaction, territoriality, culture and child rearing. Eminent educationalists and scholars provided the data and consultancy for the units.

In July 1977, a visit was made to Queensland by Mrs Mel Gabler, a "text book watcher" from the USA, as the guest of Mrs Joyner and her groups. Mrs Joyner and Mrs Gabler were also guests of the Festival of Light and the Conservative Club for morning tea and an address, hosted by the Queensland Premier's wife, Mrs Flo Bjelke-Petersen. During that month Mrs Gabler and Mrs Joyner attended meetings with Department of Education directors and other professional educators and publishers. Mrs Gabler had been pivotal in the campaign in the USA to ban such courses as MACOS. STOP and CARE immediately began to lobby parliamentarians and the Education Department to ban MACOS in Queensland.

The Gablers had organised a textbook watchers group called the Educational Research Analysts (ERA), which started in 1963 in California and was particularly influential in the 1970s. Gabler commented:

Have you noticed how texts have been systematically eliminating the basic moral and philosophical precepts of Biblical Christianity and good sense?27

The political and financial power of such groups in the USA does not have a corollary in Australia. The Heritage Foundation in Washington DC which monitored government influence upon curriculum, for example, was supported at about $500,000 a year by Joseph Coors, a well-known contributor to right-wing causes. Groups like ERA and Heritage were non-profit, tax exempt organisations with considerable assets. Groups like the Mrs Joyner’s STOP, CARE and ACTS - and, more recently, the Network for Christian Values (NCV) in Deakin, ACT cannot be sensibly compared with their powerful counterparts in the USA.

Relying heavily on the work of Mrs Gabler and her sympathisers in the USA, Mrs Joyner and Dr Goodman, the ABC Commissioner and Reader in Education at the External Studies Department of the Queensland University claimed that MACOS “taught” senilicide, divorce, destruction of the family, cannibalism, infanticide, sexual permissiveness, promiscuity, bestiality and incest. It is little wonder that the community in general was excited by such provocative claims, which seemed so tailored for hungry journalism. Mrs Joyner toured regional centres of Queensland, speaking to public meetings (at least 75 meetings) on the issue, as well as writing a huge volume of letters and petitions to government and the press. Dr Goodman also toured Australia, speaking on the issue as the guest of the Festival of Light in each state.

The opposition was sufficient for the Minister of Education by 26 September 1977, to cancel a MACOS teachers’ seminar held at Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education. At the same time the Department of Education booklet “Seminars for Teachers” was withdrawn from the MACOS holdings in state schools.

On 17 January 1978, in the parliamentary recess and during school holidays, the then Education Minister, Mr Val Bird, announced that MACOS was banned from Queensland schools by Cabinet. All sets of MACOS materials had to be withdrawn immediately. A furor developed between the state government and the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), which was addressed by the state Industrial Commission on 2 February 1978. The situation eased for a moment while Mrs Joyner, the state

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28 ibid., p. 49.
government and the union were in a phase of conciliation. However, on 23 February 1978, after considerable debate with the Queensland Council of State School Organisations (QCSSO) and the QTU, the State Government shocked all concerned with the announcement that it had banned SEMP. The QTU immediately called for a Royal Commission into government interference in education.

The next day the Federal Education Minister, Senator Carrick, and the Federal Opposition Education spokesman, Senator Button, became involved. Senator Carrick arranged to have SEMP materials displayed in Parliament House, and Senator Button took public issue with the Queensland Premier with an interesting reference to the Scopes Trial. Senator Button stated:

I don’t know whether the Premier wishes to take Queensland back to the 1925 ‘monkey case’ in Tennessee, and feed Queensland children on a diet of peanuts, or forward to a ‘brave new world’ of 1984.31

Three days after the banning of SEMP, Mrs Joyner announced that she would now pursue the high school course called Study of Society, particularly the book called Desert People. The Premier made his hard-line intentions clear to any government employee who did not obey cabinet’s decision.32 Schools, teachers and education centres feared reprisals and funding cuts if they commented publicly against the Premier.33 The Premier in writing to the Goondiwindi Argus (the political epicentre of the League of Rights)34 made it perfectly clear where he stood. He declared his government to be supreme in the matter and made it a point of political defiance stating

... many strange things arise in Canberra, especially if they were percolated during the Whitlam era ... which sustains the secular humanism of both the socialist and national socialist ideologies.35

The decision to ban SEMP, a product of the Curriculum Development Centre in

34 Gost, K., Voices of Hate Melbourne, Dissent Monographs, 1965.
Canberra, must not be overlooked and is consistent with Bjelke-Petersen’s political tactics for a decade.\textsuperscript{36} It just so happened that this incident and the campaign of STOP and SEMP suited his political opportunism. The moment had suited Bjelke-Petersen and his right wing strategies, which had turned out to be a national and international political success.\textsuperscript{37} To some degree, this whole episode reflected the mood of the time which Bjelke-Petersen endeavoured to exploit but, by the 1987 federal election, the “Joh for PM” campaign was too late. The fear of humanism and socialism was generated through the prominence of the Premier, and this controversy was something which triggered concern in the minds of thematic people. Joh Bejelke-Petersen was understood by conservative Protestants to be a Christian of kindred spirit. The fear thematic people have of socialism and humanism will be discussed in Chapter 12. No individual incident in the past in Australia had so agitated the conservative church-going population.

After some dissension in his own party the Premier announced a full inquiry into the Queensland education system, to be headed by Mr Ahern of the National Party. The Ahern Committee received over 4,000 written submissions - a figure in striking contrast to the Radford inquiry, which received only 28, and the Karmel inquiry in South Australia which, despite similar terms of reference, received only 125 submissions. Of the 4,000 submissions, nearly half were from STOP and CARE sources.

The lengthy debate over MACOS/SEMP in 1977-78 received considerable national media coverage, including segments of ABC “PM”; an article in \textit{Australian Women’s Weekly}; feature articles in the Brisbane \textit{Courier-Mail} and other leading capital city and provincial tabloids; and an hour-long live debate on \textit{This Day Tonight} on ABC national prime time television between Mrs Joyner, Dr Goodman, Mr Kay (Queensland Council of State School Organisations, QCSSO) and Dr Richard Smith, a pro-MACOS speaker from the University of Queensland’s Education Department; as well as numerous public meetings.

The overall duration of the MACOS/SEMP debate and STOP/CARE campaign amounted to approximately 12 months of exposure to fundamentalist concerns about

\textsuperscript{37} ibid., p. 226.
education and created a heightened awareness in themelic minds for the need to establish themelic schools. The comfortable conservative Christian assumption that public schools were good and much the same as "when we were kids" had been challenged. Many conservative Christian parents, though far from fundamentalist, were shocked to find that the tone of schooling had changed so much from the 1950s and early 1960s when anthem, prayer and Scripture teaching were synonymous with a good moral education.

Smith and Knight comment:

The success of the fundamentalist campaign should not, in our view, be seen as an isolated incident precipitated by comparatively few proponents of an extreme religious and political ideology whose intentions nevertheless appear to be "wholesome and benign" (Walls, 1977). Rather it may be seen as a part of a continuing organized drive by the members of fundamentalist groups to purge formal education of all "progressive" and liberal elements and to return it to a more "essentialist" posture. This aim, in turn, is a part of a larger political intention by the same people to create a totalitarian fundamentalist Christian society in Australia. 38

Smith and Knight confirm the findings of Mayer that fundamentalist groups in the 1970s were active, becoming organised and had a broad base of support. It is important to note that many people who would not classify themselves as fundamentalist nonetheless bore some of the characteristics of fundamentalism as they supported the sentiments of these fundamentalist groups. For example, reformed, evangelical, pentecostal and charismatic Christians who were not necessarily militant may have agreed on such vital issues as biblical inerrancy and infallibility, the conspiracy of demons and the Devil in the world as a battle against the forces of God, and the necessity for a higher Christian profile in society. Despite denominational differences, this kind of agreement brought with it verbal and financial support from a broad base in the community, from leading educationalists 39 to concerned parents. 40

The MACOS/SEMP controversy had raised in the minds of Christian parents the realisation that the content and structure of schooling had changed. The inability of themelic people to cope with change is crucial to understanding the level of sympathy Mrs Joyner and her groups received from conservative evangelical and reformed Christians at the time. The MACOS/SEMP controversy also serves as a case study in the politics of educational knowledge,\(^4^1\) highlighting the power of the political and religious sectors to use education as political capital.

Sociologically significant in this debate is the way in which the rhetoric of the debate indicated a “community-of-assumptions”\(^4^2\) shared by the anti-MACOS proponents. This “community of assumptions” is best understood as themelic in nature. It seems clear from the evidence that this debate assisted in informing and focusing the concerns of a large proportion of Christians of themelic persuasion who gathered together in a united manner because they were disillusioned and confused about the state of the education system in Australia.

The majority of the population had been brought up on school anthems, school prayers, oaths of loyalty to the Queen, the cane, desks in rows, an agreed morality and clear taboos; but these actions and beliefs which provided the populace with the notion that they lived in a distinctly Christian society had now apparently disappeared.\(^4^3\) The “shock of the new” was to blame for society’s supposed ills. The story of themelic schools is a story of how one section of Protestantism responded to the threatened loss of the old faith, to what Manning Clark called “the decline of the faiths”.\(^4^4\) The polemical language used in themelic circles to describe the movements in society at the time reflected a simplistic approach to the nature of society in general.

Hill states the case accurately when he says:

\(^4^1\) op cit., Smith, R. A. and Knight, J., p. 225.
Some Christian school advocates, particularly those heavily influenced by the biblicist right wing in America, propound a conspiracy theory according to which a well-integrated atheistic humanist lobby is taking over the state school system, and the options have now boiled down to two: Christian schools which teach the Christian view of life (and therefore, of course creationism), and state schools which teach atheistic humanism (and therefore, naturally, evolution). The Christian's choice, be he teacher or parent, is therefore clear.\textsuperscript{45}

The anti-MACOS rhetoric provided a clear explanation for themellic Christians, articulating simplistically the demise of Australian social morality in general in the 1960s and 1970s and the waning influence of the church. The increase of activity by conservative Christians in reaction to social and moral changes confirms Horne's observation that the "wowsers" had been in "retreat" during this period.\textsuperscript{46} One example of an area where the conservative Christians were silent was in the arts and music. The setting up of the Australian Film Development Corporation (ADFC), which provided financial backing for Australian film-making, caught conservative Christians off guard. Theatre productions such as \textit{Hair}, the music of the Beatles, TV entertainment such as \textit{The Mavis Bramston Show} and films (supported by the newly-created Experimental Film Fund) like \textit{Walkabout}, \textit{Wake in Fright}, \textit{Libido}, \textit{Alvin Purple}, \textit{Stork}, \textit{The Naked Bunyip} and \textit{The Adventures of Barry McKenzie}\textsuperscript{47} all serve to symbolise the social and moral changes which were "popular" and visible to conservative Christians.\textsuperscript{48} The 1978 MACOS controversy assisted in bringing these cultural as well as educational changes in to focus.

Smith and Knight note:

Like the modernist fundamentalist fights of the 19th century and early 20th century in the USA, the MACOS controversy illustrates a reaction against theological modernism, social liberalism, evolution theory and the rapidity of social change in urbanized society.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} Horne, op. cit., p. 183.
\textsuperscript{47} White, D., \textit{Australian Movies to the World} Sydney, Fontana, 1984.
\textsuperscript{48} Horne, op. cit., pp. 183-212.
\textsuperscript{49} Smith, R. A. and Knight, J., op. cit., p. 242.
Mayer noted the reactionary trend when he stated perceptively:

Very few educationalists or academic students of education would wish to be seen near Mrs Joyner and all she stands for. They do not wish to look too closely at her. They do not wish to face the possibility that the sentiments she manipulates and exploits are widespread and are held, to a degree, amongst many people who would not articulate them the way she does but yet feel that in some ways she speaks for them.50

The implications of this for the educational community which has ignored this sector of schooling is significant in itself but it also highlights the fact that, at a much broader level, educationalists have ignored the values and beliefs of a significant sector of the population which is not necessarily part of the themelic school system. Mayer made the point that there has been an unconscious disposition to ignore and marginalise this group and their schools in the hope that they would go away.51 Given the astounding confusion over the nature of themelic schools and lack of research this would appear to indeed be the case.

From 1981-84 Mrs Joyner was able to capitalise on the Education Act Amendment Bill which had adopted some of the Ahern recommendations, including the requirement for all primary teachers to teach Bible lessons. The lobby groups that had achieved so much over MACOS/SEMP managed to persuade the government to drop the clauses relating to the registration of teachers and non-government schools. Joyner claimed that school inspectors could close down any church school - ironically, on the basis of non-compliance with the “Humanist SUB-STANDARDS of the State system”. She forecast that parents in desperation would seek an “ALTERNATIVE system of HIGH STANDARDS”, offered by Christians.52 In late 1983 and 1984 in response to Mrs Joyner’s campaigns, the Premier withdrew some materials on multiculturalism from schools.

Another crucial element in the equation that raised the consciousness of themelic people and motivated them to action was the controversies over religious instruction of the late

50 ibid., p. iii.
1960s and early 1970s. A brief summary of the history of the free, compulsory and secular schools issue will assist in providing a context for understanding.

10.5 The “secular acts”

Educational developments from the late 1850s to the 1880s were dominated by controversial debate over religious, political and educational issues. The NSW Public Schools Acts of 1866 marked a decisive shift against church schools by increasing the degree of state control.

In the 1820s and 1830s, the liberals had argued for equal treatment and aid for all the major churches, not just the Church of England. In England, liberalism was established as a political creed after 1830 as was democracy, after the 1880s; but, in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, responsible government and manhood suffrage was achieved in the late 1850s. Both liberalism and democracy led on to secularism, which emphasised the separation of church and state affairs. Secularism argued that the state should not fund the work of the church or of church schools.

At the heart of the issue were the social, political, religious and economic antagonism and sectarianism of the Catholic and Protestant church traditions. It is not surprising that the state which pioneered secular education was South Australia, the home of the dissenters and non-conformists. In 1851 and 1852, aid to churches and church schools in South Australia was abolished. Tasmania quickly followed suit in 1854 and Queensland limited its aid to church schools in 1860. Victoria (1862) and NSW (1866) accommodated the problem of sectarianism and inefficiency in schooling by bringing all systems under control of the one government Board or Council of Education. Their legislation made it difficult to establish new denominational schools, but the dominance of Catholic and Anglican politicians in the larger states ensured that aid to church schools would remain.

Victoria was the first of the colonies to introduce free, compulsory and secular education through the Education Act of 1872. South Australia followed this path of reform in 1875, and Queensland in 1876. In 1880, NSW withdrew state aid to church
schools but still charged a threepence fee per child per week. The Act was not secular either, because teachers were required to give non-denominational religious instruction. By 1908 however, all states, including Western Australia, had introduced legislation for free, compulsory and secular education, what Austin has termed the “secular acts”. The term “secular” describes “general” instruction as opposed to “polemical or doctrinal” instruction and is not to be confused with the ideological sense of “secularism”.

By the 1870s, secularism had become a powerful force in eastern Australia. In no colony, however, did secular education threaten general religious instruction in public schools. In all states the secular Acts made provision for “special religious instruction”. New South Wales and Queensland had arrangements by 1910 for regular visits of one hour per week by ministers of religion to give instruction. South Australia made such provision in 1940; Victoria, by 1950. In Western Australia the Department of Education gave permission in 1947 for the mornings in schools to commence with devotions. Classes in Religious Instruction in most states were formed on a denominational basis in most cases owing to sectarian divisiveness. Initially this provision was related to primary school but later with the advent of high schools, the tradition was carried on.

By the 1960s, many conservative Protestant Christians had come to accept the presence of “scripture teaching” in schools as a fundamental right and sign of the Christian nature of society. As late as 1975, the NSW Department of Education syllabus on General Religious and Moral Education stated:

One of the school’s most important responsibilities is to provide children with an opportunity of gaining an awareness of their spiritual heritage. Steadfastly and consistently the school should aim at building character by presenting the highest aspirations and hopes of mankind and by giving children opportunities to experience the satisfactions which are the outcomes of right thought and action. One rich source of such aspirations may be found in Biblical literature.

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54 Gregory, J.S., Church and State Nth Melbourne, Cassell, 1973, pp. 103-146.
The Scripture readings and stories should be treated in such a way that they teach children about Christianity and make clear its underlying moral and ethical principles.  

The questioning of this instruction and its demise in schools in the 1970s became an obvious signal for Protestants that society was becoming more secularised and that Protestant Christianity had become a minority group in an increasingly pluralistic society.

10.6 The demise of Religious Instruction in government schools

By 1971, Hill was able to say that a “crisis” had arrived for school religious instruction. He described the situation thus:

... the sheer size of their task in providing special religious instruction, especially in the high schools where greater retention rates are pushing growth past general population growth, is bringing the larger denominations to their knees, while the disruption caused by class reorganisation for “Scripture” and a high rate of clergy absenteeism (due in part to other calls on their services at short notice) is responsible for alienating both students and school staff.

In NSW, the crisis began with a controversy which arose from humanist objections by the Secular Education Defence Committee (SEDC) to the 1959 Scripture syllabus issued by the Department of Education as a part of the revised Social Studies syllabus. In the midst of the public debate, the then Minister of Education, Mr. Wetherell, personally issued a syllabus - only to withdraw it fifteen days later under a barrage of criticism. In June 1962, the SEDC published a pamphlet entitled A Threat to Secular Education which attacked this new combination, pointing out the difficulties of withdrawing children from such teaching within the subject. In 1963, general religious instruction was separated from the Social Studies course.

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57 ibid., p. 84.
The Wyndham Report on secondary education in New South Wales had recommended that religious education should be part of the core curriculum in all secondary schools, but that participation in it should not be compulsory. Although the system of secondary education was reorganised as a result of the report, no changes took place in the pattern of religious instruction. In 1974, NSW became the last state to appoint a body to review the situation of Religious Instruction in state schools.

The crisis in South Australia had begun in 1968 when the Methodist Church withdrew unilaterally from religious instruction in schools. Subsequently, the Baptist Union, Churches of Christ, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches adopted similar resolutions. An Australia-wide study by Graham Lehmann revealed that in all states during the 1960s the number of lessons given by visiting clergy had dwindled. Troubled by large classes, student apathy, discipline problems and untrained laity, the situation needed a major review, particularly in secondary schools.\(^{58}\) Clergy’s and lay instructors’ apprehension had been increasing as they felt less trained to do the task feeling that the process of entering secondary schools once a week was “fraught with almost ineradicable difficulties”.\(^{59}\) At various places in all states, alternatives to the system of weekly visits were tried. The most popular alternative was a seminar programme which usually took place once a term or in conjunction with one of the Christian festivals.

In 1968 the Hughes Report *The School in Society* recommended that religious education become one of the seven core subjects for all students during the period of compulsory schooling. Following this report, the Tasmanian Education Department appointed a committee chaired by C.W. Overton to deal with the issues of the Hughes report. The implementation of a general course in Religious Instruction began in 1974, but it was a gradual process with some schools still receiving church representatives. The tenets of the Christian faith were only one part of the overall course which stood in contrast to the tradition of “Scripture” teaching in schools which the Churches and parents had been used to. Teachers Colleges established courses to train teachers in Religious Education and general teachers implemented the course in the classroom.

\(^{58}\) Black, A. W., *Religious Studies in Australian Public Schools* *Australian Education Review* Vol. 7, No. 3.

\(^{59}\) ibid., p. 3.
In Western Australia in 1971, after a process of timetable and core subject restructuring, the traditional style of religious instruction did not suit. It was decided to introduce a course into the secondary schools called Christian Education, an option for second and third form students. The experiment was a failure. Students simply did not choose the subject in sufficient numbers. In 1972 the Minister of Education appointed a committee of enquiry into the matter chaired by the Director of Secondary Education, David Mossenson. After the report was handed down in August 1973, secondary schools returned to their previous arrangements.

In 1972, at the height of reform under the Premiership of Don Dunstan, the Education Department of South Australia appointed the Deputy Director-General of Education, J. R. Steinle, as chairman of a committee to review the whole question of religious education in schools. The heads of churches proposed that the direction of the Overton Report in Tasmania be adopted. That same year, the new Education Act (1972) was approved by the parliament of South Australia. The clauses that had permitted a denominational right of entry were replaced by two clauses regarding right of attendance and the provision of a religious education programme. The Steinle Report was published in 1973 and led to the Education Department setting up the Religious Education Project coordinated by Alan Ninnies, to deal with aspects of implementing the proposals of the report. The Steinle Report resonated with Tasmania’s Overton Report.

It is important to note that in South Australia a controversy ensued for two years after publication of the Steinle Report. The media exposure, although not as concentrated as that which the MACOS/SEMP controversy, had nonetheless been the subject of months of journal articles, letters and articles in The Advertiser, furor in the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT), and a national debate on ABC television on Monday 3 March, 1975. The chief instigator of this campaign was Robert Moore, the Chairman of Keep Our State Schools Secular (KOSSS) and the Humanist Society.

In Queensland in 1960, the Director-General of Education, H.G. Watkin, chaired a committee appointed by the Minister of Education to enquire into secondary education in

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60 Ibid., p. 8
Queensland. It recommended that the secondary curriculum at all levels should include Religious Education as one of its components. Although some reconstruction of the secondary system took place, there was basically no change to the Religious Instruction pattern till 1971 when the decline in the situation previously described by Hill prompted a ministerial enquiry into Religious Education in Queensland schools. This resulted in the appointment of another committee, chaired by E.F. Gutekunst, Regional Director of Education at Rockhampton. The report recommended that a position similar to that taken by South Australia and Tasmania be adopted.

In Victoria in 1955, the Council for Christian Education in Schools (CCES), began appointing chaplains to technical and secondary schools. By 1973 there were 31 appointees. To some degree the chaplaincy scheme overcame the problems of detachment and credibility that the Religious Instruction visitor encountered. In 1972, the CCES requested that the Victorian Education Department appoint a committee to review the issue of Religious Instruction in State schools. The Minister appointed W.B. Russell, the former Deputy Director-General of Education to chair a committee of enquiry. The Russell Report was released in September 1974 and recommended an approach broadly similar to the systems adopted in Tasmania and South Australia.

The Campbell Report in the ACT recommended in May 1973 that:

... critical and comparative studies of religion be integrated into the core curriculum, but that dogmatic or sectarian religion not be offered at high school, except on demand as an extra-curricular activity.

The pattern was consistent with that of other states, and it highlights the 'revolution' that was taking place in education over the decade. Barcan describes the context:

A new organisation of educational institutions was under way, large-scale comprehensive establishments becoming characteristic of both secondary schools and universities. All these changes were associated with a dynamic economic and social situation which was producing a new interpretation of

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62 Black, op cit., p. 16.
63 cited in Black, ibid., p. 22.
educational democracy, and with a new ideological environment in which the
old ‘protestant’ ethic was giving way to a more tolerant, less definite,
‘social’ ethic.65

It is little wonder that the dormant themelic community was agitated into action by 1978
with such monumental changes of a practical and ideological nature to the education
system, in particular in the area of Religious Instruction.

The opposition to these many changes by the themelic community is well documented.
In response to the Russell Report, for example, *New Life* states:

> Whatever else it may or may not be, the new R.E. course is certainly not
> Christian education! The R.E. course does not take sides - it seeks to be
> neutral. But Christ said, “ He that is not for me is against me - he that
> gathereth not, scattereth!” That is just exactly the position taken by the new
> Religious Education course....Do not be deceived - if you want your child to
> receive a Christian education, you are suffering under a delusion if you
> expect the Government school to provide it by means of “Religious
> Education”.66

It was becoming more obvious to themelic people that they had been naive about the
ability of the government to embrace their notion of Christian education. It had dawned
on them that the times were changing. The age when Christian morality and a general
Christian ethos was accepted in Australian society as the norm was waning.67

The Evangelical Alliance Education Commission, in its examination of the Russell
Report, stated:

> That this whole policy of educating in religion rather than in instruction in
> the Word of God will be anathema to some of our evangelical brethren in
> Christ.68

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67 ibid.
This early expression of loss and entrapment captures the feeling of the groundswell of support that would emerge to establish themelic schools in 1978-1982.

10.7 General changes to education in the 1960s and 1970s

Peter Frogley captures the feeling of many conservative Christians in the 1970s about the Whitlam years describing the period of government as “an incredible frustration to anyone who embraced Christian ideals”.69

Barcan’s description of the changes in education after the 1960s as a “revolution” is reinforced by Connell, who describes the educational changes over the period 1960-1985 as an education “explosion”.70

Following a number of inquiries and reports in each of the states and territories in the 1960s and 1970s, a mood of restlessness pervaded the school system. Much of the focus of this era was on the secondary school system and many changes were made in everything from school infrastructure to classroom design and curriculum implementation. The whole push of “open space” classrooms is a case in point. Imported from England and supported by the educational philosophy of Bruner from the United States, open space classes and “learning through discovery” flourished. The first open space classrooms were started in Queensland in 1968 and in South Australia in 1969. Tasmania and Western Australia began open space schooling in 1970 and the ACT, in 1971. By 1972, Victoria had caught up, and South Australia and Queensland had established more than 40 open space schools respectively. By 1974, Western Australia had established over 100 open spaces schools. Complemented by the implementation of “new” Mathematics and “new” English, the average classroom was a world away from the classroom of the 1950s.

At the height of the 1970s, the federal government had established the Australian Schools Commission (ASC) and the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) with a significant increase of funds devoted to innovative curriculum programs such as the

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69 Interview Peter Frogley, 27.3.92.
70 Connell, W. F. op. cit., p. 79.
Social Education Materials Project (SEMP). A shift in focus had been made, following the Karmel Report (1973), with regard disadvantaged groups; a growing national interest in and focus on equity issues in education; school based curriculum development; the rise of elective courses in schools; rises in the number of working women; the strengthening feminist lobby; and changes to the tertiary education system, which all worried conservative Christians.

The drive of the “democratic imperative”\textsuperscript{71} and collectivist ideology accompanied a period of economic security, high employment and a considerable mood of risk-taking in society generally. A massive increase in funds assisted the development of education well beyond the basics. By the end of the 1970s, the dormant themelic community had caught up on the changes, awakened by several controversies. The Radford Report backlash serves as a good example of the way in which the themelic community was slowly roused to action over changes in education during this period.

10.8 The Radford Report

In October 1967, the QTU had recommended to the Minister of Education that the junior exam be abolished. The recommendation was passed on to the Board of Junior Secondary School Studies and was shelved. In late 1968 and early 1969, the recommendation had become a request for a committee to review the examination system.

In the Queensland Teachers’ Journal of October 1967, Dr Rupert Goodman, later of MACOS/SEMP fame, reported on the state of teachers and teaching in the Queensland education system. He reported that the system was in a bad state, owing to increased student numbers after 1964 and restructuring. By 1968, the situation had not changed and the department implemented an emergency training scheme to inject new teachers into the system. The QTU responded by calling a strike, and a compromise was eventually reached.

In July 1969, the Queensland Minister of Education and Cultural Activities, Mr Fletcher, set up an inquiry under the chairmanship of William C. Radford into examinations and assessment procedures in secondary schools. The changes that followed this report moved Queensland schools towards a system of school-based curriculum development and the replacement of external examinations with internal assessment.

The committee received only 26 submissions and the publication of its report did not provoke any significant reaction or opposition. The abolition of junior and senior examinations, their replacement with school-based assessment, the setting up of the Board of Studies and provisions for tertiary entrance requirements were major changes to the system then in use. Queensland was the first state to abolish completely external examinations. The bipartisan support for these changes was consistent with other changes made in 1957, 1962 and 1964, but seemed misplaced, given the implications of the resulting legislation which was passed in mid-1970. At the time, the *Courier-Mail* described it as the “Revolutionary Radford Report” which is an unusual description to be associated with any change in Queensland, given its conservative reputation.72 This fanfare was in striking contrast to the criticism the Radford Scheme would later receive in the post-Whitlam era and during the 1978 inquiry provoked by the MACOS/SEMP controversy. By 1978, the Radford Scheme would be blamed for many of the problems in the school system and in society in general.73

By 1977, the Radford Scheme was the focus for the discontent felt about the system by such groups as STOP, CARE, Community Standards Organisation (CSO) and those of traditional views. The abolition of standards in Queensland schooling was attributed, by Mrs Joyner and her groups particularly, to the implementation of the Radford Report. These are further examples of the claim that, whilst Mrs Joyner and her groups are clustered at the extremist end of Christian thinking, they nonetheless express the concerns of conservatively minded Christians generally.

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72 Connell, W. F., op. cit., p. 298.
10.9 The issue of funding

Themelic schools began without government funding. The first themelic school was started before Menzies’ announcement of reopened funding to non-government schools. Several themelic schools were established before the Karmel Report was tabled and implemented. Themelic schools have continued to develop since the restrictions placed upon funding in the mid-1980s.

There is little doubt, however, that government policy in education after 1973 assisted the acceleration of themelic school growth. I suspect that the number of themelic schools would have increased anyway, owing to the impact of the considerable moral and social changes experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. Given the history of conservative Christian enthusiasm to give financially to missions, these schools would have been funded by the church in much the same way as the Catholic church funded its schools before 1963. Indeed, the radical plan of Upsdell to establish a Protestant missionary-like teaching order may have received considerable support, particularly from zealous fundamentalist teachers and churches.

The idea of God “calling” a Christian person to teaching as a ministry is common in the language of themelic schools. In the conservative Protestant church and themelic schools, the world of education is spoken of as a “mission field”. Numerous Christian teachers and other professionals make considerable personal and financial sacrifices today to be missionaries in other countries or to work in missions in Australia, which are sometimes referred to as “home missions”. It is conceivable and even historically logical that such a development would have been translated to the world of schooling. In some ways, Upsdell was ahead of his time but, we will never know what might have eventuated had it not been for the advent of high levels of government funding for themelic schools..

Some themelic schools today do not pay their teachers at award rates, a practice more common in the past. Some churches registered their teachers as ministers with some opportunity for tax concessions. Other teachers accepted lower rates of pay as a cost to be incurred as a sacrifice upon entering a ministry. This happens in most schools which
refuse registration. In some new schools restricted to funding at category 6 staff often negotiate some reduction in pay or conditions until the school venture becomes economically viable. In other cases, some of the larger themelic schools, still funded at category 10, underwrite loans, stand as guarantors for loans or subsidise smaller new schools through direct gifts.

Menzies reintroduced funding to private schools in 1963. In 1973, after the Karmel Report the floodgates were opened for per capita and recurrent funding of non-government schools. Since then, allocations to non-government schools for recurrent expenditure have been more substantial than to government schools. By 1982-83, the federal government contributed up to 80% of the running costs of some schools. This trend slowed under the changes made by the Minister for Education, Senator Susan Ryan. In August 1984, Ryan announced an eight-year funding plan replicating the outcome of the Karmel Report. Providing considerable funding but on a more modest scale, Ryan established twelve categories of private school funding. Grants to affluent schools in the highest two categories (1 and 2) were fixed in real terms, whilst other grants were to increased. The highest increases went to schools with the least resources. In 1987, the federal government provided 56.8% of all private school income. The Commonwealth introduced new regulations in 1985 with establishment grants no longer available to new schools in areas of demographic decline. No new non-government schools could be funded at a level higher than category six. In addition to this funding themelic schools have also benefitted from funding made available at the tertiary level.

Since 1990, private students at accredited institutions have qualified for AUSTUDY, and researchers at private institutions are eligible for Australian Research Council grants, although recurrent and capital funding is not available. For Christian institutions such as theological colleges, such subsidies have been a boon. Other accredited institutions, such as Christian Heritage College, enjoy the same level of subsidy. In the past, students at theological colleges, church and para-church institutions had to find the entire cost of their tuition fees and living from their own purse. Students with children usually received relevant government benefits. In some cases the sponsoring church or individual church members would subsidise students. The recent race for accreditation

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74 Connell, op. cit., p. 634.
by Christian institutions has in essence been a race for “cheap” students.

When I questioned Brian Hill about the development of accredited tertiary themedic institutions, he made this comment:

Sometimes its even more earthy than that. They want accreditation so that their students will get AUSTUDY ... There are dangers on two sides. On one side the government is doing these things often for the wrong reasons. It can get children educated more cheaply by subsidising schools that other people put a lot of support into and, indeed, the tendency in England or New Zealand for instance is to push schools into that stance from the public sector to stress a kind of devolution which in fact places responsibility for curriculum and values and grants rights to local councils that can ultimately turn a public school into a private school ... and why are they doing it? As I say, to raise money, they are not asking the right questions politically because its simply a way of operating some of the budget load they are having to cope with in a time of increasingly straightened resources. I think that’s rather shameful and it’s been true of government policy ever since Menzies extended or reintroduced one might say, subsidy to non-government schools in 1964. The government has never been prepared to raise questions of ethos, compatibility with the kind of political democracy Australia is trying to be so long as it gets children educated more cheaply. On the other side it poses danger for Christians as in any subsidies that go into the voluntary sector ... they are vulnerable to the erosion of their voluntariness and their capacity for independent critique of the society.75

Hill identifies the power of funding in the growth of tertiary themedic institutions, and their development resembles that of themedic schools. It is clear that themedic schools and themedic tertiary institutions both started without government funding. The financial burden prior to government funding arrangements was accepted by themedic Christians as a part of their “sacrifice”. The campaign by Updell in the 1960s to start a Protestant missionary teaching order confirms this. The current situation, which Hill assesses well, is a potential financial burden on the government. This suggests ignorance in government bodies of the themedic character and energy.

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75 Interview Brian V. Hill 23.11.93.
10.10 Conclusion

As the education system began to change and society in general began to be more "permissive and progressive", themelic Christians began to mobilise and take action. Major events like the demise of Religious Instruction and the MACOS/SEMP controversy were catalysts in this awakening. By 1980, themelic Christians had responded to the perception of a crisis in education. From a themelic perspective, the battle was fought on ideological terms with practical political action.
Chapter 11

Thematic Contradictions

11.1 Introduction

The establishment of thematic schools is fraught with contradictions. The resulting confusion is not critically addressed by the thematic community and the tension remains. This chapter explores these contradictions explaining how confusion is foundational to thematic character. Confusion is discussed in relation to the following areas: the establishment of a separatist system in a pluralistic society, the socialisation of non-thematic values, the dilemma of a devalued Bible, the institutionalisation of the charisma, the confusion of school with church, the confusion of teacher with minister, the contradiction of creed with education, the possibility of open-mindedness and the sacred/secular dichotomy.

Chapter 14 returns to some of these contradictions when drawing recommendations from the study. Unless some of the contradictions are addressed, the thematic system is likely to emulate the Arnoldian system it claims to have bettered. This is a matter I have illustrated elsewhere.¹

11.2 The question of pluralism and thematic diversity

Thematic schools have grown because Christians from various protestant traditions have shared the perception that the state system has lost its Christian foundation. Others in the Christian community, such as Brian Hill, believe that consequent Christian separatism has diluted the Christian presence in the education system, taking out those who have most reason to stay in and influence it.²

It could also be argued, however, that the loss of such a large number of persons committed to a theemic ideology settles the public education system rather than destabilises it, enabling each group to operate more effectively. Theemic schools can operate as safety valves, relieving public schools of the challenge to present a religious option. Polls support the claim that over 70% of adult Australians want the teaching of religion in schools, and that this has been so through the 1980s and up to 1993.³ This demand for traditional religious teaching highlights the dilemma facing state schools which, because of their pluralism, remain secular. Discussion of the efforts of some state departments of education in the area of religious studies have been discussed in this thesis revealing that theemic schools perceive religious education as falling short of the mark. In order to be pluralistic and secular, the education system has allowed for freedom in the diversity and complementarity of opposites.

This dilemma of freedom in pluralism is articulated by Anderson who states:

A society which supports its Catholic schools, or those of any other belief group, is respecting the right of parents to school their children according to their consciences, and of the group to transmit its culture to succeeding generations ... Thus there is the contradiction that the exercise of tolerance through subsidising choice of schools may reduce the opportunity for the children in a pluralistic society to learn tolerance.⁴

Within theemic schools, fundamentalists and separatists as true believers find it problematic to advance a concept like pluralism. Separatists want to thrive, but they do not want a multitude of competing doctrines to thrive. How could they if they are convinced that their claims to truth are non-negotiable?⁵ The inflexible, inexorable yardstick which is so highly pronounced in the doctrine of inerrancy and infallibility in all the statements of faith of theemic schools, which readily sorts out right from wrong and good from bad, is the basis for a naivety which both denies and defies the social complexities of our society. The more private religious and theemic schools thrive, the more we know that pluralism is healthy, yet the more successful such groups proselytize, the more pluralism is endangered. Whilst a pluralist logic sees the exemplars of pluralism as success in Australia, fundamentalist logic sees those outside the fold as exemplars of their failure.

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⁴ Anderson, op. cit., pp. 222-23
Fundamentalist separatism makes secularist educators nervous yet there are striking similarities between the two as is evidenced by recent trends. The dominant philosophy in the public education sphere since the early 1980s has been economic rationalism, which bears some similarity to fundamentalism, indeed, writers such as Rees and Rodley label it a fundamentalism. Economic rationalism can be traced back to the roots of free market liberalism advocated by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in the seventeenth-century and Adam Smith in the eighteenth-century. Since World War II free market thinking has been advocated by economists and political philosophers such as Milton Friedman and F. A. Hayek. The rise of economic rationalism in Australia has been documented by Michael Pusey. The impact of economic rationalism on education and the preoccupation of education with economics is documented by Simon Marginson. Whilst it is not the purpose of this thesis to debate the details of economic rationalism it is important to note ways in which this new philosophy bears similarities to fundamentalism. The Christian fundamentalist and secular economic rationalist share a similar discourse which resonates with previous discussion in Chapter 8 about being formed by one’s “other”. The emphasis by economic rationalists on instrumentalism, control, crusading in righteousness, ideological dogma, individualism and a mechanistic view of outcomes has been discussed elsewhere highlighting its commonality with fundamentalism.

Some factions of the national curriculum debate have advocated views of education which are mechanistic, behaviourist and atomistic. Elliott has argued that behaviourist, competency-based training reforms exemplify the general trend of many social institutions towards fundamentalism in the 1990s. In distinguishing between “task” and “integrated” approaches to competence, Hager warns that:

... fragmenting of a profession into a myriad of tasks, as the first (task) approach to competence does, is overly atomistic precisely because actual practice is much richer than sequences of these isolated tasks, and the overall

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8 Marginson, op. cit., pp. 55-120.
approach fails to provide any synthesis of the tasks ... the opposite mistake
is adherence to a rigid, self-defeating monistic holism that rules out all
analysis.\textsuperscript{11}

Critical thinkers in the mainstream education system rightly challenge the extremes of
dogmatism in the system itself.\textsuperscript{12} Hager’s call for balance is a good one, exposing the
weakness of either extreme. The atomistic/behaviourist perspective in the competency
debate has certain appeal for the fundamentalist which has been exposed by scholars
like Ellerton and Clements to be flawed.\textsuperscript{13} Ellerton and Clements, in reference to the
national mathematics curriculum, label the underlying framework for its development as
“the Mastery Learning Gospel” highlighting its dogmatic and behaviourist foundation.
Ellerton and Clements highlight the way in which knowledge is compartmentalised in
the development of national curriculum frameworks. The idea of compartmentalising
students in this way is the domain of ACE schooling because it allows for greater
control and determination of outcomes.

Fundamentalist influences within both themelic and public schools inevitably promote
intransigence, since students neither learn the habit of compromise nor grasp its
necessity in a diverse, complex society. The danger of stifling creativity and innovation
would appear to be common to all systems in the 1990s. It is because of the dominant
fundamentalist epistemology and hermeneutic in themelic schools that students do not
learn that dissent and compromise are critical attributes of healthy democracy even
though evangelical and reformed perspectives exist essentially within a “free church”
tradition of dissent.

It should be noted also that within the themelic perspective the CPCS school tradition
serves as an epistemological counterweight to fundamentalist exclusivism. CPCS
schools with their roots in Dutch Calvinist theology, favour, according to “sphere
sovereignty” and “common grace”, a structural and confessional pluralism.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Hager, P., Is there a Cogent Philosophical Argument against Competency Standards?
\textsuperscript{12} Collins, C., A Conference Silence: Where Were the Debates on Knowledge and Personhood?
in Hughes, P. W., Creating Our Future: A Curriculum for the 21st Century Hobart, The
Australian College of Education, 1993, pp. 57-61.
\textsuperscript{13} Ellerton, N. F. and Clements, M. A., The National Curriculum Debacle Perth, Meridian
\textsuperscript{14} McCarthy, R. et al., Society, State, and Schools: A Case for Structural and Confessional
sovereignty is the theological view that God ordains and empowers the church and the state to operate each in their own sphere. Each claims its own inalienable, inviolable, nontransferable, and noninterchangeable rights and responsibilities. The church and the state are intended to cooperate in social activities in a partnership. The divinely ordained unity of all creation therefore carries with it an abiding normativity for social life. Far from the fundamentalist view of established theocracy and totalitarianism, this call for structural and confessional pluralism recognises the rightful diversity of various societal structures, honouring the religious heterogeneity of different faith communities within the public order. This diversity in themelic schools has implications for the ways they operate collectively at a political level.

Themelic schools are a contradictory phenomenon in that they exist because of the climate of pluralism and tolerance in the state system which in general they blame for the erosion of Christian foundations in schooling. Their distinctiveness is allowed to function in separate schools because of these values - some might add “Christian values”. The same contradiction exists when the defence of tolerance requires some degree of intolerance.

Hill describes the dilemma of pluralism:

Most Western Christians today are so dismayed by the present world-order that they are displaying withdrawal symptoms. They are shell-shocked by the speed with which the pluralistic society has come upon them, and defensive reactions predominate. This is understandable. For many centuries, Western civilisation operated under the unified value-canopy of Christendom, which was culturally potent even into the middle of the present century. Many readers born before the Second World War can probably still remember what it was like to live in a society where the Christian ethic was generally endorsed and expectations of life-style were relatively uniform.

He characterises pluralist societies as those in which no one world-view or unified value stance exercises a monopoly over the minds of its citizens.

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17 ibid., pp. 22-4.
Hill recognises a range of valid Christian responses to pluralism. Simplifying, we can group them into two areas: competition and modification. The competition stance seeks to set up Christian agencies and structures such as hospitals, welfare agencies, political parties and social clubs. Hill notes that this approach achieves clarity of purpose but causes social division and loss of identification and communication with the world. He argues that the modifier stance achieves both contact and relevance but at a cost of compromising goals and loss of influence owing to numbers. He then makes this note:

It is not possible to judge between these two stances purely on the basis of biblical imperatives. They represent two kinds of social theory compatible with Scripture though not with each other. It is probably desirable that we preserve a dialectical tension between them by honouring Christian activism of both kinds, rather than insisting that only one can be right.\textsuperscript{18}

In the face of the pluralist challenge, both Christian activist options of competition and modification are warranted. Christians who set up alternatives and those who decide to try to modify the system from within ought to exist in a complementary relationship. It is by the pluralistic character of our society that themelc Christian schools and, of course, other models of religious schooling, are allowed to co-exist alongside state schooling. Under totalitarian regimes, alternatives are not allowed.

In other words, a plurality of Christian responses is a valid response to pluralism if the alternative is legislation, coercion, oppression and conformity. Hill rightly acknowledges the value of the pluralist climate because it encourages tolerance, negotiation, apologetic, dialogue, openness and freedom. He also supports the right of the themelc school option and his right to criticise it.

10.3 The socialisation of non-themelc values

The socialisation of students in themelc schools at every stage in the narrow and parochial views of their families, without exposure to competing viewpoints and values, sets a course against pluralism and educational diversity. This is apparent in the way that curriculum is vetted and the manner that themelc school journals adopt in exploring crucial educational issues. The fear of rebellion and diversity is a serious problem for patriarchal authoritarianism, most observable in themelc school management. This is discussed in Chapter 13.

\footnote{ibid., p. 26.}
Themelic schools also need to be aware that, whilst attempting to resist the values of a secular and humanist world, they actually reinforce some of the same values which they supposedly resist.

As Rose perceptively states:

> While the schools provide alternative education, they also reinforce the social hierarchy of our society by socializing their children to adopt certain class roles.\(^{19}\)

In other words, each themelic community in effect reinforces its class oriented values. As Bernstein and Harris, among others, have maintained, the structuring of knowledge and symbol in our educational institutions is intimately related to the principles of social and cultural control in a society.\(^{20}\)

Apple asserts this by stating:

> For not only is there economic property, there also seems to be symbolic property - cultural capital - which schools preserve and distribute. Thus, we can now begin to get a more thorough understanding of how institutions of cultural preservation and distribution like schools create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination.\(^{21}\)

Rodger also comments:

> Applied to the treatment of women, the fundamentalist reconstruction of a false past has included the reification of a domestic ideal where women are respected and lauded for their clearly differentiated roles based in the home. This reconstruction represents a foundational ambivalence, typical of all patriarchal groups, regarding the role and power of women, with the

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Roder illustrates here how symbolic power is used to reconstruct identity in ways that empower control of a group. Catherine Hall documents how this was developed during Victorian England. In similar ways, the notion of “family values” claimed by the Christian moral Right and the campaign against abortion are used with significant symbolic power. Rodger comments:

The identification with the foetus includes symbolism of returning to the womb in the face of a dangerous world, of a symbol of their own decline in the face of an unrighteous world, for the protection of vulnerability in an uncertain world, for the guardianship of truth in the face of the relativities and anxieties of modernity.

The instrument for paternalistic power in themelic schools is theology. This situation reflects the long-standing alliance between magisterial symbolization and political hegemony in the neat fit of certitude and domination.

Lamb describes this as the dominance of rationalism in education generally in the modern era. She asserts that this way of interpreting reality suits institutionalised concepts of education which requires significant emphasis on control, security and certainty. It is the influence of a fundamentalist epistemology within reformed and evangelical thinking which directs themelic schools down this path.

Connell and Irving observe:

The subject of class analysis is social power: how it is organised, on the largest possible scale; how it is won and used, stabilised and overthrown; what its effects are in everyday life. It goes beyond “power” as the business of giving and taking orders, for those who give orders are themselves

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24 ibid., p. 12.
powerfully constrained by the way the whole society is organised. Class
analysis is concerned with the political nature of the entire social
structure.\textsuperscript{27}

This social organisation is apparent in themelic schools from observation of formal and
hidden dress codes to school policy, structures and administration. Themelic schools,
despite their rhetoric of radical Christianity, spirituality or their quest for distinctiveness,
have adopted unthinkingly the structures and curriculum of the contemporary education
system, particularly the Arnoldian traditions. This is often what causes themelic
schools the greatest concern and anguish about self-identity. The apparent loss of
distinctiveness is perhaps the greatest topic of interest to themelic school leaders and is
raised perennially at conferences and meetings.

One of the most prominent themelic distinctives is a common rationalistic piety. Much
of what themelic schools profess is at a theoretical and verbal level. An authoritarian
perspective, which is generated by reformed protestant piety and theology, is an acutely
problematic aspect of themelic schooling. Such a perspective legitimises inequality and
reinforces a blind obedience and subservience which inhibits critical and imaginative
thinking. A similar problem exists in theArnoldian tradition.\textsuperscript{28}

Those of a “prophetic” or innovative nature who rise within the movement are readily
marginalised and the hegemony is protected which contradicts the model of politics
exemplified in the Gospels.\textsuperscript{29} Rather than welcoming the potential for growth from
the diversity of new ideas and people, there is a tendency from within this conservative
themelic perspective to label divergent thinking as “rebellion” which, according to a
literal interpretation of the Bible, is heresy or sin.\textsuperscript{30} This usually means that only
agreeable ideas are encountered and an epistemologically closed system is maintained.

Ireland makes the very penetrating observation that retreat by Christian groups to the

\textsuperscript{27} Connell, R. W. and Irving, T. H., \textit{Class Structure in Australian History: Documents,

\textsuperscript{28} Turney, C., \textit{Tradition and Innovation in Non-Anglican Protestant Secondary Schools} in
Clevery, J. (ed.), \textit{Half a Million Children: Studies of Non-Government Education in Australia},

\textsuperscript{29} Yoder, J. H., \textit{The Politics of Jesus} Michigan, Eerdmans, 1972; Ellul, J. \textit{The Presence of
the Kingdom} Colorado Springs, Helmers and Howard, 1989; Moltmann, J. \textit{The Open Church:

\textsuperscript{30} Romans 13: 2.
sub-culture leads directly to that group aping the very secularist agencies they so vigorously attack. He notes:

In organisation and alliance it comes to bless and embody materialist assumptions, despite disavowals of rhetoric and ritual ... the church loses its autonomy as it becomes a look-alike of and socialising agent for the dominant economic and political institutions.31

In the same way that the themelic school absorbs and transmits the rationalism it strongly opposes, it also absorbs and transmits the secular values it condemns. So it is that it also absorbs and transmits dominant economic, social and political values it condemns.

11.4 The themelic dilemma of a devalued Bible

We know that the Bible is given preeminence in the themelic system but, what if themelic efforts to venerate the Bible actually devalue it? What if themelic handling of the Bible results in an opposite outcome to that which is espoused? Could it be that themelic theory-in-use regarding the Biblical text actually works against the establishment of respect for it? This short section endeavours to show that a themelic hermeneutic does these things.

Hauerwas comments on the Bible in the American context:

Most North American Christians assume that they have a right, if not an obligation, to read the Bible. I challenge that assumption. No task is more important than for the church to take the Bible out of the hands of individual Christians in North America. Let us no longer give the Bible to all the children when they enter the third grade or whenever their assumed rise to Christian maturity is marked, such as the eighth-grade commencements. Let us rather tell them and their parents that they are possessed by habits far too corrupt for them to be encouraged to read the Bible on their own.32

Hauerwas’s observation is just as relevant for the Australian context and the culture of

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themelc schools. The basic thesis of Hauerwas is that the Bible is devalued by Christians who read it with the bias of democratic western individualism, understand it to be neutral text and think that “common sense” is enough to process it.

Hauerwas’s protest really concerns the problem of community rather than hermeneutics. To suggest to the themelic school that they should take the Bible out of the hands of children and adults would be greeted with indignation, but this is what Hauerwas suggests. He argues that the doctrine of sola scriptura is in fact a heresy. The principle of sola scriptura (scripture alone) was first enunciated by Martin Luther in his debate with Johann Eck (1486-1543) at Liepzig in 1519. Luther intended this principle to mean the denial of Popes and councils as the exclusive interpreters of the Bible but since this time it has come to be held by reformed theology as the supreme authority of a self authenticating Bible. The Canadian reformed scholar Hendrik Hart comments:

> The Bible has for centuries been characterised as the infallibly inspired Word of God. This has set the tone for our experience of what the Bible is: revealed truth. But truth itself acquired a peculiar meaning. Infallibility has always had meanings that best surface in the most revealing articulation, namely, inerrancy. When linked to verbal inspiration, infallibility most simply becomes: our understanding of the facts of the matter and of the general structure of things (factualy true verbalised concepts and logically true stated propositions). These facts and propositions (general statements) are without error. That is what truth means.\(^{34}\)

In other words, without the necessity for mediation the individual becomes the sole reference of truth. This is masked behind the claim that the Bible self authenticates and is something one receives in some neutral manner.

Hauerwas says:

> The reformation doctrine of sola scriptura, joined to the invention of the printing press and underwritten by the democratic trust in the intelligence of

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the “common person”, has created the situation that now makes people believe that they can read the Bible “on their own”.\textsuperscript{35}

He also argues that literalist fundamentalism and some schools of liberal biblical criticism are two sides of the same coin; that is, they both presume that the text of the Bible should be accessible to anyone, without mediation. This resonates with my earlier discussion concerning the similarity of discourse of these two supposedly opposite groups. Hauerwas argues that both approaches abstract the text and argue on the grounds that it must make rational sense. In so doing, both depoliticise the interpretation of the Bible on the grounds that the text has an objective meaning. The result is the repoliticisation of the Bible, giving unchecked power to some interpreters of the Bible without such power being justified. Both groups are therefore hegemonic. The apologetic of such power brokers is that they “stand under the authority of the Bible”. Such a view claims that they have no hermeneutic because the scripture supposedly speaks to them and their subordinates “plainly”. Without a hermeneutic rooted in some other reference point, a hidden hegemony is maintained behind the language of inerrancy and infallibility. Hauerwas argues that hermeneutics must be conditioned by community. In fact the larger and less communal a themelic school becomes, the more the Bible is open to hegemonic abuse.

Jeanrond suggests that:

... the aim of hermeneutical reflection is not to replace the actual act of reading a text or of looking at a work of art, rather it wishes to help improve such acts by considering the possibilities and limitations of human understanding.\textsuperscript{36}

This presupposes that the meaning of the text exists as a fact and that we simply need to know how better to explicate what the fact really means. I would argue, to the contrary, that we must acknowledge that the text has no “real” meaning, and that no real, abstract “human understanding” exists to constitute such a meaning.

People in the themelic school environment find themselves mentally strained and

\textsuperscript{35} ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{36} Jeanrond, W., \textit{Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance} New York, Crossroads, 1991, p. 3.
uncomfortable with my view, because they fear the alternative of subjectivism or, in the worst case, relativism. The thematic identity rests ideologically in the security of biblical certitude. However, Hauerwas establishes that once it is acknowledged that strategies of interpretation are not those of an independent agent facing an independent autonomous text, but those of an interpretive community of which the reader is but a member then mediation is possible. Such a hermeneutical perspective invests a great deal in the value of community. Stuart Fowler seems to be the only voice in the thematic school movement who proposes such alternatives.\(^{37}\)

Although Hauerwas's views would strike many thematic people as dangerous, his ideas in fact share much with orthodox Christian propositions. Catholics have long held that the text of the Bible can only be interpreted by the "interpretative community". For example, in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, promulgated at Vatican II, we read:

> It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together each in its own way under the action of the Holy Spirit contributes effectively to the salvation of souls.\(^{38}\)

From such a perspective, it is absurd to assert that the Bible can be self-interpreting. Yet this is the claim of thematic thought. The familiar response of Billy Graham when giving an opinion was always "the Bible says", and this is what thematic schools teach. In thematic schools, the notion is not that the community teaches with the Bible but that the Bible itself teaches.\(^{39}\) The CPCS *Memorandum and Articles of Association* states:

> The Scripture is self-authenticating. Its authority does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but entirely upon God, its author, who is truth itself. It is to be received because it is the Word of God.


The sum total of God’s revelation concerning all things essential to His own glory, and to the salvation and faith of men, is either explicitly set down or implicitly contained in the Holy Scripture. Nothing, whether a supposed revelation of the Spirit or man’s traditions, is ever to be added to Scripture.

At the same time, however, we acknowledge that inward enlightenment from the Spirit of God is necessary for the right understanding of what Scripture reveals. We also accept that certain aspects of the worship of God and of church government, which are matters of common usage, are to be determined by the light of nature and Christian common sense, in line with the general rules of God’s Word from which there must be no departure.

It is an infallible rule that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture, that is to say, one part by another. Hence any dispute as to the true, full and evident meaning of a particular passage must be determined in the light of clearer, comparable passages.\textsuperscript{40}

This exposes the basic contradiction of assuming an infallible rule before encountering the infallible word. The notion of a “self-authenticating” text that the church and school sit under in fact assists the establishment of hegemonic power whilst advocating the neutrality of the Bible. This means that as teachers or students are disciplined, as policy is formed, as structures are put in place, there is a constant appeal to what the Bible says apart from the community. If there is some token assent given to “community” there is little emphasis placed on it in practice because of the way in which themelic schools have established themselves.

In seeking to elevate the Bible, the themelic disposition has devalued it. The very fear of opening the Bible up to individual and private judgement has generated a system of private judgement with authoritarian language.

11.5 The institutionalisation of the “charisma”

The institutionalisation of the “charisma”\textsuperscript{41} by themelic schools contradicts important aspects of their own vision and purpose. The espoused theory of themelic schools about community and education stands in contrast to the theory-in-use which is increasingly weighed down with expansionism, empire building, bureaucracy and

\textsuperscript{40} Memorandum and Articles of Association Schedule C, CPCS Ltd, p. 37.

institutionalisation. Rationalisation (the inhuman and dehumanising by bureaucracy in the Weberian sense)\textsuperscript{42} in themelic school bureaucracy is related to credalist and positivist ways of seeking truth and process. The preeminence of an inerrant Bible over all other knowledge is the foundation block of themelic thinking, regarding everything from knowledge of school organisation to curriculum design. The psychological dynamics underpinning this rationalisation of bureaucracy are fear, the desire for certainty and control. It is through the doctrine of inerrancy that the radical Christian message of community, deinstitutionalisation and pastoral care is domesticated.

Andersen’s work (listed in the first chapter) on biblical anthropology, a Christian theory of education, a Christian model of the educated person, a Christian conception of maturity and community as education reinforce the charismatic basis of Christian living. Other Christian scholars such as Robert Banks support this view.\textsuperscript{43} This is why, from the opening of the first CCS high school, Andersen has always insisted that a Christian model of schooling ought to be small. Andersen and Banks make it clear that Christian notions of community, pastoral care, charismatic giftedness, education and change are constrained by the mechanisms of bureaucracy and institutionalisation. Argyris and Schon make the same point about size with reference to the capacity of an institution to learn.\textsuperscript{44}

Andersen says:

> From the very beginning I made the point that if there were going to be Christian schools they ought to be small, that I felt that with multiplication of pupils and with a multiplication of bureaucracy that comes this could often be a stifling thing to the basic Christian principles that might operate in a school.\textsuperscript{45}

According to Andersen, the trend of themelic schools to embrace the model of large school poses serious problems for maintaining a Christian ethos in schooling.

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\textsuperscript{42} ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Argyris, C. and Schon, D., \textit{Organisational Learning II} op. cit., p. 26.
\textsuperscript{45} Interview William E. Andersen 21.8.92.
According to Weber,\(^{46}\) charisma, or the “gift of grace”, is opposed to all institutionalised routines, those of tradition and those subject to rational management. The genuine charismatic situation is direct and personal. In Christian terms, the charismatic characteristic is not directed by persons but by the spirit of God or the spirit of God as agent through persons. The contradiction for the themelic school is the limitation of God's charisma in schooling by institutionalisation. Weber recognised charisma as a revolutionary and creative force for change. The routinisation of charisma involves the devolution of charismatic authority in the direction of traditional or legal organisation. The work by Davies on the authoritarian and hierarchical nature of themelic schools reviewed in Chapter 1 supports Weber’s thesis. Davies’s proposal for a Christian model of leadership endeavours to capture the charismatic quality of human relations.

In themelic schools there is a conflict in being guided charismatically via ordained leaders, submitting to their authority, and the institutionalization of education in schooling, bureaucratisation and professionalisation.\(^{47}\) Weber asserts:

Patriarchal authority thus has its original locus in the economy, that is, in those branches of the economy that can be satisfied by means of normal routine. The patriarch is the ‘natural leader’ of the daily routine. And in this respect, the bureaucratic structure is only the counter-image of patriarchalism transposed into rationality.\(^ {48}\)

In themelic schools, patriarchy is strengthened by theology which asserts the masculinity of God and the necessity of masculinism in leadership. This is evident in the proportion of women in leadership positions in themelic schools. Less than 3% of all principals’ positions in themelic schools are held by women.\(^ {49}\) The theological traditions which support such ideas as the femininity of God and gender equity in the church are generally viewed as liberal by the theological traditions most common in themelic schools. Berger observes:

... the extraordinary passion of a charismatic movement only rarely survives for longer than one generation. Invariably, charisma becomes what Weber called 'routinisised', that is, becomes reintegrated into the structures of society.

\(^{46}\) Gerth, op. cit., pp. 246-50.
\(^{47}\) ibid pp. 245ff.
\(^{48}\) ibid.
\(^{49}\) Calculated by reviewing themelic school directories.
in much less radical forms. Prophets are followed by popes, revolutionaries by administrators. When the great cataclysm of religious or political revolution is over and men have settled down to live under what was considered a new order, it invariably turns out that the changes have not been quite as total as it first appeared.\(^{50}\)

This explains why there are constant murmurings in themelic schools about the loss of distinctives. In these many discussions about themelic distinctives, the protagonists of themelic schools really articulate a concern for the loss of charisma.

### 11.6 Church and school, minister and teacher

Teaching in a themelic school is understood to be a “ministry” as well as teaching. Indeed, Glendinning, a management consultant and psychologist with considerable experience in themelic schools as a speaker and advisor, asserts that this is one of the primary reasons that teachers join a themelic school\(^{51}\). In an age when the laity is more educated than ever before but no more empowered or recognised, particularly women laity, the avenue of ministry in a themelic school is an enticing option.

The dual roles of teacher and teacher/clergy create enormous problems for staff and student teacher relations. Not only do themelic teachers have to bear the burden of teaching but also the pressures and burden of the clergy.\(^{52}\) Such pressure in the themelic system makes it very difficult for teachers to operate with a sense of balance. In other words, the stress on themelic teaching is unique in that it combines the pressures of two professions. Coppes explains this dilemma as the expected suffering and sacrifice of the themelic teacher (suffering financially, loss of prestige, sacrifice as a public person, in training and in ministry).\(^{53}\)

Coppes unwittingly explains the dilemma:

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\(^{51}\) Interview Lynette Glendinning 8.9.93


Teachers will find themselves struggling against their own unbiblical assumptions ... thus in preparing and delivering their materials our teachers need more philosophical maturity than a "secular "teacher needs ... The teacher in a Christian school is called to face closer and more scrutiny than the public school teacher. Whether married or single, he represents Christ in a special way ... What we have said is that a teacher in a Christian school is called upon to enter a ministry.\textsuperscript{54}

The level of scrutiny and surveillance in maintaining “biblical standards” as if they were both knowable and commonly agreed in themelic schools is almost unbearable. Coppes explains the climate, in describing the ministry:

He has been expected to live on less income, and give himself and his family without reservation and without complaint. He is expected to be ready anywhere and anytime to render help. He is expected to be a leader and an example in good times and bad. This same structure now extends to a teacher in a Christian school. He is a “minister”.\textsuperscript{55}

Without any real understanding of the problem, themelic schools also have no real structures to offset this pressure. This was expressed by a themelic school parent who said that the system had not yet learnt to tell the difference between the adjective and the noun in the themelic school name. What the parent meant was that there was a confusion about whether a themelic school was primarily a church or a school. Was its focus on “Christian” or school”? The tension between fundamentalist rationalism and pragmatic and utilitarian school administration, which is a common aspect of any school administration, is in fact one of the real distinctives of the themelic system.\textsuperscript{56} The number of squabbles and disputes in themelic schools is a testimony to the fact that they do not possess the resources to deal adequately with such tensions. Many themelic school meetings are at cross purposes as parents, teachers and administrators continually confuse school agenda with church agenda.

11.7 Creed and education

The theological tradition in themelic schools which has most carefully considered the idea of an educational creed is the reformed tradition, and this is seen in the dominance of that tradition over CPCS. The validity of educational creeds as distinct from church

\textsuperscript{54} ibid., pp. 91-93.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Field notes Janet Smith TCS parent 23.5.94.
creeds was debated in CPCS in the 1970s. The debate highlights the problems within the themelic tradition about the confusion of identity between church and school.

The idea of an educational creed was first raised in CPCS schools by the Rev. Stuart Fowler who argued that church creeds had to do battle with theological errors and that educational creeds had to do battle with educational errors. The principal of Calvin Christian School, Mr J. Hofman, responded by pointing out that:

... if an association does not want to bind itself to the confessional statements, then it will be continually vague in the interpretation it gives to the gospel and the school will suffer the unhappy consequences.

Fowler’s argument for an educational creed seemed motivated by the concern that each sphere of the school and church maintain its own character. In a statement which is crucial to an understanding of themelic schools, Hofman replies to Fowler’s argument:

It is doubted, however, if the distinction of the spheres can be maintained. In fact, is it even correct to insist that the spheres of church and school are not to transgress each other’s boundaries? For a Christian teacher to be guided to every subject by the light of God’s Word and yet not teaching God’s Word is a false contrast. By implication the teacher is always teaching God’s Word. He is busy all the time, in all subjects, in the work of interpretation and application. And because he cannot avoid this, it is most important that his view of the whole counsel of God be bound by subscription to the creeds as formulated by the church of Jesus Christ, if the school’s program is to remain biblical and Reformed.

In response to creed and confessional based education, a teacher in a themelic school who considered that he had been victimised in his employment at a themelic school suggested:

At an educational level the idea of a confessional/creedal basis to schooling is problematic. Creedal and confessional based traditions make as their entry point an acknowledgement of the static and complete nature of the

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59 ibid., p. 4.
confession or creed. The purpose of schooling then is to simply know it better.\textsuperscript{60}

In his experience, the confessional and creedal search for security was something which was used in a thematic school to regulate certainty. This suggests that Christian maturity in thematic schools has less to do with espoused notions of freedom and emancipation than it has to do with an adherence to creedal rules which are the theory-in-use. In his story he had found that the church-school confusion allowed those in authority in the school to wear different hats so that, in any given conversation, the principal or chairperson of the school could appeal to business practice, pedagogical pragmatism or theological and ecclesiastical imperatives to maintain the order and so-called “ethos of the school”. Ashhurst found that

... the ability to “swap hats” encouraged a cynical use of creeds as management tools for the maintenance of power and in so doing created an arbitrary mechanism which resulted in alienation and disillusionment for staff and students.\textsuperscript{61}

Ashhurst’s story resonates with the stories of many others who have been alienated from thematic schools by role confusion. The desire to verify truth and interpretation through creeds and confessions tends to emanate most from the reformed tradition.

11.8 Open-mindedness and inerrancy

The subject of the possibility of open-mindedness has been debated at length in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. Gardner suggests that to be open-minded about an issue is to have entertained thoughts about that issue but not to be committed to it or hold a particular view about it. In saying this, he attempts to capture the ordinary, everyday meaning of “being open-minded about something”.\textsuperscript{62}

For the Christian, the idea of open-mindedness is directed at both issues and persons. This is supported by biblical imperatives such as “Accept one another, then, just as

\textsuperscript{60} Interview Craig Ashhurst 28.10.94.
\textsuperscript{61} ibid.
Christ accepted you”.63 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”64 and “Knowledge puffs up but love edifies”.65 The idea of edification in the Bible comes closest to the modern notion of education and has been well argued by Andersen.66 Jewett argues that the “welcome one another”67 passage means to:

... put an end to all competition, and to admit the basic legitimacy of the other sides ... to “welcome one another” means to reach out actively to include others in one’s circle, not simply to respect them and allow them to stand on the outside.68

In the themelic mind, the idea of open-mindedness conjures up thoughts of compromise and weakness. The doctrine of inerrancy absolutises Christian faith and creates a self-righteous disposition. It militates against the possibility of open-mindedness. It presumes upon the very grace of God which it espouses and, in the end, opposes the God who accepts mankind in the action of Christ’s love and sacrificial death for all humanity. This is perceived not only in themelic schools with closed enrolment policies but in the nature of separatism and reactionism which undergirds all themelic development. Themelic reactionism is the subject of Chapter 12.

Gardner points out that there are two accounts of open-mindedness: a firm account and a weak account. The firm account of open-mindedness does not rule out commitment or belief as such; rather it rules out holding a firm position on the issue. This means that one can have an open mind about an issue but as yet that position is not solid. The weak account of open-mindedness rules out commitment or belief. As for education, if we employ the firm account, the recommendation that we teach children to be open-minded leads to prescriptions that we avoid ways of teaching that will promote solid beliefs and that we teach children that it is wrong to hold beliefs tightly.69 This does not mean that one ought not hold a firm position but that in the holding to a position one

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63 Romans 15: 7.
64 Galatians 3: 28.
65 1 Corinthians 8: 1.
66 Andersen, W. E., A Biblical View ... op. cit.
69 Gardner, op. cit., p. 40.
ought to entertain the possibility of change through discussion, debate and inquiry.

It is this firm account which themelic schoolers most fear directs the government education system. For the themelic mind, this kind of open-mindedness leads to scepticism and relativism. However, in the movement away from the government system, the themelic school by holding to inerrancy, has developed a position which is closed, singular and anti-educational, what Gardner might define as the "weak account". Hare makes the point:

An open-minded attitude is quite compatible with having principles and convictions. What is required is ... that we regard our own (positions) as subject to revision in the light of critical reflection. Moreover, regarding our moral views as subject to revision does not mean that we adopt a sceptical attitude towards them. The test of open-mindedness is rather whether or not we are prepared to entertain doubts about our views.\footnote{Hare, W., Open-mindedness in the Classroom \textit{Journal of Philosophy of Education} 19, 1987, p. 99.}

"Unshakeable" and "fixed" beliefs are taken by McLaughlin as indoctrinated beliefs.\footnote{McLaughlin, T. H., Parental Rights and the Upbringing of Children \textit{Journal of Philosophy of Education} 18, 1984, p. 78.} This raises many questions and possible contradictions in the themelic disposition regarding rational autonomy, freedom, complexity, certainty, control and the possibility of establishing education. Guinness makes the point that a Christianity which claims to eliminate doubt militates against the very notion of faith and seriously undermines the capacity for Christians to be educated.\footnote{Guinness, O., \textit{Doubt: Faith in Two Minds} London, Lion, 1976, pp. 16-33.} Guinness makes similar definitions of attitudes to doubt to those of Gardner on open-mindedness by referring to attitudes to doubt that are hard or soft.

The themelic school position, founded as it is on a fundamentalist notion of knowledge, has difficulty coping with paradox and doubt. It consequently lacks the ability to accept critical thinking and maintains a double-speak about protection and preparation. This is evident in the justification for themelic schooling by the founder of CCS schools, Mr Bob Frisken, in the CCS introduction book. Frisken states:
Protection and preparation are very closely linked and must be kept in balance. Many parents express a concern that attending a Christian school will overprotect their children. While it is important that children should not have a narrow, legalistic or over-restrictive education, the Bible clearly speaks about the need for protection. A proper balance will, however, see protection as an important ingredient of a comprehensive education that ensures adequate preparation for an authentic Christian lifestyle that can be lived in the world without becoming a part of it.\(^7\)

The full implications of this double-speak are discovered in the final sentence and exemplify how assumptions about hermeneutical neutrality pervade the use of the biblical text in themelic school publications. It really depends on what “lived in the world without becoming part of it” means for the themelic school. It is misleading to suggest a sense of balance and open-mindedness when the foundation of the system is fixed in inerrancy.

Andersen sees the closedness of the themelic system as a significant educational dilemma, a dilemma which the themelic system has not adequately investigated. Andersen encapsulates the problem succinctly:

Christian schools are concerned with the development of pupils as whole beings; thinking, feeling and doing people; people integrated around, and progressively growing up into Christ. And this is a great goal. But it does assume that the end-point is a pupil who has become a Christian by the time of leaving school. To have this goal and no other, however, may yield an unfortunate imbalance ... Teaching the truth is all-important. If we hold forth the word of life persuasively, that is one thing. If we diminish rather than enhance the possibility of a pupil genuinely deliberating, even doubting, and then choosing, we assault and violate him or her, in the name of Jesus who taught and loved, but lost the rich young ruler.\(^7\)

For authentic dialogue to take place with themelic schools, liberal Christians and educators must confront and acknowledge their own epistemology. One of the differences between having fundamentals and being a fundamentalist hinges on whether, even in possession of one’s dearest convictions, there is something outside them which prevents them from turning into mechanisms of intolerance. In other

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\(^7\) Frisken, Christian Community Schooling... op. cit., p. 6.

words, the academic and critic must own their own position in order to make dialogue possible. The threat of open-mindedness for themelic schooling is really the threat of loss of certainty and control. This is most apparent in themelic school management, which is the topic of Chapter 13.

10.9 The sacred and secular dichotomy

The term “secularisation” was originally employed in history in the wake of the Wars of Religion to signify the removal of territory or property from the control of ecclesiastical authorities. More recently Berger notes:

The term “secularisation”, and even more its derivative “secularism”, has been employed as an ideological concept highly charged with evaluative connotations, sometimes positive and sometimes negative. In anti-clerical and “progressive” circles it has come to stand for the liberation of modern man from religious tutelage, while in circles connected with the traditional churches it has been attacked as “de-Christianisation”, “paganisation”, and the like.75

It is argued in Chapter 12 that secularisation is considered an enemy in themelic schools. This section demonstrates that the fear of secularisation contradicts the history of Protestant theology, principally the Protestant work ethic.

Some theologians have capitalised on certain congruences between Christianity and secularity, welcoming secularisation as an unfolding of the essence of religion.76 Jarrett-Kerr notes that secularisation offers Christianity two gifts: the gift of scientific humanism and the gift of criticism.77 The most notable theologians holding a positive Christian appraisal of secularisation are Harvey Cox78 and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.79 Cox and Bonhoeffer proposed the necessity for Christianity to secularise and become “religionless” and “worldly”. Their argument rejects the bi-polarisation of Christianity because of the way it has assisted Christianity to become a self-righteous idolatry, irrelevant to ordinary people and creating its own distorted understanding of reality.

77 ibid., pp. 179ff.
Separatism is strong in themelic schools because they have set themselves up as being “truly” Christian in contrast to other independent church schools.

Martin makes the point that the breakthrough of secularisation has occurred in Christian cultures and that secularisation is fostered particularly by Protestantism. Martin’s argument concurs with many points made by Weber in his attack on the Protestant work ethic. Given the Calvinist and American Protestant dominance in themelic schools, these issues are important. Themelic schools as a reaction to modernity and secularisation exemplify what Martin calls the “crisis amongst the professional guardians of the sacred”. Marshall notes three tenets of everyday conduct at the centre of the ethical codes in the Protestant tradition: diligence in lawful callings, asceticism, and accounting for the use of time. Not only are they fundamental to the teachings of seventeenth-century Calvinist groupings (such as English Puritans), but they are also readily identifiable as the foundation of the prescribed form of everyday conduct in pietism and evangelicalism. Marshall later cites the necessity of “proof” in Protestant theology as an important aspect of the work ethic. In other words, the doctrine of inerrancy of the Bible fuels the ethic and theology which eventually foster secularism. This cyclic transition has been documented effectively by Rischin and Bellah. Bellah and Rischin show that individualism, materialism, greed and the worship of success are exacerbated by Protestant theology, making Protestant groups more secular over time.

Themelic schools are most critical of secular humanism as the enemy of biblical Christianity but have yet to develop a self-criticism that might address the transition of the work ethic to secularism. As long as themelic schools remain uncritical of their own position they will continue to foster this contradiction of opposing the very thing they generate. Que de beaux makes the point that much of modern evangelical Protestantism

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82 Martin, op. cit., p. 278.
thrives on the mechanisms of modernity which evangelicals supposedly oppose.\textsuperscript{86} Similarly Horton, Guinness and Seel are critical of such contradictions in evangelicalism.\textsuperscript{87}

In many ways, the themelic school tradition has not addressed the question of secularisation. In retreating from the enemy of secular humanism, themelic schools have been uncritical of their own assumptions and roots. In choosing the separatist option, themelic schools have created too much distance among themselves whilst rejecting aspects of secularism which would provide them with the possibility of critical capacity.

11.10 Conclusion

This chapter has pointed to numerous contradictions in themelic schooling. These contradictions fuel the confusion characteristic of the themelic school mentality. The contradictions described in this chapter are additional stressors in the life of each themelic school. Themelic schools are particularly stressful because they are driven by fear, characterised by confusion and suffer under numerous financial and physical hardships. Much of the stress in themelic schools is accepted because it is expected through a theology of suffering. Such contradictions need to be addressed by the themelic community.


Chapter 12

Themelic Reactionism

12.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the social-psychological nature of themelic schooling. Thus far I have sought to examine the nature of the themelic system according to its central theological dynamic, study of which explains how themelic schools see themselves as different from government and non-government schools and how they differ from each other. A psychological explanation of why people are attracted to themelic theology has not yet been presented, and this chapter demonstrates a strong link between the adversarial disposition of themelic schooling and the authoritarian personality.

This Chapter investigates research into the nature of the authoritarian personality and considers the reactionary features of themelic schooling by means of a study of the themelic system's supposed enemies.

12.2 The authoritarian personality

The work of Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford published in 1950\(^1\) first developed the idea of the authoritarian personality (TAP). The hypothesis of TAP research is that an authoritarian personality predisposes one to accept or be attracted to fascist ideology. The authoritarian is a person who is dependent on parental and other authority by virtue of inadequate ego strength and the consequent use of various defense mechanisms to deal with hostile impulses.

The concept of the authoritarian personality is a construct and a typology in a theory

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which attempts to explain a particular personality type, and from research on German anti-Semitism in the 1930s at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt. Among the researchers of the institute were Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse. More recently, Bob Altemeyer’s work\(^2\) and the comprehensive study *Strength and Weakness: The Authoritarian Personality Today*, edited by William Stone, Gerda Lederer and Richard Christie, helps to confirm the general findings of the TAP research\(^3\). Stone and his colleagues note that 2,341 publications were listed in *Psychological Abstracts* on authoritarianism and dogmatism from 1950 through to 1989. They also note a consistent declining interest in the subject ever since the 1960s.

In spite of methodological flaws, disputes over left and right wing authoritarianism and questions raised about the validity of the “F scale” which will be discussed shortly, TAP remains an impressive work and lays the groundwork for identifying persons whose behaviour has authoritarian tendencies and those whose behaviour has not.

Jaensch’s work in 1938\(^4\) identified contrasting personality types. Meissner comments:

> The S-type was declared to be liberal, an adherent to the view that behaviour was shaped by education and environment, individualistic, effeminate and generally unstable. ... The ideal J-type, however, emerged as tough, masculine, reliable. His behaviour was fixed by birth, blood, and national tradition, and he was intolerant of ambiguity. The J-type was anti-Semitic and a potential ideal Nazi.\(^5\)

Interest in anti-Semitism was extended by research carried out at the University of California at Berkeley during the 1940s. The concept of the authoritarian personality was based on the covariance of variables in a variety of test data. A single measure was constructed to identify the constellation of characteristics which corresponds to the

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authoritarian personality - the so-called F scale. Four types of questionnaire were
developed for more than 2,000 subjects of the study: measures of anti-Semitism,
political and economic conservativism, ethnocentrism and anti-democratic trends. The
latter two variables were measured by the E scale (for ethnocentrism) and the F scale
(for fascism).

As data from questionnaires, personality tests and interviews were gathered and
analysed, a number of trends emerged. The correlations among the four scales were
high and positive. Persons scoring high on any of these scales seemed to differ in a
number of ways from those who scored low. The low scorers tended to be more
introspective, self-analytical and questioning of their own behaviour. The high scorers
resisted any idea of self-appraisal and based their life decisions on a reality ordered by
dogmatism and rule keeping. Persons scoring high on the scales were inclined to see a
multitude of dangers in ambiguity and insisted on obedience and deference to those of
higher status. High scorers tended to react to sex with guilt and anxiety and to treat
deviant behaviour in drastic ways. They tended to perceive sex as a means of achieving
status and dominance. Low scorers tended to see sex as implying warmth,
companionship and mutual affection. Low scoring subjects were more accepting of
themselves and ambivalent to parents and authority figures. They also showed more
tolerance of ambiguity and were less inclined to be rigid or blame their own hostility on
the actions or intentions of others.

Meissner lists the characteristics of the authoritarian personality as follows:

1. Conventionalism: rigid adherence to conventional middle-class values.
2. Authoritarian submission: a submissive, uncritical attitude toward the
   idealised moral authorities in the group.
3. Authoritarian aggression: a tendency to be sensitive to, condemnatory
   and punitive toward those violating conventional values.
4. Anti-intracception: opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the
   tender (as opposed to tough-minded).
5. Superstition and stereotype: belief in mystical determinants of individual
   fate, and a tendency to think in more or less rigid categories.

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6 Adorno et al., op. cit., pp. 75, 113, 122, 123, 192, 193, 211, 212.
6. Power and “toughness”: preoccupation with control, power-submission, strength-weakness: tendency to identify with power figures; exaggerated assertions of strength and toughness.
7. Destructiveness and cynicism: generalised hostility.
8. Projectivity: tendency to believe that dangerous things are happening; projection outwards of unconscious emotional impulses.

In the discussion of enemies of themelic schooling later Meissner’s characteristics will be used to draw some correlation between themelic schooling and TAP.

The authoritarian sees the world as a continuing struggle in which the strong dominate the weak. The TAP person is preoccupied with power and prejudice. Duckitt’s research indicates that loyalty to in-group and the rejection of out-groups may also be a factor in the TAP equation. Authoritarians, it seems, exaggerate the differences between the in-group and the out-group. In-groupness provides a frame of reference for self-definition. This idea builds on the analysis of the importance of in-groups and out-groups in understanding the nature of prejudice undertaken by Allport and Tajfel.

An important field experiment by Downing and Monaco provides support for the idea that authoritarians are particularly attached to their groups. This might explain why themelic schools have trouble dismissing employees with propriety and why dismissed employees speak with such anger against the themelic school and its leadership.

Meloen’s work in 1983 has some significance for this thesis in that he investigates the resurgence of authoritarianism in the Netherlands in the 1980s in the support by the

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7 Meissner, op. cit., p. 118.
11 Interviews Mark Tindall 14.8.92; Ross Henshaw 5.5.93; Craig Ashhurst 31.10.94; Craig Laffin 17.11.94; Geoff Clark 16.11.94; Lindsay and Judy Gay 18.11.94; Greg Brian 3.3.95; Anneke Kruik 25.4.95; Penny Bevan 3.5.95; Gabriel Jarvis 29.11.95.
Dutch for neo-Nazism.\textsuperscript{12} If this is a national disposition it would help explain why themelic people of Dutch reformed background are significantly more authoritarian than other theological traditions represented in the themelic system. Despite the numerical insignificance of people of this disposition in the CPCS group there is an extraordinary strength of this tradition in CPCS Ltd management.

Rigidity of thought, closed-mindedness, and other concepts related to cognitive complexity have been used to characterise the thought processes of authoritarians. Harold Shroder and his colleagues developed a scoring system for a related variable called "integrative complexity". Integrative complexity refers to the combined ability of an individual to differentiate and to integrate complex information. A person of low integrative complexity will tend to use compartmentalised thinking, make premature closure in situations of conflict and be prone to misperception and distortion of information.

The other major formulation of the authoritarian personality is that by Erich Fromm, especially in \textit{Escape from Freedom}. Fromm postulates that the human species is a freak of nature, embedded in nature yet transcending it. Humans alone have the capacity to create themselves, to expand their own life and fulfil their own potentialities, which they do through freedom. One of the major neurotic motivations is to escape from freedom. A primary mechanism of escape from freedom is the tendency to surrender one's own independence and to fuse oneself with something outside in order to acquire the strength which the one lacks. This is most commonly found in strivings for submission or domination, the normal counterparts of neurotic sadomasochism.

Masochism is usually manifest in feelings of inferiority, powerlessness, or individual insignificance. Masochists often show a marked dependence on powers outside themselves: God, other people, institutions or even nature. Sadistic tendencies are found hand in hand with the masochistic, often in the same personality, involving

\textsuperscript{12} Meloen, J. D. et al., Authoritarianism and the revival of political racism: Reassessments in the Netherlands of the reliability and validity of the concept of authoritarianism by Adorno et al. \textit{Political Psychology} 9, 1988, pp. 413-29.
tendencies to make others dependent on oneself, to have absolute power over others, to rule others in such a way as to exploit and use them and to see or make others suffer. These latter tendencies are usually less conscious and often concealed by reaction formations and rationalisations of excessive concern and goodness toward others. "I rule you because I know what is best for you". In his classic study, _The True Believer_, Hoffer comments

The technique of a proselytising mass movement aims to evoke in the faithful the mood and frame of mind of a repentant criminal. Self-surrender, which is ... the source of a mass movement's unity and vigour, is a sacrifice, an act of atonement, and clearly no atonement is called for unless there is a poignant sense of sin. Here, as elsewhere, the technique of a mass movement aims to infect people with a malady and then offer the movement a cure. "What a task confronts the American clergy" - laments an American divine - "preaching the good news of a savior to people who for the most part have no real sense of sin." An effective mass movement cultivates the idea of sin. It depicts the autonomous self not only as barren and helpless but also as vile. To confess and repent is to slough off one's individual distinctness and separateness, and salvation is found by losing oneself in the holy oneness of the congregation.  

The centrality of sin dominates theological traditions in the themelic system. The emphasis on obedience and loyalty in themelic schools is striking. Obedience is the inner dynamic of the authoritarian personality. The authoritarian is preoccupied with control and power. The often unconscious activation of aggressive impulses is reflected in the generalised hostility, suspicion, lack of trust and critical cynicism they display. By projection of these impulses, they are brought to view their environment as riddled with dangers and hostile threats. The threats are frequently projected onto the enemy, and these people or movements are perceived and treated variously as threatening, hurtful, dangerous and untrustworthy.

The submission of the authoritarian to the moral authorities in their milieu tends to be rigid and uncritical. Anxieties are aroused whenever the security of the prevailing

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power alliance is threatened. This anxiety is alleviated by unquestioning submission from subordinates. If a subordinate should question or challenge the authority - or worse, take independent initiative - control is weakened and the status of power is challenged. In such cases, authoritarian behaviour is rationalised (including contradictory and improper behaviours) so that the real motives of inner aggressive impulses lay untouched.\textsuperscript{14} In themelic schools this aggression is often dealt out to inferiors in justifications of righteousness. In many cases the aggression is dealt out in the most patronising and contradictory language.

Many of the people interviewed in research for this thesis reflected some bitterness at their dismissal because of the impropriety of the way they were handled. The themelic school, which boasts about its “Christianness” in comparison to other Christian models of schooling, seems unable to harness the anger and aggression at the foundation of their theological dynamic. Many interviewees commented about the way in which employers and principals in themelic schools delivered such aggression in a false demeanour of gentleness and concern.

This syndrome is quite consistent with Milgram’s research, which offers another explanation for apparently aggressive tendencies. Milgram’s research involved the simulation of delivering lethal shocks to participants in experiments at the Department of Psychology, Yale University. The participant was not aware that the shocks were simulated with actors as victims. Milgram set up several experiments between 1960 and 1963 which required a variety of people from all occupations to give shocks to people for simple language errors. The experiments tested the disposition of the participants to obey the experimenter at the expense of the victim. Ethical and methodological questions raised by the experiments and the variety of contexts tested are not in question here. What Milgram discovered was that the majority of participants delivered lethal shocks in a remote setting. Even within touch proximity, as the participants felt and heard the victim’s cries and writhings of pain, 30 per cent still delivered what was, to their knowledge, a lethal dose of electricity.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Kaufmann, H., \textit{Aggression and Altruism} New York, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1970.
A commonly offered explanation for those who are cruel and punitive is that they are monsters, the sadistic fringe of society. But if one considers that almost two-thirds of Milgram’s participants fall into the category of obedient subjects, and that they represented ordinary people drawn from working, managerial, and professional classes, this argument becomes shaky. Milgram’s work is reminiscent of similar issues that arose in connection with Hannah Arendt’s 1963 book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem.* Arendt contended that the prosecution’s effort to depict Eichmann as a sadistic monster was fundamentally wrong; that he came closer to being an uninspired bureaucrat who simply sat at his desk and did his job. For asserting these views, Arendt became the object of considerable scorn. Somehow, it was felt that the monstrous deeds carried out by Eichmann required a brutal, twisted, and sadistic personality, a view which allowed the ordinary person to distance themselves from the murderers.

After studying Milgram’s work I must conclude that Arendt’s conception of the banality of evil comes closer to the truth than one might dare imagine. Such reasoning makes far greater sense of despicable acts of cruelty in history like the torture of thousands in the name of Christ in the Spanish Inquisition. It makes sense of lesser acts of victimisation and oppression in thematic school management executed in the name of Christ. In relation to this discussion Mann observes a direct relation between authoritarianism and conformity. He states:

Personality tests administered to experimental subjects show that several personality traits are associated with conformity behaviour. The conformer tends to be less effective intellectually, less mature in social relations, less confident, more rigid, and more authoritarian and in need of social approval of the nonconformer.

Milgram sums up the situation well:

The ordinary person who shocked the victim did so out of a sense of obligation - a conception of his duties as subject - and not from any peculiarly aggressive tendencies.

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17 Mann, op. cit., p. 49.
18 ibid p. 6.
Milgram’s experiment noted the way in which a sense of responsibility disappears in the face of the necessity for submission to authority. Systematic devaluation of the victim provides a measure of psychological justification for the brutal treatment of the victim. This is the justification of opposition to “the enemy”. If one does not obey the defined social order or refuses the one in authority a form of anomie is created on a small scale. When the occasion is defined as one of hierarchy, any attempt to alter the defined structure will be experienced as a moral transgression and will evoke anxiety, shame, embarrassment, and diminished feelings of self-worth.\textsuperscript{19}

12.3 Themelic Enemies

Themelic schools are not known just for the convergence of theological traditions but are also identified and shaped by their imputed enemies.\textsuperscript{20} A great deal of themelic identity resides in reactionism. Themelic schools started because others had “got it wrong” or had slipped in “doing it right”. Themelic schools are better understood when their so-called enemies are identified and comprehended. Indeed, the very notion of working from an adversarial position exemplifies the simplistic black and white thinking at the foundation of themelic schooling. The extremity of this position is exemplified by Walker:

To put it as bluntly as I can, “To be a Christian is to be at war with the Devil” ... these dangers of modernity, are the most up-to-date military strategies of the Devil against the church ... until God’s invasion of the world - the final campaign in the Great Battle when the Devil will be defeated - we remain God’s militants in enemy-occupied territory. \textsuperscript{21}

Walker highlights the thinking of this position, which believes in a literal supernatural, spiritual war, a battle for human souls in an unseen realm. This concept of a battle is often called “spiritual warfare” and has become increasingly prevalent in themelic schools through the influence of the growing charismatic movement. The weapons of

\textsuperscript{19} ibid p. 152.
the battle are ideas which supposedly defeat God in the minds of people. The goal of this view is the eradication of wrong ideas and the conversion of people to right ideas. The personality type which is attracted to this thinking conforms closely to Meissner’s nine characteristics of the authoritarian personality.

The enemies which themelic schools oppose are:

12.3a Communism

In the 1960s and 1970s the militant atheism of communism was described by the themelic position as the enemy of Christendom. At the height of the Menzies era (excited by the Petrov affair and a wave of union violence) Protestants had little choice but to vote for the Liberal Party (Lib) or National Country Party (NCP); indeed, the only other real alternatives were the Australian Labor Party (ALP), who were branded as Communists, and the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), who were the old enemy of the Protestants, the Catholics. For many evangelicals the Liberal Party was the Christian party.

Australians in general had been made sensitive to the communist influence especially in trade unionism, by B.A. Santamaria and Robert Gordon Menzies who, with a skilfully cultivated father image, stood for what was stable, conservative and true.

Appealing to a literal interpretation of Revelation and other apocalyptic books of the Bible such as Daniel and Ezekiel, the evangelical/fundamentalist was convinced that the communist bloc countries led by Russia and China were the biblical Gog and Magog, the enemies of Israel.

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23 Ezekiel 38: 18, Revelation 20: 8.
One of the important discoveries of Hans Mol’s research in the late 1960s was his finding that there was a clear correlation between regular church attendance and political conservatism in Australia. Mol discovered that 33% of churchgoers voted Labor compared with 58% of non-churchgoers who voted Labor. Mol also found that churchgoing varied according to class: going to church was more a middle-class than a working-class activity. The 1967 census figures showed that all Protestant churches voted Liberal-Country Party in higher proportions than they voted Labor. Those churches which tended to produce people of themelic orientation voted Lib.-CP at the highest levels, as high as 70%, whilst the DLP received 0.5% of their vote. The highest proportion of Labor voters came from Catholic churchgoers. Mol’s research also indicated that the non-manual occupations dominated the voting tendencies of most church going Lib.-CP voters, as high as 84%. Middle-class Catholics who voted Labor and working-class Protestants who rejected Labor demonstrated the power of religious heritage in shaping partisan preference at the time. No issue solidified these distinctions more clearly than the issue of state aid to church schools.

The extreme fear of Communism is exemplified in an ACE pamphlet which quotes Joseph Stalin as the arch enemy of Christianity (this pamphlet was still being circulated and mailed to enquirers in 1994). In the pamphlet, ACE equates godliness with national patriotism and argues that the rebelliousness of the teenage years is something concocted by communist subversion to keep young people from industriousness and respectfulness. The fear of Communist conspiracy is made clear and is linked with Western cultural morality and state schooling in general. This fear matches Meissner’s category of “conventionalism”. The relevance of this fear of Communism has practical consequences in themelic schooling related to unionism which will be discussed in Chapter 13.

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26 ibid.
12.3b Evolution

In the *Memorandum and Articles of Association* for CPCS the doctrines about creation, the Bible and science are listed first as fundamental to Christian education. It states:

> Believing all the truth revealed in the Word of God we wish to emphasise some doctrines which are of special importance for Christian education.

(i) God and Creation

All things were created by God so that “what is seen was made out of things which do not appear” (Hebrews 11:3). God created them in, through and for Christ (Col. 1: 15-17) by his Word and Spirit (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6), to the glorification of his Holy Name (Ps 8; Ps 19; Rom 11:36). It is also by God’s hand, power and care that all created things are preserved and controlled (Ps 99; Mat. 6:24f; Acts 17:24f). In order to understand the world, man and history, they must be seen in their relationship to God as the Bible speaks of it.

(ii) The Bible and Science

Creation as well as Scripture have been brought forth by the same God of truth. Therefore, any seeming discrepancy between the Bible and Science can only be due to human error either in science or in the interpretation of Scripture. Science is truly scientific when both nature and Scripture are taken seriously.28

The idea that the Bible and science can be placed in the same literary genre is clear. In reality, themelic thinking cannot comprehend the complementarity of myth and science: the Bible is accurate about creation or it is not. The school of creation science brands any compromise with the literal Genesis story as “theistic evolution” and invalid.

If a teacher is considering a position in a themelic school particularly a teacher of science, knowledge of their view on the creation/evolution issue is considered essential.29 Most themelic schools, except for a few on the liberal fringe, consider the

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28 *Memorandum and Articles of Association* Blacktown, CPCS Ltd, p. 9
29 Interview Vanessa Gorman 25.5.94.
theory of evolution to be incompatible with the doctrine of creation. The majority of thematic schools maintain the creation science position.

The belief in inerrancy and infallibility guides the literalist hermeneutic about the Genesis creation account and was a major concern for conservative Protestants in the 1960s when religious instruction was beginning to wane in the state schools. Following the Robertson Report in Western Australia in 1958 and the Wyndham Report of 1957 in NSW the concept of the comprehensive high school was developed. Many high school courses, particularly in science, were developed in the 1960s and 1970s with a much higher level of funding and sense of freedom in critical input.

The development of the Australian Creation Science Foundation in 1978 is a direct reflection of anxiety about the exposure of evolutionary thinking in schooling during this period. It is far from coincidental that the founder, Ken Ham, is a school teacher.

The doctrine of creationism, which creates its own rigid category of thought, is founded upon a literal reading of an inerrant Bible and conforms closely to Meissner’s category of “superstition and stereotype”.

12.3c Relativism

For the thematic mind, the notion of compromise, particularly the literal truth of the Bible, is anathema. The World Council of Churches was and is rejected by most conservative Protestants as the work of Satan. This was based on the fear of the power of Rome and the devaluation of the Bible by most ecumenical bodies.

Appealing to such passages of the Bible as Revelation 17, which visualises a united world religion under a woman seated on a beast, New Life reminded readers in 1962 that “we are facing world crises in almost every sphere of our existence”.

The paper also proposes that the push for unity would weaken the message of the gospel. The drive for unity creates suspicion in the minds of conservative Protestants who suppose that compromise equates to an admission that something is not right. Though there is common agreement in the statement of faith for AACS and cooperation over such matters as superannuation, there is no significant convergence in matters that expose theological difference. This is exemplified in each thematic group working individually in tertiary education, conferences and publications. Despite the economic expense of endeavouring to operate seven separate thematic tertiary institutions of education, each group duplicates and doubles up in publications and professional development.

In 1950, Australia was a remarkably sheltered and homogeneous Anglo-Celtic society. Safely cocooned in a water-locked continent, the citizens, who were predominantly English, Irish and Scottish by descent, had no need to exercise any degree of pluralism or tolerance.

Conway describes the situation as

The old colonial stance - a gritty disrespectful and standoffish independence alternating with a deferential sense of relatedness to Great Britain - had not greatly altered.

The post-war immigration boom altered the equation. In the 20-year period after 1950 the population increased from eight million to thirteen million, with two thirds of the migration numbers coming from northern, southern and eastern Europe. Accompanying this influx of “strangers” was the continuing and increasing urbanisation of Australia.

One of the greatest threats of multiculturalism to the thematic mind is the possibility of having to entertain a plurality of truths. The maintenance of a simplistic Christian value

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32 Aitken, op. cit.
system in an enclosed Christian culture began to be exposed with the influx of other belief systems and the development of non-religious belief systems after World War II.

Allen S. Roberts, the research advocate for CCS schools for the bicentennial celebrations, states:

The teaching of values is fundamental to all education. Every teacher communicates one kind of values system or another, not only through his instruction but through personal example. There is no neutral teacher and no neutral school.

The Bible provides the right vantage point concerning values. It upholds those absolutes which are so urgently needed in today’s society.

God’s eternal standards of love and truth are the ones which not only please Him but are the best for every individual’s personal welfare.

Unfortunately, Bible values are no longer the ones commonly upheld in Australian education. Children today are under increasing pressure to reject absolute standards and accept relativistic ones.\(^\text{35}\)

The demand for absolutes is reinforced by the dogma of inerrancy and infallibility. Themelic schools are not interested in dialogue which challenges the notion of inerrancy and infallibility. It is a perception in conservative Christian circles that relativism or being “wishy washy” comes from intellectualism, and therefore intellectuals are treated with suspicion. An example is way the way teachers responded to the keynote speakers at the CCS national convention in 1993.\(^\text{36}\) At this convention there were four keynote addresses: two by Dr W. E. Andersen, one by Mrs Bev Norsworthy, former principal of a charismatic school in Adelaide, chairman of the New Zealand Association of Christian Schools (NZACS) and current Principal of the Auckland campus of the Christian Teachers College of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and one by the Rev Charles Newington, from Brisbane. Having previously studied with Andersen and having heard these addresses, I was keen to hear from as many teachers as possible what they

\(^{35}\) Roberts, A. S., *Education from God’s vantage Point* Pamphlet, Strathpine, ACE Australia.

\(^{36}\) Field notes, January 27-29, 1993.
thought of his addresses. Most responded that they found Andersen and Newington too philosophical and preferred Norworthy, whose address advocated an extremist and emotional line of thought (laced with biblical references), suggesting that government funding should be rejected if Christians were forced to make compromises in their stand on schooling. A high level of anti-intellectualism was apparent in most responses.  

I also attended the CPCS national convention a few days earlier where the keynote addresses were delivered by Harro Van Brummelen. A very similar response was evident from the teachers in attendance there and from observations of the popularity of less intellectual workshops. The anti-intellectualism I sensed at the CPCS convention, though, seemed generated more by a sense of having had too much intellectualism in the past and having found it wanting. Many teachers expressed an interest in the “nitty gritty” of teaching rather than philosophical issues. It may be that anti-intellectualism is common to all teachers but in themelic schools this is imbued with theological and moral value in order to resist relativism and the possibility of compromise. The prevalence of such attitudes matches Meissner’s category of “authoritarian submission” and “anti-intraception”.

12.3d Rationality

One of the strongest complaints from people outside the themelic system is that themelic actions and rhetoric are irrational. From the perspective of academics who have confronted themelic schooling in recent times, this certainly seems to be the case. Themelic thinkers have also made claims that one of the enemies of themelic schooling is the rationalist/humanist perspective. Guinness, the prominent British evangelical scholar, explains that this disposition is more anti-intellectual than anti-rational.

37 ibid.
39 See work cited earlier of Mayer, Anderson and Prideaux.
Pazmino states:

Certainly, the evangelical educator does not exclude the practice of reading the Bible, but emphasises that final authority resides in biblical revelation over against reason, tradition, or experience, which are secondary sources for understanding.\textsuperscript{41}

For the themelic thinker, the neutral Bible is the source of knowledge that one sits “under”. The term “under submission” (of the Bible) is common in themelic language. In other words, the Bible is not necessarily something one rationalises but something one receives through revelation.

Stronks and Blomberg also state:

The classical tradition views rationality as the way to truth. In comparison, concrete experience of creation is unimportant. Only theorizing gives real knowledge. It was this tradition that led the French Revolutionaries to enthrone the goddess Reason in their pantheon. Human reason seemed to promise control over the forces of the natural and even social world. This is also why today people often assume that there is a scientific or technological solution to all problems.\textsuperscript{42}

Stronks and Blomberg make the point that the biblical framework for knowing incorporates a complementarity of both romantic and rationalist traditions.\textsuperscript{43} In practice, themelic schools are far from this. The rationalist tradition dominates themelic schools because of their charter of inerrancy and infallibility and their inability to escape the literalist empiricism which accompanies it. Despite the charge from themelic thinkers and those outside the themelic system that themelic schools are not rationalist, they are indeed thoroughly positivist/rationalist. The reason themelic schoolers are both rationalist/positivist and anti-intellectual the necessity to establish control and certainty together. This stands in contrast to theological liberalism which has sought to de mythologise Christianity through historical criticism. Theological liberalism tends to

\textsuperscript{41} Pazmino, op. cit., p. 50.
\textsuperscript{42} Stronks and Blomberg, op. cit., p. 163.
\textsuperscript{43} ibid., p. 164.
question the supernatural and poses a threat to naïve realist epistemology. The idea of open criticism disturbs the themelic mind because it threatens the notion of absolute certainty. This conforms with Meissner’s category of authoritarian submission. The strongest opposition to intellectualism in the themelic movement comes from the charismatics and pentecostalists whose epistemology is expressivist.

12.3e Worldliness

The dilemma of being “in the world but not of the world” is a difficulty for every themelic school. Working out what this means in practice is often a source of considerable conflict, marginalisation and labelling. Themelic people use the brand “worldly” to dismiss and marginalise their enemies, especially those they disagree with within the movement. Worldly people and worldly words do not have to be taken seriously because the themelic framework founded on an inerrant Bible knows that worldliness is sin. Intellectuals who don’t speak the same absolutist language are deemed worldly, whether they are in or out of the themelic system.

Coppes states:

The “world” consists of unbelievers, all of whom are blind to the truth in Christ, hate the truth (Christ), and serve their father the devil....We can and should proceed to witness and push back the Devil’s attacks upon the truth.

The “world” is not neutral towards the things of God....Christ taught that the “world” would especially hate the truth and those who practice and propagate it.44

The term, “the world “ is used by themelic proponents to justify the hostility and indifference of themelic people to things outside themelic schools. The world is naturally rebellious, according to the themelic perspective, and therefore needs authority and the law of God as mediated through Christ and his witnesses. So any sense of tolerating or learning from those outside a themelic perspective is minimal, and is

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44 Coppes, op. cit., p. 100.
45 ibid.
exemplified in the manner in which themelic schools review themselves and accept criticism. The longstanding conflict between themelic schools and Professor Hill is as an example. Hill describes this longstanding difference as “being pilloried for daring to ask questions especially by those who claimed to have the Bible on their side”.46

Notwithstanding a small degree of Kuyperian “common grace” (truth outside of the sphere of Christendom) that does exist in the reformed theological tradition in the system the overall structure of themelic schooling is cut off from a great deal of intellectual rigour and critical thinking available on the outside.

The movement into tertiary themelic institutions only exacerbates this problem of being in the world but not of it. This division between the world and themelic schools is most pronounced in various degrees of anabaptist separatism that exists within the themelic school movement. The more extreme wing of the movement, which refuses registration, funding and contact with the “secular” schooling system, contrasts with some themelic schools which fully embrace state curriculum and procedures but still tend to regard truth as narrow, absolutist and static.

Despite the language about not being in the world, it is clear that much of the practice of themelic schools is highly selective and problematically worldly. The inability of the themelic schools to compromise and synthesise causes confusion because some worldly practices are accepted within the movement and others rejected. Whilst themelic schools are rightly critical of the subjectivities of state education and state totalitarianism, they unquestionably adopt traditional schooling structures and curriculum practice. The values of professionalisation, institutionalisation and expansionism are rarely criticised. The inability of the themelic tradition to embrace self-criticism has led to this position of selectivity, contradiction and confusion.

Criticism of worldliness by conservative Christians has traditionally been understood in the narrow sense of moral/sexual behaviour.47 Meissner draws special attention to the

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46 Interview Brian. V. Hill 23.11.93
sexual fixation of the authoritarian personality. It was the themelic reaction to moral/sexual changes in the 1960s and 1970s which caused alarm and demands for Christians to separate from the world. This is exemplified in the pages of New Life which states:

The Christian is called to be separate from the world by precept ... The friendship of the world is enmity with God. The whole Bible speaks in black and white ... God says: “Don’t do that” - come out from among them and be ye separate.48

This kind of argument which featured in New Life in 1963 argues for separation because of the undesirable influences of television, radio, dancing and movies. Separatist discussion is found throughout themelic texts. Although the focus of each condemnation changes with time, the basic thrust of the argument remains the same. It is detectable in more recent statements regarding the need for themelic tertiary training institutions.

Mechielsen states:

Teaching and learning from a Christian perspective does not automatically happen when a Christian teacher works with a group of students in a Christian school. Too much of the “pattern of this world” has rubbed off on the teacher, not to mention the students. Most of our teachers have received their initial training in teacher training establishments which are not oriented toward Christ-centred education ... There is an urgent need for teacher education and training to help staff serve effectively in Christian schools.49

The charge Professor Brian V. Hill made of themelic hubris in the 1970s is just as applicable twenty years later. This hostility to the unChristian world conforms with Meissner’s category of “projectivity”.

48 ibid.
12.3f Secular humanism

The reason humanism and secularism are detested by themelic Christians is their view that God is not preeminent. Themelic Christians emphasise a devaluing of the self with a focus on the “fallenness” of Adam (mankind). This kind of thinking is captured in many hymns and songs.

O the bitter shame and sorrow
That a time could ever be
When I let the Saviour’s pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered:
All of self, and none of thee!

Yet He found me. I beheld him
Bleeding on the accursed tree,
Heard Him pray Forgive them, Father!
And my wistful heart said faintly:
Some of self, and some of thee!

Day by day His tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Sweet and strong, and, ah! so patient,
Brought me lower, while I whispered:
Less of self, and more of Thee!

Higher than the highest heaven,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord. Thy love at last hath conquered;
Grant me now my supplication:
None of self, and all of Thee!50

Hymns like “All of Thee”, “Oh to be Nothing”, “Who is on the Lord’s Side?”, “I Surrender All” and “Take my Life and Let it be, Consecrated Lord to Thee” and more recent popular scripture choruses like “Spirit of the Living God”, “My Living Sacrifice” and “Lord Make me an Instrument” emphasise the prominence of God’s purposes and the obstruction of “fallen” humanity in achieving that purpose. Strong historical

influences from Wesley, the holiness movement, American pietism and Calvinist absolutism have helped shape this perspective which devalues the human in life and history.

The belief in original sin and the total depravity of the human being drives this urge to devalue the self. For the themelic mind the fear of sin is the fear of selfishness. Sin is essentially understood by the themelic mind as the fruit and status of self-preoccupation in the face of God’s righteousness. This expectation of self-surrender/sacrifice has already been noted in Hoffer’s work as foundational for a personality in the grip of of a movement, conforming closely with Meissner’s category of “power and toughness”.

It was during the Enlightenment (the Copernican and Newtonian shift) that the level of scientific knowledge increased to become a normative way of thinking. The empiricists claimed that all knowledge came from experience of reality and they were sceptical about the existence of God. These sceptics were labelled “deists” because they believed in an unknown supreme being. As humanism developed, it shifted its emphasis from human compatibility with metaphysics to a position of the incompatibility of the two. Humanists came to regard reason as the guiding force in life, ridding themselves of the religious shackles of the past which retarded human progress. As materialists, they do not believe in a spiritual dimension to life and hold to an empiricist theory of knowledge.

Edwards describes modern humanism as:

... a world view, a way of thinking, in which the supernatural is replaced by contemporary insights into the nature of man and the universe. It is an attempt to meet the needs of those many people who find that religion has become meaningless in the twentieth century, and that creeds and dogmas based on ancient "revelations" are out of step with modern ways of thought.51

It is this world view and the way it has dominated education in this century that disturbs

the themelic mind. The themelic position, fuelled by fundamentalist epistemology, theories of conspiracy, polemical thinking and the concept of the battle in Christian thought perceives humanism as an aggressive enemy. Frogley, the director of LEM, asserts “the proponents of humanism have become the driving force behind virtually all education”.  

Frogley argues that humanism is the antithesis of Christianity. Displaying his mechanistic assumptions he states further that each one of us:

... in our schooling or training have been indoctrinated. Our minds have been programmed, to operate in a humanistic framework. This programme, which could be better be described as “brain-washing”, has been so pervasive that Christian values have been almost totally divorced from the educational process.

This extreme view which seems to ignore the weight of the church in the education process in history nonetheless does reflect the general feeling of the themelic person. Such a view is generated by an either/or mentality. The themelic mind has great difficulty thinking in terms of truth within synthesis and compromise.

As humanism is the enemy of the themelic educator, John Dewey is the educational archetype of Satan. Dewey is not only held personally accountable for the production of the Humanist Manifesto but for insidiously sowing humanism within the modern schooling system by the introduction of progressivism. Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Harold Laski and the Fabian Socialists are all presented as responsible for the evils of “progressive education” which draws education away from the foundational absolutes. Frogley proposes that Deweyism is part of a conspiratorial drive. Frogley names other partners in the conspiracy as the United Nations, Communism and UNESCO because

53 ibid., p. 2.
54 ibid.
55 ibid., p. 5.
they emphasise the notion of a single world order.\textsuperscript{56} Froogley asserts that the influence of this conspiracy is present in Australia in bodies such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) because it brought progressive education to Australia.

Quoting Cornelius Van Til, Froogley concludes:

\begin{quote}
Whatever is in accord with scripture is educative; whatever is not in accord with it is mis-educative.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

The same perspective is held by Rona Joyner, who, in article 29 of STOP, ACTS and CARE “Principles of Education” states:

\begin{quote}
I do not approve the smothering of our teaching system with the dangerous philosophies and psychological techniques being promoted by so-called “expert” educationalists who are experimenting with the theories and suggestions of: Dewey, Skinner, Simon, Raths, Harmin, Kohlberg, Carl Rogers, Maslow, Glasser, Jerome Bruner, Ruggs (sic), Counts, Illich, Holt, and Schoenheimer, and any other behavioural scientists etc., who may be specialists in mind-manipulating and attitude changing techniques.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

In an interview with Mrs Joyner and in response to being asked what she thought was wrong with education she replied: “everything after 1930”.\textsuperscript{59}

Amongst her many claims, she says that scholars such as Maslow have confessed to harming children through their techniques. Teaching self-esteem and decision making were examples of humanist “affective” education.\textsuperscript{60}

In the \textit{Introductory Lecture Notes} which CCS schools Ltd provide as part of their induction process for new teachers Stephen Brinton asserts:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{56} ibid., p. 6.  \\
\textsuperscript{57} ibid., p. 10.  \\
\textsuperscript{58} Joyner, R., Principles of Education: Submission to the Select Committee on Education in Queensland \textit{Stop Press} Margate, 1982, p. 3.  \\
\textsuperscript{59} Fieldnotes 29.1.93.  \\
\end{flushleft}
Humanism began in history when the Devil tempted Eve, cast doubt upon God’s word and said, “...you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5) ... the original sin is the sin of humanism. It is man pitting himself against God’s right to rule and establish himself as sovereign.61

The same point is made concerning the literal interpretation of the story of the tower of Babel.62

Brinton considers that the purpose of education is religious because it concerns the “ultimate values of a culture”.63 For this reason, Brinton proposes that secular humanism is a religion, that is all worldviews are broadly religious. He further states:

Humanists seek to answer the question of man’s liberty/salvation in terms of man. This is evident from history and from the statements of their beliefs. They live and educate under the delusion that man is his own god and therefore able to determine what constitutes good and evil. Their salvation is a citadel on earth established by reason and their own efforts. This worldview has so shaped education that the modern liberal arts curriculum (fine arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences) now in fact incorporates the values set down in the Humanist Manifesto. Education is seen as freeing children to be themselves, autonomous and independent, looking inward instead of outward to any absolutes or external influences.64

Brinton traces the secularisation of education to the 1830s in the USA and Horace Mann (1796-1858), whom Brinton understands to be the “father of modern education”. Convinced that “Education in America initially reflected Biblical moral values”.65

Brinton finds a criterion by which to measure the supposed decline of Christian influences in education. Such simplistic notions of Christianity, culture and education enable the maintenance of a black and white understanding of the world of education in

62 ibid.
63 ibid.
64 ibid., p. 5.
65 ibid.
general. In uniformity with the common themelic view, he names Dewey as the modern instigator of educational humanism. He concludes that:

The result is that now traditional Judeo-Christian moral values are excluded from public schools and replaced by secular humanistic amorality. 66

Brinton's belief in the decline of Christian morality is based on the assumption that Australia had a Christian foundation which is consistent with the CCS schools bicentennial celebrations in 1993.

The executive director of CCS quotes from the 1959 revision of the social studies section of the Curriculum for Primary Schools (NSW), which states:

In order to underline the fact that Christianity is not only a part of our cultural heritage but also gives meaning and purpose to our way of life, Scripture has been included in the grade content of the Social Studies syllabus. The ethical principles underlying the Scripture readings should be discussed with a view to making them active in the lives of the pupils. It cannot be too strongly urged that moral training and Scripture teaching should go hand in hand, maintaining the closest relation to each other. 67

It is this perception of biblical morality in decline which has led the themelic mind to search for causes. There is no thought given to the problems of inequity in society at the time, the sanctioning of violence or the manner in which patriarchal dominance was maintained in education. The analysis is subjective, selective and simplistic. The rejection of tolerance, the rejection of the autonomous self and contingency exemplify the nature of themelic Christianity when faced with the challenge of humanism. The themelic mind, without the resources for compromise, is trapped in its own language, unable to entertain any notion of truth in synthesis or paradox.

Brinton states simply:

66 ibid.
In the 1950s, the values were based on an absolute, God-given morality, but since the 1960s the basis of morality changed to a common morality that was determined by society. A shift in values again occurred in the 1970s, the basis of morality being determined by the individual.  

In Anabaptist mode, Brinton further warns about the involvement of the government in education. Responding to the Education and Public Instruction Bill of 1987, he comments:

> The implementation of this will be detrimental to Christian schooling as it could be used to keep the Bible from the classroom in Science, History and other subjects.

This perception is reinforced by the executive director who understood any denial of government funding as direct opposition to themelic schooling. The assumption in much of Brinton’s discussion at this point is that governments are humanist, conspiratorial and therefore the enemy. Relying heavily on the work of prominent US fundamentalist of the New Right, Tim LaHaye, Brinton uses the metaphor of the battle to understand this themelic conflict with secular humanism. Brinton states explicitly in his paper that themelic schools were started in response to deficiencies and secular humanism in state schools.

ACE promotional material uses the story of the children of Israel in Egypt in Exodus as an image for their general apologetic:

> In Exodus 10: 8-11 we read of Pharaoh’s suggestion of compromise to Moses, “Let the adults go and worship God, but leave the children in Egypt.” Satan’s ploy is the same today. If he can control children’s minds

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68 Brinton, op. cit. pp. 5-6.
69 ibid., p. 6.
71 La Haye, T., The Battle for the Mind New Jersey, Fleming H. Revell, 1980;
72 Brinton, op. cit., p. 6.
for one generation he has won a great victory. The church would be considerably weakened.73

The enemy of the foreign governmental/state school is portrayed as bondage in Egypt. Mackintosh states emotionally:

Beware of leaving your little ones in Egypt. Many a heart-broken father, at the present moment, is left to weep and groan over his fatal mistake, in reference to his household. He left them in Egypt, in an evil hour, and under a gross delusion ... There is, I should say, a very serious error involved in a Christian parent’s committing the training of his children to unconverted persons, or even to those whose hearts are not one with him as to separation from the world.74

The same is stressed about the censorship of books because they are the “silent teacher” in forming mind and character.

Using the Exodus story again, the ACE founder/director states:

Most professors of contemporary education have an Egyptian degree and were trained in the Egyptian system. Even in many of our Christian schools, the teachers and administrators have Egyptian degrees and have been trained in the methodology of the Egyptian conventional school. Many beloved and respected principals and administrators have PhD degrees hanging on their walls. They are not a product of the reformation, but rather have received their training and methodology in secular, humanistic, Egyptian schools. Most of our generation is a product of this humanistic philosophy and methodology.75

According to this position the whole of the state education system has been made corrupt by secular humanism, the only recourse being the necessity to retreat into themelic ACE schools or themelic home schooling.

73 Which School for my Child pamphlet, Strathpine, Qld. ACE Australia.
74 Mackintosh, C. H., Beware of Leaving Your Little Ones in Egypt pamphlet, Brendale, Qld. ACE Australia Ltd.
75 Howard, D., Teaching Vs Learning pamphlet, Strathpine, Qld. ACE Australia, p. 8.
The least extreme of all the themelic positions on secular humanism is found in the CPCS school system although, as many themelic groups cross-pollinate staff, a stronger common position is evolving.

Stuart Fowler in a CPCS publication states:

In the modern world idolatrous religion characteristically takes a humanistic form. That is, the guiding principle for human thought and action is regarded as being in the human person. This modern, humanistic religion is not a single, united system. There are numerous varieties, few of which go under the name “humanist” or “humanistic”. To make the situation even more complex, none of the varieties of humanistic religion regard themselves as a religion. They conceal their religious character under a secular disguise.

But their humanistic religious character becomes apparent when we see that a human principle is substituted for the Word of God as the guiding principle for human thought and action. Modern humanistic religion is not identified by religious confessions of faith but by humanistic principles that give direction to human activity in the modern world.76

Fowler notes that the variety of humanistic religion is founded on faith in science, human reason, practical human experience and the autonomous human person. Each in its own way supposedly undermines the veracity of the Bible or the assertion of absolute truth by revelation.

Having established that every themelic school system understands secular humanism as the enemy, it is crucial to note that each system reacts differently to the enemy by the degree to which it operates within the paradigm of fear and rigidity. The Anabaptist and reconstructionist extreme responds to the enemy by withdrawal and aggression. The most liberal themelic position tend to respond to secular humanism with caution and guarded reflection. The degree to which each view tolerates or embraces secular humanism depends heavily on the influence of fundamentalist epistemology in its thinking and how they conceive the notion of truth. This position concurs with

76 Fowler, S., New or Old? in Mechielsen, No Icing on the Cake p. 13.
Meissner's category of "destructiveness and cynicism".

12.3g Catholicism

Reformed, evangelical and fundamentalist groups have always been in opposition to the "Church of Rome". Historically, the Catholic church has been labelled by these groups as "the beast" (Revelation 13:18; 16:2; 19:20), "Whore of Babylon" (Revelation 17), the anti-Christ (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3) or some other biblically polemical metaphorical equivalent, particularly in the context of eschatology. The strong images that began with Luther and Durer against the evils of "popery" have not changed in the circles of themelic thinking. Despite claims in some themelic schools of being open to Catholic Christians, there is a fundamental, historical dividing line between the two positions over the infallibility of the Pope and the Bible. The dogma of inerrancy is in conflict with the Catholic position. Catholics interviewed commented that they felt at odds with the ethos of the themelic school, mentioning their Catholicism as the cause for their conflict and resignation from the school. For the themelic mind there, is no reconciliation between these seemingly opposed ideas; ecclesial infallibility and biblical infallibility. In the uncompromising words of New Life:

Now, the Roman Catholic religion teaches doctrines which are unbiblical
and anti-Scriptural. It propagates error.

The demographic character of the Catholic church changed dramatically after World War II with the new wave of immigration. Of the three million new arrivals, a high proportion came from traditional Catholic areas of Europe. The old dominance of Irish-Catholics had altered. The Roman Catholic percentage of the population rose from

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80 Interview Inga Tunks 29.11.95; Gabriel Jarvis 29 11.95.
81 State Aid for Roman Catholic Education New Life October 10, 1963, p. 3.
17.5% before the war to 20.7% immediately after it, and to 26% in the 1981 census.\textsuperscript{82}

Although themelic schools do not take up the direct polemic against Catholicism as was the case in the 1950s and 1960s, a great deal of day-to-day themelic schooling is clearly in opposition to it. The direct attack on Catholicism is more the domain of the extreme. The CPCS tradition, which tends to be the more liberal/left wing in practice and educational philosophy, is nonetheless the product of the Reformation and by nature in opposition to Catholicism.

In the 1950s, the attendance of Catholic children in Catholic schools was at its highest rate in Australian history. At first, Catholics were unenthusiastic about schooling but, owing to disputes in the late 1800s, enrolments in parochial schools began to rise. By 1890, perhaps half of all Catholic children attended a Catholic school. This proportion dropped to two-thirds by the 1930s but increased to four-fifths by 1960.\textsuperscript{83}

From its foundation in September, 1956 the DLP had called on the government to assist church schools. Seven years later, as Labor ranks began to heal, Menzies seized the political opportunity and began the drift back to funding of private schooling in 1963, appeasing disenfranchised DLP voters.

In 1961, the Church of England's 32nd Synod strongly affirmed its opposition to state aid for non-state schools. At that synod Bishop Loane stated:

\begin{quote}
State aid to church schools will lead to disintegration and fragmentation of education in the state ... it is neither ethical nor practical to give public finance to private schools.\textsuperscript{84}
\end{quote}

The following year when the Catholic schools in Goulburn were closed, \textit{New Life} affirmed:

\textsuperscript{84} Loane, M. L., \textit{State Aid for Church Schools New Life} November 2, 1961, p. 4.
“The Sydney Morning Herald” in its editorial comment of July 11, calls the action “political blackmail”, a phrase which rings strangely familiar to students of Rome’s long history of political intrigue ... If politicians in their efforts to appease Rome, produce hitherto undisclosed sources of wealth, such should be spent on improving the public school system, not in assisting Rome to indoctrinate young minds in its erroneous teachings ... the leopard’s spots do not change with the passing years. Rome will stoop to anything - in this case, blackmail - to get her ends ... An action such has been taken in Goulburn is only a step along the road to anarchy.\textsuperscript{85}

However, by October 1963, despite heavy criticism of Catholic schools, even equating them with the growth of crime in Australia in the pages of \textit{New Life}, the overall tone of evangelical and reformed thinking had changed:

It will be acknowledged frankly that, from a Christian viewpoint, the state system is not all it might be. Teachers may be atheists or agnostics, and, while they do not give religious instruction, they may give an anti-religious bias in their lessons, cast doubt upon the truthfulness of the Bible, teach the theory of evolution as fact, and by doing so may shake the faith of the children of Christian parents ... It might be acknowledged, also, that the system of Religious Instruction, by which voluntary teachers from the churches go into the state schools for half an hour a week, is not adequate.\textsuperscript{86}

By 1970, the opposition to state aid for private schools had completely reversed with the push for themellic schools, typified by the opening of Maranatha, School With The Bible, the fourth themellic school to be established in Australia.\textsuperscript{87} It is worth noting that the title of the school reinforces characteristics of millenarianism (Maranatha literally means “Lord come quickly”) and Bible dominance, which are common to themellic schools. The direct relationship of themellic school growth to funding and the ironic way in which themellic schooling has developed on the back of the Catholic push for funding is an interesting aspect of their development.

In the year Maranatha started, \textit{New Life} reported on a meeting in Melbourne of the

\textsuperscript{85} Anon., Seeking State Aid for R.C. Schools \textit{New Life} July 26, 1962, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{86} Anon., State Aid for Roman Catholic Education \textit{New Life} October 10, 1963, p. 3.
Association for a Christian University. This is the first mention by evangelicals and reformed thinkers of the idea of establishing a Protestant university in Australia.

Whilst the extreme right wing of the themelic movement is aggressively anti-Catholic, the division of CPCS with the Catholic tradition is clearly understood in the “nature-versus-grace dilemma”, discussed by Arent de Graaf at the CPCS Education in Focus conference in 1977. De Graaf says:

It is interesting to note that in Roman Catholic thought on the one hand it has led to a granting of too much “machtigkeit”, power, autonomy, to Christ-less man: an ability in thought and action to get “almost there” … while on the other hand it has “debunked” nature, so that even marriage had to be declared a sacrament performed under the blessing of the church, to be valid, and even as such a hindrance to full priestly service of God, hence the man-made laws of celibate and the age-old suspicion of sexual enjoyment as somehow even within marriage too much “of the flesh”, too much “mere nature”.

The cultural prototype of Protestants is Martin Luther, who stood before the Holy Roman Emperor at the Diet of Worms and proclaimed:

Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God.

This priority and submission to “Scripture and plain reason” characterises the themelic school movement. Meissner’s categories of “projectivity” and “authoritarian aggression” fit this disposition.

It has been the possibility of associating with Catholics which has troubled conservative Protestants in the area of ecumenism. The World Council of Churches (WCC) is

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89 De Graaf, A., Creation and - or Creation versus Redemption Education in Focus Conference 1977 National Union of Associations for Parent Controlled Schools, p. 3.
viewed by many conservative Protestants as the work of Satan. Despite the surface cooperation that existed between the churches for the Billy Graham crusade, the papal visit to Australia in 1970, particularly the ecumenical service in the Sydney Town Hall, highlighted the distance between these groups, exemplified in the evangelical boycott of the meeting.

12.3h Modernity

The themelic view refers to modernity as the adaptation of Christianity to modern culture and the development of Western society under secularism. The new urban-industrial environment, with its massive productivity, rising living standards, population transience, material comforts and heady triumphs of human knowledge and industry began to take shape after the Enlightenment. Lip service, at least, would long be paid to the importance of Christianity as the dominant element in Western culture but, after the Enlightenment traditional religious assumptions ceased to be normative. Christian churches found themselves in competition, not just with each other but with ideologies and epistemologies, which in some cases were not even remotely religious. Under the growing influence of technological development and popular scientism, people in Western society began to doubt and question many traditionally unquestioned Christian doctrines.

Whilst themelicism maintains a supernatural, metaphysical or other worldly emphasis on biblical matters, the modernist emphasises the natural and rational. Rationality became the essential logic of modern society. The work processes of the modern age, rooted in artificiality and the “man-made” complexity of the production line and the machine, are the centre of its “this-worldly” rationality and its consciousness of autonomy. Darwinianism is crucial to this framework.

Themelic people do not reject all features of modernity but exist in a symbiotic relationship with the modern, selectively finding the instruments of modernity that will assist their purposes. An example of this is the discrepancy between the anti-

\[91\text{ Anon., } New Life \text{ October 8, 1970, p. 3; October 15, 1970, pp. 1-3.}\]
evolutionary language of creation science and the general willingness to justify a stance through scientific means and credentialism.

Themelic schools are ready to stand up and fight for the faith, particularly in defiance of "modernism" and "liberalism" in the church and theology. Dollar writes that modernity

... was more deadly than military warfare, for it swept away the spiritual foundations of our churches, our nation, and our heritage.

Themelic Christians equate the literal interpretation of the Bible with belief in the Bible itself. They see people who claim to believe the Bible but who interpret it in a different way from them as actually denying the truth of the Bible and putting their own standards of interpretation above it. They argue that this independence has been generated by intellectualism and modernity.

The concept of "modernity" is the subject of considerable debate amongst sociologists with regard to its meaning and relationship to urbanization, industrialization, and especially secularisation. Without entering the debate, themelic schools simply oppose the common trends that devalue conservative Christian beliefs. This conforms with Meissner's category of "anti-intraception" and "authoritarian aggression".

12.3i Disobedience/criticism

The topic of "submission to authority" is one of the most published in the themelic system which is ironic, given the rigid locus of authority and Protestant heritage.

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92 e.g. La Haye, T., op. cit., Lindsell, Harold. The Battle for the Bible Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1976.
There has been no research undertaken to delve into this most important facet of themelic school life. The strain of the dynamic of obedience/disobedience which is present in themelic schools is largely ignored. Hinder comments:

It seems to me that education in particular and probably a whole pile of other things can’t go forward unless there is continual constructive criticism from all the elements involved, the students, the parents, the staff, administration. They have all got to be heard if you are going to have a moving forward within an educational institution. And some are better at it than others but I think in this school that is not a concept that exists even slightly.

Regarding authority, CPCS focus on the biblical authority of the parents over the sphere of education. CCS focus on the authority of the parent through the church over education. The metaphorical language of “sovereignty”, “mandate” and “lordship” is often used to explain conduct becoming of a themelic person.

Glendinning, a management consultant with considerable exposure to themelic schools, explains that in her experience, under the surface of language obedience to the Bible, she found a rigid adherence to conventional values. It is, what Meissner labels “conventionalism”.

Glendinning comments:

In many cases, what they were replicating was the experience of conservative middle-class suburban and country schools in Australia of the 1950s and 60s and that was their reference point with a good dash of lots of Bible study and a bit of church fellowship, in the staff ... and so in many ways I didn’t see, while they talked about the New Testament as a model, really their reference point was Australian middle-class suburban school experiences of the 1950s and 60s.

The implications are that themelic schools are unable to locate themselves in a changing

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96 Milgram, op. cit., pp. 153-64.
97 Interview Colleen Hinder 28. 4. 95.
98 Interview Lynette Glendinning 8.9.93.
Australian culture. As Australians struggle with their national identity into the next century, will themelic schools not lag behind as they pine for a lost empire? Despite language about their being schools with radical New Testamental notions of leadership and government, most themelic schools reflect middle-class traditions. The model of school government very much reflects the Arnoldian characteristics which themelic schools have been so keen to denounce. Without exception its schools are structured hierarchically and there is little or no room for innovation, change or divergence beyond cosmetic alterations. This is the subject of Chapter 13, although it is mentioned here in passing because of its relevance to disobedience as a themelic enemy.

This problem is clearly stated by Robert Johnston, principal, John Wycliffe Christian School:

Sadly our school movement has a history of strained and broken relationships between those who are perceived to have leadership roles ... Our experience is so saturated with hierarchical models of leadership that we find it difficult to break these down ... If we allow these classic images and expectations of hierarchical leadership to dominate, we will be burdened with all the inherent relationship and attitudinal problems that go with it.99

Johnston, an experienced and positive advocate of themelic schools, has identified one of the key symptoms in themelic school dysfunction, yet one that in itself is not enough. Hierarchy alone does not make for the problems that are encountered in themelic schools; it is the way that problems in themelic schools have been institutionally and hierarchically legitimised that is of concern. The institutionalisation of compliance and conformity is a major obstacle in establishing education.

Glendinning explains that themelic schools fail to understand the evolution and dynamic of institutions. Part of the themelic disposition is to be naive about such matters and to dismiss the work of social psychology as a secular discipline not relevant to the church. In the mid-1980s Glendinning saw these schools as bursting with growth but with no

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comprehension of the dynamics of the situation they were involved in. Staff were excessively stressed and had none of the traditional structures for coping that their counterparts in other systems had. Many staff and principals at the height of the growth of themelic schools were distressed and had nowhere to go with no models to learn from. Glendinning describes the principals and staff at this time as "fundamentally in a form of anomie".101

Glendinning reflected that themelic schools by their narrowness have isolated themselves from the resources that are needed to help them. She commented:

I see them as such as bereft, with such a poverty of life experiences that could help them.102

This was exacerbated by the attitude of themelic persons regarding the illegitimacy of other schooling models. It was not legitimate to source others and learn from their experiences in growth and organisationalism because they were not Christian or Christian enough. Glendinning likens themelic naivety to late adolescence: “just waiting to be hugely disillusioned”.103

Glendinning explains the development of the problem:

The idea and original vision of the themelic school started by a small community of zealous, likeminded parents is common to their history. The original little school rises and blossoms around an organic and charismatic group or leader. Often the school was totally personality based with no systems to buffer them, totally informal; so the school board had cups of tea at morning tea with the people they paid, who were also their best friends and went to the same church together with total role conflict and overlap. This all seems to go with the charismatic founding stage of any small movement that has life, but it causes enormous personal stressors and tensions.104

100 Interview Lynette Glendinning 8.9.93.
101 ibid.
102 ibid.
103 ibid.
104 ibid.
The complication of thinking that human understanding or consideration was not a legitimate reference point only added to the problem. The dogma of human depravity and “sin as selfishness” prevents the thematic mind from seriously embracing humanism in a positive way.

Underlying what is depicted as an obedience problem are many other historical and psychological factors that result in a “grasp for straws” approach at authoritarianism when the system begins to fall apart. Schools that remain small or quietly force out staff who don’t fit manage to maintain the semblance of Christian community.

The idea that the charismatic stage of organisational development could be maintained reflects a naivety that is encouraged by a rejection of the world. The idea that secular psychology or sociology could be employed to understand the dramas of thematic school development is not a natural direction for the thematic mind. Indeed, it was not until 30 years of development and some major crises in CPCS that the CPCS central administration developed a strategy for coping with staff/principal/board conflict, and this has been predictably in house and consequently bears the hallmarks of other thematic developments which have not sourced avenues available to others.

Glendinning further addresses the problem in her discussion about the teaching profession in general. In her years of management consultancy she has found that teachers have been

Hugely institutionalised ... not exposed to any paradigms that fundamentally challenge basic assumptions of their parents since very young. Not subjected to other paradigms that may disrupt their view of the world. No other groups as demanding, emotionally irresponsible ... amazing passive victims, they repeat the behaviours that get handed to them. They are amongst most immature group regarding their dynamics compared with other groups of professionals. The professional journeyman system we’ve had in the professions has had its day. Teachers are largely unable to manage or understand frames of reference of how organisations function. Their management is characterised by a fundamental struggle with inappropriate and undeveloped mechanism for management.105

105 ibid.
Using my terminology for these schools, she continued:

The continuation of this in tertiary organisations of themelic persuasion will only increase the sectarianism that exists at lower level.¹⁰⁶

Baker, a themelic school chairman and management consultant, confirmed some of Glendinning’s perceptions:

Let’s just take the Christian out of it and look at the inherent background of teachers and schools and getting to management. How does a person who ultimately sits in a class as a pupil for the first 20-odd years of their life, then they go into a classroom situation where they are ultimately operating by themselves look after students? Every single model and so much of their working career and life is an incredible staunch rigid hierarchical model of operation. So even when they start getting into management aspects from that as coordinators or principals at the age of 40 years of age or more you’ve got people who are getting to the unchangeable part of their life rather than the learning part of their life and they are very much into rigid hierarchies where there are quite strong lines of authority which need to be enforced. So many times you see teachers in a classroom approach problems by getting more rigid or authoritarian.¹⁰⁷

If this is the case, then the problem of management is exacerbated by themelic authoritarianism. The truth is that, despite language about Jesus and servant leadership, most themelic schools are bastions of conservatism, preoccupied with the actions of those in authority. There is simply no infrastructure in place to encourage diversity, criticism or equity. An example of this is the imbalance of power given to various sectors of the themelic community. Parents have extraordinary power and staff are powerless. The lack of teacher representation by association or union after more than 30 years of the movement at a school or system level is evidence of an imbalance which fosters misunderstanding, patronisation and authoritarianism. The record of broken schools and staff changes gives weight to this argument.¹⁰⁸ Instead of embracing negotiation and industrial resolution it is often far simpler to blame the devil:

¹⁰⁶ ibid.
¹⁰⁷ Interview Nick Baker 26.7.94.
¹⁰⁸ Interview Mark Tindall 14.8.92; Bill Rusen 21.1.93; Lynette Glendinning 8.9.93.
As is often the case, Satan used one of our strengths to attack our school. Relationships between some staff members became strained; mistrust and disharmony occurred among staff, and between staff and parents. 109

The solution of this problem is:

... that we repent and are reconciled with those we have wronged. 110

The resolution of conflict in themelic schools tends to be dealt with in a magical way, reliant upon projections of guilt to elicit solutions via submission to the authorities in the school. Many conflicts are naively left to be solved by prayer without much analysis given to underlying problems. What follows is that problems are personalised and theologised so that blame and cause can be appropriated. Bollar Wagner comments

Even seemingly negative occurrences which threatened to weaken the school’s social structure, such as teachers resigning, were eventually squared with God’s leadership. Since “God wouldn’t do anything to hurt the children”, ultimately the resignations were seen as God’s pruning. 111

Themelic schools have no staff or teacher union/association, whilst principals have had an association for many years. Parents in themelic schools have always had an association and forum but staff largely remain isolated and disempowered. Many themelic schools have student councils or associations, yet less than 5% of all themelic staff belong to an independent teachers union. 112 The fear of “reds under the bed” still exists in themelic schools because unionism is often associated with disobedience and subversive activity.

The real problem underneath the facade of authoritarianism in themelic schools is the inability to cope appropriately with change. Themelic schools gain their identity more by what they don’t do than by what they do. 113 The theology and structure of themelic schools work against the circumstances which are necessary to adjust to and welcome

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110 ibid.
112 Interview Peter Crimmins 19.6.92.
113 Interview Lynette Glendinning 8.9.93
change.\textsuperscript{114} This compounds the problem of institutionalisation which strangles most schools, public or private.\textsuperscript{115}

The themelic home school tends to experience a different dynamic of education. The themelic home school, by its physical environment, tends to enjoy some of the progressive claims of the deschooling movement yet is still bound in part by the straight jacket of themelic epistemology.\textsuperscript{116} Rather than having their view of education reshaped, most themelic home schoolers are more conservative than their themelic school cousins; they tend to just “school” in a smaller environment.

The issue of obedience to authority in themelic schools is complicated because of a male dominance theology. Themelic schools are bound by problems of “messianism” and clerical insecurity. These problems are further complicated by historical factors such as Australian male insensitivity, the hierarchical structure of Australian schooling and the particularly masculinist foundation of private schooling.\textsuperscript{117} Any old bureaucrat can double as a hierarch and can more or less effectively administer the institution. The gift of genuine leadership needs greater ability than is available to themelic schools to foster participative models of school functioning that transcend hierarchalism. In the end, those who do not fit the accepted themelic mould are marginalised.\textsuperscript{118} Meissner’s category for this personality trait is “power and toughness”.

\textbf{12.4 Conclusion}

The themelic school system is founded on a psychology of fear, which is evidenced in the number of supposed enemies of the themelic system explored in this chapter. The consensual paranoia that operates and flourishes in themelic schools, founded in the doctrine of inerrancy, creates a mechanism which responds to “the other” as the enemy. This limits opportunities in themelic schools for diversity and learning, and has implications for the character of management in themelic schools, which is the subject of the next chapter.


\textsuperscript{116} Interview Greg Brian 19.6.92.


\textsuperscript{118} Interview Bill Oates 20.7.92.
Chapter 13

Themelic Management

13.1 Introduction

Given that a new system of themelic schools exists, with its own ideology and mentality what implications are there for the development of education in them? What hope is there of establishing an open and educational climate in a school system energised by this themelic perspective? This chapter explores the way that themelic ideology and mentality affect school organisation and management. It is in the area of school management and leadership that themelic trends in education are set. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore some unique characteristics of themelic school management and leadership and, through this discussion, to reflect upon educational possibilities. A discussion of school size, leadership, parent management, school management, teacher unionism and the addictiveness of themelic schooling will lead into discussion in Chapter 14 of the necessity for balance in the themelic system.

There are several aspects of themelic school organisation and management which warrant study, partly because they illustrate the way in which theology directs themelic practice but also because some of the organisational characteristics are unique to Australian schooling. In this respect, consideration will be given to strengths and weaknesses of some of these structures, the small K-12 school model, the parent-controlled model, themelic notions of leadership and the implications of a naive realist hermeneutic upon school management.

13.2 The uniqueness of the themelic school size

In the early years of the themelic school movement in Australia, Christian Parent Controlled Schools made it clear that:

Plans are, hopefully, to keep total numbers in any one school below the 400 mark. This is for two reasons:
a) That greater size than this makes it harder to retain a sense of community

b) The Christian community in general will be better served by more smaller schools which service a greater area than by a few big ones.¹

Of the 300 themelic schools that currently exist, approximately 40 schools have student enrolments of over 400 accounting for 24000 students. In other words, 13% of the schools carry 40% of the systems population, and 87% of the schools with student numbers under 400 account for the remaining 60% of the student enrolments. The themelic school model is essentially a small school model. Whilst there are many reasons for the success and growth of these schools, research for this thesis indicates that many parents, Christian or not, choose these schools because of their size.² Themelic school principals, teachers and parents articulate that the major determining factor in parents choosing their school is smallness. It is this emphasis on smallness which constitutes one of the most positive aspects of the themelic model. The constant use of language about care is related to the emphasis on smallness.³

The driving force behind the small school model was originally a theological one. It was through a model of small schools that the emphasis on family, pastoral care and Christian community was to be fostered.

Most themelic schools are K to 12 schools. Many of these schools have a high school section which numbers fewer than 400 students. Only 5 of the 290 themelic schools in Australia have high schools with over 400 students. As low-fee paying schools, they are generally under-resourced in comparison with most government and Arnoldian schools.

There are some factors that need to noted about themelic school success and school size. Firstly, themelic schools as small schools are obviously viable and attractive to a significant number of parents. Secondly, parents send their children to schools for reasons other than facilities, resources and opportunities to specialise. They often want a communal or pastoral climate and an assurance that their child will not be lost in the masses. Thirdly, the size of themelic schools is related to their Christian educational

² Interview Elizabeth and Peter Yuille 19.4.95; Hewitt, op. cit.
³ Hewitt, op. cit.
philosophy. Fourthly, parental participation in these schools is high, despite the
demands of double income and lower middle class constraints placed upon time, and is
related to a different sense of commitment fostered by a level of intimacy between staff,
students and parents. At a time when many other schools were pressured by the
assumptions of economic rationalism to expand for the sake of economic efficiency,
especially in the 1980s themelic schools continued to provide a small alternative. Their
growth rate and subsequent busyness, however, has in part prevented them from really
thinking through the importance of what they have been doing regarding the uniqueness
of their small K-12 model. Most study to date of the K-12 model tends to focus on
small rural schools.

Some themelic schools intentionally keep their numbers under 400 despite a long
waiting list, often with plans of planting another small school rather than expanding the
existing school. Some of these schools already operate in a cluster system which seems
to have happened more by circumstance than by careful planning. Sometimes a system
of sub-schools or “feeder” and “annex” schools has been developed to maximise
government funding. The schools which make plans to stay small intentionally are
usually shaped by a Christian theology of humility and suffering.4

It is interesting to observe that themelic schools are currently at a rather substantial
crossroad in their history. Starting new themelic schools has been a difficult process
since Senator Susan Ryan’s “new schools” legislation of 1985 has taken effect. Many
themelic schools since that time have expanded in size in a natural way, but also because
they have felt threatened and intimidated by the large school model, and planting new
schools has been limited by government regulation. It has been interesting to note the
problems that these larger themelic schools experience as they endeavour to maintain
their themelic ethos in K to 12 schools that exceed 400 students. The language of
pastoral care remains, often without the structure to support it. It is the view of the
writer that some current developments in themelic schools towards larger schools place
their distinctive contribution to education in Australia in jeopardy.

At this stage in themelic school history, there are two extremes in development. The
first is the model of the struggling school, not unlike the parochial Catholic school. The

4 Interview George Windsor 9.3.93; Geoff Bowser 5.12.94.
second is a group of themelic schools looking to push their enrolments over the 1000 student mark, many without having given much thought to the uniqueness of their model as a contribution to their own success, and without due consideration of the relationship of ethos to size. Such trends are related to themelic theology and insecurity in several ways.

The striving for increased enrolments is an aspect of conservative Protestant thinking which associates numerical growth with godly blessing. This idea comes from America through a phenomenon in the 1970s and 1980s in church circles known as the “church growth movement” which in turn is grounded in an American entrepreneurial business mentality. The pentecostal and charismatic theology of power also supports the idea of “big is good”, “big is better” and flaunting what you have. The result is a showcase style of Christianity with slick “razzamataz” methods, expensive conferences - not unlike a network marketing or Amway convention - and an emphasis on excellence. Leaders of this trend power-dress, emphasise the spectacular, focus on authoritarian leadership and talk about leadership itself, building programs and numbers. In themelic schools, this influence is apparent in some schools which pay their principals an “executive” wage, well beyond that of government schools - despite the fact that their schools are much smaller. Such patterns contradict the basic notion of the low-fee threshold and language about making Christian education affordable to all. Principals in this mould tend to emphasise conservative dress standards, enjoy the company car and exaggerate the role of school principal as visionary and leader. This model is educationally bankrupt because it focuses on image and rarely considers the deeper educational issues which might come from critical self-appraisal or collegial criticism. A number of such schools are found in Queensland.

The principals in this model are generally not well qualified, academically or experientially, and have entered the themelic system at a time when it was desperately short of principals, often getting their start in a small themelic school and finding themselves relatively quickly in charge of a large school.

Themelic schools have been situated on the fringe of middle/low income areas. As well as the attraction of a small environment of care and nurture, themelic schools offer

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5 Oswald, op. cit.
this income bracket an alternative as a “poor-man’s grammar school”. The themelic school attracts aspiring low/middle income earners in the same way that success theology attracts low/middle people to charismatic and pentecostal churches.

The obsession in themelic schools with theological and dogmatical correctness means that the guiding criteria for selection of staff, including a principal, are founded on theological compliance. Many themelic schools do not advertise for staff positions but tend to employ on an in-house basis which guarantees continued conformity and increases the dangers of nepotism.

A second aspect of themelic school development which is related to their theology and insecurity is an inability to set up a climate of critical thinking or a basis for critique. This lack of critique has allowed many themelic schools to adopt mechanisms and ideas which are at odds with their initial development, thus causing significant schisms. Without the ability or structure to embrace change, some principals and schools retreat into a stronger conservativism. The inability of the themelic system to develop a critical history has created an environment of haphazardness without any real basis for examination of trends and developments.

A third aspect is the comparative persuasiveness of the Arnoldian model of schooling, of large elitist schools with a corporation style of management. The success of Arnoldian schools threatens the insecurity which is engendered by the smallness of themelic schools. The larger the number of students in the K to 12 model, the more difficult it is to maintain the things which themelic schoolers set out to establish and the more they adopt the methods of Arnoldian school management. It is worth noting that the initial view of Christian education has changed as larger themelic schools try to maintain original Christian notions of community and family. Research indicates that, whilst elements of schism can be explained by theories of institutional cycle and management, it is also clear that the reason people in the movement become disenchanted with the larger themelic school is a perceived change in relationship, pastoral care and community emphasis, owing to changes in size. Some people who leave themelic schools tend to seek another small school or else begin home schooling.6

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6 Interview Sue McNair 14.3.95; Peter and Elizabeth Yuille 19.4.95.
Peter Kaldor’s work makes it plain that Christians want caring social relationships and spiritual nurture more than anything else in their congregational life. The evidence for declining rates of participation and feelings of not belonging in larger churches is also telling in relationship to large themelic schools. It is not that community and love cannot exist within a larger school or church but that it takes considerable effort, expertise, cost, ability and careful strategies to ensure that it happens.

13.3 School Size

To strive for smallness means to bring organisation and the mentality of production back to a human scale. The current analysis of successful corporate change and effectiveness supports this contention. The real issue in the Christian leadership debate should not be about style as much as about structure. As long as the themelic school accepts the institutionalised authoritarian model as Christian, it will continue to foster confusion and conflict between its ideology and schooling practice.

Structures need to be maintained that will enhance openness and trust. In short, themelic schools need emancipatory structures that will build up rather than limit people. Unless they question the leadership assumptions that are dictated by size, they will not experience the deep possibilities that are latent in being small.

Giantism seems to be endemic - or, as Schumacher says, “an almost universal idolatry.” There needs to be a balance, as Kleinig stresses:

Small groupings can more easily afford to direct their efforts to the autonomy of the members, but their facilities for its full flowering are often very limited. Obviously some balance is required.

School size should be included as a major factor on the themelic leadership and management agenda. As long as themelic schools continue to look at managerial issues from the “top down”, they will passively accept the enlargement of small schools and the assumptions that accompany the “bigger is better” mentality. In this respect they will tend to further institutionalise their fears and confusions, as the opportunities for

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7 Kaldor, Peter. et al., Winds of Change Homebush West, Lancer, 1994, p. 185.
change and innovation are limited by school size.

The work of Michael Fewster draws some interesting conclusions with regard to the size of government secondary schools. Fewster makes several pertinent points about small schools: teachers do not use the small school's structure to its best advantage when they are situated in one; the presence of small schools will continue to decline if their structure is not utilised positively; and the most valuable resource of student engagement is lost in larger schools with resultant rises in truancy, drop-out rates, vandalism and perceptions of irrelevance and non-caring teachers.

Reynolds' study discovered that the more successful schools with high rates of attendance, higher academic attainment and lower levels of delinquency tended to be smaller in size. McKenzie's doctoral research indicates that large schools are not necessarily better off financially, particularly after their enrolments increase beyond 800 students. His study indicates that curriculum breadth and depth declines as schools increase in size. Day's review of current research into the matter of school size also reveals that larger schools are not necessarily cheaper. Day argues that analyses which ignore capital costs, transport costs and wider social and community costs are not valid.

Overall, very little research work has gone into examining the hidden costs of large, so-called "efficient", schools. Hidden costs generated by more complicated communication processes, demands for additional pastoral care/counselling/chaplaincy, deleterious effects on staff morale, discouragement of parental participation and changes in attitudes to time in large schools are all aspects which warrant further research.

Fewster argues for a balance of models in schooling that should vary according to the school setting. He concludes that larger school structures, whilst allowing for greater

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11 ibid., p. 12.


curriculum flexibility and more academic strands nonetheless increase student alienation. He argues that the “effective schools” movement in general tends to accept the alienation of students as a by-product of the benefits of large schools. Fewster also argues that small schools, if effectively utilised, can be cheaper to run than larger schools. In this respect, Bray’s study\textsuperscript{16} which investigated a cluster scheme to help small schools, also warrants further exploration.

The question of size and balance is crucial in understanding the dilemma that faces the themelic school system. Smallness, according to Fewster, is a matter of attitude and structure. There is no sense in having a small school if it is being run like a giant school. Rather than aspiring to giantism, small schools need to do better at what they do best so that the myths of giantism can be exposed, and giant schools need to talk less about the rhetoric of community and family and own their real foundation for existence.

13.4 The relevance of size for Christian education

In the themelic school context, the trend to develop and expand into large schools tends to work against the establishment of pastoral care networks and community. Such trends erode the very relational character of what should constitute Christian education. Christian scholars such as W. E. Andersen make it quite clear that the ethic of community is itself the teacher, for the Christian. As Andersen explains, Christian living is relational rather than propositional.\textsuperscript{17} “Relational” here refers not to the sense used by Process Theology or Marxism. It simply refers to the kinds of links within which love, justice and fellowship - or the denial of these - among beings of dignity have basic significance.\textsuperscript{18} The goal of Christian education, according to Andersen’s reflection and biblical analysis, is what the apostle Paul called “upbuilding” or “edification”. For Andersen, the goal of Christian “upbuilding” is the idea of the “mature person” as part of a “mature community”. The value which is central to the idea of edification and maturity, and which is certainly seen as transforming, both for the individual and the group, is agape or selfless love. Related values of trust, respect, tolerance, open-mindedness and acceptance are also crucial to the establishment of


\textsuperscript{17} Andersen, W. E., Christianity and Schooling in Contemporary Australia Education in Focus Conference, CPCS Ltd, 1984.

learning through relationship. This is why Andersen has always maintained the necessity for themelic schools to be small.

The idea of the large school is founded on three central propositions: that output is increased by co-ordination of larger numbers; that specialisation is good and is best attained in large institutions; and that large schools are more economically viable. These propositions tend to run counter to the current thinking of employers, who seem to want multi-skilled critical thinkers as employees. The difficult question regarding large schools is, how big is too big?

Robert Banks helps by suggesting that:

Beyond a certain size, it becomes impossible to establish genuine relationships with, and take unlimited liability for, one another. beyond a certain size, things become too formal for us to show certain sides of our personality and to share many of our everyday concerns. Beyond a certain size, meetings become too regulated for God or the desperately needy to break in on our consciousness in any radical way, and too dominated by a few who allow everyone to play a part in determining the community’s affairs.19

In other words, there is no exact and magic number after which things get too big, but there are clear indicators. Somewhere in the process of bigness, the warmer nature and communal character of a group is lost, yet superficial language continues. Conversation often centres on problems of identity and belonging. Changes in the down-to-earth-character of the group, in quality of relationships and capacity for flexibility are other indicators. In a school, perhaps the biggest indicator of a problem is when the language in the school revolves around everything except the students and pedagogy. Bureaucracy, a word often used in teaching circles, has become synonymous with the feeling that organisations are in some sense no longer human.

On the symbolic level, the segmentation process in the large school tends to assert the authority of the school’s executive and create a mythology about their presence. Important behavioural cues are given according to their position in the building and office space. Preston and Symes note:

19 Banks, R., Small is Beautiful Zadok Perspectives Barton, ACT, T19.
As a general rule, those occupying the highest positions in an organisation tend to occupy the most enclosed spaces, the lowest the most disclosed. Open areas, be they in offices, factories or schools, are always the place where executants are to be found, another instance of panopticism. Thus the school's topography, which is saturated with power dimensions, echoing those in other public buildings, becomes another dimension of the school's structured imposition, another way of asserting that the divisions between the school population are natural and logical.\(^{20}\)

They further note the quasi-militaristic approach that is adopted regarding pupil movement and discipline and a kind of "territorial atavism" which carries the larger concerns of the school into the classroom. The timetable, which authenticates the power distribution within the school in general in the larger school eventually becomes immovable and impersonal.

Much of the literature on school architecture and school size tends to be technical rather than critical, written for the benefit of architects, economists or teachers concerned about pedagogical interests. Preston and Symes make it clear that:

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\text{In seeing educational space simply in terms of its pedagogical possibilities, this literature rarely unmask its power and social dimensions.}^{21}
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They argue that the social dimensions of school architecture are a critical element in the structure of school anatomo-politics. The use of space conditions behaviour and social practice and contains telling symbols of how that space is to be used. For example, in large schools, the administration block serves as the face of the school, the place where visitors encounter the school. This area is usually removed from teaching spaces and is adorned with clerical staff and administrative technology. The entrance room is usually decorated with an iconography of excellence, with the feel of a dentist's waiting room. It serves as an example of the ethos of individuality which dominates the moral economy of schooling: those who succeed in schools deserve to have their names displayed there. The deputy and principal usually have separate offices in this block and they are not freely accessible. An appointment to see them must be made through secretarial intervention. In large schools, this is complemented by communication

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\(^{21}\) ibid., p. 174.
through the memo, day book, daily blurb or loud speaker.

Whilst large schools provide greater opportunity for specialisation, they do not necessarily encourage innovation. The concept of institutional isomorphism has been developed by DiMaggio and Powell to support the argument that disparate organisations in the same line of business, once structured, come under powerful forces which lead them to become more similar to one another. They state:

The concept that best captures the process of homogenisation is isomorphism ... Isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions.\textsuperscript{22}

They distinguish three types of isomorphism. Competitive isomorphism arises from competitive pressures for a share in the market, for legitimacy and political power; mimetic isomorphism results from standard responses to uncertainty, and normative isomorphism is associated with professionalisation.

Whilst there has been little research on the subject of cluster schools or subschool management, five indicators serve as vital signs. Firstly, compartmentalisation within a school is a signal that the school is too big, and a concomitant reduction in school size to a manageable level is an attempt to regain a sense of community. Secondly, the mega-school concept with subschool arrangement confirms the belief in the myth of the mega-school as good. Thirdly, the idea of a subschool creates the feeling that the smaller unit is not fully a school but an auxiliary to the whole school. Fourthly, the model of mega-school and subschool confirms an insecurity about innovation and creative options with the concept of smallness in mind. Fifthly, this model assumes a greater economic viability is possible without consideration of hidden costs or of the more human issues of equity and participation.

Hierarchical, patriarchal and oppressive structures of leadership, Whilst acknowledged and discredited as outdated in theory, continue in practice and in leadership rhetoric. In fact, in schools and in classrooms there has been very little real change. What develops

is a new language. Employees simply have to become more astute at interpreting what they hear and read. In the state education sector, for example, devolution and school renewal have simply not delivered better schools, according to Blackmore and Smyth, certainly not in the sense of greater equity, quality or effectiveness. Yet, still, the government system continues to act upon such policy as the closure of small government schools, on the basis of unquestioned beliefs and myths.

Kell explains:

Many practitioners and theorists in the field have been duped into thinking that the possession of generic management skills, a 'go getum' entrepreneurial attitude and ability to create the 'vision thing' are the 'right stuff'.

Kell's suggestion that the educative process constructed as a commodified exchange has not developed a more human level of schooling is plausible. There is little doubt that the success of themelic school growth can be attributed to the provision of the small school option.

13.5 Themelic leadership

Much of contemporary leadership language focuses on the "top down" with little emphasis on the "bottom up" and genuine structural change. The Christian leadership movement is little different, asking very few questions about important assumptions to do with size, power and the nature of professionalisation and institutionalisation. The conclusion from conservative Christian leadership seeking to justify their power is that schools are in an imperfect world and must suffer such contradictions. So the themelic leader "cops it tough" and must experience the lonely life at the top for Jesus’ sake: this is the lot of those in positions of authority and responsibility. This is the kind of thinking which, in the end, simply legitimises authoritarianism without question. Bradley, the principal of Donvale Christian School, confirms this view by stating that Christian leaders must be resigned to "working in the shadow" that is so often cast by

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real life situations. Bradley has recently written a paper on a Christian theory of leadership giving credit to the theory of Machiavelli.

The idea of investigating the ideas of Machiavelli within a discussion of sound Christian leadership exemplifies the degree to which authoritarianism governs themelic school management. Machiavelli, tortured and imprisoned after the fall of Florence to the Medici and later released under the amnesty of Pope Leo X, had lost faith in the church and had little thought for more than the national unity of Italy. He knew humanity only on one side and placed his trust ironically in a vision for a new state under an absolute monarch. He justified his indifference to morality under the cloak of human depravity and criticised Christian ethics because it had made men feeble, and caused them to become an easy prey to evil-minded men. Such a thought stands in stark contrast to the biblical notions of strength made perfect in weakness and redemptive suffering which one would expect to come from the Christian perspective. Such a discussion as the one initiated by Bradley in the *Journal of Christian Education* serves as an example of the extent of confusion in themelic schools about what kind of leadership best fosters educative practice.

In making human corruption the starting point for his political thought, Machiavelli disposed of principled thinking as weakness. The logic of equating rightness with expediency in his philosophy does not solve the initial problem of depravity anyway. Therefore, an absolute legislator has all the potential to be absolutely corrupt. Far from being the “ultimate realist”, in Bradley’s words, Machiavelli reacted to his turbulent times. Machiavelli’s desire was for power and his book of advice, possibly tongue in cheek, *The Prince*, dedicated to Lorenzo de Medici, was an attempt to flatter and impress his way back into public life. The only thing about power that Machiavelli was worried about was that he no longer possessed it.

Bradley’s statement that

> Today we are not so interested in whether we find Machiavelli’s ideas palatable or not. Instead we want to know whether he paints an accurate

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picture of leadership experiences in the real world, as distinct from the widely-accepted models and theories that leaders seek to follow.26

serves as a curious introduction into a positive appraisal of Machiavelli’s perspective. Relying heavily upon Calvinist assumptions of human nature and the idea of perceiving what is as compared with what ought to be, Bradley assumes much about the real world and the possibility of hope.

Bradley’s conclusions do not take us very far past the paradox of the good and the bad. Assisted by the selection of the biblical models of vision, submission and service, the reader gets the feeling that a bit of Machiavellian leadership is worth dipping into.

The “working in the shadow” leadership model proposed by Bradley illustrates several important points about themelic school notions of leadership and management. The first is the relationship of themelic theology to patriarchy and authoritarianism; the second is the relationship of themelic mentality to the idea of the social contract; and the third relates to the common K to 12 structure of themelic schools and the inability of the themelic model to cope with large school numbers.

The themelic model is founded on a theology of patriarchy and authoritarianism which is clearly symbolised in the metaphor of lordship. It is no coincidence that there are so few women in the themelic system of schools in positions of leadership. Despite the fact that women make up more than 60 per cent of teaching staff in themelic schools, less than 3 per cent of themelic school principals are women.27

Handy’s analysis of leadership in The Gods of Management28 is particularly helpful in understanding the structure of leadership in themelic schools. Using Jungian typology not dissimilar to Neville’s, Handy explores the types of leadership that suit the different cultures that exist in organisations.

He makes this point:

26 ibid., p. 17.
27 This was calculated using 1995 themelic school directories.
I have done this not just to add whimsy to another book on management but to underline a very important point, that the management of organisations is not a precise science but more a creative and political process, owing much to the prevailing culture and tradition in that place at that time. Organisations like families have their own way of doing things, things that work for them and things that don't work. You have to read them right to be effective. \(^{29}\)

Using four gods of Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus and Athena, Handy stereotypes leadership into four cultural types - the club (Zeus), role (Apollo), task (Athena) and existential (Dionysus). The types are not intended to be precisely definitional, but they do provide an indicator which can be recognised quickly. Handy explains:

At one level, the theory helps to explain the comfort or discomfort of an individual in an organisation. A follower of Zeus will not be happy, or effective, in an Apollonian organisation. An Apollonian manager will find Dionysians irritating beyond belief. At a second level, however, the theory becomes a diagnostic tool for a manager or consultant. Inappropriate cultures lead to unhappiness or inefficiency. Communication breakdowns are often the result of one culture clashing with another. Organisations nearly always need a mix of cultures to carry out their different tasks, but each culture has to understand and respect the ways of the others. Too many organisations allow one culture to dominate and thus to impede others.

Each culture, it will become clear, or each god, works on quite different assumptions about the basis of power and influence, about what motivates people, how they think and learn, how things can be changed ... The gods of management, after all, do arouse strong allegiances in their followers. Those who think like Zeus find it hard to accept that Apollo can ever be right.

Cultural confusion, therefore, is one of the principal ills that plague organisations. \(^{30}\)

This thesis has already explored many role confusions existing in themelic schools. Confusion can be attributed to what is sometimes a very fine line drawn between the concepts of church and school and the roles of clergy and teachers, and between parental interference and parental partnership. Conflict is also experienced between

\(^{29}\) ibid., p. 9.

\(^{30}\) ibid., p. 11.
utopian ideology and the business pragmatism necessary to run a school, and is
generated in part by imprecision in the use of commonly accepted terms from an
amalgam of theological traditions. Confusion about leadership is predictable, in view of
these other areas of dissension. The language of partnership and mutuality which is
used consistently throughout the themelic school system simply does not match
leadership practice.

Handy’s types help to illustrate the cultural monologue in themelic schools. “The club”
nature of Zeus culture is an apt image of themelic management. The rigidity of the
dogma of inerrancy and the gate-keeping language of Christ-centredness help maintain
the unchangeability of the club.

According to Handy, Zeus

... represented the patriarchal tradition, irrational but often benevolent power,
impulsiveness and charisma.\textsuperscript{31}

The image Handy employs for this type is that of the spider’s web. Turney et al. in
\textit{The School Manager}, the publication of the Educational Management Project funded by
the Federal Government and Sydney University, discusses “the controlling role” of the
principal in a positive way.\textsuperscript{32} The proponents of themelic schools would like to
believe that their notion of control matches Turney’s. However, it is difficult to
understand the idea of control positively when themelic schools immerse their language
of control in theological imperatives of submission, obedience, authority and lordship.
In themelic schools, things radiate from the centre through lines of authority. Handy
comments:

Because of their setting, schools, and other academic institutions, are faced
with a tug of war between Dionysus and Apollo, with Zeus as umpire.
Their staff, the teachers or professors, are by training and inclination the
members of a profession. They have, most of them, taken on board those
professional values which are to do with service to the client, commitment
to the profession and the right to use their discretion in their job. Once
admitted to a profession, the new professional is his or her own boss.

\textsuperscript{31} ibid., p. 18.

\textsuperscript{32} Turney, C., \textit{The School Manager} North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992, pp. 240-59.
Management, as we saw in Chapter 1, is the servant, not the master, of professionals, who are the true Dionysians.\textsuperscript{33}

If Handy is right, this poses significant problems for the climate of management in theocratic schools because of the dominance of confusion and compliance in the system. Handy explains the problem in schools in general, thus:

The dilemma for schools is that, whilst they are quite properly staffed by Dionysian-leaning professionals, the size and complexity of their job drives them towards an Apollo-type structure, which is the logical route to efficiency. Carried too far the Apollonian culture turns the school into a processing machine, with kids as its products. The tendency then is to top it all off with a Zeus-like head who institutes, controls and directs the Apollo structure - in a very un-Japanese way. You can hardly blame the head, whose only experience of managing others is likely to have been the classroom, where Zeus behaviour is not out of place and comes naturally to many Dionysians. The end result, however, can be a cultural mixup which does little good to anyone.\textsuperscript{34}

According to Handy, the larger the institution, the stronger the development of the dominance of Apollo and the greater the conflict with other gods. Baker, a past treasurer, council member, parent, management consultant for KPMG - Peak Marwick and chairman of TCS comments:

At a very practical level when you are in a Christian school environment you are adding effectively two different models of authority over each other and it's so easy for the individual players to put one foot in one side and one foot in the other. And when it doesn't suit them, perhaps, to submit to a normal organisational hierarchy, they can dovetail over into a spiritual one. The whole line of who is in charge and where things are going and how you deal with people and how you manage them and what your relationship is with them is all totally topsy turvy ... that for me is a critical problem.\textsuperscript{35}

Baker commented that when he first entered the world of a theocratic school he was not aware of such problems but became aware of these problems when he got involved at deeper layers in the operations of the school.

\textsuperscript{33} Handy, op.cit., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid., p. 121.
\textsuperscript{35} Interview Nick Baker 26.7.94
Research by Myers-Briggs management psychologists confirm the dominance of certain types in religious organisations. This is particularly relevant, given the way in which themelic schools confuse the role of teacher as clergy and principal as bishop. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) functions on Jungian assumptions regarding the division of personality into types. Using eight categories (Extraversion, Introversion, Sensing, iNtuition, Thinking, Feeling, Judging and Perceiving) the Myers-Briggs analyst uses letters to plot human temperament. There are sixteen possible temperament types according to MBTI (INFP, INFJ, INTP, INTJ, ISTJ, ISTP, ISFP, ISFJ, ENFP, ENFJ, ENTP, ENTJ, ESTJ, ESTP, ESFP, ESFJ). Keirsey and Bates\textsuperscript{36} developed on MBTI by establishing four combination types (SJ, SP, NT, NF) which dominate sectors of the population. These are known as the Keirsey Temperaments (KT).

Using MBTI and KT, Oswald and Kroeger\textsuperscript{37} tested 1,319 ordained clergy across a wide array of denominations. The preference of these clergy showed considerable differentiation from the population in general. The clergy showed stronger preference towards introversion, intuition, feeling and judging. This correlated with Gilburg’s research of 254 Presbyterian clergy from central New York, southern California, New Jersey, western Pennsylvannia, West Virginia and Ohio.\textsuperscript{38} Gilburg found that 44\% of his sample were iNtuitive Feeling (NF); 29\%, Sensing Judging (SJ); 19\%, iNtuitive Thinking (NT); and 8\%, Sensing Perceiving (SP). Oswald and Kroeger note that NF clergy tend to play favourites in relationships making every situation emotional; they communicate ineffectively by empathising with everyone; they cannot can’t say “No”; they are faddish and have the strongest need for affirmation from others of all the temperaments; they avoid conflict and cannot cope with criticism. SJ clergy are literalists, and dogmatic; they get nervous when messages are interpreted symbolically or figuratively; they are pessimistic; they burn-out trying to keep up with their “shoulds” and “oughts”; they constantly hammer out rules, regulations, policies and moralisms and are preoccupied by calling others to be vigilant; they have a great deal of trouble accepting people from marginalised groups (singles, divorced, non-conformists, ethnic groups); and they find it difficult to praise others and resist creativity and innovation.


\textsuperscript{38} ibid., p. 23
Keirsey and Bates show that similar percentages of clergy temperament types are located in the field of education (SJ - 56%, NF - 36%, NT - 6%, SP - 2%). Therefore it could be reasonable to expect similar dominance of these types in a religious school. The differences between teachers and the population in general (SJ - 38%, NF - 12%, NT, 12% and SP - 38%) is quite remarkable. This may explain why themelic schools are so prone to schism.

The majority of religious leadership and school leadership is either iNtuitive Feeling (NF) or Sensing Judging (SJ). These statistics vary slightly according to sex. Women tend to be significantly less Judging in clergy and teacher roles. Mary McGinnis director of the Institute for Type Development in Sydney, commented that similar results were indicated from smaller studies undertaken in Australia. Her research indicates that the real difference between Australians and Americans is the variation in population between SJ and SP personality types. McGinnis also commented that SJ types (those wanting control, security and closure) were more common across the American religious population than in Australia. However, the influence of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism on Australian Protestantism, as established by Buch and Parker, would indicate that a similar dominance of SJ types ought to be expected across Australian Protestantism. Given the similarity between American and Australian evangelicalism, it would make sense that the two personality types of the SJ and NF ought to be the two most common leadership types in themelic schools. In my experience, this seems the case. It may be that the Myers-Briggs indicator can also help explain some of the managerial patterns in themelic schools.

McGinnis comments:
... this is American data, so we ought to take it with a grain of salt because it is not Australian. But my experience in Australia indicates that it is fairly similar. There hasn’t been enough hard research to be sure but, given the

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39 Keirsey, op. cit., p. 155.
40 ibid.
Americanisation of Australian culture, it is not surprising.\textsuperscript{43}

Given that 97\% of themelic school principals are male, it is not surprising that the SJ type tends to find a home for their style of leadership in such a context. The fundamentalist hermeneutic of inerrancy and the strength of the authoritarian personality at work in themelic schools would lead one to expect rigidity, dogmatism and insecurity in management and leadership. The SJ personality is authority-centred, fatalistic, meticulous, standard-setting, structured, conformist, hierarchical, an enforcer of rules, most comfortable in economics and measurement. The SJ type is protective, acts as a monitor and needs membership and loyalty. The NF personality is relationally centred, empathetic, spiritual and warm-hearted; it creates harmony, is romantically idealist, concentrates on morality, enjoys unity and needs meaning and significance.\textsuperscript{44}

Jungian theory also indicates that most problems occur for managers in the inferior function of their personality type.\textsuperscript{45} These functions tend to get out of control and take over in situations of tiredness and stress. In the case of the SJ type which seems to dominate themelic leadership this indicates a poor sense of intuition, a negative attitude to future events, subscription to conspiracy theories, a lack of imagination, feelings of inferiority in the company of imaginative people, confusion when faced with too many options and the tendency to take literally what is symbolic.\textsuperscript{46} The NF type in the inferior function tends to sense in an erratic way, has a poor sense of detail, overlooks errors of fact, covers up with feelings of concern, has feelings which spin out of control, neglects their physical well being, is prone to live in fantasy, delays decisions and perceives the needs of sense as self-indulgence. The result of management under these inferior functions is the creation of a climate that focuses on sin, guilt, authority, conformity and an abnormal demand for loyalty.

With reference to the inferior function, McGinnis commented:

\textsuperscript{43} Interview Mary McGinnis 16.11.94.
\textsuperscript{44} Berens, L. V. and Fairhurst, A. M., Keirseyan Temperaments Huntington Beach, Telos Publications, 1983.
\textsuperscript{45} Moss, S., Jungian Typology: Myers Briggs and Personality Melbourne, Collins Dove, 1989.
\textsuperscript{46} Berens, L. V. and Fairhurst, A. M., Keirseyan Temperaments Huntington Beach, Telos Publications, 1983.
A lot of what you see going on in the fundamentalist organisations is the inferior function acting out of control. One example that comes up all the time is the book of Revelations. It says at the beginning of the book that this is a symbolic book and it talks about seven heads and they take it literally. It says it is a symbolic book but they have to read it literally. Except when you pull out pieces like “a man shall hate his mother and father” and they say it doesn’t really mean that. They are selective about what they interpret.

The inability to work well in the inferior (unskilled) function is exacerbated by stress which is at extraordinary levels in the themelic school setting.

Given the demand for loyalty and obedience in themelic schools, it has been the present writer’s observation that the NT personality type seems to cause the most disruption in themelic school life. In secondary schools it is the English and History teachers who appear to cause the most trouble, who are most critical. It is observable that most schisms in themelic schools are generated through such people. Primary teachers in general and secondary teachers from the more rigid disciplines are more compliant and obedient, more offended by questioning and blurred thinking. Hofman confirmed this when he said that most problems occur for themelic schools when they begin secondary school sections.47

McGinnis comments:

... and what these people will do is they get a thinker who starts to question logically and they project on to that thinker not good logic but their own unskilled thinking. So they look at that kind of person and they see the kind of characteristics which they have themselves, they recognise themselves in that thinker. They project their poorly developed thinking and they see him as critical and negative...its like a Jeeckle and Hyde thing, like the person that is normally very logical when they are under pressure becomes awkward in expressing feelings, irrational dislikes, harbouring prejudices, become sticky, dependent, feels inferior in the company of people who express their feelings openly.48

47 Interview John Hofman 6.1.94.
48 Interview Mary McGinnis 16.11.94.
This is also confirmed by the work of Noel Davis at the Institute for Type Development in Sydney. 49

13.6 Parent management

Management in themelic schools is parent-centred. Themelic schools emphasise the biblical role of the parents as the primary educators of their children. CCS states clearly in its *Introductory Lecture Notes* that the four major features of a Christian Community School are:

1. THAT it is an extension of the home to help parents give their children the training the Bible says they should have;
2. THAT it is a part of the ministry of the church for equipping individuals for ministry and training them to grow up into Jesus Christ in every area of their lives;
3. THAT it aims to protect children against evil and help prepare them to live an authentic Christian life in the world;
4. THAT it is based on the three principles of growth towards Christian maturity as set out in Ephesians chapter 4.

And that

The Bible clearly places upon parents the responsibility for the training of children and sets out the nature of proper training and growth. 50

In schooling generally, the parent-controlled model of school management is quite unique and, as such, warrants further research.

CPCS promotional material states:

God has given to parents the responsibility to train their children. Christian parents may seek help from each other in the fulfilling of this responsibility, but they cannot avoid the responsibility, or pass it off to others.

A Christian school association is a group of parents joined together with

other parents and believers, to fulfill the responsibility which God has given to parents. It follows that the parents must ensure that the teaching and nurture that the children receive fulfills their responsibility to raise children to love and serve the Lord.

... The authority which the association exercises over the school is an authority to be used in ensuring that the whole conduct of the school and the education given in it, is according to Scripture.

... Parents should not leave the spiritual and moral shaping of the child to the teacher. While God may be pleased to bless the witness of a teacher, the responsibility is placed upon the parents, and therefore we may expect that they will normally be the greatest influence upon the child.51

In the CPCS model, each association of parents is the employing and managing body through an elected council. Principals and staff do not have voting rights on the council. Teachers generally have no direct representation other than via the principal, who is an ex-officio member of the council. Whilst language about parent and teacher partnership is common, in practice the very structure of the system negates its achievement. Staff have no union, no corporate representation, no vote or formal influence in policy making. Instead, they feed on volumes of scriptural imperatives about obedience and submission which pander to the themelic mentality and they accept their lot as good servants of Christ.

One of the factors contributing to schisms in CPCS schools is the lack of definition of what in fact it means to be "parent-controlled", which is part of the confusion which is distinctive of themelic schools and which is further confused by the themelic hermeneutic. Weeks makes a supposedly neutral Bible the yardstick of management truth.

It follows that the exercise of parental authority must be judged by Scripture, but it may not be limited in any other way. Any attempt to limit parental authority means that there will be aspects of the child’s education which are taken out of the control of parents. In practice, teachers may make many decisions in the day to day operation of the school. However, in principle, none of these decisions are exempt from scrutiny, revision, and if necessary, change by the parents. Thus parental authority cannot be

confined to the non-academic or to general principles. It is important that parents lay down the general principles or framework, but their authority is not limited to doing this. It reaches also to details of curriculum and classroom practice.

Parents must bring an understanding shaped by Scripture to all areas of the school and educational practice. In practice, it is important that they guard the school from domination by fads in educational thought, rather than by Scripture.\textsuperscript{52}

In practice, CPCS schools allow a very high level of parental influence and interference in the day-to-day affairs of the school, because of this confusion. This often runs counter to the professionalism of the staff, causing considerable stress. Even one parent with an agenda can have an imbalanced amount of power in this system, often behind the misleading title of allowing “parent-control”. This was the topic of a two-day conference held by CPCS in Sydney in March 1995. A review of this conference made it clear that the issue of power in themelic schools was not being identified or suitably addressed. The conference still maintained the idea of parents and teachers as “partners”, even though there is no sharing of political power in the themelic school design.\textsuperscript{53} Armed with a theological agenda or Bible passage, a parent or council chairman can wield inordinate power in the school without a single idea about educational practice.

In the themelic school pattern, each school stands autonomously and is not obliged to follow the directions of the central offices in Sydney, which serve primarily as service agencies. If there are troubles in some schools, the executive directors of these central bodies tend to wield a degree of moral influence but have no legal or formal influence over the particular direction of a parent association or a church council or board.

Many themelic schools and their staffs suffer under very amateurish and “sunday schoolish” approaches to management. Even some of the most progressive themelic schools are bogged down in the paranoia of blind obedience and submission to authority.\textsuperscript{54} An example is the inability of Trinity Christian School to establish a staff association. In 1993, several staff members at the school sought to establish a teachers


\textsuperscript{54} Circular to Staff Trinity Christian School Wanniassa, ACT. 13.9.93
association similar to that of the Canberra Grammar School. The association was to assist representation and communication, the desire of which reflected their concern about excessive executive power and secrecy. After a series of meetings, the staff were divided on the matter. The council had given approval of the concept and a large section of the staff were upset by the plan. It was expressed by some that such concept was divisive and contradicted the biblical basis of the school. This was supported by the principal who saw the concept as something out of his control. One staff member in particular was singled out for attention and was informed by the principal that the concept was anti-Christian. As a consequence of the incident the teacher concerned became ill, left the school, took legal action and was compensated.55 Three years after these events there was still no staff association at the school.

Often, the themelic claim of biblical mandate excuses the most unethical exploitation of its employees. Ignorant of correct industrial procedure and feeling that they are somehow above industrial law, themelic employers have not yet come to grips with legislation regarding acceptable workplace practice. This results from a disdain that is held for humanity because it is “fallen”, lost and corrupt, inhibiting themelic managers from accepting humanness as a quality for directing management of people. The validity of the self as a valid frame of reference is rejected by themelic thinking. This Augustinian view of the self permeates much of the themelic fear of humanism.

The framework and manual for correct management of people in themelic schools is the Bible. This creates a dilemma in management complicated by the sense of self-righteousness which accompanies truth claims founded on inerrancy/infallibility. This in turn leads to justification for the abuse of power.56

55 Interview Craig Ashhurst 31.10.94
56 Bewley, D., Meeting Agenda Trinity Christian School Wanniassa, ACT. 19.5.93.
Without the resources or disposition to be self-critical, large themelic schools have found themselves captive to forces of organisationalism and efficiency, professionalisation, credentialism, bureaucracy and institutionalisation. The narrow spiritual/biblical orientation of these schools toward problems in general sometimes inhibits a level-headed assessment of why themelic schools encounter schism. The themelic school tends to look for spiritual causes of problems rather than to critically analyse its social life as an institution.

It must be said that some principals display a degree of ambivalence on these issues which usually depends on their own schooling or early teaching. The rapid growth of themelic schooling in the 1970s and 1980s sometimes resulted in a "clutching at straws" approach when selecting principals for schools. Many principals entered their job with little or no executive or educational experience resulting in an amateurish approach to management, sometimes with horrendous economic, social and emotional consequences.

Those who have a greater familiarity with the Arnoldian pattern tend to implement Arnoldian traditions and symbolism in themelic schools automatically, often causing disputes and friction with foundation members of the school. Those who come from the government schools sector to the job of principal tend to be more critical of Arnoldian schooling.

Grievances that lead to court action are grave concerns in a themelic school, mostly for ideological/theological reasons. The thinking is that themelic people ought to be above such "problems", that grievances and disputes ought to be settled "Christianly". What results in effect is a considerable amount of manipulation of employees usually involving guilt and intimidation. The heavy accusation of being unChristlike or unbiblical is deeply hurtful to the themelic person. It is not uncommon for a themelic principal to argue that unions or teacher associations are unbiblical as a sanction used to

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57 Informal survey results from Christian Schools Association of Queensland Principal’s Association conference 1994.
58 Interviews Mark Tindall 14.8.92; Bill Rusen 21.1.92; Alan Mullaly 6.5.93; Brian V. Hill 23.11.93; Terry Parsons 25.11.93; Lynlea Rodger 30.8.94; Craig Ashhurst 31.10.94; Anneke Kruik 25.4.95; David Cavill 24.7.95; Colleen Hinder 28.4.95.
59 Interviews with principals: Bill Oates 20.7.92; George Windsor 9.3.93; Terry Parsons 25.11.93; Brian Cox 18.3.94; Bob Stunnell 19.3.94.
ostracise staff members in a moment of conflict. The charge of being unChristian attacks the integrity of themelic identity.

A compounding problem is the employment of spouses on staff and school councils and the number of staff children in the student body opening up the school management to significant accusations of nepotism and corruption. This often happens because of the small school model and it is one of its greatest weaknesses. The small and closed nature of the themelic school community opens up the possibility of such problems. Alternatively, the themelic school which extends to a large size jeopardises the potential for Christian education, as it sacrifices the potential caring and community nature of the school for the sake of greater efficiency.

Many themelic schools of the more reconstructionist variety tend not to work within the teaching award system at all, and they pay their staff as part of the sponsoring churches ministry team, creating an additional set of problems which expose staff to significant abuse. Many staff who leave themelic schools in an unhappy or stressed state are often too poorly prepared to understand their rights because of their own themelic fear of unions and disobedience. Most would not be aware of their right to make an industrial claim or are ashamed to make a claim for compensation for unfair dismissal. The central demand for “obedience” and “surrender” is so crucial in the evangelical and pietistic traditions that any holding to one’s stated position or defiance in these traditions is interpreted as unChristian behaviour. Consequently, many people leave the most terrible situations in themelic schools and disappear in a cloud of bitterness. One ex-principal of a themelic school corresponds with me with a mock letterhead which reads “Fully Crucified Ex-Christian Teachers Association”, an expression of gallows humour in the face of unresolved conflict.

13.7 Themelic management and teacher unions

There is a problem of anxiety and inability to cope with conflict in themelic schools, especially at an industrial level. Citing biblical texts such as Matthew 5: 25; 18: 15-19 and 1 Corinthians 4: 3-5; 5: 12; 6: 1 which infer that court action is not an option for Christians, the themelic disposition feels that court action or industrial action is

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60 Bewley, D., Executive memo, Trinity Christian School Wanniassa, ACT., 30.7.94.
somehow sinful, regardless of the degree of impropriety suffered at the hands of another party. Many people simply leave themelic schools rather than fight the system. The structure of themelic councils and boards with membership drawn from voluntary and often well-meaning but incompetent people exacerbates the issue. Managing a school is nothing like running a church, despite councillor’s good intentions.

The fear of communism discussed in Chapter 12 affects curriculum decisions and diversity. There is a reluctance to appraise the values of Marxism/socialism in themelic schools in the curriculum, or even the value of Liberation Theology. When the Bible is made the inerrant/infallible foundation of truth, there is no need to explore the work of Marx, Darwin or Freud. This selective blindness reinforces the values of the families from which so many of the students come, so that no real challenge is offered to their basic assumptions. The possibility of indoctrination is a very real danger in themelic schools because of this disposition.⁶¹

A major consequence of the fear of communism is the rejection of unionism by employees in themelic schools. Peter Crimmins, the executive director of AACS, has confirmed that less than 5% of staff in the themelic school he represents are members of any association or union.⁶² What often happens is that staff in themelic schools have no contact with the teachers’ union until they encounter problems. The foundation for this situation is the belief that Christians should not need such a mechanism for employee/employer relationships.

In a paper entitled A Society of Staff in Christian Schools (labelled “appendix “M””) given at the CPCS AGM in 1994 it makes clear that:

Even though this matter has been raised previously at an AGM, certain developments in the last 3 or 4 years suggest that it is now time for such an organisation to be formed.⁶³

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⁶² Interview Peter Crimmins, 19.6.92.

⁶³ Baxter, J., A Society of Staff in Christian Schools Staff Associations Discussion Paper Appendix “M” 1994 AGM, CPCS Ltd.
The paper, presented by John Baxter, the chairman of CPCS board of directors, makes it clear that:

The contentment (despite frustrations etc) and commitment of our teachers is very important.\textsuperscript{64}

In other words, Baxter saw that the morale and well being of staff was not being attended to as much as it should have been as evidenced by the number of schisms that had occurred in the recent history of themelic schools. This thesis argues that the fear of unions has contributed to a high level of schism in themelic schools. Baxter’s paper notes that “only around 10% of teachers in Christian parent controlled schools are members of a teachers union”. This is a clear admission of the degree to which teachers in themelic schools are isolated industrially and alienated in their employment.

As if to confirm this thesis, the paper cites as reasons for this low union representation:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) A high sense of God’s calling to the particular school as well as to the teaching task.
  \item b) belief that the school is serious about its commitment to the teacher
  \item c) somewhat negative conclusion about unionism rightly or wrongly latent among Christians; and
  \item d) concern that the union is primarily interested in industrial issues at the expense of the development of the profession.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{itemize}

The paper proceeds with an apologetic for the formation of a “society of staff” which echoes many of the common justifications for a teacher union. Without entering further into the issue, it is worth noting several facts which Baxter’s paper confirms about the nature of themelic schools in relation to unions:

1. The word “union” is rarely used in any discussion about an association of teachers.
2. The push for a “society of staff” comes from the CPCS group of schools, which supports the claim this thesis made in Chapter 6 about the more relaxed CPCS approach to professionalism and academic credibility.

\textsuperscript{64} ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} ibid.
3. The drive for a society of staff is not a grassroots push but is very much controlled from above, which confirms my thesis about the fear of freedom in themelic schools.

4. The language of the paper which justifies a staff society is couched in Scriptural terms and themelic shibboleths.

5. The proposed society of staff agenda deals with formalising current pressures about staff transfer and promotion, leave and other entitlements which the current arrangement does not cover.

It seems odd that the theological traditions which have the greatest history of dissent from the orthodox position should be so rigid in their view of authority, a view which is most evident in this discussion of communism and unions. The sad fact is that the everyday working life of the themelic teacher is beset by role confusion, industrial misrepresentation, job insecurity, guilt, stress and authoritarianism. This situation stems from several factors at work in themelic schools that have not been clearly identified or investigated by the schools themselves.

The first issue that needs to be investigated is the way in which the search for authority in the dissenting traditions has been shaped by their opposite. Historically, the dissenting Christian traditions have sought to distance themselves from ecclesiastical corruption and the papal model of authority by establishing an inerrant Bible which has, over time, become a “paper pope”. This has led to the elevation of the clergy as the legitimate and authorised dispensers of “the Word”.

In themelic schools, principals serve as surrogate clergy through the confusion of church with themelic school, schooling with church mission and evangelism and teaching with ministry. The doctrines of submission and obedience are tied to respect for the ordained authority because the idea of ordination for office is implied in the exercise of authority in themelic schools, making it very difficult for any grassroots movement of themelic staff to develop because it entails the questioning of the ordained authority. The evidence for this is the language of “calling” used in describing themelic teaching as a vocation. Typical of this is John Hofman’s articulation of the missionary “calling” in themelic schools:
Every believer has a missionary calling and out of love to our God and neighbour and with thankfulness for delivery from sin we commit ourselves to evangelism. This commitment is not restricted to family and church, but to all areas where an opportunity is given to us. We support home and foreign mission, the Sunday school and beach missions and the Leprosy mission. Would it be right then to pass by the most vital area of day-school education? It will be hard to find a better opportunity for home mission than through the Christian school where the younger generation is daily and for six or more years instructed in the Bible and brought up in a Christian atmosphere. Rather than think of our children mixing with unbelievers let us be glad that they mix with ours.66

The second issue that needs investigation is the way in which the Hobbesian philosophy of the social contract underpins the thematic dilemma of ruling under the shadow of original sin and yet believing in the ability to know revelatory knowledge with accuracy. This dilemma carries grave concerns about management/employee relationships. The justification for authoritarianism in thematic schools is often couched in terms of protection of the weak because humanity is “fallen” (an Augustinian notion of original sin). Hobbes’s relationships to Bacon, Scottish common sense realism and the roots of fundamentalism are worth noting.

Hobbes stated:

And as in Arithmetique, unpractised men must, and Professors may often erre, and cast up false; so also in any other subject of Reasoning, the ablest, most attentive, and most practised men, may deceive themselves, and infer false conclusions; Not but that Reason it selfe is always Right Reason, as well as Arithmetique is a certain and infallible art: But no mans Reason, not the Reason of any one number of men, makes the certaintie; no more than an account is therefore well cast up, because a great many men have unanimously approved it. And therefore, as when there is a controversy in an account, the parties must by their own accord, set up for right Reason, the Reason of some Arbitrator, or Judge, to whose sentence they will both stand, or their controversie must either come to blowes, or be undecided, for want of a right Reason constituted by Nature; so is it also in all debates of what kind soever.67

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Hobbes's commitment to civil peace by whatever means and whatever allegiance is how themelic authorities most commonly rationalise what they understand as industrial impropriety, through the biblical doctrines of obedience, submission and an interpretation of the sin as rebellion. The Hobbesian view that "a man's Labour also, is a commodity exchangeable for benefit, as well as any other thing" resonates with that of themelic school discussion about the status of teachers. If we couple these two issues with the fear of communism and unions, it does not augur well for the future of workplace practice in themelic schools.

13.8 The themelic school as an addictive organisation

Although the themelic school is not a total system, as Peshkin proposes, it is nonetheless an addictive organisation. Argyris and Schon define organisations as "cooperative systems governed by the constitutional principles of a polis." Shaef and Fassel's work supports the proposal of the addictive organisation and sheds light on why Peshkin would have thought the fundamentalist school was a total system. Shaef and Fassel explore ways in which individual symptoms of addiction are manifest in a corporate psyche. An addiction is any process or substance that begins to have control over someone to such an extent that they feel they must be dishonest with themselves and others about it. An addiction leads to increasing compulsiveness in behaviour. Shaef and Fassel list religion as one of the common processes of addiction.

The themelic system is a closed system. Information cannot be processed within the system because the worldview of the system will not allow that information to be recognised. By definition, it does not exist. Open systems take in new information, espouse flexibility as one of the characteristics of their system and are open to new information as a way to initiate change. The doctrine of inerrancy is by nature a closing force which has already declared which information is invalid. All systems call for those within them to exhibit behaviours and processes that are consistent with those systems. Systems subtly and explicitly reward people for exhibiting these behaviours.

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68 Interviews Bill Oates 20.7.92; Craig Ashhurst 31.10.94.
69 Hobbes, op. cit., Ch. 24, p. 127.
The addictive system is first of all a closed system. It is closed because it presents very few options to the individual in terms of roles, behaviours, thinking and perceptions which they can pursue. An addictive system calls for addictive behaviours. It encourages into the system people who enjoy the processes of addiction and addictive thinking patterns.\textsuperscript{72} What follows is a discussion of these processes of addiction (italicised) with reference to themelic schools.

The first characteristic of addiction is \textit{denial}. If something does not exist, it does not have to be considered. When people will not see or let themselves know what is happening, they pose no threat to a dysfunctional system and in fact perpetuate it with an unintended dishonesty.

\textit{Confusion} is another vital characteristic of the addictive system. Everyone spends inordinate amounts of time trying to figure out what is going on. Confusion keeps those in the system busy and ignorant and ultimately powerless. They thrive on crisis and hardly know how to function when things are “normal”. In a themelic school, the eternal nature of sin is taken so seriously that it injects a persecutory tone into responses to many adolescent behaviours.

\textit{Self-centredness} is a prominent characteristic of addicts and an addictive system. Getting the “fix” is central to the addict’s life. In themelic schools, despite the language and theology of selflessness, there is a subtle twist which causes themelic Christians to become focused on self. Guilt, shame and martyrdom are self-centred activities.

\textit{Dishonesty} is fostered in an addictive system because of the value attributed to one process or view of truth above all others. An addict cannot be believed because they have perfected the “con” to a fine art. This con appears as the foundation of our political system and has become the norm in advertising and business. It thrives on having one face for the public and another for those on the inside.

\textit{Perfectionism} is another characteristic of the addictive system. Perfectionists are obsessed with not being good enough and not doing enough. Mistakes are quickly denied or covered up. They are not a valid way of learning because they are indicative of imperfection.

\textsuperscript{72} ibid., p. 61.
The major preoccupation of the addictive system is control or, more accurately, the illusion of control. In the family of an addict the family tries to control the addiction; the addiction controls the family; the co-dependent spouse tries to avoid being controlled and the family becomes dysfunctional. The illusion of control in the themelic system is the illusion of dogma. It is an illusion because none of us can truly control anything. The addictive system believes that it can. In fact the addictive system begins the illusion of control by the attempt to control with a process or, in the addict’s case, with a substance.

Other characteristics of the addictive system are ethical deterioration, stress, dependency, negativism, defensiveness, projection, tunnel vision and fear.\(^{73}\) Shaef states that

> Invalidation is one of the hallmarks of a closed system. It acknowledges that divergent ideas exist but will not let them into the frame of reference of the system, and it refuses even to recognize the existence of processes that are threatening to it.\(^{74}\)

The process of narrowly defining what is worth knowing and what is not thwarts information and knowledge. In such a system, accurate information is always a threat to the status quo. The system relies on the construction of a simple dualism which relegates a very complex and ambiguous universe to being reduced to two simplistic choices. It relies upon the collusion of co-dependents to maintain the closed system. Shaef comments:

> Co-dependents are servers, volunteers, and the ones who set aside their own needs to serve the needs of others. They end up exhausted and burned out and rewarded by the system for their thoughtfulness and giving...The society’s concept of the “good Christian Martyr” is the perfect co-dependent ... Their impression management disguises a wide-ranging dishonesty that is experienced by others as niceness, righteousness, and an unlimited capacity for understanding and listening. Co-dependents will rarely come right out and tell you what they want. They are experts at vagueness, manipulation, rumour, and gossip.\(^{75}\)

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\(^{73}\) ibid., p. 68.

\(^{74}\) ibid., p. 71.

\(^{75}\) ibid., pp. 74-76.
The addictive construct provides a useful model for reflecting upon the weaknesses of themelic school management. When compared to the criteria for successful leadership and management constructed by Beare et al.\textsuperscript{76} and Turney et al.,\textsuperscript{77} it is little wonder that themelic schools are schismatic by nature. The conflict between parent power and staff disempowerment is one comparison which is instructive. Turney notes:

They found that teacher frustration and dissatisfaction were commonly related to:
- lack of teacher input into decisions that directly affect their work;
- administrative decisions that undermine teacher professional judgment and expertise;
- absence of debate about new or alternative practices; and
- lack of recognition of accomplishments.\textsuperscript{78}

In themelic schools these matters are exacerbated for several reasons. Firstly, teachers and non-executive staff suffer under a clergy-centred approach to decision making. This is consistent with a system which focuses on lordship as a godly model of leadership. Secondly, government teacher training is considered to be unChristian and therefore misdirected; hence the idea of teacher autonomy is rejected because it has an unChristian foundation. The energy of themelic schoolers directed at tertiary pre-service teacher training is evidence of this. Leadership in themelic schools, owing to an understanding that its hold on revelation is inerrant, tends not to work on broad collegial approaches to problem solving or administration. Staff are expected to be obedient subservient “partners” in the education process. Thirdly, debate is not valued in the themelic system because it is understood as a sign of disharmony. Disharmony is interpreted as evidence of something being wrong; it is not looked on as an opportunity for all the players in the business of education to have their say. The focus on sin in themelic schools entices the management to search for wrongdoers. Fourthly, lack of recognition in themelic schools is reinforced by Calvinist views of the self. Self-esteem is misinterpreted as self-love and is rejected in the name of practising humility. As a consequence, teachers in themelic schools receive less recognition for their accomplishments than do their counterparts in government or Arnoldian schools.

\textsuperscript{76} Beare, H. et al., \textit{Creating an Excellent School} New York, Routledge, 1989.
\textsuperscript{77} Turney, C., op. cit., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{78} ibid., p. 28.
13.9 Conclusion

In this chapter the themelic school model as a small school, low-fee model of alternative non-government schooling has been discussed. The small school model is unique in the make-up of schooling in Australia and adds to educational diversity. Despite some problems, the themelic system provides a model of small schooling which offers a structure of pastoral caring and community-centred relationship in learning. The themelic school system moves away from this model at its own peril. Trends in themelic schooling towards a large school model threaten its very ethos. This is reinforced by certain ways of looking at leadership and management in themelic schools. The themelic small-school model ought to provide structures for management and leadership which stand in contrast to hierarchical and bureaucratic models of school management. The parent-controlled model of management is something which is unique in Australian schooling and warrants greater research. However, the imbalances in themelic school management in favour of parental power considerably weaken its capacity to embrace educational change and innovation. There is no political partnership in themelic schooling between teachers and parents. Staff in themelic schools are politically powerless. New tertiary teacher training options, founded in unquestioned themelic theology, will more than likely perpetuate this imbalance. In the final discussion of the chapter I suggested that themelic schools are addictive organisations. This is due to their potent combination of their peculiar theological mix and small schooling model. If the strengths of the small school model are to be realised in themelic schools there will have to be some change at a theological level.
Chapter 14

Conclusions and Recommendations

14.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together some of the conclusions of the thesis and offers some recommendations. Imperfect as they are, themelic schools have as much right to exist as any other schools, imperfect as they also are. Themelic schools are not places of violence or destructive deviance but a response to trends which a group of conservative Protestant Australians have perceived since the 1960s as morally and educationally problematic. The solution of these perceived problems which the proponents of themelic schools were concerned was the establishment of themelic schooling. The schools which have been established in the themelic system espouse a theory which claims to be distictively Christian; but the schools have established a contrary theory-in-use which reflects the limits of themelic school educational possibilities. The incongruence which occurs is conditioned by constraints which have been discussed in Chapters 8, 11 and 12.

This thesis has not set out to be destructive of themelic schools but to offer informed and supportive criticism. It has sought to clarify an educational picture which to date has been poorly defined and as such has a positive intention of seeking to provoke a wave of research in and outside the themelic movement that will clarify why they have been overlooked and to promote productive dialogue among the schools and the intellectual and bureaucratic community. Themelic schooling is a system in development to which it is hoped this thesis makes a contribution. The eight practical recommendations made in this chapter indicate areas where themelic schooling can further develop.

There are two key phenomena which have been the continual focus of the thesis: the influence of fundamentalist epistemology and the dominance of fear and confusion in
the movement. This thesis has asserted these phenomena are educationally problematic. It is from them that authoritarianism, separatism, underlying contradictions, lack of openness, fear of criticism, adversarial reactionism and managerial myopia develop.

14.2 What is an organisation that it may learn?

Argyris and Schon ask the above question in their work Organisational Learning II.¹ This is the challenge of any work which makes recommendations to schools. With specific attention to themelic schools, the question ought to be: how can an organisation which has constructed a discourse on an inerrant/infallible interpretation learn? What processes would promote themelic school development and allow it to proceed with greater educational potential? What kind of learning ought to be encouraged?

Argyris and Schon make it clear that organisations learn from inquiry. “Inquiry” is not used here in the colloquial sense of scientific or juridical investigation but in a more elementary sense of the meshing of thought and action that comes from doubt and the resolution of doubt. Inquiry in this sense is made more difficult in the themelic school setting because of structures for the denial of doubt. There will be little opportunity for learning if doubts are not brought into the open and structures supporting dogmatism are not altered. This is the task of researchers in and outside the themelic school movement. Research is not likely to occur in any substantial way unless funding is provided.

My first recommendation is that associations of themelic schools and government institutions fund research into themelic schools. It would be important to move on from this work and focus in on a smaller sample of schools in much greater detail, in a similar way to the work of Peshkin, Bollar Wagner, Rose and Lambert.

Argyris and Schon list the kinds of changes that are mediated by lessons drawn from inquiry.

interpreations of past experiences of success or failure;

b. inferences of causal connections between actions and outcomes and their implications for future action;

c. descriptions of the shifting organisational environment and its likely demands on future performance;

d. analysis of the potentials and limits of alternative organisational strategies, structures, techniques, information systems, or incentive systems;

e. descriptions of conflicting views and interests that arise within the organisation under conditions of complexity and uncertainty;

f. images of desirable futures and invention of the means by which they may be achieved;

g. critical reflections on organisational theories-in-use and proposals for their restructuring; and

h. description and analysis of the experiences of other organisations.2

Such a list could be helpful when drawing up strategies for research of themelic schools. Many possibilities for further research are also suggested and implied elsewhere in this thesis.

The likelihood of research being generated from within the themelic system is remote given the fear of criticism which is engendered by the authoritarian structure. If research is forthcoming it will most likely come from the CPCS group, who have the strongest commitment to academic and scholarly work. However, if themelic schools in general are to really conform to the imperative of learning, they must give up the imperative of dogma, this is the second recommendation.

In Christian terms, the avenue for most the solid criticism is from those who are prophetic, critics who are able to analyse and shake the foundations of institutions fixed in cycles of single-loop learning. Therefore, it would seem a reasonable third recommendation that themelic schools look carefully into the support and promotion of prophetic thinking in their organisation.

2 ibid., p. 17.
An organisation's ability to learn is also made up of structures that channel organisational inquiry and the “behavioral world” (qualities, meanings and feelings that habitually condition patterns of interaction) of the organisation which is meshed in the structures and inhibits or facilitates organisational inquiry. Argyris and Schon comment:

... structural and behavioral features of an organisational learning system create the conditions under which individuals interact in organisational inquiry, making it more or less likely that crucial issues will be addressed or avoided, that dilemmas will be publicly surfaced or held private, and that sensitive assumptions will be publicly tested or protected.\(^3\)

By “organisational structures” they mean channels of communication, information systems, the spatial environment of the organisation, procedures and routines, and systems of incentives that influence the will to inquire. The degree to which patterns of interaction are friendly or hostile, open or closed, flexible or rigid, productive or defensive, will affect the possibility of organisational inquiry. Structures that bring things out into the open engender trust and reduce the disposition of individuals to act according to theories-in-use that feature win/lose behaviour and unilateral self-protection.\(^4\)

It was noted in Chapter 13 that themelic schools are and have intentionally been small in organisational structure. It has also been noted by Argyris and Schon that single- and double-loop learning is complicated by organisational size and complexity. It is therefore a fourth recommendation of this thesis that themelic schools explore further the relationship of size to organisational development and the nature of Christian education. Themelic schools as small K to 12 schools need to examine the uniqueness of their model and publish this research. One of the temptations of small organisational

\(^3\) Argyris, *Organisational Learning II* op. cit., p. 28.
\(^4\) ibid., p. 29.
models is to become burdened with what Rees calls the "more with less" prescription. The struggle of endeavouring to do more with less has a human cost. In theemelc schools this is observed in high levels of stress and evidenced in schismatic tendencies. Researchers in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) argue that poor management resulting in conflict is due to persons operating out of their weakest function in moments of stress. If theemelc schools are to stay small and maintain the benefits in Christian education terms claimed by Christian scholars such as Andersen and Banks by being small, they need to clarify more of what they do best and establish clearly what they cannot do.

The fifth recommendation concerns structures. At a structural level, there are some practical issues which could enhance inquiry in theemelc schools. One structural matter that ought be addressed is political equity; in particular, the need for staff to associate and unionise. This would have a domino effect with implications for management, arresting authoritarianism and equity in the development of curriculum. CPCs have commenced such procedures but others ought to follow. The prohibition on staff having representational power and industrial knowledge in theemelc schools is a naive and a most pressing problem. Problems associated with political inequity in theemelc schools were discussed in Chapter 13. If teachers are to have a greater influence on the educational direction of theemelc schools they will have to struggle for political equity.

The sixth recommendation is that the structure of the K to 12 school design be further researched. There are major problems associated with this, including confusion in secondary and primary sectors about each other and the nature of the students they teach. In theemelc schools this confusion is exacerbated by unclarified theological presumptions about the nature of childhood. However, it is clear that the themelc system has this pattern of schooling as their standard and the educational community could learn from the themelc system in this regard.

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6 Interview Mary McGinnis 16.11.94.
14.3 Themelic language

The next recommendation concerns the language and symbols of themelic schooling. The basic principle of semiology is that where there is signification and a text there must be a knowable underlying system giving rise to meaning.\(^7\) That methodological assumption rests on Saussure’s distinction between *langue* and *parole*, between the synchronic system of a given language and anything anyone might say or write in that language.\(^8\) Each linguistic is a member, an *articulus* in which an idea is fixed in a sound, and a sound becomes the sign of an idea. Language is a system of symbols, revealing different aspects of our experience and perception of reality.\(^9\) Meanings conveyed by language are articulated by implicit grammatical rules that determine the ways sentences can be structured.\(^10\) These rules also reflect our spiritual beliefs and social structure, and the way we segment our time.\(^11\) The vocabulary of language may be influenced by cultural, environmental and physiological factors and serves to categorise things that are important to a society. Language, therefore, plays an important role in transmitting culture, in the process of enculturation. Language does more than reflect culture, according to radical linguistic determinism, it determines culture by controlling the way people think, predisposing them towards certain interpretive choices.\(^12\)

Language can be compared with a piece of paper: thought is the front and sound is the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back. Likewise, in language one cannot divide sound from thought nor thought from sound. For this reason, feminists have sought to reform some practices of society through changing language that engenders discrimination. The same principle needs to be applied in themelic schools at


\(^8\) ibid., p. 7.


two levels.

First, there needs to be much greater clarification of themelic language. It is confusing to use central motifs such as “Christ-centred” and “educating Christianly” without analysis and clarification. Too much communication in themelic schools is left blurred and unchallenged. Second, there needs to be a reappraisal of terms such as “inerrant” and “infallible” in statements of faith. Thinking evangelical educators such as Andersen prefer terms such as “inspired” to designate the authority of the biblical text in the Christian life.\(^{13}\) Such changes in expression would enable greater openness and have long term implications for education.

A seventh recommendation is therefore to engage in debate about the meaning and use of terms in themelic schools. Those at the more liberal and neo-evangelical end of the movement ought to begin reshaping conversation in the schools by developing an alternative language which is less focused on binary oppositions. Moon states that binary oppositions as an organising principle for texts and readings reproduce patterns of thinking which close rather than open options.\(^{14}\)

Oppositional thinking represents a black and white view of the world, a tendency to see everything in terms of simple contradictions. This has clear consequences for the way power is distributed among groups of people. The expression “black and white” is not just a descriptive expression but is tied to a divisive history of racism. Moon stresses that binary patterns of thinking privilege one element over another in a hierarchical fashion and we have observed this in Chapter 12 which dealt with reactionism in themelic schools. The second term of a binary opposition often comes to represent merely the absence of the first, which devalues the second element. Therefore, in binary patterns of thinking, “emotion” is often degraded as merely the absence of reason. Through such connections, established patterns of thinking are supported, for it becomes difficult to change one set of terms without challenging an entire set of beliefs and practices. The task of the prophet is to trace the assumptions which have

\(^{13}\) Interview William E. Andersen 21.8.92

been coded into the themelic text.

The problem of role confusion which was discussed in Chapter 13 warrants special mention. The confusion regarding the identification of the school as a church and the teacher as minister must be addressed. As an eighth recommendation the clarification of roles and the eradication of role conflict ought to be a matter of urgency for themelic schools. A great deal of literature exists about role clarity, role ambiguity and role conflict, which suggests that they are correlated to each other.15 A meta-analysis of results relating these role variables to measures of job satisfaction shows that role conflict and role ambiguity relate to lower satisfaction and signs of psychological, physical illness and stress.16 Research on stress in teaching indicates that teachers under distress are less reflective and less able to cope.17

The role of teacher-as-minister and principal-as-priest causes the most damaging outcomes in relationships in themelic schools as teachers and principals move in and out of role at will, investing school practice with ecclesial and theological power. This is exacerbated by the conflict over staff children, spouses and relationships which span several Christian settings. The confusion of roles in themelic schools invests adolescent behaviour with sinfulness and misdemeanor with eternal consequence. Themelic schools need therefore to take much greater care with daily school matters such as open employment processes, clarification of job descriptions, staff allocations, establishing due processes for leave and grievances, and processes for dealing with staff children and children who attend numerous Christian institutions, including the themelic school. This process would be assisted if more staff joined unions and discovered minimum workplace requirements required by industrial law.

16 ibid.
Conclusion

This thesis has sought to bring into the open a group of schools which have been overlooked and to explain their development. The fact that the thesis has been generalist in nature is one of its limitations however, it has provided an overview for others to use and develop. The thesis has offered criticisms and explanations of the nature of themelic schools and has sought to explain why they have developed so strongly. An examination of the schools has been undertaken using theological, historical and philosophical methodology which has had a focus on oral history.

It has been argued that a unique group of schools has emerged on the educational map in Australia after World War II. The group of schools shares common language and ideology, which are explained theologically. The theological structure of the thesis explains the commonalities of the themelic system and also the deeper and more divisive elements of the schools as a whole. The conclusion of the thesis is that themelic schools are schools of confusion, fear and contradiction. If they are to develop as educationally sound institutions and solve their problems, they need to address the issues raised by this thesis.
Appendix 1

Interview Release Form

Interviewee's name______________________________

Interview No__________________________________

Interview Release Form

I have granted permission to Robert Long of 10 Jens Place, Kambah, A.C.T. to record an interview with myself, ________________________________
of ________________________________

I agree to the following conditions:

1. That the interview will be transcribed, the transcripts may be edited and all materials including tape recordings, transcripts, notes etc. indexed and copies will be placed in the Christian Parent Controlled Schools (CPCS Ltd) Library as part of the Oral History Collection.

2. That I will receive a copy of the interview in cassette form and a copy of any edited transcript prior to their inclusion in the CPCS Oral History Collection.

3. That I have the right to correct errors in the transcript prior to its inclusion in the CPCS Oral History Collection.

4. That every copyright I have in any use of the tape recording(s), transcript, notes or any other material made in connection with the interview is assigned to Robert Long.

5. That the CPCS will permit bona fide researchers access to the material in the “History of Christian Schools” Oral History Collection, and control of their use of the material in a responsible manner.

6. Should a book, article or publication be written which incorporates any material from the “History of Christian Schools” Oral History Collection, I do/do not give permission for my name to be attributed to extracts from the transcript or recordings involving myself and the interviewer.

7. That I have the right to use a pseudonym which will be used in all recordings, documents etc. in the “History of Christian Schools” Oral History Collection. This name will be: ________________________________

Signed______________________________

Date____________________________________
Appendix 2

Interview Themes

Childhood/Early Education
Place, family, school experiences, level of education.

Brief History
Where and when concern for Christian schooling and education began.

Theology
Disposition to basic doctrines: Scripture, God, Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation, consensus of staff, parents, associations.
How does your theology drive your educational philosophy?

Private Schooling/Church Schooling/Christian Schooling
Why start Christian schools? Why do you think parents enrol their children in Christian schools?
What are they endeavouring to do that others are not already doing? What is the difference? How do you understand the beginnings of the Christian school movement?
Has anything changed?

Types of Christian Schools
Why have some church/theological traditions adopted particular schooling models? e.g. Parent-controlled, Community schooling, ACE schooling. Does it matter?

Relationship with Government/Policy
How has this affected the development of Christian schools? Dangers and benefits. Funding. Policy within the movement.

Teaching and Curriculum
What is your perspective on methodology and content in Christian schools? How are these different in a Christian school? What about primary/post-primary? What about specific subjects like Christian studies?
Developments

Centralisation, professionalisation, unions, affiliations, facilities, rationalisation, efficiency, size, management, insurance, teacher training.

Experiences

What has been your experience in Christian schools? What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the model you were involved in?

Vision and Future

Where are these schools going? Where would you like to see them go?
## Appendix 3
### Interview Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Frogley</td>
<td>Director, LEM</td>
<td>27.3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Frisken</td>
<td>Founder, Director, CCS Ltd</td>
<td>5.6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Crimmins</td>
<td>Executive Officer, AACS</td>
<td>19.6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Brian</td>
<td>Former chairman St Georges Christian School</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Former principal ICS school (YWAM)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Watson ACT</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Director, International Correspondence Home Schooling Institute</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher, O'Connor Christian School</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home School Coordinator</td>
<td>19.6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Oates</td>
<td>Principal, Kindalin Christian School</td>
<td>20.7.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Tindall</td>
<td>Principal, Tongarra Christian School</td>
<td>14.8.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Andersen</td>
<td>Former Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education</td>
<td>21.8.92</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Sydney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floyd Risser</td>
<td>Director, ACE Aust</td>
<td>17.10.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simone Sully</td>
<td>Graduate of ACE system (whole of school life) now hairdresser</td>
<td>17.10.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew White</td>
<td>Assistant Director, CPCS Ltd</td>
<td>19.11.92</td>
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<td>David Magill</td>
<td>Founder, Director, CCS Ltd</td>
<td>20.11.92</td>
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<td>Jack Mechielsen</td>
<td>Executive Director, CPCS Ltd</td>
<td>21.11.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Rusen</td>
<td>Teacher, Tyndale Christian School</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Windsor</td>
<td>Principal, Nowra Christian Community School</td>
<td>9.3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Title and Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kerry Kennedy</td>
<td>Dean of Education University of 5th Queensland</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chairman, NICE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Former chairman, TCS</td>
<td>10.2.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allan Mullaly</td>
<td>Executive Officer, CSAQ</td>
<td>6.5.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Pierson</td>
<td>Dean, Heritage Christian College</td>
<td>7.5.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ross Henshaw</td>
<td>Principal, Christian Life College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray Tiller</td>
<td>Founding teacher first ACE (Aust) school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A/Principal, Christian Outreach College (Toowoomba)</td>
<td>6.5.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Baskerville</td>
<td>Principal, Calvary Temple College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stuarte Kerdel</td>
<td>Principal, Hillcrest Christian College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rien Van der Heide</td>
<td>Founder Goodna Christian School</td>
<td>8.5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie Parkinson</td>
<td>Former Principal, Calvin Christian School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stuart Fowler</td>
<td>Lecturer, Association for Christian Scholarship, NICE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director, Antithesis Educational Services</td>
<td>24.8.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynette Glendinning</td>
<td>Parent, council member Trinity Christian School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director, Palm Management Services</td>
<td>8.9.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Hester</td>
<td>Founder, Former Principal CCS Ltd</td>
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<td>Chairman CCS Ltd</td>
<td>23.9.93</td>
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<td>Doug Blomberg</td>
<td>Lecturer, NICE</td>
<td>11.11.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewart Miller</td>
<td>Principal, Mt Evelyn Christian School</td>
<td>11.11.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brian V. Hill</td>
<td>Professor, Faculty of Education Murdoch University</td>
<td>23.11.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terry Parsons</td>
<td>Principal, Swan Christian High School</td>
<td>25.11.93</td>
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<td>Neil Rowcroft</td>
<td>Principal, Kingsway Christian College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack Kuilenberg</td>
<td>Foundation Teacher, Calvin Christian School</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>John Hofman</td>
<td>Former founding principal</td>
<td>Calvin Christian School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jannigre Hofman</td>
<td>Former Parent, Calvin Christian School</td>
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<td>Elsa Wierenga</td>
<td>Parent and former student</td>
<td>Calvin Christian School</td>
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<td>Dirk Wierenga</td>
<td>Parent, Calvin Christian School</td>
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<td>Darren Kuilenberg</td>
<td>Former Student, Calvin Christian School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wendy Romanelli</td>
<td>A/Principal, Southern Vales Christian Community School</td>
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<td>Bob Stunnell</td>
<td>Principal, Torrens Valley Christian School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick Baker</td>
<td>Parent, Council Treasurer, Council Chairman, TCS, Management Consultant Peak Marwick</td>
<td>26.7.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise Kuilenberg</td>
<td>Former Student, Calvin Christian School</td>
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Appendix 4

Interview Questions (Non-Christian)

What has been your employment record? In what capacity can you speak about fundamentalist Christian schools?

What has been your experience with fundamentalist Christian schools?

When did you first encounter them?

Could you reflect on your first and subsequent impressions of this school system?

How would you describe them to an outsider who has no experience of fundamentalism and non-government schooling?

Do you have other experiences that have further influenced your opinion of these schools?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of these schools?

What needs to happen in them to address these strengths and weaknesses?
Appendix 5

Glossary

Anabaptist/Separatist

Separatism is the touchstone of anabaptist thinking. The anabaptist tradition stresses the “free church life”. Anabaptists are ancestors of the “Particular” Baptists and Mennonites. The educational ideas of the tradition revert to the doctrine of separation (Absonderung). There is a palpable sense of “over-againstness” toward the rest of society.

Charismatic

Pentecostalism entered a new stage after World War II with the appearance of “neo-Pentecostalism” in traditional churches. The term “charismatic renewal” was used in the early 1970s to explain the difference between the older, more separatist Pentecostal movement and the softer and less dogmatic experience and theology of Pentecostalism that was developing in the mainline churches. The charismatic tends not to insist that their experience should be normative for all to be true Christians and therefore tends to be less isolationist. The charismatic experience of the Spirit of God tends to sit more comfortably with the theology and emphasis of the denominational tradition of which she or he is a member.

Christian Reconstructionism

The roots of Christian reconstructionism extend back to opposition to Presbyterian liberalism and the perspective of Cornelius Van Til. As strict Calvinists they believe that “the elect” know and have the ability to understand life in the light of God’s laws. All of life must come under the rule of God. The emphasis is on correct training, correction and God’s lordship. Reconstructionists criticise and hope to undermine institutions that they see as usurping God’s rightful place. The chief among such institutions is the modern state. They look to the Old Testament and the model of Israel
for teaching on blessing and cursing. The most published reconstructionists are Gary
North, Samuel Blumenfeld, Otto Scott and Rousas J Rushdoony who publish through

Christian reconstructionism finds its primary focus in the Old Testament covenant.
Reconstructionists extrapolate from the Old Testament covenantal relationship between
God and Israel to apply that sense of relationship to all nations. The key issue of the
covenant has its roots in Presbyterianism, and Christian Reconstructionism extends the
tenets of Presbyterianism to its natural conclusion. The prominence and example of
Abraham Kuyper and Kuyperian government in the Netherlands in the 19th century or
Calvin’s Geneva would best represent the kind of developments that Christian
reconstructionism hold dear. The right to not only exist in the state but to christianise it
is foundational to Christian reconstructionist assumptions. Though the literal Bible
figures prominently in their reasoning it is in fact the prominence of the covenant itself
that precedes the Bible in their thinking.

Conversion

“Conversion” refers to the radical change or transformation of a person to faith in
Christ. The term “repentance” literally means a turning around. Conversion entails
intellectual, emotional, volitional and psychological elements, including a doctrinal
affirmation of the orthodox evangelical position.

Creationism

Christians differ on their understanding of the mode of creation. A creationist is simply
a believer in creation. In contrast with a loose understanding (neo-evangelical and
liberal) of creation stands “scientific creationism”. Scientific creationism is a position
that is founded on the literal interpretation (biblicism) of the biblical account of creation
and the application of rational, positivist, “scientific” methodology to biblical evidence.
Scientific creationism examines all scientific evidence in the light of creationist
evidentialism. The enemy of the scientific creationist is evolution and relativism.
Evangelical

The term “evangelical” comes from the New Testament Greek word for gospel (euangelion), meaning “good news”. Central to the evangelical is preaching about salvation, the proclamation of God’s “saving work” on the cross and man’s need to personally trust in Jesus for eternal salvation. Evangelicalism, like fundamentalism, is transdenominational and is a tradition that gives an identity over and above denominational affiliation.

Fundamentalist

The term “fundamentalist” was first coined in the 1920s to apply to the movement against evolutionism in public schools in the USA, most publicized by the famous Scopes trial.

Fundamentalism is the result of a coalition between “Princeton theology”, dispensational premillenialism and the Keswick movement. “Fundamentalism” has since become a pejorative reference to any cultural or subcultural form of rigidity and dogmatism. Historic fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes.

Higher Criticism

Higher Criticism was pioneered in German universities in the 19th century by scholars who used scientific/historical method to criticise the Bible. This method endeavoured to research by objective and exact study the sources and methods used by the authors of the Bible. The idea was to get behind the text to the historical basis of the text. It was contrasted with “lower” criticism which studied the manuscripts and other evidence in order to get at the text as originally written. In the 20th century, literary source criticism was supplemented by: form criticism which attempts to discern the form taken by a story or teaching in order to make it more memorable, or more impressive, as it was passed on in oral tradition; and by redaction criticism which attempts to recover the
theological motive of the redactors or editors who shaped the books of the Bible that we have.

**Liberal**

Theological liberalism is also known by conservative Christians as modernism and represents a shift in theological thinking that occurred in the late nineteenth century coming out of Germany. It is an extremely elusive concept because there are many shades of liberal thinking. Generally the term is used by evangelicals to refer to Christians who don’t share the same view of the Bible and doctrine. Liberals maintain that Christianity must be understood within its cultural context and that literal conclusions held about the Bible are based on erroneous assumptions. Liberalism rejects religious belief based on authority alone and places the Bible and Christianity under the microscope of critical, reductionist reasoning. Liberalism denies the supernatural and infallible arguments of the evangelical and reformed traditions. Liberal thinking tends to emphasise divine immanence which is known subjectively rather than the evangelical and reformed insistence on transcendence objectively stated.

**Modernity**

The term is often used as an equivalent of liberalism but properly refers to a much broader phenomenon usually associated in themelic thinking with post-Enlightenment philosophy and modern industrial living. The influence of modernity has reinterpreted the so called “accepted teachings of the Bible” and theology.

**Neo-evangelical**

The neo-evangelical, like the charismatic, represents the soft option within the tradition. The neo-evangelical tends to hold their evangelicalism lightly in reaction to the perceived extremes of fundamentalism and does not wish to alienate people from Christianity by dogmatism. There is a concern about relevance and a tendency to be convinced by historical and literary arguments about the Bible and Christian history. Fundamentalists and evangelicals would label this perspective as “wishy-washy” or “backslidden”.
Pentecostal

Pentecostalism is an evangelical, charismatic reformation movement which usually traces its roots to an outbreak of “tongue-speaking” or glossolalia in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901 under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham. Basically, Pentecostalists believe that the experience of the 120 on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), known as the “baptism of the Holy Spirit”, should be normative for all Christians. Most Pentecostalists believe, furthermore, that the first sign of “initial evidence” of this second baptism is speaking in a language unknown to the speaker. The major milieu out of which Pentecostalism sprang was the worldwide Holiness movement, which had developed out of nineteenth century American Wesleyan Methodism.

Pietism

Pietism originated in seventeenth century German Lutheranism after the churches had become entangled in confessional rigidity. It refers to the emphasis on the necessity for good works, biblical scholarship, missionary endeavour and a holy life. It focuses on the conversion experience and the development of the “spiritual life”. This emphasis often devalues the importance of intellectual and cultural matters.

Puritan

Puritanism is a loosely organised reform movement originating during the English Reformation of the sixteenth century. The name comes from the drive to “purify” the “Church of England” by those who felt that the Reformation had been incomplete. The theological roots of puritanism may be found in continental Reformed theology and in native dissenting traditions descending back to John Wycliffe and the Lollards, but especially in the theological labours of first-generation English reformers. From William Tyndale, the Puritans took an intense commitment to Scripture and a theology which emphasised the covenant; from John Knox they absorbed a dedication to thorough reform in church and state, and from John Hooper they received a determined conviction that Scripture should regulate ecclesiastical structure and personal behaviour alike.
Puritanism generally emphasises four basic convictions that:

1. personal salvation is entirely from God
2. the Bible provides the indispensable guide to life
3. the church should reflect the express teaching of Scripture, and
4. society is one unified whole.

The puritan believes in an Augustinian doctrine of original sin, depravity and salvation as grace by faith. This is testified by Christian good works which is called “sanctification”.

In Australia, excessive and overbearing puritanism has been known as “wowserism”. Wowserism originated in the 1890s when the Christian Temperance Union canvassed prohibition. The term “wowser” is most commonly accredited to the editor of the Sydney Truth in 1899. It is applied to those who especially to campaign for temperance, Sunday observance, smoking, gambling and censorship. Wowsers are sometimes known as “do-gooders”.

**Reformed**

The reformed tradition finds its roots initially in the theology of Ulrich Zwingli, the first reformer in Zurich. The key figure in this tradition was John Calvin of Geneva, who in his biblical commentaries, pamphlets and especially in his Institutes of the Christian Religion developed its theological framework. Calvinists, whilst basically agreeing with each other and resembling each other in many ways, have certain differences produced by historical and even geographical circumstances.

The reformed perspective is characterised by its emphasis on the sanctity, veracity and priority of the Bible in practical piety and theology. The theological themes most dominant and intertwined in this tradition are the covenant, creation, election and sovereignty/authority. Historically the reformed perspective shares many common principles and methods with the evangelical but tends not to make evangelism its primary focus.
Scottish Common Sense Philosophy

The source or system of those very general beliefs about the world which are universally and unquestioningly taken to be true in everyday life but with which the speculations of the philosophers seem frequently in conflict. Most associated with Thomas Reid (1910-1796) Scottish common sense realism claims certainty of knowledge through the senses. Built on the inductive scientific method of 17th century philosopher Francis Bacon, it assures Christians of the “facts” of Christianity. It is also known as naive empiricism or naive realism.

Secular Humanism

Humanism, by itself, is used to describe those who do not invoke the concept of the supernatural in their account of humanity and the universe. It is qualified by the secular adjective because some Christians feel that the expressions “Christian humanist” and “secular Christian” have historical warrant. These expressions are most commonly associated with the school of thought founded by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The emphasis of the secular Christian is on this world rather than the supernatural, behaviour rather than belief, emancipation rather than obedience, and a bold maturity rather than conservativism. The term “secular” refers to the decline of religion in society which has been associated with the western 20th century development. Secularisation involves the ending of state support for religious bodies. In Christian circles the expression “secular humanism” is a pejorative expression for state/government godlessness and the deification of humanity.

Separatism

Separatism believes that formal cooperation or associations with unbelievers constitutes a compromise, denial or rejection of a pure position regarding matters of faith. The separatist position invokes literal interpretations of Bible passages like Romans 16:17, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18, 1 John 2: 15-16 and 2 John 10-11.
Themelic

The term “Themelios”, meaning Christ-centred, is used in the New Testament (Rom 15:20, 1 Cor 3:11, Eph 2:20,21 and 2 Tim 2:19) in reference to elementary foundations or teachings “in Christ”. The rhetoric of “Christ centredness” serves as a gatekeeper for themelic schools. This rhetoric is interpolated according to the various theological traditions in themelic schools.
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