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THE SPECIAL CHARACTER
OF
NEW ZEALAND PROTESTANT
INTEGRATED EVANGELICAL
SCHOOLS

Graham David Smith

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
The University of Auckland 2013
The Special Character of New Zealand protestant integrated evangelical schools is that spiritual ethos, the ‘god-factor’ that distinguishes these schools from secular schools. The thesis set out to identify the perceptions that school administrators, parents, teachers and students have concerning their Special Character with a view to establishing a clarity of understanding as to the self-perceptions, the modus operandi, the values espoused, the opportunities which these schools represent and the basis on which their understandings and values are founded. Sixty two semi-structured interviews undertaken in six of these schools were recorded and transcribed. Analysis by themes enabled a consideration of the participants’ own defining of Special Character, the values the schools espoused, the means by which their Special Character could be preserved, and the tensions and anomalies encountered as evidenced in the data. It was found that while there is considerable complexity in the vast variety of perspectives of the participants, there is, nonetheless much evidence of a homogenous group of schools that work closely together, with common understanding of what unites them – namely, an acceptance of the inerrancy and authority of the Christian scriptures for all of life, living and learning. It might be concluded from the findings that because of the complexity of the views expressed there is no clear definition of Special Character in these schools. But in the spectrum of participant articulation of perceptions, Special Character is both the content and the context of education. As to the content, all of the curriculum was seen to be subject to and consistent with an evangelical understanding of the Christian scriptures. Similarly to the context, the ethos was generated by an evangelical Christian staff who modelled and taught a Christian lifestyle in a relationship with the Christ of the Bible, and who encouraged the students to adopt that same lifestyle and relationship, adopting the biblical values that derive from a biblical worldview. Relationships were seen to be of paramount importance for upholding and defining Special Character. Participant voice indicated that they preferred to think of themselves as teaching in Christ-centred schools and their work as God-directed. They claimed their work was preserved by constant vigilance and constant vision-casting concerning their Special Character.
DEDICATION

To my late parents, Captain C. Rah Smith and Lillian Smith: This is to honour them.

To June, my wife and companion of 48 years, for her constant love and support.

SOLI DEO GLORIA
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Most of all, my greatest support has, as always, been from my wife of 48 years – June, mother of my two middle-aged sons, and a great manager at home and in the schools where she has worked over much of those 48 years. My thanks are ever due to Him Who said, “In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6). I have sought to do so on a daily basis, faltering though it has been. The journey has been as rewarding as the end product.

Graham Smith
Howick, New Zealand
2013
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Introduction .................................................. 1
2. Historical and Current Considerations .................. 24
3. Organising Principles concerning Special Character .... 44
4. Methodology .................................................... 82
5. Special Character ............................................. 115
6. Values ............................................................. 145
7. Preserving Special Character ............................... 184
8. Tensions and Anomalies ..................................... 216
9. Conclusions ..................................................... 259

Appendices ....................................................... 277

References ....................................................... 289
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

From early colonial times, the intersection of education, state and religion has been a source of ongoing contention and debate in New Zealand. It was not until 1975 that families who chose to have their children educated within a school that overtly recognised and practised a religious belief could gain tax-payer rights to state funding for their children’s education. Under The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act (1975) such schools were distinguished by their Special Character,¹ that which is an expression of their religious or philosophical underpinnings. Special Character is thus the defining point of difference that epitomises New Zealand state-integrated Christian schools, along with other integrated schools. To maintain state funding the schools must be able to demonstrate to the officials from The Education Review Office (ERO), the national body that evaluates and reports on schools, that they are observing their Special Character in practice. It is this that justifies their being catered for under a special education Act of Parliament.

What is Christian Education?

Understandings of ‘Christian’ education are neither universal nor static. They shift across time and reflect different perspectives and opinions. While Christian education is, in a broad sense, education for Christians, it includes pre-conversion, conversion and post-conversion learning experiences. It encompasses “a lifetime dedicated to learning more about God and His Word” (D.E. Williams, 2001, p. 132). According to Williams:

Christian education is Christian when teachers and learners are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the learning environment. It is Christian when the purpose and goals are honouring to the Lord and to His Kingdom. It is Christian when the curriculum is developed from the teachings of the Word of God and from an understanding of Biblical theology. It is Christian when there is an overall understanding and perspective that God is in control and that teachers and learners are sincerely seeking to fulfil God’s will and purpose in all things. (D.E. Williams, 2001, p. 133)

Pazmino (2008) makes similar comment when he says that:

Christian education is the deliberate, systematic, and sustained divine and human effort to share or appropriate the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, sensitivities and behaviours that comprise or are consistent with the Christian faith … It is a Bible-based, Holy Spirit-empowered (Christ-centred) teaching-learning process. It seeks to guide individuals … toward knowing and experiencing God’s purpose and plan through Christ in every aspect of living …. It fosters the change, renewal, and reformation of persons, groups and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit to conform to the revealed will of God as expressed in the Scriptures and pre-eminently in the person of Jesus Christ … (p. 91).

The term ‘Christian’ is a generic term for a particular religion that came out of Judaism. I have used the term in three contexts in the thesis – in the context of the six schools researched which are

¹ For ease of reference, I have designated Special Character in this thesis to be in italics throughout and capitalised the initial letters of the term.
Christian, as implying evangelical Christian; in reference to church schools of mainline churches, they not necessarily being evangelical but nonetheless of the Christian religion (in the generic sense); in its biblical usage as referring to individual believers (Christ’s ones).

The Christian schools central to this research are those commonly known as the evangelical schools. Evangelical educators, according to D.E. Williams (2001) wanted to be explicit in their understanding of Christian education and referred to “that which is taught in the Word of God” (p. 132), a Bible based ministry of education. David Bebbington’s (1989) *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* outlines the four aspects of belief and practice which for him defines evangelicalism: the need for personal conversion – a ‘born again’ experience he terms ‘conversionism’; a high regard for biblical authority which he terms ‘biblicism’; emphasis on the atoning work of Christ – Jesus’ saving death and resurrection which he terms ‘crucicentrism’; and involvement in gospel outreach which he terms ‘activism’. I defined evangelicalism as broadly understood in the context of these schools as a commitment to the inerrancy of scripture. This is basic to the New Zealand Association of Christian Schools (NZACS) movement (and conditional to membership in the movement to which they belong (NZACS, 2012). ‘Evangelical’ schools, as used in this research, therefore refers to those schools that accept that Holy Scripture as found in the Christian Bible is inerrant in its original form in all that it affirms and is the ultimate (final) authority for all matters pertaining to life and conduct.

**Enshrining Special Character in law and life**

The Integration Act (1975) defines *Special Character* generically as education “within the framework of a particular or general religious or philosophical belief” (*Statutes of New Zealand*, 1975, No. 129, p. 3, S.2.1). The purpose of this research is to provide insights into a particular facet of evangelical schools from the perspective of those inside them: that is the perceptions of *Special Character* as held by the leadership, the staff, the parents and students in the context of their schools. The intention is not to develop a definitive description of *Special Character* per se, nor to report my understandings of *Special Character*. It is not primarily about history, philosophy, pedagogy or theology, though these factors and their forms of representation needed to be taken into account and can be traced in the daily operations of these schools. It does, however, attempt to gauge how the participants that took part in the research understand and articulate their understanding of the *Special Character* of their schools. If the raison d’être of these schools is their *Special Character*, and if explicit expression of that *Special Character* is the underpinning justification of their continued support from the state, as witnessed in reporting from the national Education Review Office, it would suggest that clear articulation of what those in the schools understand to be their *Special Character*, as well as expression of it in the structures and everyday operations/practices of the school, needs to be explicit.
The Integration Act was introduced at a time when rights of recognition for marginalised interest groups were being expressed in social movements nationally and internationally and was therefore in part a state response to its obligations to meet social concerns in a pluralist society (Dale, 2008). Within the provisions of the Integration Act, the students at the schools are able to be educated within a context in which their religious beliefs are taken for granted as the underpinning framework for their daily personal and education experiences. However, the Act was passed at a time of imminent economic change and policy management in the country. This initially created possibilities for independent institutions which could demonstrate strong performance, but would subsequently render them vulnerable to major tensions between what was deemed desirable for a state education system to offer and what was feasible for the state to support (Dale, 2008). Students and the evangelical communities themselves have much to lose if state funding is withdrawn from the schools. Given the basis on which that funding is granted, it is crucial that schools are able to demonstrate how they are meeting their obligations in receiving state funding. However, as this thesis will demonstrate, *Special Character* is something of an enigmatic phenomenon.

**Evidence for Special Character**

The many ways in which *Special Character* is lived out in a local school, is illustrated through the tragedy of one New Zealand school when, on April 15th 2008, a canyoning disaster took the lives of six of its students and a teacher. These seven casualties were from a protestant evangelical integrated Christian school in East Auckland and the response of the school generated respect throughout the country. The media were not held at bay, but did not take advantage of their access to the more intimate interaction with those who were grieving. There was no blame or recrimination from the grieving families, at peace in their trust in their sovereign God Whose purposes are beyond our understanding. One of the many school principals who attended the school’s memorial service for the victims of the disaster, wrote in a school newsletter to parents and others of “listening to grieving families and friends work out their shock and grief in a very public way” and of being “struck by what a difference it makes to know God, and to know that one has ‘a future and a hope’ ” (Middleton Grange School Newsletter, May 2008). “A future and a hope” is the motto of the grieving school, a motto taken from Jeremiah 29:11 in the Holy Bible which says, “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil to give you a future and a hope” (Revised Standard Version). This was acknowledged evidence of *Special Character* in practice, for the world to wonder at.

The focus of this research is to ascertain the perceptions held within the New Zealand protestant integrated evangelical Christian schools as to what *Special Character* is. This is a new focus for academic study in New Zealand. So what is *Special Character*? In a sense, *Special Character* is
enigmatic. The enigma is illustrated by the following homily, being extracts from Craig Groeschel’s (2008) book *It* concerning a similar concept among evangelical churches. Groeschel\(^2\) was expressing how difficult it is to define and articulate what it is that gives a religious activity an impacting cutting edge. The implication is that it belongs to the spiritual realm, and is indispensable to a work that has an eternal dimension to it.

"**IT**"

Some ministries have it. Some don’t. Most churches want it. Few have it. When a church has it everyone can tell. And when one doesn’t … everyone can tell. The same is true with leaders. Some leaders have it, some don’t. And *it* or *itlessness* is obvious. *It* is always unique. *It* is always powerful. *It* is always life-changing. That’s *its* upside. *It* has another side too. *It* attracts critics. *It* is controversial. Many people misunderstand it. It’s hard to find, but *it*’s impossible to miss. … That’s why we have to embrace the fact that God makes *it* happen. *It* is from Him. *It* is by Him. *It* is for His glory. We can’t create *it*. We can’t reproduce *it*. We can’t manufacture *it*.

*It* is not a model. *It* is not a system. *It* is not the result of a programme. You can’t purchase or manufacture *it*. *It* can’t be copied.

Not everyone will get *it*. *It* can’t be learned in a classroom. Yet even though *it* can’t be taught, *it* can be caught. (Groeschel, 2008, pp. 8, 11, 12, 27.)

*Special Character* is often noticed without needing to be defined, as in the comment: “I sense there is something different about this place”. At another level, *Special Character* is an official Ministry of Education term relating to that identified and submitted by each integrating school when applying to the Ministry to be ‘integrated’ in the state system. It may be defined in general terms, as for example, when the Catholic schools define their *Special Character* in terms of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church (Cross, 2008). The religious beliefs and practices of the protestant evangelical schools that give these schools a *Special Character* is the subject of this research. In order to understand the context of these *Special Character* schools, I shall background the circumstances that brought them about.

**History of The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act**

In the early 1970s, the New Zealand Government recognized the unique contribution that private schools and Roman Catholic private schools in particular, were making to the New Zealand education context, and indeed, to the New Zealand economy. Catholic schools were numbered in the hundreds compared to the handful of other private schools in any one denomination. Millions of

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\(^2\) Groeschel was named 5th most influential pastor in the United States in 2006 and his church was named as America’s most innovative church by Outreach magazine in 2007 and 2008 (cited in Wikipedia 2012) and as of December 2012, the largest church in the U.S.A. (46,000).
dollars worth of property in the form of school buildings and land was supplied by the owners of these private schools, and large sums of tax-payer dollars saved (Lynch, 2000). Recognition of this contribution may well have strengthened his argument when the Catholic Bishop, John Mackey, published his argument as to why the educational endeavours of the different Christian denominations should be financed by the state (Mackey, 1967).

For some years prior to the formation of the Integration Act, the Labour Party (in opposition at that time) had been concerned by the ongoing disquiet among Catholics concerning the financial needs of their schools and the inequities of access to the educational revenue (Sweetman, 2002; Lynch, 2000). Both the National Party and the Labour Party worked towards a solution, much of the preliminary negotiations being undertaken by the third Labour Government in 1972 under Norman Kirk’s leadership, and his education spokesman, Phil Amos (Bassett, 1976). They were, no doubt, anxious to secure the Roman Catholic vote, and although they were defeated in 1975, the Bill was passed as the final piece of legislation prior to the election (PPTA Executive, 2009; Bassett, 1976).

It was decided by an agreement between government and the private schools, which included the Roman Catholic schools, that they should be financially supported by public funds. In this agreement, government would pay all salaries, maintenance and running costs, while schools agreed to teach the state curriculum, provide buildings/facilities up to the prescribed state code, provide a free education, and be subject to audit and accountability at the same level as state schools (Bassett, 1976; Cross, 2008). For as long as there were mortgages on such buildings, the proprietors of these schools were permitted to raise a levy over their students in the form of ‘fees’ (called ‘attendance dues’) that were approved by government for mortgage-reduction purposes only (Lynch, 2000). They were, further, permitted to retain the Special Character of each school (usually a religious one) thus “ending a century of secularism in New Zealand education” (Sweetman, 2002 p. 12). For proprietors of private schools wanting to integrate and for government, it was a win-win situation. Christian groups could educate their young people with state funding and government had neither the cost of capital outlay for buildings nor the responsibility for them.

In 1975, there were no evangelical schools wanting to integrate: it was an entirely Catholic initiative. However, the Roman Catholics were not entirely united over the legal implications of integration, some wanting state aid only, while others favoured legal integration into the state system, involving considerably more ‘give and take’ which many felt was a compromise (Sweetman, 2002). At the

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3 PPTA is the Post Primary Teachers’ Association, the New Zealand Secondary Teachers’ Union.
4 The Proprietors of a school are the owners. An Integration Agreement is between the proprietors and the state. The Catholic Church representatives are the proprietors of their schools. In Church-based evangelical schools, the church is the proprietor. In independent integrated schools a Board of Proprietors own the school, and the school is governed by a Board of Trustees which has proprietor representatives on it.
time of negotiations, there was only one well-established protestant evangelical Christian school and that school was not involved in the negotiations. It was in the late 1970s that a protestant group of evangelical schools arose, aligned under an association called the New Zealand Association of Christian Schools (NZACS). One by one, in the 1990s, the various member-schools of this association began to apply individually for state-integration status under the 1975 Act. Like the Catholic schools, they, too, had to define their own Special Character more specifically than the generic definition in the Act if they were to be eligible to integrate.

However, it was not all plain sailing. Opposition to the New Zealand government’s 1975 legislation was considerable (Bassett, 1976; Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993). Tensions ran high. Catholic negotiators were quite unwilling to buy into a system that secularised their schools, a view the protestant evangelicals share. Nor were the Catholics willing to continue to operate their schools with ongoing deficits in funding. On the other hand, the teacher unions vigorously opposed the concept of integration on two grounds. Firstly, they felt that funding given to prop up religious education would always be at the expense of funding that would otherwise go to the state schools (PPTA Executive, 2009). To a large extent these tensions were based on notions of status which were grounded in the unions’ tendency to classify private schools as elitist and not needing state funding (Cross, 2008).

This was not true of the Catholic schools, however, where salaries (stipends) of the Catholic brothers/fathers and nuns were cited as low as 20% of what state teachers were being paid. Furthermore, the teacher unions, expressed concern that these schools were supposedly, ignoring their non-preference allocation percentage of students (Lee, 1993). A strong body opposed desecularisation per se, the Committee for the Defence of Secular Education (CDSE) (Cross, 2008). The CDSE was set up in early 1978 to oppose integration. At that stage, no school had integrated and its opposition amounted to a religious one (Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993). This was expressed in their references to ‘the Christian right’ and ‘state sectarian schools’, and a guilt-by-association approach in classifying supporters of the Act with right-wing quasi religious groups such as the Council of Organisations for Moral Education, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, and the Society for the Promotion of Community Standards.

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5 This is a group of at least 66 evangelical protestant schools that are committed to an evangelical theology, providing an education for a clientele that is predominantly from evangelical churches. Closely aligned to similar associations in Australia and the United States, NZACS schools may be church-controlled, parent-controlled or controlled by an independent board.

6 Secular education is the system of public education in countries with a secular government or it can be seen as reflecting the separation between religion and the state. The word secular (from the Latin saecularis meaning ‘of a generation’, or worldly and temporal) is the state of being separate from religion. Secularity is not anti-religious but rather religiously neutral. However, it can be argued that there is no difference between secular and religious education because they use the same learning theories, methodologies, and approaches to learning; they use the same content and both want to see change, that is, learning. I have used the term ‘secular’ in this thesis in four different contexts: first (as on p. 55) referring to non-denominational schools or as Sweetman (2002) terms them, non-sectarian schools; secondly in ‘secular schooling’ as meaning non-religious (on p. 23); thirdly as representing that part of life not connected with the sacred (p. 71) and fourthly, I refer to ‘secular humanism’ (pp. 47, 54) which puts man himself as centre of all things (Schaeffer, 1976).
There developed a history of opposition to the Integration legislation, with voices such as the Society for the Protection of Public Education (SPPE), where spokesman, Mulheron, argued that state school opposition to integration had been ignored, that state schools were poorly represented in discussions, that an amendment to the 1964 Education Act went against the Johnson Committee Report of 1977 which urged on the state system a non-sectarian spiritual dimension. Professor Ivan Snook, moral philosopher and commentator on educational policy, had also expressed his concerns on the grounds that integration not only reinforced privilege, but it also served to duplicate provision and was therefore a wasteful use of resources (Lee, 1993). Snook (1981) also argued that positions in integrated schools were not open to teachers generally, where the Act suggested freedom of movement between state school teaching positions and state-integrated schools, and that the teachers’ colleges’ courses on ‘Teaching religious education’ only served a political purpose – to some integrated schools.

The CDSE urged government to check enrolments at integrated schools lest they have an adverse affect on the enrolments at nearby state schools. According to Snook, integrated schools were deemed to be in a privileged position in that they were not subject to the same zoning regulations, they did not suffer the same ‘decapitation’ of senior classes to intermediate schools, they were not subject to amalgamation or closures in the case of small rolls – they were protected against this. Because many of these schools were Area schools (Area schools usually being rural), teachers in urban Area integrated schools enjoyed a privileged salary. Finally, he argued, because the ‘preference’ criteria for students in integrated schools were seen to be too flexible, this gave them a privileged position also. Others were concerned at the speed at which the legislation seemed to be rushed through parliament and that the 1877 principle of separation of church and state “had been abandoned” (Lee, 1993, p. 46).

In 2009, speaking for The New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists, political activist John Minto referred to integration as being “a goldmine for the world’s wealthiest church”. This cast the churches as “leeching money from state education to prop up their inefficient religious indoctrination centres which masquerade as education facilities” (Sweetman, 2002, p. 299). The private schools, however, had long felt that their right to government financial support had strong moral foundation in that the parents of their enrollees had already paid for their education through taxation along with state school enrolled children and therefore had equal claims upon the education dollars available through government. By paying private school fees, they were, in fact, paying twice for their children’s education. This had been strongly argued as early as 1883 when Bishop Moran wrote his editorial in the Catholic newspaper, The Tablet stating that Catholics by their taxes were compelled “to pay for the free and godless … education of other people’s children” as well as paying
for their own Catholic education (New Zealand Tablet, XI, 28, 1883, p. 15 (see also Simmons, 1978). To them, Special Character education had a legitimate claim for assistance.

**An Important Concept: Special Character**

Notions of Special Character played a prominent role in the negotiations leading to the 1975 legislation. The chief negotiators for the private schools were representatives of the Catholic Education Council (CEC). Developed to respond to the 1960-62 Currie Commission of Education in New Zealand’s opposition to state aid, this group could speak on behalf of the considerable number of Catholic schools. Catholic schools, Lynch (2000) explained, were in financial crisis and the Labour government of the day was anxious that students in these schools did not suffer as a result of closing down those schools. Nor, it had long been realised, were the education authorities ready to accommodate all their students in state schools (Small, 1965). In the 1970s, the Catholic Church had over 200 schools in the country and the New Zealand government could not afford to allow these schools to fail (Lynch, 2000). The CEC executive refined ‘Six Principles’ on which they would negotiate and introduced the term ‘Special Character’ as a way of explaining the importance of their schools. Soon after negotiations began, it became clear that “the paramount condition … was that an integrated school should be permitted to retain its Special Character”; it was “the foundation upon which all other decisions rested” (Sweetman, 2002, p. 101).

The first principle on which their negotiations were based was “the right to teach, develop and implement the Catholic programme in Christian faith and living and to follow those religious customs that are normal in the Catholic school” (Sweetman, 2002, p. 85). Even within the broad umbrella of Roman Catholicism, this was not necessarily simply defined as there is considerable evidence that the founders of the particular schools, or Order of schools, influenced the development and Special Character of the school (Filipo, 2005; O’Donnell, 2000). Difference in Special Character is also likely within the umbrella of the protestant evangelicals. The CEC’s second principle concerned staffing, seeking assurance again that the special Catholic character be recognized when appointing staff. These two principles were elaborated into what was termed by the Catholics’ lawyer “the first and second commandments of integration”: an integrated school would continue to have the right to reflect its Special Character through its teaching and conduct, and integration “must not jeopardize the Special Character of the school” (Sweetman, 2002, p. 101). These were important principles (Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993).

The significance of Special Character to successful integration was recognised also in the legislation. The title of the Integration Act is “Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975” (PSCI) (Statutes of New Zealand 1975, No. 129). Prior to the commencement of the various sections
of the Act, is the elaborating statement “An Act to make provision for the conditional and voluntary integration of private schools into the state system of education in New Zealand on a basis which will preserve the Special Character of the education provided by them” (p. 3, emphasis mine). This implies that safeguarding Special Character was paramount to the agreement. It demonstrated awareness by the legislators that this was a key expectation. Section 1 of the Act is the Title, and Section 2 of the Act defines terms (except the term Special Character which each integrated school must define for itself, specifically, in its agreement according to S7(6)(c) of the Act).

Section 3 which begins the body of the legislation concerns the “Preservation of Special Character of an integrated school” (p. 3), again focusing on the preserving of Special Character as of prior concern in the prioritising of this section of the Act. Not only was Special Character considered significant to the stakeholders, it also became a requirement on which state involvement rested. Without such preservation of its Special Character a school would no longer qualify for state assistance under this Act (S11A(a) and S2(1)). This is clearly exemplified in the emphasis put on Special Character in the current governmental auditing body for preschool, primary and secondary schools, the Education Review Office (ERO), in its examinations and reports on integrated schools. Not only do the schools value and wish to retain their Special Character – the state also demands that it is retained. This is monitored by the ERO in its regular visits to the schools (Smith, 2002).

The Current Context: Influences and Implications

There are, in 2011, 329 Integrated Schools in New Zealand, 97% of which are Christian-based. This represents a reduction from a high point of 334 in 2000. Each of these schools must define its own Special Character. There is an ethos/culture and an expectation of a uniqueness that is special to each one (Cross, 2008). This has already been well researched in relation to the Catholic schools (McMenamin, 1985, Walsh, 1987, O’Donnell, 2000). O’Donnell’s thesis concluded that Catholic students tended to define Special Character in terms of the culture of the school. This covered such things as the values, purposes and goals of the school; the metaphors, motto and images portrayed; the relationships, heroes, and people involved; the rewards, activities and general school spirit pursued (O’Donnell, 2000). The Catholic rationale for Special Character aligns very closely to that of the evangelical schools and these same aspects will be identified in this report. However, although both groups work together under the Association of Integrated Schools, in the Special Character itself, there are strong differences as well as similarities.

In the New Zealand Government Cabinet Minutes for 2001, Guidelines for application for integration require that the school “will be generally available to a broad cross-section of those New Zealanders who subscribe to the school’s Special Character; and that the Special Character is
meritorious, to some degree unique and not in conflict with the Education Act 1989” (cited in Cross, 2008, p. 9). This is true of those non-catholic evangelical integrated schools (39 in 2011, see Table 1) that described themselves simply as ‘Christian’. Each has its own proprietor, negotiating integration agreements separately. In the 243 Catholic schools each proprietor, on average, negotiates for approximately ten schools (243 schools, 25 proprietors) (Sweetman, 2002). The Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) have one proprietor for their sixteen integrated schools.

There are 13,000 students in these evangelical Christian schools and over 1,000 teaching staff (NZACS, 2012a). A number of these Christian schools would choose to integrate under the Act, but in recent years the New Zealand Ministry of Education, through its Minister under a Labour government, chose to put a moratorium on further integration. The New Zealand evangelical integrated schools (including SDA schools) comprise over 60% of the non-Catholic integrated schools in New Zealand.

Table 1: Integrated Schools (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>243</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudolf Steiner</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare Krishna</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA Schools IN NZACS – evangelical</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Evangelical Christian Schools in NZACS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>329</td>
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Table 2: Known Protestant Evangelical Schools

<table>
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<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDA Schools IN NZACS – integrated</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Evangelical Christian Integrated Schools in NZACS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Private Christian Schools in NZACS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Private Christian Schools not in NZACS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These New Zealand evangelical schools have been widely influenced by their Australian counterparts and from further afield. In Australia, there are several parallel evangelical associations supporting over 400 schools and at least four state accredited major teacher-training establishments. Australian and New Zealand personnel have shared in each other’s conferences and built their schools on the same philosophical foundations. New Zealanders have been influenced by the considerable scholarly output of the publications from their Australian colleagues (Mechielson, 1980). The Association of Christian Teachers in England has 1500 members and there are separate similar evangelical associations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The evangelical group operating in South Africa account for 60 affiliated schools and about 70 affiliated preschools, according to their director of academic affairs, Anne-Marie Russell (2006). Christian schooling has long played a big part in education in the United States. Harvard, Princeton and the other Ivy League universities were originally set up to train clergymen. Today many inner city Christian schools, including the Cornerstone Schools working with predominately minority students, are producing higher test scores and at a fraction of the cost of public education (Colson & Pearcey, 1999). Not only have evangelical Christian schools proliferated worldwide, but the quality of their education is widely acknowledged (Braley, Layman & White, 2003).

Reference is also made in Chapter Two of the ACE Schools (Accelerated Christian Education) which began in the United States and which cater so much for the home-schooling market in Australasia. In New Zealand there are also strong links between the home-school population numbering 6,782 at 1 July 2010 (Education counts, 2011) and the Christian school population, often having a similar Special Character (Lynch, 2000). All of these movements have had, and continue to have a direct impact on the evangelical schools of New Zealand and particularly in the aspect of their Special Character. Many of the New Zealand schools began as ACE schools. Many have had to rely on financial input from the Christian private sector, as have the Cornerstone Schools of America.

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7 ACE – Accelerated Christian Education is an evangelical organisation originating in the United States, that structures schools in a form of programmed learning. Their learning booklets are called PACES, which rely heavily on reading skills and independent learning. Many schools in Australia and New Zealand set up ACE programmes in the 1970s and 80s. Today, ACE serves a predominantly evangelical home-school market.
State Schools: 2153

State-integrated Schools: 329

Catholic Schools

243

Anglican 13
Presbyterian 8
Methodist 1

Others:
Muslim 1
Rudolf Steiner 6
Montessori 1
Hare Krishna 1

SDA Schools
In
NZACS
16

Protestant
Evangelical
Schools
in
NZACS
39

Non-integrated (private) Schools: 85

Anglican 20
Presbyterian 8

Independents 35

Protestant
Evangelical
Others not in
NZACS
7

Protestant
Evangelical
Schools
in
NZACS
15

Key: NZACS is the New Zealand Association of Christian Schools
SDA is the Seventh Day Adventists

New Zealand Schools (Primary/Elementary and Secondary/High Schools)

Figure 1: The Distribution of New Zealand Schools showing the number of schools of each type of Integrated and Private Schools
Threats to Special Character Schools

Shortly after New Zealand’s educational restructuring in 1989, Openshaw, Lee and Lee (1993, p. 84) contended that so far as religious education was concerned “the issues so hotly contested in 1877 remain[ed] essentially unresolved”. In 2003, the Ministry of Education’s ‘Education Management Policy’ group published a Public Discussion Paper *An Education with a Special Character*, on the Consolidation of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 into the Education Act (Ministry of Education, 2003). A variety of interest groups responded, including the PPTA, the NZEI and those representing the integrated schools whose *Special Character* they wished to protect.

Section 155 of the 1989 Education Act made explicit provision for *Special Character* schools in that Kura Kaupapa Maori\(^8\) could now be set up with ethnic *Special Character*. On this basis, it was argued that it was no longer necessary to have separate legislation for *Special Character* schools. Because the distinction could be made between ‘spirituality’ and ‘religion’ prayers can now be said in Maori in Kura Kaupapa Maori, but not in English in most state schools which are secular.

However, the Integration Act provided for a religious clientele at the time – and, as noted above, the government could not have coped financially at that time had those struggling schools been obliged to shut down (Lynch, 2000). The nature of their continuing existence was dependent on a business contract, in effect, a financial partnership that guaranteed an ‘in perpetuity’ agreement, and acknowledgement that the special conditions enshrined in their agreements were unable to be jeopardized. In a variety of aspects, the 2003 Discussion Document was a clear threat to the ongoing protection of the *Special Character* of those schools that had integrated, not to mention the financial threat to proprietors whose mortgages were, in some cases, in the millions of dollars.

The document suggested that the network of integrated schools would be ‘better managed’, by giving the Minister of Education the power to amalgamate integrated schools or their Boards or to close them down. Some small state schools were found to be uneconomic and were closed. Some small Christian schools were likewise considered to be uneconomic. The present Education Act 1989 (updated with Amendments to 1995) S111(4) states that “No Board\(^9\) that administers an integrated school may combine with any other Board unless all the schools they administer have the same proprietors”. This currently ensures that schools and their proprietors are not worldviews\(^10\) apart. The suggestions in the 2003 Discussion document were a direct threat to the in perpetuity agreement

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8 Kura Kaupapa Maori are Maori medium schools, which have been developed by Maori and operate under Maori philosophical principles.

9 The Board of Trustees (BOT) is the governing body for each state school. The BOT are drawn primarily from the parent community of each individual school. In Integrated schools, the BOT also has representatives of the proprietors (owners) of the school, and by law, always at least one less than the number of parent representatives.

10 The term ‘worldview’ is used extensively in this thesis. It is understood to mean the sum total of our beliefs about the world; our belief system that determines our actions, attitudes and decisions. It is the lens through which we interpret the world, and life in general. It is our network of implicit beliefs.
(Statutes of New Zealand, 1975, S11A(a)) that Proprietors had with the State (not the government of the day) and that was sealed in legislation. The proposals threatened the Special Character preservation in the evangelical schools, many of which are small schools. The suggested changes were never implemented. Whatever threats there might be, or have been, parents continue to want to send their children to Special Character schools (Buckley, 2001). Hence the long waiting lists in some of these schools (Maxim Institute, 2011; NZACS, 2004).

A further threat was posed by the Law Commission of New Zealand (NZLC) when it produced an Issue Paper in 2008 (10th December) entitled Private Schools and the Law (NZLC, 2008, 1P12), with suggestions on changing the law with respect to private schools. It had earlier called for submissions as responses to leading questions. (There were 99 private schools in New Zealand in August 2008, providing education for 30,000 plus students.) The law commission reported on the healthy state of these schools, but felt sanctions, other than deregistration, were needed to be put in place in case they were ever in breach of the law. The schools concerned were not integrated schools, but the NZACS were concerned as there were private schools anticipating integration under threat. They were also aware that should future compliance and/or restrictions on them, force them to de-integrate to become private schools once more, they needed to be sure they were not under threat there also. The NZACS were also concerned that this represented a move toward government control of private schooling and responded in detail, accordingly in an 11-paged response (Norsworthy, 2008; NZ Government Law Commission, 2008).

**Parental Choice**

Special Character schooling is being provided for in a variety of ways through the 1975 Integration Act; the provision for Home Schooling (Part XXVI of the 1989 Education Act); the provision of Kura Kaupapa Maori (S155, Part XII of the 1989 Act); and Designated Character Schools (S156, Part XII of the 1989 Act). Many thousands of parents have chosen Special Character schooling under the 1975 Act. More than thirteen percent of New Zealand school students (86,000+ in 2011) attend integrated schools, Catholic and others (NZ Government Auditor General, 2009). As noted above, many more in New Zealand make that Special Character provision by home-schooling. The right to choose a school that reflects the parents’ religious persuasion is recognized as a right – limited however, by government, because many of the integrated schools turn away hundreds, as a result of government imposed roll-capping. However, New Zealand has signed the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which strongly asserts that “Parents have the right to choose what kind of education their children will receive” (Edlin, 1999, p. 103). While the New Zealand Government allows for religious schools, it can be considered unfairly prohibitively expensive to do so if non-integrated private schooling is all that is available. One proposition in the 2003 public
discussion paper ‘An Education with a *Special Character*,’ suggested that state schools be able to have ‘schools within a school’, offering religion-based education. However, Christian schools guard jealously the context, the environment, the influence of the school as a whole, as being the best condition for delivering their *Special Character* education (Fowler, 2004). Faith-based schooling in a secular environment is ‘not an option’ for these parents.

**Faith-based Schooling**

Because religious education comes in a variety of forms, it is well to conceptualise the place the evangelical schools occupy in the spectrum of these approaches. Miedema (1998) distinguishes three types of religious education for faith-based schooling. The first is seen as teaching “about religion” or religious commitment or faith(s) – where pluralism is accepted and where no particular stance is taken. It is variously referred to as “active pluriformity” and “phenomenological-religious-study-approach” (p. 104). The second approach is “teaching from” a particular religious commitment. This involves the child’s affirmation of the views of the teacher, a copying by the child such that the transmission of faith is achieved. This is seen by Miedema to be doctrinaire and does not leave the child free to come to a personal commitment to faith in their own time, their own way, as their own decision. What needs to be provided, he argues, is a context of relative stability of belief, practice and value that the Christian school can provide without the aim of entrapping but with the aim of self-determination for the student (Miedema, 1998). The six schools in this study all fall into the second category of teaching from a particular religious commitment – protestant evangelical Christian commitment that acknowledges Jesus Christ (6BC-30AD) (Elwell & Yarbrough, 2005) as the Son of God, coequal with Jehovah ‘God the Father’, who has been revealed to mankind through Jesus and through the inerrant Christian Scriptures, The Holy Bible.

**Researcher Background**

This research is not concerned with a definitive articulation of *Special Character* per se. There are no ‘right answers’ as to what it is. This research seeks to ascertain and document an articulated perception of *Special Character*. It is the perception of those within its context. But why this subject? Those who carry that *Special Character* in their person\(^\text{11}\) have an impact on their students in terms of that *Special Character* in particular, and so it is worthy of further investigation. My interest in the spiritual impacting, of teenagers particularly, stems from my ten years of self-supporting missionary

\(^{11}\) ‘In their person’ means that in their demeanour they are seen to be living by the convictions and beliefs of these *Special Character* schools.
work in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where I taught in African education. In one African High School, interest in the Christian faith was such that 25 years on, students from that college were “in Christian leadership throughout the country”, to quote from a letter to me from one African church leader (personal correspondence, November 1996). Such was the interest at that time (1970-72), that I was asked to address a conference of missionaries engaged in educational work on the missionary role of the Christian Teacher in African schools. The transcripts of those several addresses became compulsory reading for the ‘outgoing missionaries’, that is: those new recruits embarking on their missionary career within one particular mission. I became aware that Christian teachers can have considerable spiritual impact on their students.

Twenty years later, I was invited to Chair the Board of a fledgling (one year old) private Christian school. It was struggling, but my involvement lasted for more than ten years, ten as Chairman. Today that school is a state-integrated school of 850 students and has approval to expand up to 1000. Four years after my initial involvement I took early retirement from my Mathematics teaching in a state school so that I could work on this Christian school’s development, convinced that an exposure to Christian teaching in a Christian context should be made available to more than just the affluent who were able to afford private church schools. The Catholic schools made that provision – why not the protestant evangelicals?

In the course of time, after the school had become an integrated school, I was asked by the Board to lead the school as principal. My experience in education includes primary school teaching for which I was initially trained and sole-charge teaching in a rural school, 52 years ago now. For 36 years I was a (self-taught) Mathematics teacher, teaching Calculus and Statistics to senior level, and as Head of a Mathematics Department during some of that time. I also taught Physics for a year at senior level, and Religious Knowledge for Cambridge overseas examinations for ten years. My tertiary experience includes lecturing in Old Testament and New Testament survey in local Bible Schools, in Hermeneutics and in Leadership issues for prospective church leaders. With little background in educational management, I undertook diploma papers to upskill – in my sixties. This led on to a Bachelors degree and later a Masters degree in Education. At 67, I embarked on the current research project, as being the kind of contribution I can make to the Christian school movement at this stage of my life. Ultimately, the purpose of all educational research is “the improvement of teaching and learning systems and practices” (Mutch, 2005, p. 15). My business interests over 40 years (and continuing) have included leading a Property Trust for providing financial assistance to Christian work and workers, a Publishing Trust for publishing Bible Study courses covering over 20 volumes, and a Camping Trust that provides a 23 acre camping facility in rural South Auckland for church and school groups of up to 200.
In order to further the passion and commitment to the development of evangelical Christian schooling in New Zealand, it is my view that greater emphasis needs to be placed on a wider exposure of Christian teachers to the rationale and philosophical basis that justifies a fresh approach and renewal in evangelical school philosophy, and thinking. The New Zealand teacher is under considerable pressure to perform well in the classroom and in extra-curricula activities. I am not convinced that the average Christian teacher is well-read in the literature or has given serious thought to the issues involved. It is purposed to research their perceptions in the light of the literature, and by highlighting those successes where a school staff has become awakened to the enlightenment available. From the outset I have not deviated from the topic as chosen. It has been a journey of discovery – not only of the research process but of rich literature of which I had previously been ignorant. What has changed, however, is the degree of urgency in addressing the issue given the nature of recent threats to integrated schools from new forms of privatisation.

The Research Question

With this purpose in mind, having made a survey of the current literature, I drafted a series of questions that would engage the participants in serious thinking concerning their own perceptions of the major issues that concern Special Character – what is it all about? Why should you be different? What IS an evangelical? Why the Bible as your authority? How does Special Character lose traction? Who is responsible for its preservation? How does it impact relationships within the various stakeholders? How does it affect curriculum? With the above questions in mind, I formulated the question this research seeks to answer.

How is the Special Character of New Zealand Protestant integrated evangelical schools (NZPIES) interpreted and reflected in practice?

In order to address this question, associated material will be discussed: issues such as

- How is Special Character defined legislatively?
- How do the individual NZPIES interpret their Special Character statements?
- How does Special Character influence curriculum?
- How do these individual schools demonstrate their Special Character in the life and ethos of their school?
- What are the values espoused by Special Character?
- Are the NZPIES homogeneous in character? If not, how do they differ from each other in their Special Character?
- How can Special Character be preserved?
- What are the tensions/anomalies encountered in perceptions and outworking of Special Character?
Method

*Special Character* is a complex concept (Astley & Day, 1992): to some it is ‘more felt than told’; to others it is ‘caught more than taught’ (Snook, 1972). In order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the perceptions that those in the field of Christian education may have, subjective as this is, a qualitative multiple case study was undertaken. It was necessary to canvas the meaning/perceptions from a wide selection of stakeholders. The Doctor of Education programme Part 1 required of the cohort of students to undertake the writing of a journal article which could be based on field work associated with the final thesis. This I undertook as a first Case Study in one school, limiting my interviews to seven participants: ‘the Principal, the Founder of the school, the Chairman of Proprietors, two Board Members and two of the academic staff. For the thesis itself, another five schools were surveyed as multiple case studies, but expanding my data collection to include up to eleven one hour semi-structured interviews, the additional four being two parents and two senior students (over 16 years of age), preferably Head Boy and Head Girl. One school did not have a secondary department and hence no senior students. In two schools I had no access to a Founder, hence only 62 participants in total. It was a University of Auckland requirement that the issues of confidentiality and conflict of interest were followed as well as the anonymity for participants. Informed written consent was obtained from the schools and the participants and they were given an assurance of a six year care of transcript material prior to their being destroyed. Those transcripts were available to the participants to check as to their accuracy. I have included in the Appendices the Approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, with the proposed questions and Participant Information Sheets.

For triangulation purposes, data were also derived from documents that were available in the schools, including their Charter, their Integration Agreement with the New Zealand Government, any Prospecti, Strategic Plans, or information sheets including any pamphlets explaining Christian Education to would-be parents. A detailed outline of my procedure is given in the Methodology Chapter Four.

As researcher, I approached the work as an ‘insider’. I have had 20 years of exposure and involvement with evangelical Christian schools and school personnel and 60 years involvement with evangelical causes and churches. The foundation of evangelical schooling is a biblical worldview, these schools claiming to be based on the Bible. The Bible is a book I have read many times, and read on a daily basis. The implications of being an insider are also fully covered in the Methodology chapter. But as an ‘insider’ I also share with my participants a belief in a Triune God who has revealed Himself in Jesus the Christ. I share the belief that valid knowledge is found not only empirically, but also through divine revelation, that revelation being primarily in the written
documents consisting of the Christian Scriptures. It is not my intention to enter into an apologetics discussion justifying such a belief, but merely to state those presuppositions as ‘givens’. As such, I had common ground with my participants on which to examine the issue, a recognition of their use of Scripture in their thinking, and an empathy with their ‘story’.

Chapter Summaries

The Chapter analyses are as follows:

Chapter Two is a Literature Review. With respect to evangelical Christian schooling there is, understandably, a paucity of literature that speaks from a purely secular standpoint. Those who have sufficient passion to research Christian schooling are more likely to be found within those who identify with their aspirations. The philosophical basis of these evangelical schools is established with comment on the tensions and debates involved. This is followed by reference to the motivating factors in the establishment of these schools. The key themes in the literature are highlighted. The literature concerning Special Character within a variety of Protestant groups, evangelicals and others, will also be examined. Included is a review of the Australian experience of schools led and governed by evangelical Christians of the same persuasion to illustrate the similarity that NZPIES have with their Australian counterparts. Finally the literature on the Special Character of the New Zealand Catholic school scene is reviewed, as distinct from that of Protestant groups to portray the distinctiveness of evangelical school life and practice in bolder relief.

The literature on Anglican church schools in the United Kingdom portrays a strong similarity to the NZPIES except to show how much further on they are in unifying an approach for Christian teachers to their pedagogy. From the Calvinistic schools in the United States there is helpful material on foundational work done by an earlier generation. The work of Richard Edlin (a New Zealander) heading up the National Institute for Christian Education in New South Wales, is examined in the light of his worldwide influence on the evangelical school movement. There is also a strong evangelical branch of Australian academia that is reflected in the literature on Christian schooling emanating from Macquarie University’s ‘Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity’, especially on Christian schools’ philosophical underpinning.

Chapter Three outlines the Organising Principles concerning Special Character, principles that represent a framework or structure and beliefs that enable evangelical Christian schools to function in the way they do. The first two of these principles are secular ones – that of governance with special reference to the work of Dale (2008), and how the Special Character schools fit into the governance structure. The second is a principle that evangelical schools work against, with intentionality – that of secular humanism. The second two principles are philosophical ones,
describing how evangelical schools are based on a biblical metanarrative and out of that biblical metanarrative comes a framework of absolute truth based on the trustworthiness of the Christian scriptures. The third pair of organising principles I have termed anthropological ones as they have a strong human element. The first is the principle of the Imago Dei which sets a value on the student based on the biblical account of mankind. The second concerns the values that are espoused in the schools under this study, be they values common to all schools or values related more significantly to the Special Character evangelical schools. The fourth pair of organising principles are theological ones – that of dualism and of worship. Dualism is another of those principles that these schools endeavour to guard against, that is, dividing life into secular and sacred, resulting in a split-vision concept of reality. It is seen as a challenge to the sovereignty of God in all things. There are varying viewpoints on this issue and these are discussed in the light of the biblical account. The principle of worship is essential to the structure of evangelical schools based on the biblical injunctions: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8, Authorised version). But worship can take many forms and a variety of styles, giving rise to the proverbial ‘worship wars’. The tensions are discussed, principally regarding the music styles, and the literature on this is discussed at length.

Chapter Four on Methodology explores the nature of qualitative research and outlines the research design for this study. The decision to use a qualitative research methodology is based on the nature of the research problem: it requires research that produces findings that would not be available by statistical procedures or other means of quantification and from which a rich description of participant viewpoints would be possible. It is based on the need to search for and interpret the views of others, according to the complex and multiple understandings and articulations of the issue being examined. I have used an interpretive lens as a general framework which must take account of subjective understandings. The presuppositions from an evangelical’s perspective are spelt out and the process of doing multiple case studies developed. As noted, I write as an insider who has had a twenty year involvement in Christian schooling and as a third generation evangelical. The implications of this, for the kind of story I tell, are examined.

The study uses a multiple Case Study approach whereby six integrated evangelical schools were studied by way of conducting up to eleven one-hour (approximately) semi-structured interviews in each of them. This covered staff, board members, proprietors, parents and students. Documents from within those schools relating to Special Character were also examined for insights on their Special Character. The interviews were transcribed and analysed by bringing together from the transcripts the understandings of the participants concerning critical issues (as indicated in the literature) relating to Special Character.
Researcher-Participant relationships are discussed along with the researcher biases that were possible, including selection bias, interview bias, political bias, analysis bias, religious bias and respondent bias. Ethical issues will be examined and the processes of my data collection and analysis explained.

Chapter Five outlines the perceptions that the sixty two participants had as to what constituted *Special Character* itself such that it justified their existence as being separate from the state system of secularised education. Many of the values expressed in the course of the interviews were also designated by participants as being the *Special Character*. These have been incorporated into this section as well. How participants saw *Special Character* and the factors that had a bearing on their perceptions, were explored. Because evangelicals are biblically-orientated, I have sought to explore the role the Christian Scriptures had on their understandings of *Special Character*. Key findings from the interview data are identified and a discussion of these is presented by drawing on insights from the literature introduced in the early chapters of the thesis. A similar procedure is followed in Chapters 5 to 8.

Chapter Six I have entitled Values and Virtues, as values are at the heart of what *Special Character* is about. The chapter begins with an examination of the ways such issues are expressed in the curriculum statements in the Bible. There is debate among some evangelical Christian schools as to the impermanence of values that change according to current cultural values as reflected, for example, in key shifts in curriculum documents over time. Because the claims in these evangelical schools to base their *Special Character* on a biblical worldview, those biblical values and virtues, as referenced by the participants, are examined more closely. Some of those values may be unique to the Christian schools while others are common to all schools. These, too, are identified.

Chapter Seven is an analysis of the perceptions the participants had on Preserving *Special Character* in the institutions to which they belong. It is not enough to know what *Special Character* is; it is not enough to know there is a vibrancy and energy in the current practice of that *Special Character*. Many older institutions have started off the same way and have, over the years, lost that initial vision for the upholding of an evangelical faith-based education, becoming more secularised over the years. A few have retained it. The current generation of what could be labelled a fresh initiative into evangelical Christian schooling, are concerned to learn from the lessons of history and put in place those mechanisms of maintenance that enable these schools to stand a greater likelihood of preserving that *Special Character* over the lifetime of the schools. Hence specific questions were explored with the participants as to their perceptions of how that *Special Character* could be sustained. The legal position is that they must maintain their *Special Character* to justify their
continuance as separate from the state system. But in a post-modern, relativistic era, words can change their meaning and their message over the years and mere lip-service is paid to a concept that has lost its dynamic.

Chapter Eight deals with the Tensions and Anomalies that were surfacing in the course of interview-deliberations. Some of these were historical and are included to illustrate the difficulties many of these schools had in establishing themselves. Relational tensions were explored, the question of who is ultimately controlling the direction of the school. Religious tensions were explored and the impact of conservative views verses pentecostal views. Human failures from work-loads and morality issues, were discussed in the light of tensions surrounding these issues. Where there were anomalous issues of contrasting or opposing views on certain issues, these were highlighted. How participants viewed their school in terms of business versus ministry structure is also dealt with where there were tensions.

Questions were asked concerning the evidence of a biblical worldview in the curriculum. This is best seen in the Interact curriculum produced by Helen Pearson who was the founding Principal of one of the evangelical integrated schools in New Zealand. This curriculum for Years 0-10\(^\text{12}\) is based on the New Zealand State Curriculum which all integrated schools are obliged by law to deliver. The Interact curriculum is a theme-based curriculum, the themes being some character-quality of the godhead, for example: God is Patient, God is Kind, God is Love. The various subjects (Mathematics excluded not being as amenable to a subject-integrated approach) are woven into the theme for the term with frequent reference to a perspective that is consistent with a high view of Scripture as being inerrant, God-inspired, and applicable to every age and all peoples. The Interact curriculum material is available throughout New Zealand and is now used in Christian schools overseas as well.

The issues that did generate traction in the interviews, were issues of spirituality (as a response/reaction to the Maori concept of Hauora that is cited in the New Zealand curriculum) and the issue of the ‘evolution’ aspect of the science curriculum. Direct questions concerning both of these accounted for the frequent reference. Because evangelical believers hold to the inerrancy of Scripture, they are committed creationists in the sense that they believe that the universe came into being initially by divine intention, purpose and design. How that took place, when it took place, how species have developed since is open to debate among them.

\(^{12}\) New Zealand children are required to be in school at 6 years of age but are permitted to enrol at 5 years of age which most do. Their first class (New Entrants) is called Year 0 and children do not necessarily stay there for a full year. Primary schooling is up to Year 6 (usually 10 year olds), Intermediate schooling is for Years 7 and 8, after which students go on to High school (Years 9-13). There are no public examinations until Year 11. The Government compulsory curriculum is prescribed for Years 0-10. Five of the six schools in this study are called Area schools, meaning they cater for students from Year 0 to Year 13.
Chapter Nine contains my own conclusions and recommendations for further research. I stress that there are fourteen ways in which these schools are different from secular state schools, the major one being its biblical worldview with all the ramifications that involves, including a distinct authority, cosmology, anthropology, epistemology and pneumatology. The strong dependence on relationship is described and diagrammed. The complexity arising from a large range of perceptions was a chief characteristic of the data. Each of the subquestions was revisited, noting also the omissions and anomalies in the data, with respect to the biblical worldview.

There was a variety of methodological limitations explored – the number of schools chosen and how they were different; the limitations of representation of the various interest groups/stakeholders at each school. Assuming that these participants were the more articulate in things concerning Special Character, what the understandings might be at the other end of the spectrum has not been tested and the degree to which those understandings could not be gauged. The interview time factor was discussed and how that impacted on certain questions not always being asked, and when answered, what limitations resulted in terms of time for deeper probing. It was not clear what constituted the economic size of the number of participants, for it to be a manageable project yet large enough to produce a consistent picture. There were important follow up interviews that might have been done, but already the data-set was suffering from ‘information overload’. It is also doubtful in my view how objective the participants were. Strongly committed to the Christian view, they would be the more likely to paint a favourable picture of their situation. The truth may well be between the lines.
CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL AND CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS

*Special Character* in evangelical Christian schools is encapsulated within a number of biblical, theological, philosophical and ecclesiastical concepts. The history of *Special Character* schooling in New Zealand is a history of struggle. This chapter first provides a brief historical survey of New Zealand Christian schooling, to locate the current group of evangelical Christian schools and its struggles within the development of the wider New Zealand education system. It then traces the origins of the concepts that have impacted the philosophy of the *Special Character* schools, both in the historical movements that have shaped the Christian school philosophy and the movements that have been shaped by Christian school philosophy. This helps account for and illustrates the wide variety of ethoses and emphases that various groups give to the outworking of their Christian character.

New Zealand Historical Setting

Evangelical Christian schooling has existed since the days of Samuel Marsden, one of New Zealand’s first missionaries. Originally stationed in New South Wales, Australia, he first came to New Zealand in 1814 to set up a Church Missionary Society (CMS) presence (Sharp, 1966). With that, an educational programme was inaugurated for those whom they would Christianise, headed up initially by Thomas Kendall, Marsden’s co-worker (Davidson & Lineham, 1987). The CMS established around 50 schools for Maori particularly, teaching them to read and write, and thus enabling them to read the Word of God, the Bible (NZACS, 2012b). The CMS “had close links with prominent evangelical public figures” and Marsden himself “was closely associated with English evangelicals” (Davidson & Lineham, 1987, pp. 17, 18. See also Oliver, 1960). With the rise of evangelical Christian schools today, it is but a return to the foundation that was laid 195 years ago.

Christian schooling, at that time the only form of schooling in New Zealand, began around 1816 (Lynch, 2000). With white settlement and other missionary personnel arriving in the colony of New Zealand, Catholic and Protestant church schools proliferated for the settler populations as well as for Maori even though many of the earliest schools had a short life (Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993). With the breakdown of trust for the settler administration during the time of the New Zealand wars “Maori had all but completely withdrawn from the schools” (Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993). In response, the New Zealand government established a system of free primary education for Maori with the Native Schools Act 1867, although denominational boarding schools continued to run. In 1877 the New Zealand government passed further legislation providing for free, secular, compulsory education for the colony which by this time had a growing European population. Thereafter, education in New Zealand became the responsibility of the central government. Once the 1877 Act was passed, “apart
from a few private schools and the Catholic parochial schools, it stifled out of existence almost all other [Christian] primary schools in the country” (Mackey, 1967, p. 261).

Some early providers, particularly Catholic, felt so strongly about faith-based education that in 1894, writing in The Tablet (the official New Zealand Catholic newspaper) an article appeared entitled “Godless schools are immoral schools”, claiming that such schools “do their hellish work of gradual dechristianisation” (Moran, 1894, p. 17). It denounced the ‘paganism’ brought about by “the banishing of the name and religion of Christ from the public school” (p. 17). Deploring the absence of religion in New Zealand’s secular schools, the author argued that such would lead to a student’s “capability for evil [to be] increased by the very instruction he receives” (p. 17). This campaign was led by Bishop Moran of Dunedin. “For fourteen years an identical editorial was produced weekly to argue the injustice of the education system”, (Davidson & Lineham, 1987, p. 222).

Special Character schools are deemed desirable because of the secularising of all state schools. Because colonial New Zealand society was strongly influenced by the values emanating from the Christian faith, and because those values were often accepted as foundational to social control and stability, many believed that “the mere training of the mental faculties would not make law-abiding men and women” (Wright, 1887). In 1896, a writer in The Evening Post lamented that out of all the Australasian colonies, “New Zealand stands alone in making no provision for religious education” (Shaw, 1896). The Catholics continued to provide Christian schooling at their own expense, while the Protestants who were concerned about the lack of religious instruction in schools began to lobby for this soon after the 1877 Act (Davidson & Lineham, 1987). Eventually, the Bible in Schools league was formed in 1911. Meanwhile, the Nelson Regional Education Board allowed optional Bible teaching by local ministers and lay people in a time slot each week when the school would not be officially open. The ‘Nelson System’ as it came to be called, was later adopted by many schools in New Zealand where the first thirty minutes of one day each week would allow for Christian teaching to take place. McGeorge (1993) and Petersen (1993) have written at length on the history of the Nelson system indicating that while the school is officially open, teaching must be secular.

It was not until 1962, with the Currie Commission on Education, that it was recommended that the Nelson system of Bible in Schools should be authorised by Statute (Scott, 1996). This was adopted in 1964 in Section78 of the 1964 Education Act (Statutes of New Zealand, 1964). Today, 750 schools are serviced by volunteers for this work under the permission of their school boards. This reaches 100,000 young New Zealanders (Bible Society, 2011). Many of these teachers are from evangelical churches and until the emergence of the evangelical schools, were the only evangelical witness in the New Zealand primary school system. Mary Petersen (1993) points out that since the 1964 Education
Act which officially recognised the Nelson system, the Churches Education Commission (CEC) was formed (in 1973) in an effort for the churches to work together, and provide an agreed syllabus, resources, and training programmes for would-be accredited teachers. The void in Protestant Christian schooling that was institutionalised with the 1877 Act was not comprehensively addressed by legislation until the following decade, however. It was to a large extent Catholic campaigning for nearly a century that culminated in the provision of free Catholic and Protestant Christian schools through the 1975 Integration Act under which the evangelical Christian schools of this study have been able to develop. This chapter now looks at the historical movements that have impacted the philosophy of these *Special Character* schools.

 Movements that have impacted the Evangelical Christian School Philosophy

*The Impact of the Early Church’s Bible on Christian School Philosophy*

The only Bible that the early church possessed was the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. It was the Christian’s guidebook and as such, had an impact on the schooling of that era. Originally, Christianity was a sect of Judaism, their worship being at the synagogue. Jewish education was centred on the Torah, the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible which majored on moral and spiritual laws. The context of learning was the home (Deuteronomy 6) and subsequent to and during the exile in Babylon (587-506 BC), in the synagogues. The synagogue’s purpose was primarily instructional. Memory work was a key feature of their learning, with mnemonic devices, so much of scripture being in poetic form or set out as acrostics. The scriptures were their text book. The function of Jewish education was to make the Jew holy. Hellenistic schools arose among the Jewish communities outside of Palestine in which Jews participated in the later Hellenistic times (Douglas, Comfort & Mitchell, 1992). This strong emphasis on biblical content and focus, on its regard as a guidebook for living, on the close association of church/synagogue and learning, on the ultimate responsibility for training being the home, on the need for training in holiness and on memory work, are all emphases the current *Special Character* schools draw on as the findings of this thesis demonstrate.

*The Impact of the Early Church*

The earliest schools among the Christian community were catechetical classes originating very early but reaching their zenith in the 4th and 5th Centuries (Elwell, 1988). More formal Christian schooling can be traced back to Origen of Alexandria (approximately 185-254) with foundational use of the Bible (Cross, 1958). Origen was considered to be the leading Christian intellectual of the first three centuries (Brown, 1990, cited in Thompson, 2003). His contention was that it was essential to synthesise the Christian faith with current culture (Pazmino, 2008). Contentious though that was then, to this day leading evangelicals are advising Christian schools to ‘engage the culture’ (for
example Colson, Guinness, Schaeffer), while others (Anyabwile, Piper, Sproul,) teach a more rigorous separation from ‘the world’ (cited in Edlin, 2011, July). The ‘Cultural Mandate’ features prominently in some of the literature on evangelical Christian schooling such as in Dickens (2006); Edlin & Ireland (2006). With the passage of time early church Christian schooling became indirectly influenced by the Greek education philosophy of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, through Augustine (Edlin, 2006; Thompson, 2003).

**The Impact of Greek Culture on Augustine’s School Philosophy**

Besides Origen of Alexandria, those educators who used the Bible foundationally, were Augustine (354-430), Loyola (1491-1556), Comenius (1592-1670), Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and van Brummelen of Canada (1942-). Justins (2002) adds to this list Groen van Prinsterer of Holland, who had a profound influence on Kuyper. Heading this list was Aurelius Augustine of Hippo, North Africa. Greene (1998) considered Augustine’s Christian worldview “shaped academic thinking for a thousand years” (p. 30), much as his thinking was influenced by Plato (Greene, 1998), with an acceptance of Plato’s dualism (Goheen, 2004). To this day, the issue of dualism is a contended issue among Special Character schools as discussed in Chapter Three. Augustine’s famous quote concerning the heart being restless until it finds its rest in God (Augustine, 1983) was foundational to his educational thinking. At the core of his curriculum was the study of the scriptures (Douglas, 1978) and the scriptures were integrated into all areas of learning. A key figure in the long history of Christian-based schooling, who followed the Augustinian pattern in asserting that learning was only important as it afforded an understanding of the scriptures (Thompson, 2003), was the saintly Alcuin (735-804) of York Cathedral School in Britain. He was a teacher, scholar (mathematician) and headmaster of York who, in 781 AD, became chief advisor on educational and ecclesiastical affairs to Charlemagne in France (West, 1893).

**The Impact of Alcuin and Others on Christian School Philosophy**

The influence of Alcuin on current thinking, as evidenced in the evangelical literature from the contemporary associated schools, is unified and unambiguous. He argues that education needs to be approached from a biblical worldview perspective (Blomberg, 1980; La Haye & Noebel, 2000; Oppewal, 1985; Pazmino, 2008), that the Christian scriptures are authoritative and sufficient in the establishment of truth (Appleyard, 1996), and that they are committed to the transformation of society through their teaching, namely by the transformation of students in their schools (Octigin, 1980; Ridgeway, 1980). These themes are foundational concepts in the establishment of the articulated Special Character of state-integrated evangelical schools in New Zealand, and elsewhere in the world.
The Impact of Luther on Christian School Philosophy

It was not early church practice, nor that of the Middle Ages alone which had a deep influence on the current philosophy of evangelical schools. A variety of writers make reference to the foundational contribution Luther made to Christian school philosophy (Jenkins, 1998; Long, 1996; Scotchmer, 1986; Wilson, 2003). The impact of Luther (1483-1546) and Calvin (1509-1564) in the protestant Reformation profoundly influenced future thinking. Luther’s close classicist friend from the University of Wittenberg, Phillip Melanchthon (1497-1560), was the devoted educationist of the protestant world of that time. For Luther and Melanchthon, the Bible was central and foundational for universal education throughout Germany. Schools were to be used for scriptural indoctrination. Their purpose was to Christianise society, while a strong classical education was not to be neglected. Luther defined the proposition that the scriptures alone are authoritative, not the decrees of popes and councils (Douglas, 1978).

Influential in the Protestant reformation in the establishing of evangelical Christian schools, Luther believed the knowledge of scripture was “both the basis and goal of education” (Faber, 1998, n.p.). He was the founder of the Lutheran Church which has established Christian schools throughout the world. Of the 116 in Australia - 6.4% of all independent schools, many are in the parent-controlled Association of Christian Schools (Justins, 2002). In America, Lutherans have the largest Protestant school system in the country (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011). Although the Lutheran church has been in New Zealand for 150 years (18 congregations currently), there are no Lutheran schools in New Zealand. According to Lutheran educationist Signe Sandsmark (2002), Martin Luther (1483-1546), their founder, was a theologian not an educationist, who argued vociferously for education for all.

The Impact of Calvin on Christian School Philosophy

Another of the Reformation period who had an enduring impact on evangelical thinking and more particularly in the Christian School movement was John Calvin, the French refugee in Geneva, Switzerland (Greene, 1998; Pazmino, 2008; Scotchmer, 1986). Calvin is “generally regarded as second in importance only to Martin Luther as a key figure in the protestant Reformation” (Douglas, et al, 1992, p. 128). The evangelical school movement has its roots in a theology, the Calvinism of the Reformation. Calvin’s monumental work (two volumes) Institutes of the Christian Religion, still in print, was initially written in his twenties (1536) with its publishers claiming that “no one book has had a greater or more formative influence on Protestant thinking” (Calvin, 1957, dust jacket).

Calvin established the University of Geneva in 1559 – a grade school, high school and college all in one. For Calvin the underlying principle for all his work was “Scriptura tota: Scriptura sola” –
expound all the Word of God and the Word of God alone (Palmer, 1980, p. 5). This is the heart of
the evangelicalism in evangelical Christian Schools (Hauerwas, 1994). Calvin argued that knowledge
is two-fold: natural, rational knowledge, and revealed knowledge. Jesus Christ is Himself described
as the Mediator. Without divine revelation, we have no knowledge of the purposes and plan of God,
according to this worldview. Calvinism is considered a worldview in itself (Kuyper, 2001, p. 103).
His view of scripture led him to an understanding of the sanctity of human life, a view adopted by
Christian schools. Calvinism proclaims equality among humans because all humans, according to the
Christian scriptures, are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27; 5:1). Kuyper (2001) elaborates
on this concept. As made in the image of God, man is under the authority of God to serve and build
up, rather than rule over others. This altruistic egalitarianism is embodied in the philosophy of the
modern evangelical school movement (Fowler, 1980a; Mechielsen, 1980).

Calvinism also challenges people to intelligent interaction with the world. ‘Cultural engagement’ is a
frequently used term (Edlin, 2011). The world is God’s (Psalm 24:1) and is a constant recipient of
His common grace in the development of mankind. Such grace is given to this end, that God can
glorify Himself as Creator (Kuyper, 2001). Calvinism thus rejected monastic withdrawal from the
world. That ‘God can glorify Himself as Creator’ is perhaps, the strongest emphasis and a doctrinal
‘must’ in Calvinistic reforms. All of life and learning and worship must be for the glory of God, not
just for the sake of humanity. A true relationship with God is on God’s initiative and God’s terms: a
theocentric philosophy. This concept is espoused by the evangelical Christian school movement
(Fowler, 1980a; Octigan, 1980; Walsh, 1997; Wolterstorff, 1997). Calvin did not invent a new
teaching: he simply uncovered and systematised biblical truth which many before him had espoused
(Palmer, 1980). To the secularist, Calvin’s biblical worldview is exclusive in its approach, and often
seen in a negative or “pejorative way” (Lineham, 2006, p. 1). Dennett (1988) said “if Britain is to
have Christian education … then it must come through Christian schools, governed by Christian
leaders, staffed by Christian teachers and using a Christian biblical curriculum” (p. 13. emphasis in
the original).

Calvin’s influence on later thinkers was considerable. He influenced John Knox in the establishment
of the Presbyterian movement in Scotland (Stalker, 1904; Westeman, 1997) and the founders of the
Brethren movement with its Presbyterian Church government (Coad, 1968; Rowdon, 1967). It was
also crucial on the Huguenots (the Protestant Reformed Church of France, also called French
Calvinists) (Cross, 1958); on the Dutch Reformers and the Dutch Reformed Church (Hexham, 1983).
These “all followed in different ways and with varying success the educational system from the
Swiss city” (Westeman, 1997, p. 56).
The Impact of Abraham Kuyper on Christian School Philosophy

Significantly for the evangelical school movement was Calvin’s influence on the whole of life and living that was reflected well in a Hollander named Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), in whose life Calvin’s framework of philosophy and theology was never more prominently espoused and demonstrated. According to Veltman (1992), Kuyper was “widely recognised as an historian, [an ordained] theologian, philosopher, writer and professor-educator” (p. 406). He is famed theologically for his Stone Lectures on Calvinism at Princeton, in 1898. He held a doctorate from Leyden (Cross, 1958). He founded two newspapers (one a ‘daily’ which he edited for 30 years), founded a Reformed University, the Free University of Amsterdam, and led the Anti Revolutionary Party (ARP) which came to power in 1900 in an alliance with the Catholic Party of the Netherlands. He also founded a denomination – the second largest Protestant group in the Netherlands (Mouw, 2005). Although he trained for the Christian ministry and held two influential pastorates, he spent most of his public life in politics and education. He was Prime Minister of the Netherlands 1901-1905. He served as first Rector (Vice Chancellor) of the Free University and taught there for many years, retiring in 1908 as Theology Professor of its seminary. He retired from active politics in 1913, but continued writing voluminously until his death in 1920, aged 83.

Kuyper was the founder of a school of thought known as neo-Calvinism or Kuyperianism (Swanson, 2001). His authority in evangelical theology is recognised by frequent references to him in standard evangelical texts on systematic theology (for example Erickson, 1985; Grudem, 1994), as well as in the evangelical worldview literature (Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2004) on which Special Character schools depend. He is a prominent authority in Christian school literature (Fernhout, 1997; Greene, 1998; Ireland, 2004).

With a coalition government in Holland between the ARP and Catholics, the governing programme was to build on the Christian foundations of the Netherlands in a contemporary way. Its focus was on the Christian schools’ struggles and social questions. A concern of the ARP was to secure state support for Protestant and Catholic schools, equal to that given to ‘neutral’ humanistic schools (Langley, 1999). Hence their bills were for school reform “which would give full equality (including a voucher system) to Christian and Catholic schools” (Langley, 1999, p. 3). This resonated with Kuyper’s belief that educational responsibility should rest with parents not with the state and he was able to draw on the issues of fair play for Christian schools and his government agenda, clearly spelt out in Ons Program (Our programme) which he developed in 1879 as opportunities to express his Christian worldview. In consequence, Kuyper and his fellow ‘cultural activists’ established sovereign parent-governed Christian schools. His organisation of the Christian school movement in the Netherlands, known as the School with the Bible was one of the major contributions of his rich and
varied career (Langley, 1999), and his rejection of the situation where “for financial reasons, Christian people [had] only a secularist public school open to them” (Langley, 1999, p. 2), has been an enduring argument and foundational plank to the parent-controlled Christian schools (Dickens, 2006; Lambert & White, 1996).

Kuyper has, therefore, given considerable inspiration to the Christian school movement in the West with respect to the right of parents to have their children taught by fellow Christians in a Christian environment rather than be obligated to have their children taught in a legislated secular environment. His emphasis on the sovereignty of God has reminded the Christian school movement that all learning is under God’s authority. “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry ‘Mine!’” said Kuyper (cited in Zylstra, 2004, p. 98). Similar comments were made in his Stone Lectures at Princeton: “The human heart .. discovered its high and holy calling to consecrate every department of life and every energy at its disposal to the glory of God” (Kuyper, 2001, p. 16). Kuyper’s philosophy presupposed an acceptance of the inerrancy, divine origin, authority and relevance of the Bible in the life of the Christian believer/teacher. Every evangelical school in its statement of faith (list of doctrines believed) enshrines this viewpoint of scripture as foundational to the rest (Fowler, 1996).

The Impact of Kuyperianism on Modern Australasian Christian School Philosophy

Kuyper’s influence was not confined to Europe. The Dutch emigrated to both Australia and New Zealand and brought with them the Christian schooling values they had acquired in their homeland. Justins (2002, p. 39) argues that the worldview of the Reformed migrants from the Netherlands to Australia, was “a critical factor in the establishment of CPC [Christian Parent Controlled] schools” and is one of the dominant traditions of Themelic schools (Christ-centred schools) in Australia. A similar influence spread to New Zealand (Dunlop, 1989).

Following Calvin and Groen van Prinsterer, Kuyper’s mentor, Kuyper claimed that family, church, state and school were all sovereign in relation to each other (Strauss, 1992). They were each distinct and separate spheres. Schools were not church-schools: they were parent-controlled schools. It is in this area of sphere sovereignty that Kuyper was considered a neo-Calvinist (Justins, 2004) which gave rise to Kuyperianism. ‘Sphere sovereignty’ was a useful way to limit the power of corrupt people. He saw the relationship between God and man as being direct and immediate, a view commonly held by those in the modern evangelical school movement. But the sovereignty of family, church, state and schools may not be as simple today as it was in Kuyper’s day, the functioning of each being complex and overlapping as shown in Figure 2.1 on page 33 which indicates the
responsibilities of each, the authority under which they operate and their basic task. The diagram illustrates that overlap.

**The Historical Impact of Evangelicalism on Christian School Philosophy**

Kuyper was not just concerned with the structure of the Christian school in terms of having its own sovereignty, being funded by the state, and being parent-driven. Out of his presupposition of divine revelation through the inerrant Holy Scriptures a variety of core beliefs, demonstrated in his writings, were adopted by the contemporary evangelical school movement. At the heart of his evangelicalism and that of *Special Character* evangelical schools in New Zealand is a high view of scripture and its ultimate/final authority in all matters of faith and practice. More than any other, it is the distinguishing factor that makes evangelicals, evangelicals (Packer, 1958). They appear in every branch of the Christian church, and are not specific to any particular denomination. As the diagram (Figure 2.1) on the next page suggests, the set of core beliefs are common to most evangelical groups including evangelical schools. Their differences are found more often in their emphases than in core beliefs of evangelicalism.

“Belief is foundational to all educational endeavours” (Walsh, 1997, p. 8). The distinctiveness of *Special Character* in individual evangelical Christian schools is invariably determined by their particular theological slant. This is particularly true of church-based Christian schools where their *Special Character* statement is tied into the ‘Doctrinal Basis’ or ‘Statement of Faith’ of the particular church that set up the school. Tradition does play a part, but not the traditions of a church group (cf. Groome, 1996 for Catholic Schooling) but a theological tradition called the Historic Faith or Orthodox Christianity. The root meaning of theology is ‘speaking about God’, and the role of theology is “to spell out the significance of God’s revelation, supremely in Jesus Christ of himself and his provision and purposes for his world and the men and women he has made” (Ferguson & Wright, 1988, p. vii). At the heart of this tradition is the inerrancy of scripture (Appleyard, 1996). The stabilising guiding principle in evangelical theology championed by the evangelicals in Christian schools, is the divine inspiration of scripture encompassing its inerrancy and its authority - that is, the “supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God” (Erickson, 1985, p. 199).

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13 The term evangelical does not apply to a particular Christian denomination but rather, in the context of this research, and as noted in chapter one, to a movement within all branches of the Christian church that hold to the inerrancy and authority of the Christian scriptures as found in the Holy Bible. There are some Catholics who would classify themselves as evangelical in this sense, even though the official Catholic position on scripture is different. The Venn diagram (Figure 2.2, page 34), illustrates very simplistically, the theological stance of Catholics (where final authority lies with scripture and the church), Evangelicals (where final authority lies with scripture alone) and Liberals where final authority lies with human reason. The diagram indicates the overlapping, and where various groups might be found.
**Figure 2.1 - Major Institutions of Scripture**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH Matt. 16:18 Eph. 4:11-13</th>
<th>Things the School has in Common with the Church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evangelise/Missions</td>
<td>A covenant community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach to disciple</td>
<td>Submitted to biblical authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing Ezek.34</td>
<td>Concerned with discipleship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority: Eldership</td>
<td>Upholds primacy of relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Task: Edification Through God’s Word and His Spirit, Encouragement</td>
<td>Concerned for the glory of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proclaims the centrality of the gospel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises giftedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotes service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engages in evangelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises servant leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspires to holiness in their people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian Schooling: A response to the God-ordained Cultural mandate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY Eph.6:1-3 Deut. 6:7; 4:9-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority: Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Task: Parenting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOVERNMENT Romans 13:1-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provide state education where it is compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority: Parliament or its equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Task: Protection of and justice for its citizens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Centrality of the Bible


Out of rational consistency, to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible as educationists in the Christian school movement do, is to accept the validity of the assertions it makes. Special Character schools do see things in black and white. Creation is considered part of the gospel whereas “evolution is philosophically, morally and conceptually repugnant to Christians” (Dennett, 1988, p. 70). This does not necessitate a literalist view of biblical interpretation; the Bible, like all ancient documents, must be read in the light of its cultural and historical setting, its various genres, figures of speech and its united voice (Osborne, 1991). But having accepted such parameters of beliefs, there is surprising unity of thought across a wide spectrum of denominational persuasions that demonstrates Christian schooling, with a biblical worldview, follows the Kuyper model and philosophy. Every discipline is value-laden with worldview implications, and no discipline is value-free (Noebel, 1995). There is a wide spectrum of practice among Christian schools that illustrate the varying success of putting that biblical worldview theory into practice.

Movements That Have Been Impacted by Christian School Philosophy

In the historical development of Christian schooling generally, various routes have been taken according to the particular persuasion (denominational background) of the group establishing such schools. Not all schools followed Kuyper’s Calvinist model. By way of comparison, the following school systems will be examined briefly: the Reformed, Dutch Reformed (Presbyterian), Anglican, Charismatic-Pentecostal, Fundamentalist, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Lutheran, and the ACE programme. Table 2.1 on page 37 illustrates the particular emphases observable in the church groups covered by this analysis of Special Character, as analysed from the literature. Under each group is a generalised view on scripture, generalised in that in many church groups there are evangelical, liberal and high church believers amongst them. There is also a generalised approach to worship, an orientation with respect to curriculum and any distinction commonly recognised in each of the groups.
**Reformed Christian Schooling**

The thinking of Reformed schools, as has already been stated, is rooted with memory and vision in the Calvinist’s high view of scripture (Vryhof, 2002). Further, ‘Reformed’ people are covenant-oriented in their thinking concerning their relationship to God: this is central to their teaching, and unique to the Reformed section of the church, ‘covenant’ concepts being a thread that runs through the entire Christian Bible (Old Testament/New Testament are, more literally, Old Covenant/New Covenant). A third emphasis in their teaching is the concept of ‘kingdom’, according to Vryhof (2002). He argues that both these concepts (‘Covenant’ and ‘Kingdom’) influence their worldview.

Of all the evangelical groups, the Reformed schools would have a far greater emphasis on environmental issues, with their belief that Christians must engage with the current culture and redeem it (Vryhof, 2002). The Reformed literature has had considerable impact on the philosophy of Christian education in New Zealand and the Reformed churches give ready support to the evangelical schools of the type in this research.

The Culture of the Christian school has been carefully analysed by Kathy Mills (2003) with respect to Reformed schools. She sees in the Reformed schools the move from ‘static organisation’ to a ‘dynamic organism’ in school culture based on biblical (Pauline) understanding of community (interdependence), purpose and need.

**Dutch Reformed Christian Schooling**

The Dutch Reformed schools follow a very similar path to the ‘Reformed’. The term ‘Reformed’ is used as a theological term involving much of Calvinism with an emphasis on certain doctrines. Reformed churches can exist in any denomination. The Dutch Reformed church (DRC) is a denominational term and represents a particular group that has churches worldwide. Their structure is very similar to that of Presbyterians. The Dutch have a 400 year history of providing Christian schools. Because of state opposition prior to Kuyper’s time, many of the Dutch emigrated to America establishing Christian schools there as early as 1628. One school, (Collegiate School, New York) established in1628, is reputed to be the oldest continuously operating school in the New World (Collegiate School, 2011).

It is to Dutch immigrants both in Australia and New Zealand that evangelical Christian education owes its initial drive for providing such an education in these countries – in Australia as the Parent Controlled Schools (Justins, 2002) and in New Zealand in Christchurch (Dunlop, 1989). Kloosterman (2006) expressed the Dutch theological passion when he said, “The recognition of the need of regeneration and the recognition of the covenant relation wherein God has placed our children are the principles from which their instruction should proceed” (p. 10).
### TABLE 2.1  Analysis of Theological Positioning in Integrated Christian Schools as analysed from the Literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reformed</th>
<th>Presbyterian D.R.C. *</th>
<th>Anglican</th>
<th>Charismatic Pentecostal</th>
<th>Fundamentalist</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Seventh Day Adventists</th>
<th>Lutheran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On Scripture</strong></td>
<td>High view</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>High view</td>
<td>Literalist</td>
<td>Interpreted by Church</td>
<td>Law dominated</td>
<td>Liberal and Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On Worship</strong></td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Liturgical</td>
<td>Liturgical</td>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Sacramental</td>
<td>Saturday Services</td>
<td>Liturgical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Christ Centred</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Christ Centred</td>
<td>Bible Centred</td>
<td>Catholic Oriented</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Bible focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distinctives</strong></td>
<td>Kingdom Covenant Divine Sovereignty</td>
<td>Integrated with the State</td>
<td>Pluralism Architecture Political action</td>
<td>Work of Holy Spirit Separatist Experiential</td>
<td>Mission Individualism Vice-less</td>
<td>Mariology Papal authority Tradition Justice</td>
<td>Law Focused</td>
<td>Citizenship Education for All Paradoxes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Dutch Reformed Church
**Anglican Christian Schooling**

The work of the Anglicans in the U.K. is of significance to the evangelical schools in New Zealand because their aspirations in educational provision are similar. There is a strong emphasis on traditional family values in their schools (Shepherd, 2011). The Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales, Carey, Hope and Williams (2001) once said, “Anglican schools in particular set high store on pupils’ spiritual and moral development on the basis of clear Christian values” (p.v.) The proportion of Church schools regarded as outstanding by Ofsted, the British School auditing body, is much higher than the national norm and yet the Church schools are fully inclusive.

Britain is favoured with a much longer history in Christian education than in the colonies that provides insights into the impact such a ministry can make over the years. St. Peter’s School in York dating back to 627 A.D. and King’s School in Canterbury claiming no less a founder than Augustine himself (National Society for Promoting Religious Education [NSPRE], 2001, p. 4). Twenty-five percent of all primary and middle school children of Britain attend their 4600 primary schools. They also have 220 secondary schools and have established 100 new secondary schools in the last ten years (Church of England, 2011). They have a strong emphasis on worship, a key feature of the New Zealand evangelical schools albeit much of that may be liturgical, a feature not found in the New Zealand evangelical schools. The Anglican church, consisting of ‘high church’ and ‘low church’ (evangelicals) is accommodating of evangelical scholars. Under the 1988 Education Reform Act British schools are now accountable for the “spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development” of their pupils and adhere to the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 (NSPRE, 2001, p. 3). The ethos evident in Anglican schools covers “almost every variety known in the country” (p. 4). Yet collectively, Anglicans see schools to be “at the centre of the church’s mission to the nation” (Dearing, 2001, p. x). Beyond pluralism and breadth of sympathy (Runcie, 2001, p. 4), the most evident characteristic of special Anglican character would be its liturgy. However, on their own admission, “the character of an Anglican school will always be difficult to define” (Christian Character, 2001, p. 17).

Two articles of significance in articulating Anglican education and its ethos are: *The Ethos statement for Anglican schools in the diocese of North Queensland* (2005), NSPRE, (2001) and *Evangelism in Education* by Astley (2002). The North Queensland statement tends to be evangelical in flavour, while it outlines the defining features of an Anglican school, principally “tolerance and respect for difference” (5.2). Theological discourse can be confusing with terminology meaning different things to different persuasions, according to their view of scripture and of authority. However, when Astley defines evangelism, for example, he talks of sensitivity, imagination and prudence.
Charismatic/Pentecostal Christian Schooling

The pentecostal and charismatic movements are a subset of evangelicalism (Clouse, 1974; Burgess & McGee 1988), and sometimes grew out of evangelical revivals. In New Zealand, the Apostolic Church and the Elim Church (both pentecostal) grew out of the Welsh Revival of 1904 (Burgess & McGee, 1988). One aspect of the modern evangelical school movement in New Zealand is the increase of students from the charismatic megachurches, be they pentecostal or neo-pentecostal. The most distinctive feature of the movement was an exuberant worship style, (Wheaton, 2012) a feature that continues to this day. The movement spread to mainline churches as did the ‘signs and wonders’ emphasis of John Wimber and others, often labelled as ‘the third wave’ (third after Pentecostal then Charismatic (Wagner, 1988)). The Wheaton research group fully expect that Pentecostalism in the next decade, will overtake numerically, the Catholic community “as the largest Christian presence in Brazil and much of Spanish-speaking Latin America” (Wheaton, 2012, n.p.) Researcher Patrick Johnstone (1998) reports that while the protestant church worldwide is growing at twice the rate of the world’s population; the evangelicals within protestantism are growing at over three times the population growth. The growth of pentecostals and charismatics has been even more striking. Their presence in the evangelical Christian schools has had a profound impact on the contemporaneity and intensity of the worship through song in the assemblies of these schools. However, it does not appear that charismatic churches themselves are establishing schools in large numbers worldwide.

Fundamentalist Christian Schooling

At the other end of the theological spectrum there are the fundamentalist schools. Fundamentalism is a subgroup of evangelicalism, and was initially expressed through a defence of a series of long-held doctrines presented in 12 published and widely circulated articles between 1910 and 1915. But the nature of fundamentalism according to Erickson (1997) changed from affirmation to criticism and rebuttal of a rising liberal theology and ‘social gospel’ thereby becoming combatant with a narrowing of the classical evangelical position. The term “has come to denote an aggressive style related to ensuring separation from cultural decadence” (Wheaton, 2012, n.p.). The Wheaton statement goes on to say that fundamentalists believe the culture is evil and corrosive and Christians must isolate themselves, whereas evangelicals believe the culture is redeemable and can/should be impacted by Christians. Roger Hunter (1993) identifies Christian fundamentalism as being authoritarian, as against anything new, as encompassing a belief in the infallibility of the Bible “in every detail” (p. 165), as being confrontationist and as a form of political activism. While this may be true in some quarters, there was no evidence that any one of the schools researched for this thesis were characterised in this way. Hunter considered all the Australasian Christian schools of 1993 were
fundamentalist. Few if any of the New Zealand Christian schools had integrated at that stage. It was only in the mid to late 90s that most of these schools integrated into the state system. It is probably fair to say that many of the older leaders in the current evangelical school movement grew up with a fundamentalist background. Evangelical scholarship was fast developing with the growth of research and institutions and publishing houses like the evangelical InterVarsity Press, founded 1940 (IVP, 2011); the Banner of Truth Trust, founded 1957 (Murray, 2011); the Baker Academic Books, founded 1939 (Baker Publishing Group, 2011), all from a large influential evangelical base. The literalism of the fundamentalists gave way to a developed hermeneutics based on literary criticism, archaeological research, and a net-working of evangelical scholars worldwide in the development of scholarly biblical and theological dictionaries, encyclopedias, journals and Bible commentaries (Evangelical Christian Publishers Association – ECPA, 2011). The current school movement’s authenticity owes much to the earlier fundamentalists who paved the way for what has been described as one of New Zealand’s growth industries – the evangelical *Special Character* school movement.

Modern evangelicalism grew out of that fundamentalist movement, and Billy Graham, the prestigious Wheaton College, Illinois (founded 1860), and *Christianity Today* (evangelicalism’s most influential magazine worldwide, founded in 1956 by Billy Graham (Christianity Today, 2011) emerged as the three identifying pillars (Badley, 2002). Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, founded by D.L. Moody in 1886 (Moody Bible Institute, 2011) grew to be the flagship of the fundamentalists. The place of biblical hermeneutics defines the watershed between them and evangelicals. Fundamentalists, as literalists, have little need of hermeneutics. It is of paramount importance to the evangelical. As such their schools have very different ethoses. Evangelicals are known for what they are for; fundamentalists for what they are against. One is often seen as legalistic, the other as majoring on grace. Their fundamental beliefs may be identical; their ethos, emphases, focus and demeanour, different. Fundamentalists have a greater concern for home schooling (Badley, 2002). Gilling (1993) suggests a fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something.

**Catholic Christian Schooling**

Within New Zealand, another very strong branch of Christian schooling is that which is conducted by the Catholic Church. There is increasing interaction between the evangelical schools in New Zealand and their Catholic counterparts through the Catholic Education Office and the common ground they share as proprietors of schools that have ongoing dealings with government agencies (New Zealand Catholic Education Office, 2011). As such there is an increased sharing of ideas and strategies. As mentioned earlier, it was the Catholic Education Commission that invested so much in the establishing with government, the New Zealand integration legislation that has enabled these
evangelical schools to survive or come into being (Sweetman, 2002). The evangelicals owe much to the Catholic school movement.

What makes a school Catholic? This question is answered in scholarly style by T.H. Groome cited in McLaughlin, O’Keefe & O’Keefe (1996). Groome deals extensively with the commitment to tradition, Catholicism’s positive anthropology (man is essentially good), its sense of sacrimentality and its commitment to rationality. He follows the application of these through the Catholic education system. He traces the origins of Catholic education to Clement (c150-215) and Origen (c185-254), through to St Augustine (354-430) considering how Catholics worldwide, and for centuries, have invested in education wherever they have gone. Their schools have generally predated the rise of state schooling in a westernised society. Their Special Character has roots well down in history.


Not nature OR grace, but graced nature; not reason OR faith, but reason illumined by faith; not law OR gospel, but laws inspired by the Gospel; not scripture OR tradition, but normative tradition within scripture; not faith OR works, but faith issuing in works and works as expressions of faith; not authority OR freedom, but authority in the service of freedom; not unity OR diversity, but unity IN diversity.

Characteristics of a contemporary Catholic school include a culture of prayer, ritual and symbol; a commitment to and preferential option for the poor; an opposition to racism and cultural assimilation and balancing particularism with pluralism, with openness to dialogue and growth (O’Keefe, cited in McLaughlin, 2002). These make for characteristics uncommon on a wider Christian front, as among evangelical schools and mainline church schools.

Evangelical schools do not share the same commitment to church traditions; their anthropological view of the child is only partially that man is essentially good (born ‘imago Dei’ – in the image of God), but he is also ‘born in sin’ (Psalm 51) and is thus at enmity with God. The evangelical school is not committed to a sacramentality in its functioning, nor to rationality in its understanding of holy scripture. T.C. Hammond (1968) wrote that “Reason is the great sorting house, but not the sorter” (p. 39) indicating that reason doesn’t have the final authority in matters pertaining to faith. For evangelicals, there is no pronounced emphasis of attendance on the poor or on issues of justice as there is among Catholics. There is no venturing into religious pluralism in the evangelical schools (Gangel, 2003; Riter & Timms, 2004).

**Seventh Day Adventist Schooling**

The only denominational group the NZACS works in close liaison with is the Seventh Day Adventists (NZACS, 2012a). Their sixteen schools belong to this association. The SDA educational
system is reputed to be the second largest Christian school system in the world, after the Roman Catholic system. It operates in over 100 countries and has 1.5 million students (Seventh Day Adventist, n.d). It also operates over 100 tertiary colleges and universities worldwide, including a teachers’ college in Avondale, New South Wales. It is evangelical in holding to the ‘sola scriptura’ principle (by scripture alone) of the protestant reformation. Its observance of Saturday as their day of worship is its iconic doctrine. It has a strong emphasis on prophecy and especially the teachings of Ellen G. White, its co-founder.

**Lutheran Christian Schooling**

The Reformation “was as much concerned with school as it was with church and home” (Faber, 1998, n.p.). One of Luther’s first endeavours after his nailing of his ’95 Theses’ to the church door at Wittenberg, Germany, was to promote the transforming of monasteries into schools. He wrote to the councils of all German cities urging them to establish and maintain Christian schools (Faber, 1998, n.p.). He also pointed out the place of paradox and polar structure as underlying and undergirding Lutheran theology and educational thinking. In Sandsmark’s view of the Lutheran church paradoxes, he highlighted authority and freedom, antipathy and sympathy, sacred and secular government, individuality and community, faith and reality.

Luther made the Bible central in reforming education according to the norms of scripture, subjecting that learning to the “theology of the cross” (Faber, 1998). To him, education was meaningless without the gospel. He urged that their learning programme included the study of the scriptures in the ancient languages – Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Sandsmark (2002) reminds us we are teachers not preachers, that what is taught from scripture is foundational to what is applied from the pulpit, and that our students must become seekers after truth. Training for moral citizenship was seen to be an essential in Lutheran education. Life is a battle between the good and the bad, God and the devil, according to Asheim (1961) as cited in Sandsmark (2002). The aim of Lutheran education is service. But perhaps Sandsmark’s most incisive comment, applicable to all Christian groups is that “it is not what is taught that makes a school Christian, but how it is taught” (p. 104).

**Home-School Christian Schooling**

While the denominational education programmes have made an impact on the evangelical school philosophy in New Zealand, there are over 6000 children (3,350 families) being home-schooled in New Zealand for Christian reasons (NZACS, 2011). Many of these are on the ACE programmes. In New Zealand there are over 1000 students enrolled in the ACE programmes and many of them would be Christian home-schoolers. As noted on page 11 of this thesis, these programmes have been entrenched in another context for many years. Many of the *Special Character* Integrated Evangelical
Schools in New Zealand began as ACE schools. Accelerated Christian Education is a branch of the evangelical school movement that began in the US and originally used church premises from Monday-Friday for schooling. It is used in over 7,000 Christian schools in over 100 countries (Home Education New Zealand, [HENZ], 2011). Their programme was based on individualised learning through booklets for every subject, thus standardising their conservative content throughout. Its style reflects more of a fundamentalist approach (Baldwin, 1993), albeit it provides a trans-denominational service. It is noted for its literal interpretation of scripture (Justins, 2002). Many Christian schools that commenced with ACE programmes (often through lack of expertise, or lack of resources at the time of establishing a new school), later shifted across to a more conventional approach to classroom learning and interaction. ACE has a strong commitment to a biblical worldview. The New Zealand Universities Vice Chancellors’ Committee have made provision for ACE-trained students at Year 13 to achieve university entrance through the ACE programme, which has now been operating in Australia and New Zealand for thirty years (HENZ, 2011).

Concluding comment
This chapter has traced the history of Christian schooling from earliest times, the early church fathers, through medieval times, to foundational philosophical thinkers on evangelical schooling. The application of Kuyper’s theory on sphere sovereignty has been illustrated in the overlap of state, home, church and school responsibilities, which illustrates the complexity that faces the New Zealand integrated Christian schools concerning issues of authority. The thinking of various Christian Educational groups who have contributed to the philosophical underpinnings of the Special Character schools in New Zealand have been discussed in terms of the way they have impacted Special Character schools to make them what they are today.

The core common denominator of these schools is the evangelicalism that underpins all they do and is the very strong unifying factor among them: it is their belief in the authority of scripture and their personal relationship to Jesus (Charles, 2006). How that is worked out in the running of the Special Character schools is as different as conservative reformed Christian schools are from hand-clapping arms-raising pentecostal schools which makes Special Character both complex and interesting. Those at the conservative end of this spectrum are more influenced by their scholarly literature, while those at the charismatic end are more likely to be influenced by their mega-churches and their contemporary lifestyle of worship which can be a source of tension. All of them have to deal with the New Zealand Government, being integrated schools, with the benefits and constraints accruing from this; and all of them take a position on the role of worship in their schools. These and other issues that Special Character schools grapple with that help to define them, are the focus of the next chapter.
“The function of the organising principle is to enable educational planners to have a basis for decisions” (Downs, 1994, p. 197).

There are a variety of principles at work in every school on which decisions are made. In *Special Character* evangelical schools there are, similarly, a variety of principles at work which determine the way these schools operate and thus determine their philosophy and modus operandi. Some of these principles appear to be religiously neutral, while other principles are decidedly religious in nature. Yet these two sets of principles are inextricably woven together to establish the basis on which decisions are made in these evangelical schools.

Governance is the framework within which all the other principles operate practically. It sets the state’s objectives, constraints and boundaries against which all decisions are measured. The religious issues are, basically, all biblical ones against which all principles for them, operate morally. They set divine objectives, constraints and boundaries against which all their decisions are measured.

Philosophy of education is about what education should be (its mandate), what dispositions it should cultivate, why it might cultivate them and how or with what resources (capacity) and in whom it should do so (White, 2001). Both the state’s governance and the biblical mandates enshrined in these biblical principles determine what education should be for the *Special Character* school.

The pragmatics of running the school are very philosophy-dependent. However, policy itself is philosophically based. Policy reflects philosophically-based responses to the state’s dual (and contradictory) mandate to meet the demands and expectation of both the economy and the diverse groups within a nation. Policies grounded in liberal, neoliberal and neoconservative imperatives create official parameters within which the schools have to operate in order to gain state support in the current context. New public management is a means of understanding the way policy is structured in that context. This has posed both constraints and possibilities for the schools. Understandings of governance as demonstrated through the Dale model do not limit the discussion to official state/school dynamics, however. This model provides a way of understanding the impact of other dynamics that can shape what the schools can and cannot do. What about the internal dynamics (church/school) that are at play? But every other principle covered in this chapter certainly does shape what these schools can do, including secular humanism, dualism, worship, the imago Dei, the values, the biblical metanarrative, evangelicalism and truth issues. These are the organising principles that shape what goes on in the schools.
The thesis is not about the philosophy of Christian schools though perhaps the nearest philosophy would be essentialism that Benson (2001) considers is one of the five traditional educational philosophies, the others being idealism, realism, Thomism and perennialism. The tenets of essentialism are that firstly, learning demands the discipline and diligence of the student, thoroughly, rigorously. Secondly, the major initiative is with the teacher. Thirdly, the focus is acquiring the stated curriculum and fourthly, employing the finest teaching methods. The final tenet of essentialism is that teachers teach what is of eternal (essential) worth; what is of absolute truth. (Jary & Jary (2000).

There are aspects of realism, idealism, Thomism and perennialism that are detected in these schools, and aspects of all of them that they would shun. And there are varieties of each of these philosophies.

Evangelical schools would be very comfortable with the aspect of realism that truth is objectively established (see the section on truth in this chapter) but uncomfortable with Aristotle’s claim that only what is learned through the senses is real (see presuppositions in Chapter One). While the existence of God is acknowledged in idealism, and where the nature of truth is absolute with an axiology based on these premises, there is nevertheless a denial of general revelation in nature which these schools claim is biblical, and where the acknowledging of God’s existence is more than the idealists claim of being merely an intellectualised affirmation. Thomism is a Dominican philosophy for Christian education and rightly gives primacy to the reality of the supernatural and specifically to the reality of the revelation of scripture, from the evangelical’s point of view. It concurs with the integration of reason with faith, but questions that God can be known irrespective of faith. There is also the contention with Thomism over the nature/grace split vision of reality. There are aspects of perennialism that are no problem to the evangelical Christian school – teaching that which is of eternal value; being teacher-centred and focusing on personal development. The suggestion that focus should be on principles rather than facts would be questioned. E.D. Hirsch (1996) sees essentialism as a back-to-basics philosophy as well as being teacher-centred. Yet he also sees it as being vocational and fact-based and with students as being spoon-fed.

The pragmatic philosophies of experimentalism, progressivism and reconstructionism that arose against formalism, championed by Dewey, committed to democratisation, appear to be rejected by Christian schools. Although Kirkegaard was a Christian existentialist, the existentialist philosophy is also championed by well-known atheistic philosophers (Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger). There is, evidence of the influence of educational philosophy that can be detected in the findings chapters of this thesis as philosophy includes the ontology, epistemology and axiology in particular, all of which had considerable exposure. Closely allied to this is the biblical worldview. But like philosophy, to focus comment on the theoretical aspects of worldview and how a biblical worldview differs from other worldviews is too extensive a study to be included here.
Special Character schools only exist in New Zealand as part of the Government’s provision for free education because of a particular school-governing structure established by the 1975 legislation that made provision for such schools. In this there were tensions involved. This chapter explores the impact of shifts in that administrative structure since the passing of the legislation and the possible implications for continued state support for the schools that are central to this study. The legislation was necessary because state schools are, by legislation, secular. The literature would indicate that a primary motivation for the provision of Christian schooling was that secular education is not necessarily religiously neutral, as some suppose, but is premised on a humanistic philosophy. And so the chapter will also explore the ramifications of that humanism and why Special Character schools reject the principle of humanism. Discussion of governance and humanism, the secular organising principles, will open this chapter.

Humanism is not the god that is served in Special Character schools, ‘gods’ being the term Neil Postman (1995) of New York University uses synonymously with ‘metanarratives’. He argues that every school must have one as an overriding principle – “a story that constructs ideals, that tells of origins and envisions a future, [that] prescribes rules of conduct, … a source of authority and gives a sense of purpose” (pp. 5-6). And so the chapter will explore the ramifications of a biblical metanarrative and how this principle meets the criteria Neil Postman postulates. Special Character schools will be concerned with the expression of their own narrative’s values in a way that is not only expressed in character and personal conduct, but in its collective expression that is evident to others. Within that metanarrative there exists for such schools the principle of absolute truth, divinely given in the Christian scriptures (Grenz, 1996). These are the philosophical principles on which Special Character schools are based – a biblical metanarrative and ultimate truth. What is truth? How do we know what is truth in a postmodern culture?

Arising out of the biblical principle of truth is the biblical principle of humankind, an anthropological principle. This concerns the nature of the child in these schools – What is man? What does it mean to be human? The technical (theological) term for this is the ‘Imago Dei’ which will be considered in the light of the literature. The other principle considered in this third section is that of values; some preliminary comments on values is undertaken in the light of the literature and the principles involved, prior to a later chapter on the findings from the fieldwork on values.

The fourth set of principles to be covered in this chapter are the theological principles of evangelicalism, dualism (secular/sacred divide) and worship. These dominate both the Christian school literature and evangelical worldview literature. Evangelicalism, based on the inerrancy of
scripture, is the dominant common denominator of the evangelical school movement as enshrined in the constitution of the NZACS Constitution, 2012). The sovereignty of God in its outworking not only sees God’s direct hand in every aspect of life and living but also boldly confronts a dualism which is deemed to challenge that sovereignty. The concept of dualism is thought by some to be the number one enemy of good understandings in Christian schools (Walsh & Middleton, 1984). And so the chapter will go on to explore the ramifications of dualism for Christian schools. A review here on the literature concerning worship anticipates the detailed references that will be made to worship in the findings chapters (Chapters 5 and 6). This introductory outline for chapter 3 is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 3.1 below.

![Organising Principles Diagram](image)

Figure 3.1 – An Outline of Chapter 3: Organising Principles

**Governance issues relating to Special Character**

In an attempt to conceptualise what is involved in the work of education and how its agenda might be formed, Roger Dale (2008, p. 28) introduced the concept of an Education Sector Settlement (ESS) as being made up of three separate components: mandate, capacity and governance. The mandate, he suggested, encompassed what was deemed to be desirable for the sector to achieve at any time. Capacity, referred to what resources were available to achieve the desired mandate, and this determined what was feasible for education to achieve. The third component, governance, incorporated an understanding of “how the system was coordinated to bring about the mandate and the capacity” (p. 28). Rather than taking for granted that the state is the only agency involved in
education, governance involves consideration of the complex and shifting ways in which education is funded, provided, owned and regulated, and of the various agencies – state, market, community and household – which participate in fulfilling those activities (Dale, 2008). The shape of these arrangements will differ in different historical circumstances and for different forms of educational provision.

New Zealand, like other western nations, has been deeply affected by major social, economic and political changes in the past 50 years. The post-World War II period of economic prosperity and full employment supported the country’s distinctive social democratic welfarist policies headed by a strongly interventionist state (Kelsey, 1993). By the 1970s the impact of international concerns about social justice had begun to shape the national consciousness and it was within this period that the Catholic agitation for fair access to the state education budget was finally recognised in the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act, 1975 (Sweetman, 2002). However, as economic stability gave way to fiscal crisis, unemployment, globalisation and diversity brought increasing awareness of educational inequalities through the impact of social and political exclusion of marginalised interests, the state was faced with a legitimation dilemma in meeting the demands of the economy and an increasingly divided society. This had ramifications for all state institutions including education, and for the way in which the public sector services would operate (Robertson & Dale, 2002).

During the 1980s, a new system of managing public funds within a neo-liberal political philosophy became the state’s solution to addressing this dilemma whilst addressing also critiques from the political right of an overly interventionist approach to government (Codd, 1997; Dale, 2008). A market-like approach, based on devolution of governance activities to non-state sectors, meant that minimal state funding would be supplemented by the management skills of non-state actors, and this in turn would abrogate responsibility for institutional performance (Codd, 2008; Dale, 2008). The implications for education were considerable. Market interests were privileged and other parties such as teachers and parents, who were seen to be too self-interested, were marginalised (Snook, 1995; Codd, 2005). Within the newly created Ministry of Education, policy became separated from practice, and contrary to the rhetoric of a non-interventionist approach, the Minister of Education was in a position of power not previously held by such officials, being able “to respond to pressure from a small [business-oriented] group and, in a pen stroke, make decisions which once had to be filtered through the [Education] Department and the [Regional Education] Boards” (Snook, 1995, p. 56). Because it was both a major consumer of public funds and a source of national prosperity, there was an expectation that education would support higher standards, greater economic efficiency and increased productivity to enable New Zealand to maintain its place in a changing world (Smith, 2002). Schools had to be efficient, competitive and responsive to consumers, and they had to offer
diversity of provision (Codd, 1997; Snook, 1997, Dale, 1997). Although this initially supported opportunities for initiatives developed outside of the state to be accepted as alternatives to ‘mainstream’ schools, as Snook explains, this was not an expression of democracy in action. Rather, education’s role in preparing students for democratic participation in New Zealand society was threatened by expectations that market ideals and processes should “dominate the school system” (Snook, 1995, p. 67).

Reforms to governance in education affected all schools (state, private and integrated), but had little impact on the evangelical integrated schools in terms of their Special Character. This was because their Special Character only had to be defined at the time of integration; and most of the New Zealand evangelical schools did not become integrated until after the reforms of the 1980s were well in place. It could be argued also that, as the reforms were in part a response to a neo-conservative critique of former liberal freedoms in education (Dale & Ozga, 1993), the Christian schools could have been seen as contributing to the desired return to moral and intellectual excellence (Bayley, 2003). However, the changes initiated at that time continue to impact the way schools operate today. The globalisation of economic activity over the last twenty years, in particular the impact of the Global Knowledge Economy (GKE) on education policy has meant that schools are impacted by forces often beyond their control, from a supranational level. Under ‘Tomorrows schools’ (Department of Education, 1988) the New Zealand government’s neo-liberal approach to the governance of schools has left many of them, the Christian schools no less, in an environment competing for funds, competing for students, striving to meet internationally-set benchmarks (or be exposed as not having met them) and being subject to a rigorous on-going self-examination, all in the name of ‘value-added’ education that can be documented as such. The four categories of activity (funding, ownership, provision and regulation) that Dale suggests collectively made up educational governance, certainly affect the operation of evangelical schools in ways that are different to, say state schools, which in some instances, may well be because of their Special Character.

Dale suggests that the dominant mandate in New Zealand “since the early 1990s, has been ensuring that education contributes as fully as possible to the country’s ability to participate in, and benefit from, the global knowledge economy” (Dale, 2008, p. 31). While this may be the dominant state mandate, the mandate for evangelical Christian schools “is to equip Christ’s young disciples to be active citizens of His kingdom” (Fennema, 2006a, p. 14). This research will endeavour to show whether the Special Character of these schools determines that this be their dominant mandate, as their literature might suggest. It also questions whether and/or why the schools are able to operate in a relatively independent way. As ‘capacity’ to fulfil the state’s mandate had become an issue of concern, the co-optation of non-state contributors within market principles of competition, efficiency
and user pays became an answer. All New Zealand state and state-integrated schools were subjected to the same accountability regime, through the Education Review Office. The Christian schools that accept full state funding (the integrated schools) are obliged to submit to this regime of accountability which Codd (2005, p. 204) argued has “eroded fundamental democratic values of … social justice and trust” with teaching becoming “a formal, externally imposed, low-trust requirement”.

The third component of the Education Sector Settlement concept was ‘Governance’. This has been analysed three dimensionally by Dale (2008) as in Figure 3.2 below:

![Figure 3.2 Pluriscalar Governance of Education (Dale, 2008, p. 30)](image)

The evangelical integrated schools are a quasi-state-school, integrated into the state system and hence fully-funded, but separate from it in that they are ‘privately’ or ‘community’ owned as institutions. Global, or supranational expectations, national policies and local organisation are all part of their governance structure (Codd, 2008; Dale, 2008). However, governance activities vary considerably from the average state school. Coleman (1993) points out that integrated schools are bound by constraints which are different from those of their state school counterparts with regard to their control, finances, resources and personnel. In terms of funding, financial provision is initially
made by ‘proprietors’ or owners, be they a Trust (Foundation) or a local church. The proprietors are required to provide physical facilities up to state code which may entail an investment of several million dollars (Statutes of New Zealand, 1975, No. 129). Much of this may be raised by way of mortgage, thereby allowing the proprietors to raise a levy against the mortgage from each of the parents of children/students so schooled. Parents are also invited to ‘donate’ an activity ‘fee’ in line with most state schools which similarly invoice parents for an activity ‘donation’, as well as contributing to day-to-day activities such as school trips, materials costs, expendable workbooks, stationery and uniforms. Nonetheless, the state is still the major financial contributor to the education of students in these integrated schools. This is by way of staff salaries for teachers and ancillary staff, funding for specialist education services, for an operations grant (running expenses), and sundry other costs (Ministry of Education, 2012a).

Fundamental state contributions do not ensure schools can keep the competitive edge, however, and an increasingly common source of funding for New Zealand schools in recent years is through their marketing of their services to overseas students, as state-encouraged (Codd, 2008; Dale, 2008). Enrolling foreign full-fee paying students has enabled many schools, Christian Schools no less than state schools (NZACS documents), to stay financially viable as the value of state provision has effectively decreased. This, Dale (2008) suggests has created, in some instances, what could be called state-for-profit institutions, a new form of educational governance. Increasingly, also, schools are state-encouraged to seek the investment of the local business community whether it be by way of advertising, sponsorship, scholarships, renting out school facilities after hours, or by direct investment (Ministry of Education, 2012b). Taxation (from the general public, including from the parents in these integrated schools), remains overwhelmingly the dominant source of educational funding.

The question of ownership, the second governance activity, varies from school to school in the evangelical protestant group of schools. It is very often a Christian (faith-based) Trust (Foundation) or a local church. This is made possible under the Integration legislation that predated the 1980s reforms, yet seemed to anticipate them in this respect. Those owned by Trusts can be in the trusteeship of business people, or by parents or by local churches. It is possible, under New Zealand law, for these schools to be privately owned by an individual. However, the powers of such owners are limited to the providing or withdrawing or withholding facilities, and to the regulating of the Special Character. Once the school has integrated, its day-to-day governance/control comes under a Board of Trustees whose structure/composition is state-regulated. While proprietors have representation on these Boards, it is not necessarily a controlling voice.
The third governance activity is that of provision or delivery. In the community form of provision that these integrated schools are, education is provided on the principle of ‘eligibility for membership’, eligibility being based on a parental ‘buy-in’ of the school’s Special Character. This entitlement is centred on a particular history and culture. It is “intentionally particularistic” (Dale 1997, p. 279) as stipulated by the state, that is, designed to exclude non-members. Dale suggests that the emergence of a pluralist society with community provision is possibly the most novel aspect of the changes in New Zealand society in recent years. Yet the evangelical community has been a distinct subset of Christendom for longer and the possibility of establishing their own schools predated the 1980s’ reforms. What is novel is that they are now financed by government enabling greater growth in their schools and a proliferation of their schools amongst a wider clientele of middle-class families who can now afford such a provision. This study seeks to consider whether current state arrangements compromise what might be seen by their communities as the dominant mandate for these schools.

The fourth governance activity is regulation. The new public management model has enabled the state in New Zealand to enhance its strength since the 1980s’ reforms, while divesting itself of a significant range of activities and responsibilities (Dale, 2008). There has been the establishment of the Qualifications Framework which regulates state recognition of study courses and their syllabi; the New Zealand Qualifications Authority which regulates public examinations; the Education Review Office which assesses the performance of schools, and by publishing a public assessment of each school, can coercively regulate their view of what constitutes best practice, all in the name of public accountability. Then there is the Teacher Registration Board (Teachers Council) which regulates the registration (and deregistration) of teachers. The state’s Ministry of Education has effectively divested itself of these functions to quasi state-owned, not-for-profit enterprises. Accountability is also monitored by international bodies such as the O.E.C.D. Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) and thereby indirectly regulates by means of transitional targets and goals, making the current transnational practices the basis on which New Zealand’s systems are rated.

In addition, the Special Character of these integrated schools is regulated by each school’s proprietors and in accordance with each proprietors’ defining of Special Character in their formal legal Integration Agreement that it has with the New Zealand Government. Each integrated school, like each state school, is further regulated by the school’s Board of Trustees who appoint the Principal (The C.E.O./Manager) and who formulate the policies by which the school is managed. Fiscal policies of government’s Treasury Office themselves regulate/provide strict guidelines within which each school must operate, and schools must submit an annual audit report from government-approved school auditors (who are, themselves, regulated by Treasury in this role) to the office of the
government’s Auditor-General. Indeed, it was the Treasury Office’s critique to the incoming government of 1987 that focused on efficiency and responsiveness, encouraging the education sector to adopt the techniques of private sector management (The Treasury, 1987).

The new reforms of the 1980s were promoted by the 1988 Picot Report as making provision for deregulation, parental choice, governance by school boards, thus giving the community the authority to run their own schools. Of significance is that even tighter controls now exist than those prior to the reforms, over both the curriculum taught and the assessment engaged in, “limiting the scope for the political discussion of education”, as Dale says (1997, p. 279). School boards are so regulated that there is little room for deviation from government stipulations (Carter, 1994; Snook, 1995). The one area for the evangelical integrated schools where re-regulation, transferred governance and juridification has had little impact, concerns the Special Character of those schools, which for many of them, as faith-based schools, has a strong religious element – an area where the government is not involved. In this, where such schools are within the practical vicinity for attendance, parents have a choice very often denied to city state schools which are often ‘zoned’.

The governance of Christian schools functions with similar constraints and governance contexts to state schools: the fact that they are community schools alters the source-mix of their funding, the ownership equation, the provisos on provision as a sub-culture of society, but very little as to regulatory constraints. It is assumed that the governance that is carried out by their boards will contextualize the Special Character of their school into their policies. The thesis is concerned to examine whether such ‘non-interference’ can be taken for granted, or whether there are collateral effects of governance structures.

The relationships that these schools and the state schools have with the New Zealand Government’s various educational bodies is illustrated by the Figure 3.3 below, as drawn up by Dr Jean Annan and colleagues of Massey University, and which appeared in Volume II, Issue 2, 2010, p. 40 of Kairanga Journal. It is used by permission.
The issues of mandate, capacity and governance are all secular issues, and together a necessary adjunct to structure. The secular issue that is not necessarily an adjunct to structure is the principle of humanism to which this study now turns.

**Secular Humanism**

While governance may appear to be a very secular thing in itself, it is that very secularity that evangelical educational scholars take issue with, believing as they do that all viewpoints, all policy issues, all academic learning is value-laden. Education is never neutral (Edlin, 2004; Newton, 2004; C. Zylstra, 2004; H. Zylstra, 1997). “There is no middle, religiously neutral ground for any kind of
human thought or action” (Mechielsen, 1980, pp. 11-12). To embrace a secular worldview is to embrace a humanism, against which the Christian school movement have reacted, by establishing their own Christian schools. While humanism may not be in the common discourse of Christian school staff-rooms, it is common in the Christian literature pertaining to Christian schools and biblical worldviews (Fowler, 1980c; Stronks, 2003). Jary and Jary (2000) defined humanism as “a central focus on human needs and on human fulfilment without recourse to religious notions” and “an emphasis on the creativity of humanity, and the autonomy and worth of the human subject” (p. 280). Kolenda (1999) writing in the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy defines humanism as:

A set of presuppositions that assigns to human beings a special position in the scheme of things. Not just a school of thought or a collection of specific beliefs or doctrines, humanism is rather a general perspective from which the world is viewed. … It comes into focus when it is compared with two competing positions. (p. 379)

Kolenda (1999) also associates humanism with the Renaissance with an emphasis on Greek philosophy as did Schaeffer (1976), who compares the humanistic developments from the Renaissance with the theological developments from the Reformation. He argues that the ‘rebirth’ (implied by the term ‘renaissance’) “was not a rebirth of man, it was the rebirth of an idea about man. There was a change in thinking about man, a change which put man himself in the centre of all things” (p. 51). Further, he traces the emergence of two lines of thought at the end of the Middle Ages – “the humanist elements of the Renaissance and … the Bible-based teaching of the Reformation” (p. 48), with a consequent tension between these opposing views. Schaeffer also claims that “humanism has no final way of saying certain things are right and other things are wrong … humanism in private morals and political life is left with that which is arbitrary” (p. 128).

The struggle as La Haye & Noebel (2000) term it, between Christian and humanist worldviews is felt by the Special Character schools in their goal to put God, rather than humankind (teacher, student, parent) at the centre of their living and thinking, and in their interpreting of this world. It could well be argued from the literature that the essential difference (in theory if not in practice) between secular schools and the evangelical Christian schools in New Zealand is the claim by the latter to be God-centred, and their acknowledging that secular schools are not (nor can be) God-centred. Although such secularism is termed ‘humanism’, the term has deeper connotations in that for many, it takes on the characteristics of a religious crusade, with its ‘Humanist Manifesto’ (La Haye & Noebel, 2000). Scholars in the Christian School Movements show an awareness of the philosophical stance of educational humanists and humanism, drawing attention to the humanist worldview, as did Noebel (1995), van Brummelen (1998), and Wilson (2003). As such the Christian school school-teacher is possibly more aware of the effects or presence of humanism than their secular school counterparts.
Where humanism is not an issue, Kolenda (1999) pointed out that it comes into focus when there are competing positions (as in the Christian school philosophy). The impact of Rousseau (1712-1778) in Switzerland and David Hume (1711-1776) in Britain both criticised reason as a method of knowing truth and their philosophies developed a Bohemian ideal that was a factor leading in part to the hippie culture of the 1960s, according to Schaeffer (1976). The Bohemian ideal of fighting “all of society’s standards, values and restraints” (Schaeffer, p. 156), was a life of autonomous freedom as opposed to the evangelical ideal as taught in *Special Character* schools, of living life under the control of the Spirit of God. Both Governance and Humanism are essentially secular in nature, but the principles upon which *Special Character* in evangelical schools is built may well be based on philosophical principles into which they can cast their roots. The first of these philosophical principles is that of a metanarrative onto which this story now moves.

**Metanarrative**

The metanarrative of the Christian school movement is a metanarrative of the Bible. While humanism is decidedly man-centred and can be traced back to the renaissance, the Christian school movement claims to be God-centred or Christ-centred (Edlin, 1999). This claim is based on the claims of the Christian scriptures, a claim that is not based on fragmentary truths extracted from the Bible, but on an all-comprehensive, all-pervasive worldview and lifestyle that answers to all of life’s situations – a comprehensive explanation of historical experience (Edlin, 2004). It is the grand narrative of scripture, the metanarrative whose central focus is centred on the Incarnation of Christ (God becoming man), “the central interpretive principle of the Bible” (Teague, 2011). This is illustrated in Bruce’s (1960) comment:

> The Christian gospel … tells how for the world’s redemption God entered into history, the eternal came into time, the kingdom of heaven invaded the realm of earth, in the great events of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (pp. 7-8)

The purpose of Christian schooling is to change society according to that metanarrative of the Bible. Writing in the New Zealand Listener (November 8, 1986) and documented on the website of the NZEI journal, Education Aotearoa (2010), Clarence Beeby, twenty years Director of Education in New Zealand, stated that real change in education “is slow” and that “if you want to … change the very objectives of education, change the kind of students who emerge from the school system, then you have at least a generation of work ahead of you” (Beeby cited in Education, Aotearoa, 2010, para 4). He was, however, talking about changing the education of the country as a whole. There is no evidence that the Christian schools are endeavouring to do this, but they are endeavouring to ensure the perpetuation of a biblical metanarrative within their own schools to conform to another paradigm – a biblical one, aligned to a biblical metanarrative, their *Special Character*. Beeby

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14 NZEI, the New Zealand Educational Institute is the Primary Teachers’ Union.
claimed that “unless the average teachers understand the change, believe in it and, above all, accept it as their own idea … no fundamental change can be brought about” (para 1). This accounts for the approach the Christian evangelical schools have of only employing staff that ‘believe in’ and ‘accept as their own idea’ the biblical metanarrative of transformation of the human heart in relation to the biblical narrative of man’s depravity and thus his/her need of a Saviour, that Saviour being the Jesus Christ of the Christian scriptures.

Dr Beeby also emphasised the need for a change of attitude “not just in the teaching profession but also in the parents of the students” (para 4), which is why principals in Special Character schools similarly endeavour to find a congruence between the Christian schools’ ideals and values, and those of the homes and their churches from which their students come. Beeby continued by saying that:

A series of three or four year plans that change with political fortunes will get a country nowhere unless they all accept, over a generation or more, a consistent sense of direction, a perhaps half-conscious master purpose that will last for 25 years. (Beeby cited in Education, Aotearoa, 2010, para 7).

In the Special Character Christian schools there is a half-conscious master purpose: since the 1975 Integration Act was passed, it has lasted for 25 years; it continues to move with a consistent sense of direction, a direction determined by its metanarrative (Middleton & Walsh, 1995). Those overarching ideas that state education has been influenced by over the decades, Beeby calls “great educational myths” (para 8) – myths in the sense of being expressions of purpose, vaguely expressed, none of them being fully attainable. It was “a form of communication, spoken or assumed, between contemporaries or between generations” (para 10), he wrote. In this there is a parallel with Special Character education which purports to express purpose, though not vaguely, but ratherbiblically specific in terms of that metanarrative (Edlin, 2006; Newton, 2004), not ‘assumed’ but rather spelt out in its literature, in its interviewing, in its enrolment constraints and in its communications with ‘new parents’ meetings (Belcher, 2004). Beeby suggests “it’s a communication that can’t be taken quite literally” (para 10). However, Special Character schools do expect parents to take their educational purposes literally if their mission is not to fail (Edlin, 2004; Woods, 2006).

Beeby’s myths have five characteristics. Firstly: they are either “rooted deep in social history” or “expresses some deep though not always clearly defined public aspiration” (Beeby cited in Education Aotearoa, 2010, para 22). Secondly: they are “expressed in language that’s flexible enough to permit a reasonably wide range of interpretations” (para 23). Thirdly: “the language must still be tight enough to rule out altogether some lines of action, so that administrators … teachers can get practical guidance from the myth” (para 24). Fourthly: they “must be unattainable for at least a generation if it is to sustain 25 years of change without being constantly and confusingly modified” (para 25). Fifthly: “people working for the new myth must believe in it so completely that they will fight for it
in its youth … they must hold to it more critically in its middle age and, when it has served its purpose, they must be willing to see another myth put in its place” (para 26).

_Special Character_ schools are rooted deep in social history as Chapter 2 of this thesis has outlined. The NZACS schools embrace a wide spectrum of evangelical persuasions – again as Chapter 2 of this thesis has demonstrated. Being evangelical, they are unwavering on the inerrancy of scripture, thereby ruling out non-evangelical influence. That evangelicalism in schooling is sustainable over 25 years or more has also been demonstrated in their history, and that the people working for this ‘myth’ believe in it so completely as to fight for it in its youth and hold to it, despite views to the contrary (see for example Capetz, 200; Smith, 2012), will be demonstrated in this research. That they must be willing to see another myth put in its place, may yet prove true in terms of process, policies and pedagogies, but not in terms of the unchangeable nature of evangelicalism per se which is foundational to the faith of these schools, an evangelicalism that began in New Testament times. To use Beeby’s term of myth in the kindly sense that he uses it, the _Special Character_ of evangelical schools could well be labelled the great biblical educational myth: that their worldview, values and purpose must be derived from the biblical metanarrative; that the person of Christ, the second person of the Christian triune God-head, is to be central to all of their thinking, planning, worship and relationships in the Christian school. It is:

> the radical distinctiveness of our educational goal of challenging children to celebrate the Lordship of Christ over all creation. … Christian schools exist to assist families in helping their sons and daughters to learn about the world and their places and tasks in it as God’s responsible stewards and image bearers. (Edlin, 1999, p. 76)

This is the great biblical metanarrative of Christian schooling. Within that biblical metanarrative is a body of truth, divinely given in the Christian scriptures, it is claimed, such that the principle of absolute truth becomes foundational for these evangelical Christian schools (Huddleston, 2004). It is to the principle of ‘truth’, as a philosophical principle this story shifts its attention.

**Truth**

Another critical philosophical question found in the Christian scriptures is ‘What is truth?’ (John 18:38). No principle is spoken of more in the literature of Christian schools than the principle of truth, except perhaps their emphasis on the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures as the source of that truth. In 1968 Schaeffer wrote that “the way we come to knowledge and truth is the most crucial problem … facing Christianity today” (p. 13). Society is currently emerging from an era where people preferred to see things in black and white. What you were told was either true or it was not true. If it was true, you must be able to demonstrate its veracity, or by sheer logic argue the point consistently, coherently, and convincingly. It was an age of rationalism, where human reason reigned supreme and was unassailable. It began with Francis Bacon, the British philosopher of the sixteenth
century (1561-1626), who is known as the father of the scientific revolution and father of what is known as the Enlightenment (Greene, 1998). He classified himself as “fitted for nothing so well as the study of truth” (Lea, 1982, p. 566).

The Enlightenment view sees truth as objective and classifiable on the basis of unaided reason alone (Guinness, 2000). To understand the truth of the Bible, which has so much primacy in these schools, it must be studied ‘like any other book’ – meaning scientifically (the historical-critical method). Biblically-speaking that is only half a truth. Academics bring scholarship to the Holy Scriptures, whether it be through linguistics and ancient language study, through archaeology, or through the study of the culture of Bible times with its historical geography. These add understanding to the truth of the Bible. But the Bible itself suggests that it must be studied and approached as a book unlike any other book. This is because divine revelation is considered to supersede our rational learning. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us” God makes His truth known by divine revelation, not just through nature (Psalm 19) but also through His written word. Phil Pringle (1998) develops this thought when he says:

The Church, built on the material of revelation is invincible against all the powers of hell. … It is truth known in the inner man. It is neither the logic of the mind nor the deductions of human reasoning. It is spiritual insight given by the Holy Spirit. It is knowing. This knowing is what faith is. It is knowing things that are not revealed to the natural senses. Acting on revelation is what faith is. This is what the kingdom is built on. This is what the Church is built on. (p. 35)

A common saying in the literature is that “All truth is God’s truth”. The saying originated with Augustine (AD 354-430) in his treatise On Christian Doctrine (397) (Shaw, 2011) written in Latin which, when translated said “Let every good and true Christian know that truth is the truth of his Lord and Master wherever it be found” (De Doctrina Christiana II cap 18). Calvin (1509-64) reiterated the statement in Institutes 2:215. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) made the same claim according to Sproul (2009), as do more recent writers (Downs, 1994; Gangel, 2003; Holmes, 1977; Ireland, 2004; Stronks & Blomberg, 1993, p. 35). For Pazmino (2008, p. 233) “Truth is the essential content of Christian teaching – truth as revealed in Christ and in Scripture through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and truth as discerned in all creation”. John Piper (2009, p. 1) says that alongside the slogan that all truth is God’s truth, we need to say “All truth exists to display more of God and awaken more love for God”. It is “viewing reality through the lens of divine revelation” (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p. 13). For these authors, “Our major task in life is to discover what is truth and to live in step with that truth” (p. 14).

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15 Isaiah 66:2
16 Deuteronomy 29:29
17 Quisquis bonus verusque Christianus est, Domini sui esse intelligat, ubicunque inveneret veritatem. (Whoever is a good and true Christian, know the truth to be of his Lord wherever it is found).
The Enlightenment view of truth held sway until very recent times, although the transition is thought to date back to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Secularism became the order of the day among intellectuals (Schaeffer, 1976). A new tolerance of people and views emerged. New approaches to truth and meaning were being adopted. This later era is known as post modernity. It is an age of images, the information age, an age of pluralism, globalization, rapid change, a shift from traditional certainties to an age of speculation and subjectiveness (Newton, 2004). Postmodernism itself is the ideology behind the mood – comprising new approaches to truth and meaning, history and ethics, science and theology (Newton, 2004). Postmodernists reject the absolute nature of truth-claims; they reject the ‘timelessness’ claim of truth. Truth is deemed to be a social construct – it’s what you want it to be. Your story is your own personal truth. It is what Jary and Jary (2000) refer to as cognitive relativism, that holds there are different “way of knowing … involving truth claims from different standpoints … so that there are no overarching rules or procedures for deciding between such different belief systems” (p. 517).

Nietzsche, among others, set the score for evangelical pronouncements concerning truth. He said, “There are no eternal facts, as there are no absolute truths” (Nietzsche, 1977, p. 458). But “If there is no truth, nothing has transcendent value, including human beings. … When persons are viewed as things, they begin to be treated as things” (Beckwith & Koukl, 1998, p. 22). Such is the view of the evangelicals in these Special Character schools. It could be considered that the emergence of these postmodernist views has possibly strengthened the Christian school movement as they have had to develop scholarship that addressed these views. Evangelicals, however, believe God has “an absolute and unchanging standard of right and wrong based on His own holy character” (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p. 21). In postmodernism there is no objective universal truth, there is only a group perspective – “agreed values” (Foster-Allen, 1996, p. 180).

It is argued by Veith (1994) that “If there are no absolutes, if truth is relative, then there can be no stability” and Greene (1998) adds that “with the disappearance of truth goes the disappearance of moral principles” (p. 24). Special Character schools, by virtue of their belief in right and wrong, based on biblical absolutes may well be confronted and challenged as to “Who are they to judge?” Such an implied accusation is self-refuting for the accusation is itself a judgment. Moral judgments are valid because we are relational human beings capable of moral reasoning. The accusation:

assumes moral relativism, the view that when it comes to moral issues there are no universal right or wrong answers, no inappropriate or appropriate judgments, and no reasonable or rational ways by which to make moral distinction that apply in every time, in every place, and to every person. (Beckwith & Koukl, 1998, p. 12-13)
The belief that only subjective opinions exist is “to deny the existence of universally objective moral distinctions” (Beckwith & Koukl, 1998, p. 13). The same authors also said it is an era of “dogmatic scepticism” where if truth now means ‘true for me’, Special Character schools would have lost the very basis for their existence, because of the primacy of the Bible and its truth-claims on which they base their whole philosophy. Indeed, the Bible has a lot to say about truth – the best known of which is that “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Scripture consistently holds to the ‘correspondence view’ of truth; that is: there is total correspondence between the truth-claim and the reality of that which is spoken of. “The belief is made true or false not by other beliefs but by something in the physical world to which it refers” (Ewing, 1951, p. 53). Ewing calls it “the commonsense theory” of truth (p. 53).

The Bible goes further, in saying that God Himself (Jesus) is the author of truth (John 1:17), that Christ is the embodiment of truth (John 14:6), that the Holy Spirit will guide his followers into all truth (John 16:13), that the Scriptures are the Scriptures of truth (Daniel 10:21). Believers must be able to say with the Psalmist “I have chosen the way of truth” (119:30). God is the “God of Truth” (Isaiah 65:16); the Holy Spirit is “The Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17, 16:13). In teaching values, the Christian teacher will become (biblically) truth-oriented for, as Guinness (2000) put it:

Living in truth is the secret of living free … [it is] our basic human handle on reality. … Becoming people of truth is the deepest secret of integrity and the highest form of taking responsibility for ourselves and our own lives. (pp. 14, 18)

In the Bible is the evangelical perspective on truth that the literature of Special Character evangelical schools hold to.

Sociologist, Os Guinness (2000) in his Time for Truth writes on the preciousness of truth and how freedom and relationships on the personal, national and international level are dependent upon it. He deals at length with the concepts of truth owned in a postmodern context and the corrupting effects of untruth on culture. He deals with the death of discernment when he says, “When nothing can be judged except judgment itself – ‘judgmentalism’ – the barriers between the unthinkable, acceptable and doable collapse entirely” (p. 24). He appraises Nietzsche’s approach to ‘the mistrust of truth’, and the loss of a reference point with which people can judge themselves. For the Special Character school such a loss of anchorage creates a crisis of character in the economising of truth. Guinness draws attention to literary license, liberation marketing, creative accounting and political correctness when truth dies and power prevails under the ‘tyranny of consensus’. He adds: “Human beings are truth-seekers by nature, and truth persuades by the force of its own reality” (p. 87). Nowhere is this more acknowledged than in an evangelical context such as these Christian schools.
Professor David Wells (1993) writing as a theologian, deplores the theological illiteracy that the evangelical church generally has plunged into, facilitating life being lived without absolutes. Modern evangelicalism has become part of the cultural decay and decay of truth he speaks of – “substitute[ing] the relative for the absolute, the many for the One, diversity for unity, the human for the divine, our own private experience for truth that was once also public and universal in its scope” (pp. 7-8). His panacea is found in the biblical narrative enabling one to adopt ‘the biblical mind’ as he terms it (p. 270). This is the biblical worldview that the evangelical school literature makes constant reference to (Greene, 1998). What the evangelical school is up against is the legitimising of truth as being relative (Beckwith & Koukel, 1998), a matter Nancy Pearcey (2004) confronts in a two-realm theory of truth, a concept she developed from her studies under philosopher Francis Schaeffer who developed the two-story imagery, as

**Private truth in Upper Story: Non-rational, non cognitive – personal meaning**
**Public truth in Lower Story: Rational, verifiable – science and reason**

In today’s vocabulary the truth diagram would look more like:

**Postmodernism – Subjective, Relative to particular groups**
**Modernism – Objective, Universally valid**

Pearcey (2004, p. 21) sees the importance of recognizing this division as “the single most potent weapon for delegitimizing the biblical perspective in the public square today”, as used by secularists. Secularism, she claims, consigns religion to the value sphere, effectively removing it from the area of truth per se. It is a fact/value dichotomy which does away with the objective truth content of the faith, consigning it to cultural captivity. It is a theme she returns to repeatedly throughout her work. For her, biblical truth needs to be restored “to the status of public truth” (p. 22). Truth needs to be recognized for its objectivity, recognizing that reality is objective. Confronting the data of ordinary experience challenges the confining of truth to mere subjectivism and liberates from it. “Christianity claims that we have access to transhistorical truth, because God Himself has spoken” (p. 395). By this, she implies that because truth is objective and absolute, there is a sense in which it is eternal – it does not change.

Another of Schaeffer’s students, philosopher Groothuis (2000) wrote an extensive defence of Christianity in a postmodern environment and made much of the fact that “truth is revealed by God” (p. 65); it is “objective truth [that] exists and is knowable” (p. 67) and that the truth of God “is an end, not a means to any other end” (p. 80). He defended the correspondence view of truth consistent with other Christian writers. As also with other Christian writers, Groothuis made a very clear distinction between belief and truth, claiming that the evangelical Christian faith (as is held in these Special Character schools) is solidly foundationalised on objective truth, because it is founded on historical facts as well as ‘revealed’ facts. He quotes liberally from Pascal’s (1623-62) *Pensees*
throughout his work. Pascal likened behaviours to those who are aboard a moving ship. On board, nobody may appear to be moving, unless you have a fixed point against which to gauge the movement. So it is with absolute truths; they are the fixed points for morality.

McGrath (1996) examines in detail the biblical concept that Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6). He argues that this New Testament affirmation does not merely assume that “Christ is propositionally correct” (p. 177). He says there are personal as well as cognitive aspects to truth in the biblical view which is based on the Hebrew understandings of truth as “something which can be relied upon” or “someone who can be trusted”. This ‘confidence’ “must be regarded as foundational to any authentically biblical concept of truth” (p. 177). Such truth is neither “abstract or purely objective; it is personal, and involves the transformation of the entire existence of those who apprehend it and are themselves apprehended by it” (p. 178). In a school context where Special Character is so deeply entwined in relational issues, such a concept is a further extension of the Christo-centric aspects of truth. “A theology [truth] which touches the mind, leaving the heart unaffected, is no true Christian theology”, McGrath argues (p. 178). It is to this heart experience that the Christian school endeavours to bring its students. Such is an essential to its Special Character (Bode, 2003).

If the problem with western academia is its ‘coherence’ view of truth, the evangelical schools would favour a ‘correspondence’ view of truth, consistent with biblical assumptions. Roger Moses, Principal of Wellington College commented that “Just as we did, and our parents before us, they too, [young people today] are searching for truth, meaning and purpose. They want their lives to count for more than just material gain and self-aggrandisement” (Moses, 2007, p. 27). For the evangelical Christian, truth is God’s perspective as revealed in Scripture. As Colson and Pearcey (1999) said, “Without a biblical worldview … there are no intellectual pegs in the mind of the individuals to hang these truths on” (p. ix). As Phillips Brooks said when addressing students at Yale in 1877, “Truth is always strong no matter how weak it looks and falsehood is always weak, no matter how strong it looks” (Brooks, 1895, p. 271).

This section has sought to highlight one of the major foundational stones on which the Special Character of evangelical schools rest – the biblical nature of truth. The principle of truth, as a philosophical principle raises the issue as to what truths are important to evangelical schools. One of the most important is the truth about humankind (the Imago Dei), an anthropological principle about which consideration will now be given.

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18 Correspondence theory of truth says “a belief is true provided there exists a fact corresponding to it”. The coherence view of truth says “a belief is verified when it is part of an entire system of beliefs that is consistent and ‘harmonious’” (that is, verification is holistic). It “is sometimes referred to as intuitionistic truth”. The pragmatic theory of truth says a belief is true if it is “a good basis for action … with desirable results” (Horwich, 1999, p. 930).
**Imago Dei**

The Imago Dei, man[^10] made in the image of God, is considered an important truth in *Special Character* evangelical schooling. It answers the question ‘What is man?’ Mankind’s relationship to God is contingent on our understanding of who or what man is. A key principle in scripture is “What is man?” (Psalm 8:4; Job 7:17; Hebrews 2:6). It is also a key principle in establishing *Special Character*. Nicholas Beversluis (1971) pointed out that thoughtful teachers are guided by their assumptions about the nature and needs of man, and that “Christian teachers must believe that the nature and needs of man and therefore of a child in school, are determined above all by his [her] relationship to God” (p. 123). A biblical anthropology (what the Bible says about the nature of man) is essential to a *Special Character* school that holds to a biblical worldview, as evangelical schools do.

At the heart of the biblical view of man is the principle of the ‘Imago Dei’ – the image of God. The biblical term ‘the image of God’ is used in Genesis, 1; Colossians 3; Corinthians 11; and James 3. Man was not made a little above an advanced human-like mammal; Psalms say mankind was made “a little lower than the angels” (Psalm 8:5 AV), or “but little lower than God” (the Septuagint LXX, RV. Also Amp; NASB; NIV footnote; HCSB); “little less than Divine” (Mof; DeW). Consequently, for the students as for mankind generally, to be human is to be morally responsible/accountable to God. As such, man has a unique sense of right and wrong, a sense of purpose and of a place in history, a passion for justice, creativity and worship, and the ability to choose to reflect on the nature of God. All these facets are relevant to the Christian school, the last two particularly evident in *Special Character*. Such a status as implied in the scriptures above gives worth to the student in any school, but especially recognised as an organising principle in a *Special Character* school founded on a biblical worldview.

It was considered helpful then to see how the Bible defined this concept of the Imago Dei. Nowhere in scripture is the ‘image of God’ defined in an unambiguous way. “One essential meaning … is plain” according to Clines (1968): “It is that man is some way and in some degree like God …. Man is the one god-like creature in all the created order” (p. 98). Piper (2007) describes the Imago Dei as being mankind created and called to “look like what he [God] really is. This is what it means to be created in the image of God. We are meant to image forth in the world what he [God] is really like” (p. 33). A.W. Tozer 1948), an evangelical leader and writer expressed it devotionally:

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[^10]: In this section the terms ‘mankind’ (used 20 times), ‘man’ (used 37 times) and his, he or him (used 7 times) are used in the generic sense of man/woman, he/she, him/her and his/hers in keeping with the many quotations that use these terms generically.
You and I are in little (our sins excepted) what God is in large. Being made in His image we have within us the capacity to know Him. In our sins we lack only the power. The moment the Spirit has quickened us to life in regeneration our whole being senses its kinship to God and leaps up in joyous recognition. (p. 14)

Lemke (2008) defined the image of God as “the reflection/likeness/similarity of God’s essence which He created in human beings, and is reflected most noticeably in the personal, spiritual, relational, rational, volitional, moral, responsible, and emotional aspects of human life” (p. 8). Theologians have also tended to give like composite definitions, that is, the sum of a cluster of capacities (Berkhof, 1958; Erickson, 1985; Hodge, 1871; Strong, 1907; Theissen, 1949). Berkhof added to the cluster mankind’s immortality. Gangel (2003) says:

As finite human beings we cannot ultimately understand God, Who is all powerful, all knowing and present in all places at all times. None of these attributes are reflected in us as His image bearers. However, many of His other attributes do find expression in humanity – sacrificial love, unconditional forgiveness, a justice that knows no favouritism, and a choice of moral and ethical values in line with our Christian belief system. (p. 59)

These latter values are specifically endorsed in the Christian school literature.

Clines (1968), a Hebrew scholar, pointed out that God has no image of His own – that man is created as God’s image, not in God’s image. That is, to be God’s image, is “to deputise in the created world for the transcendent God who remains outside the world order” (p. 101). Man “is representative rather than [a] representation since the idea of portrayal is secondary in significance of the image” (p. 101). The image is to be understood existentially more than ontologically in man’s function and activity – that function being to represent God’s lordship over the rest of the created order. The students at school in their work and demeanour, on this basis, are to represent the work and demeanour of God.

Another perspective from scripture is hinted at in 2 Corinthians 3:18 where the apostle Paul talks about “being transformed into His [God’s] likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”. Paul referenced the Spirit as the agent of transformation. The biblical view of man’s true humanity is that man was created to be truly man inasmuch as he was a dwelling place for God by His Spirit (Genesis 2:7, cf: John 20:22). When mankind sinned he became spiritually ‘dead’ (Ephesians 2:1). When mankind was reconciled to God, God once again took up residence in the man (Romans 8:9) by His Spirit, restoring man to his true humanity. Hence man is in the ‘image of God’ by virtue of the presence of God in the man. This is equally true for the child. Evangelicals in Christian schools therefore speak and write much on the students’ relationship to God. However, there is not a hint in scripture that man ever ceases to be in the image of God regardless of his spiritual condition. He never loses that image. This affirms the dignity of all mankind without
distinction including every child in the *Special Character* school. As Clines (1968) said, it “elevates all men … to the highest status conceivable, short of complete divinisation” (p. 53). And every child is thus elevated.

It would be easy to tabulate those qualities that separate mankind from the animal kingdom and knowing God has those qualities, to attribute the image of God to be resident in mankind – linguistic ability, ability to reason, to laugh and cry, to make sophisticated tools, to cook, and to worship. But mankind can also be indwelt by God, as we have seen, giving greater grounds for separating mankind as special. Then there is the fact that scripture counts mankind (including the child) of such infinite worth that a holy God should die for the sins of mankind. Even to grace mankind with the supreme honour of becoming a man for this purpose, laying aside His deity (Philippians 2:6-8) ennobled mankind. Such is the case for every child in the school. Such a perception of the immense worth of the child adds to the school’s *Special Character*. St Paul, in Acts 17:28-29 acknowledged “we indeed are His offspring”. Do not children bear the likeness of their parents?

Speaking of mankind the Psalmist (8:5-8) wrote that “You [God] crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts … the birds … and the fish” (see also Genesis 1:26). It was “a dominion mandate” (Munroe, 2008, p. 43) also referred to as the ‘cultural mandate’ or the ‘cultural commission’ (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p. 295). “Let them rule [have dominion – AV] over all the earth” (Genesis 1:26). It is a dominion over nature, not over fellow human beings (Lemke, 2008). As every child is included in that dominion mandate, scripture thereby assumes a dignity, nobility, worth, purpose and high destiny that belongs to each of them (Colson & Pearcey, 1999; Downs, 1994; Pazmino, 2008). This dominion mandate is promised upon being made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). The extensive leadership literature of Dr Myles Munroe of the Bahamas (over 40 books written) has been developed on the biblical basis of Genesis 1:26 – the dominion mandate that arises from the Imago Dei, and this principle is used to develop the potential in others around the world on the basis of their Imago Dei (Munroe, 2005). It is a basis for developing the potential of the student in the Christian school.

In the New Testament, the emphasis concerning the ‘Image of God’ shifts to a focus on Christ who is the true image of God. He is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15. See also 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:24; Hebrews 1:3). “In Christ, man sees what manhood was really meant to be” (Clines, 1968, p. 103). It was God’s purpose that mankind should be “conformed to the likeness of his [God’s] Son [Jesus]” (Romans 8:29). This does not preclude a teacher’s awareness of the child’s fallenness – the marred image, for in Proverbs 22:15 it is recognised, that “foolishness is
bound in the heart of the child” – that they are “born in sin” (Psalm 51:5; 58:3). In other words, the child is not a sinner because (s)he sins; (s)he sins because (s)he is a sinner (from birth). Christ “was tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). This is indicative that the child’s capacity to sin (free will being operative) was part of the Imago Dei. The second book of Corinthians 3:18 assures mankind that “as we behold the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same likeness”. In Special Character schools, it is purposed to expose students to that “image of Christ” for the transformative effects it promises.

The implications of the Imago Dei principle for the teacher in a Special Character school are considerable, as the literature indicates. The child is morally responsible and accountable to God. “The great myth of the 20th Century is that people are inherently good – that evil is just a result of external social causes … the Bible teaches that … evil … is rooted deep within the human heart” (Colson & Pearcey, 1993, p. 149). The child must, further, develop the God-like qualities that the scriptures demand of them in the light of that eschatological aspect of Christian living. Then there is a deep sense of worth and identity in the child as mentioned above. First Peter 2:9 suggests that God’s people are “a royal priesthood” which means that as sons and daughters of God, made in God’s image, they are ‘a child of the King’. Biblically speaking, there is a sense of humble royalty that surrounds the Christian believer. “The Christian’s identity is found in bearing the image of God” (Greene, 1998, p. 55). Human beings are dignified. “You made him a little less than God and crowned him with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:5). It is a human dignity, in one sense not one’s own but one derived from God, as a gift.

The Imago Dei principle has implications in the focus on whether the school is a ministry. According to Phillips Brooks (1895) the power which lies at the centre of all success in ministry is “the value of the human soul” (p. 264). To him it was “so supremely important” (p. 256) that without it, the work lacks effectiveness. To Brooks it was the central power of Christ’s ministry and that if we could have like understanding of the value of the human soul, the worth of the child, our work would approach the effectiveness of Christ’s work.

There is a restlessness within the human heart that “stirs us ceaselessly in search of meaning and purpose and connection. Christians know this something of the soul, or the Imago Dei – the image of God within us” (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p. 128). Augustine of Hippo as mentioned in the previous chapter, stated 1600 years ago, “You made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it find its rest in You” (Augustine, 1983, p. 15). The child is no different. If it is thought that integrated schools are semi-elitist, being the more free of behavioural problems, it could well be because a Christian student has come to terms with his/her Imago Dei and found the key to allaying that restlessness Augustine
spoke of. Like God, man has personality, personality that is grounded in the personality of God. That is, man finds his true home in God and in being in close relationship with Him. “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man”, wrote Pascal (cited in Sire, 2004, p. 32).

Because students are made in the image of God, “we need to develop not only the academic aspect of the students, but their spiritual, social and emotional facets as well” (Harris, 2006, p. 125). While educating the whole person thus, the educational approaches “that are manipulative or demeaning must be avoided” (Downs, 1994, p. 50) because of the Imago Dei. “Without the Imago Dei, utilitarian values become the dominant determinant” in our approach to education according to Colson & Pearcey (1999, p. 125). German theologian Helmut Thielicke comments on the emotional facet in saying, “His [human kind’s] greatness rests solely on the fact that God in His incomprehensible goodness has bestowed His love upon him. God does not love us because we are so valuable; we are valuable because God loves us” (as cited in Sire, 2004, p. 34). The import of this fact for the Christian school is that such love is embedded in the Special Character of the school; so will it be impacting on the child.

“If God exists and we are made in His image, we have real meaning, and we can have real knowledge through what He has communicated to us” (Schaeffer, 1968, p. 71). Being made in God’s image means man has the capacity for reason and knowledge. Schaeffer comments further on the reasonableness of communication between God and man, based on the premise “that man, as man, was created in the image of God” (p. 95). And so the child in a Christian school will be taught to pray and taught how to listen for the voice of God through His Word, the Holy scriptures. The Fine Arts, Music and the creative genius of man “is a part of the unique mannishness of man as made in the image of God. Man in contrast to non-man is creative” (Schaeffer, 1976, p. 133). “The ability to imagine new things or to endow old things with new significance” was the essence of the creativity Sire (2004) saw in the Imago Dei (p. 33). When once the mentor has caught a glimpse of the value of the human soul the teacher in a Special Character Christian school is enabled to show intense interest in the most diverse types of children/students. “It will give interest to many people whom otherwise we should find very uninteresting” (Brooks, 1895). The greatest resource of all is the human mind made in the image of God. The Christian teacher will thus exploit the latent possibilities in the minds of Christian school students.

Being made in the image of God also means that mankind, including the child, has the capacity of recognising and understanding good and evil, right and wrong; (s)he is conscience-conscious, and thus has the added problem of dealing with his/her wrong and his/her being inwardly made aware of his/her need of help outside of him/herself to solve that problem. C.S. Lewis reminds us that
sometimes God has to solve the problem when he says: “to be punished because one is truly guilty is to be treated as a human being made in God’s image, capable of making moral choices – even if the choice is wrong” (cited in Colson & Pearcey, 1993, p. 70). Punishment may not be a popular concept, but it is a biblical one, mentioned 78 times in the Bible (AV). This is the metanarrative of the Bible that fallen man is brought back into relationship with God through God solving that problem for him through His own death on the cross. This reconciliation to God is at the heart of Christian School philosophy. The nature of our relationship with one another stems from our relationship with the Christ of man’s salvation (Stronks, 2003) and reflects “the ways in which human beings image God” (p. 90).

The book of Genesis, chapter 1, says that God assessed what He had done. It was good/very good; (verse 25,31) “pleasing to the eye and good for food” (2:9, NIV). This was an expression of judgment or evaluation. To abdicate the responsibility to observe and evaluate our creations, is to abdicate this aspect of our Imago Dei (Gordon, 2010). Dr Rod Thompson (2003) found in Australian evangelical Christian schools a heavy dependence on the Genesis passages in establishing the biblical nature of the child – “you nurture the image of God in the child” (p. 160). “The Imago Dei embraces our entire selfhood in all its variegated functions, centred and unified in the heart” (Spykman, 1992, p. 227). And this selfhood is first met in the Genesis account. Perhaps this is why Schaeffer (1968) said, “Take away the first three chapters of Genesis and you cannot maintain a true Christian position nor give Christianity’s answers” (p. 104). In the senior school particularly, there are plenty of questions, whether it be a Special Character school or otherwise.

The Imago Dei as an organising principle in Special Character evangelical schools, is essential to their existence for on this principle rests the appreciation that the child is responsible and accountable to God. It is on this principle that the school becomes a ministry; that every child is equally important; that the child finds its true home in God (as grounded in the personality of God). The child is valued because God loves the child. The child will be taught to pray and to listen for the voice of God because in the child is the image of God. The mind of the child becomes the greatest resource for mankind. The child can be reconciled to God in spite of its fallenness for God assesses his creation of the child in His own image, as something that was ‘very good’. The Imago Dei is an anthropological organising principle – concerning the nature of man. It is also in the very nature of mankind to generate and espouse personal and communal values and it is to this principle of values that this chapter will give consideration.
Values

Education policy Professor Tooley (2000) commented that:

Values – one’s own and those of society – completely permeate the whole of … what education is. Only when we know our values could we know what was valuable in society, and hence what was worth knowing. Children couldn’t possibly learn everything as they grow up … some selection had to take place. And that selection process ultimately depends upon values. (p. 29)

The impartation of biblical values is of prime importance (as an organising principle) to evangelical schools (Gousmett, 2004). Much has been written on values – both positive and negative values. These include the seven deadly sins placed in contrast to the seven cardinal virtues: lust and chastity (self-control); gluttony and temperance; greed (avarice) and charity (generosity), sloth and diligence (zeal); wrath and patience; envy and kindness; pride and humility.

Throughout New Zealand state schools, “Cornerstone Values” have been promoted by John Heenan (1996). The material has been purchased by over 800 New Zealand schools. The programme has a strong emphasis on character education (concerned with behaviour), rather than values education per se (concerned with thinking). Of significance is that the eight values that are majored on, are derived from C.S. Lewis’ eight ‘objective values’ – honesty and truthfulness; kindness; consideration as concern for others (justice); compassion; obedience (to rightful authority); responsibility; respect; duty (obligation) – values which Lewis, after long years of research, considered all cultures held in common (New Zealand Foundation for Character Education, 2011). There are other values that Cornerstone deal with, such as courage, loyalty, unselfishness, tolerance, sacrifice, self-control. “Character is a pattern of behaviour and is demonstrated in relationships toward one another, and it is the goal of Christian school education that this behaviour be characterised by moral excellence and other-directedness as defined by God” (Uecker, 2003, p. 244). The Christian Educators Association International have their own set of values: love, biblical knowledge, respect, integrity, prayer, patience, self-control, worship, truth, unity, forgiveness, faith, servanthood, joy and professional excellence (Christian Educators’ Association International, 2011).

There has been much written about values especially in the recent New Zealand Government curriculum requirements where values are defined as “deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 10). “The values of a person or group are the moral principles and beliefs that they think are important” (Collins Cobuild Dictionary, 2001, p. 1733) and the Concise Oxford (McIntosh, 1951, p. 1431) defines values as “Qualities on which worth and desirability depend”. A virtue has been defined as “a good quality or way of behaving – ‘his virtue is patience’, ‘humility’ is considered a virtue” (Collins Cobuild Dictionary, 2001, p. 1744). The
Concise Oxford (McIntosh, 1951, p. 1431) defines virtue as moral excellence, uprightness, goodness, as ‘a virtue is its own reward’, particular moral excellence, as ‘patience is a virtue’.

Natural virtues – justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude, theological virtues such as ‘faith, hope, love’. Values recognise a person’s worth or desirability for certain qualities, whereas virtues are the qualities themselves. The curriculum document says that the values are the beliefs held about those qualities that are listed in the document. Values are thus subjective while the virtues are objective; values are personal while the virtues themselves are impersonal; values are culture-based while the virtues are absolute (non-negotiables) from a biblical perspective; values represent a preference while the virtues are the non-negotiables that are chosen or rejected.

For the purposes of this research the two terms (values and virtues) will be used interchangeably as, in non-academic contexts, that seems to be the way the words are used. Analysis of uses of these terms in the Bible suggest that two factors describe biblical virtues or values: they are excellencies (occupying the highest moral ground), and secondly, they are qualities that are pleasing to God. The evangelical stance on values is not only based on biblical absolutes but is a response and their answer to moral relativism and situational ethics (Beckwith & Koukl, 1998). Evangelicals believe they are not born virtuous; nor do they believe they became ethical by osmosis. Values, morals and truth have to be taught. Lynch (2000) suggests the reason so many resort to homeschooling is to “focus on values education, belief systems, safety and security issues” (p. 101). He also said that “Parents want schools … that are able to overtly teach what they regard as desirable moral values” (p. 93).

Mencius (372-289 BCE), the famous Confucian Chinese philosopher, once wrote that “Men must be decided on what they will not do, and then they are able to act with vigour in what they ought to do” (Mencius, n.d.). The heavy reliance on biblical directives by evangelicals generally and evangelical schools no less, gave rise to the analysis of those particular biblical values and virtues. Another resource on values is Rosie Boom’s two volumes (2006, 2008) on The Gift of Values where, as an evangelical she writes on various values, based on scripture: honesty, a positive attitude, courage, diligence, perseverance, obedience. In her second volume, generosity, self-control, encouragement, forgiveness, patience, compassion. Being biblically based will inevitably lead to a school’s engagement with biblical/Christian values. In sum, the literature relating to values has highlighted a problem with so-called secular versus sacred values, a problem they term “dualism”. It is a ‘split vision’ principle on which the literature has much to say. It is a theological principle which is the subject of the next subsection.
Evangelicalism

At the beginning of this thesis I outlined a dependency this thesis has on evangelical presuppositions. It is well to note that ‘evangelical’ means different things to different people. Modern evangelicalism is a movement that grew out of the fundamentalism of the 1920s and 30s (Stock, 2012). Technically the movement emerged by that name around 1730 (Bebbington, 1989), though “most evangelicals would maintain that they trace their heritage back to the New Testament itself” (Erickson, 1997, p. 16). The term derives from the Greek ‘evangelion’, translated gospel (good news). According to Wheaton College’s Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, ‘the term is a wide-reaching definitional ‘canopy’ that covers a diverse number of protestant traditions, denominations, organisations and churches” (n.p.). It is not a name of a single church. The lines have become blurred; somewhere between the extremes of fundamentalism and the extreme liberals are the evangelicals (Luo, 2006) and so are termed the third leading strand of American Protestantism. There is also seen to be an overlap between evangelical protestants and Roman Catholics. (See Figure 2.2, p. 34). The evangelicals themselves can be seen as in three camps (Luo, 2006) – Traditionalists: the Christian right (for example Jerry Falwell); the Centrists (for example Leith Anderson) and the Modernists (a small minority represented by much more diversity in their beliefs). Historically, modern evangelicals were earlier called the ‘New Evangelicals’ who pulled away from fundamentalism’s anti-intellectualism, militancy and culture-shunning traits. Theologically, evangelicals believe in the trinity, that the Bible alone is the inerrant infallible word of God, that salvation is by grace alone through faith and not accomplished by human effort or achievements; that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and His death and resurrection were the payments of human sin (Stock, 2012). Sociologically, Wheaton (2012) says the term describes the religious movements and denominations which sprung out of a series of revivals that swept the north Atlantic Anglo-American world in the 18th and early 19th centuries, involving Whitfield, the Wesleys, and Edwards, giving rise to the Baptists and Methodists, more recently under Finney’s, Moody’s and Sunday’s preaching. The Wheaton statement goes on to suggest the term evangelicalism is used in three senses – as affirming certain key doctrines, as an organic group of movements – a style as much as a set of beliefs and an attitude; and thirdly as a label for a coalition of key figures who reacted against fundamentalism, for example Carl F Henry, Ockenga, Billy Graham or key institutions like Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College and Fuller Seminary.

Historian Mark Noll (2003) of Notre Dame in writing of the American scene endorses Bebbington’s (1989) definition/description emphasising the ‘new birth’ as a life changing experience of God, as well as a concern for sharing the faith. Millard Erickson (1997) analyses ‘the evangelical left’ as those that oppose capital punishment, support gun control, are pacifistic, promote legalisation of same-sex marriage, protection of access to abortion, and focus on non-contentious issues such as
poverty. Erickson, Helseth and Taylor (2004) have written extensively of a relatively new movement among evangelicals, called the ‘Emergent Churches’ or ‘Young Evangelicals’, as headed up by Brian McLaren, its leading pastor; Rob Bell and his universalism; and the late Stanley Grenz, its theologian. They have been labelled the post-evangelicals, the post-conservatives or the postmodern evangelicals, with their revisioning of biblical authority (Pierard & Elwell, 2001).

The debates in evangelicalism involve a number of issues that have challenged traditional evangelicalism. Clark Pinnock’s (and others’) ‘Open Theism’ (of which there are four kinds) who argue that God cannot know the future, is also responded to by Erickson, Helseth and Taylor (2004). There is the debate concerning eternal judgment and annihilationism as supported by John Stott’s ‘tentative views’. John Stott is himself a leading evangelical statesman (Callahan, 2001) and has deviated from the traditional view (Morris, 2001). The late Bernard Ramm is another elder statesman of evangelicalism and it is argued that, following his studying under Karl Barth and studying Rudolf Bultmann’s new hermeneutics, he has called into question the traditional view of inerrancy, and in later years followed Barthian Hermeneutics (Franklin, 2011). See also Ramm (1970).

The divide between Arminians and Calvinists is possibly the largest theological divide in evangelicalism and is the most historical, giving rise to the Reformed Theology of the conservative wing and to the holiness teaching of Methodism through to the charismatic renewal of recent times. The five points of Calvinism (Palmer, 1980) are usually given under the acronym of TULIP – total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance, whereas Arminian evangelicals reject these claims. This is seen in the divide over the use of ‘charismata’ – spiritual gifts which has divided evangelicals between cessationists (who believe the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 no longer operate) and the charismatics who do believe and practise them (J.R. Williams, 2001). This is more keenly felt in those Christian schools governed by ‘Reformed’ people. Special Character schools, while often ‘Reformed’ in theology, are more Arminian in practice. There is, further, a more recent, growing divide between these evangelicals that are supersessionists with regard to the state of Israel (that ‘God’s people’ are now centred in a non-Jewish understanding – often referred to as ‘replacement theology’), and an increasing number of evangelical groups that support Christian Zionism. Hence Christian schools that send their students to Israel in support of that nation.

A more subtle division in evangelical communities is between those committed to the Church Growth Movement, with its formulaic approach (Moreau, 2001) to achieving growth especially among mega-churches, and those committed to Revivalism, aware that only a sovereign (divine) intervention can bring about lasting change in the culture (Davies, 2001).
Dualism

Dualism is:

The belief that existence is comprised of two parts: our secular or physical existence within the world around us which is essentially evil, and the sacred spiritual world of the soul which is made pure through the salvation of Jesus Christ. Dualism is often referred to (critically) as the nature/grace distinction. (Edlin & Ireland, 2006, p. 244)

In this thesis dualism is referred to as a theological principle because on the basis of classifying actions, functions and things as secular or sacred, there is the possibility of cutting across other foundational principles of Special Character – God’s sovereignty in all things, for example. In the NZACS Constitution (2012), the second clause of its statement of faith reads: “Secondly, we affirm the sovereignty of God and Lordship of Jesus Christ over all the universe. We recognise Him as the creator and sustainer of all things and that all things exist for his glory”. Such Christian classics as Thomas á Kempis’ (1963) The Imitation of Christ (over 2000 editions since its production in the 13th century) or Brother Lawrence’s 1997 edition of the 15th Century The Practise of the Presence of God, both still in print epitomise the concept of God’s sovereign rule over all of life, no part being ‘secular’.

According to Walsh and Middleton (1984), “Dualism … is the fundamental worldview problem which has plagued the history of the church and still plagues us” (p. 96). Jary and Jary’s (2000) definition of dualism refers to “any doctrine in which fundamental forms of things are seen as two contrasting types without any possibility of one being reduced to the other” (p. 168). Ken Dickens (2006) goes so far as to say that “the greatest contribution that the Christian school movement can make towards the kingdom of God is to confront the issue of dualism” (p. 119). Significantly, though, a number of key writers on Christian education and worldview studies made much of in evangelical schools make no significant mention of dualism as a theme in their major works. Examples include Braley, Layman and White (2003); Edlin (1999); Pearcey (2004); and Philips and Brown (1991); Sire (2004); Sproul (1986); van Brummelin (1998, 2002), though he deals with it elsewhere; Wilson (1991) and his other works on ‘classical’ Christian education.

Dualism “separates reality into two fundamentally distinct categories: holy and profane, sacred and secular” (Walsh & Middleton, 1984, p. 95). To the biblical Christian in Special Character schools, all of life is sacred (Colossians 3:23). The view taken by Walsh and Middleton (1984) is that our vision of life, in the scriptures, needs to be evidenced in our cultural history. They say Christians ought to have much to contribute in our economic, political and military systems, for example. Wells (2007) points out that this dualism has its roots in classical Greek philosophy that portrayed the soul as being alienated from the natural world. According to Greene (1998) the foundation needed for a
Christian school is a biblical worldview in that the Christian scriptures are deemed to be the arbiter and source of truth. Greene’s concern, along with that of Dickens (2006), Edlin (2006), Fennema (2006b), Goheen (2006), and Walsh & Middleton (1984), is that the claim to a biblical worldview does not guarantee a biblical worldview. The problem as Greene and others see it is that so many coming into the Christian school environment bring with them a two-level ‘split-vision’ view of reality – a lower level called nature and an upper level called grace. In Christian theology, dualism’s influence can be traced back to classical Greek writers, on to Augustine (334-430 AD) through the neo-platonists (Plotinus) and thence to Aquinas (1224-74 AD). Not all scholars agree on whether the Bible presupposes dualism – there are complexities within the doctrine and the concept of dualism has been applied in a number of directions. Modern writers on Christian schooling see it as “destructive of Christian truth” (Greene, 1998, p. 73). According to Walsh and Middleton (1984, p. 113), “the most devastating effect of dualism is that it necessitates a double allegiance. It forces us to serve two masters”.

The theological principle of dualism, deeply rooted in theological history has implications for the Christian school when interpreted as a challenge to the sovereignty of God in all areas of life. Not all Christian school writers are agreed as to the application of this principle especially in the light of some perceived biblical dualisms. For example, in Leviticus 10:10, and Ezekiel 44:23 “They shall teach My people the difference between the sacred and the secular” (Berkeley). Paul, in writing to the Philippians said (3:20) “we are citizens of heaven” (Philips, ASV, Way). Paul’s writings are silent as to his redeeming tent-making as part of God’s kingdom activity. The very concept of Sabbath-keeping (a theme throughout Scripture) indicates a certain dualism with respect to our life’s activities. The Christian school literature does not seem to address these biblically valid dualisms. Walsh and Middleton (1984) distinguish between dualism and duality – duality being the valid alternatives of the scriptures wherein we must choose – life or death, for example. But the categorisation is not always clear. The very fact that Christian schools are set up at all makes a dualistic statement that we are different rather than seeking to ‘redeem’ the state education system as part of God’s kingdom programme.

One particular aspect of dualism that attaches to church-linked education in particular is the dualism of church and school. The ‘church’ schools are more correctly called denominational schools as schooling is not a function of the church, biblically speaking, but of the home. Paradoxically, church schools make a stronger distinction between church and school, than evangelical Christian schools do. Hence the criticism that the evangelical schools often function as though they are a church. It has been lamented (by Frost, 2002 as cited in Dickens, 2006) that the contemporary church and the Christian schools are “attractive, hierarchical and dualistic” (p. 115). Firstly, in modern (crude)
parlance for ‘attractive’ it is said that the concern is for ‘getting bums on seats’, hardly a worthy consumerist motivation for the gospel or for evangelical Christian schooling (but in the current neoliberal context, at times a necessity for their very existence). The second issue concerns structure – ‘hierarchical’ which leads to (benevolent?) dictatorship (under the guise of biblical authority) rather than governance by a community of parents. The third issue of dualism applies in two different ways. The church is seen to be dualistic in that it often sees itself as handling the spiritual side of life only whereas schooling and other issues are seen to be dealing with the secular side of life. Dickens makes the point pertinently when he says, “To limit the church to concern with the spiritual is to limit the sovereignty of God … God is interested in all of life” (Dickens, 2006, p. 119).

The teaching against dualism seems to arise from three sources. The first is the key ‘reformed’ doctrine of the sovereignty of God – God’s rule extends over all of life. The second source is in the reference to Hebrew thought as opposed to current Greek philosophical categorisation. The third source is a relatively recent teaching in some evangelical quarters concerning the Kingdom of God which sees the Kingdom of God as “God restoring His rule over the whole of creation” (Goheen, 2006, p. 175). Whatever the perspective is, however, it never seems to undermine the worship that all these writers endorse and that is seen in all the Christian schools, a worship of God that is common to them all. This theological principle is what is considered in this last section.

**Worship**

At the heart of the evangelical Christian school and of the biblical metanarrative is the worship of the triune God of the Bible. In this section various aspects of worship will be explored to show how they might influence the *Special Character* of the evangelical integrated Christian school. The Pentateuch focuses predominantly on how to worship. The Tabernacle and later, the Temple, were the centres of Hebrew worship and culture. The Psalms deal with the content of worship. According to the Christian scriptures, worship characterises the future life of those who are with Christ in eternity (Revelation 5:8-14). While worship is much more than music (worship in song), the Christian scriptures make much of religious music – the only kind of music the Bible talks about. Eugene Peterson (2004), in his introduction to 1-2 Chronicles in his paraphrase of the Bible (The Message), says:

> In Israel’s story, nothing takes precedence over worship in nurturing and protecting our identity as a people of God – not politics, economics, family life or art. … The people of God are not primarily a political entity or a military force or an economic power; they are a holy congregation diligent in worship. (p. 484)

The most characteristic form in both biblical and modern formal worship times is the matter of singing to the Lord. Hence the primacy of worship times in their assemblies in evangelical schools,
in identifying their *Special Character*. For Christian believers, singing “is the divinely instituted, divinely commanded and divinely regulated means of responding to God’s great works of creation, preservation and deliverance” (Gordon, 2010, p. 31). Two whole books of the Bible are songs (the *Psalms, Song of Solomon*), the Psalms being devoted exclusively to providing worship songs (150 of them) for God’s people, not to mention the numerous other songs in scripture. An entire branch of the Levitical priesthood was set aside to be singers or choristers or instrumentalists (1 Chronicles 15:16-24), as though this was a dominant part of formal communal worship, cognizant though they were that every aspect of life was to serve as an expression of one’s worship to God.

Such worship is also important in the *Special Character* school as it provides the greatest motivation to learning (Astley, 1992). Dr Noel Weeks (1988) states “Children need to be motivated at learning …. The prime motivation is that God requires it of us …. State schools are forced to seek for alternative motivations” (p. 4). While the basic motive for worship is to glorify God (Psalms 65:2, 96:7, 105:3, 115:1), there is also an acknowledged joy associated with worship (Psalms 67:4, 71:23, 100:2). Again Eugene Peterson (2004) acknowledges that:

> Worship is the most popular thing that Christians do. … There are more people at worship on any given Sunday [in the USA] … than are at all the football games or on the golf links or fishing or taking walks in the woods. Worship is the single most popular act in the land. (pp. 50-51)

It is out of that joy in so relating to God in worship as a prime motivator in Christian schools that the student can be appealed to, to do their best. The same motivation – to please God – is reiterated in 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Colossians 3:23. God Himself is spoken of as a singer, rejoicing over His people with singing (Zephaniah 3:17 in 21 of 30 English translations). Because it is addressed directly to God, worship is very personal:

> Worship is an act that develops feeling for God, not a feeling for God that is expressed in an act of worship. … We can act ourselves into a new way of feeling much quicker than we can feel ourselves into a new way of acting. … We think if we don’t feel something there can be no authenticity in doing it. … The Bible wastes very little time on the way we feel. (Peterson, 2004, p. 54) (Underlining mine)

Because it is often emotional and contemporary, therefore controversial concerning music styles, it gives rise to what are referred to as “worship wars” in the church (Hansen, 2009, see also Cooling, 2012). However, much of the evangelical literature on Christian school education has little to say on formal worship itself. This may be partly because so much of the literature is from Reformed educationists who have a tendency to be more cognitively than experientially-orientated. In New Zealand, many of the younger generation attending Christian schools come from a charismatic background and thus bring with them a more contemporary approach to formal worship. Gordon (2010) has made some pertinent comments concerning contemporaneity and other meta-messages.
coming through in the guitar-driven worship of the modern evangelical community, that could well apply to the Christian schools. As a lecturer in media ecology, Gordon sees media as both a social construct that reflects cultural values, and as a social constructor that shapes cultural values. The worship in an evangelical *Special Character* school will reflect evangelical values and theology, at the same time inculcating evangelical values and theology (Astley, 1992). They reflect our priorities and shape our priorities. “We make song and song makes us” is Gordon’s thesis (p. 10). In the preface of the Trinity Hymnal (1961), as cited by Gordon (2010), it says, “It is well known that the character of its song, almost equal with the character of its preaching, controls the theology of a church” (p. vi). The ancient Catholic thesis of Prosper Aquitaine (390-455 AD) “Lex orandi, lex credendi” (The law of prayer is the law of belief) is applicable to music – “how we worship shapes how we believe” (Fournier, 2005). In shaping that belief system through formal worship, Archbishop William Temple (1934), seventy years ago said:

> To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God; to devote the will to the purpose of God.

This could well apply to the current students in evangelical schools. However, in Gordon’s view, there are three metamessages that come through when pop music style is used in worship – contemporaneity, triviality and paedocentrism as though contemporaneity was a value in itself – being current. It is supposed to help ‘hold’ the younger generation (paedocentric) such as are in the schools under discussion, who have little tolerance for older style music in church. The triviality is tested by how well the lyrics stand as good verse were they not put to music, and how the current generation have chosen informality over formality and ritual, the subjective over the objective, the spontaneous over the planned. Gordon Dahl (1972) said in reference to the old aphorism ‘we work at our play and play at our work’, that “the confusion has deepened: we worship our work, work at our play and play at our worship”. The danger is that worship can degenerate into flippancy.

It is possible to modernise old hymns to make them ‘contemporary’ as Rick Warren (1995) advocates. While Gordon (2010) and Myers (1989) and others have provided a well-researched academic approach to the role of music in worship, there are counter-arguments to their case. Rick Warren of California mega-church fame (over 22,000 attendees) and whose writings have sold in the tens of millions in over 30 languages, argues in *The Purpose Driven Church* (1995) that his own research prior to commencing his church, indicated that the number one reason why people do not attend church, was that they do not relate to the type of music in the church. It is not their style.

In the history of evangelical church revivals, the ‘movements’ have generally produced their own music (Orr, 1965). Out of the Moody-Sankey era of the 19th Century, there arose significant numbers
of hymn-writers and composers who wrote in the idiom and style that reflected the culture of the
day (Bliss, Bonar, Crosby, Grant, Havergal, Sankey,). Bible societies are adamant that their rationale
for bible translation must be that each ethnic group must get the Christian message in their heart
language for it to be transformational (Bible Society, 2011). Does not the same argument apply to the
heart-language of worship which music tends to be, trivial to some though it may seem?

Peter Wagner (1999), former professor of Church Growth at Fuller Seminary, in his *Churchquake*
comments that the “new apostolic worship is … plugged into contemporary culture” (p. 155). In
analysing the eight most significant changes in worship, he lists “from classical to contextual, from
performance to participation, from hymns to songs, from pipe organ to percussion, from cerebral to
celebration, from awe of God to intimacy with God, from liturgy to liberty, from meditation to
mission” (pp. 157-8). He cites George Hunter who says, “All worship services are contemporary, but
most are ‘contemporary’ to some other culture or generation” (p. 159). It is that challenge that school
administrators face when deciding on the style of worship at their school assemblies. Both Wagner
(1999) and Warren (1995) also document how that the complaint about modern worship styles, has
been repeated down the centuries.

Hymn books in the past, have represented the choices of specialised committees of musicians,
academics, divines and literary critics (Aldis et al, 1936). The current generation of song-writers now
have a ‘free pass’ to having their music heard, recorded and chosen for worship by local personnel,
be it school or church. It is no longer under the control of an elite group. That the lyrics are trivial is
a generalisation that could be made in any generation of writers – some songs will be trivial, others
have deep meaning. The same could well be true today with ‘contemporary’ music in the schools.
Has there ever not been music/worship wars in the church? For the pragmatic, the seeker-sensitive
services are those whose music is attractive to ‘the man in the street’. If that is in the form of the pop-
music genre and their churches are full, that to them is justification enough for its usage. Because
*Special Character* schools are well-populated by students who come from this type of church, the
same music style may well be to them, significant and meaningful in their worship and as their
worship.

**Summary**

I began this chapter by examining the unique position evangelical *Special Character* schools hold in
terms of governance arrangements of New Zealand schools with particular reference to Roger Dale’s
work. The evangelical integrated Christian school is structured outwardly by the constraints and
boundaries established by the state whereby its funding is shared by both state and proprietor,
although parents very often pay attendance dues to cover the proprietors’ mortgages. It is owned by
the Christian public, with an education financed at the level of the classroom largely by
government but provided by evangelical Christians. Regulation is established by a number of
government agencies, such as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), New Zealand
Teachers’ Council (NZTC), Ministry of Education (MOE) and ERO (Smith, 2002), though for
evangelical schools, they purposefully adhere to biblical understandings with respect to curriculum
and pedagogy, to biblical values and purpose. These schools are thus able to fulfil the ideals of an
essentialist philosophy of education in providing a rigorous, teacher-driven, academic programme as
established by the state, a content that is of essential worth and within the bounds of absolute truth,
provided in a context of the finest of teaching methods (Benson, 2001).

Because the state has legislated this way, evangelical Christians (and others) are now free to carry
out what they believe is their biblical mandate to train/school their own. It has been shown from the
literature that the evangelical schools not only carry out a biblical mandate but they see in the
secularism of the state’s provision of education a humanism that runs counter to their mandate. This
in itself adds further motivation to the evangelical Christian home to seek out a schooling that is not
only biblical, but in their perception is free of the humanism their children could otherwise more
readily be exposed to in state schools. These were two secular principles about which Special
Character evangelical schools had to confront: governance and humanism.

Such a provision for the evangelical family enables the child to be exposed to a biblical
metanarrative of the historic faith of Christianity that answers to every demand of life and living, and
that is grounded in both the cognitive and the experiential aspects of Christian life. Indeed, every
aspect of the learning process is based upon and grounded in the Christian scriptures as representing
ultimate truth. There is a clear rejection of the relativism commonly seen in postmodern approaches
to truth-claims. These were the two philosophical principles about which evangelical school
literature had much to say: A metanarrative and truth.

In order to address the biblical truth claims in the learning context, evangelical pedagogues have
adopted a view of the child based on the biblical concept of the Imago Dei (the image of God) and
thus view their function as a sacred trust that views humankind as a special creation and the
culmination of God’s creative work as being only fully human, when indwelt by God Himself. The
absolutes of biblical truth provide Special Character schools with a solid basis for ethical values and
a clear sense of right and wrong and of consequences and accountability to a Higher Authority.
These were the two anthropological principles about which evangelical school literature had also
focussed on: The Imago Dei and values.
Christian schooling was seen to be compromised when life was divided into secular and sacred as was suggested in the literature happens within Christian schooling and church life. This too was addressed. To the evangelical school family, faith finds its zenith in the worship of Jesus, such worship being at the very heart of the Christian school and its *Special Character*. These were the two theological principles about which evangelical school literature had varying comments: dualism and worship.

In seeking to answer the question as to how participants in this study perceive their *Special Character*, the literature would suggest that *Special Character* must be viewed in the context of a governance regime to which these schools must adhere. The schools operate in a humanistic secular context which they feel mandated to address. Their commitment to a biblical worldview enables them to formulate a philosophy grounded in the metanarrative of scripture and committed to the perceived eternal truths of the Christian scriptures. Their *Special Character* is strongly influenced by their view of the child as an image of the child’s Creator, a child who is to be taught the values emanating from that biblical metanarrative. The overriding principle within that metanarrative is that ‘God is in control’ of all of life and therefore there must be a rejection of the various split-vision concepts of dualism. In such a context, *Special Character* personnel will with one heart express themselves in a spontaneous contemporary worship both formally and informally.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes, firstly, the research paradigm framing the project, and explains why a qualitative approach has been taken in this particular study. Philosophical and methodological assumptions made are explained. The use of an interpretive lens is justified, and the presuppositions that characterise this study’s approach to academic inquiry are outlined. The research questions and sub-questions are then restated. The research design, that of multiple case studies, is defined and explored as to its procedures and modifications for this research. The rationale for the sampling procedures is explained including the choice of schools studied and the choice of participants. The sources of evidence drawn on in this research are outlined and the type of data collected is described. Ethical considerations are taken into account and an outline given of the interviewing process itself. The section on data analysis includes an explanation of the coding system and its application in the analysis of the interview data. How such analysis was reduced to charts and how that led to thematic classification of the data is explained. The researcher’s long-standing ‘insider’ positioning within the research had implications for researcher-participant relationships. Issues of transparency and authenticity therefore consider possible bias in the researcher, in the interview and in the respondent. Finally, issues of validity, verification and reliability are addressed. The chapter outline is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below:

![Figure 4.1: Outline of Methodology](image-url)
STRUCTURE

Research Paradigm/Framework

This research into Special Character of state-integrated Christian Schools is an interpretive qualitative study. “It advances fundamental knowledge about the social world” (Neuman, 2003, p.21), in this case the world of evangelical Christian schools. It is a social science study focusing on people in organisations and the perceptions of these people (Mutch, 2005). Qualitative interpretive social science research is appropriate to this study since it concerns how school personnel make sense of and operationalise (Merriam, 1998) Special Character in their schools. The constructed realities of Special Character spoken of by the participants will be multiple. Anderson (1998) says, “A fundamental assumption of the qualitative research paradigm is that a profound understanding of the world can be gained through conversation and observation in natural settings rather than through experimental manipulation under artificial conditions” (p.119).

I would have favoured an approach described by Creswell (1994) as a “low-risk, fixed method of research without ambiguities and possible frustrations” (p. 8) leading to quantitative work. But the topic did not lend itself to that approach. The participants’ perceptions concerning Special Character were being elicited. Given that the nature of the research question drives the research approach, (Anderson, 1998; Creswell, 1994), a qualitative paradigm was chosen. It was also chosen because the topic required a preference for meanings – “documenting the world from the point of view of the people studied” (Silverman, 2000, p. 8). A qualitative approach also involves generating qualitative data from field work and interviews, such as has been carried out in this study.

While qualitative research has been challenged as value-laden and subject to bias (Creswell, 1994), interpretivists believe that efforts toward total objectivity are illusionary at best. An interpretive social science research approach, while being value-laden, is appropriate to this study because values are an integral part of all social life, as they are of school life and especially so in Special Character schools based on biblical values. This study on Special Character is an investigation that seeks insights rather than statistical analysis. The data were collected mainly in the form of words where the collection strategies involved documents and semi-structured interviews, along with verbal verification. The very nature of the interview process accommodated a personal process (Neuman, 2003; Silverman, 2000), and as the research was seeking to understand a social/human phenomenon, detailed views (often as quotations) of participants are reported. These were analysed using thematic analysis or document analysis techniques (Mutch, 2005).

Qualitative analysis concerns the quality of a thing – not ‘how many times?’ But, ‘how did you feel?’ for example. Therefore its findings are not necessarily applicable elsewhere – it does not seek to
generalise to the whole population (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Rather, it records what people said or did in a particular location and allows for a full and rich description, deep in substance and meaning. In this research sixty-two extensive interviews were used as well as the documents associated with each school to ascertain that perceived reality – the quality and nature of Special Character, as it was perceived. The high number of participants allowed for some patterns within the data to be perceived.

**Philosophical and Methodological Assumptions**

Decisions about choice of methods going into this study were based on assumptions that participants’ perceptions about Special Character would be multiple, subjective and constructed so that the chosen methods of investigation would provide the richest source of knowledge and understandings about Special Character that could be acquired. These are the ontological and epistemological assumptions on which this research is based. Special Character was deemed to be value-laden as stated above, its values being specific, namely, Christian or biblical values; these were the axiological assumptions. The study on Special Character was situationally constrained; it only occurs in the context of faith-based schools and is constrained and moulded by the context itself. I needed to exercise a personal view as to what data were highlighted; these were the rhetorical assumptions.

The methodological assumptions related to eight issues. The first issue was the goal of the investigation. There was an endeavour to describe in depth, not looking for causes of Special Character but gaining an empathetic understanding of it. Secondly, the focus of research was on the nature of Special Character – what kind of schooling is Special Character school education? How do these people, involved in Special Character education, make sense of their lives? These are emic issues, arising from within the participants themselves. They are the embodiment of that Special Character as they perceive it. The study was an analysis of words, not numbers. The third issue in method related to design characteristics: it was an interpretive Case Study with semi-structured interviews by key informants (up to 11 in each school) with emerging themes categorized from the literature and the interviews. The fourth issue concerns instruments. As interviewer, I was the primary instrument. I was not an objective observer, but a key part of a dialectical relationship. The content, pace and structure of the interview was largely in my hands. There was potential for me to be involved in the creation of the outcome of the interview through such things as the questions posed, the issues raised, subtle and not-so-subtle hints, expressions of interest and body language. My theoretical positioning, my own “social moment”, and “who I am” could not be written out of the research. Conducting semi-structured interviews, the interview schedule itself was an essential instrument to the research. Documents were also analysed. Number five assumption concerned data
generation. Purposive sampling was undertaken, with schools being chosen for their convenience, six (few) schools only were chosen such as would provide scope that was at the same time manageable, where their individual uniqueness was important to the understanding of their Special Character. The sixth methodological assumption concerned mode of analysis: it was a thematic analysis where differences and divergences were looked for. As such it was an inductive study. Seventh, were findings. These were comprehensive, very detailed descriptions about Special Character, a summary of opinions and perceptions. Finally, number eight concerned truth-value. This was established through verification with principals and executives in the Christian School movement and its authenticity attested by triangulating findings from the interviews with school documents and the literature.

General Framework: An Interpretive Lens

The lens through which I interpreted my world was the ‘interpretive’ approach with my own worldview directing this. As Neuman describes it, “Interpretive researchers study meaningful social action … in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds” (Neuman, 2003, pp. 76, 79). In this research that social world is the evangelical schooling from a select group of schools.

Interpretive research is a subjective approach, interrelated and dialogic (Woods & Trexler, 2001) of necessity, as it deals with people’s sensitivities: the interpretivist is more “concerned with achieving an empathetic understanding of feelings … than with testing laws of human behaviour” (Neuman, 2003, p. 81). Understandably, this is the criticism it faces – that it is too subjective and lacking in rigour. This is the view that Frankfort, Nachmias and Nachmias (2000) recognise when they argue that

Those who follow the interpretative approach realise that not only is their subject matter different from the factual, objective material of the positivist but because of this difference, the credibility of the findings and the explanatory principles they propose is considered to be less than that attributed to the natural sciences. (p. 11)

Special Character research deals with the religious sensitivities of people within the schooling context: it is a concept about which there are no definitive understandings and about which there could be no right or wrong answers to the questions raised. Rather, what could be gleaned from the research was an empathetic understanding of the religious sentiments of the participants in the study as they applied to their educational tasks.

Yet interpretivism contributes to our understanding of the reasons and motives that shape a person’s internal feelings and decision-making (Weber, 1981). In this case study, interest was in the reasons
and motives behind the participants’ responses to Special Character schools and their understandings of what Special Character in schools meant for them. It was believed that an interpretive approach would provide insights into how the participants related to their world, their social context and their social actions, and how they construct social meaning within those Special Character schools. Reality for the interpretivist is to be found within this social interaction – constructed in the minds of those involved. It is a subjective reality, encapsulating a perspective that differs from one person to another (Neuman, 2003). Thus, to interpretivists, reality is what you think it is: it does not exist independent of the humans who interpret it. While the positivist believes “the world may be understood by studying the parts” (Checkland, in Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 28), the interpretivist argues “the whole can only be studied in its own right” (McPherson, in Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 28). The former is reductionist in its approach (Stake, 1995), the latter synthetic. Special Character can be better understood by taking a synthetic account of relationships within the schools, the curriculum, relationships with the homes, and with the proprietors, thus gaining an overall picture.

Interpretivism moves from observations to theory generation (an inductive approach) (Neuman, 2003). Induction moves us from the specific to the abstract. It is a practical orientation that generates theories and postulates but also tests those concepts and theories (deductively). Thus theory and evidence become interwoven. It was only as the qualitative data were analysed that the most significant themes became apparent. This led to the formulation that certain characteristics of evangelical schools are generally in evidence among those claiming to be evangelical. Deductions could then be made about other schools in terms of being evangelical, where those emphases or themes were seen to dominate.

**Research Question Restated**

The question set out to be answered, as given in Chapter 1, was:

How is the Special Character of New Zealand Protestant Integrated Evangelical Schools (NZPIES) interpreted and reflected in practice?

Delamont defines qualitative research as finding out “how the people you are researching understand their world” (Delamont, 2002, p. 7). The process through which the question for this study was addressed was aimed at finding out how the participants from NZPIES understood their Special Character, and whether those understandings (implicit and overt) reflected in their practice, in their behaviour, in their operation, in their functioning within the schools. It was both the participant and the school that were the reference points for descriptions of that behaviour and operation. In order to address this question richly, as noted in Chapter One, other related insights were sought either during
the probing at the time of interviewing or during data analysis to consider what factors might enable or constrain the outworking of Special Character?

While the thesis is concerned primarily to describe the perceptions that are held concerning Special Character in evangelical schools, given the instances of ‘threat’ to the maintenance of Special Character, the further questions enabled critical reflection about the mitigating factors and the constraints on Special Character, the limitations as well as the possibilities that Special Character encounters.

RESEARCH DESIGN: MULTIPLE CASE STUDIES

Defining Case Studies

Yin (2003) defines Case Study research as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 13). This research constitutes in-depth case studies (multiple cases) about six schools concerning their Special Character. Multiple cases strengthen the results (Yin, 1994) by replicating the pattern-matching and so ensuring a robust theory, should theory arise. While the six schools were studied in depth, the findings are analysed in terms of perception of Special Character (a phenomenon). Where a case (a school) is studied to research a phenomenon in the school, the school is merely an instrument for the study – hence an instrumental case. To understand Special Character as an issue within state integrated Christian schools, several cases were studied as ‘instrumental’ case studies (Berg, 2004; Stake, 1995) for ascertaining those understandings – what Stake calls “collective case study” (p. 4).

In this study, it was not immediately clear where the evidence for Special Character would be found nor what defined it in each particular context. The context for each of the six schools was different, the history of each was different, the personal histories of each participant were different, and not immediately clearly evident. Case studies require detailed and thorough contextual analysis (Soy, 1997; Zonabend, 1992). In this study, this applied particularly to the interview transcripts and the documents analysed. Because such analyses are multi-perspectival, it is not just the individual participant perspective that was elicited, but that also of the relevant literature/communications the schools put out, such as promotional literature, annual yearbooks and prospecti. Of interest is how these perspectives are expressed within expectations, possibilities and constraints of the wider milieu (school policy et cetera). The essential characteristic of case study is that the research strives towards holistic understanding (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). This holistic understanding amounted to defining their Special Character in worldview terms as indeed many respondents defined their Special Character as a biblical worldview. Furthermore, case studies can well give a voice to the
powerless and voiceless as might be the case of the classroom teacher whose voice is seldom heard on issues of Special Character. While I had no way of gauging this, there were interviews where it seemed these participants were delighted to have a voice on Special Character. Such a wide choice of participants gave opportunity for some who may otherwise be excluded from more ‘official’ expression.

**Reasons for Choosing Case Studies**

The choice of a case study approach depended on a variety of factors, the first of which was its practical importance. It has been found overseas, that institutions founded on an evangelical Special Character often lost their faith-basis over the years (La Haye & Noebel, 2000). Special Character is the very reason for the existence of the schools under study and is thus of paramount importance to them. It is fundamental to the religious right and its contribution to society that Special Character is clearly defined/identified so that it might be more readily embraced and preserved. The New Zealand Minister of Education was reported to have said at an association of Integrated Schools of New Zealand (AISNZ) and Association of Proprietors of Independent Schools (APIS) conference 29-30 July, 2008 that “Integrated schools need to reflect their Special Character and be able to confirm why the nature of the school justifies government funding” (Hokke, 2008). A focused in-depth case study facilitated such an analysis.

The choice of case study, secondly, depended on the amount and quality of information available. This information is in the minds (consciousness) and belief-systems of the participants. In this case there were multiplied hundreds of possible participants. There was also a rich data-source in the documentation to be accessed in the schools studied. The implications of findings derived from this raw data and a third factor in the choice of a case study approach, was the potential of lessons to be learned such as: How can evangelical schools avoid repeating the history of losing a faith-basis? What are the factors that mitigate against the preservation of Special Character? Are there ‘correctives’ needed to be put in place for charting a future pathway? Can pitfalls be avoided in the future - the pitfalls some schools may have already fallen into? What factors ensure a clear pathway ahead that ensures the preservation of Special Character? It was considered that a comprehensive understanding of cases chosen allow comparisons across contexts, such as would promote insights otherwise unavailable with which to inform the research.

A fourth factor in the choice of a case study approach was the writer’s confidence in being able to complete the task. I have been immersed in Special Character issues for over twenty years; in one school for helping to establish the Special Character, setting it in place – laying a foundation in a then new, but now mature school. For me, the Christian influence in schooling has been a sustained
passion for over fifty years. My reading over the years, on Special Character and Christian schools gave me the confidence in what to look for and what questions to ask. Being, by nature, analytical of such material in the past, gave me confidence to work with a case study approach that could be brought to a conclusion. A further motivating factor was the knowledge that case-writers can select particular cases that have received considerable media attention, where public information is limited (Flick, 2006). Although this study’s inception predated recent tragedies in more than one of the schools in this study, they were tragedies that raised media attention, not only to the tragedies but also to the schools’ Special Character evidenced at the time. They became particularly useful examples, as they portrayed Special Character under very unique circumstances.

Creswell (1994) adds further to the above factors, drawing attention to the researcher’s worldview, training, experience and psychological attitudes. My own worldview was closely aligned to that of my prospective participants; my training has included theological studies; my experience has included work in Christian schools and earlier case study work. Creswell (1994) also points out that the research question itself will often indicate the appropriate approach for the research design and tradition of inquiry. In that respect, the case study design was considered the most appropriate way to address the question of Special Character.

Ethnographic, Descriptive, Rigour and Philosophical Considerations

As a case study with an ethnographic dimension this research focuses on a description and self-interpretation of an aspect of a cultural group - their beliefs, practices, icons, stories and practice (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984). The researcher “studied an intact cultural group” (Creswell, 1994, p. 11) and described, analysed and interpreted their values, beliefs and attitudes. In narrative form, it is “a description of the cultural behaviour of a group” (Creswell, 1998, p. 65).

Berg (2004); Davidson and Tolich (1999); and Yin (2003) have outlined three general approaches to designing case studies: Explanatory, Exploratory and Descriptive cases. The first is often associated with cause-and-effect studies, the second to see if a particular phenomenon actually exists, and the third aims to describe a phenomenon in detail. This particular study is descriptive in that the Special Character already exists and needs to be identified for what it is. Descriptive cases, as this research is, need to have a descriptive theory, a pattern-matching procedure to cover the depth and scope of the case under study. For this study, key themes or issues were identified from the data, each of which was further analysed into 3-4 subsections. The description then followed the themes and subthemes. It is the methodological qualities of the case and the rigour with which the case is constructed that give it credibility. Indeed, case study is known for its being a triangulated strategy (Snow & Anderson, 1991) where triangulation can occur with documented data, investigator’s themes, and voiced data. Key themes and sub-themes were identified and most of the data fitted.
There were outliers whose placing occasionally appeared a little contrived where placed, while some data readily fitted under a variety of headings.

In this study, it was necessary to probe the philosophical perspectives that provide the foundations of *Special Character*. The intentionality of participants’ views (Creswell, 1998) needed to be unearthed – what the participants perceived was consciously intended to be conveyed in terms of ethos, truth and values as understood by those working in that environment, since their perception of *Special Character* is impacted by both their daily immersion in that *Special Character* and their memory/image and meaning in the written expression of it. The reality of *Special Character* is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of the individual. One task of this research was to expose that perceived reality and compare it with the documented, declared reality to ascertain whether a subject – object dichotomy existed.

**Sampling**

Creswell (1998) pointed out that participants need to be carefully chosen individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (called ‘criterion sampling’ by Creswell, p. 112 and ‘purposive sampling’ by Neuman, 2003, p. 211). Purposive sampling, according to Davidson and Tolich (1999, p. 111) relates to “samples which deliberately seek certain types of elements because these cases are judged to be typical of some case of interest to the researcher”. This was true not only of the participants, but also of the schools chosen. It is non-random sampling research (Berg, 2004; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Selecting cases had to be done to maximize what could be learned in the period of time available for the study. Some cases were chosen because it was considered they would yield richer data than others because they were known to have explored the concept of *Special Character* over a longer period. Stake (1995) and Tellis (1997) both say that a good instrumental case does not have to defend its typicality. Flyvbjerg (2006) also noted that “locating a critical case requires experience, and no universal methodological principles exist by which one can with certainty identify a critical case” (p. 426). It has also been claimed unusual cases should not be overlooked where much can be learned from their diversity from the norm (Stake, 1995; Flick, 2006).

In selecting the six schools for this study, it was also important to select cases to represent a variety of geographic regions and of size or other parameters (Merriam, 1991). Diversity was sought in the nature of the community (ethnic mix); the size of the school (27 to 1200); the history of first involvement in Christian schooling (1960s to 1990s); theological orientation (Arminian to Calvinist); location (rural to city); accessibility (North Island centre, South Island centre and one

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20 Calvinism has a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God whereas Arminianism has a strong emphasis on human responsibility, and man’s need to cooperate with God (Hammond, 1968).
‘far north’ school); schools hospitable to the inquiry (generally when a relationship had already been established with the principal). While it was important to aim at balance and variety, the “opportunity to learn [was] of primary importance” (Stake, 1995, p. 6). I was prepared to reselect another case or cases should early assessment of progress (or lack of it) indicate the desirability of dropping a preselected case or cases.

The choice of schools was facilitated by the matrix below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>ii</th>
<th>iii</th>
<th>iv</th>
<th>v</th>
<th>vi</th>
<th>vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>M/E</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>A/C</td>
<td>R/C</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C</td>
<td>E/A</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>A/C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School D</td>
<td>P/E</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>A/C</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R/C</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School F</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Facts Concerning Schools Chosen

Key:

i  ethnic mix (Maori, Asian, European, Pacifica)
ii size (number of students)
iii history (year founded in 1900s)
iv theological spectrum (Arminian – Calvinist)
v situation (City – Rural)
vi accessibility (North Island – South Island)
vii being hospitable (researcher welcomed as friend)

Three schools were under the proprietorship of pentecostal denominations. Figure 4.2 illustrates the basis on which the six schools were chosen.
METHODS
Sources of Evidence
According to Yin (1996, p. 125), the investigator working within a qualitative interpretive paradigm must be free to do his field work in a reasonably unstructured manner, “so that the regularities and rituals of everyday life can surface in a natural fashion”. This implies accessing a wide variety of evidence. In this study the first source of evidence was a documentation review. Across the schools the following were studied: the school’s charter, its Integration Agreement with the New Zealand Government, its strategic plan, its Special Character auditing instrument (Black, 2003), any curriculum documents that made reference to Special Character, any historical documents such as a Yearbook, Staff Hand book or recorded history, and any promotional marketing material of the school. These were perused for any evidence of Special Character references or references that could be construed as such. Fifteen years earlier, I was involved in the integration process and so was very familiar with a school’s charter (most of which is determined by the Ministry of Education) and the Integration Agreement, which for each of these evangelical schools is strikingly similar. An auditing instrument summary is included in Appendix 4 of this work and I have been a recipient of school Year Books from two of these schools over many years. The documents were used to identify key areas of possibility and constraint within which the schools had to work. Promotional material, like
the literature, and the data itself was also a fertile field from which to derive themes that were relevant to *Special Character*.

The second source of evidence was archival records. For this reference was made to the Integration Agreement and the Charter, as above, which served as founding documents. The Founder of the school was also interviewed where this was possible; where a history of the school thus far had already been written, this was consulted. The third source of evidence was ‘Interviews’, which Yin (2009, p. 106) classified as the primary source of data and “one of the most important sources” for case study. Eleven one hour (plus) semi-structured interviews were conducted in four of the six schools and nine interviews in the other two, there being no senior students in one, and others not available in the sixth. Sampling was purposive as described above.

In each school, participants included one Founder (if there was still one to be identified), one member of the Proprietor Board, usually the Chairperson, which, in the case of three of the six schools, were pastors of the associated churches that owned the school, and one principal. The reason for interviewing principals is that principals in Christian schools have generally thought through the issue more thoroughly; they are exposed to teaching around these issues at their national annual conferences, and have usually been the more exposed to the literature of these matters. Two Board members (one the Chairperson) and two of the teaching staff of each school were also interviewed. Boards consist, generally, of educational lay-people who often live busy lives in another (non-educational) context. Their commitment to education is not life-long (or career-long) as is the principal’s. Yet it is the Boards that govern these schools. While most board members may have a general idea as to what they think, the questions may well have demanded that they crystallise their thinking enough to articulate their commitments. In terms of values, belief-systems and worldviews, the Boards of integrated Christian schools are relatively homogeneous. In the case of those schools which had a ‘Head Boy’ and ‘Head Girl’ over 16 years of age (five of the six schools), their contribution was sought. Two parents were interviewed to give the viewpoint of the client as well. In most cases, these parents had some role to play in the administration of the school – either as other Board members, or teacher aids or other teachers who were also parents. As such, they were assumed to be more familiar with the *Special Character* concepts and thus possibly more able to articulate their understandings. Among the participants were two solicitors, a university lecturer, six school principals, two former principals, two associate principals, three doctoral students, three church pastors, three farmers, three businessmen/women and a business consultant, an accountant, an engineer, a bank official, at least thirteen teachers, ten senior school students, school ancillary staff who were parents, twelve designated as parents but many more were. The second Board member, the teachers, students and parents were selected on the recommendation of the respective principals who
had a clearer understanding of who could provide and articulate well the rich data. I requested that, if possible, such participants had a long standing with the school – preferably four years. In each case the school office coordinated the appointment times over two days, the timing of two days being agreed upon by the principal. The school office also arranged a suitable place where the interviews could take place. (The informed consent forms are included in Appendix 3. The questions drafted for those interviews are included in Appendix 2). The questions put to the participants were open-ended questions that provided for probing where more detailed analysis was sought (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) in the context of a focused interview (Yin, 2003).

The interview questions as supplied to participants were sufficiently wide to lend themselves to probing to elicit as much of their background thinking as possible. This helped in understanding what lead them to the convictions they articulated. For example: If (In Question 2) they were asked what they understood the Special Character of the school to be, and they simply read (or quoted or reverbalised) the statement in the contract (charter) with government, the question would be rephrased: What is the particular ethos of this school? Or: What is the key issue that makes you evangelical? (since “the statement” in the charter may well be a typical evangelical piece of ‘dogma’).

The fourth source of evidence was ‘Physical Artefacts’. These were evident in the schools themselves – relevant Bible texts, the proliferation of Bibles and other Christian literature, WWJD arm-bands (What Would Jesus Do) and such like.

**Initial Preliminary Visits**

Prior to the field work, an initial exploration of the research sites was undertaken. This involved not only viewing the schools, but also briefing the respective principals (potential ‘gate keepers’) of the purpose of the research with a view to their allowing access to personnel as participants in the intended research. In every case the principals were graciously helpful and positively enthusiastic, even though it meant considerable organisation on their part to facilitate the interviews. Document data were also collected on this visit.

At the exploration-interview with principals, the letter of Participant Information as developed through the ethics process was given to them, the details of the procedures to be undertaken were explained and opportunity was given for them to ask any questions that could occur to them, concerning the research or the process. The extent of the research was pointed out as including document analysis and interviews with a variety of personnel involved with the school in some way. Once the principals had consented to the request, they were left with packages for each of the
participants containing an introductory letter (see Appendix 3), the set of proposed questions and a consent form to be signed and brought to the interview. This enabled prospective participants to give some prior thought to the issues involved, and to put them at ease with respect to the interview itself (Stake, 1995). It also was a means of economising on the one hour available for these ‘focused’ interviews (Yin, 2003) in which up to 28 questions were to be addressed.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations followed the prescribed protocols of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) and included the following:

- **Informed consent.** The participants were, by means of a written outline in their original letter, fully informed about the purpose of the study, the potential benefits, how the research would be conducted, and how the information would be disseminated. All this was to be void of all deception concerning the purposes or methods employed. An enclosed consent form for signing was included in the letter addressed to them. Participants were assured that the permission of the school principal and Board of Trustees had first been obtained and assurance had been given that decision to participate or not participate would not impact their relationship with the school.

- **Voluntary participation.** The decision to participate in the research rested entirely with the participant. They were invited to participate, but no coercion from the researcher or their superior in the school was applied at any stage or in any aspect of the research. In this, care was taken where any would-be participant had worked under the researcher, albeit five years or more previously. Care was taken lest a participant would feel embarrassed over any aspect that might make them feel uncomfortable. In this respect, it was pointed out that participants had the right to withdraw at any stage up to the final write up for the thesis without unwanted consequences.

- **Confidentiality, Anonymity and Privacy.** Participants were assured that the sentiments they expressed and information given would be confidential to the researcher and only used in such a way that individual participants and individual schools should not be able to be identified. Participants were not asked questions outside the scope of the research or anything that might hint at their privacy being invaded or their time abused. Names of participants and names of schools were not used.

- **Participant and Researcher Safety.** The type of research involved did not lend itself to physical harm. Should there be psychological, emotional or cultural harm by way of the interviews for whatever reason, the recourse that participants had was made known beforehand, and to whom questions and concerns could be addressed: namely having access to the researcher, to his supervisor, and ultimately to the Chair of the Ethics Committee of the University. The contact details of the above were given in the Information letter. The counsellor of each school was to be
accessed through the principal for recourse should such an occasion be deemed desirable, where participant counselling might be needed. This proved unnecessary in every case.

- Dissemination. Participants were informed that raw data and field notes and any transcriptions, would be held for six years in a locked cabinet at the home of the researcher without access to the data being given to another. The signed consent letters would likewise be kept at the University also in a locked file, and for six years. All transcripts as written up, pertaining to each participant was available for checking by those participants. This proposed process was communicated to the participants prior to the research, and carried out after the interviews.

**Interviewing**

Interviews formed the major source of data for this thesis and constituted the field work carried out with the participants. Because the thesis concerned the perceptions held by people involved in *Special Character* schools, the interview was considered the best means through which a rich source of descriptive data could be obtained. Semi-structured interviews (McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 2003) were employed having the advantage of providing richer data than that possible with a questionnaire (see Appendix 2). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to develop conversations around issues that elicited enhanced insights from the participants. They were “guided conversations” (Yin, 2003, p. 89) where the stream of questions tended to be fluid rather than rigid. In probing, care was taken to avoid ‘Why’ questions that might create defensiveness on the informant’s part (Davison & Tolich, 1999; Neuman, 2003; Yin, 2003).

The participant perceptions as elicited in the interviews, would inevitably be subjective in the sense that it was their perception and not necessarily that of another (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998). However, subjectivity is often an essential element of understanding (Stake, 1995). Additionally, that qualitative research is subjective does not refer to a hermeneutical subjectivism whose “notion is that there is no objective meaning to any sentence (but this one)” (Piper, 2007, p. 26). Piper goes on to argue that there does exist an original meaning that a writer (or a verbal respondent) had in mind when he wrote. Good interpretation will endeavour to arrive at that intentioned meaning, seek to verify it and thus add to the validity of the conclusions reached. As part of an ethical exercise, research would treat this not only as the courteous thing to do, but the consistent thing to do. It is therefore assumed in this study, that the responses of the participants had objective meaning and that this was verifiable by the general consistency of responses.
The use of probing questions enabled the participants to define the terms they used, in view of the fact that in religious circles, terms are used in a variety of ways. Are the participants’ responses to be treated as giving direct access to ‘experience’ or to actively constructed ‘narratives’? Because I held to the existence of ultimate truth, and that this can be adequately communicated without recourse, necessarily, to a relativism in the reality as conceived, I accepted the accounts of the participants as indeed their experience of the reality of the Special Character that pertained within their schools. This was particularly so in the light of my epistemology based on an acceptance of biblical revelation of ultimate truth, a revelation that has nothing to say concerning perceptions of that truth or relativity. For the evangelical Christian believer, life and death hangs on the acceptance of biblical sentiments expressed in simple terms, to be accepted ‘at face value’. The ‘naïve realism’ that Richard Pring (2000) attributes to the correspondence view of truth is not a viewpoint held by evangelical scholars in the field of hermeneutics and exegesis (Osborne, 1991). Many proponents of Christian education argue that Christian education is a “distinctive kind of knowledge or understanding” (Pring, 2006, p. vii). Pring suggests that religious propositions are not reducible to propositions of
other kinds, constituting thereby a distinctive form of knowledge. Michael Hand (2006) also rejects “the view that religious propositions constitute an autonomous epistemological class” (p. 24). Having explored the epistemological claims of six philosophers, Hand rejected outright, the claims of all with one exception – that of Leahy & Laura (1997) whom he believed were confused. Hand could not accept their claim that by giving up the empiricist worldview for the ability to apprehend by “the eye of faith” (p. 329), one could transcend the limits of our perceptual apparatus. Hand cannot accept the biblical claim\(^{21}\) that believers have a perceptual ability which the non-believer does not have.

Clearly, the perceptions of *Special Character* will not be seen to be the same by everyone, and so by interviewing a wide variety of participants, I aimed to discover and portray the multiple views held. In this way, the interview becomes the window to multiple realities (Stake, 1995). The fundamental first step of forming questions is to do so on the basis of what needs to be known. Upon being immersed in the literature of *Special Character*, it became clear to me that those various understandings of *Special Character* needed to be canvassed, and the problems encountered that might inhibit or threaten *Special Character* be identified. Upon discussing *Special Character* informally with school leaders, issues of worldviews, biblical inerrancy, ultimate motivation, the place of prayer and worship, theology of creation and redemption, and school structure, gave me much insight as to what issues needed to be probed and what questions to ask. The issues concerning the preservation of *Special Character* needed to be explored if there was to be long-term sustainability for such schools. The key players in driving *Special Character* needed to be identified in terms of their roles in the establishing, modelling, preserving and growing *Special Character*. The relationship that these schools have with the state system and their situation in the philosophical spectrum of educational thinking were understandings that the interviews looked into.

Draft questions were formulated (see Appendix 2) that were role-specific: a separate set for each of Founder, Proprietor, Principal, Board Members, Teachers, Parents, Students, and that elicited the desired information. Interviews are verbal reports only and thus are given to poor or inaccurate articulation, hence the need to corroborate interview data with written transcripts. All transcripts were forwarded to the participants to verify their accuracy.

As much as I was an insider and known to some respondents I felt that I had come across to them in the interview itself as genuinely naïve about the topic. Most participants were university-trained people and understood the necessity for it to be that way in the interview. It allowed the respondents to provide a fresh commentary about the issues under discussion. I did not sense on-site

\(^{21}\) 1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV): “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned”.
corroborating in a conspiratorial way. Indeed, appreciating the nature and value of the research, several made the point of stating they had intentionally not talked around with others who were involved. Furthermore, in some schools it was evident that individuals who were nominated to participate were unaware who else had been nominated.

There is debate over the use of a recording device as needing the consent of participants, the embarrassment to some of being recorded, the distracting intrusion of attending to that while interviewing, the difficulties and cost in transcribing, the temptation to so rely on the recording as to sacrifice closeness of listening. In this fieldwork, the process was handled by an amanuensis of whom they knew in advance from their information sheet. Each participant agreed with her being present and taking shorthand notes. All were also asked at the interview and not one expressed the slightest embarrassment of the small device being on the table as we talked. I was thus able to focus fully on what was being said enabling the conversation to flow as dialogue as close as possible to a natural dialogue – whatever that may be, rather than formal interview. Shorthand notes were taken as a backup, in case the recording device failed – or I failed in its use. ‘Yes/no’ answers were not being sought but descriptions, linkages and explanations were looked for (Stake, 1995). While the main questions were kept carefully in mind, probes were carefully created. They were issue-orientated questions – issues of values, of tensions, of preservation of Special Character, of communication, of authority. Concern was not so much for their exact words, but for what they were seeking to convey, which, as Stake (1995) suggests is the important part of the interviewee’s contribution. The interviews were transcribed and returned to the participants for attestation and validation (Merriam, 1998). The interviews took place over a year.

It soon became evident that one hour interviews did not always allow for full discussion on all issues listed. In some cases it was possible to extend the time, resulting in some transcripts providing data on a wider range of issues than others. Only once was there an interruption where an interview had to be truncated, but not before a considerable amount of data was gathered. As time went on, I became more confident and experienced at probing such that later data was possibly fuller than data from the earliest interviews. Where extensive probing took place on some questions, other questions were inevitably omitted that were asked of others. Hence the reference in the commentary “An interview question that was often asked was …” or “Forty six of the sixty two participants made reference to …” And this could also be because they did not respond even if I had asked the question.
DATA ANALYSIS

Coding

Prior to the first stage of analysis, schools were coded as C1 to C6. Participants were coded as:

- F1 for Founder
- O1 for Proprietor/Owner
- H1 for Principal/Headmaster
- B1, B2 for Board Members
- T1, T2 for Teachers
- P1, P2 for Parents
- S1, S2 for Students

A participant might be referred to as C3T2, or a direct quotation as C3T215 for page 15 of the transcript so that I had ease of locating particular statements. In this thesis, the coding has been changed to a number between 1 and 67 simply to indicate the source of comment, to aid in the preservation of anonymity. In the findings, a reference to, say, P49 is a reference to Participant 49.

To find the original statement in the interview transcript, the numbered list of participants will tell me the original code, such as C4B2, which would mean School C4, Board Member Number 2.

Originally the data was coded as under; the themes being derived from the literature and the data:

- A Authority
- B Bible/Scripture/Inspiration
- C Character/Modelling/Nurturing
- D Differences
- E Educational Theory
- F Fundamental/Exclusive/Pluralism
- G God/Jesus/Holy Spirit/Related jargon
- H History/Tradition
- I Influence – external
- L Law/State/Govt/White Paper
- M Music/Arts
- N NZ curriculum or other
- O Orthodox or Reformed Theology
- P Pentecostal/Charismatic
- R Relationships/Experiential
- S Stronger Feelings
- U Undenominational/Interdenominational/church
- V View – that is: Worldview
- W Worship

According to Berg (2004) transcribed interviews can be used for analysis “to organise or reduce data, to uncover patterns of human activity, action and meaning”. And so in due course, each transcript was marked in the margins with an indication of what was being said. For example: ‘bible’, ‘faith’, ‘mission’, relationship’, ‘passion’, etc. It soon became clear by grouping related data that there were eight major areas into which most comments relative to the Special Character of the school could be fitted, and the original A-W coding was abandoned. With 11 pages per transcript, and up to 40 usable references or comments per page of transcripts, with 62 transcripts there were up to 24,000 possible comments. The sample analysis sheet on page 288 had 55-60 different references to the transcripts, most of which were participant references. There were 30 such analysis sheets. Each reference on each sheet had next to it, the school number, the participant number, the page number from the subject pages, and the participant code. Everybody’s remark on every theme was coded, indexed, filed, the files being analysed for thematic classification.
The eight headings were:

1. *Special Character* per se
2. *Special Character* Values
3. Values common to all schools
4. Curriculum issues/comments
5. Staff-related comments
6. Comments concerning others (BOT, Founder, Proprietor)
7. Preservation of *Special Character*
8. Tensions and Anomalies

**Analysis of Comments**

In each of the transcripts, to make it easier to locate them on the pages of the transcript:

*Special Character* issues were underlined in red
*Special Character* values were highlighted in blue
Values common to all schools were underlined in pencil
Curriculum issues were highlighted in yellow
Staff related issues were highlighted in green
Comments concerning others were underlined in black biro
Preserving *Special Character* issues were highlighted in orange
Tensions and Anomalies were highlighted in pink

All the Curriculum comments (with their contexts) were gathered together from all the participants of a school and retyped for future analysis. This was done for each of the six schools, giving six such folders of comments on Curriculum. The process was repeated for all eight issues giving 8 major folders. Each folder on Curriculum was then analysed to list all comments on Curricula in Table form. This process was repeated for each of the eight issues. Each transcript could then be analysed for its contribution on all eight issues. For example: in one transcript, the following analysis was made:

**Special Character** (from folder 1)
1. God-given purpose 28a,c (meaning: Page 28 top quarter, 3rd quarter of the page).
2. Foundations of Christianity 28a
3. Framework of Prayer, Scripture and Worship 28b
4. Living the Faith 28b
5. Relationship with God 28b
6. Christ-centred education 28c
7. Relationship with students 29a
8. Biblical worldview 29d
9. Biblical education 30a

**Values common to Special Character** (from folder 2)
1. Bible 28a,c; 29b,c,d; 30a
2. Worship 28a,d; 30b
3. Prayer 28b,d; 29d
4. Transformation 28b; 30a,d
5. Evangelism 28c
6. Faith 29c
7. Unity of the Faith 29c

Values common to all schools (from folder 3) - (none were alluded to)
Curriculum Issues (from folder 4)
1. Thinking behind it 29d
2. Primary-‘Interact’; Secondary - difficult 30c
3. Texts in line with Special Character 30d

Staff Related comments (from folder 5)
1. Living it 28b
2. Sharing your faith 28d
3. Different emphases 29a
4. All staff to subscribe to Special Character 29b
5. More than a teacher 29c
6. Subject teachers 29d
7. Christian Worldview 30c

Others (from folder 6) (no comments)

Preserving Special Character (from folder 7)
1. Having a hat to hang it on 30c

Tensions and Anomalies (from folder 8)
1. Lack of Unity 38c; 29c
2. Others mess with it 28d
3. Tension of Revelation 29c
4. Flippancy in worship 30b
5. Teaching Christianly 30c

This was repeated for all of the transcripts.

From the marked transcripts in each school, a chart for each of the eight issues was set up. Below is an example on the curriculum comments from one school. The Table 4.2 was an analysis of all the significant comments on curriculum from one school and in whose transcript they were found. Eight similar charts were done for each school, corresponding to the eight major topics. It became clear that the curriculum comments themselves needed classifying, so four subheadings were devised:

A Subjects in the Curriculum   B General issues in the Curriculum
C Special Character issues   D Specific curricula

To each of the twenty comments in Table 4.2 an A, B, C or D was allocated. From the above analysis a new Curriculum sheet was set up as under:

Subjects in the Curriculum   General Issues
8 Hauora   (6) H1, B1, T1, T2, P1, P2
9 Evolution   (6) H1, B1, T1, T2, S1, S2
10 Biblical Studies (4) H1, B1, T1, S1
18 Literature   P2
20 Curriculum Choice   S2

6 Foundations of Curriculum   H1
13 Non-familiarity   B2
17 Issues Philosophically   P2
19 Restrictions   S1

Specific Curricula
1 A biblical curriculum   (2) F1, T2
5 Its Influence   O1
11 Special Character woven in (5) B1, T1
14 The God-factor   (2) T2, S1
15 Biblical Worldview in curriculum   T2

2 An international curriculum   F1
3 A local curriculum   F1
4 A transferable curriculum   F1
7 Interact curriculum   H1
12 Theme-based curriculum   B1
16 The New Curriculum
The numbers on the left indicate the number in the original list of curriculum issues for this school. The codes on the right indicate the transcript(s) from that school.

**Curriculum C2**

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Table 4.2: Example of an analysis of issues chart

The process was repeated for each of the eight major issues/themes for the six schools (48 in all).

**Frequency Charts**

The eight major issues were also subsectioned. The frequency of items raised over all schools is indicated by the following chart (Table 4.3) which identifies the subsections. By quantifying the frequency of items, it was easier to identify issues of greater importance to the participants. The
totals 18, 24, 11, 48 (as for *Special Character*) indicate the number of issues raised. Many issues (perspectives) were repeated in several schools. Clearly, 18 is not the total of the numbers across for *Special Character* Biblical Base. There was a total of 35 comments (many repeated) but only 18 different perspectives in that 35.

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Table 4.3: Frequency of Items Raised
Thematic Classification

A further set of Analysis Charts (on each of the eight themes) enabled me to identify all of those issues under each of A, B, C, D subsections, for all six schools, for each of the themes. For example: on “Preserving Special Character”.

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Key: The totals for each school agrees with the totals in Table 4.3, that is, the number of items raised. In school C1, one person spoke of P.D.

A second issue (staff appointments) was raised in school C1, but by 3 different people.

Table 4:4: Analysis of a Subsection (Staff) of One Theme

This was also done for the other three subsections of ‘Preserving Special Character’. Then it was also done for the four subsections (or 3) of the other seven issues. (A scanned example of an original hand-written analysis is included in Appendix 5.) To locate a particular comment in the original transcript that has been used in a findings chapter of this thesis, (say P49, as used in the ‘Preserving’ Chapter), I would first go to the Summaries using the original coding – C4B2. The comments of B2 in the Preserving section of School C4 had the relevant comment with a page number reference to the original transcript, say 43c. This meant it was on page 43 in the 3rd quarter of the way down of B2’s transcript (School 4.) There were times when it was considered appropriate to state the role of say P49, as board member P49 to add to the credibility of the comment, and to state where a perspective is coming from, putting the comment in perspective.

In summary, the three major theme-classifying analyses were:

1. Transcript analyses – 8 themes listed with reference to page numbers.
2. School analyses – 8 themes listed with reference to transcript analyses.
3. Themes analysis drawing from all six schools facilitating cross-case analysis.

The above analysis made accessible a detailed collating of relevant and significant comment on each of the issues, category by category, for each school. These school-by-school summaries constituted
the first stage of analysis, that is: “within-case analysis” (Stake, 1995, p. 36) but without commentary. The cross-case analysis followed where the data were examined for similarities and differences. Similar schools (for example those that were church-based) were examined for differences and dissimilar schools were examined for similarities. Conflicting perceptions were cause for me to pry more deeply, as, for example when two participants from the same school had opposite views concerning the harmony that existed in the Board of Trustees.

When it came to discussing the findings, for example, for the chapter on Special Character concepts, all 35 Biblical Base perspectives were gathered from the six schools to start with (the first section) into a list, noting which school they were from. These were then grouped for giving cohesive paragraphs on that topic and a redrafted list combining similar comments was made. Some of these were very extensive. For example, references to Biblical Worldviews were in that first section and there were 29 references to the transcripts on this aspect alone. Those 29 were also grouped so that approximately eight paragraphs could be drafted meaningfully from the data. The process was repeated for the other three sections of Special Character. Each chapter that dealt with an analysis of data was dealt with similarly. In reporting of participant voice, there are, at times, multiple references (like Ps 3, 17, 8, 5) which are listed in the order they were accessed, rather than being listed in numerical order.

It is important to acknowledge the theoretical basis on which it is meaningful to make measurements of such entities as attitudes (Silverman, 2000) which feature strongly in Special Character debate. It is a measurement of words and images rather than numbers, drawn from unstructured interviews where the researcher looked for meanings even more than the behaviour which gave credence to those meanings. It is an attempt “to document the world from the point of view of the people studied” (Hammersley, 1992, p. 165). Lest such documentation be reduced to mere ‘anecdotalism’, using a few telling ‘examples’, care has been taken to analyse less clear data and the incidents of contrary data as in the cases of participant reports concerning teaching staff who did not support the Special Character of the school as documented. It is, further, important to have indicated the representativeness and generality of the support-comments of the participants to avoid the charge of ‘anecdotalism’ (Bryman, 1988). Each of the findings chapters therefore incorporates a discussion section in which the various dimensions of the aspect of the research considered in the chapter are drawn together into a coherent account. This requires returning to the relevant strands of literature introduced in the earlier chapters of the thesis to help make sense of the findings in their own right and in terms of the work of previous scholars in the area. Points of convergence and divergence are discussed and any novel findings are identified.
Ultimately, “objectivity should be the common aim of all social science” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, pp. 10-11). I argue that it is through my careful use of structured analyses that the objectivity and trustworthiness of this thesis is enhanced.

**THE QUESTION OF BIAS**

**Researcher as Insider**

The evidence for *Special Character* as documented in this thesis needs to be seen in the light of my being an ‘insider’, and therefore not independent of the research. Inasmuch as the institutions at which the research was conducted claim, from their documents, to hold a biblical worldview, to that extent I was a longstanding insider. I had also been a principal, and therefore responsible for maintaining the *Special Character*, at a larger evangelical Christian school some ten years earlier. This inevitably shaped my pre-understandings and expectations of participant perceptions. These needed to be ‘bracketed’, or fenced in, to retain a degree of objectivity and thus avoid bias as much as is humanly possible (Neuman, 2003). Bracketing involved suspension of researcher judgement. Elsewhere referred to as epoché (Jary & Jary, 2000), this required laying aside, or at least becoming aware of, all experiences, taken-for-granted assumptions and/or prejudices regarding *Special Character* to enable an open understanding of the participants’ responses (Moustakas, 1990) and to avoid precipitous imposition of meaning. It can be argued that being such an insider gives greater strength to the validity and authenticity of the findings, the understandings being so much clearer. Since insiders ‘talk the same language’, they are ‘on the same page’. Yin (2003) suggests that it is desirable to experience the phenomenon being studied, and that in undertaking the field work, experiencing, that is, present experiencing, is inevitable.

According to Mutch (2005, p. 14) insider research occurs when “the research question relates to the researcher’s context, interests and worldview, and shapes the subsequent research decisions”. I am unashamedly ‘evangelical’ in that I hold the Christian scriptures to be authoritative over every aspect of life and truth. It predetermined all my assumptions – metaphysical, ontological, epistemological and methodological. The validity of divine revelation with its moral absolutes was a given. It was the lens through which I interpreted my data. Such is my worldview, my research paradigm. It is my set of beliefs that provide the framework within which my inquiry took place. All the taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions embedded in that worldview or component thereof act as the framework within which the research design was developed. That paradigm is not where the research was coming from: it is where I, the researcher was coming from. It is the significant personal baggage that I brought to the task of the inquiry. Where an individual participant did not accept the presuppositions of my worldview (and that of Christian schools generally – a biblical worldview of evangelicals as earlier defined) their conclusions/viewpoints and perceptions of their school’s *Special*
Character were not considered to be representative of the purpose of that school’s standing in terms of their Special Character.

I had come to know well, on a personal basis, the leaders of four of the six schools from my own involvement as a former principal. A relationship of trust had been built up (Mutch, 2005). I came to the study with many of the same pre-understandings that the majority of my research participants came with: I was an ‘insider’ that ‘spoke the same language’. The relationships thus built up, enabled this kind of research to proceed with ease, and with enhanced insight. There were disadvantages as well – they did not always have to define their terms: they knew the researcher knew their language, although shared understanding cannot always be presumed. Sometimes knowing too much or expecting agreed understanding can mask nuances of meaning. At times I asked participants to define their terms. There were occasions, in retrospect where I should have, but did not. Sometimes, my elaborating on their answer gave clarity to their intended meaning. As a student of scripture for sixty years, I was deeply conscious of allusions made to scripture, as participants used phraseology from the Authorised Version of the Bible – or even concepts that Bible students often refer to. As such, I often inserted in square brackets, into the transcripts, the Bible references participants were expressing.

There was a possible bias in the researcher’s privileging of favourable comment on Special Character schools and minimising whatever problems and tensions might seem to exist in these schools. As a researcher, from the positivist tradition you endeavour to be neutral; but you can never be totally neutral: you always see things through the lens of your own worldview, and that quite unconsciously. In this case, mine was the same worldview of the participants, to a large degree. It was necessary to employ a degree of cynicism to see the situation more objectively. But it was a selective cynicism towards human understandings; never towards faith, for cynicism “is a parasite on faith, enervates hope and leaves us anaemic in love” (Peterson, 2000, p. 75). Earlier involvement enabled me to be aware of the tension points in such schools, enabling a probing of them in the search for an authentic description of such schools.

Being an insider, there was a tendency to subconsciously assess the credibility of the participant and pigeon-hole them as either ‘advocate’ or ‘witness’, to use legal terms. Were they ‘grinding an axe’, ‘pushing a barrow’ or telling it as it is? Were they speaking from the head or the heart, assuming the head is used to explain what is a heart thing, what they’ve taken on board or bought into and own as their own. I have not practised ‘horizontalisation’ as Creswell (2007) terms giving every significant statement relevant to the topic equal value. I made value judgments as to whether or not one participant had more understanding, or experience of Special Character, than another. The research
was not free from the context, but rather, was context bound. Qualitative methodology focuses on contextual research. The participants were giving voice to an ethos they were immersed in and in which I had been immersed. And for each participant it was situationally-specific: their own school.

Stake (1995) uses the term “thick description” (p. 39) which comes from an “experiential understanding” (p. 43) which insider work generates, enabling him/her to contextualize interpretations in detail, as they emerge, locating the experiences spoken of in social situations. In this sense, “they speak from the subject’s point of view” (Denzin, 2000, p. 362). The challenge for me was to combine historical involvement in Special Character schools which provide insider insights (in the sense of having previously experienced the program) to enable adequate understanding of the phenomenon “as an insider while describing the program for outsiders” (Patton, 1990, p. 207).

The advantages of being an insider, as Yin (2004) points out, is in gaining access to groups that might otherwise be inaccessible and to be able to perceive reality from the viewpoint of those within. The major problem related to an insider stance is the potential for bias, especially if one is a ‘supporter’ of the organization being studied, as I was. Researcher participation was limited to prior involvement and present ‘good standing’ in the evangelical Christian school movement. The ideal was always to be as detached and as objective as possible. But in qualitative research, the researcher is always the primary instrument of data collection: hence there will inevitably be a measure of subjectivity and interaction.

As indicated, one of the major problems related to an insider stance is the potential for bias. Bias consists of any “systematic and culpable error; systematic error that the researcher should have been able to recognize and minimize” (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997, p. 11). The term is used in two senses in the literature: first in the statistical sense of ‘systematic’ error (for example a false measurement reading, carried over into further calculations) and secondly in the sense of personal prejudice or prejudicing. It is in the latter sense that it is used here. It involves the “one-sider accentuation” of aspects of reality in order to detect causal relationships (Weber, 1949, p. 90). The next sections deal with bias as it relates to the researcher, the interview and the respondent.

**Researcher Bias**

When the researcher is the major research instrument, it is thought that qualitative research is thus particularly prone to bias (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997). It is also thought that “if the researcher ‘goes native’ [becomes an insider-participant which was not the case in this research though I was formerly involved] he or she will interpret events solely from the point of view of particular
participants, taking over any biases that are built into their perspectives” (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997, p. 3). In this sense, bias is an antonym of objectivity. The concepts of truth and validity are open to competing interpretations, and the same authors cite eight other research scholars who assert that the very concept of objectivity is also open to competing interpretations.

Given that judgments were made about which presuppositions are functional for this inquiry there was always the potential for non-culpable bias (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993). None of these presuppositions could be established as valid beyond all reasonable doubt. Sociological analysis is always from someone’s point of view and therefore partisan (Becker, 1967). The researcher must be aware of any personal biases and how they may influence the investigation (Merriam, 1998). Observations and analyses were inevitably filtered through my worldview, values and perspectives (Merriam, 1991). I was raised in a strongly religious home with values and Christian viewpoints imbibed from earliest years, in a close-knit Christian community, thus influencing my own view of reality through which the respondents’ views were filtered. I thus brought a construction of reality to the research situation which interacted with the constructions and interpretations of the respondents with respect to Special Character in this case. Limited space forced a narrowing in the selection of participant quotations, with intentional objectivity an aim. The final product is yet another interpretation of the respondent’s views, filtered through my own interpretation thereby creating several layers of meaning. Methods themselves also impose certain perspectives on reality (Berg, 2004).

In the practical research process itself, researcher bias can occur as:

i Selection-bias, (of schools and respondents) which is common in non-random designs. This was minimized by my first establishing the grid that was outlined under ‘Sampling’.

ii Political bias, which may occur if the researcher “has an axe to grind.” Considerable investments of time and capital outlay to establish one of these schools, made me, formerly, a dominant stakeholder in one of them, opening the possibility for historical political bias.

iii Analysis bias. The researcher necessarily decides from the data, what is important and what is excluded, especially if there are views contrary to his own. According to Ziman (2002) and Neuman (2003), a researcher’s proper role is to be a ‘disinterested scientist’. Care was taken during analysis to ‘bracket’ my own views and be alert to views contrary to my own, aware how much such contrary views enrich the data as it pertains to the perceptions of the participants which are the focus of the research. Analysis may also be seeking to mediate perceived bias (Neuman, 2003) where the researcher gives voice to those who normally have no voice – more commonly the socially marginalized groups, but in this research, these may be the classroom teacher, the parent and student who might otherwise be voiceless.
concerning *Special Character*. A researcher’s analysis can also show “negative bias” (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997, p. 2) where his findings conceal more than reveal. This contrasts with ‘positive bias’, in Khilnens’s terminology, highlighting what we might otherwise overlook.

It was therefore important to have minimised all the potential sources of bias in this study by checking my own tendencies to avoid negligence-motivated-bias such as omitting to cover issues raised but not thought important to me. Issues raised but not covered, were not covered because of the limitation of space. The complexity of the data yielded more issues than could be studied in the one thesis. It was also necessary to check that procedures had been rigorous so that systematic errors would be avoided. This was further safe-guarded against by many re-reads of all the transcripts to check for items that may have been missed. There were also two supervisors who were checking the researcher’s work against the data, safe-guarding against such bias.

Sources of bias were also minimised by checking the conclusions. It was necessary to check any leaping to conclusions based on limited data (Kahneman & Tversky, 1973). Checking was needed that the conclusions were not overly influenced by the vividness of responses (Nisbett & Ross, 1980); and that the conclusions were not more biased towards the more elite respondents (Miles & Hubermon, 1984). In this research, the response of the students was as relevant as that of the principal. Finally, it was necessary to check that no disconfirming evidence had been inadvertently dropped (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). In this research, the transcripts were checked by the respondents. There was no disagreement with the transcripts. It is likely that in the interviewing of up to eleven people in each school, that contrary findings would have concurring evidence. Throughout the entire process, transcripts, transcript summaries, school summaries, and topic summaries with my comment/discussion, were read, discussed and if need be, deleted, with the thesis supervisors.

**Interview Bias**

In this research, one of the major tools for data collection was semi-structured interviews. In Neuman’s notes on interviews (2003) he cautions that interview bias can arise from either the researcher or the respondent in the following situations, depending on the issue involved. Bias can occur, he says,

i  When the interviewer causes embarrassment, or forgetfulness or misunderstanding in the respondent by virtue of his very presence. Seen by some as a father figure in the Christian school movement, I could have been seen to be in a position of power to some. Attempts were made to lessen this response through informal chatting preceding the interviews.
When the interviewer misreads or omits questions in a rigid interview schedule, or asks questions in the wrong order; records wrong answers or misunderstands the responses. While this is unintentional, care was taken (by thorough preparation) to avoid creating confusion and to record accurately. As the questions were semi-structured, allowing for ‘probing’, this potential was minimised. Each participant had a copy of the questions with him/her in the interview.

When the interviewer/researcher intentionally subverts, by altering answers or questions. Interview transcripts indicate that this did not occur.

When the interviewer/researcher is judgmentally influenced about a respondent’s answers, by the appearance of the respondent, his/her situation or their other answers. Again, interview transcripts indicate that this was avoided.

When the interviewer/researcher fails to probe adequately and thus foregoes vital data that would otherwise have influenced the analysis. The large number of interviews, so much of which gave collaborating data, minimised the potential loss of vital data.

When the respondent’s answers are influenced by the appearance of the interviewer/researcher, his tone of voice, his attitudes, comments he may make ‘off the record’, or his reaction to answers given. Care was taken to avoid all ‘off the record’ comments during the interview itself.

Respondent Bias

Bias is not simply an issue with the researcher: it is also a factor to be considered in the participants. According to MacDonald and Walker (1997, p. 186), “What people think they’re doing, what they say they are doing, what they appear to others to be doing, and what in fact they are doing, may be sources of considerable discrepancy” (emphasis in original). Such is the nature of respondent bias. The temptation to conceal the discovered discrepancies in the data was avoided where there was variance, where concealing would avoid the possible resulting dissonance. Attention is drawn to such discrepancies in the discussion chapters. These may have resulted from:

“Social desirability bias” (Neuman, 2003, p. 276) when respondents distort answers to fit their responses, to conform with social norms – in this case by saying what should be said in a Special Character school, concerning Special Character. The respondents in the research were well aware that Special Character is the basis for their very existence and that the research would reinforce the rationale for that existence. They would, mostly, also have been aware that I had championed this cause over many years.

“Prestige bias” (Neuman, 2003, p. 269) in which a statement aligned with a prestigious person evokes an aligned response. I was aware of this when ‘probing’ and avoided making such references.
“Courtesy bias” (Neuman, 2003, p. 427) occurs when strong cultural norms cause respondents to hide anything unpleasant – or to give answers they think the interviewer wants to hear. Knowing that I have been a senior member of the evangelical Christian school movement could also have been a source of courtesy bias. While I was not conscious of such with the adults interviewed, I did wonder, in the case of one student, whether courtesy bias was involved from some of the answers that were given.

**VALIDITY, VERIFICATION AND RELIABILITY**

In order for research findings to be accepted and convincing, the data details, design and decisions must be trusted by the reader as being believable, accurate and correct. For quantitative designs, Mutch (2005) suggests that the researcher needs to document the basis of its validity and reliability. However, Mutch also indicates that for qualitative research, trustworthiness and credibility are the vital factors. While validity means that the study actually measures what it set out to measure, the aim of trustworthiness … is to support the argument that the inquiry’s findings are “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). According to Fenton and Mazulewicz (2008), the four issues trustworthiness is concerned with are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Trustworthiness relates to whether the decisions, design, data-gathering and data-analysis techniques are all clearly documented and demonstrate an ethical approach. I endeavoured to do this for the investigation of *Special Character* in state-integrated evangelical schools. The emphasis is the ethical aspect, whereas for validity it is the accuracy of the data that is in question.

Reliability in quantitative research occurs when another researcher could replicate the results by reapplying like strategies, thus yielding similar results. For qualitative designs, however, the emphasis is on credibility whereby you ensure that the findings as documented, marry up with the facts, as known by the participants and others. This is achieved by ‘member checking’ of transcripts which was done, to ensure that what was heard or seen and documented, was what was said and intended. These were all endorsed as correct. Using triangulation in the sense of using multiple data-sources (many participants) and data-gathering instruments (documents and interviews) is another credibility technique. These were used.

Creswell (1998, p.194) defines verification in qualitative research as “a *process* that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing” in contrast to ‘standards’ which are “the criteria imposed by the researcher and others after a study is completed”. Among the procedures for verification that Creswell (pp.201-203) himself explored from the literature, the following are given:

- Prolonged engagement by the researcher including the building of trust with participants and being immersed in their culture. This was outlined earlier.
• Triangulation as mentioned above.
• Peer review or debriefing, providing an external check. This was carried out by my supervisors.
• Checking for disconfirming evidence, that is: negative case analysis, which was kept in mind throughout my analysis.
• Clarifying researcher bias or assumptions, in researcher self-exposure, as outlined in the section on bias in this chapter.
• Member checking as mentioned above.
• Rich thick description by the researcher of the setting, the participants, and their shared characteristics.
• External audits.

The truth value aspect concerned consensual validation where leaders in the field could validate the conclusions reached as being credible and true to their own understandings. And this was done. The presuppositions of my worldview whether they were right or wrong, were helpful in clarifying participant perceptions as those were the presuppositions of the movement to which they belong and the conditions of their belonging (see page 2). I did not debate with the participants; they did not necessarily know what my views were on the questions. So there was no agreeing or disagreeing with me.

Another test of trustworthiness of research is indicated by Creswell (1998): Can an outside reader recognize the logic of the experience and how it matches his or her own experience? Eisner (cited in Thompson, 2003, p.117) describes this means of validation as ‘consensual validation’ that is: “agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation and thematics of an education situation are right”. For this research, the work was discussed with personnel in Special Character schools, on an informal basis, over the six years this work has been in progress, facilitated by my attendance at the annual NZACS conference I have consistently attended.

There is inevitably a subjective assessment of the relevance of participants’ statements to the research question. This subjectivity is safeguarded from misinterpretation by being checked against the way the evangelical literature has commented on the same issues. The values expressed cannot be measured as such. The intensity of feelings on the issues discussed cannot be quantified or be subject to statistical analysis. My main purpose for analysing the participants’ statements/comments was to ascertain their perception as to what constituted their Special Character. It is to that analysed comment on Special Character that is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE: SPECIAL CHARACTER

For O’Donnell (2001), *Special Character* is a “complex and dynamic phenomenon” that “relates to the way people live and work as a group and as individuals” (p. 27). It is in this sense that the term *Special Character* has been used in this thesis. In my introduction chapter, mention was made of the enigma and seemingly indefinable nature of *Special Character*, understood best, perhaps, by what it does more than by how it is defined. Enigmatic though evangelical *Special Character* may seem to be because of the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, the schools do articulate what their *Special Character* is for the purposes of establishing an integration agreement with the state. In one school:

The *Special Character* of the school is determined by the Christian beliefs, values and lifestyle of the ______________ church in accordance with scripture. These beliefs are determined from time to time by the trustees of the ____________ church and are to be upheld in word and fulfilled in practice by the principal who must be recognised as a qualified minister in [the church] and by staff who are recognised by the trustees as qualified church ministry team members of [the church]. (Document of the school)

In another school:

The school was founded to establish the educational needs of Christian families and present the message of the gospel to children and the community within the context of biblical truth and practice as recognised by adherents of the evangelical Christian faith. The same biblical truth and practice encourages a mission perspective.

From another, we read:

The objective of [the school] is to pass on to students the truth that all creation is subordinate to the will of God as expressed in the scriptures; that all truth finds its meaning and centre in God and that God gives purpose and hope to individuals as well as His creation by virtue of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ … that gives substance to intellectual, physical, spiritual, ethical, emotional, social and aesthetic development. The curriculum, including all the New Zealand Curriculum Statements, is presented within a Christian worldview. Such a worldview gives perspective and meaning to all learning in the school. Implicit in the curriculum is the development of Christian ethical values exemplified by the Ten Commandments and Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. These values are the foundation for personal and social peace, just government, responsible citizenship, compassionate neighbourliness, wise parenting and a responsible attitude to creation. Such biblical values also recognise that a life of self renouncing love is one of liberty.

This chapter presents the multiperspective nature of *Special Character*. Perspectives from the sixty-two participants regarding *Special Character*, fell roughly into four major perspective fields. These are illustrated by Figure 5.1 below.
Under the first perspective field, A Biblical Base for *Special Character*, the issues of a biblical metanarrative, a biblical worldview, a perspective on the Bible itself and statements of faith are considered. Under the second, A Philosophical Base of *Special Character*, I address the ontological base of *Special Character*, founding principles, *Special Character* as a culture, the integration of the whole of life and the pedagogical issue of ‘teaching Christianly’. The third, A Christological Base for *Special Character*, takes account of the views of those who view *Special Character* as being Christ-centred, God-focused, and God-honouring. Under the fourth, Relational Base of *Special Character*, I focus on abstract principles, character qualities, discipleship, and community.

In order to demonstrate the essentiality and complexity of *Special Character* in New Zealand Integrated Evangelical schools I begin this chapter by analysing a principal’s story of the process he traversed in establishing the concepts and practice of this construct in his own school. This principal became a principal of a Christian Evangelical School after 22 years in the state school system. In the story of his journey he described in the interview how he, his board and his staff had established a transformative professional development programme aimed at ensuring that all staff were intentional about *Special Character* in all aspects of the school’s life.

The principal made ten important points. First, people do not really understand a school fully, especially a *Special Character* school, until they are part of it. He didn’t – even as a committed
evangelical Christian. Secondly, there is a vast difference “a vast disparity” (Coleman, 1993) between a state school and an evangelical Christian school, sufficient to create a ‘culture shock’ when transferring from one to the other, as he found. Then thirdly, he indicated that Special Character is not an option in these schools: it is mandated. To be on staff is to buy into the Special Character culture. Integrating one’s faith into every aspect of school life was the fourth point: it must be taken very seriously and proactively to be at all effective. Integrating one’s faith throughout one’s professional life, his fifth point, is possibly unique to teaching in a faith-based school.

A sixth point is that Special Character professional development (PD) in a Special Character school is most effective if it starts with the principal. He/she must lead. Generous amounts of time must be set aside if the PD is to have depth and effectiveness. Then, point number seven, a rigorous programme of seminars, lectures, mentoring, required reading, reflections, discussions, with writing of curriculum application and a personal final report to the Board of Trustees, needs to be in place, as does a Special Character staff library. This requires, (as point number eight) adequate (generous) funding that needs to be allocated to facilitate such staff training, allowing for staff to be given regular release time over a one or two year period. It was noted, ninthly, that the changes in staff and their work, were, following professional development, “deep and transformational” as observed by parents, pupils and the staff themselves. However, the more focused and embedded Special Character emphases became in the life of the school, the more polarising it became, especially for non-preference (non-Christian) students – the tenth point. In brief, the points made referred to understanding the school, culture shock, mandated Special Character, integrating faith pervasively, professionalism integrated, professional development, rigorous programmes, generous funding, transformational change in staff, and possible polarisation.

I now move to considering the perspectives of the other participants under the four perspective themes outlined above.

A BIBLICAL BASE OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

In this section I shall outline how these schools view their Special Character as a biblical metanarrative, as a biblical worldview, as a perspective on the Bible itself, and as Statements of Faith.

A Biblical Metanarrative

For many of the participants, the biblical metanarrative anchors Special Character. It is a story of origins, of God’s great people, of values, of a chosen people, a relational story. It is a story including justice and judgment. It is an aesthetics-laden story and it is a story with eschatology. According to
P42, the *Special Character* understandings are based on: “a narrative that works, a storyline that’s the basis of education … the Christian story … the story of God engaging with His world”. “In simple terms it is creation, faith, redemption” (P7). Both P7 and P54 used the term metanarrative – a directing force that gives meaning to the learning process.

Postman (1995) considers the impact of metanarrative on learning. He argues that “to become a different person because of something you have learned … so that your world is altered … for that to happen you need a reason,” (pp. 3-4). It “is somewhat abstract, not always present in one’s consciousness, not at all easy to describe … without it, schooling does not work …. Their teachers must have a god to serve, or … several gods” (p. 4). He was not referring to the God, although he acknowledged that for 500 years in the western world, God was sufficient justification for setting up schools and universities. Schools must be “infused with the spirit of a narrative” (p. 5) to give meaning to the teaching. He uses the term narrative as a synonym for god – small g. This gives it “an awe of sacredness” that will direct their minds to an idea, to a story, a story “that tells of origins and envisions a future, a story that constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority and above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose” (pp. 5-6).

Postman accepted that “the most comprehensive narratives are, of course, found in such texts as the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran, the Bhagavad-Gita” (p. 7). In the Christian school literature, Belcher (2004), Edlin (2006), Justins (2006) and Newton (2004) all refer to Christian schooling as being based on the biblical metanarrative.

**A Biblical Worldview**

However, the participants believed that there is more than a biblical metanarrative driving *Special Character*. A worldview was also considered to be significant as it answers to such questions as: Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we? Why am I here? What is wrong? What is the solution? Where are we going? How can we get there? (Walsh & Middleton, 1984). A basic dictionary definition of worldview is “the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world” and “A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group” (The Free On-line Dictionary, 2012). La Haye and Noebel (2000) have indicated that given that “the Bible has something to say about all reality, [and] that … makes Christianity a worldview” (p. 204). This is significant for Christian Evangelical schools if the goal of Christian education is “to imbue the child with a Christian world and life view” (Wolterstorff, 1997, p. 113). However, Smith (2006) has wondered whether the “broad worldview categories [creation, the fall, redemption] are often more like the edge pieces of a jigsaw than the foundation of a building” (p. 140). Eventually though,
according to Renicks (2003), “the worldview of the teacher will gradually condition the worldview of the student” (p. 314).

For 25 of the 62 participants a biblical or Christian worldview was the essence of *Special Character*. It was not easy to know the depth of understanding these 25 participants had of worldview, nor is it an easy concept to define. Smith (2006) commented on how, as he read more widely and attended conferences of Christian educators he soon heard “that the answer was to develop a Christian worldview. Yet what I heard and read was often very general in focus – a Christian view of life, the universe and everything” (p. 135).

Because ‘worldview’ is a mental construct to provide a framework of understandings (about origins, values, life’s meanings) it is both the means and context of an education at the same time that cerebral learning is the means and context for imbuing the student with a biblical worldview. The worldview categories Smith (2006) mentions (creation, fall, redemption) are contested, (Thompson, 2003), but are common to texts used in evangelical schools (Colson & Pearcey, 1999; Greene, 1998, Walsh & Middleton, 1984; Wolters, 2005). Other evangelical writers on worldview avoid the terms ‘creation, fall, redemption’ (for example: Noebel, 1995; Sire, 2004; Sproul, 1986), possibly as they are seen to be too formulaic. The terms are foundational even if not exclusively so. Bishop (2004) says “[it is] a worldview that consistently tries to see the world as God would see it”. He believes that, “apart from a Christian worldview, Christian schools do not have a unique educational contribution” (p. 19), and “we start by modelling a Christian worldview” (p. 27). If the worldview of the teacher is the teacher’s perspective on life as lived out, it could be argued that it becomes increasingly a biblical worldview if that teacher’s life is aligned to the values, precepts and timeless prototypes of scripture. In that sense, the teacher is very much part of the context that teaches/models a worldview.

Edlin (2004) in his list of six core values for Christian schooling, states a biblical worldview as his second core value after the centrality of the Bible. It is to this emphasis on worldview grounded in the Christian scriptures that the participants of this research made frequent reference. Thirteen participants referred to *Special Character* as a biblical worldview (others as a Christian worldview) and another four made clear reference to a biblical worldview without labelling it as that. That worldview is foundational according to P30 – “based on biblical foundations”. This “worldview is teaching students to think biblically” (P6). It is liberating (P36) and impacting (P4, P26). Of the 31 worldview comments (from 25 participants), eight were specific that for *Special Character*, the worldview must permeate the curriculum. Five of the eight were from one school, and there was one each from three other schools. As P41 says, “Our worldview should colour our subject”. As such it
elicits purpose and significance (P32). Governed by a biblical worldview, “the Special Character should be the lens … and the way we want our whole motive for learning, for achieving, for succeeding” (P19).

Twelve participants referred to their Special Character as a Christian worldview, for example “it is a Christ-centred worldview” (P24), whereas thirteen referred to it as a biblical worldview. There is a distinction of emphasis, though for two participants the terms were interchangeable. There is an exclusivity about it according to P46 who said: “a biblical worldview [is] the only one that makes sense because of our belief in Who the Creator is”. In the evangelical Christian school it is a dominant worldview (P14), “seeing everything from the perspective of God”. It is also a creationist worldview. In one school alone, six participants made reference to origins in the sense that God is the Creator of all things (P47).

This biblical worldview does not recognise secularity. It is “a worldview where God is in the whole of life; there is no sacred and secular division. This is in contrast to the ungodly humanist, secular world we live in” (P20). It is a godly worldview (P56). “Where you are able to … reference things back to God” (P56). There is the element of the transcendent (P10). For P61 (like P19), the biblical worldview is: “the lens that they view that knowledge through”. In that sense, it colours everything they do (P67). For those associated with Christian schools, according to P13, the Christian worldview is seminal in that “worldview is how a lot of the Special Character is created” (P13).

Indeed, P50 felt that the Christian worldview involved a relationship with God through Christ as though that was “the heart” of Special Character. In speaking of the biblical worldview, P64 believes the student is “getting the message in stereo” – at home and school. It “encompasses what kids need to grow and develop from the worldview point” (P23). As mentioned above, it is a paradigmmed (creation, fall, redemption) worldview (P7, P8). It was felt by P17 that because it is a biblical worldview it has a unifying effect with other Christian schools. One participant (P7) had some reservation on the paradigm “because [of] that phenomenological thing [it] is only from where I sit…. Our starting point for analysis is a phenomenological one [whereas Scripture] starts with God. It starts with revelation”. What he appeared to be emphasising is that scripture does not start with outlining a worldview; nor does it ever outline a worldview per se.

For more than half of the 25 participants this worldview, in a sense, is a standard-setting worldview for the Special Character. “It is a school with a Christian worldview … asking ‘what would Jesus do?’” (P9). “We are attempting to align our professional practice … with the biblical perspective … we align discipline … relationships … with the nature and character of God … in everything we do” (P29). “If they are going to examine the current culture, … [they] must have a biblical worldview”
“[We need to] be able to critique things in the light of a Christian worldview (P10).” It is a plumb line against which so many decisions are made. Finally, it is an evangelistic worldview (P58), a quickening, that is, making alive to God – it “reveals … our relationship towards Him” (P54).

In this section, I have outlined how participants perceive *Special Character* to be a worldview, and that the goal of their educating was to impart that worldview. This worldview was defined in three ways – as answering to life’s basic questions (La Haye & Noebel, 2000); as the viewpoint of God (Bishop, 2004); and as the essence of the Christian faith itself. I then acknowledged the perceptions expressed: that this worldview was biblical (Edlin, 2004, Greene, 1998, Ps 30, 12, 6, 36, 46); curriculum-permeating (Ps 32, 19); Christian and Christ-centred (P24); exclusive (P46) and dominant (Ps 14, 47); non-secular (Ps 20, 56, 10, 61); seminal (Ps 13, 50, 64, 67, 23); paradigmatic (Ps 8, 7); standard-setting (Ps 9, 29, 37, 10); and evangelistic (Ps 58, 54).

**A Perspective on the Bible itself**

The second most common comment concerning *Special Character* description was that it was Bible-based. Related comments came from twenty-two sources. The understanding of *Special Character* as Bible based was summarised by P4:

> It is based on the Bible, the teachings of Jesus, the truths, the history of the Bible … What the Bible teaches is coming through continually … [it] teaches the children the biblical way of resolving conflict. We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. This is our number one starting point … from which we build the *Special Character* of the school … and that is a non-negotiable. … [The Bible] is given by God, written by God through men … it was actually God’s idea. It is powerful. We can build our lives on it and grow successful productive lives based on it. It is infallible … [young people need to] be reading the Bible on a daily basis … learning how to have that time with God where the Word will be quickened [made alive] to them and speak to them and give them the wisdom that they need for any given situation … to strengthen up the engagement of the pupils in good sound Bible teaching to ground them.

*Special Character* is seen to have its roots in biblical understandings (P43). This would be true historically of Christian schools (P17). While biblical understandings give *Special Character* its roots (Eaude, 2012), to change the metaphor, they also provide foundations (P25). Indeed, P2 stressed that, “the biblical truths of Jesus Christ are taught and lived”. “In everything we do we endeavour to … remain consistent with the principles of the Word of God,” said P37. “Every subject … [should have] some sort of biblical teaching behind it” (P55). However, concern was expressed by P53 that, being “a Bible-based school there is an acceptance of … an evangelical approach [being confined] to teaching Scripture”.

The Bible was seen to be foundational for faith (P31). As such, the Bible becomes to the student “our guide to life” (P35). Another student (P11) commented that “you find so much meaning to life
through a biblical perspective”. And this student made at least 15 references to the Bible in the course of the interview. Student P6 said: “The truth is in the Bible. … It is God’s Word. It is the truth”. This student added “we come to school to get an understanding of God’s Word … to grow into a relationship with the Lord as well as getting taught the basics of schooling”. Because there is this common biblical understanding, P8 could say that “it is identity for people who share the same views”.

The Bible is foundational for values. One Christian school founder (P22) said that “Our own concepts of Bible values motivated us to provide the exposure of Bible virtues on a day to day basis within the normal state curriculums”. The Bible was also seen to be foundational for pragmatic Christian living by P18, who spoke as if the production of Special Character in the life of the students, is the test as to whether Special Character was genuinely based on biblical foundations. Participant 20, speaking of the evidence for the divine inspiration of Scripture said that it works – it has the answer to life’s problems. And so it is personalised, as P44 expressed it by saying: “It is His divine inspiration to us. That’s the way He speaks to us; it is His wisdom given to us … it is my instruction for life … it is the most important way God speaks to me”.

The Bible has been seen to be foundational for Special Character schools historically (P43), foundational for curriculum (P55), for faith (P31), for values (P22), and for pragmatic Christian living (P18). As one student eloquently described, the Bible is the source of her worldview, of her concept of the Christ, as having an all-pervasive application to every aspect of her life. It puts God as the centre, it is relational and personal, it is alive in that it can ‘speak’ to you. It is all about Jesus and is applicable to every group, to young and old alike. The truth elements of the Bible that these schools place particular store on, are spelt out in their Statements of Faith.

**Statements of Faith**

The Bible is also foundational to what all Integration Agreements in these schools call a Statement of Faith - the set of believed doctrines or teachings held in that faith community. Referring to a biblical worldview, P47 said: “It would certainly define the Statement of Faith and define your beliefs”. At the heart of this biblical understanding is a commitment across all six schools to the inerrancy of Scripture (P49) which is definitional to evangelicalism. While not directly focused on the Bible, the school’s Statement of Faith is often a salient factor for some in describing Special Character. Significantly, P49 referred to the Reformed influence as both a strength and a weakness: a strength in that it gave depth of understanding, a weakness in that it discouraged outward spontaneous expressions of faith. “Special Character [is] defined by the fundamentals [propositional truth],” said P1. The pentecostal-based schools also reflect their doctrines in their statements of faith; all three
pentecostal schools in this study were church-owned. What was embedded in their statements of faith, was developed in the school. Participant 26 felt the Special Character of his school was enshrined in the beliefs and practices of the local church that sponsors the school and of the movement to which they belong. This implies a pentecostal evangelical context where it is outworked, resulting in pentecostal practices in the school which, he said, are encouraged in both students and teachers.

Concerning the statements of faith (the doctrinal basis/statements) the views expressed included that ‘the statement’ was the stronger part of the school’s DNA (P25); ‘the statement’ contained a strong reformed underpinning influence (P2, P49); ‘the statement’ consisted of the fundamentals (P1, P17); ‘the statement’ included provision for a pentecostal experience (Ps 33, 65, 5, 9); for P22 the original ‘statement’ was militantly pentecostal; P26 acknowledged a pentecostal slant could become an overemphasis “at the expense of academics”; the ‘statement’ majors on the person of Christ and the Bible (P26). Special Character was allied to a denominational statement (P17); the statement represented the flavour of the proprietor church (P53). Special Character was more in people than in doctrinal statements (P23). Motivation is by the Holy Spirit, not by doctrinal statements (P23); the ‘statements’ are specifically evangelical (P58). While the statement of faith was static, the Special Character was evolving (P22). It may be laid down in the foundational documents, but it is not static; schools are beholden more to the proprietor than to the proprietor’s statement of faith (P22). It would seem that statements of faith have a wider influence on Special Character in those schools that are not church-founded. The three pentecostal schools in this study were under church-proprietorship and the statement of faith of the church became that of the school, but with little influence beyond that.

**PHILOSOPHICAL BASE OF SPECIAL CHARACTER**

All of that which has been expressed in this chapter thus far has dealt with the biblical basis of Special Character as it is understood by the participants. Other expressions concerned the describing of Special Character in terms of a philosophical base. In this section I shall examine particular comments relating to its ontological base, the founding principles of the schools, Special Character as a culture, the integration of the whole of life and a pedagogical issue – that of “teaching Christianly”.

**The Ontological Base of Special Character**

Ontological commitments are defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* as follows:

> The ontology of a theory consists in the objects the theory assumes there to be. In order to show that a theory assumes a given object, or objects … we must show that the theory would be true only if that object existed. (Gibson, 1999, p. 631)
In P44’s responses concerning Special Character, her concerns initially centred on the ontological commitments; what those presuppositions were. Gibson’s “objects the theory assumes” are P44’s presuppositions. Only if those evangelical presuppositions were set in place would evangelical Special Character schools exist. The data reveals no other motivation. “It is certainly founded on the belief that God is the one true God and His ways are the right ways and the Bible is His divine Word about how we should be living our lives” (P44). Or as P8 put it – “that there is one God and that He is our Creator and to know that we have a plan for our life, we have a purpose”. The presupposition here is that God had revealed Himself to man and communicated that revelation through a divinely-inspired compilation of writings called the Bible or Scripture. Participant 42 expressed it that “This whole God business is true – you’ve got to start somewhere with the foundational belief or presupposition … I’m not going to be questioning it my whole life”. Both P31 and P61 made reference to philosophical underpinning and P19 went so far as to say that “Special Character is enshrined in the philosophical underpinning”. One school had set in place a rigorous programme of study for staff on the philosophical underpinning as part of their professional development for staff. It consisted of professional reading, a series of lectures and discussion, reflections, and discussions on issues of pedagogy and curriculum arising from it, that philosophical underpinning.

**Foundational Principles of Special Character**

There were others that conceptualised Special Character more in terms of Foundational Principles and in general philosophical terms rather than ontological terms, starting with a very general statement such as “the Special Character has always been the founding principle of the school” (P31). It is enshrined in “both the teachers’ and the school’s foundations” (P43). “Starting with the biblical foundation … everything comes out of that … God’s Word is foundational” (P19).

“I think Special Character is built into the institution”, said P31, by which he meant that Special Character was built into the institution by virtue of the people within it who carried that Special Character (Hauerwas, 1994). A school is people, not buildings; an ‘institution’ when used as a school in this context, only exists by virtue of the people associated with the institution. Participant 31 said the teacher did not carry the Special Character on arrival at the school; he implied that the people have to ‘buy into’ the Special Character that has been developed there and thus become the embodiment of it along with others. As P11 suggested, “because the policies are made by the head of the school … it is on our wall[s] and stuff and so obviously in their policies,” referring to the Special Character policies and the embedding of Special Character sentiments within other policies. “It was based on, from the beginning [a founding principle], a reaction to the secular schools” (P17). To
student P27 the founding principles which *Special Character* expressed were simply
“Christianity … living the right life … godly living is just being good to people. Not just praying but being practical”.

**Special Character** as a Culture

Within the philosophical network of ideas, was a description of *Special Character* in terms of culture. “There are attitudes that are specific to cultures, but in our school”, said P3, “our culture is Jesus Christ … it is not Maori or European or Chinese … it is Jesus … anything just comes in behind that, or it should”. “*Special Character* is a sort of mind-set” (P47). This culture is seen in “your surroundings … which give off this idea of a future and a hope” (P11) leading us to believe that as *Special Character* is ‘in your surroundings’, it is therefore as much in the context as it is in the content of the education that is provided. *Special Character* “is a lot more about branding … of the school in terms of what we have on our building and various notices … our … practice to open God’s Word … to stop a meeting to pray about something” (P2). Such is their culture. Participant 49 called it an unwritten brand.

“Part of our *Special Character* probably is biculturalism” according to P26. It was an operationalised biculturalism in a predominantly Maori community. However, there was no reference to biculturalism in the school documents or the ERO report of December, 2006. Although the school was only one third Maori, it was possibly the dominant ethnicity in the school. Another cultural perspective was proffered by P24, a school founder, who was “interested in establishing a counter-culture and that was really the reason why the school came into being. I could see a crisis in the direction nation-wide”. He said he was concerned New Zealand was moving away from its Judeo-Christian roots of western society, and thus the need to establish a counter-culture – a school with *Special Character* culture.

**The Integration of the Whole of Life**

The concept of artificially Christianising school subjects was raised by both P37 and P25 and rejected by both, P25 labelling the practice ‘veneer *Special Character*’. Gilling (1993) argues that “New Zealand Christians have tried to create ‘godly schools’ by inserting some aspect of Christian belief into the programmes of state schools” (p. ix). There was no evidence of this. Rather than artificially manipulating a curriculum, *Special Character* was seen by P22 as integrating the Christian faith in the whole of life (Shepherd, 1957; Van Dyke, 1985). To P22 this must emanate or grow out of a personal relationship with Jesus. Participant 26 believed that discipleship and education came together and to separate them was to miss the point of *Special Character*. 
Although not many made direct reference to divine accountability of the whole of life in the delivery of *Special Character* education, one who did was P47. “Because you are actually acknowledging that God is your Creator, or God is your Father, as a Christian; and so it is not just me, me, me; but it is God and me”. One school’s motto is “Jesus is Lord”, that is, He is the Master to whom we are accountable. “The *Special Character* defines the whole school … environment”, said P17. “It is woven in all aspects of the school and curriculum … it is a way of life, it’s not just Christian education over here and the rest of it over there”, said P36. That’s how student P13 saw it as well – “fairly well spread across every aspect of the school … so the facts of how they see the pupils … teachers … relationships … how they approach their actual teaching method and what they teach”. Parent P19 also observed that “it runs right across everything, the governance of the school, not just the relational aspect … the documentation, how we think, how we act, how we interpret, how we respond to material from the Ministry, everything – it is total”.

**A Pedagogical Issue**

Finally, as part of the philosophical approach to *Special Character*, there is the repeated phrase of “Teaching Christianly” which I have examined in Chapter 8 on Tensions, aware that some teachers are confused by the terminology used in the literature (Greene, 1998; Smith, 2006). Several participants\(^\text{22}\) used the term to indicate what it means “to teach in a Christian way, which is our *Special Character* … in a way that shows that everything is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It has to be authentic” (P25). When P7 made reference to ‘teaching Christianly’, he was asked: how did he know someone was ‘teaching Christianly’:

> I don’t actually like the term ‘teaching Christianly’. Because you teach, you just teach. It depends how philosophical you want to be, but it is this ontological understanding; it is simply who we are, it is not just a function of what we do, … A *Special Character* programme is most effective when we get to that ontological level to help people to understand that their whole entire life, not just as a teacher between the hours of say, 9.00 and 3.00 but who they are is their entire character … it [teaching Christianly] is in the DNA of who we are, how we operate, how we think, everything: it is so total. It is so pervasive. (P7)

**THE CHRISTOLOGICAL BASE FOR SPECIAL CHARACTER**

*Special Character* is not only described in terms of its biblical base or its philosophical base; it is also described in terms of its Christological base. In this section I shall gather together the thoughts expressed on evangelical *Special Character* as being Christ-centred, as being God-focused; and as being God-honouring.

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\(^{22}\) P25, P10, P37, P19, P7, P52
Christ-centred Special Character

Christ-centred Special Character will be discussed as a focus and as a relationship for the purpose of analysis though inevitably they are interwoven and overlap. A Christ-focus in Special Character is the vision of the proprietors (P49), the concern of the parents (P50), “the pivotal point of everything we do” (P15) the heart of the Board (P41), the focus of the principal (P29), the passion of the staff (P25) and the anchor for the student (P11). “It is all about Jesus” said P49. Similarly, P50, a parent commented:

First and foremost, it is a Christ-centred school; the children all come from the same Christian beliefs … at the end of the day if my children can’t be as one with me in Christ, there is no meaning to life … if my kids can’t be there, if I can’t make a difference in my children’s lives … their future is eternal.

Participant 25 remarked on the virtue of “teachers who are absolutely passionate about the Lord Jesus Christ”. Special Character:

is all about Jesus. That sounds simplistic and might even sound naïve [for a highly trained university man] but ultimately that is at the core of the character of this school in its structure and in its foundation documents and, I believe, in its practice. (P49)

Similarly, P25 intimated that the presence of Christ, through His Spirit, is the essential aspect of the Special Character spirituality, which is there but cannot be handled, or touched or seen, but only experienced.

Not only is Christ-centredness spiritually essential, Christ-centred Special Character is a focus in the curriculum (P55). To P5, “no education outside of Christ is of value”. Parents “want their child in a Christ-centred environment” (P29), “a Christ-centred environment based on biblical truths and practice and it is woven in all aspects of the school and curriculum” (P36). (Note the complexity here where all three concepts of Special Character are interwoven, being Christ-centred, biblically-based and applicable to the whole of life). Special Character was “a Christ-centred worldview” (P24), as noted earlier.

Twenty seven of the participants made reference to Special Character as a relationship with God or with Jesus, stating that Special Character nurtured their need of Jesus (P28), that they were following Jesus (P4), the need to be embodying Jesus (P58), involved with Jesus (P10), knowing Jesus (P52), befriending of Jesus (P24), relating to Jesus (P11, 35, 41, 42, 47), walking with Jesus (P4), living Jesus (P46), reflecting Jesus\(^\text{23}\) (P1), deferring to Jesus (P2), depending on Jesus (P46), promoting Jesus (P31), talking about Jesus (P55), learning about Jesus (P51), prioritising Jesus (P43), focusing on Jesus (P19), loving Jesus (P14), teaching about Jesus (P44) and pleasing Jesus (P44). Some of these I expand on below.

\(^{23}\) 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “We who … reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His likeness”.
In order to embody Christ, the individual must first ‘know’ Christ. “They [the parents] were more interested in their children being equipped in knowing Christ and knowing … how to live as a Christian … something that you have to constantly hold in focus”, said P52. Another, P46, also spoke of living the life of Jesus, saying

> If Christ, by His Spirit lives in me … then I would expect that what people see is what is written – I am a readable letter. My heart … is being changed, to be more like Christ. In the end it is an issue of truth. What is truth? … truth is the Person of Christ.\(^{24}\)

Perhaps the most common comment from the fifteen who spoke of Christ-centredness was that “Jesus is Lord”. “*Special Character* is basically the Lordship of Jesus Christ over everything we do” (P25). And this is what he said they sought to do, which was not done in a secular school: its point of difference. There is a common saying among evangelicals (attributed to J. Hudson Taylor) that “If you do not crown Him Lord of all, you do not really crown Him Lord at all” (MacNeil, 1896, p. 77). For P25 that included such things as your finances – “whose money is it ultimately? Where did you get it from?” he asked.

Of significance are the results from asking a variety of participants as to what was the best thing the school could do for its students – or what was the ultimate goal of their education. While one participant (P63) said it was to teach them some morals, and another (P66) said it was to keep their focus on God, a third said it was to pray for them. All the rest who spoke to this issue\(^{25}\) were very definite that it was to see that the student developed a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord of their lives.

*Special Character* consisted of showing the character of Christ (P47), exhibiting the life of Christ (P38, P33), having the nature of Christ (P1), owning the lordship of Christ (P25, P29), being involved in the worship of Christ (P5), having the mind of Christ (P29), measuring all things against the values of Christ (P3, P44), becoming like Christ (P3), producing disciples of Christ (P24), developing a dependency on Christ (P33), having spiritual life through the indwelling of Christ (P33), knowing, loving and serving Christ (P20), being fulfilled and satisfied with Christ (P3), cultivating the friendship of Christ (P24).

The relationship with Jesus as Saviour and centre, according to P50, is one you cannot communicate (explain) to others. “That is … at the heart of the *Special Character* … it has got to be a heart thing – the heart of the school, the heart of the teacher, the heart of the children”.

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\(^{24}\) John 14:6 – “I am the … truth”  
\(^{25}\) Ps 4, 8, 14, 15, 26, 28, 33, 44, 52, 54
Whatever the relationship with Christ, this is all dependent on where the believer is at ‘positionally’ (rather than ‘conditionally’, that is, one’s legal standing to use theological terms). This must be the overarching principle of being ‘IN Christ’ according to principal P10:

We actively want children to have encounters, living encounters with Christ in such a way that they are able to share their faith. Christ ultimately is the wisdom; He contains all the wisdom and knowledge of God; that in Him all things are summed up. He is the epitome of who we are to be, His people, so we put Christ at the centre of all that we do in order for His redemption, not just to be available … for individuals, but a redeeming of the education process, that is, putting Christ at the centre; we are acknowledging His Lordship over all things. To have people [students] impacted by the Gospel … [was that] … they are in Christ … that undergirds everything. To be in Christ … having kids encounter Christ and be in Christ. [Whatever the school does for its students] ultimately it is wasted unless they are in Christ.

God-focused Special Character

While the majority of participants highlighted a Christo-centric orientation with respect to their Special Character, there were others, who, alongside a relationship with Christ, highlighted a relationship with God. For evangelicals, Jesus Christ is the second member of the triune God. Focusing on God is a slightly different focus. As P52 expressed it, “The foremost thing in our lives should be our relationship to God. … It is not just about education, and it never was”. Participant 66 had an identical focus, using the term ‘God-centred’ four times.

The change of focus was illustrated well by P38, a businesswoman who said:

It starts with an understanding of the Bible: “acknowledge God in all your ways and He will direct your paths”.26 And “seek to work as unto the Lord in all that you do”.27 Again it comes from the Bible. God had an idea of how we are to live so that we can “have life with abundance”.28 Unless you submit to God and “resist the devil”29 it comes back to obedience. [In reference to bullying] it grieves God that we treat each other like … that … our responsibility … to the children is to bring that Christian teaching, “draw them near to God and God will come to the other side”.30 In your formative years you don’t understand God … “we love God because He first loved us”31 … praise and worship of God is a daily living thing … but the act of praise and worship to God is in your everyday actual living. The choices you make on a daily basis, that’s the praise and worship to God … From a Christian perspective you understand that ultimate accountability lies with God32 and not us.

Her contribution to our understanding of the Special Character of these schools was also of interest for her Bible orientation and quotations, not unusual in the evangelical school communities. It is of interest to note that in the entire interview with P38, no mention was made of Jesus, or the Christ. She used the term ‘Christian’ or ‘Christianity’ 35 times. Hence my referring to her God-orientation

26 Proverbs 3:6
27 Colossians 3:17
28 John 10:10
29 James 4:7
30 James 4:8
31 1 John 4:19
32 Romans 14:12
concept rather than the more frequently encountered ‘Christ’ orientation. On this perception of **Special Character** her contribution was unique among the 62 participants. It is also of note how detailed P38’s God-orientation was – coming to God, acknowledging God, submitting to God, worshipping God, accountable to God, being directed by God, finding purpose in God, fullness of life with God, and obedience to God.

Others spoke of focusing on God (P18), being indwelt by God (P44), of our need of God (P28), promoting God (P31), walking with God (P4), listening to God (P44) learning about God (P51), loving God (P14), walking with God (P4), pleasing God (P44), deferring to God (P2), relying on God (P11), depending on God (P34) and finding support and strength in God (P11) as these pertained to developing and maintaining **Special Character** in their schools. God was also seen as the source of spirituality (P10), the Creator and Father (P24). “**Special Character** is … a spirituality … as coming … from a loving Creator personally involved in the lives of His people” (P10), “people who have a personal relationship with God” (P42). Similar sentiments were expressed by four others, with respect to worship of God and heart-hunger for God (P11). “We are able to talk about God in every subject of the curriculum” (P55). The prioritising of things relating to God was seen as the key to **Special Character** by P43, in that it “is more importantly the fact that God is sought to be placed first and for Him to be Number One”. The focusing on God was the issue for P19:

> Our **Special Character** is not only the curriculum we teach, but it is the character, God’s character especially, that we want to see developed in the children …. What makes us special is that God is central to everything that we do … we place Him at the centre … [in] the way we teach, … interact.

“It [**Special Character**] is God living in us,” said P44, “so it is just who we are … it is God in us … a heart thing”. This concurs with the biblical (Pauline) concept that the great mystery of the faith “God in you of a truth”, as Paul also wrote of “Christ in you”. “We are in need of God in every area of our lives”, said P28. What most changes the character of the student “comes down to God speaking to each individual child and their response to Him”. “We would be openly teaching about God and Jesus Christ and His life” (P44). **Special Character** is “to love God at the very centre of everything we do and say”, said P14:

> The kids and teachers engaging with their learning, but always asking what does God think about this? What does God require of me in this? Why does God want me to be learning this? … [and doing so] in an uncontrived fashion. (P2 on deferring to God)

and student P11 who saw the need of relying on God:

> In growing your spiritual side you can grow your educational side as well, because when you rely on God, He teaches you what the right path is and finding that right path is choosing to study for your exams.

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33 1 Corinthians 14:25  
34 Colossians 1:27
Participant 46 saw *Special Character* as a God-dependency. “God inspires it. Unless He builds the house we’re just mucking around … It is nothing we can do; it is not our might or strength, it has got to be what God does through us”. And cases of answered prayer in the school context were given. Participant 11 said:

> School is an important way of students taking their parents’ faith to being their own … and to build on it and hold on to it … to know that with God by your side you will always come out better than if you had done it by yourself. God is our strength.

### A God-honouring *Special Character*

While *Special Character* may be Christ-centred and God-focused, some participants described their *Special Character* in terms of their motivation; that is, *Special Character* is setting out to honour God in all things:

- firstly, it is God-honouring so that all … that happens in the school right from the Board decisions to the classroom is honouring to God. First of all acknowledging that He exists and has some interest in what’s going on in this [or that] particular facet of the life of the school … God is interested. (P42)

> “The whole thing is to glorify God” (P34). When explaining the term ‘teaching Christianly’, P37 said “Through their subject, God’s got to get the glory”. When asked what the ultimate goal of education in *Special Character* schools was, he said “I’ll quote a Bible verse to you – 1 Corinthians 10:31 ‘In all that you do … do all to the glory of God’. That’s [on] the foundation stone of this school”. The motivation for *Special Character* teaching, he added, was that in all things the question must be asked “Is it to the glory of God?” He intimated that was a reason there were no celebrity photos of founders or past principals on display on the walls. “We just want to give One Person the glory”.

A student commented that “they will address the fact that exams are for the glory of God”. Students were reminded in assemblies that they “need to remember … that the reason you are working hard is for the glory of God” (P13). When P7 was asked what they were trying to do that isn’t done in a secular school, he said:

> We are trying to honour God. We are educating for eternity. I know that is a sort of hackneyed phrase, but it is profoundly true … If a teacher can understand, or get a glimpse of what that might mean, it changes everything.

In this section we have seen how *Special Character* is particularly concerned with one’s relationship to God, whether as God the Father, or God the Son – or even God the Holy Spirit, though none of the participants indicated *Special Character* was in any way related to a focus on the Holy Spirit, the third member of the biblical triune Godhead. Much of what has been said in this section concerns our

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35 Psalm 127:1
36 Zechariah 4:6
relating to the God, the Christ of the Bible. It is to further comments on the relational issues that this thesis now turns.

**RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF SPECIAL CHARACTER**

*Special Character* has been perceived from a Bible base, from a philosophical base and from a Christological base and God-focused base. In this final section, I shall identify some Relational issues that participants felt were at the heart of what *Special Character* was, excluding the relationship with Christ Himself and God which were included under the Christological base. First I shall examine some broad abstract principles of this relational basis. Secondly, I shall identify Character Qualities that give evidence of that relationship. Thirdly I shall focus on discipling aspects that are affected by the relationships; and finally the community relational aspects will be discussed.

**Abstract Principles**

In this sub-section, *Special Character* will be viewed as providing a purpose for living (Ps 32, 41, 47, 23, 46), a motivation (P23), a destiny (Ps 20, 41); it will be viewed as an enabling to living the Christian life (P65); an umbrella of understanding (P52, P7); as a spiritual life (Ps 25, 14, 31); as an awareness of a Christian perspective (P48); as an engagement with students on issues from a Christian perspective (P60) and as a ‘tone’ that is established in the school (Ps 49, 19, 14).

God has a purpose for our lives and hence desires to be in relationship to those He created. Such were the sentiments of P32 who used the word ‘purpose’ twelve times including reference to the school’s purpose to educate so that God’s purpose for the students are fulfilled. “While all of that [growth in Christ-likeness] can happen in a state school, it isn’t the purpose of a state school”, she said. She compared parents whose purpose in spending money on the child’s education was: “to have the ability to generate wealth for themselves as an adult” whereas theirs was: “if I spend money on my child’s education now, I will equip them to be Christ-like in whatever career God chooses for them”.

*Special Character* is spiritual life. You cannot see it, you cannot feel it as the person can in whom it is resident. When P25 was asked whether it was ‘more felt than telt’ he responded that:

> It is a hard thing to describe, but I hope you would feel it, sense it, see it intangibly as well as tangibly. It was both. I think the ‘telt’ would be seen to be authentic by the ‘felt’ … We all know when we are literally doing the … sort of charade of the prayers, et cetera. I would hope that you would see that and say “It is authentic, it is real”.

*Special Character* is “a spiritual awareness from a Christian perspective” (P48), the development of spiritual awareness being one of the objectives of the New Zealand state curriculum (NZ
Government, 2007). This inevitably means different things to different people with different understandings arising from different contexts. In Special Character evangelical schools, the spiritual awareness is a God-awareness and a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus.

Much will be said in Chapter Six concerning the Special Character values upheld by these schools, but it is many of these values that give the school “a kind of tone within the school” (P49). That tone, said P19, “is set because God is central to what we do and what His Word says”. She used the term “the tone of the school” three times in her deliberations. Others, like P14, similarly referred to a distinct ethos – that “something different”. Such are the broad principles in the relational aspect of Special Character. In order to live by these principles a certain type of character concomitant with these commitments is needed and to this we now turn.

Character Qualities
There are personal, behavioural character qualities associated with this relational aspect of Special Character. That is, ‘Character’ that shows itself in a distinctive type of interaction (P17); it is salt and light (P42); it is Christian morals (P16); it is the Christian’s modus operandi (P29); it is dependent upon an operationalised vibrant faith (Ps 64, 30, 12); it is godliness (Ps 42, 36, 32); it is hope (Ps 11, 35, 49); it is love (Ps 35, 5, 49, 46); it is a transformed heart into Christ-likeness (Ps 25, 5, 53, 46). “The way that people behave and interact [relationally] to me is distinctive”, said P17. One student (P16) put it well – “we base ourselves on Christian morals”.

The Special Character is a character that gives a special modus operandi as principal P29 speaks of. It:

has to be based around life-style and therefore it must be determining practice … from the lessons we teach, through our assemblies, … our communication with the wider public, … the way we interact with colleagues, … the way we approach discipline, how we solve problems, how we arrived at decisions, how we spend money … [and] in the dedication and commitment of staff … I want us to be different and I want us to be seen to be different … it should drive everything I do, my appointment of staff, the way I work with students … it should be our vision, our goal, our direction.

The character that Special Character produces must come from an operationalised faith (Greene, 1998; Stronks & Blomberg, 1993). To develop Christian character, the faith has to be lived. “You are only going to get Special Character operating if you have individuals who live in that zone” (P41). “You can teach it”, said P47, “but … to be Special Character you’ve got to live it … it is a heart thing … [it] has to be caught” [through relationship]. Patricia English (1998) considers: “It is incumbent upon Christian teachers to be Christ-like in everything” (p. 110). For the student (P34),
“they input into your life with how you should live … your life effectively and how to grow in the spiritual side of your life, how to grow in all areas of your life”.

*Special Character* is Christian character, godly character and godly wisdom as others have expressed it, born out of a relationship with God. There was a strong emphasis by P32 on being godly – a term she mentioned no less than eleven times – working in a godly way, giving a godly example, teach in a godly way, pursuing godly character, having a prizegiving award for godliness, abhorring ungodliness, and “all the godliness that two Christians can bring to a relationship”, stressing at the same time that “Christians aren’t the only ones who choose to do good things”. It is the particular character that is derived from a personal relationship with God that sets the *Special Character* apart in its outworking. It was also P34’s preference to base *Special Character* around the concept of godliness – “godly principles”, “godly values”, taught “in a godly … manner”, the place being run “in a godly way”.

For two student leaders interviewed, the outworking of *Special Character* as godly character was evidenced in the hope they alluded to. “We found hope and peace and love through our *Special Character* with what we believed … I think that *Special Character* instilled that hope, peace and love into us” said P35. Another (P11), said:

> I think of the statement ‘a future and a hope’. That’s the first thing that comes to mind when I think of [*Special*] *Character* and how we, as a school, present ourselves … in how we reflect … in the reflection we give … it comes back to that biblical meaning even deeper which it has to do with [Jeremiah 29:11].37 There is a lot more depth to it now for us … it has become more and more important to me … God still has a future and a hope … for me … God can work and God can touch people’s lives and that is also showing.

Another relational character quality highlighted was that of love. Participant 49 went on to say “it is like Jesus said, ‘love God and love your Neighbour’. *Special Character* loses its meaning unless it benefits your neighbour”. Participant 5 referred to this as “aroha38 – Christ’s love”. Participant 5 ranks this factor as “the biggest thing that would be different”. He is the only participant of the 62 that highlighted this factor in this way. One of the seemingly indefinables in Christian experience is the sense of bondedness that fellow-believers have in their relationship to Jesus and to one another, given that over-worked but biblical term of ‘love’. It is like a brotherhood, a family commitment and affection. That love was well illustrated in P46’s experience. When P46 ran his own school many years ago in the days of legalised corporal punishment, he ran an ACE school which had check lists to work through before the disciplining, which ensured you knew the student well and had built a

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37 Jeremiah 29:11 says: “I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord … to give you a future and a hope”  
38 The Maori Dictionary defines ‘aroha’ as: affection, sympathy, charity, compassion, love, empathy. The term ‘aroha nui’ (often used at the end of letters) means: much love; with deep affection. In Maoridom, the term aroha has multiple layers of meaning according to teacher and tohunga (Maori Dictionary, n.d.). Aroha is the binding force of all that is (Ruth Makuini Tai, n.d.).
strong relationship. He remarked that often after a half hour session with the student, being assured the student took ownership of the issue, he would administer it:

Almost invariably, after the paddle had been administered, every kid would do this to me – they’d want a hug to restore the relationship. Now that … was a very precious thing … Now of course, it is not kosher in any shape or form and I don’t know that it ever was … but it does impact how you deal with kids.

“It is not the head alone”, said P25, “it is the heart … it has got to be living”. It is of significance that the scriptures speak far more about the transformation of the heart than it does of the mind. With reference to this ‘transformation’ that Special Character seeks to bring about in the school setting, both P29 and P5 made reference to a ‘born again’ experience and again to Romans 12:2. It is a transformational relationship that is “the essence of Special Character” (P35) and “the bottom line” for Special Character (P47), this being “the difference between a ‘religious’ and a ‘Christian’ school” (P41). When P46 was asked what kind of change he expected in his students, he said “transformational change I’d like to think … I think we’re all in a process of being changed for glory or being transformed”. Speaking of Special Character, he said “You are talking about transformation of the heart, transformation of character and thinking, transformation of relationships, transformation of society. … Transformation … a mystery in one sense”.

Discipleship Aspects that are affected by Relationships

The relationship of staff and parents in achieving discipleship is now considered. Evangelism and discipleship emphases are compared as to where the focus is for Special Character. The end result of that discipling is to produce Christian leaders, for some, this being their goal of Special Character.

In Special Character schools, and particularly the six in this study, there would be far less emphasis on the evangelistic task than there is on discipling of youthful Christian believers. In P42’s school, “we would call ourselves … more discipleship focused – supporting Mums and Dads at home”:

One of the things we [the founders] had to face at the beginning [prior to Integration] was: did our school exist to evangelise or did it exist to disciple? … I realised and others realised that we are here to disciple. (P24)

The very nature of the enrolment policy of 90% being ‘preference’ students would indicate alone that Christian schools are more focused on discipling than evangelising. This does not discredit the efforts made in evangelising on the possible 10% of non-preference students that they are permitted to enrol. With that focus comes the pastoral care of students – “The manner and the matter of the

39 See John 3:3-7 where Jesus discusses being ‘born again’.
40 “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may experience that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone; the new has come”.
41 An allusion to 2 Corinthians 3:18 which says “we … all … are being transformed” (changed – Authorised Version of the Bible, 1611) “into His likeness with ever increasing glory” (NIV – New International Version, 1978).
way they do things, their interactions with the pupils … the parents … each other” (P25). When P64 said he did not know what *Special Character* was, formally, he defined it as “equipping and inspiring students to reach their life’s potential and serve God’s purpose”. This in effect, is discipleship training.

Others saw the role of staff as bringing an evangelistic emphasis, which it was for P49. Many years ago – “we were here to convert pupils” that is, to evangelise – “it was John 3:16” and, apparently the message was constant. “The true fruit has got to come by one being born of the Spirit of God” said P37. But there was a diversity of views in this school as to what that actually meant and when such an experience takes place in the life of a student or adult. But it was clear to me that the majority of personnel in the school (if not all) hold to the experience of being born of the Spirit of God as a distinct experience that one can attribute to a specific point in time as to when it happened, that experience being the focus of evangelism. Harris (1999) defines “informed conservatism” in terms of:

> Embody[ing] the distinctives of evangelicalism – a focus on the centrality of Jesus Christ … on the entire trustworthiness of Scripture and of its ultimate authority in all matters of faith and conduct; on the need for conversion and the primacy of the evangelistic task (p. 11) – (emphasis mine).

One of the expressed goals of *Special Character* schooling, according to one school founder, was “to train and raise up godly leaders to serve in every field of endeavour and to be an influence within society … I can’t change the government and I also felt that, based on Scripture, when things got bad enough, God would raise up a deliverer when people cried out to Him” (P24).42 “Regarding that *Special Character* – I think [this particular school] puts a lot of emphasis on student leadership. They want all our students to develop into student leaders … that would be the particular *Special Character* that [our school] would have” (P30). This was a comment from a student who also clarified the kind of leadership; it was “servant leadership, where you go down, not up – as servants”, a concept that P60, from the same school, highlighted, as did Ps 12 and 48 – Jesus said “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first, must be slave of all”.43 There is one obscure reference to the term ‘leader’ in the AV New Testament, but around 70 references to servants, many of which applied to their leaders. Of Himself, Jesus said “I am among you as one that serveth”.44 This is servant leadership, an important relational aspect of *Special Character*.

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42 This is an allusion to the Book of Judges in the Bible (2:16-19).
43 Mark 10:43-44 (NIV)
44 Luke 22:27
Relational aspects of *Special Character* are guided by principles, lived by the character of those involved and co-ordinated by those in leadership, in pastoral care or in mentoring, with a view to developing and discipling servant leaders from among the students. In the outworking of that discipling there develops a school nondenominational relational Christian community.

### A Spiritually Relational Community

In each of the six schools, it would be fair to say that the school communities were non-denominational (P7, P20) even when their proprietorship was a denominational one, as it was in three of the six schools – three different denominations. The student body in all the six schools represent a wide cross-section of the evangelical population in their catchment area.

“What the school will be about”, said P2, “is to major on what we hold in common across the evangelical spectrum”. This is more of a balancing act in those schools that do not have a denominational base. The three church schools were all pentecostal and those non-pentecostal people, who enrolled their children in such schools, did so on the basis of understanding where various emphases would be encountered. The three independent schools tended to reflect the doctrinal emphases of their founding fathers whether they be Charismatic, in the case of one, or Reformed church as was the case in another. More will be said of this in Chapter 6 on Values.

In the case of the schools that have a church base, there is the tendency for the church to have a strong influence such that:

> The [church] flavour [comes through and gives it] an extra dimension … the performing arts [(a church emphasis)] are part of the *Special Character* of this school. The visual and auditory product of the [church] facilities and the vision … they [the students] watch and they hear. It is a ‘listen with their eyes’ generation. (P53)

In this, the *Special Character* reflects a joint church and school community, such is the broader organisational relationship. A spiritually relational community is how parent P38 saw the *Special Character*:

> The relationship is with both God and fellow believers. It is a two-way relationship … [*Special Character*] is relationship – it is individual and it is community … that individual relationship with God. … [How do you describe it?] It is community responsibility for learning as opposed to individual responsibility. I think that in a community we should all care for one another ideally. In a school environment, we should care for one another’s learning as well … It is community and co-operative learning but with the Bible surely sewn into every aspect of the curriculum … it is coming to learn from community support … loved and nurtured into that by the community, … So it is first a community thing. If we expose our children to that love in a community, they will come to understand something of the nature of God … so it is first a community thing before it is an individual thing. (Underlinings added.)
Participant 38 saw the community relationship coming first from a relationship with God, but with two dimensions to this: the individual’s relationship with God and the school community’s relationship with God, expressed in the interdependence for learning within the school community. Her *Special Character* concept equated very closely to the mutuality and commitment of a New Testament community. She points out how necessary this is for the young who may not yet have a relationship with God personally, but benefits from the community’s prior relationship. “The sense of sharing and self-sacrifice is inherent in the word [koinonia]” (McRay, 2001, p. 445).

That sense of community gave rise to the incorporation of family values into the ethos of the various schools. The desire for this, according to P12 emanated from the “humanistic type of teaching that was starting to emerge in the 1980s”. Both P1 and P42 expressed similar sentiments. This sense of community is also experienced in the school assemblies where their *Special Character* ethos is so much on display. “It is not just assemblies”, said student P35, “but I think it is a substantial part. *Special Character* is the heart of the school” and that heart is witnessed in their assemblies. Take away that *Special Character* and “the heart of the school would have gone” (P54).

Harris (2008) found in her research that models enhancing school performance emphasise building community. “Schools are more likely to be effective if they draw their community into their work” (p. 19) by engaging parents and agencies, and by reconfirming relationships between schools. These practices are already in place in the evangelical schools with a strong interdependence within their close-knit association, consistently feeding into each other, and in the symbiotic relationship that exists in three of the six schools that they have with their churches who also feed into each other. Community is also experienced in the relationship staff have with students. “We pray together, share issues together, so you end up forming life-time connections with students. That is our *Special Character*. It is huge and it is treasured. It is desperately important” (P41). It is also relationships “between students themselves and between the staff themselves”, said P47.

Participant 32 also made mention of the inclusiveness in respect of their “ethnically mixed school”. It was also in respect of theological breadth: although a protestant school, catholic families were made to sense that inclusiveness:

> The reason is because we are supposed to serve the Christian church, all of the churches in [our town] … It is nice to think they feel they can be accepted and welcomed. That in essence is the Christian [*Special] Character. (P32)

For community to be successful, it needs to be outgoing. That involves a service mentality. To this, P46 made reference. The purpose of a *Special Character* school for P46 was to so “impact them for Christ, so that they can have an impact in the community they live in”. The whole purpose of their
reaching their potential was “in order to serve God’s purposes – “blessed to be a blessing”⁴⁵ … it is a kind of a bigger view [vision] … Special Character culminates in service” whether it be in missions abroad or in the local Old People’s homes, or voluntary odd-jobbing in the local neighbourhood (P46).

DISCUSSION

This thesis has documented the complexity of understandings as to what constitutes Special Character. That complexity is acknowledged by O’Donnell (2001) and by Astley and Day (1992) as including a worldview, a curriculum, discipleship and ‘faith seeking understanding’ (using Anselm’s (1033-1109) famous aphorism). Participants within this study did not always articulate clearly their understanding of Special Character, but often acknowledged that it was more ‘caught than taught’. As Astley and Day (1992) suggest, “the Christian teacher stands at the crossroads between theology and the social sciences” (p. 19). It may be, perhaps, that they know their education better than their theology.

I have suggested in the Introduction to the thesis that the enigmatic nature of Special Character is encapsulated within Groeschell’s (2008) analogy to a church’s spiritual effectiveness. A Christian’s growth in faith, according to the Bishop of Ely, Stephen Sykes (1992), is a mystery, as scripture itself acknowledges (Colossians 1:27). However, Astley and Day (1992, p. 18) argue that those “who use[s] the phrase ‘Christian education’ should know what he or she means by it and that they should tell the rest of us”. At an official level, those involved in these schools have endeavoured to do so, as a requirement of the Ministry of Education, some of which I have documented. Such understandings are sometimes in the form of theological statements and do not take into account the heart-issues that make this sector of schooling unique in the New Zealand spectrum of schooling institutions. The understandings expressed by participants in this study have been presented under four major groupings: the biblical basis of Special Character, the philosophical basis of Special Character, the Christological basis of Special Character and the relational basis of Special Character.

Participants from the evangelical Christian schools that were included in this study made reference to the biblical metanarrative which forms the backdrop to all their thinking on Special Character. It is their story, the necessity for which story was spelt out clearly by de Pree (1989), Postman (1995) and Beeby (1986), as secular educationists. This has been reinforced in the evangelical school literature (Edlin, 2004; Newton, 2004; Middleton & Walsh, 1995). Groothius (2000) makes reference to sociologist John O’Neil who “laments the loss of meaningful metanarratives that give direction to work, families and communities … leaving no central reference point, no authoritative and unified

⁴⁵ An allusion to Genesis 12:2: “I will bless you, … and you will be a blessing”
meaning to history” (pp. 56-57). The biblical metanarrative, according to Grenz (1996), “is a single metanarrative encompassing all people and all times” (p. 164). It is a reflection of the response of the schools in this study.

The biblical base for Special Character is commonly expressed in terms of a biblical worldview (for example Fowler, 1980c; Stronks, 2003; Noebel, 1995; van Brummelen, 1998; Wilson, 2003). As highlighted in the interview data, many participants in this research did not think in terms of their schools having to serve an economic goal. They took for granted a biblical overall goal, to bring glory to God and to serve Him. It is not the economic goal framed by the Global Knowledge Economy that constitutes the current mandate for education initiated by the 1980s neoliberal reforms as discussed in Chapter 3. This biblical worldview arises out of a perspective of the Bible itself which many participants in this study equated to their Special Character. Most made reference to the Bible in the interviews and many quoted from it. In Chapter 2 I traced the roots of this perspective through Augustine, Comenius, Kuyper, van Prinsterer and Calvin, and referenced more recent writers who stressed the total authority and sufficiency of scripture for life and living (Douglas, 1978; van Brummelen, 2002; O’Toole, 2006; Newton, 2004; Edlin, 2004). Osborne (1991) suggested that a hermeneutic that had credibility in an historical-critical approach to the interpretation of scripture was required. However, the stance taken on biblical authority arises out of the evangelicalism which is a core issue in the Statements of Faith that each of these schools document. A key element in those Statements relates to biblical inerrancy, a common acceptance in all of these schools and of all such schools in the New Zealand Association of Christian Schools. For many of the participants in this study, such an acceptance was foundational to their understanding of Special Character.

The propositional truths espoused in the Special Character claims of participants, are enshrined in their Statements of Faith. Teaching what is of eternal (essential worth) is the final tenet. This accepts uncritically an absolute truth which is at the heart of the evangelicalism so characteristic of these schools. I have argued in Chapter 3 that the centuries-old saying “All truth is God’s truth” fundamental to early Christian thinkers’ ideas about education, is no less central in the work of current writers in the field. Within the postmodern era, however, there are equally strong proponents of the view that there are no absolute truths (Nietzsche, 1977). Participant 6 noted that God’s word was “the truth”, and getting that truth was a key purpose in their schooling. Many youth today are searching for truth, according to Moses (2007), so expression of belief in the ultimate truth that comes through revelation in these evangelical schools (Groothius, 2000) therefore holds significance. This chapter has revealed the prominence of ‘truth’ perceptions of Special Character in the Special Character statements of many of the participants in the study. They spoke of the absolute nature of
truth and the personification of it in the person of Christ as spoken of by McGrath (1996). As will be seen, such perceptions also underpin the values identified by other participants in Chapter 6.

The second grouping of *Special Character* metaphors selected to frame this discussion relate to the philosophical base for *Special Character*. The presuppositions that the participants spoke of were the ontological understandings, the “objects the theory assumes” (Gibson, 1999), those assumptions being that there is a God; that He is the Creator of all things; that He has revealed Himself through the written word and through Jesus the Christ. *Special Character* is founded on these presuppositions. Some of the participants called these the foundational principles. One of these foundational principles was the Sovereignty of God, expressed much in the literature (Piper, 2010; Kuyper, 2001; Dickens, 2006) and also by participants. Little was said about the ‘Dualism’ that was critiqued in the literature (Walsh & Middleton, 1984; Dickens, 2006; Greene, 1998), probably because of the complementary truth of God’s sovereignty overall all of life: there is no secular/sacred divide.

A second important foundational principle is that of the Imago Dei which puts the value on human life as of inestimable value. This is widely acknowledged in the literature (Gangel, 2003; Greene, 1998; Colson & Pearcey, 1999; Brooks, 1895; Harris, 2006; Sire, 2004; Schaeffer, 1968; Spykman, 1992). David Clines (1968) expounded at length how God’s image was to be seen in humankind. The child was to be seen as deriving its life from God Himself (‘children of God’, to use the biblical term), so that thoughtful teachers will be appropriately guided in their approach to children (Beversluis, 1971). Although the term was used very little by the participants, the concept was implicit in their responses. In fact, for one school in this study, it is a key factor in the school’s approach to *Special Character* professional development.

*Special Character* was also spoken of by some participants in terms of a culture. For some, this was in relation to biculturalism, an evangelical school’s response to their enrolment intake. For others it was a more direct reflection of the Christian base of the school – “our culture is Jesus Christ”.

According to Gilling (1993) “New Zealand Christians have tried to create ‘godly schools’ by inserting some aspect of Christian belief into the programmes of state schools” (p. ix). This has been termed putting ‘The Icing on the Cake’. However, any suggestion of superficial commitment was not part of the discussion with the participants of this research. Rather, their responses were testimony to the ways in which the schools have sought to subject the whole of life and curriculum to the Lordship of Christ under the Kuyperian model of ‘every square inch’ belonging to God. They seek ‘to teach Christianly’ (Downs, 1994; Ireland, 2004; Fennema, 2006b), as an expression of their
Special Character in action, with reference to the all-pervasiveness of Christian faith and understanding in every aspect of teaching.

The third grouping of Special Character metaphors is the Christological base of Special Character. According to Van Dyke (1985):

A Christian school is a place where Christian educators refuse to be satisfied with providing only factual knowledge, high exam scores, and marketable skills. Rather, teachers in a Christian school seek to transform all activities and studies into an expression of biblical wisdom, training the students to walk as disciples of Jesus Christ. (p. 3)

Teaching can be referred to as child-centred, teacher-centred or God-centred, all of which would help explain various aspects of the observations made by participants in this thesis. But the dominant emphasis was that Special Character implied that the schooling was Christ-centred, Jesus related, with a Christ-focus (Teague, 2011). The theocentric philosophy espoused by Fowler (1980a), Walsh (1997) and Wolterstorff (1997) found its expression so often as ‘Christ-centred’. The particular emphasis coming through in this study was the personal, living relationship with the Jesus of the Christian faith that students were encouraged to explore for themselves. Of Edlin’s (2004) six core values of Christian schools, the Christo-centric value was subsumed in his first core value, ‘the centrality of the Bible’. As a ‘Reformed’ writer, his emphasis on experientialism would not be at the expense of his emphasis on propositional truth. ‘Jesus is Lord’, the motto of one of these schools, expresses the primacy of this metaphor for Special Character. The focus on God’s glory found great emphasis in Piper (2010) who argues that this value supersedes Kuyper’s ‘sphere sovereignty’. While this concept was acknowledged by a few, it was diminished by the more experiential value of knowing Christ in an intimate divine encounter.

The fourth grouping of Special Character metaphors identified by participants in the study concerned other relational aspects of Special Character. I mentioned initially those abstract metaphors which can often be unique to an individual – like Special Character being an umbrella of understanding, an enabling to living the Christian life, a tone, a destiny, a motivation. Such were reflected in the responses given. Shepherd (1957) refers to a “school’s wholeness of purpose” (p. 126). Harris (2006) writes of a Christian student’s motivation being “about working as a response to God’s love, not to achieve anything for pride or esteem or to compare against others” (pp. 127-8).

The character qualities referred to in this grouping were acknowledged by Gilling (1993) when he said that the formation of character is “the distinctive contribution which a Christian school can make” (p. xi). Every school is involved in the formation of character. The essential point is what kind of character? If Special Character is Christian character, Greene (1998) and Stronks and Blomberg
(1993) well argue that it must emerge from an operationalised faith. The participants were adamant that this has to be lived out before the students, a view that English (1998) underscored. Because evangelical integrated schools must operate on a ‘preference’ intake of 90% or 95% enrolment from evangelical homes, the emphases within the school pertain much more to Christian discipleship (developing already converted Christians) than to Christian evangelism (producing Christian conversion). Students are encouraged to “harness their abilities to serve the Lord” (Octigan, 1980, p. 77) and told that “the scriptures are … the soil that nourishes our life roots” (Ridgeway, 1980, p. 129). Not one of the participants in this study saw the Special Character of their school in relation to Bebbington’s (1989) term ‘conversion’ as much as this is at the heart of evangelicalism. Thus, I would suggest, the findings of the thesis lend weight to my argument that the dominant intentional emphasis in evangelical school Special Character is on discipleship, not evangelism. Some of the participants saw Special Character in terms of a spiritually relational community. McRay (2001) equates community in a Christian context with the biblical concept of ‘koinonia’ which, literally, means a partnership but carries with it the ideas of ‘contributory help’, ‘sharing in’ and ‘spiritual fellowship’ (Souter, 1916), commonality of ownership, involvement, giving according to need (Wigram, 1903) contributing, communion (Vine, 1952). While the evangelical schools in general may see their Special Character in terms of community, as do some of the writers in the field (Harris, 2008), with the exception of one participant, there was little evidence of a depth of understanding of the biblical concept of a biblical community being held by members of the school communities interviewed for this study. It may well have been implicitly understood. The schools in this thesis were non-denominational as a community but with more factors in common than issues that would separate them.

CONCLUSION
In this chapter I have brought together participant understandings about Special Character that were Bible-based, those that were philosophically based, those that centred on the Person of Christ and those that had a relational aspect to them. For this research, gaining the perceptions of the personnel who work and study within these evangelical schools, as to what constitutes their Special Character is considered crucial. I have shown that the participants from six schools, who were interviewed for this inquiry, perceive their school’s Special Character in a wide variety of ways. Predominantly Special Character was spoken of as a biblical worldview; seen experientially, it is the presence of the God of the Bible. Reformationally it is seen as propositional biblical truth. While all schools endeavour to identify a philosophical base, be God-honouring, have their own metanarrative and worldview, operate as a community to some degree, there was one concept attributed to these schools
that was not so straightforward and was challenged by the participants. Some writers, for example, who took a critical view, saw *Special Character* as an add-on. Such a view was not supported in the majority of the evangelical school literature, nor was it supported by the participants in the study. Critiques from the post-modern position which reject the notion of an absolute truth in support of a plurality of narratives and viewpoints, were also challenged by the findings of the study. The new right reforms for management of the 1980s advocated an economic purpose in education which was debated by both the Christian literature and the participants. Their biblical worldview gave voice to another purpose. While there was unanimity within the Christian school movement over the question of biblical inerrancy – and in the Christian school literature, with the concomitant truth claims, this was debated by more liberal theologians – as has been the case since ‘biblical criticism’ has become an academic discipline. There was debate within the movement itself as to the so-called biblical/cultural mandate that some interpret to mean a Christian involvement in every aspect of society while others emphasise that we are strangers and pilgrims ‘in a foreign land’, an entity of the spirit-realm.

What is unique about these schools are the paradoxes: there is the extreme complexity of their perceptions of *Special Character*, yet a wholesome unity is both portrayed and felt within the Christian school movement. They are required to teach the secular state curriculum, but also to teach it ‘Christianly’. Their *Special Character* is enigmatic but must be declared definitively, with both claims being true and valid. They are required (by their Association) to uphold evangelicalism while de-emphasising evangelism per se. Anthropologically, they have a commonality with all humankind, yet uphold foundationally, a sacred view and value of mankind as ‘a little less than God’ which makes their task a sacred task. Their emphasis on a Christ-centredness is unique in that it involves a personal ongoing interaction with the Christ of the Bible in terms of that defined evangelicalism. Whether it be their worldview, their philosophical presuppositions, their metanarrative, their chosen culture, their Christ-centredness or their discipleship, each and every one of these *Special Character* perceptions have their roots in an inerrant Bible. There is a total dependency on scripture as a final authority in terms of their values and much of their philosophy. Whereas some educational studies might be referenced to sociological study and psychological and philosophical perspective, this study is unique in that it has its foundation in scripture. This is the perception of the participants, as researched. Hence it is uniquely a biblically-rich study, and tells of a biblically-grounded *Special Character*, grounded in scripture that is claimed by the participants to be inerrant. Moreover, and more significantly perhaps, many of their claims concerning *Special Character* would not and could not hold without that doctrinal underpinning which undergirds all *Special Character* thinking for these integrated evangelical schools in New Zealand.
CHAPTER SIX: VALUES

Special Character is defined in a variety of ways but it is evidenced in the kind of behaviour, lifestyle and relationships it produces. In the practices that emerge there is evidence of the values that are espoused in the philosophy that has been embraced. It is those evidences of Special Character that this research is seeking to identify in the particular values these evangelical schools espouse. There were values expressed by the participants of this study that are not necessarily exclusive to evangelical schools. This is not surprising given that the transmission of values is embedded in understandings of the purpose of education. Furthermore, as van Brummelen (2002) observes, values education has always been taught wherever a human personality is involved in the teaching process. Teachers invariably project who they are such that students adopt or reject the values that are on display, demonstrated and modelled. In this sense, Pazmino, 2008, p. 247 notes “[t]he hidden curriculum refers more to what is caught ... [and] addresses the implicit formation of persons”.

According to the participants, as numbered, there are many cherished values, common to all schools. Schools need a vision (42, 60, 8); cherishing indigenous values (58); moulding a sense of tradition in a balanced education (29) that is non-elitist (17); leadership among students (67, 6, 36, 12) who will help develop a sense of history (17) in a school that is outward looking (17, 31, 38, 8). Establishment-wide unity is seen as a ‘must’ (35, 12, 43, 25, 57), while acknowledging diversity (42, 29). Students need to see development and feel and know they are in a safe environment (5, 17, 11, 1, 60, 13, 26). However, as will be demonstrated through participant voice in this chapter, there are some values that relate particularly to Special Character.

Values are also explicitly articulated in New Zealand curriculum documents. The New Zealand Ministry of Education Curriculum Framework has indicated the state’s desire that Values are identified and taught. The Curriculum Framework of 1993 did not give the basis for its suggested list of values except to say it was based on the school’s community’s values. “These values include honesty, reliability, respect for others, respect for the law, tolerance (rangimarie), fairness, caring or compassion (aroha), non-sexism, and non-racism” (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 21). Some of these were not mentioned by any of the participants in this study (respect for the law, non-sexism, non-racism).

The more recent Curriculum Framework document of 2007 on the TK1 Website (Ministry of Education, 2007) defines values as “deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable [that] are expressed through the ways in which people think and act” (p. 10). It goes on to list ‘values’ that students will be encouraged to adopt, pointing out also that the list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. They are: excellence; innovation, inquiry and curiosity; diversity; equity; community and
participation; ecological sustainability; integrity; respect. It is noted in the document that education around values should “be guided by dialogue between the school and its community” (p. 10). The evangelical Christian community that feeds into the Special Character of evangelical Christian schools are thus the more likely to foster biblical values. However, Snook (1972, p. 3) has suggested that “it is notoriously difficult to present an ultimate justification for values”.

According to the participants (as numbered), there needs to be inclusiveness (5, 47, 4, 31, 62, 43, 57, 44, 38), vibrancy (4, 29), energy (8, 30), relevance (5, 8) and a dynamic that renders a positive student-experience that is enjoyable (4) and even selectively competitive (38). Students need to be public-spirited, developing a ‘servant-heart’ (13 participants\textsuperscript{46}), following a dress code (23), while the school grows professionally and with measured caution (2). Changing human nature for the better is a long-term goal (29, 42, 60) while the school itself develops its own individualism (29), protecting students from the negatives of society’s ills (27, 5, 17, 11, 1, 60, 13, 26). Thus the hope is to build an environment that generates peace (36, 27, 6, 25) and inspiration (42). This chapter examines those values/virtues that relate more specifically to the evangelical Christian schools in New Zealand and thus help to define further the Special Character itself of those schools as perceived by the participants. These values can be grouped into four themes, each with sub-themes as indicated in the outline below (Figure 6.1).

In terms of normative theory (that is, “any theory which seeks to establish the values or norms which best fit the overall … requirements … of particular societies” – Jary & Jary, 2000, p. 426) these evangelical schools whether conservatively evangelical or mildly pentecostal, make a particular point of establishing their values from the Christian Scriptures. To P40 Special Character was “the values and beliefs of the Christian faith”. Nor are the Special Character values such as prayer and worship, for example, the exclusive official domain of Christian schools, according to Lynch (2000) who wrote of a Ministry of Education challenge to ERO’s objection to Christian values being overtly taught in an Auckland primary school.

\textsuperscript{46} Ps 67, 17, 36, 57, 38, 1, 28, 47, 42, 24, 12, 18, 30
**SPECIAL CHARACTER VALUES**

![Diagram of Special Character Values]

**Propositional Truths**
- *Special Character itself*
- Context of Propositional Truth
- The Bible and Truth
- Specific Biblical Truths

**Personal Spiritual Experience**
- Relating to God – Father and Holy Spirit
- Relating to Christ
- Outward evidences in character
- Operational Factors

**Relational Experiences**
- A basis for relationships
- Church-school relationships
- Institutional relationships
- Interpersonal relationships

**Functioning of Special Character**
- Broad principles under which schools function
- How the school functions
- How the students function
- How the staff function

![Figure 6.1: Special Character Values Outline]

**PROPOSITIONAL TRUTHS**

In this section I have divided the participant comments into comments on *Special Character itself*, followed by the context of propositional truths; matters relating to the Bible and truth; specific biblical truths and applications of biblical truth.

**Special Character Itself**

Eight participants placed special emphasis on the value of *Special Character itself*. It was so important to P24 that he said, “without it – close the school down – give it to the government … it is the glue that holds it all together”. The school “wouldn’t exist without the *Special Character*” (P12). “It is why we chose to send our children here”, said parent P18. The personal view of P62 was that *Special Character* mattered “crucially. Otherwise I wouldn’t be here”. dePree (1989) in his widely-acclaimed work on Leadership, said:

> Every family, every college, every corporation, every institution needs tribal storytellers. The penalty for failing to listen is to lose one’s history, one’s historical context, one’s binding
values. Without continuity brought by custom, any group of people will begin to forget who they are. (p. 72)

This is equally true of Special Character-school values. Special Character itself is thus the indispensible factor, the ultimate reason for the existence of these schools (P12). It is who they are. It holds the entire enterprise together (P24), because it was on the basis of Special Character the student was enrolled (P18); because the unwanted pluralism is rejected by such a choice (P49).

**Context of Propositional Truth**

The context of propositional truth as espoused by these evangelical schools is to be found in their philosophical underpinnings, their presuppositions, the coherence between home and school, the consistency of their vision and shared beliefs, their Christian foundations and prior beliefs including the Judeo-Christian roots they embrace. “It is the set of beliefs on which the school is founded; … that has to come first, then the person has to subscribe to that” (P2). It was considered by P60 that the most success a school has is found among those children where there is a coherence between home, school and church (Astley & Day, 1992; Woods, 2006). Student P30 acknowledged the consistency and seemed to be saying “you should belong where you believe”. That consistency extended across the school itself according to P19, especially since professional development in Special Character was introduced. In P58’s view, the extent of the shared vision was unique and deeply appreciated.

“There is no such thing as a neutral education. Every education, every curriculum has a viewpoint. That viewpoint either considers God in it or it does not. To teach children about life and the world in which they live without reference to God is to make a statement about God. It screams a statement. The message is either that there is no God or that God is irrelevant. (Sproul, 1986, p. 23)

“Special Character is being open to biblical revelation and biblical knowledge” (P5). These are our “Judeo-Christian roots” as P24 calls them, where “God tolerates no rivals” (Nahum 1:2 GNT). The context of the propositional truths as held by these evangelical Special Character schools includes their presuppositions based on their beliefs concerning the Bible, its revelation of the Creator God and His Son Jesus, its roots, its exclusiveness, its acceptance by the school’s families, its basis of a worldview shared by like-minded sister-schools and shared by all staff, and a belief in its inherent power to transform lives.
The Bible and Truth

The major context and source of propositional truth is in the Bible. The first value and possibly the supreme *Special Character* value in these six schools referred to by participants is that of the Bible itself and the truth of the Bible. Forty eight participants (c 80%) made specific reference to this. Participant 65’s reference was to its values; P5’s to its applicability to all of life and as foundational; P29’s to its application to discipline, curriculum content, origins, relationship, professionalism, its inerrancy and its sufficiency; P67’s to its basis of our worldview, its authority and its inspiration; P41’s to its speaking to the heart and to its creativeness; P53’s to its metanarrative, its impact and its divinity; P23’s to its creation story and as a handbook on which to build one’s life; P11’s to its being the source of the school motto and the confidence that can be had in the written Word as the medium for personal divine communication.

From P1’s perspective the Bible is the source of basic moral teaching in the Ten Commandments and of fundamental truths that are “not up for debate”, like the death and resurrection of Christ. Participant 36’s perspective was its inseparability from prayer; P12’s on the balancing of Old Testament stories with New Testament values and their “huge impact on our curriculum”; P42’s on “the starting point for truth” and its usefulness “for teaching and correction” – an allusion to 2 Timothy 3:16; and then he also saw it as a self-authorising piece of writing, having found it to be true in his own experience. Participant 24’s focus was on the Bible as the basis for “raising up godly leaders” because of it being “the ultimate authority”; P54’s as the medium where “God reveals Himself through the Person of Jesus”; P30’s as the basis for class devotions at the start of the day; P48’s as “the only truth that I know that works. I’ve tried different types of religions when I walked away from God” and so it enables people to understand themselves better … “it is my presupposition”; P18’s as a means to heal broken relationships; P60’s as a means of encouraging others with spiritual sustenance, and as enabling (based on Acts 17:11) by engaging with the Scriptures.

Pazmino (2008, p. 89) draws attention to the biblical responsibility of parents as spelt out in Psalms 78:5-7, “He instructed our ancestors to teach His laws to their children so that the next generation might learn them and in turn should tell their children. In this way they also will put their trust in God” (GNT). One message from the 1 Corinthians 4:6 passage is that man should live according to Scripture. The concern of P38 reflected Stuart Fowler’s sentiments that “we can only effectively test educational practices for consistency with the belief in God as we are immersed in scripture” (Fowler, 1996, p. 32). This was P38’s expectation of her *Special Character* schooling – being immersed in scripture.
Fowler (1980b) also insists that “For any school to be worthy of the name Christian, it seems self-evident that the Bible must have a central place of special authority and importance” (p. 131). For him, scripture must be approached “as the declaration of God’s Word to which we must submit ourselves … in the humility of faith” (Fowler, 1996, p. 33). Hence it must be listened to as a means by which God can mould character in conformity to His standards and character. He stresses that it is a resource unlike all other classroom resources – not so much as an academic resource but a life-practice manual to be obeyed; not to master it but to be mastered by it; to be lived out, not so much spoken of (Fowler, 1980b). Pazmino (2008) goes even further in saying “the Bible is a critical instrument that discerns and judges the educator, the educatee and the educational process” (p. 10). That critical and evaluative function is affirmed in Hebrews 4:12 and 2 Timothy 3:16 of the Bible.

Wolterstorff (1999) writing of philosopher John Locke’s belief that “Life requires the formation of beliefs on matters where knowledge is not available” (p. 507), noted Locke’s distinction between natural theology and revealed theology” (p. 508). The latter term is useful in understanding participants’ claims of being led by God through the scriptures, of relying on them for direction. In principal P10’s view it was a guide to behaviour, to establishing a worldview, of perceiving the nature of God and the mind of God, as a philosophy to be lived out, as the authoritative word on the worth of a child, as the critiquing mechanism on curriculum and school life. For board member P34, the scriptures inform decision-making and problem-solving; for student P40 it is the “base line for everything we do … the foundation of the school” where literature could be chosen on the basis of how it reflects biblical values.

In three of the six schools all eleven participants commented independently on the primacy of biblical scriptures to the Special Character of the school. In P49’s school it was read at the start of all Board meetings and referenced as a source of divine principles. “Everything needs to be looked at from a biblical perspective”, said P2 and is the benchmark for all incoming staff, who have to respond verbally and in writing with their views on its “authority and inspiration” when they apply. “All of our thinking and philosophy of education flows out of how scripture informs that”. In this school, staff are required to sign annually, their reaffirming of those perspectives on scripture. Participant 37 had more to say on this issue than on any other. To him “there is no neutral ground, you are either for or against the scriptures”, in terms of their reliability, infallibility, efficacy and sufficiency. It reflects the philosophy of the founding fathers. “I don’t think you can educate a child truly without the Word of God”, he said. For P62 it is ‘nailing colours to the mast’ to centralise scripture in all situations – including when the Minister of Education visited for a meeting. It made the statement: “this is where we stand. I don’t try to be embarrassed about it or put it under the table”.
Student P13 had particular admiration for the teacher “who I realise is very seriously involved in the Bible and her own personal relationship with God … so for me, … it is back to the Bible”. Another student, P43, took his cue on environmental issues from the Bible, and on the care of his own body. For P19, the scriptures were the unifying factor among the various Christian schools. She also felt that the authority of God’s Word had as much influence on the child’s behaviour when brought to bear wisely, as did the authority of the teacher herself. Teaching in a Special Character school was liberating in that she is now free to share God’s Word in the classroom. She encourages the students “to critique things in the light of God’s Word”. Because “the heart of the Special Character in this school … is the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ”, and “primarily it is the Lord Jesus Christ … that has been revealed to us in His written Word”.

Because the Bible was accepted to be “God-inspired, God-breathed”, P26 saw it as “useful for counselling and training in righteousness” in accordance with 2 Timothy 3:16. He takes it as an absolute for today because “the Word of God should be affecting our culture, not the other way around”. He also “believes the Bible teaches a born-again salvation experience”. Participant 57 believed the Bible had “a particular place in determining atmosphere”. For P3 the Bible “has authority, it has power”. “The ‘preference’ children that are here are ones from churches that believe in the Bible”.

“My understanding of what being a Christian is about is based on what I know about the Bible”, said P32. “I don’t think too deeply about it”, said P14; to her the Word of God is inspired – “it just is!” It is P66’s “manual for living”. The Interact curriculum used in several of these schools “is very biblically centred”, she said. The Bible occupies a place of marked authority in Christian school thinking. According to P38: “I want my children to firstly, grasp what the Bible is and why it is important and to have that as an integrated part of their learning”. Her lengthy deliberation illustrated the strength of conviction parents can have in the efficacy of the Scripture in conveying divine revelation and therefore the necessity for children to become biblically literate – indeed, she saw it as a responsibility for which she was accountable, in the belief that a child’s behaviours (and adult’s) are the direct result of the values they have acquired. In this case, to obtain a biblical lifestyle, biblical values must be imbibed. It is viewing reality through the lens of divine revelation.

Four participants made specific reference to divine revelation. Special Character came into being “because there was a revelation from the Holy Spirit” according to P53. This highlights the epistemology that evangelical Christians have as a basic understanding of truth. It is a “personal revelation of Who God is”, said P47. “God gives people inspiration as well and He does that through
the Bible, but He also does that through speaking to them individually”, according to student P11. Proprietor P26 saw that revelation as being role-specific on “what the Father [God] has revealed for you to do” and went on to say that for him it was to establish a church with a focus on education as the outworking of its ministry in the local community.

For P37, the *Special Character* is evidenced in the curriculum documents as explicitly written statements that make it more open. The *Special Character* value for P60 was theological/biblical understanding. She perceived that there was a sad lack of biblical understanding in the school owing to the changing role of the church away from biblical theological teaching leading to biblical illiteracy. Piper (2010) pleads for a rejection of the either-or thinking that participants were asked about – it is “head and heart, thinking and feeling, reason and faith, theology and doxology, mental labour and the ministry of love” (p. 179).

Allied to the overt dependence on the Bible for *Special Character* in these evangelical schools, is their emphasis on ‘Truth’ per se. Nine participants commented directly on this as a *Special Character* value. “We need to seek truth in all that we are doing … truth needs to be articulated” according to P29. Others, like P60, were quick to acknowledge that they saw truth as being absolute. Participant 47 readily acknowledged he did not hold all the truth – “the entire truth is not in me”. Regret was expressed by P37 that under postmodernism, there is no absolute truth (Greene, 1998; Groothius, 2000; Guinness, 2000). When P62 was asked what his *Special Character* understandings were based on, he said it was on absolutes. “They need some absolute that they hold on to”, he said. To him, those absolutes were contained in the “truth … contained in God’s Word”. That, he claimed, was his bottom-line presupposition.

Participant 7 saw the biblical worldview as needing biblical interpretation; that not everybody sees scripture in the same light or as self-interpreting. We are conditioned by our current culture which changes, though the scripture itself does not change. Scripture is to be interpreted for the times not by the times we live in. “There is truth beyond the phenomenological”, P7 said. In his defence of ultimate truth (what Schaeffer (1968) calls ‘true’ truth) he said:

Marxists take to the extreme and make us suspicious of anything objective and that’s nonsense. Black is always going to be black. Red is always going to be red and if someone else comes along and says no it is green, well they’re wrong. But in relativistic, postmodern, socio-humanist mind-set, no, if it is red for them, it is red for them, it might be green for me. But facts and their understanding are always tied to objectivity. But the teaching, learning experience is always a mixture of the objective and the subjective; you can’t get away from that. (P7)
Both P63 and P44 were concerned that absolute truth be established in the context of *Special Character*. Student P30 spoke at length on the value of knowing the Bible for formulating your worldview, for seeing the world through God’s eyes, for grasping its self-authenticating nature, for facilitating a relationship with God, for experiencing the immediacy of its encouragement, for its revelation of Jesus, for the wisdom that can be applied to everyday life, for its application to every aspect of living – all this in spite of it not being well written (in her view) and that there are multiple interpretations of it, even though 5 year olds can “get something out of it relating to us”. The strength of conviction evident in this student came through in the interview. She describes the all-pervasive “permeative function” of the Bible that Edlin (1999) suggests when he says that every aspect of learning and living is approached “from the perspective and presuppositions of the Bible” (p. 64). It was clear in the interview she had a familiarity with scripture.

**Specific Biblical Truths**

With regard to specific biblical truths, it has been shown that *Special Character* schools treasure their biblical base; they are passionate about truth per se and the certainty of it as truth. Derived from their commitment to scripture is a variety of issues that scripture itself deals with. The first of these concerns the ‘sovereignty of God’, that is, that God is in control of His universe, His world, and all that is in it. “We mean the supremacy of God, the Kingship of God, the Godhood of God” (Pink, 1928, p. 20). Nothing takes God by surprise. “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Revelation 19:6) at one end of the Bible and “Thou art exalted as Head above all” (1 Chronicles 29:11) at the other end, with numerous scriptures in between, convinces Bible-believing, *Special Character* school personnel, that God is, indeed, in control. It is a doctrine stressed by the ‘Reformed’ branch of evangelicalism, but embraced also by charismatics and others at the other end of the evangelical theological spectrum, as it was discovered from the interviews in these schools. It is admitted as one of the divine mysteries of the Christian gospel that there coexists the truth of God’s sovereignty and the truth of man’s responsibility and accountability to God. But no participant made mention of any tension in that anomaly. Abraham Kuyper (2001) spoke of God’s sovereignty as “the dominating principle of Christian truth” (p. 48).

It is the belief in God’s sovereignty that gives rise to the common aphorism “History is His Story” that P52 referred to. Based on such passages as Proverbs 8:15, “By Me, kings reign” and Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a water course wherever He pleases” and in Psalm 75:7, “It is God Who judges: He brings one down, He exalts another”. It was this kind of acceptance that enabled an understanding and acceptance of God’s mysterious ways in tragedy (P31) and minimised the ‘blame game’, enabling compassion and forgiveness (P31) without minimising accountability, acknowledging “that God is sovereign through all of it”. The biblical
paradox of seeming arbitrariness of “the rain fall[ing] on the just and unjust alike” (Matthew 5:45) and “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28) are accepted and lived with as mysteries of the faith. Participants from two other schools also made reference to the sovereignty of God in the face of tragedy. It was felt by P54 that experiencing tragedy can strengthen faith and build trust in a sovereign God. It was P63 who quoted Romans 8:28 when he indicated his commitment to God’s sovereignty as being absolute.

Closely related to God’s sovereignty is the very act of creation which, according to P7 “is primary. That’s what we are here for. We are here to understand the creation of our place, and our God-given purpose in it. It is total”. Because God created us, there is an acknowledged accountability. In this, both P60 and P38 made mention of the moral absolutes derived from a biblical understanding of God’s standards. “Without a strong moral framework in which to explain why certain behaviours are not okay, there’s nowhere to go with that”, said P38. When asked what that moral framework was, she said, “It is [the] Christian ethic; it is Christian respect for God’s creation, of one another as human beings … we’ve got so lax in society without being exposed to that teaching in the early years; people have no moral convictions” (P38). Unlike Kuyper, Piper (2010) says:

The most ultimate or defining truth is not God’s sovereignty but that he created the world and sustains it to display His beauty and His worth and greatness so that those whom He creates in His image will know Him and treasure Him above all things. (p. 187)

There were eschatological and eternal issues that emerged in the thinking of P4 and P50 respectively. Teacher P4 remarked on the common ground among all the Christian schools which included the “belief in a new earth and the new heavens” emphasising that we must still care for the one we have. But for P50, “It’s not this life that is my main focus”. This is consistent with her biblical understandings from Mark 8:36, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul”, and other passages (Matthew 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 15:19) that stress the greater importance of the next life than the present one.

“We are looking very carefully to make sure that all our perspectives in the deliveries of that education … are doing so through Christian … values” (P4). In reference to sex education, he said, “ours … is about saying that all of this is centred around purity, as being a motivational value for life … we want to do it in a way that is conducive to upholding the values at home”. The school’s Christian Living programme throughout the school “fits in with the school’s values” he said, as seen by those coming into the school.
PERSONAL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

The various aspects of Propositional Truths have been commented on in terms of their context, as well as exploring the connections between the Bible and truth per se. Various biblical truths as mentioned by participants as important were surveyed. There is a sense in which all the above are objective truths. So there is a need to address the more subjective aspects of the faith that the participants associated with their Special Character. For ease of analysis I have divided this into four sections, the first being their relationship to God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The second concerns their relationship to Christ, followed by a section on what I have termed “Outward Evidences” – peace, faith, hope, for example. Subsection four I have termed Operational Factors – the first of which is prayer, about which 46 participants made comments, some of them at considerable length.

Relating to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit

A belief in the God who wrote the Bible was, for P5, the God Who revealed Himself and communicated with mankind. According to P47, faith in that God should be embraced and man should learn to experience Him personally. In that experiencing, P11 felt He (God) should be relied upon daily (Proverbs 8:34). According to P36 within that reliance, God enables those who acknowledge Him as the giver of every gift (James 1:17) with ability and skills for living. It was that total reliance on God, in P24’s estimate that enabled his school to be financed and built in the first place. Teacher P48 felt that students need also to so rely on God (Proverbs 3:5) and to be taught to do so. Everything in the school should have a God-focus, said P34, whether it be finance or curriculum: “we are here to honour God”. In fact, the ultimate goal of education, in P62’s eyes, is to honour God in accordance with “the Westminster Shorter Catechism”. Participant 14 saw God at the “centre of the universe”, “He is absolute – this is black and this is white”. In doing all things for God’s glory, P38 suggests we thus ‘reflect’ the glory of God. Numerous writers on Christian schooling make reference to the centrality of God’s glory – Octigen (1980); Walsh (1997). Theologian Jonathan Edwards of the 18th century said, “God is glorified not only by His glory’s being seen, but by its being rejoiced in” (cited in Shafer, 1994, p. 495). Piper (2010) wrote similarly, occurring in so many of his publications – “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him” (p. 189). Special Character is not simply acknowledging God, but that His glory is prioritised as the rationale for all that happens in the school.

The participants were acknowledging that the interaction with the Godhead is also through the work of God the Holy Spirit, and that man can only please God as he is “empowered by the Holy Spirit” (P65) which is “essential to the school’s Special Character” (P65). Board member P67 said, “we will

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47 That we were created for God’s glory and that glory is central to the Christian message is highlighted in scripture in Isaiah 43:6-7, Psalms 115:1, Romans 3:23, 9:23, 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 1:5-6, 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10.
be encouraging the moving of the Spirit in assemblies”. The experience of the ‘Baptism of the Spirit’ that Jesus and the early church referred to (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5, 2:4) is invariably associated with the practice of ‘speaking in tongues’ – an ecstatic form of praying (1 Corinthians 14:2). The ‘moving of the Spirit’ that P67 refers to, is their terminology for seeing God working in this way. For non-pentecostals, this could be seen as controversial for a school to be involved in encouraging children to be exposed to these practices. To the pentecostal, it is seen to be most beneficial to the individual (1 Corinthians 14:4 – he/she thereby ‘builds himself/herself up’ in their faith). It was suggested by P48 that the worship needed to be led by the Spirit of God though she was not specific as through whom that leading would come. As for the very little children, P60 acknowledged that God meets His people as they are and that He leads little ones in “incremental steps” by the working of His Spirit. This is Special Character functioning for P67.

**Relating to Christ**

According to Professor Brian Hill, (1998) “Christian teachers not only have a right, but a duty to make the presence of Christ more visible in schools, through ‘practising the presence of Christ’ in their personal lives” (p. 100). In defining Special Character, several participants suggested it was a Christ-centred education, an education where the individual is relating to Christ (Charles, 2006; see also Chapter 5). Others like Ps 32, 67, 9 and 63 who defined it differently nevertheless included Christ-centredness as a value that is associated with Special Character. For P32 it was a “growth in Christ-likeness”, (a term she used four times) that she looked for in her students as evidence of Special Character at work. It was the “teaching with Jesus Christ being the central figure” that P67, a Board member proffered. Participant 9 saw Christ-centredness as:

> its chief characteristic … it is a school set up to administer the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of a believer’s life. [Again he added], kids in the school appreciated being able to speak about Jesus openly … if you cannot see Christ being developed in them, then what are you here for? … The best thing you can do for the students is to love them in Christ and help them to come into a relationship with Christ themselves … this must be taught as well as caught.

**Outward Evidences in Character**

Such values as peace, love, faith, hope, joy, wholeness, transformation, wisdom, sacrifice, purpose and a sense of destiny, were spoken of by the participants as outward evidences in character. It was “peace amidst the storm” of tragedy in the school for P47, but a “peaceful demeanour right across the school” for P22. I wondered how valid that was in the light of comments by other participants from within the school who commented on bad language and bullying. Only one participant (P44) spoke of love as the motivation for the care staff show towards students.
Fourteen participants spoke of faith as a key element in their thinking concerning *Special Character*. Faith is at the heart of every worldview whether it be humanist or Christian, atheistic or theo-centric, creationist or evolutionist. It is a set of presuppositions that are accepted and believed in. That is faith. Each of the six schools has a “Statement of Faith” – doctrines they believe in, and standard evangelical beliefs, among them: The deity, humanity and sinlessness of Christ; His incarnation; His vicarious death and resurrection to atone for man’s sin; His return to earth; the inerrancy and efficacy of Scripture. These are standard fundamental ‘truths’ of the orthodox, historical Christian faith. They are common to these schools (P29, a leading figure among them).

In establishing his school, founder P5 said he “had to resign [from his secure teaching position] and test my faith”. Participant 29 referred to his fellow staff and Christians generally as ‘believers’ – those who exercise faith. He talked of “the priesthood of all believers”. This no doubt, is based on the fact that scripture refers to Christians as ‘believers’, more than by any other appellation, but in the verbal form, as though ‘believing’ is their prime function (John 6:29). The term ‘Christian’ is only used three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26, 26:18; 1 Peter 4:16). ‘Believers’ twice (Acts 5:14; 1 Timothy 4:12) but them that believe or exercise faith, dozens of times (see Strong’s Concordance, 1995). “We must believe that God is in this … [we] declare our trust and belief in prayer” (P5).

The worldview of Board member P67 was “seen through scripture on the basis of faith”, thereby acknowledging that the philosophy behind the school is one based on faith. While the Christian school educational philosophers would argue that the secular school philosophy is also a faith position; the difference is that the focus of faith is claimed to be in the person of the Godhead in a Christian school. The terms ‘faith’ and ‘believe’ are the heart of the Christian message. (‘Only believe’; ‘If you had faith’; ‘Whoever believes in Him’ – 540 times, at least, in scripture. The word ‘faith’ is only used once in the AV Old Testament where the term ‘trust’ is more commonly used – another 180 references, 36 of which are in the New Testament). Furthermore, for P67:

It [*Special Character*] is coming out of our own faith as much as it is from [the church]. If it was not our faith there would be no personal authenticity. It is a Christian Board and upholds these beliefs with a strong Christian faith, grounded in scripture, not [the church].

To her it was irrelevant to the school’s philosophical position whether or not the state was involved. “It would not change our core beliefs in the practice of our faith-based education”.

Teacher P41 was concerned that her teaching and mentoring in faith were intertwined. “I cannot separate my faith from that mentoring”, she said. It was her daughter that P23 was concerned for:

48 Participants 5, 29, 67, 41, 23, 47, 11, 8, 42, 12, 54, 37, 13, 43.
It establishes her faith in a stronger way … I think that the school has a huge impact on them cementing their faith … Christianity is quite real to a lot of kids. They have actually had that experience that they can hold on to. They have experienced God here, they’ve seen it work, they’ve seen how people live it, so it is something they want themselves … it is kind of accepted that they will continue with their faith … from what I can see, I think the school has had a great influence on their lives.

This faith is “a faith from which to work out of” said P12. It is the basis on which the experiential side of Special Character is maintained. Both P42 and P8 claimed it was “a faith-based education”, which did not detract from the school having to be run efficiently, fiscally sound with viability, and within government guidelines. “This school has come about because of faith” (P8). Both P54 and P13 saw the possibility that their children will “grow in faith” (P54), and “increase your faith” (P13). This was seen by student P13 as a ‘safety’ thing. It was pointed out by student P43 that it is essentially a faith in Christ – “a common bond having a foundation in Christ and a faith in Him”.

Participant 37 spoke of his own coming to faith as a young person and then maturing in that belief and it becoming more rational as he grew. This was akin to that aphorism ‘believing is seeing’, or of Whittier’s (1881) poem where he says “The steps of faith fall on the seeming void and find the rock beneath” (p.73).

Besides faith there were other values esteemed precious to the personnel of these Special Character schools. Hope featured prominently in one school. Dr Henry Cloud (2010), a clinical psychologist, leadership coach, international conference speaker and author, writes:

Hope is one of the most powerful forces in the universe. With hope, we can endure almost anything, and certainly more than if we lose it or don’t have it to begin with. In short, hope keeps us going. … Hope is good and requires time as part of its equation. But … that is also the problem: Hope buys time, and spends it. … In false reality, hope is the worst quality you can have. (pp. 84-85).

The students who had been through trauma found great comfort in their school motto – “A future and a hope”, one student mentioning it 24 times in our interview. She said, “When we go out into the community, bearing that Special Character, I’d like to think that we exemplify that in how we handle ourselves in the community”. This hope seems to have been a great stabiliser and concurs with their biblical literature (Hebrews 6:18-19): “We have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast”. Student P35 said about Special Character, “that’s what I found gives me hope and that is what keeps me going … I believe that you find hope in Christianity and in Jesus like you can’t find anywhere else”. Other schools took note of their evident hope (P62). In another school, P49 suggested that the best thing that the school could do for its students was to “give them hope”, in a cultural environment of negativity, doom, despair and distrust.
Added to hope, there is joy, though only one participant remarked on it for its *Special Character* value. It was a student (P30) commenting on what a happy school it was and how supportive; though I suspected that this particular student may well have enjoyed school anywhere, as a positive, outgoing, buoyant person. The student seemed to think the school generated happiness for many who would otherwise not feel that happiness at school.

The expected outcome of such an education is the transformational aspect mentioned by Ps 41, 2 and 25. This happens when the students “take ownership and initiate in the spiritual activities”, said P41. It is a “change from head to heart”. There are “students whose family has been changed by their involvement with the school … to see it coming back at you from the students”. Principal P2’s succinct comment was that “transformed thinking is at the heart of a transformed life”. The *Special Character* professional development for staff in one school was itself transformational. One of the staff said:

> that the programme not only made an impact on him as a teacher, but on his own spiritual journey with God and on his family’s spiritual journey as well … they are actually saying ‘it is changing me as well’.

*Special Character* was both product and process. The product is the transformed life. The process is the training that is given to bring about that transformation.

Wisdom, as a *Special Character* value was mentioned by only one participant (P4). This I found unusual in light of the book of Proverbs being perhaps the most character-specific book in the Bible. That book has more to say about God’s wisdom than on any other topic. It did not escape P4 who felt “pupils would lose out on a lot of God’s wisdom” if the teaching was secular. Cloud (2010) endeavours to define wisdom:

> Wisdom means many things. If you examine the various ways that wisdom has been discussed in philosophy, religion and the behavioural sciences, they all involve a coming together of knowledge, understanding, insight and discernment so that a person knows what is good and what to do … another key ingredient of wisdom puts the others in perspective: experience – the experience of others or of oneself.

Two schools highlighted the spirit of sacrifice (a biblical norm, Romans 12:1) as a *Special Character* value. The founding principal of one school went on an overseas fact-finding trip at his own expense to investigate Christian education. “I am committed to the principle of sacrifice and I knew that it was going to cost me heaps, and it did, particularly in time and energy over a ten year period”, said P24. Teachers who launched into this work often took huge drops in salary, as did P5, already mentioned. Parents, too, “sacrificed every penny that we had to send our kids here. Sometimes it was more than we were earning – it was more than our mortgage … because we had four children here in the non-integrated days” (P18). Parents became poor that their children might become rich in *Special Character*. 
Character values. Another mother (P60) went out to work in order to put her children into such a school. The concept of sacrifice is a major theme in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation (350 plus AV references), climaxing in Christ’s sacrifice of Himself at Calvary, and modelled by the way He lived. It also permeates evangelical hymnology and thus the thinking of evangelical school personnel in terms of their Special Character.

Special Character schools endeavour to get across to their students the value that God has a divine purpose for each of their lives. “It is about understanding that we are created for a wonderful purpose … to live and work and reflect the glory of God” (P38). They endeavour to get across to students that they have a destiny to fulfil, even to the point of following an online Christian programme that “allows them to follow where they think God has led them over the years and it helps them to choose accordingly” (P12). They sing “I have a destiny … to fulfil”, as one of their contemporary songs.

This subsection talked of faith, a faith that spring-loaded so many values like peace, a faith-based hope, a faith-based worldview that produces joy, a faith that produces consolation in times of tragedy, a faith-based purpose in life, faith-based mentoring, a faith that transforms character and imparts a godly wisdom, accepting of sacrifices needing to be made. It spoke particularly of hope and joy.

Operational Factors
Having surveyed the character values that stem from personal spiritual experience, such as peace, faith, hope, joy and others, there are factors that influence the operation of Special Character which need to be detailed, for they, too, are valued. The first is that of prayer, highlighted by forty six of the participants and which is perhaps their most significant activity. In two schools all eleven participants commented on it. In no instance was comment on ‘prayer’ ever initiated by the researcher. In P12’s transcript (a school leader) there were more references to prayer than to any other issue. For P42, the answers to prayer were forthcoming. By way of analysis I have separated out those comments on prayer which came from founders of schools, principals, Board Trustees, teachers, parents and students.

When P24, a school founder felt called of God to start a school, like Moses, he argued with God and said: “I don’t think I’m the right person; I’m not an educator … Lord it is too big”. But there was a resorting to prayer. Two ladies were his prayer-backing and as Aaron and Hur held up Moses’ arms while he prayed (Exodus 17:12), ensuring Joshua’s victory in ancient Israel, so he felt these ladies were to him. Prior to P5’s school being set up, a group prayed together regularly for five years.
Principal P10 acknowledged that for him, prayer “is a recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit. We invite the Holy Spirit in a very dynamic way within the school”. As a school leader P2 had 2-3 confidants to whom he could share intimately, knowing they would pray through those issues – and he recommended to staff that they get around them the same kind of inner circle support. He, too, mentioned the various prayer groups of the school, some meeting at the school, some in the homes. Commitment to prayer was a cultural commitment in another Special Character school (P49). As a leader in the school P49 felt it was important that leaders lead by example, and be men and women of prayer. One principal, P9, likened to a Christian grandfather to many, will gladly pray with the students who came to see him. Staff appointments were never made by P29 without much prayer. In his school, prayer starts the day and sets the tone for the day, declaring God’s leadership over the school. If new things had to be introduced to staff, it was always done prayerfully. In conflict resolution, or with upset parents, prayer was prioritised in the procedures.

All Board meetings begin with prayer according to P67. In one school there is an annual Church commissioning service where staff and Board of Trustees are publicly prayed for. In P1’s Board meetings they are punctuated with prayer and when critical decisions arise or problems encountered – they take time out to pray. Not all the Board are entirely happy with this approach, but there is an expectation that all Board members will participate in prayer. Participant 34 made seven references to prayer and explained that in the Board meetings you have to pray: “it is our expectation”. Where there are staffing difficulties, the Board will ride it out and pray for the right person. For P62, regardless of who also attended the Board meetings, prayer continued as usual. That included the Minister of Education on one occasion, and they were unembarrassed about their prayer time. One Board member (P44) noted how the Board was sensitive to the financial constraints of parents, especially when there were redundancies, and prayer on their behalf was a priority.

In P5’s school, a daily prayer meeting for staff was set up and continues to this day – well over 20 years. They submit the day into God’s care and blessing and as a staff they pray with and for each other; in class the staff pray with and for the students (P29). “How can a non-Christian pray with a student?” was a question posed to highlight its importance as one of the criteria for appointing. It was a great ‘freedom’ for teacher P53 to be able to pray aloud in the classroom at any time. For her, prayer was a distinguishing mark of the school. For P36 an upset in class or a class member that is having a difficult time, may mean that the whole class may stop and pray for that student. The Deans prayed with the students they had to deal with and teachers were known to begin their day in the classroom alone in prayer in acknowledgement of their dependence on God and seeking His blessing (P48). If students know their teachers are praying for them, that will make a difference; praying teachers lead to praying students, which P10 felt was true in his school. Being in a spiritual battle, as
P25 perceived his work, he believed the greatest thing that could be done for the students was to pray for them. When ERO was visiting the school, P14 noted that regardless of their presence, if it was prayer time, they would pray. This teacher, when working in a state school, had her prayer list on the classroom wall; no one knew what it was, but it was used every morning. Reflecting on her comments, it might well be concluded that you do not pray because you are in a Christian school; you are in a Christian school because you pray. Even P4’s staffroom was a place of prayer. The teacher “prayed for specific things” in the classroom “and then you can see specific answers. So it becomes experiential to the children and not just a ritual”. When her staff are feeling “apathetic and indifferent” she simply says, “let’s just pray for each other and pray that God will give enthusiasm and vitality towards this. … Prayer has a part to play, but you can pray all you like, but if you don’t outwork some stuff, it becomes empty as well”. One senior key staff member (P19) prayed for each of her staff each day and for each classroom before the others arrived.

Parents too, prioritised prayer in deciding, as in P23’s case, what school to send her children to. She had noted that all school assemblies started off with prayer – and that the school was very prayer-oriented. Another parent (P47) had made the same observation in the same school. Participant 36 mentioned how at every parents’ meeting they pray. She mentioned ‘Mums in Touch’, an international prayer organisation that operates prayer vigils. Parents have observed, noted and commented on the prominence and priority of prayer (P18) and how this is contrasted with the secular state school and the pronounced prayerlessness the state has committed them to (P60).

Prayer “flows through every part of the school” (P28). One parent (P58) had observed how “when the children are disruptive … she [the teacher] just brought in a weekly worship time”. Was it manipulation? “I don’t think it was … she would just play a few songs … and she would direct them to asking God for help” resulting in a “calming effect”. “It changed the climate of the classroom”, she said. There were 100 families in P2’s school who were on an email list of folk willing to pray over issues in the school as they were regularly fed information. For parent P3, the first aspect of Special Character was the Bible, the second was prayer. If there was a teacher shortage, “You’d get down on your knees and you pray earnestly to God”.

It is a common thing for the school personnel to be praying, not just for the students, but for the families of the students (P66). The parents, too, will pray with staff when they come to see them (P55). Many of the families are praying families, as was the case with parent P50. She prayed for a school “where her kids would be prayed for”. She couldn’t afford the fees, but prayed for God’s provision. On the day the child started, that provision came. She saw the prayer-advantage of preference versus non-preference students – “40% non-Christian, you’d have 40% less people
praying for the school”. There are, no doubt, strong praying teachers and principals in the state system, but this would be the exception rather than the rule. Like almost every other, this participant (P38) put prayer as their top priority in how to handle crises. “You’d say ‘Lord what do you want me to do?’ He’s right there, ‘an ever present help in time of trouble’.  

Student P27 said of prayer: “It is the most vital aspect” of *Special Character*. In a state school you wouldn’t see kids on a bench praying for each other – we’re just praying for our friends”. To her the benefits were most often seen in their changed attitudes at home. The local state high school had a prayer group, but they were mocked by their fellow students. Not so in this Christian school. “People want to be prayed for” in P54’s school, and in their prayer meetings there is no coercion – students only go if they want to go. It was the students (P30, P16) who highlighted how each of their lessons began with prayer, often by the teacher; sometimes they will ask a student to open the lesson with prayer. The students spoke very favourably of this as it set the tone for the lesson. “You have a huge support system” through prayer, said P30 who drew attention to a great tragedy in another school – students took time out to travel and visit their bereaved fellow students and pray with them and show support. Not all students are amenable to a praying environment, but student P6 said “80-90% of students at my level I would be comfortable praying with”.

Student P35 stated it well, saying “We open the day with prayer”. He noted how teachers took extra time in thought and prayer to instil valuable life lessons into them. Of one teacher, he said, “He would speak into your life and every morning he would pray for every student by name in the class”. It made a great impact on this student. Student P43 found the praying of the staff for the students “a huge part of their input”. Devotions in the classroom with students was set up on a daily basis, involving prayer with the students. “The children pray quite readily in class, throughout the classes, on any given day” (P4). At the end of the lesson she had given that day, four students volunteered to pray – and “they all prayed specifically into that area” about which she had been teaching. One of the compassionate aspects of this prayerful culture for P7 was that students can raise personal or domestic issues in prayer times – “My Mum is sick; can we pray for her” – and this is normal. If there were problems between students, P19 in sorting the dispute would get the children to pray for each other, a practice sustained over 19 years. Where unfortunate incidents happen in the playground, there is recourse to prayer even among the students (P36).

Student prayer groups tended to come and go over the years – sometimes few, sometimes many, some short-lived, others going the distance. The senior students were involved (P15) and it was

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50 Psalm 46:1
evident this student participant had a vibrant prayer life of her own. Independent prayer groups were run by students in P48’s school. In assemblies, students will pray, unrehearsed, extemporaneously from the heart (P36). At school sports, teams will often pray before a game. Student-run prayer meetings were noted by P41 who also commented that it is not considered odd to walk into a classroom when prayer is happening. It was pertinent to students’ career choices and certainly over enrolments (P12). Prayer in evangelical Christian schools is not just an activity of these schools, it is the generator of their dynamics, their source of strength, their first refuge for all stresses and distresses, their source of wisdom and divine direction, this being so for all concerned from those who initially establish these schools to the principals currently running them; from proprietors to parents, teachers to students, and to the governing Boards of Trustees. It is possibly their one most common denominator. Without it there is no evangelical *Special Character*.

Two other outward evidences of *Special Character* relate to personal spiritual experience that the participants spoke of like the unassessability of *Special Character*. “Many … feel very uncomfortable assessing it [*Special Character*] because it is an issue of the heart”. It is the heart that gives “the connectedness” which “is very subjective … I can look at your programme – but that doesn’t actually tell me about engagement” (P4). When P37 was asked how the standard of *Special Character* was assessed, he asked, “how do you know that [I am] a Christian?” He mentioned all the usual evidences that point towards people being a Christian. “Ultimately, only God knows. With school, I think, similarly, you could see that the staff go to devotions and they pray … you could come to our prize-givings and not see it explicitly, [but] hear it, in the whole tone of the place and say ‘this is different to …’ ” (P37). In a sense it is a thing of the spirit, like the individual’s conversion. You may see it, but you cannot prove it. That would be the case with *Special Character*.

In a Christian school where the Christian message is of the Fall of Man and Redemption through Jesus Christ, there inevitably comes the issue of addressing the conscience.

There’s just not enough teaching to convict people that we have to do what is right or the consequences are really bad … people just don’t have any moral convictions. … And it comes right back to right teachings. There’s no conviction out there … to do the wrong things brings no consequences. (P38)

The concept of ‘being convicted’ is common terminology in evangelical circles when the issue of sin and its consequences are discussed, and the price Jesus paid to cover that are responded to, such that the conscience is awakened sufficiently to want to do something about it. There is always someone else involved that brings such things to one’s attention. This leads into the next subsection of relational experience.
RELATIONAL EXPERIENCES

In this section I deal with four subsections: A Basis for Relationship; Church Relationships; Institutional Relationship; and Interpersonal Relationship.

A Basis for Relationship

Speaking of a basis for relationship, relationship for many is at the heart of what Special Character is all about. Relationship within a Special Character context is contingent on other factors, such as ethos (P62), the people themselves (P9), and the concept of trusteeship/stewardship (P38).

It was noted by P62 that there was a special ethos in the school “and that’s never been measured as far as I know”. The environment is different, generating a different kind of relationship. According to P9, “The Special Character is focused in people. It is embedded in Scripture and the authority of the Bible in the believer’s life”. If these people are really different through this Special Character, the relationships they form will be correspondingly different.

It was P38’s view that the children are, essentially, God’s children, and adults exercise a trusteeship of them. “I trust that as God’s children more than my children, … are my family to look after … they are part of the greater family. So it is my responsibility to lead them in the right direction”. This makes God the ultimate stakeholder.

Church-School Relationships

The three issues covered in this subsection on church-school relationships are the denominational factor in those schools, a proprietor’s prioritising theological viewpoint and the symbiotic relationship between church and school. There was an insistence with P29 that while the school was a denominational one, there was an inclusiveness about it – “What we do here would serve the needs of any mainstream church in New Zealand” (P29). This sentiment was expressed similarly by Ps 49, 7, 2, 25 and 55. “To promote one denomination over another would be unacceptable” (P49). None of the schools claimed to be denominational in terms of an exclusiveness: they all wanted to be seen as inclusive.

Participant 65 made much of the role of the church (as a proprietor) mentioning the church 19 times, and speaking of his vision for the church to cater for the whole person which meant providing a school. He felt the school was very intertwined with the church and so the school is “a reflection of the doctrinal flavour of our church”. The other participant who spoke with special emphasis on the church was another church proprietor (P26). His approach was more a theological one based on Matthew 16:18, “that places the church at the centre of God’s redemptive work on earth”. He saw the
synagogue model and the Beth Midrash, as “a house of study, a place where the Rabbi would teach the Scriptures”. He also perceived that “the one thing God is building on earth is His church”\(^{51}\) and so the church must be built via schooling as well as in other ways. Participant 26 went on to say: “Jesus did not come to build schools, counselling centres, mission organisations, legal services, sports teams, et cetera. He came to build His church”. And he sees schooling as a means to that end.\(^{52}\) For P26 the *Special Character* relationship between church and school must be strong, because the *Special Character* was there to enhance the character of the church. For this school, this was obviously not so in an exclusive sense as there were six different churches represented on the Board of Trustees according to P57. Nonetheless, they got along well and there was the perception that *Special Character* was seen in the harmony or unity in which Christians can work together in a common concern. While the school was seen by P26 to be supportive of the church, in the majority of the schools in this study, the church and school were seen to be more in a symbiotic relationship. Hence, church forms a big part in support work for some schools.

This kind of support can only come out of a relationship of trust. While relationships that the school has with the church are of strategic importance to the sustaining of the school’s *Special Character*, so also are good relationships within the institution itself.

**Institutional Relationships**

Special Character is totally dependent upon the kind of relationships developed within an institution, according to the participants of this study. Some comment on the extensiveness of these relationships (Ps 10, 32), one on relationships being the core of *Special Character* (P32). Participant 10 said it was not enough just being a Christian, that it was “about being able to be a thinker and a relational person”. These he claimed were ‘essentials’ for *Special Character* to be operating.

When P32 was asked if *Special Character* was dependent upon relationship she said:

> Just about anything in life is dependent on a relationship. That’s true. If you go to the supermarket and you are being served by somebody and that someone is having a bad day, you have an unpleasant experience in the supermarket. But if they develop that two-second relationship with you and it is cheerful, then everybody benefits from that. So yes, your *Special Character* is dependent on your relationship with God, I guess, to know, to love, to serve; but then it is also dependent on your relationship as teachers, with each other, parents with each other, students with each other, and then each of those groups with the other groups and all of the sub-things that go with that because we were created to be relational.

*Special Character* has its own impact on disciplinary procedures in the pastoral care programme.

\(^{51}\) Matthew 16:18: “I will build My church”.

\(^{52}\) Ephesians 3:10: “Through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known”. 
We explore the student’s relationship with God as well. … That’s something that we do for all of the high school students. They all have pastoral care over the course of the year, one on one … our relationship with God is part of that. (P54)

This has a profound impact on the students and possibly has more effect in behaviour modification than any other factor of their disciplining. Pastoral care is also undertaken “working alongside our churches … for families” (P44).

**Interpersonal Relationships**

Many of the relationships within an institution are indeed, interpersonal relationships. In this subsection reference will be made to a dependence on coherence between home and school values (Ps 58, 14, 48), to inter-ethnic relationships (Ps 51, 23, 46) and to the problem of reconciliation when relationships are marred (Ps 53, 42, 38). Relationships are deemed to be stronger if there is a coherence between home and school values. For P14, it is important that schools express: “the same set of values or standards as the home that they are being brought up in”. It is therefore in the enrolment procedures that “the family has to declare that they are actively involved in a church” (P48), yet as this participant explains, she was well aware there were people who joined a church just to get their children into a Christian school. Some comments were made by P4 who said, “80-90% or something like that” lose their faith initially when they go on to University. “Obviously, it needs to be talked about prior to them getting there”. Hence the need for strong student-teacher relationships. As P53 notes, “Special Character is crucial; … without it there would be a sense of loss”. It is that “sense of loss” that P48 referred to as students leave the school.

Once in a Christian school, student P51 sees the importance of treating all students as equals – without discrimination. This school celebrates diversity and ethnic mix. In P23’s school there would be “a very large number of South Africans, particularly on the staff … I think a lot of the Koreans are Christians that come”. In both cases she felt they contributed to the Special Character as the influence of Christian schooling in South Africa was higher than in New Zealand she felt. The school celebrates their diversity of culture in the talent evenings this school regularly provides. Special Character is seen in the intangible evidence of “what’s going out of your heart to people” (P46). There is that intangible heart-bonding.

Finally, in this subsection it is relevant and important to consider the matter of broken relationships and the need of conflict resolution, forgiveness and compassionate care. While harmony and unity are ideal relationships that should result from and are preserved by Special Character, the reality is that these must be worked at, and that the people involved are still very human. As Special Character schools, there is possibly a greater sense of duty to preserve that unity and harmony. While teachers
experience classroom stresses from pupil-teacher tensions, stresses of a different kind occur within management, not to mention tension with staff, within departments or faculties. For P53 because the Special Character is biblically-based, they resort to the biblical approach to conflict resolution – the principles spelt out in Matthew 18:15-17 that if there is a difference you must go and sort it out one on one to begin with, with recourse to others if that fails. In the question of forgiveness the essential difference was that apportioning blame, ideally, is suspended initially. “It is important to know where each other is at so that we can keep Special Character to the fore” (P19). There is an acknowledgment that ‘I am my brother’s keeper’. An unusual discovery in these schools is that there is fostered an intergenerational support. It is not all one way – teachers looking out for students. It was pointed out by P55 that you do not just have teachers praying for students; you also have students praying for teachers, and not with any sense of familiarity, but with that Christian deep concern. It is part of how the school functions.

FUNCTIONING OF SPECIAL CHARACTER
Without good relationships, institutions will never function at their best; and it is to this functioning that we now turn. There are broad principles to be looked at – commitment, accountability and independence from the state. Special Character is seen through how the school functions – with reference to the facilities, to the worship, about which there was much said, to the concept of a counter-culture, to school camping. The student functions referred to are their engagement with contemporary culture; their behaviours, their music and their missionary enterprise. The staff functioning referred to are the lead they give in daily devotions; their professional development and their evangelism involvement.

Broad Principles under which Schools Function
In order to function well, there needs to be commitment, as P8 pointed out, to their single focus: “It [Special Character] is not like something you just do on Sunday; it is something that is part of your whole life”. It is a consistent message that comes through to the students – from home, church and school, according to P50. “If you go to Sunday School, you are there for an hour, compared to five days a week at a secular school where it is being taken away rather than being built up. … So school enhances what we teach”.

Two principals (P29, P2) were deeply conscious of the accountability factor involved in Special Character. “We are accountable to deliver what it says in the Integration Agreement” and “we are accountable for the funding we receive” (P29). While state schools are also accountable, it is especially so for integrated schools as they have a greater measure of independence and are

53 Galatians 6:10: “Do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”
accountable for ensuring the *Special Character* is upheld, for such justifies their separate 
existence from the secular state schools. An initiative from P2’s school was the development of “an 
audit tool”, having:

pooled together the best thoughts and ideas [of others] and put together a tool that we are 
trialling around our schools here … which basically looks at all the areas of school life and 
asks questions relating to how *Special Character* is expressed in these areas: governance, 
principal/leadership, senior team, enrolments, curriculum.

There are also senior people in the Association of Christian schools who will come and do principal 
appraisals as requested. This has been happening as far back as the 1990s. A summary of one of 
these *Special Character* audit tools used in these evangelical schools, is in Appendix 4.

The issue of independence that the Integration Agreement gives for *Special Character* was valued by 
proprietor P65.

State involvement in these areas would take away parents’ freedom to choose in an area 
where people have strong beliefs. … We would certainly not be able to work in a situation 
where there is an amalgamation [of schools] on the same site. It would close us down. There 
can be no more state involvement than what we have at present.

For P29 “the distinctive [factor] is that we deliver education philosophically independent of the 
state”. Participant 67 also valued the independence whereby “we can protect and maintain and 
deliver our *Special Character*”. He only regrets the restrictions on growth that is esteemed an unfair 
burden in that the *Special Character* is there as a choice for some, but not for others if ‘the cap’ is 
reached. The fact that other state schools are not at capacity is to them, irrelevant to the concepts of 
choice or conviction. One other voice (P24), a school founder, came out strongly on “the importance 
and the value of autonomy”. He was very strong on having autonomy from church as well, so that 
the school stood on its own as a separate entity unaligned to any particular church. He perceived that 
schools under church jurisdiction tend to come under pastor jurisdiction, whose prior focus is the 
church.

**How the School Functions**

Mention has already been made of the use of church facilities by P65 who did not want church 
facilities to be empty all week – “it was not ethically right to put millions of dollars into a building to 
be used only on Sundays”. There is a mutual arrangement whereby the church can use school 
facilities after hours and for conferences with seminar groups, and holiday programmes, and the 
school gymnasium is used by the public in the evenings. The downside of this is the tensions that are 
created when those privileges are abused, albeit unintentionally. Sharing of facilities sometimes 
reflects the church/school relationships where that is a feature of the school. In P65’s school the 
church auditorium is used for school assemblies and as their place for collective worship. This does
not mean that physical linking of facilities in this way is the sole determinant of schools being places of worship. Frequent reference was made of the school being a worshipping community – 36 participants made comments, some at considerable length. The one exception was the school that had no secondary department; in that school there was no direct reference to times of worship. It would seem that the more intense corporate worship is more a function of secondary age students who have adopted the faith in their own right and carry the responsibility for their own faith.

The worship programme in each of these schools is pronounced and highly valued. It is the contemporary tunes and lyrics of the church, as they seek to “praise God through music” (P5). Of all religions, the Christian church is known for its vast hymnology and hymn-writers – Charles Wesley’s 8000 hymns, Isaac Watts over 500, the blind Fanny Crosby’s over 2000 (Comfort, 1992; Best, 1992). On almost every occasion when asked where the Special Character could be seen, participants made ready reference to their assemblies as though corporate worship was its ultimate value. As P13 said, the emphasis on music in the school is “quite high”. Music is at the heart of corporate worship.

In defining worship as everyday living (P19 and others), it is contrasted with specific occasions for collective (corporate) worship (P30). Seen by students (P11, P35) as an agent of change, the assembly worship times are increasingly being given a central focus (P65). It is in those times of worship that spiritual needs of students are addressed (P4, P36). The flavours of the worship vary from that of the proprietor church (P26, P2), to ‘middle of the road’ style (P55, P7), to contemporary style (P13). Worship events include special worship celebration evenings (P12), an ongoing emphasis on honouring God (P48), and a pentecostal emphasis in worship (P22).

A particular take on worship in one school, common in the conservative arena, is to regard all that is done as an act of worship. This was the approach P19 took, as did P5, P23, P42, P48:

How we live our lives is an offering to God, no matter what we do. … I’d like to get the children away from the fact that worship is just a time set aside to spend in prayer, singing … praising … how we learn, how well we do things is actually an act of worship to God. I think it would be great if that was so. … I fall short of it too. (P19)

Participant 19 also spoke of the variety of approaches that different students brought as they led school worship, from the “really bright, outgoing thing” to “a reflective-type of thing. And yet all of it is offered from hearts of love to God … it is good to see the different flavours coming out”. A significant comment from student P30 says:

The main flavour of the worship would be … kind of funky, happy to get everyone into, but not too intense. Of course, there are kids that are not into that. … [The school] also says that you worship God in whatever way you like to. Some don’t feel like they feel God in the worship, you know; there are songs I don’t relate to at all, but I really like playing sport and so I feel I really want to play my best for God. That’s so cool. [Our school] really pushes that. … If we want to feel Him through music, but also in Art, you can worship God in your own way. You have to experience God in your own individual stuff. None of this corporate stuff;
you’ve got to find God in the way that you need Him in your life. … Every year level is different as well. … It also changes from year to year.

Student P11 commented that:

Worship [at the school] has changed over a lot of years; there was a deep hunger for that deeper relationship with God … the younger students are quite open to worship. … Worship is a way of giving everything back to God at the beginning of the day and saying ‘today is Yours and I want You to use me through this day’. … Worship … is the way [the school] starts the … day … students have that opportunity to give it all back to God. … The music is … for this age group … you need to reach the kids on a level they are comfortable with … music such as Hillsong … they know them from their youth groups and churches.

Fellow student P35 considered the worship time “an amazing opportunity” to worship. Teenage boys do not usually wear their hearts on their sleeves, and *Special Character* is a heart thing. He seemed unabashed at making reference to what has been very dear to him and relevant.

For P65, the impact that *Special Character* was designed to give in the life of the school from his perspective was “the assembly life of the school. Things like contemporary worship”. However, it is:

more praise than worship. It changes according to who or what is popular – it is flexible. … Inspired and anointed songs do something. When there is too much of the contemporary it does not have long-term spiritual effect. It does not give moulding or teaching opportunities.

(P53)

The worship in P26’s school reflected the music and worship style of the proprietor church: it was “mostly lively and contemporary and occasionally contemplative”. A student in this school (P27) suggested it was “quite out there … but a lot of kids just fold their arms and just stand there. But quite a few kids get into it”. In P2’s school “because of the historical roots of our school, I would say that we lean toward a de-emphasising of the experiential in relation to rational cognitive based on God’s Word … the cognitive does loom large”. It seems what he is saying is that the worship times in the school are at the conservative end. In the same school, P49 considered the worship very important:

it is more upbeat than I’d have been used to. I’m beginning to learn a bit more that … worship and praise does change with culture. … It is not necessarily wise to put down modern worship. I think praise and worship is extremely important because you inculcate in the mind, biblical truths through hymns and songs and choruses … so more power to it.

Another perspective on the same context (P55) was that “it is not very pentecostal and yet it is not really conservative … it is somewhere in the middle”. Yet another (P7), went further and assessed the worship as “well it has to be a bit below the lowest common denominator really … [that’s] not a good phrase; the worship is more middle of the road … it is sort of being sensitive I suppose”. He made the point that school does not take the place of the church, that the school has a conservative foundation but over the years there’s been a change in constituency – the charismatic/contemporary would be more predominant.
The most common comment about the worship was that it was contemporary, according to 22 participants. Board member, P31, wondered if genuine worship was ever achieved. “It is probably not … it is better to be aiming than not at all”. He said, “My understanding of worship is when you really want to engage with the Lord in the Holy Spirit and you are allowing yourself to take time out to engage and focus and communicate with God”. Responses concerning worship are particularly diverse from adults to young people, from conservative Christians to those embracing contemporaneity. Even among students themselves, there is a wide range of comment. Student P13 in this school said:

   The music and the worship itself is fairly upbeat, but not to the point that it offends, so it is appealing to the students … in the spectrum … it would be up towards the charismatic. … We run worships during lunchtime … it is the freedom … to get deeper … although through the institution itself we can get sick of it. We get sick of the fact of Special Character.

This student gave the overall impression of being passionate about her faith – to the extent of leading voluntary lunch hour worship sessions, but she did not buy into the conservative approach to her faith that the school epitomised. Another fellow student (P43) said, “I came from a Reformed church, so there isn’t the loud music [at church] … [the school] is more of the charismatic spectrum”.

In P36’s school they have five worship bands and she noticed that as the students got older they had more inhibitions and could even become a little spiteful towards each other. “It’s a bit of peer group disapproval when you are involved in a worship band or a particular prayer group”, she said. This was the only school where that kind of comment emerged. Another innovation – a student initiative that P12 drew attention to was the students’ own annual Praise and Worship evenings that had a very strong pentecostal flavour to them but were considered “pretty powerful evenings”. Staff were there as support; these evenings were entirely student run.

The ethos of P24’s school’s praise and worship was “wholeheartedly loving God. It is foundational, a great commandment … it is a heart that loves God expressed through worship … if the capacity to worship God in spirit and truth is lost then the school is in deep trouble”. “When I worship God”, said P48, “I have to make sure that the whole of me honours Him … we don’t pressure them to sing. There is not full participation … maybe 60/40 participation”. Participant 60 notes that “some songs are not very deep, but they are good songs and it is a good start. At one or two levels there are some very budding preachers”. Her comments are particularly positive in the light of the fact that on her own admission, she much prefers for herself a “more conservative, more staid form of worship, with old style hymns”.

Worship is not Special Character nor is Special Character worship; but the worship times at school for older students, particularly, is one of the significant values espoused for all its weaknesses. It is a

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54 Ps 49, 11-13, 43, 52-55, 7, 4, 58, 40, 16, 41, 47, 35, 30, 18, 60, 26, 27.
form of student expression of the effects of *Special Character*. It is the God-focus in a student’s life. It can take pride of place in the life of a devout student in an evangelical protestant Christian school. It is a time when they connect with their deeper spiritual values, which makes the experience transformative for the student, regardless of the style of that worship, though it is more likely to reflect a contemporary style. But worship is not the only God-focus in how the school functions.

The remaining two issues in this subsection on how the school functions, concern the culture of the schools and the camping programme their students take part in. Christian education was deemed to be non-retreatist, but still counter-culture, counter to the current western secular culture inasmuch as it is anti-Christian.

The issues and tensions in our society … help us to embrace our *Special Character* – the government changes things like same-sex marriages and prostitution; pre-marital sex, adultery, alcohol abuse, drug abuse and acceptance of it from a lot of parents … all these things that give us a reason to retain our *Special Character* … because it is not part of our culture. (P36)

As strongly as many parents think about these particular issues, there is still a stronger motivation coming through of a positive kind that *Special Character* education is deemed desirable for its immersing their children in Christian sentiment.

One other high impact activity needs highlighting. In P53’s school there is a strong emphasis on utilising the school camp experience to strengthen *Special Character* issues. They are “quite incredible; high impact … dynamic and transformational”, without neglecting the teaching activities that the days are focused on. These are functions of the school itself. How the individual student responds to that environment is the theme of the next subsection.

**How the Students Function**

The school functions to impart knowledge and skills in a values-laden environment. One of these values, as P7 saw it, was to provide a curriculum that embraced rigorous thinking, the ability “to critique and engage contemporary culture … in a way that is God-honouring and biblical, [giving] skills both spiritual and intellectual”. The will to engage in hard work is another factor fostered in most schools, and mentioned by the majority of the schools in this study – Ps 24, 18, 38, 28 and 62. Having said that, P36 was concerned that balance was maintained between “academic development” and “character development”. However, it is those character qualities that the public see and assess. Every school likes to hear that the public applaud the behaviour of their students in the community. Student P16 commented on this that the school “gets calls every week … people phoning us to say how well behaved our students are”. In the playground, he thought that “maybe [there would be] less
swearing”, a claim disowned by P64 in this school. A sense of pride was espoused along with the need to focus on a balanced humility (P17).

Participant 50 saw the need to express wisdom and humility. “We don’t all do it; we all slip up”. Humility was also espoused by Ps 12 and 66 – “Without it, Special Character is compromised” (P66). This involves selflessness (P42); “not to just put themselves first, but to put others first” (P50). Being public-spirited (rather than antisocial) was fostered in P12’s school. And they are encouraged to look further afield as well. An activity unique to the Christian school movement would be its emphasis on missionary enterprise, whether it be by going abroad, as some schools taking groups of students (already referred to) or fundraising through the school (P58). It was P52’s original intention as a founder, that the school purposed to be a missionary-producing school – “We used to have this dream … that this school would produce missionaries … men and women of faith … who would become doctors and go to the mission field” (P52).

The way students function demonstrate the values they espouse – learning to think critically about their society, developing the protestant work ethic, a reputation for honesty without jeopardising academic development. Selflessness, wisdom and humility are necessary to the values of Special Character students if the Special Character is not to be compromised. An altruistic value expressed in an evangelistic concern was the missional value expressed as an adjunct to Special Character. The context in which these students function is the school, but more particularly, their context is people, and their teachers primarily. It is to the influence of these teachers through their functioning that attention is now directed.

**How the Staff Function**

Staff are involved in staff and student daily devotions – not usually a practice in a secular school. For principal P12 it was a non-negotiable, “that would never change as long as I am here”. Student P30 applauded such an emphasis as did teacher P48. Yet another feature unique to the values of Special Character schools is the professional development emphasis on Special Character itself. In P37’s school, as already mentioned, there is a two-year cycle of “reading, lectures, discussions and writing [or rewriting of] units [of work] from a Christian biblical worldview”. Two thirds of their large staff has already been through the programme.

A feature that has a lower profile in these evangelical schools but that is nonetheless valued is their commitment to evangelism. Four of the six schools made mention of it. To take on non-preference students (with a non-Christian background) was found by P12 to be rewarding in some cases – “now we look at them and can see why … whole families have turned to God”. Church-going is
encouraged and P36 found that unchurched children in some cases “want to go to church … parents will start to take them along”. One principal (P2) was wary of teachers who wanted to come to teach in order to evangelise kids. He said:

If you are a teacher … your core responsibility is to teach whatever the curriculum is, to the absolute best of your ability. That is your service to the child and their family … and if God gives you the opportunity to be able to witness in a more specific way, grab it and go for it and the school would endorse that.

Evangelism per se was a value P41 highlighted quoting Matthew 28:20 as justification: “the great command ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples of all men’ ”.

The way staff in Special Character schools function so as to express their values is in their daily devotional time of their own as a staff and with the students. It is seen in their commitment to prioritising Special Character professional development. Staff, too, have a commitment to an evangelistic emphasis such that non-preference students’ spiritual welfare is not neglected.

To summarise, in this subsection the values espoused by these schools and commented on have included that of focusing on a biblical approach consistently, having accountability for Special Character monitored, having an independence from the state to foster Special Character, such that biblical values like traditional marriage, for example, can be honoured.

There is the value of shared facilities with proprietors that secular schools do not enjoy; this often being the context of the school’s worship activities, it being a worshipping community. These schools value their Christian curriculum which caters for a counter-culture, such as they are. Their education outside the classroom can also reflect their special values through their camp work.

The holistic approach which blends spiritual with intellectual disciplines is valued, and provides the basis for behavioural evidences that honour their faith. Their music is contemporary with the added dimension of it being a heart-expression of a love for their Creator. They value the opportunity to reach out in a missional conviction that the world is their parish.

School staff in particular are responsible for staff and classroom valued daily devotions which set the tone of the day for all. There is a valued mindset of wanting to lead rather than direct the students by modelling and teaching servant leadership. To this end staff themselves, are subjected to their own valued personal professional development in Special Character issues and emphases. While evangelism is valued and does function, it is not the primary focus of these schools.
DISCUSSION

It is necessary in any study exploring the operation of a school system to identify the values framing the philosophy under which the school functions, as it is these values that unite the community.

Indeed, de Pree (1989) in his widely-acclaimed work on Leadership, said:

> Every family, every college, every corporation, every institution needs tribal storytellers. The penalty for failing to listen is to lose one's history, one's historical context, one's binding values. Without continuity brought by custom, any group of people will begin to forget who they are. (p. 72)

This is equally true for these *Special Character* Christian evangelical schools where the notion and nature of *Special Character* is itself strongly valued. The participants’ identification of a specific value system associated with *Special Character* evangelical schools and their unequivocal belief that *Special Character* evangelical schools can only operate successfully, both academically and spiritually, within such a framework challenges concerns raised by Snook (1981) who, following the passing of the Integration Act, conjectured that such changes would lead to an inferior education in these schools and suggested “this may come to be seen as the main failing of the Act” (p. 57).

An over-riding value for these schools was the drive for excellence. Nine participants made specific reference to the need to be a “model of excellence” (Snook, 1981, p. 17), not for being competitive but to honour God, indicating that the driver for excellence is one of the differences between secular and *Special Character* evangelical schools. The motive may also be a response to their being disparaged – they are committed to prove their worth by what they produce. It is an excellence, says David Smith (2006, p. 134) that “will really channel grace, life and peace”. O’Toole (2006) comments on those who “send their children to Christian schools because of the perceived excellence of the education they offer” (p. 219). It is an excellence that educator Wilson (1991) advocated, based on biblical principles.

While the schools in the study share many values with secular schools, analysis of the data generated during this study indicates that there are four value groups that were particularly important to the *Special Character* evangelical schools in this study. These are associated with propositional truths, personal spiritual experiences, relational experiences and the functioning of *Special Character*. That these value groups have particular pertinence to Christian schools is not unexpected (Sproul, 1986) although non-Christian schools may also value an emphasis on propositional truths, personal spiritual experiences and relational experiences (Tooley, 2000).

These evangelical schools had no problem with the values recommended by the Ministry of Education Curriculum Framework of 1993 and 2007, or the Cornerstone values that 800 New
Zealand schools have adopted, but perceived their motivation for these as coming from a biblical mandate. What is particularly different for these schools is their understanding of the context and source of the propositional truth – the Bible – and the participants’ beliefs that it is their responsibility to teach children according to biblical principles. The majority of participants, from proprietors to students, claimed that God directed their practices through revelation in the Bible (Wolterstorff, 1999). However, some participants were concerned that biblical illiteracy was becoming more common in these schools, leading to a possible separation of secular and spiritual in ways that Piper (2010) has counselled against. As mentioned in the discussion on Special Character findings, others commented on modern society’s shift away from notions of absolute truth to postmodernism’s lack of such a concept (for example Green, 1998; Guinness, 2000) and the influence that such thinking might have on notions of Special Character being underpinned by absolute biblical truths. It is a contrast of values. For Edlin (2004), the centrality of the Bible was his number one core value in his list of six core values of evangelical Christian schools. Although modern theologians such as Capetz (2011) and Smith (2012) reject the evangelical concept of inerrancy and a belief in absolute truth, biblical inerrancy was the anchor around which many of the participants built their case for Special Character of Christian evangelical schools.

Forty eight of the participants (approximately 80%), including all eleven in three of the six schools, made specific reference to the overriding value of the primacy of scripture, confirming Pazmino’s (2008) and Fowler’s (1996) approach to Christian education. For these evangelical schools, the scriptures as inerrant and infallible determined all aspects of the work they undertook, the biblical values they esteemed, the certainty of the truth they embraced, the hope of an eternal future they anticipated, and the focus of the honour they ascribe to deity.

Whilst Snook (1972, p. 3) has suggested “it is notoriously difficult to present an ultimate justification for values”, the evangelical community have no such hesitancy when it is inscribed in the Decalogue of the Christian scriptures. Biblical values are therefore of prime importance as an organising principle for evangelical schools (Gousmett, 2004). But although many participants still made mention of their values, others among them were more focused on the biblical qualities themselves (namely virtues) rather than their beliefs in those qualities (namely values) for values by definition are “deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable” (McIntosh, 1951, p. 1431). More significantly, the six evangelical schools in this study were concerned with ‘authority’ under which schools adopt particular values. As Gousmett (2004, p. 231) indicated, these schools are responding to “a revelation from God … that challenges our own attempts to decide for ourselves, on whatever basis at all, how we should live”.
This unquestioning response to revelation stands in contrast to John Heenan’s (1996) cornerstone values’ justification of “a core of universal moral precepts” (p. 8) – a position which Gousmett (2004) argues is based, ultimately, on human reason rather than biblical absolutes. Thompson (2004) writing of his Australian research into evangelical schools said: 

Without exception … participants recognised that the Bible was foundational for their faith, the formation of their worldviews and their educational practice. … Other factors … were … important. However, the Bible was acknowledged as the single most important influence on the lives and subsequent educational practice. (p. 150)

The participants in the six New Zealand evangelical schools in this study also demonstrated this unwavering acknowledgement of the Bible as the greatest influence on their educational practice.

The second value group identified in this study was associated with personal spiritual experience. These values concern the individual’s relationship to the triune Godhead of the Bible. There was a total acceptance among participants of the concept that the Judeo-Christian God is sovereign over all of life, again based on the premise that the written word of the Christian scriptures is divinely inspired, utterly reliable, and totally sufficient for all of life’s directing (Dickens, 2006). Such positioning is in line with Astley and Day’s (1992) proposal that “to be authentically Christian, it [Christian education] will stand in some relation to the person of Christ” (p. 20). “Its processes or methods will reflect the character of Christ. … Christian education must be congruent with the ends of Christianity, with the end that is Christ” (p. 21). The participants’ comments reflected an emphasis on giving all praise and glory to God (including giving their own biblical warrant for this); a focus reflecting the position of scholars such as 18th century Edwards cited in Shafer (1994), Octigan (1980), Walsh (1997), and Piper (2010).

In Chapter 5 discussion, reference was made to ‘Christ-centred’ being a metaphor for Special Character. Others, however, saw this as a value. This aspect of personal spiritual experience values concerns a faith relationship with Christ – expressed as “living out their faith” (Charles, 2006, p. 189) and belonging to a “community of faith” (O’Toole, 2006) and constituted within the schools’ “Statement of Faith”. Faith in these evangelical schools (spoken of by at least 14 participants) is faith in God based on faith in the ‘Word of God’, the Bible, another indicator of the significance of the inerrancy of the Bible in framing the philosophy of these schools. Indeed, that faith in the inerrancy of the Bible is a condition of their membership in the New Zealand Association of Christian Schools.

An important aspect of this faith relationship is prayer. Forty-six participants (approximately 75%) considered prayer to be very important – in line with Buckler and Astley’s (1992) study in an urban UK parish that found 96% of those who go to a local church say they pray, 55% of them regularly.
Because of the way evangelical schools are constituted with preference students being 90 or 95% and thus most likely church-going, the figures are probably comparable. The staff of these schools indicated that they usually have staff prayer meetings on a daily basis. Evangelical schools create a praying-environment which the students of this study acknowledged positively and appreciatively. The third group of values was categorised as relational experiences. Four sub-groups were identified – the basis for relationship, church relationships, institutional relationships and interpersonal relationships. Again, for the participants in this study, these values are contingent on their being embedded in scripture, a stance supported by Dickens (2004), Eaude (2012) Gousmett (2004), Huddleston (2004), Justins (2004) and Thompson (2004) who argue that relationship is essential to student spirituality, and that this relationship is grounded in the Word of God with “relationship to Christ supersede[ing] all other relationships” (Dickens, 2004, p. 292). Students’ relationships with their teachers are also seen as being “motivated by their relationship to Christ” (Justins, 2004, p. 265). While Gousmett (2004) would have it that values are taught “on the basis of their faith, directed by scripture”, he adds “that they must be oriented towards love and obedience to God and focusing on love for others” (p. 243) a position reflected by the participants in this study. As noted above, such thinking is in contrast to the underpinnings of Heenan’s (1996) Cornerstone values which according to Gousmett have “roots [which] are in humanistic rationalism, secular religion and a traditionalism divorced from any sustaining vision of life or vision for life” (p. 243).

The participants in this study claimed that Special Character is totally dependent on the nature of the relationships developed. Huddleston (2004) argues that this involves “relational learning” (p. 218) and Eaude (2012) uses the term “relational consciousness” (p. 124) stressing that spirituality of students is embedded in the story of their school community – that is where the student derives his/her relational identity. Christian schools seek to provide the very community from which the student from a Christian home can derive its identity and thus have a sense of the normal. In contrast, the sense of Christian community can be lost in the secular schooling of a Christian student. These concerns were echoed by the participants when speaking of church-school and institutional relationship as well as interpersonal relationships. They spoke particularly of the importance of a coherence of home, school and church values as did Astley and Day (1992) and Woods (2006). However, Thompson’s (2003) research found that this relational aspect, while giving a localised identity to students, did not seem to extend to the suffering of Christians around the world (Thompson, 2004) and was too often more characterised with a ‘Jesus and me’ approach to scripture.

The fourth grouping of values concerned the way people express Special Character through their actions and words and concerns the way people function within an institution. Commitment was one value identified here. The participants indicated that effective Christian schooling called for
commitment as highlighted by Black’s (2003) call to academic commitment, and “to teach with commitment if they are to teach for commitment” (p. 153). Other aspects of commitment identified by the participants were a commitment to Jesus (concurring with scholars such as van Brummelen [2003], and Renicks [2003]), a commitment to the goal of spiritual formation (Uecker, 2003); commitment to the call of God on the Christian teacher (Renicks, 2003); and a commitment to missions (Braley 2003).

Another value that participants spoke of was the need for accountability. Many made reference to their audit tool and processes of self-reviewing. Black (2003) believes this is an on-going “primary concern in many communities” (p. 155). John Codd (2012) on the other hand, in his 1999 article referred to the educational reforms in New Zealand as having “promoted a narrow, reductionist model of accountability informed by theories of managerialism and economical rationalism and based on a culture of distrust” (p. 47). Yet it is the Christian schools who have called for their Special Character accountability by peer reviews in the light, possibly, of the proprietors not monitoring their own Special Character.

There was a great deal of comment on the collective worship in these evangelical schools as an example of the particular functioning of a Special Character evangelical Christian school. When asked what evidence there was for Special Character, the researcher was commonly referred to school assemblies (where their collective worship takes place). In so identifying worship as a very important aspect of Special Character development the participants were concurring with Shepherd (1957) who reminds us that “Christian educators persist in pointing to their chapels as the symbols and centres of their schools’ wholeness of purpose, values and enduring achievements” (p. 126). Astley (1992) saw the school’s collective worship as a key issue in the school’s hidden curriculum as he saw this as where most Christians learn to be Christian. Cooling (2012) drew attention to a proposed government revision of English and Welsh schools’ requirements that “seemed to assume that religious worship was, in itself, an inappropriate activity in any educational context, even faith schools” (p. 96). Although the majority of participants in this study demonstrably valued worship, one participant of this research stood out for his abhorrence of the cringe factor he perceived, in the school’s contemporary worship. He questioned the need for worship time at all, but was still very committed to Christian education. He was, however, an exception to the general attitude towards worship time.

Although the majority of the participants indicated that they valued the emphasis placed on worship within their schools, there was some disagreement around the style of worship, in particular was some expressed concern about the contemporary nature of the worship, a debate echoed in the
literature. This issue is also raised as an issue in the discussion of Chapter 8 – as a source of tension. Although Warren (1995) and Wagner (1999) provide strong argument for contemporaneity, media ecologist Gordon (2010) was scathing in his comments on the shallowness and superficiality of the current worship malaise. However, whether contemporary or conservative, collective worship appeared to be not only a value in itself, but an expression of values in the very lyrics that are set to music. Reference was made by participants to Hillsong music, coming from Sydney’s 17,000 strong congregation, influential in New Zealand evangelical schools, which has produced 49 CDs between 1992 and 2008 much of which focuses on the person of Christ. In the view of the participants, perhaps in no other aspect of school life is the heart of Special Character and its ultimate value more clearly expressed than in the lyrics of their assembly worship times.

In summary, evangelical Special Character schools clearly have a culture and value system of their own and participants often spoke of that culture, recognising it as a strong aspect of their schools but seeking to avoid notions of a counter-culture culture. Rather they saw their culture as one developed in a disciplined environment, a “shared public culture” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 233) essential for community life. Such “shared public cultures” in the particular context of these schools may represent a dangerous rejection of the wider culture (Justins, 2004). Justins wrote of the risks associated with promoting Christian schools as a shelter for students “from the evils of their culture” (p. 274-5). Hathaway (1989), also warned of developing “a fortress mentality … [avoiding] the evil influence of the world around them … fail[ing] to be salt and light” (p. 124). It appears important to avoid non-recognition of the wider New Zealand culture. However the culture of these schools is markedly different from that of a state school sufficient for one newly appointed principal in this study to refer to the culture-shock he experienced.

With respect to the culture of these schools, Pazmino (2008) has drawn attention of Christian educators to “the need to distinguish cultural and biblical values and to struggle with the questions of contextualisation” (p. 163). In this he included the missiological, structural, theological and pedagogical contextualisations that needed to be addressed in the Christian schools.

Missiological concerns were expressed by the study’s participants and the activism/outreach that Bebbington (1989) refers to in his definition of evangelicalism is a big item in the school year for several of these schools, with participants in four of the six schools making particular mention of their commitment to evangelism. However, the issue of in-school evangelism was not high on the agenda of these schools as having a 90% or 95% preference-student enrolment, the student body was largely assumed to be already evangelised. As indicated in Chapter 5’s discussion, no participant
used Bebbington’s ‘conversion’ term with the focus for these schools appearing to be more on discipleship.

In this discussion, there is hardly an esteemed value that does not relate back to the participants’ ultimate foundational core belief in the inerrancy and thus the sufficiency and authority of the Christian scriptures as the pivot on which all values are dependent. The values themselves are rarely challenged, and well supported by the evangelical school literature. ‘Biblical inerrancy’ is the watershed of evangelical/non-evangelical life and practice and nowhere is this seen more clearly than in these evangelical schools. In contrast to ‘values clarification’ programmes that have been introduced into schools (Beckwith & Koukl, 1998) where students are encouraged to develop their own set of values based on exposure to supposed practical situations, these Special Character schools claimed to provide students with biblical guidelines and absolutes, with several schools citing the Ten Commandments in their integration agreements. To some this may appear to be indoctrination but the term ‘indoctrination’ was not always a pejorative term (Thiessen, 1992) and Edlin (2000) claims that all teaching contains aspects of indoctrination. What Thiessen does highlight is that “indoctrination … is thought to involve the failure to produce minds that are open and critical” (p. 69). However, Astley (1992) suggests it is a matter of degree. And so participants both applauded and deplored indoctrination, depending on how they interpreted the term.

CONCLUSION
In conclusion, there are both shared values (with secular schools) and values unique to Special Character evangelical schools. Those shared values are of an ethical nature, that value common activities of academia, sport, the arts and community service, family values and behavioural norms as would be expected of a mature society. Compromising these values would in turn compromise their Special Character being seen as inconsistencies and character deficiencies. The unique aspects of the value systems in these Special Character schools are the foundational biblical beliefs that foundationalise Special Character itself. Emanating from these beliefs is the existential aspect of Christian living which is based on a relationship with God which in turn conditionalises all other relationships, flawed though they may be through their ‘fallen’ humanity. There is a variation in these schools as to where the greater value lies – some that are more cerebral who focus on propositional truth while others have a greater focus on the experiential. Consequently, the place of prayer is valued above most. They value the absolutists’ view of truth and so treat the Bible as their source of spiritual nourishment, as a source of guidance, as a guide to ethical values, and a source of hope come life or death. These values are taught by example, modelled and articulated by staff. All things biblical are valued – including Israel, the land of the book.
In short, God, the Bible, prayer and worship are treasured – there is a very deep commitment to these values as they impact all other aspects of life and learning. Without these values, there is no evangelical Special Character. With them, there is some hope of preserving Special Character – the focus of the next chapter of this thesis. For these values they will fight for and sacrifice. Out of these core values comes a particular approach to curriculum, to relationships, to judgement, to upskilling, to pedagogy, to behaviour management with the associated issues of faith, moral purity, hope and purpose for living which transcends the here and now. Education is not just academic learning: it is for transforming the student into a humble God-honouring, God-loving learner. That is the whole purpose of Special Character schooling in these institutions.
CHAPTER SEVEN: PRESERVING SPECIAL CHARACTER

Introduction

Preserving *Special Character* is an obligation to the state, an expectation of the parents, the responsibility of the proprietors, the task of the school staff, and for the ongoing spiritual welfare of the students. First, *Special Character* preservation is a priority for any Christian school. Each school’s purpose is enshrined in the *Special Character* statement formalised at the time of integration. Secondly, without *Special Character* being preserved, it has no further raison d’être outside of the state system. Thirdly, it is incumbent upon proprietors who have contracted with government on the basis of their school having a well-defined *Special Character* to ensure that *Special Character* is preserved and maintained.

Because these evangelical Christian schools are anxious to preserve their *Special Character*, they are, accordingly, the more alert to the comments concerning the preservation of *Special Character*. One Christian school, not in this research group of schools, picked up comments from the Association of Christian Schools International to underscore the need of a clear Mission Statement for the preservation of *Special Character*. This association:

surveyed successful Christian schools in North America, … one of the seven common characteristics they found among these schools was the formulation and articulation of a clear Mission Statement, … clearly identifying the objectives of the school. The Statement was not only published and distributed to School Board Members, Staff, Parents and Students but it was talked about on a regular basis. The school mission became the principal goal of the school and everybody knew what it was and sought to see it implemented in every area of the school at all times. (Hebron Christian College Newsletter No.14, 2010)

The *Special Character* of any Christian organisation can soon diminish in the course of years as this example from American history illustrates: For the first five hundred years of American history, according to LaHaye & Noebel (2000) “every college begun in the country was founded by a church, denomination or religious group” (p. 101) and the first 150 colleges were all started by Christians. For over 250 years the primary teacher-training centres were Harvard, Princeton and Yale whose original purpose was, in each case, to prepare ministers and missionaries, the training of teachers being the natural outgrowth of that vision. These teacher colleges reflected the biblical moral values of their respective colleges. Over time, these teachers’ colleges became secularised (Appleyard, 1996; Marsden, 1997). Even by 1716, after 80 years, Harvard’s commitment to the puritan and

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55 In Harvard’s original Rules and Precepts:

Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well, the maine end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottome, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. And seeing the Lord only giveth wisedome, let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seeke it of him (Proverbs 2:3). (Rules and Precepts at Harvard in 1646, 2012, n.p.)
reformed tradition was suspect, according to the father of Jonathan Edwards, America’s foremost protestant evangelical theologian (Mitchell, 1992). The father would have sent his son to Harvard, his alma mater, but decided on Yale as Yale’s charter referred to “public spiritual persons … upholding the Christian protestant religion … learned and orthodox men” (Nichols, 2001, p. 33), whereas he considered that Harvard had moved from its original God-centred vision. The loss of their evangelical commitment and the factors involved were carefully researched by Burtschaell (1998) and Marsden (1994).

The commitment to prevent the loss of their *Special Character* and preserve such *Special Character* values was highlighted by P36, a Board Member, who said:

> We have … been liaising with some of the original founders of the school, together with those currently responsible for running the school, over the continuing development and review of [our] *Special Character*. It is always encouraging to see a wide range of people being consulted over the development of such documents to ensure they remain relevant and reflect the unique character of our school.

However, not all of the participants were clear about how to preserve *Special Character*, some indicated that this might not be possible. Indeed P1 questioned whether “in fifty year’s time … when the founding fathers are dead and gone and you have passed it on down through the hands of multiple groups” you could be sure of maintaining and sustaining the *Special Character*.

Another proprietor (P49), equally concerned about the preservation of *Special Character*, perceived therein a divine as well as the human factor. Like the practical Calvinist that prays over his efforts as though it all depended on God, but works as though it all depended on his skills and excellence, so this participant says concerning preservation “it is 100% man and 100% God”. He said you can do all your paper work and training to perfection, “but ultimately you have got to trust God as well. You have to depend upon His voice and depend upon His grace as it says in John 15[:5] – ‘without Me, you can do nothing’. Therein lies the challenge”.

There were almost one hundred different comments from 47 of the participants (76%) who commented on how *Special Character* is to be maintained or how *Special Character* can lose traction in the school. This aspect was not discussed with the fifteen others because of the time factor. The comments were divided into four sections each subdivided as in Figure 7.1, These will be discussed in turn.
STAFF ISSUES IN PRESERVING SPECIAL CHARACTER

In this section, attention will be drawn to the participants’ view that it is imperative to appoint the right staff to a Special Character school. This is so because they carry the living and teaching of Christianly concepts into the classroom such that there is a consistent message that expresses a unity (rather than uniformity) not only of school aspirations but of home and church (Astley & Day, 1992; Woods, 2006). This notion is further developed with reference to the particular activities of staff that reflect Special Character and the professional development that supports them in their Special Character focus.

Staff Appointments

There were more comments concerning staff appointments than on any other factor in the Preservation of Special Character discussion. To quote a principal, P29: “The biggest threat [to Special Character] would be lack of capable, gifted, talented, skilled, professional staff”. That will determine whether the direction of the school stays on track, they suggested. It was considered that one of the main functions of the staff was to preserve Special Character (P54) because staff are the ones forming relationships with the students – the students’ first contact, and forming friendships that sometimes last well beyond their school years. Hence the teacher’s committed personal ‘walk with God’ was considered to be vital. The interview process at the time of appointment needed to be such that it would distinguish where people were coming from (P18). Dr Parker Palmer (1997) expressed
it as: “we teach who we are” (p. 14). All staff needed to be committed Christian believers (Ps 18, 36, 42, 54, 67).

While some Board members attributed the preservation of *Special Character* to staff, others such as P24 suggested that the preservation of the *Special Character* lay more in the hands of the Board who appoint staff, rather than the staff themselves. The most important decision a school Board can make is the appointment of its principal as it is the principal’s judgment in most cases, which determines what other appointments are made. In turn it would seem that the participants considered that the most important decisions that a principal can make is the appointment of staff, as they are “crucial elements in the organisation’s future” (de Pree, 1992, p. 30).

In order to secure the appropriate staff for *Special Character* delivery, the schools in this study are permitted under the Act and in their ‘Agreement’ with government, to reserve staff positions for teachers who are committed to, and will uphold the protestant evangelical faith, in belief and practice (P10). “All the staff must support and subscribe to the *Special Character* of the school. We only employ Christian teachers”, said Board member, P67. Staff “are the guardians, the holders and the imparters of *Special Character*. … You cannot appoint solely on competency” (P1).

For some, appointing the right staff included appointing those with multi-perspectives on the faith. All schools surveyed were drawing personnel from a wide variety of denominations. However, the staff must have a passion, not just for Christ, but also a passion for the students to communicate through their very lives, their passion for Christ. Staff had to have their own personal encounter with Christ, be thinkers, relational persons and learners (P10). And while all would-be staff may not have all those qualities according to principal P10 they would still be considered for employment if it was believed they were teachable in the nuances of evangelical *Special Character*. It was suggested by the researcher that professional development training around *Special Character* could be seen as a form of indoctrination, but P25 answered that challenge by saying: “No. For some, it is new. For some it is challenging. Not all staff, it is fair to say (and that is not my goal) will agree with everything we present, which is good. We have good discussions and good debates”.

Appointing appropriate staff was also a concern of parents. According to P34, parents put their children into such a school believing they will be taught and influenced by committed Christian believers, and stressed how important it was for schools to be able to discriminate in their selection of staff. While it is illegal in New Zealand to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation, it is not illegal for *Special Character* schools to discriminate on the grounds of commitment to its *Special
Character (see Chapter 3). For this participant, the belief was that in their school, appointments of ‘totally unsuitable’ people had been made “and over the years they’ve had to [leave eventually]”.

It was not sufficient to simply appoint the right staff. Staff tensions arising from working conditions, differences in theology and philosophical approaches to discipline and the demands of the proprietor, and others, also contributed to loss of traction (P34) and this will be mentioned again under ‘Tensions’ (Chapter 8). Participant 58 drew attention to the need for all relief (substitute) teachers to also be committed to the Special Character and thus help ‘close the gap’ between what is articulated and what is practised regarding Special Character, and P9 believed that staff who are appointed need to come to the school with a sense of ‘calling’ as only such will meet the Special Character in all its aspects.

Not only were there clear-cut statements on only employing committed believers, but there was also the affirmation that their schools should not be employing non-believers. The staffing situation becomes critical when there are no Christian applicants for a ‘hard-to-fill’ vacancy. Participant 31 was still adamant that to renego here is to create a blockage for Special Character and P55 strongly believed that even a core group of teachers who subscribed to Special Character was not sufficient. This was particularly true of one school where, according to P17, the students themselves made formal complaint that a reliever was teaching contrary to the Special Character of the school. “You cannot deliver it to its fullest extent. You can’t teach the theory [of Special Character] without the experience. For example, how can a non-Christian pray with a student? How can they give Christian support and guidance?” (P67). When a reliever states that “all religions are equal and it doesn’t matter who you pray to” (P17) you are bound to get “a backlash” as happened. According to P42, without Christian teachers, your Special Character would be lost, and the function of the school would change.

There needed to be ongoing ‘buy-in’ by staff if Special Character was to be sustained and ongoing driving of it (P15); a case of enhance it or lose it. Dr Val Hollard (February 22, 2011), former psychology lecturer, comments that: “Biblical illiteracy is the main reason why apostacy is spreading so rapidly in the church today” and so much is biblical understandings deemed important to Special Character that one of the schools set in place a series of Bible lectures for the staff, three years in a row to strengthen Bible knowledge per se in staff. It was expected by P3 that school leaders, particularly, must model the Christian faith in such a way that their lives are ‘an open book’ – transparent, and in common language, ‘squeaky clean’. Weaknesses at the top are more impacting than weaknesses in other staff.
In summary, staff appointments are the school’s most important decisions, all positions being tagged positions. This is a Board’s responsibility. They are expected to discern the necessary passion in potential staff for Special Character schooling. The kind of staff provided is a concern of the parents. Inter-staff relationships also have a bearing on the preserving of Special Character. Non-Christian believers are deemed unsuitable even for hard to fill vacancies. A strong sense of calling, of commitment, of consistency in Christian life-style is what is deemed necessary from staff to preserve Special Character.

Character of the Staff

One aspect where staff are deemed to be crucial is the relationships they develop (P10). Building of strong relationships was vital not only between staff and students but also between staff and with other stakeholders, such as “within the community and within the church … it is about relationships, not rules” (P46). Another aspect suggested by P14 is the relationship to God that must be maintained. “You just can’t say ‘I’m a Christian’ and never read the Bible or pray or attend church and worship God … if you don’t then it [Special Character] would become dull and blunt”.

As well as being relationship-builders these people prayed. The maintenance of an established prayer-life of the teaching staff and others who work in the school was considered essential for Special Character to be preserved. This was seen as being of particular importance for the Senior Management Team by P10 who sensed that they are ‘sent’ the right people “because we are praying for it”. Participant 49 emphasised the need for prayer concerning the principal, for wise judgement, for if there is moral compromise in the principal or the administration as there had been in more than one of these six schools over the course of their histories, then Special Character is compromised. It is at such times of moral failure in a school, P49 suggested, that there is a far greater prayer dependency on God, for the preservation of Special Character. “There needs to be moral purity with personnel involved if credibility and public confidence in the Special Character is to be maintained”, said P52. Loss of moral purity carried an obvious loss of traction, according to P22, in the school’s Special Character. It had scandalised one school, according to P46. As P10 commented, it took years to build back public trust, but they had succeeded. (See additional comments in Tensions chapter.)

There also needs to be strong individual staff commitment to the Special Character according to P2, but P4 pointed out “there is a huge variance in people’s individual walk with God”. That variance can impact on the classroom. Thus P4 concedes that while you will always have an imperfect system, the aim is still not to lose traction. And so the role of the teacher is “absolutely huge … kids are very quick to pick up ‘is your Christianity real or is it a tack-on?’” (P4). This is exactly where P2 sees “the rot will more likely set in – from the inside, not the outside”. Staff needed to be “committed to
that … being absolutely resolute in not compromising that at all – including our support staff” (P2). Without that the teacher is, potentially, a bottleneck that blocks *Special Character* (P31).

Participant 7 commented:

> In this school it is narrowing all the time, because we are promoting this ontological understanding of who we are and not just what we do as what matters. In theory, we can sit in lectures and seminars forever and a day but unless that changes who we are, unless we allow the Spirit of God to work in us, change us, shape us, develop us, the theory means nothing.

In more than one of the schools in the study, this kind of deep commitment was well illustrated by staff working for years on half a normal teachers’ salary until integration took place, though such a material commitment does not of itself guarantee moral commitment.

A lack of focus on *Special Character* may lead to loss of traction concerning *Special Character*. It was pointed out by P46 that with integration came all the compliance issues that were seen to be a burden in most schools, including Christian schools. As P46 noted, “Compliance … is not just your workload; it shapes your thinking in the sense of what is important”. School administrators “feel very much they need to meet [compliance] requirements and it is easy for that to dominate their thinking, rather than the vision and heart of the school” (P54).

Who the staff are as people has been seen to have a strong bearing on preserving *Special Character*. In their student-teacher relationships, in their prayer-life, in their *Special Character* focus, *Special Character* is preserved. Similarly it loses traction through compromise, through compliance issues that threaten focus and through the confusion in students resulting from inconsistencies in the staff.

**What Staff Do to Preserve Special Character**

The implications above are that staff will model *Special Character*. Participant 22 suggests “every teacher should be born again and a person living their faith from a well-defined Bible attitude”. As a founder of one school, P22 claimed that “we have the right to [dismiss] a teacher … if he’s of the wrong calibre or … not portraying the standard that we require”. More than one school “had a Director of *Special Character*, (a teacher)” (P36) to enable and emphasise *Special Character* and thus limit loss of traction.

What staff do in relation to *Special Character* has considerable bearing on its preservation. Staff will model *Special Character*; they will manage *Special Character*, as some schools do with a Director of *Special Character*; they will guard their motivation for *Special Character* be it for ministry or financial gain; and they will minister *Special Character* accordingly. However, in order for the suitably appointed staff who are in good relationships within the school to function best with respect
What is Done for Staff to Preserve Special Character

According to P10 and P4 there needs to be formal Professional Development in Special Character issues. The former, a school principal, considered a good induction programme for new staff was needed if Special Character was to be preserved. He suggested both informal and formal professional development was desirable with programmes including visiting speakers and attendance at New Zealand Association of Christian Schools conferences which have a strong emphasis on training in Special Character (NZACS, 2011). Participant 4 considered their staff development included “keeping Special Character before the teachers … supporting … helping them … resourcing … addressing what needs to be addressed”. This participant was aware that a more formal “staff development programme in Special Character … needs attention”. Participant 29 acknowledged that as a staff they should be upskilling and training staff in the outworking and understanding of Special Character. It was considered that training, advice and guidance should be facilitated by senior management.

It was considered by P31 that professional development and appropriate induction in Special Character was imperative; that if there were not such an involvement, “potentially there is an opportunity for that traction to be lost within that department”. Referring to a lecture given at Bethlehem Training Institute (for teacher training) by David Giles, the then senior dean, P25 said: “If there is no ongoing effort to train staff in thinking and functioning Christianly, a Christian school will become a religious school within ten years”. While it is conceded that staff have a strong influence on preserving the Special Character, there are others who also have a corresponding influence.

INFLUENCE OF MANAGEMENT

This second section that deals with Preserving Special Character concerns aspects of management. When a private school integrates with the state, it does so on the conditions that there is a Board of Trustees set up to whom the principal is accountable and which is answerable to the state for the good management of the finances and for the carrying out of the school curriculum in the context of the State’s National Educational and Administrative Guidelines (New Zealand Government, 2007). On this Board there must be up to five elected representatives of parents of the school. Also there can be representatives of the proprietors (the owners of the school), their permissible number being one less than the number of parent representatives. There must also be a staff representative and in the case of schools with a secondary department, a student representative. This section can be divided
into four aspects of management, management by government, by proprietors, by the Board and by the management team. Each will be discussed in turn.

Management by Government

One school mentioned the considerable debate over a number of years that was associated with the decision to integrate – debate around the perceived threat of going into partnership (as it was perceived to be) with the secular state, and how that would impact the Christian character (P2). Half the schools studied made the point that *Special Character* could be threatened by the possibility of government reneging on the Integration Act (P29). Participants did not rate government’s participation highly, for example, P17 considered that “… we should help them do it in the right way … we should demonstrate that there is a better model”. A school founder, says:

> My confidence in government was, and still is, extremely low and I have had a sense that possibly there will come a day when this whole edifice [the integrated school – a multi-million dollar complex] will be taken over just like that. (P24)

However, with the investment of many millions of dollars in property by the proprietors of such schools, the government will no doubt be reluctant in the current climate to interfere with a structure that is working for them as “supported across party political lines” (Lynch, 2000, p. 99). It not only saves government capital/costs, insurance responsibility, but also satisfies the options for private school funding. It also works for a particular interest group in a democratic society, giving middle class families access to faith-based education.

Participant 22 raised the possibility of the government attempting to amalgamate an evangelical Christian school with a state school, thus possibly sharing facilities. Participant 22 felt this was fine, but considered that, should government attempt this, the *Special Character* of evangelical Christian schooling would be compromised. This was reiterated by P5 as well.

Proprietors’ Management in Preserving *Special Character*

The responsibility for the formulation and the preservation of the *Special Character* is, ultimately, the responsibility of the proprietors (P5, P10, P36). They are the gatekeepers of *Special Character* (New Zealand Government, 1975, S3(3)a) and it is their main task – to preserve it through their strategic planning (P36). However, *Special Character* would soon be lost when proprietors “don’t know what they’re supposed to be doing” (P52). This participant believed that proprietors need training in how to ensure *Special Character* is maintained, especially as part of their role was to be on the employment committee of the Board of Trustees when hiring a principal. Participant 67 felt that “proprietors [who protect *Special Character*] should be anxious to ensure that there are good candidates for principal put forward for the Board’s consideration, candidates that demonstrate in
their demeanour and association that they, too, have a similar commitment”. He suggested from
his experience of his predecessor, that “the most vulnerable area of slippage is through the
proprietors”.

It has been claimed that “there is no formal assessment of the Special Character of all integrated
schools and disregard for the founding Special Character could go unnoticed” (Casinader, 2006,
n.p.). One avenue the proprietors are increasingly using to preserve Special Character is to have an
independent group from within the evangelical school movement to come in and carry out a Special
Character audit (P22). These have taken place in three of the six schools studied, and in other
associated Christian schools (P42). This practice pertains in the Catholic community of schools as it
does in the SDA schools. The audits, it is hoped, give a clear picture on the delivery and
effectiveness of that delivery of Special Character (P10). The questions in the audit are very similar
to those asked in the interviews associated with this research. A summary of one audit template is in
Appendix 4. There are also ongoing reviews in some schools whereby the Board interviews, twice a
year in some cases, “all the teaching staff and most of the support staff with respect to Special
Character” (P10).

A proprietor made reference to his school’s statement of faith that had been modified to
accommodate a more inclusive sentiment towards the wider ‘Body of Christ’ even though it
“watered down” the original vision of the sponsoring church (P52). The point was made concerning
preserving the Special Character by means of a clear statement of faith – that is, of its doctrinal
position (P52). The need for statements of belief to be clear was reiterated by P2, to preserve Special
Character.

In the schools that are sponsored by churches, there is the inevitable conflict over management, the
Board of Trustees being the legal governing body and the proprietors being the legal owners. The
proprietors may feel they have a moral right of say as to what direction the school should take, for
example, and the proprietor can hold back funding for expansion. For the preservation of Special
Character, it is of great importance as to who represents the proprietors on the Board of Trustees,
and what authority they have.

In summary, participants have indicated that perhaps the greatest responsibility for the preserving of
a school’s Special Character lies with the proprietors: they are responsible for strategic planning of
Special Character as the gate-keepers of it; they are responsible for the slippage that results from
perceived poor proprietor-understanding of Special Character; they have a surveillance role that
guards against moral scandals that have threatened Special Character in the past; they have the
power to carry out *Special Character* audits; they formulate the Statement of Faith that is inclusive of stakeholders, parents and staff; and they have, potentially, a stronghold over the school in that they can withhold property development funds. Much of their influence is wielded through the Board of Trustees, which will now be considered.

**Board of Trustees’ Preserving of *Special Character***

It is the participants’ view that the Board of Trustees also has a critical role to play in the preservation of *Special Character*. Although only one Board member debated the need to preserve *Special Character*, there was consensus that the very appointment of trustees was itself crucial to the preservation of the school’s character (P24). Participant 14 was concerned that the people at the top, meaning the Board of Trustees (and Senior Management Team), should be deeply committed to the *Special Character*. “Boards will need to consider how they foster that *Special Character* through the learning programmes and ethos of their schools” (Ministry of Education, 2012, n.p.). Participant 26 had a unique take on where the responsibility lies for *Special Character* suggesting it is with the Board as they are the controlling authority with the principal answerable to the Board, not the proprietors. The Board is answerable to the state, not to the proprietors. Therefore, if the proprietors believe the *Special Character* is not functioning in the school as it should, meaning the Board is not ensuring the principal is carrying out his *Special Character* functions as he should, the proprietor has then got an issue with the Crown, should he want the government, under the current legislation to put in a commissioner as a replacement of the Board. So when teachers or principals act outside of the *Special Character*, it is an employment issue and therefore a Board responsibility.

“[It is by] who we put into governance … [that] the rot can set in” (P2). Choice of personnel at Board level can only be “on the basis of what our philosophy is” (P2). The Board, P58 felt, can also establish, along with the principal, the biblical culture in the school. Participant 62 talked about the current ecclesiastical (church) culture as becoming increasingly shallow and lacking absolutes. If those kinds of ‘shallow’ trustees become involved in Board work, it was claimed, there would be a deficiency and *Special Character* could lose traction.

However, there was some debate in Board member P64’s mind as to whose role it was to preserve *Special Character*. This participant felt the school documents relating to this were far too wordy. The documents referenced Scriptures that P64 felt were not clear on contemporary issues, especially controversial issues. The more appropriate question, according to this participant, would have been concerning the role of the Board in interpreting *Special Character* in the changing world, which was, he felt, a greater challenge than finding a way to preserve *Special Character* as it is. However, according to the Integration Act, that is the role of proprietors. For *Special Character* to be
preserved, P64 made the point that it must be “operationalised … it actually becomes a living part of what is happening at the school” – a principal’s responsibility. Whilst evangelicalism embraces both exclusive (‘in Christ alone’, ‘by faith alone’), and absolutist concepts (espousing of biblical rights and wrongs) it thus engenders a narrower understanding of the faith than for those outside evangelicalism. Participant 64 was an advocate for keeping the Christian understandings “sufficiently broad” lest it “become just cultish”. Participant 58 talked of a very legalistic Board in a previous school with a literalistic approach to biblical interpretation. This underscored for P58 the need for a great measure of balance between truth rigorously taught and grace compassionately applied, considering that such augurs well for a healthy Special Character (P58).

It was not enough for Board of Trustees members to know their role, their authority and their limitations, they must also be clear on the things they can do in preserving Special Character. Participant 36 pointed out that in their school (as in another) there was, on the Board, a member whose portfolio was to oversee Special Character. That person heads up a team whose function/mission is to preserve Special Character and this has given their Board a much greater Special Character focus. There is a need for systems to be in place (P26) to preserve Special Character as in the Governance Manual, where new recruits to the Board are encouraged to have a good understanding of the Integration Act. In this way they will know what is expected of the management team.

To satisfy proprietor expectations on Special Character, it was considered by P17 that the Board needed to critique the curriculum offered, note the material that students will be exposed to as to its compatibility with Special Character aspirations, and thus by satisfying themselves that it is compatible, ensure the preservation of Special Character. As P34 stated, their Board particularly looked for the Special Character component in their Board reports on Curriculum. Special Character, according to P52, needed to have a Bible-based curriculum, being aware that the state curriculum, on its own, was not perceived as carrying the Special Character. It is also crucial to the preservation of Special Character that the Board, who make their most important decision in the appointment of a principal, are themselves of the judgment that will select Special Character orientated candidates. If these are “not holding up Special Character then they might as well forget about it”. Participant 14 would not even think of having a non-Christian secretary in the office, a BOT ratified appointment.

One of the primary functions of the Board in preserving Special Character is to conduct an annual self-review in this area, as Boards are required to do in other areas as per compliance requirements of

56 John 1:17
government (P67, P17). This enables staff to make judgments as to the effectiveness of *Special Character* emphases coming through the curriculum and the context of the teaching programme.

One school’s yearbook indicated that their Board had:

> been liaising with some of the original founders of the school together with those currently responsible for running the school, over the continuing development and review of … *Special Character* … to ensure they [their documents] remain relevant and reflect the unique character of our school.

The Board will also look at any ideas on improving *Special Character* delivery, but then go to the proprietors, and check “is this still in line with what you want done?” (P67). This has an added advantage of ensuring the continuing monitoring by the proprietors. In this sense the appointment of the Board Chairman is also crucial to the preservation of *Special Character* (P10) because that role incorporates liaising with proprietors, which necessitates building good relations. The significance of this relationship was noted by P10 who recognised a noticeable change from one Board Chair to another.

Communicating the demands of *Special Character* to all stakeholders, including the proprietors, is very much part of its preservation and a responsibility primarily of the Board and its principal (P46, P12). “In Christian schools, the most critical thing is communication … Anything that hinders open, clear communication becomes an obstacle and detracts from your *Special Character*” (P46). To P12, it represented a huge responsibility in a school “to make sure that the parent community, the student body are all aware of what it means to be part of the [school] community”. It is also the Board’s responsibility to ‘sell’ the school to the Christian and non-Christian public. Participant 49 saw *Special Character* as the school’s branding – “If you lose that [Special Character] you lose, almost, your brand. They don’t want to just become a respectable school”. It is an unwritten brand, something you can know is there but you cannot see it. Participant 49 was aware that there will always be a gap between the perceived *Special Character* as articulated and the reality of it in practice; and that it was important for the preservation of *Special Character* to be aware of that.

Just as there was a felt need for staff competence, biblically, so it was expected that trustees counter any shallowness of their own understandings concerning *Special Character*. Commitment to the evangelical position was deemed a necessary BOT understanding to ensure all academic and support staff appointees were Christian believers. The BOT were seen to establish culture in the school – avoiding legalism and biblical literalism that detracts from *Special Character*. It is their task to communicate *Special Character* as the school’s special brand, to confirm the critical appointment of principal, to conduct *Special Character* self-reviews, to be the controlling authority of *Special Character*, to critique the curriculum in terms of *Special Character* and to continuously monitor it in
their Board meetings. This is their role in preserving Special Character. It is through their functioning thus, that the management team are enabled to preserve Special Character on a day-to-day basis.

**Senior Management Team’s Preserving of Special Character**

Preserving Special Character is not simply the responsibility of proprietors and Board. It is very dependent on the management within the school itself. The Senior Management Team (SMT) headed up by the principal, has the responsibility of the day-to-day running of the school. Its composition varies from school to school but generally includes the heads of the various sections of the school – principal(s), deputy principal(s), heads of primary, middle and secondary, for example. Management is not only people but also processes and systems and includes strategic planning, carried out primarily by the SMT and endorsed by their Board. Teacher-P54 was concerned that those in the SMT recognise that they are key to preserving Special Character. One principal (P29) put it,

> I am the facilitator or guardian of Special Character … [whose] job is to be setting it before our staff and our Board and approach all forms of planning based on ‘how will that enhance or detract from our Special Character?’

Hence the particular need for the principal to be acknowledged as a key person. Another principal (P12) said:

> In my role, it is the one essential thing that you have to do above all else. It doesn’t matter how good you can do your job in other areas, you do have the responsibility to preserve it [Special Character] and that often means some very hard talks at Board level when you think people are going off track … and you have to fight for those things … that is what you were put in the job for and is … in my job description.

Unless the principal is driving Special Character philosophy in the school, it won’t be there. “I absolutely believe the principal IS the key person” (P10). One of the Board members suggested that the school tended to reflect the strengths and enthusiasm of the principal, and saw this as enabling a stronger influence in the preservation of Special Character than that possible by the church or proprietor (P34). Similarly, P4, a teacher, put that influence “right at the top”, arguing that if a principal was slack, that would likewise filter down. The principal’s task is to get the right mix of people on the staff, according to P20, as you can lose Special Character with the wrong mix on staff or board. Preserving Special Character has a lot to do with selecting the right people for “if it loses its sharp edge, it loses its integrity” (P8). One very important task of the principal relates to enrolment of students. A central concept of Special Character schooling is to preserve a continuum of values, beliefs and understandings between church, home and school. So there is a sense in which Special Character starts in the home. It is during enrolment that the continuum is assessed for Special Character compatibility (P1). The need to take care during enrolment was stressed by P2.
Strategic planning as an SMT responsibility, plays a part in the preservation of *Special Character* (P36) where at every strategic planning meeting *Special Character* preservation is revisited, with consideration given as to how it will look in the future (P36). It has to be driven by someone, says P3, or “the *Special Character* loses its specialness”. Elsewhere, P49 reminds us that without clear defining statements in your strategic plan, you are vulnerable to losing your *Special Character* and being swallowed up by the system – and “that would be a betrayal of what the school is all about” (P49).

The SMT is also responsible for ensuring the curriculum is covered in a *Special Character* context. In many of these New Zealand evangelical Christian schools, the Interact Curriculum is followed in the Years 0 to 10 of the school (Integrated Education, 2012). This is specially written to cover the New Zealand curriculum requirements but with aspects of *Special Character* built into it. Participant 41 lamented the fact that the upper secondary area of the school did not have such a framework on which to hang their curriculum with respect to *Special Character* and acknowledged there is work to be done in this regard in order to preserve *Special Character*. The sovereignty of God, the centrality of Christ, the relational aspects of knowing God, pervades the Interact curriculum. Teachers at upper secondary level are expected to work these values and theological understandings into the state curriculum for their individual disciplines (subjects). This presents challenges and a potential weak-spot concerning the preserving of *Special Character*.

While P49 considered the preservation of *Special Character* was primarily the role of the principal, he conceded that “it is really by the grace of God that *Special Character* remains in the school” mindful as he was of human weakness and the school’s vulnerability to that weakness. It was perceived that, primarily, it is imperative that the principal drive the *Special Character* ethos. It is his/her role to guard its preservation even through the enrolment processes; in the strategic planning within the school along with the SMT; ensuring definitive statements that eliminate ambiguity; in the curriculum statements, particularly those of the secondary school area, and always being mindful of a dependency on the grace of God at work. But there are others who must also contribute to its preservation – church, parents, students and the Christian community. This is addressed next.

**SPECIAL CHARACTER RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTED TO OTHERS**

The preservation of *Special Character* is not simply the preserve of staff or the management, be they proprietors, Board of Trustees or principal and his/her senior management team. There are others whose lives and thinking have an impact on a school’s *Special Character*, such as the local church or churches, the families of the students in the school, the students themselves and the community at large.
Role of the Church in Preserving Special Character

In three of the six schools studied, the school was, in a sense, an arm of the church. Personnel within those churches understandably believed that the school’s Special Character was better served, and its evangelical roots better preserved by being so aligned (P26). The churches in each case were aware of the schools’ founders and “it was important to remain true to the principles and philosophy established by its founder” (P26). There was a very strong ‘sense of call’ in the founders to establish each of these schools and that was reflected in the strength of connection evident in the proprietors’ defence of its Special Character. In contrast, the principals of the three schools not aligned to a church were adamant that they should not be. (See extended comment in the ‘Tensions’ Chapter 8.)

To each church proprietor Special Character was more the ‘end’ than the ‘means’. “The nature of the church would have been reproduced in the school” (P22). The vision for the school and the vision for the church were considered to be all part of the same one vision. There is a fine line between the separation of church and school and the oneness of church and school. There is the temptation to treat school as if it were another church, which it is not, especially when each of these schools draw the greater part of their enrolments from families from other churches. However, P10 considered that by partnering with the churches, they are more likely to preserve their Special Character.

Role of Families

Whether it is a church-school or a non-church school, Special Character can weaken when families of the school come adrift. The school is dependent upon its Special Character being upheld in the home (P38). When the school parents walk away from God, there is inevitable weakening of the school’s Special Character (P32). Just as teachers can kill it, so “the community can kill it if they are part of the school … they make it or break it” (P32). Fortunately for the schools, there are those parents who readily acknowledge that “the teachers can only ever build on what is already happening at home,” (P3) and so accept that as their own responsibility.

Role of Students

If parents can adversely affect Special Character, the effect is generally through the students whose lives may have been destabilised or their focus inhibited. “Students help maintain it”, P47 says. Having students themselves that go off course, can all contribute to failure of Special Character preservation. If you believe, as P15 does, that Special Character is in the children as well, then, according to this participant, “The children have got to get to a point where they take ownership themselves … Everybody’s personal relationship with the Lord comes into that” (P15).
But not every student has that home-backing to begin with. Prior to integrating, some of these schools had a higher percentage of non-preference students. P58 expressed it as the:

- school was well known for … accepting all those kids that have been kicked out of [the local state high school] that could find nowhere else to go … it was creating a mess, and parents were really unhappy … they should have just limited who they accepted.

Such an imbalance detracts from the *Special Character* impact. It was felt by P58, that under Integration, although the percentage of non-preference students was low (5% or 10% is the usual figure), the possibility was still there for *Special Character* to be adversely affected by injudicious enrolment. Participant 3 had similar thoughts – that too great a percentage of non-preference students could create a loss in *Special Character* impact.

Much depends on how ‘non-preference’ and ‘preference’ is defined and interpreted by the school administration. If ‘preference’ refers to parents being committed to the evangelical faith, does that mean the children are? Does that mean they go to church? Does that mean they subscribe to the particular slant the enrolling school gives to ‘being evangelical’? Not all the students in pentecostal schools come from pentecostal homes, for example.

**Role of Community in Preserving Special Character**

As well as church, family and students impacting *Special Character*, so does the local community have the potential to impact positively or adversely. The question, “How does the community influence the *Special Character*?” generated differing responses, according to the perspective adopted. “I would hope they don’t” said P42, “otherwise if we have a *Special Character* that is determined by the will of the people, we come down to the lowest common denominator … we’re all capable of self-interest, including the Board of Proprietors”. Participant 42’s way of guarding against sectional interest in the community was by saying:

> The direction needs to be set. …each year, we say: “This is who we are; if you don’t like it, leave, because don’t try and change us. This is a Christ run school, and yes, there is homework and so on and these are the non-negotiables, so don’t try and mess with them”. (P42)

It was of interest to note that when participants pointed to those who were key people in the preserving of *Special Character* (see Table 7.1 below) many took ownership themselves. Parents considered it rested with them. Board members considered it rested with them. For principals, it rested with them. (Founders are no longer involved.) In two groups they did not appear to take ownership to the same extent. Is this where a weakness lies? Only one of the four proprietors making comment said it rested with them – and that is ‘where the buck stops’. Only one of the five commenting staff articulated that it rested with them – and they are daily on the front line of its delivery.
Key: Those ticked were those the participants considered were key people in preserving Special Character.

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Table 7.1: Perceptions of the Key Impactors for Preserving Special Character
Special Character was seen to be facilitated by parents whose influence transfers to the school’s Special Character via the students, their sons and daughters who, hopefully, will take ownership of it, hence the necessity to guard jealously the preference/non-preference ratio (9:1 or 19:1). Lack of clarity arises in the variety of ways ‘evangelical’ is interpreted: this has a bearing on that ratio. Lack of clarity also arises in the variety of ways ‘community’ is interpreted and this determined whether it was considered an influence on the school’s Special Character. The church community inevitably has a positive impact on the church-going clientele of these schools. Analysis of where the major influence for the preservation of Special Character is given in Table 7.1 below, as derived from the data.

PRINCIPLES RELATED TO PRESERVING SPECIAL CHARACTER
Special Character is not merely impacted by people but also by the decisions that people make, by the systems they work within, by the attitudes they adopt, by the integrity they function with and by the emphasis they give it. These impacts need to be observable, able to be recognised and given recognition. To preserve Special Character it needs to be given recognition; it needs to be enhanced, maintained and protected against its being derailed.

How Special Character is Given Recognition
If Special Character is not going to be lost it must be given public recognition in the activities and traditions of the school (P67), that is, “recognition of Christian citizenship” and other such awards given at their prize-giving, highlighting character awards in particular, which she alluded to. Because of this identity, P67 felt “it could not be a subset of a state school … to combine them would be to show no understanding of the Special Character”.

Ultimately, Special Character is recognised and identified “by its fruits”, 57 says P42. He agreed that thus far the evidence is only anecdotal and that Special Character schooling needs a longitudinal study to ascertain the real results of Special Character.

How Special Character is Enhanced
Integrated schools “are going to have to get stronger in terms of what they stand for, because if their Special Character is not clear and not demonstrable, then they have no reason to exist” (Casinader, 2006, n.p.). For Special Character to survive, it is not enough simply to give recognition to what you have. Special Character needs to be continuously enhanced. If Special Character is to be preserved and enhanced staff must needs be vigilant in weeding out that which runs counter to the Special Character (P58). Special Character is enhanced by understanding it, says P26, a proprietor. This

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57 Matthew 7:20 (NIV) – “By their fruits ye shall know them”.
The proprietor was particularly concerned with the fact that so many of the staff were state-trained and thus had a diminished understanding of *Special Character* than did those trained in Christian tertiary colleges. The state system was perceived by him to be embedded “in teaching secular humanism” – a philosophical perspective at odds with the *Special Character* perspective of NZPIES.

**How *Special Character* is Maintained**

*Special Character* is maintained essentially by vigilance according to thirteen of the participants. This was the most common comment the participants made regarding the preservation of *Special Character*. It is the *Special Character* that “well and truly sets us apart from the state”, according to P5, “and we are continually having to make sure that we are”. There is a need for vigilance in setting the *Special Character* ideas tightly enough as to how teachers work and what they say in assemblies (P35). There is need for vigilance in the transfer from one principal to the next. Vigilance is required with respect to prayer and devotion times (P9), to foundational values and unity of vision (P63), to address creeping apathy and boredom with respect to *Special Character* (P27), to bring light in increasing darkness (P49), to continuous monitoring of *Special Character* (P31), to seeing it is featured in all school planning (P19), to placing it on the agenda for all staff meetings (P19), to giving it constant professional development (P19), to accepting the baton that has been passed on with intentionality (P7). “Lack of vigilance is negligence” (P7). “Unless you are on the job, … things revert. Nothing gets better; they always run down” (P52; similarly, P58).

Similar comments were made concerning the dangers of ‘Compromise’ (P2, P29). Mentioning as an example the teaching of non-Christian culture and religion as having equal validity and application to life, P8 spoke of how *Special Character* could “be compromised and undermined”. “As soon as you compromise it – as soon as you make a choice that lacks integrity, you lose it. You have to go back and repair it. It is all about relationship and again, it is about people, it is about what you do” (P32).

*Special Character* is also maintained by recognising its importance, that is, by prioritising it. “We offer spiritual safety first and foremost to the kids, which then translates into moral and physical safety. Then the opportunity is there to add the academic aspects to it” (P5). (Academic work was first priority for P8 and P34.) So it must be actively pursued. “If you are no longer actively pursuing your walk with God then it becomes very difficult to function in a place where that is the expectation of every minute of your day” (P12). There is a measure of intentionality with respect to *Special Character*. Participant 7 said it was the intentionality of the school where he was, that “drew [him] in”. Similarly, from P58:

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58 Ps 5, 35, 36, 52, 58, 49, 2, 31, 19, 7, 9, 27, 63.
It comes down to the individual’s choice, staff, the governing body, because as they make each decision on what they allow into the school in the way of everything from curriculum to families and students and staff, every decision affects the outworking of the *Special Character*. If they begin to deviate from their relationship with God, then they are in trouble, because it is going to affect these decisions.

The importance of prioritising *Special Character* was also recognised by a group in P36’s school. She alerted me to the fact that heads of departments, proprietors and trustees “have a combined retreat at the beginning of the year [when] we do our strategic planning together ... it is just a non-negotiable when it comes to retaining *Special Character*”. This was the only school that made a reference to holding a special retreat to plan out the year ahead and especially to give the *Special Character* its prioritised prominence and place. “By having too high a proportion of people who don’t have the same belief systems [on the Board of] the school”, the *Special Character* could be lost, according to P50. In this, though, it was not so much the denominational differences as the spiritual relationship differences that impacted, for she went on to say, “If you didn’t believe in your heart who Jesus is and you didn’t have a relationship with Him there would be no *Special Character*”.

Prioritising to maintain *Special Character* needs to be ongoing. Traction regarding *Special Character* can be lost in transition times – changes of staff, of Board, of principals. “We’re actually passing the baton and passing on the *Special Character*”, said P36 who referred to it as “a change-over period”, and made reference to a new chairperson of the Board having the former chairperson alongside them for some time. Participant 12 believes that before taking on anybody, be it new staff or new students they need to have it “articulated very clearly what the *Special Character* is … [so that they] know that well ahead and [must] be prepared to embrace that truth. And if not, then this is not the right place for them”.

*Special Character* also needs to be maintained in the individual’s life. Participant 44 saw some dangers in establishing a *Special Character* culture that is merely “a culture rather than a living truth that is going to be fruitful”. This is referred to by P26 as “losing their first love” – an allusion to Revelation 2:4 in the Holy Bible, that speaks of the church of Ephesus having lost its first love. “It will lose traction when either the staff or the proprietors lose their first love for Christ”. For P15, this malaise was seen as an indication of getting “too religious”, having lost the passion. According to P3, if the passion is gone, the *Special Character* itself is lost. And so, when P26 was asked what the best thing was that the school could do for its students, at two different junctures, he said “to give them that relationship with Christ whereby He is their inner strength for good times and bad”.

How Special Character is Derailed

While *Special Character* is preserved by things we do, it can also be derailed by other things we do or don’t do in the preserving of *Special Character*. Sometimes it is through what happens externally, such as a tragedy in that “in a crisis it could cause them to start really questioning deep down rather than being … perhaps superficial … if they don’t find satisfactory answers, they might perhaps tend to lay aside their *Special Character* or their beliefs” (P47). Such would really be a test of the individual’s personal commitment to their faith in ‘bad’ times as well as in good times. It was suggested by P19 that “we need to be aware of where each of our colleagues are at and be alongside them and encourage them” when they go through hard times.

One school founder (P24) felt that *Special Character* can be derailed if you resorted to a democratic structure, everyone having a voice, *Special Character* taking on the lowest common denominator. When those with the original *Special Character* vision “lost control”, *Special Character* tended to be watered down. This participant cited two schools (not in this study) where the original vision caster was no longer around. In one case it became restructured democratically and lost its *Special Character*, whereas the other, a much older institution, was not structured democratically, and has retained its *Special Character*. On the other hand, P38 believed that by not being democratic and allowing debate over decisions, there could be a loss of traction in its *Special Character*. There is, of course, a difference between allowing debate and participating in the decision-making. Allowing debate does not, in itself, make it democratic.

Most of the other issues raised on the derailment of *Special Character* focused on spiritual issues. Participant 12 was aware that the circumstances of personnel change, perhaps resulting in their “walking away from God”, maybe “through a marriage break-up” and the situation becomes difficult in that there is a *Special Character* “expectation of every minute of your day”. It was clear to the researcher that total consistency of lifestyle is what was demanded in these schools. So there was no room for “dead wood” as P24 described people who were no longer committed to and living out the spiritual values of the school.

*Special Character* can also be derailed by the emphasis we choose to give the education process. Participant 24 and P19 had reservations concerning an emphasis on the academic side at the expense of the spiritual input. “These pay-offs are more important to parents of their pupils than academic results” (Casinader, 2006, n.p.). Participant 66 expressed it as “not being God-centred in the classroom … in your planning and in your thoughts”, and said “[I must] keep my relationship with God on board and to make sure that I don’t slip because if I can’t deliver what I’m supposed to for the *Special Character*, then I shouldn’t be here”.
Three ‘-isms’ were raised as stumbling blocks to detract from and thus jeopardise the preservation of *Special Character*: the first was legalism. “If you are tight on ‘rules’ it can lose that openness and lose that relationship that you might have” (P47). Pluralism was next: “Allowing students to study other religions … allowing other things in that don’t necessarily reflect *Special Character*” (P47). The third was fundamentalism. Participant 64 seemed to sense there was already some fundamentalism in his school defining fundamentalism as having an “authoritarian leadership” where people are “coerced into something”.

Another cause for possible derailment was the tension P62 encountered in his church life between cognitive expressions of the faith and the experiential aspects. He felt that an overemphasis on the experiential can detract from the *Special Character* – but “so can dry head knowledge without having a heart for the Lord”, he added. He continued with: “there are those two dynamic tensions … we can veer one way and have a crash … or … fall over the other side of the bridge. There is a balance there”. He also expressed his concerns that what “the churches are churning out is getting shallower and shallower and more and more me-centred and more entertainment and experiential-centred, rather than absolute-centred”. As these changes filtered through to school and at Board level, *Special Character* was compromised in his view.

It only remains to include in this section, the viewpoint held by P52 that by integrating into the state system, “the atmosphere changes from what was a ministry of the church run sacrificially” which alters the ethos, formerly the church’s ethos, to something less than what the *Special Character* was originally thought to be. It was now perceived to be less pentecostal, in the light of a broader clientele-base.

In summary, *Special Character* first needs to be given constant public recognition if it is to be preserved. It is recognised by its fruits, although only a longitudinal study will allay the fears of some who have doubts on its effectiveness. *Special Character* is enhanced by constant prayer, unity of thought and deeper understandings of *Special Character* especially by proprietors. Only constant vigilance enables *Special Character* to be maintained. This involves avoiding negligence, compromise, syncretism and by prioritising *Special Character* in the school over all else. To achieve this some schools have annual retreats, do strategic planning together as a staff, rise above sectarian denominationalism, and work at their succession planning. *Special Character* can be derailed as much by what the school does not do as by what it does. It is tested in times of crises and tragedy and by inconsistent life-style messages by school personnel. Legalism, pluralism and fundamentalism were seen as threats, as well as the seeming shallowness (to some) of contemporary Christianity. The
very act of integrating a school into the state system was seen by some as a possible threat to the sharp edge of a school’s *Special Character*.

**DISCUSSION**

Enshrined in the legislation concerning New Zealand Integrated schools is the concept that *Special Character* must be preserved (Statutes of New Zealand, 1975). This was the focus of the findings in Chapter 7. The participants of this study were well aware that without *Special Character* being preserved, they have no reason to exist, no desire to exist, no other purpose to establish their schools, and no prior rights to function as an integrated school. This concurs with Gleason’s (1995) view that a school’s task of providing spiritual direction for its students is central to their fundamental purpose. Furthermore, they are deeply conscious of educational institutions abroad that have lost their evangelical *Special Character* over the years; so much so that the schools in this study are putting in place increasingly, a range of mechanisms that might counter this trend. In surveying the literature on *Special Character* schools, little is said concerning the preserving of *Special Character*, but rather of positive asserting of its constitutionality. There is a parallel literature in the United States of the loss of the spiritual dimension in the university colleges that historian Marsden (1994, 1997) and others have researched. The lessons from this literature are lessons that have been expressed by the participants. It is to that literature amongst others, that references are made in this section.

Marsden (1997) readily acknowledges the difficulties for evangelical colleges in that there is an inherent ‘offence’ in the gospel\(^{59}\) whereby Christian educational institutions such as these in this study will encounter opposition concerning views held. Participants were aware of their detractors. Marsden attributes “the root of that opposition [to] the question of highest allegiance” (p. 57) to the God-factor. Wolfe (1996) disagrees with Marsden on this point, suggesting that the evangelical institutions simply have no will to save the secular schools from their secularity, and have thus abandoned secular schools.

If the nature of mankind is to compromise, it is questionable, as one participant postulated, whether *Special Character* could be preserved long term at all. There are very few of America’s older universities, for example, that have retained their original evangelical stance (Marsden, 1994). Wheaton College, now 150 years old, is one of the few (Wheaton College, 2013). Another participant saw the retention of the *Special Character* as a paradox, achieved only if it is 100% God and 100% man. Reference was made to the desirability of a clear Mission Statement to preserve *Special Character* (Hebron Christian College, 2010), though Burtchaell (1998) suggested that

\(^{59}\) Galatians 5:11; 1 Peter 2:8; Isaiah 8:14 all make reference to the ‘offence’ of the cross.
necessity to produce such statements is a leading indicator of a shift away from its spiritual home base.

Those involved in this study readily acknowledged how easy it is to compromise – “you can lose it”, as one participant said. Secularisation of a school may never be intended, but it happens (Appleyard, 1996) through compromise, little by little. There is the compromise of assumptions – foregoing a commitment to the creation and yielding to and bending to scientific assumptions (Marsden, 1997). There is the compromise of assimilating into the current culture where these assimilation tendencies gather force (Gleason, 1995). Cassidy (1997) in referencing Marsden, noted that the patterns which one’s organisation claims, are the product of our values and beliefs; and when/if these values and beliefs are compromised, so will the Special Character be. The underlying drive for change can derive from a commitment to public service, (as was evident in some of the schools researched) for example, as observed by Marsden (1994), can be the result of a transition from religious sentiment. The compromise can also derive from external pressures, particularly financial interest groups who bargain liberalisation as the price of funding, schools not wanting to ‘bite the hand that feeds them’. As Marsden (1994) said in another place, the institutions did not seem to have understood the forces they were yielding to. While this study has shown there is an awareness of these hazards in Special Character, there was no guarantee of an awareness if and when these symptoms applied to themselves, and thus compromising the preservation of their own Special Character.

The participant voice concerning the preserving of Special Character, was analysed under four major headings: issues concerned with school staffing; with school management (government, proprietors, Boards of Trustees, senior management teams ); with others (church, families, students, the community); with the principles (as to how Special Character is given recognition, is enhanced, maintained and derailed). Leading these comments was the emphasis on the appointing of appropriate staff. According to Schwehn (1999), a Christian school needs a critical mass of staff who carry the DNA of the school; staff who promote its ethos and who carry a sense of calling. These points were all emphasised by the participants.

Marsden (1997) of Notre Dame laments the abandoning, in American institutions, of the assessing of the spiritual perspectives of prospective staff, the new norm being competence. Marsden (1994) also noted the drift in the older American universities to the delegating of staff hiring to faculty heads, as being a cause of the loss of spiritual emphasis and identity. While there was no evidence of such delegation in this study by principals, there was little evidence that the proprietors (the responsibility with whom Special Character lies) have any considerable input into the appointment of staff. Palmer (1997) highlighted the fact that who we are, as teachers, determines the quality of Special Character,
as participants suggested. Marsden (1994) pointed out that in years gone by, faculty members of an employing institution were often required to be practising members of the school’s persuasion. One school in this study began that way but soon de-denominationalised in favour of a more ecumenical, economic model. Either way as both de Pree (1992) and the findings argue, the appointment of appropriate staff is the most important decision a school will make.

Dunlop (1993) expressed concern at the loss of trust in scripture. He said, “It is essential [for] such staff to be convinced of the trustworthiness of the Bible and to be able to apply its teaching with confidence” (pp. 75-76). Such an emphasis pervades this thesis. Kenny (1996) on the other hand, pointed out the inability of the many in the protestant intellectual tradition to respond in debate with persuasive rigour. The biblical illiteracy that Hollard (2011) regrets in the New Zealand evangelical community is countered in some schools by in-house training in biblical lectures. It is this failure of belief that schools became grounded in, according to Burtchaell (1998), that caused them to lose the will to assert their theological commitments in the schools.

In the schools in this study, that theological commitment included a commitment to a vigorous community prayer-life, as indicated extensively by the findings. This is encouraged by the international group ‘Moms-in-Prayer’ (2012) which operates among evangelical schools in 140 countries and in 45 languages. This concurs with New Zealander Dunlop’s (1993) sentiments who said:

> It is worth noting the emphasis on prayer … with staff meeting each morning to pray and remember specific needs among students as well as occasions when there would be personal prayer with particular students and parents … it acknowledges our dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about any real change in people’s lives (p. 77).

Whilst prayer facilitated a focus on Special Character, compliance issues seemed to have the reverse effect. Reference was well made concerning the difficulties in focusing on Special Character with so many competing compliance detractors that impede that Special Character focus. Burtchaell (1998) draws attention to a similar detractor where staff focus on their own academic disciplines at the expense of a commitment to the institution itself even to becoming antagonistic to the norms of the spiritual emphases relating to the institution. It was said in Chapter 7 that Special Character was the task of the staff, a responsibility acknowledged, without exception, by the participants. The sentiments of this study’s participants concur with Hauerwas (1994) in that the impact of their Special Character “shaped by its practices help us to see that God matters” (p. 20), and it was their task to preserve that sentiment.
While, as Marsden (1997) says, “faith precedes and conditions understanding” (p. 9), the *credo ut intelligam* of the Augustinian tradition, understanding is nonetheless addressed and encouraged by the NZACS conferences and extensive professional development as reported on in this thesis. For those teachers in these schools who were trained in the New Zealand evangelical teacher-training institutions (Bethlehem Institute in Tauranga, Laidlaw College in Auckland) it has been said that “the aims for Christian education will influence the mode of teacher education which is deemed appropriate” (Coleman, 1993, p. 132). Indeed, without such training and professional development, Giles, as cited by a participant, gave a mere ten year life-expectancy for its spiritual *Special Character*. One school in this study, to protect and preserve its *Special Character*, had a staff induction plan as part of their programme. To nourish a spiritual identity, Appleyard (1996) suggested:

That they develop ways of introducing new faculty and staff into the ethos of the institution and of enabling experienced faculty and staff to reflect on how their disciplines are related to broader issues of community, culture and belief. (p. 33)

As these schools are state-integrated schools, preserving *Special Character* is an obligation to the state. Although there have been various governmental threats to *Special Character*, as mentioned in this thesis, the current structure for integrated schools is supported across party political lines (Lynch, 2000) and the preservation of *Special Character* guaranteed meantime. However, as the findings in this study portray, there is no sense in which these schools assimilate into the culture of state schools, just as “Catholic intellectual life … has something of an outside quality which resists complete assimilation” (Appleyard, 1996, p. 33). The real threat, as Carter (1994) points out is placing too much power and authority in the hands of government. This sentiment was echoed in the reservation that various schools (including some in this study) had about integrating into the state system, lest their *Special Character* would not be preserved long-term.

Preserving *Special Character* is acknowledged in this study as the responsibility of the proprietor’s management. They are the legislated gate-keepers of *Special Character* (N.Z. Government, 1975). It is their main task. It is incumbent on them, as Gleason (1995) suggests, to provide a clear reason for the institution’s existence using the available philosophical and theological resources. Proprietors do establish the initial Statement of Beliefs which each of these *Special Character* schools have adopted uniquely for their own documentation. Schools in this study have set up external peer-review audits, but these are not necessarily driven by the proprietors. *Special Character* is compromised when doctrinal rigour is rejected and schools settle for a core of non-sectarian ethics, according to Marsden (1997). Problems arose, as Burtchaell (1998) saw it, when there was a shift from theological specificity and commitment, albeit gradual, to a more liberal stance with a view to being more inclusive, led by financial considerations as outlined below. Ironically, this led to the demise of any
spiritual emphasis as a prime focus. In this thesis, participants made ready reference to their Statement of Faith – and there was no hint of changes to them. Out of these evangelical Statements of Faith were frequent references to the creation and a metanarrative, a belief in both of which Schwehn (1999) sees as necessary attributes for an institution to be ‘Christian’. He said that schools will lose spiritual traction by the disappearance of God and the emergence of a science and technology-driven metaphysics.

Management by the Board of Trustees was a concern of some participants who feared a shallowness with respect to Special Character, though this could not be assessed as such. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2012) was concerned that Boards of Trustees foster the Special Character as did Marsden (1997) who urged that reflection on the Christian outlook be encouraged. Schwehn (1999) expressed similar caution that Christian men and women, clergy and laymen be appointed to the governing bodies whose primary task was to uphold the Christian spiritual dimension, in order to preserve Special Character. In this study at least two of the six school Boards of Trustees had established a portfolio for overseeing Special Character preservation. Marsden (1994) laments the voluntary disestablishment of such an emphasis. Appleyard (1996) drew attention to religious strengths of 18th and 19th century colleges, made strong by clergymen leaders “who defined their identity with a strongly Christian rhetoric. The required curriculum included scripture and Christian doctrine” (p. 32). Cardinal Newman (as cited in Marsden, 1994) commented that “the banishment of theology … was symptomatic of losing a unified vision of knowledge as all part of one integrated whole” (p. 143). Its place had been taken by scientific naturalism, Marsden (1994) believed.

Although the proprietors set and established the Special Character of the schools in this study, and the Boards of Trustees had the role of fostering it, the management by a Senior Management Team (SMT) was seen to be the prime sustainer of Special Character. The strong service mentality in these schools as emphasised and factored in by the SMT, reflects the altruism encapsulated in St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s (1090-1153) aphorism “seek[ing] knowledge in order to serve and edify others” (cited in Sire, 2000, p. 216). However, the marginalisation of a vigorous practice of the Christian faith in schools abroad came through a passion for tolerance and liberalism – an inclusivism that was non-sectarian, which eventually came to mean exclusively secular, according to Marsden (1994). Hence Appleyard (1998) advocates for an SMT “a strong campus ministry programme” (p. 33). There are other factors that Schwehn (1999) advocates should be put in place for the preserving of Special Character: teaching biblical classes to all students, an active chapel ministry with worship, such as has been portrayed in this study. The SMT with the principal usually determine this programme.
Perhaps a more critical factor in the preservation of *Special Character* which a school administration needs to heed is the ability to defend intellectually the rationality of the faith they profess. In earlier years this was never seriously challenged (Marsden, 1997). Schools, according to Marsden (1997), must have the intellectual resources to challenge the concepts that the scientific approach is the only source of knowledge. Hence the strong emphasis in the schools of this study, on the inerrancy and efficacy of the scriptures as divinely-given revelation. Appleyard (1996) made similar comment concerning the need to be able to defend the claims of the faith. “The rules of evidence and logic still apply, and ‘private revelations’ cannot pre-empt argument” (Marsden, 1997, p. 431).

There are ‘Others’ who have a part to play in preserving *Special Character*. Churches certainly do, especially if they are the proprietors. There is dispute as to what model (church-base or independent) of proprietorship best suits Christian schools – an issue best dealt with in the ‘Tensions’ section of these discussions. Parents and the students from these families also play their part in preserving *Special Character* given that *Special Character* and its preservation is for the welfare of the students and therefore the expectation of the parents. Buckley (2001) and Marsden (1997) pointed out that tertiary students do encounter teachers who endeavour to break down the religious beliefs of students. While this is probably less pronounced at the schooling level, students may meet enough lack of sympathy/understanding that makes some cherish the concept of a Christian environment that is consistent with the values and beliefs of the home and therefore parents choose to send children to these schools. Conversely, if Christian commitment is compromised in the home, it will be, via the student, in the school and at the cost of *Special Character* impact. This is of concern for the preservation of *Special Character* for these schools, since as Schwehn (1999) pointed out, however successful students may be academically, “they will still fall short of the mark without the grace of God” (p. 30).

The enactment of principles the participants of this study outlined, is also important for the preservation of *Special Character*. Well articulated principles are significant, for as Casinader (2006) pointed out, these evangelical schools are going to have to get stronger in terms of what they stand for, if they can, as Burthcail (1998) remarked, present as articulate and theologically literate. In this way preservation of *Special Character* is enhanced.

Most commonly, the participants were aware how constant vigilance is necessary to preserving *Special Character*. Schwehn (1999) does not see this as a passive stance but sustained by an ongoing active pursuit of truth in the context of an overarching metanarrative, such as was articulated in the findings of this study. Constant vigilance also involves a genuine piety as was acknowledged in the
study and reiterated by Burtchaell (1998). For when the decline in spirituality comes, it comes, according to Marsden (1994), without being noticed. Marsden went on to say that the faith becomes peripheral to the main business (as cited in Johnson, 1995) when it is not prioritised with intentionality. Where there is no passion there is no Special Character which is why Schwehn (1999) advocates an active Chapel ministry with worship services (common characteristics in all the schools in this study). Marsden (1997) reflects on how the schools, prior to their losing their spiritual/religious focus, “had a tradition of worship” (p. 16). In analysing the attributes of a Christian school, Schwehn (1999) advocates a transmitting of “a particular tradition of thought, feeling and practice” (p. 29) through its rhetoric and its corporate worship.

Special Character can be derailed in a variety of ways. Some have argued, in this investigation, that the very act of integrating into the state system was to lose some of their Special Character. It was the separation of church and state that Marsden (1997) says was misunderstood for separation of all religion from the state. Gleason (1995) commented on the felt need of some to reassert the spiritual emphases of their religious tradition.

There was an emphasis in this study on the need for a total, unreserved commitment to Special Character ethos in every aspect of life if it was to be preserved. This commitment aligns with Schwehn (1999) who, in his attributes of Christian colleges, asserts that there needs be “an integral connection among the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of human life … a wholeness, an integral balance and harmony in the operation of the moral, spiritual and intellectual virtues” (p. 27). He further argued there must be strong shared values/virtues among them, issues on which this study had much to say (see Chapter 6). One other matter which Kenney (1998) raised was the prestige in being a pace-setter in academic pursuit. He was not critiquing the excellence, but the glorying in it which could derail the preservation of a school’s Special Character. Several participants in this study commented on being too academic.

In preserving Special Character schools must, according to Burtchaell (1998), be resolute in permeating their school with the core credenda of the Christian faith. For these schools, as this study has emphasised, the core is the safeguarding in particular of the inerrancy of scripture. Their irresoluteness in this regard makes them susceptible to what Marsden (1994) refers to as the higher critics of the Bible who raise doubt over inerrancy.

By way of summary, Special Character of evangelical schools is preserved when it is a parental choice, when it is biblically based, Christ-centred, student orientated and teacher led. There must be clearly understood assumptions concerning creation and biblical inerrancy with a regard for biblical
authority (Marsden, 1994), a view shared by the participants. The personnel of state-integrated protestant evangelical schools must be able to defend the theological claims rigorously, having a strong apologetic. This will require a biblical literacy which is led preferably by men and women of the cloth, and governed by trustees not lacking in spiritual discernment who will oversee a curriculum that is Special Character-orientated. They will be clear in their Mission Statement, encouraging of worship, steeped in prayer and providing of adequate professional development in Special Character for its staff. Special Character will be regularly audited and Boards of Trustees will conduct self-reviews; they will make attendance at their annual conferences a priority. These are the concerns of the literature and/or the participants themselves. For some, there is the issue of whether schools should be church based or independent. As this is a more contentious issue, it will be dealt with in the next section: the tensions involved.

CONCLUSION

In the first section this Chapter I focused on the many comments that related Special Character preservation to the selection, spiritual aptitudes, relationships and development of the academic staff. Staff play a key role in the preserving of Special Character just as, in the business world. “Promotions, key appointments and succession planning are the most crucial elements in the organisation’s future” (de Pree, 1992, p. 30). If the visionary founder moves on without ‘passing the [Special Character] baton’, if the governing body’s primary focus is not Special Character education and there is a conflict of vision, if there is lack of passion for Christian education and no longer a strong parent-partnership, Special Character will suffer and lose traction (P18).

Secondly, I dealt with the impact that management can have on Special Character effectiveness, whether it be by the state governance, by proprietors, Board of Trustees or SMTs. Each has its part to play in so maintaining and guarding Special Character, that it is preserved and enhanced. The participant responses raised questions about where ultimate responsibility for enforcement might lie – with proprietors or Board. If Special Character is to be preserved, is there a need for the proprietors to have a strong input at Board level? Should they be initiating the Special Character audits, being involved in the appointment of the principal and the appointment of staff to ensure that all appointments meet the requirements for Special Character? Should they be addressing would-be Board of Trustees candidates to spell out clearly and specifically, what is expected of one working in a Special Character school environment? Should the Board of Trustees be equally assertive in monitoring, prioritising, evaluating and supporting the Special Character ethos in the school? In each of these there are many facets and perspectives as the chapter has shown.
And there were others whose impact had strong influences on Special Character – the church, and through the parents, the students themselves, not to mention the local community. These were discussed in the third section. In the final section, I discussed, through participant voice, how the Special Character is given recognition, how it is enhanced and maintained by constant vigilance. Perhaps more importantly, it was prudent to note how Special Character can become derailed, so that such can be avoided and the Special Character preserved.

Within that broad spectrum of perspectives expressed in this chapter there is a pronounced unity of thought that so much rests on the individual’s own spiritual pilgrimage as the major contribution to the whole. On the issues that were debated, there was not always concurrence of ideas, some of these ideas leading to tensions. It is those tensions that are the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT: TENSIONS AND ANOMALIES

In order to build and preserve Special Character, the schools must face and address the tensions and anomalies\(^\text{60}\) that emerge in their operation that challenge the establishment, enactment and preservation of Special Character. The tensions were mostly within the schools themselves rather than in society at large. There were tensions grounded in theological issues, tensions with the administering of these schools, tensions relating to the academic programme. The range of tensions are best illustrated by the chapter outline below (Figure 8.1).

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{TENSIONS AND ANOMALIES} & \\
\hline
\text{THEOLOGICAL ISSUES} & \text{ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES} \\
\text{Doctrines} & \text{Structural Issues} \\
\text{Emphases} & \text{Financial Issues} \\
\text{Faith Issues} & \text{Legislative Issues} \\
\text{Special Character Issues} & \text{Prioritising} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{ACADEMIC ISSUES} & \text{ISSUES WITHIN THE SCHOOL} \\
\text{Secular-Sacred Divide} & \text{Worship Issues} \\
\text{Curriculum Issues} & \text{Student Issues} \\
\text{Ministry of Education Issues} & \text{Staff Issues} \\
\text{Challenges to Special Character} & \text{Miscellaneous problems} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Figure 8.1: Chapter 8 Outline

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Theological tensions with the potential of influencing the enactment of Special Character varied from school to school with few aspects in common. However, all six schools commented on the following theological/faith issues, with an average of eight comments from each school. Theological tensions were of four kinds: Firstly, issues of doctrine, requiring clear statements of faith; concerning the new birth; the charismatic issues; Arminians versus Calvinism; and on hermeneutics – how doctrine is interpreted. Then secondly, there were issues of emphases. While there may be agreement over doctrine, the emphases given on spiritual/theological issues can vary widely, whether they be the emphases of the proprietor church, denominational emphases, discipling versus evangelism, student revivalism, the emphases of Christian school programmes, fundamentalist emphases, anti-

\(^{60}\) I use the term ‘anomaly’ in the sense of being irregular, not expected, or even contradictory.
intellectualism and pentecostal emphases. In the third sphere of tensions were concerns over faith issues – the worship style, the place of prayer, the use of relievers not subscribing to the faith, the difficulties students encountered with their faith and whether the school was teacher-centred, student-centred or Christ-centred. The fourth source of theological tension concerned Special Character itself – the lack of clarity with some Board members; teacher ambivalence to Special Character, the theological expectations of the Education Review Office, the call for a unity of concepts regarding Special Character; the concept of ‘Teaching Christianly’, and a principal’s dilemma as to his role in Special Character. All these involve theological understandings.

Issues of Doctrine

Most participants accepted that they would not be completely understood by the non-Christian public; a potential issue with, for example, “Government people” (P41). Such lack of shared understanding underscored the importance of a clear doctrinal Statement of Faith. “If you didn’t subscribe to the statement of faith, you weren’t in. And we got some people who were very angry with us” (P24).

A key understanding of evangelicals in Special Character schools is a belief in the necessity of a ‘born again’ experience whereby a person becomes ‘alive to God’ and has been spiritually transformed. Not all evangelical groups understand the new birth as a one-off experience. In one school there was an obvious lack of shared understanding in this regard but the possible impact of this was managed:

We acknowledge that that is the case. That when we talk about becoming a Christian and being born again, we need to appreciate that when one person says that and another person says that, they can hold two different understandings. Again, we come back to that principle; we have to stick with what we hold in common and not get bogged down in the fact that there may be differences there. (P2)

The following comments from P25 illustrate an approach to manage the divisive potential of differing doctrinal beliefs:

The proprietors … right from the founding times, have identified a number of doctrines that they say are not up for debate. For example, tongues-speaking, or gifts of the Holy Spirit, where there’s a difference of opinion … They’ve said infant baptism/adult baptism is another example, that these have the potential to be divisive and so in order to not be divisive, let’s say that we will not debate these in the staff to try and be one way or the other. Those are the things that are not there to divide us.

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61 Luke 15:24,32; Romans 6:11,13
62 John 3; 2 Corinthians 5:17
A key doctrine on which there was minor deviations from the norm concerned biblical inerrancy. There were some staff in these schools that questioned the reliability of the Bible (for example P36, who indicated she had serious questions about many Old Testament stories) in contrast to many of the parents in the study.

Board member, P64 went even further to question evangelical hermeneutics. This participant “would expect … a reasonable, moderate interpretation of the Word of God, without having to involve too much specific conjecture as to the exact meaning of a particular verse”. He did not see the Bible’s relevance for a school board, as for him, it is not really clear on contemporary issues. However, the vast majority of participants indicated a total trust in the veracity, relevance and reliability of scripture, as is indicated elsewhere in this thesis. The intransigence and fundamentalism of the traditional evangelical churches has given way to a more moderate stance on the charismatic issue in recent years (Grigg, 2005; Wagner, 1988) and this is reflected in the schools where a strongly conservative approach once prevailed. But P62 still found it a personal frustration having to ‘agree to differ’ on these issues which to him were very important. At least five of the six schools were led by principals who worshipped in charismatic churches even if the schools were not founded on a charismatic basis. Student P13 said that “theologically, most of our influence comes from our teachers”. All of the schools in this study would argue that there needs to be one common message coming from church, home and family as Pazmino (2008) and others advocate. Yet for P13, in her school there is one message from church and home (a charismatic one) and another from school (a conservative one). It is a tension they live with affecting students more than staff.

A philosophical tension also exists between Calvinism and Arminianism. This was expressed by P49 as an ongoing tension between subjective experience and propositional truth. He said:

There is probably more emphasis than there would have been in the early days on the experiential side than the theological side for a reason or two. One is that it is far easier to deal with experience in our culture, which is existential rather than propositional. … You can’t say someone is wrong because the first question is “who says”? The answer is “God says”. “Oh, you’re a loony”. So it is very very hard to maintain the propositional truths. Therein lies the challenge. … It is a tension that has always been there and it is more subjective experience than propositional truth.

In summary, schools do not always expect their beliefs to be understood by those outside the schools. In one school there were differences in their understanding of the doctrine of the new birth and of the

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63 Calvinism, named after John Calvin (1509-1564), the Protestant Reformer and father of Reformed and Presbyterian doctrine, stresses the sovereignty of God, limited atonement, and God’s foreknowledge and election. The Reformed churches tend to be Calvinist.

64 Arminianism, named after the Dutchman Arminius (1560-1609), follows the doctrines of the pre-Augustinian fathers and the Wesleyans, stressing man’s free-will, salvation (atonement) available to all. The ‘holiness’ churches and pentecostals tend to be Arminian.
role that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit should be played out through the charismatic influence, this being the age-old controversy of Calvinism versus Arminianism. How doctrine is formulated (hermeneutics) is, likewise, an age-old tension for the Christian church and has its spill-over into evangelical *Special Character* schools, albeit in isolated cases. The flavour of the *Special Character* is often determined not so much by doctrines over which there is much agreement so much as in the emphases various doctrines are given. These can be a cause of tension.

**Issues of Emphasis**

*Emphases* can be that of the proprietor-church, or denominational emphases. A school can have a higher emphasis on discipling Christian students than on evangelism (or vice versa); it can promote student ministry initiatives or discourage student revivalism. The use of ACE programmes brings its own emphases. The influences of a narrow fundamentalism is a potential tension of emphasis rather than doctrine. This sometimes brings anti-intellectualism with it whereas pentecostalism is at the other end of the spectrum that not all are comfortable with. There were, on the other hand, expressions of denominational expectations on the part of the proprietors of the church-based schools. Of these three schools, only one of them conformed (albeit remotely) to the ethos of the proprietor-church as much as pressure was brought to bear – an ongoing tension for some. This can take the form of expectations on the school to use church personnel in assemblies and to be of influence among the students in counselling.

The situation in the schools reflects that of the wider Christian community. Since the days of the charismatic renewal of the 1970s, denominational “boundaries are all blurred now” (P7) with so many community churches not owning a denominational label (Wagner, 1999). Participant 52 remarked that the proprietors needed “to remind people from time to time that it is [the local church’s school on site] … it wasn’t because of Baptist people or Church of England people or whatever; it was because of … people from [this church on site]”.

Denominations aside, there were, however, other competing emphases evident. One was the tension of discipling versus evangelising. It was asked of P48 why the need for *Special Character* schools if the church is catering well for Christian children. She said:

> People who are church-goers, that’s fine; church will only be the answer for church-goers. They won’t necessarily reach people who don’t go to church … I would love to share the gospel and share God’s love … through schooling … at my work-place. As these schools cater predominantly for people who are already church-going rather than for the unchurched, they are not places of evangelism specifically, even though the 10% of non-preference students may not be church-going. There was a noticeable lack of evidence in the documentation of these schools of an evangelistic/evangelism emphasis coming through. Their charters are more
discipling-orientated. For example, in one: “It is the goal of the school that Christian character be developed in the lives of all students”. The school vision statement however, does have as one of its five aims: “Having a life changing encounter with Jesus” – under an ‘Evangelism’ title. Depending on how that message is presented, non-believing students may come to faith through socialisation in a Christian environment or be ‘turned off’ the faith (P13).

During the era of the charismatic revival/renewal, the students themselves of one school, who had been influenced by the renewal, sought to bring that emphasis in the discipling of their fellow-students, albeit out in the playground. As P2 commented:

The school grappled with how to manage that and there were a range of views about what to do. Because of what the kids were saying and how it was manifesting it was largely what you would describe as experiential. It was, in the words of some, squashed. The official version is that this was one of those areas that was not part of what we hold in common across the whole school community, that if we were to promote and embrace an experience, we would be in breach of our non-denominational policy and so I think the kids and their families were told that this is for the church and for you as families; this is not something that is for the school.

This participant acknowledged the tensions between those who supported the opportunity to generate spiritual enthusiasm in teenagers and those who resisted more recent development in Christian expression. This was an historical tension reflecting generational and ecclesiastical differences, but one that remains a potential tension affecting the enactment of Special Character in this school.

There were tensions over theological emphases, but also over experiential emphases. The three church-based schools were all pentecostal-based. Being statedly pentecostal did not preclude tensions being evident over that issue. It was observed by P22 the fact that the school was formerly thought/seen to be “militantly pentecostal”; this created a measure of animosity among local Christian believers. Once that aspect was removed:

there is so little to conflict with ... they know who we are … what we are; we have been here a good many years and as a church we were notorious for quite a while. But the community has lost all that kind of aggro and they’ve come to see that we are fairly normal people. (P22)

It could be seen that one of the costs of integrating is that the church’s pentecostal impact is diminished, and this could be considered by some to be compromise. It is debatable whether this has occurred because of integrating or because their clientele now represent a wider theological base, and in deference to them, P22’s school has modified its stance on pentecostal issues concerning the outworking of their theology on the operation of the gifts of the Spirit as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. In Chapter 7 reference was made of a proprietor’s statement of faith being “watered down” – modified to accommodate a more inclusive sentiment towards the wider ‘Body of Christ’,
detracting from the original vision of the sponsoring church (P52). Herein lies a tension for the proprietors versus the Board, for which the only way out seemed to be compromise.

Participants within the same school can have varying views on degrees of experiential focus. For example, P26 argued that his school was strongly pentecostal not only in flavour but also in practice. He admitted that this elicited negative reaction from conservative Christian homes as was the case when hands were laid on a child from a Brethren Assembly family. Yet P9 from the same school said “it is not happening frequently within the context of the school … we actually do not have ‘buy-in’ by the children”, especially not of the secondary students. This participant acknowledged the school was professedly pentecostal, but “we do not always see speaking in tongues, for instance … not that we see a lot of the spiritual gifts operating … it is not happening frequently … [even so], we would place spiritual development way ahead of academic development”. Another (P57) said “some of the parents that I talk to … do not share the same point of view … a lot of [the] parents would disagree … I think that is fairly common”. It may well be that the only solution to this tension is to restrict enrolments to pentecostal families – which may jeopardise the economic viability of the school. Otherwise, it is a tension the school has to live with.

In summary, the particular emphasis the local church gives the school may vary considerably from that which the school personnel would want to give it and can be a cause of friction, the tension in proportion to the determination that one or other party may wish to apply to it. This concerns the establishment and the enactment of Special Character and threatens its preservation. To impose denominational emphases on a school whose clientele come from a wide variety of backgrounds is to invite tension. Likewise to suppress student enthusiasm in spiritual expression can be counter-productive for Special Character enactment. There is the danger of catering for your 90% preference students to the neglect of evangelism among the rest and the evangelistic needs of the preference students. To the evangelistically-minded staff, this is a frustration. The conservative staff members seem sometimes to be looked upon as fundamentalists which is irksome, even threatening to the less conservative. Similarly the pentecostals at the other end of the theological spectrum create a cringe element for the conservative staff. Such are the tensions from the variety of emphases given in a school.

**Faith Issues**

Doctrine and emphases aside, the outward expression of personal faith in the worship times at school assemblies, brings its own tensions as does the use of non-Christian relievers (substitute teachers). In three of the six schools studied, this issue was raised as being problematic to some, and as a faith
issue could well be a reflection on teenage development as much as a reflection on Special Character schooling.

Non-Christian relievers can be a cause of tension within a school. As one Board member commented, “A reliever … made the statement that all religions are equal and that it doesn’t matter who you pray to; there was a backlash in class and he was challenged by the students” (P17). This caused a stir and considerable tension within the classroom and between students and principal. Permanent staff are screened well for Special Character fitness, but relief (substitute) staff are not so well managed, it seems. Proprietor P42 expressed a need to have flexibility on this issue: “I have room for that because I don’t hold all the truth – the entire truth is not in me … so I have to give room to accept people with a different view to me”, but parents (and thus their children, so often) are more certain than that. In some schools, the degree of certainty concerning fixed beliefs and the inappropriateness of non-Christian beliefs was far more pronounced. As one parent said:

If they were to employ staff that were not as committed to the Special Character, that could become a problem. The relievers too, too many relievers coming in that don’t reflect the Special Character – relievers themselves are a disruption … the kids just don’t cope. There have been little issues around that. (P58)

However, it needs to be acknowledged that relievers at any school can cause a disruption, as they do not know the students by name; the students often feel they, the students, have the psychological advantage, it being ‘their turf’; the relievers have not usually prepared the lessons themselves and the relievers are not usually familiar with all the protocols and procedures of the school. They have not built up their authority in the school over months.

Participant 58 referred to an incident in a class where a non-Christian reliever questioned the belief in Scripture and “just basically tore apart their faith”. This serves to add to the struggles the students experience in their spiritual growth. One student (P43) expressed his own personal struggles and challenges regarding fellow-students who saw things differently. It is possibly easier for students to take disparagement towards their faith in a state school where such is expected, than in a Christian school from fellow-students who are reacting to their ongoing/constant exposure to it. It is a very real tension for some students: both for the Christian student and the anti-Christian student who cannot ‘escape’ it. Their faith to some degree is on trial.

Not only are there classroom tensions concerning relievers, there is also the philosophical tension of whether the teaching programme is Christ-centred (as numerous participants claim it is) or teacher-centred or student-centred. Paul Nash (1982) in his Britannica article says:
For Aquinas, the primary agent of education was the learner, and his model was thus, a person capable of self-education. Intellectually autonomous, he should be able to conduct his own process of research and discovery. The Roman Catholic Church, however, has usually put the learner firmly under the authoritative super-ordination of the teacher. (p. 410)

Participant 33 saw learning as a faith issue in the light of the Christ-centred emphasis he considered **Special Character** to be. “It is a battle every day to let Jesus be Lord of my life … making it difficult to achieve [that Special Character]. But that’s the vision, that’s the battle”. Participant 20 who was convinced of “the specialness of the child”, was nevertheless at pains to point out that “you want a Christ-centred education, not a child-centred education”, while retaining the sentiments that Christ Himself had towards children.

Others like P15, argued for a child-centred approach. Roger Moses (2002), principal of Wellington College comments:

> How I cringe with disdain every time I receive an application from a teacher trainee who proclaims with pride and apparent conviction “how much their educational philosophy is based on a child-centred approach”. Are they actually aware that any other approach is possible? Does Aristotle count for nothing when he says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought? My gripe is not that a ‘child-centred approach’ is necessarily wrong, but that the young teacher is no longer aware that other viewpoints or perspectives are possible.

Principal P10 defined ‘Christ-centred’ in a very succinct Christology as when he said:

> The Christ ultimately is the wisdom. He contains all the wisdom and knowledge of God, that in Him all things are summed up. He is the epitome of who we are to be, His people, He is our final teacher and our example in living. And He obviously is our Redeemer, so we put Christ at the centre of all that we do in order for His redemption, not just to be available, in the sense, for individuals, but a redeeming of the education process, that in putting Christ at the centre we are acknowledging His Lordship over all things.

“We try to make it student-centred” said P15, “our focus point is the students … they are the most important things in the school”. The principal here also reiterated the same, whereas P56 in the same school spoke out strongly for a teacher-supported outlook however child-centred the classroom may be. “You should resource your staff, protect your staff, empower your staff and you will get the best. Then the students will get the best” (P56). He went on to say that the principal, in being child-centred in his philosophy, tended to side with the parent voice, without hearing out the staff as has been “often the case at this school”. He said that you stand to lose good staff – some of your most progressive staff, who may be a pain to work with but you must have them. He also added that to see the school as teacher-centred tended to help staff see themselves as missionaries and who are commissioned in their local churches. That in itself is not a problem taking a wider school view; the
tension arises when teachers sense a possible over-emphasis on the student by the administration, especially when it comes to issues of discipline.

In summary, the strongest tensions are possibly related to the use of relieving teachers who question the *Special Character* and raise the ire of the students themselves in the process. This is a ‘lack of faith’ issue challenging the enactment of *Special Character*. Another tension concerned students unsympathetic to the *Special Character*. Unless schools find a way of drawing in the antagonistic, spiritually iconoclastic students, there will always be a source of minor undercurrents in the enactment of *Special Character* in the student body. The debate over whether the school is Christ-centred, student-centred or teacher-centred is an academic one which possibly generates more heat than light. It is not how the staff see themselves but how they are looked upon by the administration that causes the tensions. They were personal tensions, not *Special Character* tensions per se.

**Special Character Issues**

A school may have its doctrines well sorted and a clear emphasis and expression of its faith. It may sound a consistent message from most staff without conflict among its staff over its philosophy. But tensions can exist around *Special Character* with superficiality of understandings concerning *Special Character* evident in some Board members and proprietors. There was also teacher ambivalence towards *Special Character*. The term ‘Teaching Christianly’ created consternation for some, while principals could well see themselves as ‘the meat in the sandwich’ where *Special Character* understandings were at stake.

Superficiality is not confined to student worship. In staff and administrators there was evidence of superficiality of belief concerning *Special Character*. When P23 was asked how *Special Character* would be recognised by an ‘outsider’, there was a vagueness; “I would hope … I think people can see that …” was the language of her response. Participant 47 was not even sure that an evangelical *Special Character* school needed a Christian principal. Board member, P1, found it difficult to identify what *Special Character* was. “*Special Character* is more of an exploration of the world from a biblical perspective”, he said. He was not convinced that *Special Character* schooling was a ‘must have’ for all students, as much as he felt the student had a better chance spiritually by being in a Christian school. Proprietor P42 was asked why people send their children to the school – “I don’t know”, he said. “As times goes on, I imagine fewer people are really keen on the Christian-based education. Fewer and fewer”. (This is not borne out by school enrolment statistics. As at present schools have waiting lists of up to 500, and by my calculation, their enrolments have increased 30% over the last 15 years.) These are anomalies in that it is not characteristic of the whole. If an average of one participant per school with a superficial understanding of *Special Character* was
representative, then 9% of school personnel had a superficial understanding. Given that principals possibly selected their most knowledgeable people to be interviewed, the percentage with superficial understandings could well be higher. This is an enactment problem that could lead to a preservation problem in *Special Character*.

In another school, a key teacher participant (P56) had had state school executive experience. He was only conditionally convinced about the rightness of Christians running Christian schools challenging *Special Character* establishment; not unless they have “excellent systems and excellent staff”. However, he conceded that if Christian schools were expected to start with excellent systems and top staff in place, few would ever get started. There was further, a measure of doubt with P56 concerning the institution’s identity, as to whether it was a church (that is, an extension of the church) or a school. It was not for him, a parachurch activity. “First and foremost I see we are a school”, but also the ‘Body of Christ’ which is the church. Hence, he believed, the next principal should be a member of the proprietor church. He felt there was a safeguard to *Special Character* by coming under a church because he felt a church pastor is far less likely to deviate from its *Special Character*, as aligned to the church, than were educationists. In both these issues, P56 was an exception to the norm – an anomaly in the data.

A further anomaly occurred when P17, a Board member in a church-based school, and only he, believed they should all subscribe to the same *Special Character* within the school or: “Shape it until we all agree. Say there was part of the *Special Character* that we did not all agree on then we should be able to discuss it and change it”. Yet later he acknowledges that the *Special Character* is driven by the church. “If they have a real problem with it then it is open to discussion”, he thought. However, under the legislation the Board or the principal or the parents have no authority to change the *Special Character*. It is the prerogative of the proprietors. So he cannot reshape it at will. This was a challenge to the process of preservation of *Special Character*.

One participant (P41) and only one, expressed difficulty with the term and concept of “Teaching Christianly” which is common currency in the language of these schools and which occurs in the literature. It was touched on briefly in Chapter 6. As P41 says: “as a school we struggle with this. We struggle to understand what it means … it is down to the teacher – which is not really good enough; it doesn’t work”. The term itself is vague to many, but some of the texts on *Special Character* issues do make reference to the term (for example, Greene, 1998). “Teaching Christianly … involves the effort to induce in students’ minds and hearts a radically new view of the world we live in” (Greene, 1997, p. 72). The claim of P41 was that the tension was felt more widely than just one teacher. The
tension was not so much in the definition but in the outworking of the ramifications. There may well be others with the same tension but who did not articulate their dilemma.

A yet fuller definition with ramifications was proffered by P10 who said that ‘Teaching Christianly’ meant:

To be a person who carefully considers their teaching approaches as to whether they are the kind of relational approaches that would be those of Christ. Also to consider the material and to have that critiquing eye to see things in the light of biblical principles. Hence, if they are teaching social sciences or history are they taking it as historical documents that are just humanistic in their perspective or are they presenting to the students in a very conscious way that God is the ultimate director of history?

One tension related to principals was illustrated by P12 when asked whether the principal was a gatekeeper of *Special Character* alongside of the proprietors. The response was: “You are the meat in the sandwich really. You’ve got the staff on one side that you need to protect; you’ve got the Board on the other side and you’ve got the proprietors out in left field”. Significantly, this was not a church-based school where the proprietors might believe more strongly they have prior voice concerning *Special Character*. This is a tension that is inescapable: it will always be there for Integrated schools that have proprietors as well as a Board to satisfy.

In summary, it is incumbent upon proprietors and Board members to be thoroughly conversant with what *Special Character* is all about. Operating from a superficial understanding can cause them to exercise judgment at variance with the *Special Character* and to the consternation of the *Special Character*-sensitive teaching staff and a threat to the preservation of *Special Character*. Board members also need to have clarity as to who the *Special Character* gatekeepers are – for to try and reshape it, as one suggested, is to act outside their jurisdiction. Coercing staff to “teach Christianly” when the term is not clearly understood is likewise counter-productive to the enactment of *Special Character*: staff suspect they are looked upon as possibly unspiritual. Much is expected of the school principal who may well determine *Special Character* by default. He then becomes ‘the meat in the sandwich’ – an administrative issue ensues.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

While there are tensions over theological issues, there are also issues of governance and management that are subject to tensions: administrative issues. In the administration of the *Special Character* school, tensions may arise over *structural issues*, *financial issues*, *legislative issues* and issues concerning a school’s internal systems. In the structural issues, there are the tensions involved in the establishment of a facility with *Special Character*; the process of integrating; the proprietor-controls and their understandings and assertiveness; the necessary symbiosis between Boards and proprietors; historical tensions with principals; tensions over staffing issues and the power struggles in Boards.
The second major administrative area concerned tensions over financial issues, the enactment of *Special Character*: functioning under a business model; establishing a facility financially; the problem of inexperienced finance managers in schools, and teacher salaries. The third major administrative area causing tensions were legislative issues, which included the state’s purpose in educating versus the Christian school purpose; the roll-capping imposed by the Minister of Education; compliance issues common to all schools, and the power blocks that are created by the structure imposed by government for establishing these schools. The fourth major administrative area causing tensions was issues concerning a school’s internal systems – issues such as a lack of shared understandings such that people ‘talk past each other’, the tension of contested priorities in a school, and management issues.

**Structural Issues**

Much expenditure of nervous energy and thus potential tension is seen in the setting up of a protestant evangelical integrated school, a *structural* issue. The initiative comes from the Christian public, not the government. More than one of these schools in this study had difficulty finding a suitable property and the majority of the six schools do not operate on the site where they started. Four of the six schools in this study began in a church. This is an historical tension. Many had no funds, no commercial backer, no sponsor – just faith, courage, a vision and personal sacrifice with no guaranteed income. One landlord also took a risk. He was not a committed Christian but believed in the value of the vision.

To set up the school in the first place was a hurdle for P20 in the establishment of *Special Character*. The local council’s demands required a two year process to work through just to get started. Council’s requirements were two pages long. These bureaucratic requirements may well have been necessary but were a hassle to the builder-participant (P8) who was accustomed to gaining council permits without too much difficulty. The Resource Management Act hurdles can sometimes take 5-6 years to get past, he suggested. Meanwhile the school had to begin in a church. Ironically this can strengthen *Special Character*. We value that which has cost us much. In P20’s school which had to begin in church buildings, the church sought to take ownership of the school. While churches can provide a sound and stable financial base, there is always the possibility, understandably, of the church endeavouring to exert control over all the activities that take place on its premises, thus depriving the school of its autonomy, independence, and compromising the nondenominationality of the enterprise. In a church, the pastor may argue that he is the vision-holder and the vision-caster for the school that operates within its walls, whereas the vision for any Christian school, like any enterprise, is established by its founder(s). So for P20, when those at the church, in an open meeting of parents, suggested “there was no vision for the school”, this participant (one of the founders)
stepped in and rescued the situation. This illustrates how Special Character was considered worth fighting for, challenges though there had been. This also highlights the vulnerability of schools that are beholden to churches – the church can close them down, as happened to the Christian school in Auckland City (Beaumont Street) in 2000. In more than one case in this study, schools have been forced from their original site and this threatened the continuance of the school in each case.

The whole process of integration was stressful and costly for all the schools in this study. In at least two of the schools a consultant had been employed at $18,000 to see through the process of integration, in P20’s case only to have the request turned down by government. A second application, later, was successful. Evangelical Christian schools believe that it is the parents’ divinely-given right, based on biblical assertions, to decide how their children are to be educated. For government agencies appearing to be jeopardising their ability to do so, is seen as them ‘playing God’. Understandably “it is often forgotten that government is not God. Nor should government play God. Nor should the state usurp the prerogatives that God has ordained to the family or church” (La Haye & Noebel, 2000, p. 206).

Five participants made mention of the tension over the process of integrating, firstly because for a conservative Christian Board to decide whether partnership with government was biblically legitimate (P42 and P2 from two different schools). It resulted in the resignation of Board members in one case. One substantial school is determined to keep its level of debt very low lest their fears concerning government interference are at some stage realised, necessitating their withdrawal from the Integration Agreement (P49). Three of the six schools in this study had considerable debate before they entered into integration, knowing that they would lose a certain amount of independence and autonomy, knowing that there was far less room to steer their own course in terms of curriculum. Participant 34 retained a distrust of the Ministry and the researcher is aware of other Christian schools who will not integrate because of the influence and demands the state then makes on the school. Peter Frogley (2010), a school administrator, put it well when he said:

State control in education is now so ingrained in our thinking that we find it difficult to think about education in biblical terms. For example, most teachers could not conceive of a course being worthwhile unless it was approved by the state. Its credibility rests with state approval rather than God’s approval. (p. 7)

One tension that inevitably arises from integrating was raised by both P22 and P8 where the very structure set up by government (Boards/proprietors/principal) created more than one power bloc,

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65 Two biblical principles are sourced in this process: 2 Corinthians 6:14 “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” and in theology’s typology, Egypt is considered “a type of the world” (Wilson, 1957, p. 158). Isaiah 31:1 says “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help … but do not look to the Holy One of Israel”.

albeit with different functions. This was a tension, not with government, but one which happens within the structure of the schools themselves.

Stresses over setting up a facility and then integrating were widespread, as were the stresses associated with building workable relationships between Boards, proprietors and school management, the common denominator of these stresses being the proprietors. Several participants seemed considerably exercised about churches (as proprietors) having the oversight of a school, as the following comment of P12 illustrates concerning:

the outworking of [Special Character understandings]: if the people at the top don’t understand what it actually means to work in a school with Special Character and govern with Special Character; if they are looking at it from a more managerial point of view and trying to run it like a church it won’t work because there’s conflict of interest and conflict of ideas.

This participant questioned whether church-based proprietors understand what it means to work in a Special Character school, what it means to govern with Special Character and not conform to the business model. There is a perceived conflict of interest with a strong potential for conflict with the school’s leadership. Proprietors generally, do not think Special Character: they have, understandably, a different focus, a different commitment. The vision for the school is in the founder, not in the pastor.

Three of the six schools in this study are under a church-based model with participants from another making very strong reference to the tensions that may arise as a result of church-based schools with proprietor dominance. There is a perception that one way this is brought about is through the proprietor body ‘stacking the Board’ with proprietor personnel. It was pointed out by P1 that “we have a deliberate process and are stacked with proprietors, proprietor reps”. The process can occur because “the parent body tends to [re]elect those that have been on the Board”. Proprietor representatives who are appointed (not elected) to the Board, gain Board experience, can then stand as parent representatives later, while the proprietors appoint other representatives to replace them. Hence the parent representatives not only represent the parents but are from the proprietor body. If the proprietors are a church, this gives the church a disproportionate influence in the running of the school. It can become a de-facto denominational Board running a non-denominational school, and if the proprietor’s emphasis is a business-model, Special Character suffers.

It is true that the proprietors ‘carry the can’ financially, in providing buildings, a facility, and possibly the initiative to start the school. It is not always entirely true that the proprietor-church pays for the buildings, the facility, much less the resources in the school. The resources (furniture and all classroom needs) are supplied by the resourcing division of the Ministry of Education and the
buildings that are in place, by virtue of bank loans/mortgages, are paid for by the parents who are levied by the proprietors under their Integration Agreement. It is only a half-truth that “he who pays the piper calls the tune”, as one pastor-proprietor put it when defending his right to decide the direction for the school. The implication was that the church paid for the school. In theory, a church could borrow 100% for its buildings, open a school, have the student levies pay off the mortgage (at no cost to the church) then close or move the school. They are left with a suite of buildings they did not have to pay for. Even if the school is not closed, but is developed further, the school is entirely at the mercy of the proprietors as to what provision is made by way of facilities. If the school does not follow the policies or wishes of the proprietor, over whatever issues may arise between them, the proprietor can exercise control by consciously using development (or lack of it) by virtue of their controlling parent-generated proprietor funds. This can be construed as a form of blackmail to exercise a disproportionate voice in the school’s operating. While the issue is not Special Character per se, such tensions may have an adverse affect on the Special Character of the school given that undercurrents are generally felt by others not directly involved.

The control factor of proprietors was also illustrated by two principals in this study having been ‘moved on’ under the influence of proprietors. Church proprietor P26 was not at all sure about trusting Special Character to the school – “You cannot assume Board employees understand the Special Character and uphold it”. This proprietor was deemed by P57 to be the most Special Character sensitive person in the school. Hence their comment that “it is the church that runs the school” even though the proprietor was not an employed staff member. “Maybe the principal, too, [runs the school]” he added. With reference to those who were unhappy about things, P57’s judgment began with the words “If people weren’t comfortable with the way the proprietor runs things here …” indicating the proprietor-dominant role. This stance was approved of by P56 as mentioned earlier, who felt that being under the umbrella of such a proprietorship board was safe – in safeguarding the school’s Special Character.

In the case of another school, P52 was quick to point out that the proprietor simply needed to threaten to close the school down to make his voice heard and establish his authority. That there had been tensions is reflected in the statement concerning their working together, that “it is hundreds of percent better than it was five years ago”. Such tensions can be a deterrent to others getting involved at Board level. One of those was P64 who had initially been reluctant to get involved as he had observed the “internal politics and the egotistical behaviour of principals and proprietors … quite shocking” as played out in another Christian school not in this study. If the better informed people do not get involved at Board level because of the politics, Special Character suffers.
Part of the tension of proprietor versus school in P52’s school was blamed on “proprietors who didn’t know what they were supposed to be doing”. Even in the upgrading of the statement of faith that the Board had for the school (that is, the set of Bible doctrines believed), there was a point where the pastor was “pushed to the limit” in being asked to remove all pentecostal references – the dogmatism was removed, but not the pentecostal concepts – “So I said ‘No, we won’t because that is our roots’ ” (P52). The question is well asked: “Who holds the vision for the school?” In law the proprietors do, determined at the point of integration. But by default, proprietors can choose to, and tend to become, less and less involved, so that the initiative falls into the hands of either the principal or the Board of Trustees. In P10’s school it had likewise drifted that way until a new pastor (proprietor) came along who was unhappy with the situation and sought to retrieve it:

So it has been a gradual working through with the proprietors … on endorsing them as the vision-holders and giving every opportunity for them to have input into the Special Character of the school, through strategic plans and the like. (P10)

The school rightly acknowledged the proprietors in this case as the vision-holders as they had founded the school.

Dickens (2006), addressed the tensions encountered between church and school. One of the issues he raised was “a heaviness of control under the guise of biblical authority” (p. 115). Speaking of “a leadership control”, he mentioned “the accompanying destructive effects not only on the communities but the people who lead them” (p. 115).

But the tensions between school and proprietor are not confined to spiritual or philosophical issues. For the church, there may be the seeming abuse of church property where “the church was being taken for granted” (P52) – “food between the keys on the keyboard … equipment broken … chairs written over … chairs broken … light bulbs not replaced”. In this instance the proprietors locked the school out of the church auditorium until the school ‘got the message’ and exercised discipline appropriate to the use of the auditorium (P52 and P28). This was accepted in good grace by the school. Serious functional weaknesses are a denial of the very Special Character that the schools profess to uphold.

There may also be issues relating to the principal. More than one principal in these six schools has been moved on as mentioned earlier – in one case the founding principal who steered the school through its first nine years, had done the pioneering work, taken the risks and the cut in salary. With new proprietors and a desire to integrate, it was felt another leader needed to take the school to the next level. In one school, the proprietors had three principals, each for two and a half years then settled down on the fourth. The moves were more proprietor-instigated or related rather than Board-
instigated or related. These were all historical tensions with the tension between the proprietor and principals rather than proprietor and Boards. At the time of the research, all six schools had long-standing principals.

In summary, it can be very stressful pioneering the establishment of a Christian school especially by founders (in four of the six schools) who launched out without great financial backing, but in response to their own strong sense of call. Similarly the process of becoming integrated can be costly, hotly debated and stressful. In the church-related schools, the possible tensions the school (particularly the principal) has with the proprietor (particularly the pastor as spokesman for the proprietors) was evident because of shared facilities and the financial structures in place. They had to work together as they were dependent on each other. Where this failed, the principal could become the casualty and have to move on. Power struggles were also a possible source of tension, whether that be within the Board of Trustees or between the three decision-making authorities: the proprietors, the Board of Trustees, or the school’s management team. At the heart of some of these tensions is the matter of finance.

Financial Issues

Although tensions so often concern people – what they do or do not do (proprietors, Boards, principals) – the handling of money creates its own tensions and can impact on the outworking of Special Character. School Boards often spend considerable time debating financial issues. The neo-liberal educational context in New Zealand created pressure on schools to function under a business model (The Treasury, 1987). Having to do so created for some, a tension with their vision of a ‘ministry’ model where lack of finance caused them to lean more on God (through prayer) in a belief that the needs would somehow be met by the giving of others, or by school personnel making greater sacrifices, which various teachers have done by working (prior to integration) on half a state salary (such as P14 and P5), as mentioned earlier. One interview question asked, “Is Special Character schooling a ministry or a business?” This is a complex issue with its constraints and contradictions. The question and its responses must be seen in the light of the financial context and the educational environment in which these schools operate. Firstly, the neoliberal policy context forces a market model that recasts education as a private good rather than what could once have been taken for granted as being a public good (Crawshaw, 2011). This put increasing pressure on schools to function under a business model (Dale, 2008). Secondly, there is the social context in which concerned parents want schooling that addresses the values espoused by these parents, values that speak more to the ‘ministry’ concept than the ‘business’ concept. Thirdly, there are tensions in having to address state imperatives to ensure that Christian schooling remains viable. If it is primarily a ministry to which participants felt called, presumably they would do it whether they were
paid well or not – as evidenced by those who had worked underpaid. If it was primarily a business, the dollar-profit-motive would dominate: the business, for example, could be a ‘cash-cow’ of the local church that sponsored the school. Many respondents regarded Christian schooling as both, knowing that if the books did not balance, there would be no school. However, a balance is necessary, with P49 adamant that “the minute Special Character [becomes a business] you lose your Special Character”. Participant 2 also believed that a ‘corporate devotional life’ among the staff was necessary in the preservation of Special Character as this tended to engender a sense of ministry in the staff. Wolters (2005) suggests that: “Educators … develop an intuitive sense for the distinctive structure of a school; if school board members try to run it like a business, they recognise that violence is being done to the nature of an educational institution” (p. 26).

A more recent (2011) ongoing tension in which the state has been involved, affecting five of the six schools in this study is the financial offer made in the current round to teachers in ‘Area’ schools66 in New Zealand. The Unions involved (N.Z.E.I. and P.P.T.A) deem it necessary to take Industrial Action. This poses a tension among staff in Special Character schools. Principal P29 made the following comments in a document in this context:

The Board of Trustees recognise a union member’s individual entitlement to take industrial action. It would be fair to summarise that the Board is of the view that industrial action on the part of employees of [the] College does not reflect well on what they, the Board, believe to be the tenets of our Special Character and essentially a biblical view. I fully support this thinking. My personal view is that I choose not to withdraw or partially withdraw my labour as an appropriate way for me as a Christian to address any industrial matters. It is my belief that as I reflect on the past few years here at school, we have had a growing desire to be authentic and consistent in the outworking of our Christian worldview. Is it time we now explored other ways to raise matters of injustice in terms of the very poor offer concerning pay and conditions for area schools? (Document 3) (Underlinings mine)

In summary, the business model set up by legislation under ‘tomorrow’s schools’ has a strong purpose-component: an economic one, that runs counter to what Special Character schools are all about, but it is a tension that has to be lived with. There are, indeed, financial tensions in Special Character schools (as there are in other schools) and particularly in their original establishing. Like other schools they are also subject at times to working with inexperienced finance managers. If tensions were to emerge over finance, it is more likely to occur through the structures established by state legislation as the next subsection indicates.

**Legislative Issues**

Whatever tensions may arise from within a school, be it theological, issues of emphasis, issues with structure or finance, schools generally try hard not to fall foul of government goodwill. You do not

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66 Five of the six schools were Area schools. Area schools cater for students for their entire 13 years of primary and secondary schooling. Area schools are a relatively small group of schools in New Zealand.
'bite the hand that feeds you'. There are tensions that schools feel are created by the interpretation of state legislation by government departments even if the schools must ‘suffer in silence’.

One tension with the state was the extent of compliance issues. P42 observed that “we seem to spend a lot of time scrambling to comply with Ministry regulations and requirements, rather than focus on our Special Character expression”. In another place he said:

In order to receive the goodies that came with integration, there was a lot of emphasis on complying with things … we had to do this, we had to do something else here because that’s what the Ministry want … or that’s what ERO wants. … A lot of your energy and direction is going into compliance stuff.

While it is acknowledged that with state funding/rights, there comes responsibility and accountability; it is the level of this that is found irksome. However, it was felt that “there has been a lot of community support for some of our battles with the Crown” (P26), with much of their recent battles being given wide coverage in the local press as P9 also related.

Just as P26 mentioned roll-capping by government, so did P67, P52 and P10. In this sense, they are not free to chart their own destiny (P67) to outwork their Special Character fully. This is perceived by the schools as a convenient blocking mechanism of what was once considered one of New Zealand’s ‘growth industries’. There develops in these schools disproportionately high waiting lists, as referred to earlier, and the public are denied a ‘freedom of choice’ that the ‘reforms’ of the 1980s were supposed to promise. “State intervention” was how P52 described the roll-capping mechanism put in place by the state. It demanded an ‘Enrolment Scheme’ – usually put in place to protect the enrolments at similar neighbouring schools. Although there were no other evangelical Christian schools in the district to threaten, the scheme must still be put in place. Roll-capping was not a tension – rather, a contention, for P10. (A tension may only affect one party; a contention is an arguable matter between two parties).

I think that the greatest impact [of the Ministry of Education on the school] has to be that they roll-cap on schools and make it so very difficult for us to apply for roll-cap increases. We know it is tied primarily to financial considerations because as soon as they increase them they have to provide an enormous amount towards facilities, especially if you are in a high-growth area. … It has also been … an ideology that really does not respect the choice of parents to have an education for their children that they would desire. … [In fairness] my interactions with the Ministry … at a local level have been ones that have been very positive.

In summary, the compliance requirements involve form-filling and returns common to all schools, but no less a detraction from the task of educating itself, in the context of a Special Character environment, requiring an army of subsidiary/ancillary staff that never existed thirty years ago. The
issue of roll-capping is perceived to be a political tension in the light of provision in the legislation for *Special Character* schooling – but at the discretion of the Minister of Education of the day. Hence the long waiting lists some of these schools have. The capping runs counter to the spirit of the new right ideals that parents should be able to give their children the kind of education they desire for them.

**Issues From What is Prioritised**

Within the school systems themselves there was sometimes a lack of shared understandings concerning *Special Character* and evangelical concepts; there were differences as to what is prioritised – academics or *Special Character*; and some schools seem to suffer from deficient management systems. The place of Biblical Studies was also contended. Was it to be prioritised, or is it an add-on, not really part of the *Special Character* per se? There is also a mild timetabling tension over the very offering of Biblical Studies because of the over-crowded curriculum. “It is just an ongoing tension really … one that really threatens *Special Character*” (P54). Timetabling is a source of tension in this regard. A further issue emerged concerning priorities when discussing the ultimate goal of *Special Character* schooling. “Education is important because we are a school”, said P15, “but the Christian character input is of more importance, because you can get an education [without *Special Character*] anywhere. So we have to educate them with *Special Character* being very central”. Principal P10 concurred saying that the ultimate goal of *Special Character* schooling was “to have people impacted by the gospel of the love of God through Christ”. This was counter to what other participants in his school were saying: namely that a good education was the ultimate goal, albeit in a Christian context. The end goal was the same as the church, P10 ventured, but the processes of educating were vastly different. He argued for “an integrated wholeness with Hebrew understanding of what it is to be human” rather than a Greek philosophy concept that separates mind and soul. “The Great Commission” is to make disciples and teach them … is our first priority. But how we do that is through having students realise their full potential in order to impact the world” (P10).

So much depends upon the Management Systems in prioritising *Special Character*. *Special Character* for P1 was “not having as great an impact as [it] should … the management systems and processes have not kept up; we are playing catch up”. And another Board member (P42) from the same school, referring to *Special Character*, said “we actually don’t know what that looks like any more,” and he said he would score the school a 3 out of 10 on *Special Character*. Such anomalies were the exception, but I noted they were there.

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67 Matthew 28:18-20
By way of summary, *Special Character* schools need to define their terms well so that all staff are very clear as to what is meant when talking about *Special Character*. Effective management systems need to be in place so that there are clear expectations on all staff as to how their work is to be *Special Character*-contextualised, so to minimise possible anomalies that seem to exist currently. The role of Biblical Studies in a crowded curriculum needs to be thought through and clearly articulated, to avoid the tensions arising from competing for time.

**ACADEMIC ISSUES**

In this section the *secular-sacred divide* will first be discussed, followed secondly by two curriculum issues – that of the Health curriculum as it concerns spirituality and the sex education and science curriculum issue concerning mankind’s origins. The third issue is Ministry of Education related – the ERO’s relationship with these *Special Character* schools. The fourth pair of issues concern challenges to *Special Character*, primarily by academic work, but also by current culture.

**The Secular-Sacred Divide**

The first issue of the secular-sacred divide, is historical; for there was some debate over the very issue of historical secularisation. As P62 said: “[This school] is in the state system, it is a state school, a state school with *Special Character*”. When it was suggested that state school education by legislation has to be secular, P62 asked: “What did secular mean?” So I said “non-religious” and he said: “No”. So I said “that’s what the legislation states”. He said: That’s because they have reinvented the word ‘secular’. When it was signed up at the end of the 1800s, they said it was secular and that was meant to be non-denominational because the Christians couldn’t agree. Wasn’t that the way it was worded? Because the government at the time was so sick of the Baptists and Presbyterians the Anglicans and the Catholics not coming to agreement that they said “right, we’ll have state schools, but it won’t favour any particular denomination” and in my view that’s what secular means. Now it has been reinvented to mean something else, but in my view when that was signed off … and I’m no historian, but the little bit of reading I’ve done, was in Sweetman’s book *A Fair and Just Solution*, I think that comes out in that book. … Those who have power of the language have power because they can re-interpret things. Like this particular word that can go in a particular direction; they’ve re-interpreted it and said: “No, it means this, and because it means this, we can do that”. The meaning of words is very important. (P62)

Patrick Moran’s view as expressed in the *Tablet* (in the early 1870s) was that he was opposed to denominationally-mixed schools. This was his understanding of ‘secular’ at that time for he stated the Catholic view (which is also the view of most evangelical schools education writers as in Edlin 2004; Belcher, 2004; Zylstra, 2004) that all education was religious; secular education was a contradiction of terms (cited in Sweetman, 2002). Even more recently church schools are sometimes
thought to be secular, as by P36 who attended one: “But when we came here it was so different – it’s a way of life; it’s not just Christian education over here and the rest of it over there”.

There were tensions over the secular versus non-denominational interpretation of earlier legislation as it had a bearing on the need for Christian schooling. The concept of setting up a Christian school as a subset of a state school on the same site appealed to P8, but only to P8 of the participants interviewed. Other participants, as explained elsewhere, were too concerned for the overall contextual impact, and that unless all the personnel in the enterprise are totally committed to an evangelical faith, you do not have that *Special Character*.

**Curriculum Issues**

Evangelical schools do not stand alone under the act; they are obligated to teach the state *curriculum*. The areas of state curriculum that evidenced some unease were health education and parts of the science curriculum. I have covered both areas in more detail in Chapter 5 concerning perceptions held. A tension was created by government, according to P64, when the Ministry of Health wished to vaccinate girls at school as from 1st September, 2008, against HPV virus\(^{68}\) which leads to cervical cancer. It was assumed that the need for such vaccination arose primarily through sexual promiscuity. Because sexual promiscuity was in “conflict” and “inconsistent” with the *Special Character*, they advised parents who wanted their girls vaccinated, to take them to the local G.P. who would vaccinate without charge.

This was not the only tension concerning sex education. As P22 commented, one of the motivations for starting the school resulted from the Johnston Report on Sex Education in Schools – a report commissioned in the mid-seventies. It was felt that children needed to be “taught in a Christian atmosphere free from the pressures of pre-puberty sex education … that lobby was being thrust upon the state school system at that time” (P22). However, it is always a dilemma as to how much should be taught. For example, P63 expressed the concerns towards the very young:

> You don’t want your children naïve but you don’t want to tell them stuff too young either … You don’t want to turn on lights that don’t need to be turned on … maybe we need to stand up and say “no, not yet” … it is important that a lot of that gets taught at home … my daughter … is finding out all sorts of things in the playground.

This is not unique to Christian schools. It might have signalled the need for her daughter to be brought up to speed by a responsible adult, given that what is learned in the playground is not from teachers.

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\(^{68}\) HPV virus – Human papilloma virus
Another aspect of the health curriculum was its mention of spirituality. Spirituality can mean many things, but to the evangelical Christians in *Special Character* schools, spirituality is associated with a close relationship with God, such that we seek to be more like Him. Documents from within the schools in this study indicate that: “One aspect of our humanity is that we have the ability to make choices; hence we can choose how we will respond to God. That responding to God is the essence of our spirituality” (Document 5). The spiritual is the essence of all our being as we are commanded in scripture to love the Lord with all our intellect (mind), all our emotion, all our strength, all our sense of beauty, all our relationships. “Christian literature on spirituality, fits into three groups: the cognitive (right doctrine), mystical (right experience) and activist (right action) corresponding to head, heart and hands – engaging each in the pursuit of God” (Document 4).

The science curriculum tensions dealt with a very different issue – that of origins (Poole, 2012). Because the ramifications of Darwinism include questioning the existence of a Creator, and thus the reliability of Scripture, and therefore of the validity of a personal faith experience of eternal salvation, and the biblical metanarrative of the prophetic future – as well as a view of past history, some Christian folk are particularly sensitive to their children being taught that all life originated by chance – as a fact of evolution.

I think maybe on some things they shouldn’t teach it as “this is how it is”. Certainly in a Christian school, because it is not what we believe. You probably do have to teach it to a certain extent and not just shut your mind to it … I don’t know enough about it; … there are probably parts of it that do fit. (P23 – a parent)

Viewpoints about evolution from the participants ranged from off-hand comments to a more liberal approach. For example, P14, when referring to the scholarship behind evolution teaching said off-handedly: “we all know that’s not right, don’t we. Because God created the world and it is only thousands of years ago”. The issue of when the earth was created is debated among Christian creationists and I understood P14’s allusion was to a literal seven-day creation six thousand years ago. State schools are not permitted to teach creationism, for according to the Human Rights Commission (2009) “teaching creationism as science would be a breach of the need to be secular” (Question 10).

On the other hand P64 had a more liberal approach. He confessed to being “an old earth creationist” (OEC) Answers in Genesis (n.d. p. 1) and he saw the science staff as being “young earth creationists” (YEC) Ross (1993, p. 52) Sarfati (2008, p. 112). Because there were so many “intermediate positions” he was not bothered – “it doesn’t bother me that other people do believe in a different version … it is one of those polarising factors” (P64). Evangelical Christians, while labelling themselves as creationists to acknowledge God’s original hand in creation, nevertheless
allow for a variety of interpretations of the evolutionary process thereafter. Young Earth Creationists (YEC) interpret Genesis 1 literally and take the days mentioned as 24-hour days; some 6000+ years ago. Old Earth Creationists’ (OEC) belief systems vary; the Gap Theorists believe there were billions of years in the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Other OEC’s have Day-Age interpretations of two kinds: progressive creationism which interprets each creation day as millions of years, but did not use evolution in the development of the species. The other kind, theistic evolutionists, also say each creation day is equal to millions of years, the days overlapping each other and involved an evolutionary process. Given this possible variation in belief, tensions were raised within the schools surrounding government curriculum requirements regarding processes of evolution.

Ministry of Education Issues
The state also has a department which is independent of the Ministry of Education but answerable to the Minister of Education – the Education Review Office (ERO) who report publicly on all schools, including the evangelical Christian schools. Their reports are contestable and so tensions can arise as to how a school is perceived by the ERO. In P9’s perception there is an anomaly that ERO makes Special Character judgments at all. He acknowledged ERO was obligated to check for the Crown that the school is delivering on its Special Character – a non-Christian group sent in to make judgments on Christian issues. Another principal (P29) commented how the ERO team they encountered was headed up by a Christian, which he felt was fair and made good sense. To overcome the anomaly of being assessed by non-evangelicals, several of the six schools, as already mentioned, have put in place their own additional independent (external) Special Character audits, so that the audit has a feel of being peer-reviewed. However, there was no indication that these reports are available to the ERO.

Challenges to Special Character
There were also challenges to Special Character. One tension relating to educational ideas concerned the school programme being utilitarian versus Special Character, already mentioned in Chapter 6. Is it for the students to make a living or make a life? When asked about the greatest thing the school could do for his students, P8 said: “Schooling, for me, as well as the Christian education, is actually the education. I know my son is getting a good education and because of our beliefs, that he can develop that into that as well. So that is the best thing the school can do for the children – give them a good education in that environment. Because school is about education”. Another parent (P47) thought the best thing the school can do was to give them “a good education so that they can get a good job”. She was unsure whether a school could teach good morals: “The Special Character, I guess, you can do at home”. However, in talking about the issues and tensions in our society that
engender an embracing of *Special Character* education, she said she would choose *Special Character* over a good education.

Another (P34) felt the greatest thing the school could do for her children was to “educate them … into good study habits … it is more to do with education than the Christian thing”. She quoted her husband’s mantra that “you don’t go to the dentist because he is a Christian; you go to him because he is a good dentist”. Needless to say, the dentist is not there to influence the future destiny of the child or of society. Teachers arguably are. There were only a few participants who responded strongly in this way, as most perceived that the child’s spiritual formation is of greater concern than the quality of education itself – a perception that is at the heart of *Special Character*.

Another tension, (culture versus *Special Character*), related to the biculturalism that was fostered in one school with comments about culture from two other schools. Whether mono-cultural, bicultural or multicultural in its composition, a *Special Character* school will generally strive to produce a biblical culture inasmuch as it can reflect a biblical worldview in a modern setting. A contrasting viewpoint, accordingly, was expressed by P63 who emphasised how *Special Character* was about Christian education, Christian values, regardless of our race:

But as soon as our culture is making more noise than our Christianity, we are in the wrong school. I think sometimes the ethnic mix of our school has probably got more impact than it should … This should be about Christianity, not about Maori culture … there is … room to learn some, but not to overdo it. (P63)

She believed that the school’s Christian culture should rise above the expressions of local culture as determined by ethnicity. Similar sentiments were expressed by P3 who said:

I am known to say “This is not the Maori school; that is the one on the other side of town” – which I think gets up people’s noses sometimes … It doesn’t worry me what colour somebody is; what concerns me more is the attitudes that people have. There are attitudes that are specific to cultures.

Such strong sentiments are possibly an indication of the extent of the tension. However, the proprietor of this school was of the firm belief that biculturalism was part of the *Special Character* of the school (P26) and that Maori emphases were therefore justified. This feeling of racial tension was not expressed by the European students that were interviewed. The principal (P9) was concerned that the school’s culture was taking on the culture of the district. It was a transethnic culture, he thought – a culture of being laid back, based on the American gang culture. He did not label it as Maori, though the community was predominantly Maori. He thought the real ‘laid back’ culture was not too far underneath the surface and that the *Special Character* was deemed to be in very few of the children. He had looked to local church leaders where problems emanated from church family homes, but found little support from those quarters.
To summarise, tensions do arise over academic issues. An historical one taught us that ‘secular’ now means non-religious and we cannot therefore expect the state system to make provision for the spiritual growth in Christian understandings for its students. However, Christian schools are expected to teach the state curriculum and cope with the concomitant tensions that varying understandings of spirituality creates. They must find credible reconciliation between their Christian values and their teaching of sex education and the science of human and biological origins. Tensions arise from the perceived incongruity of the secular state assessing evangelical Special Character through the agency of the ERO. So much so, that these and other Christian schools have established their own audit processes for Special Character assessment. There were tensions concerning the state’s approach to salary settlements whereby teachers working in area schools became disadvantaged financially. Special Character evangelical schools needed a more united clear understanding as to what were the priorities in education – academics or the spiritual nurturing and a clearer united understanding as to the place of culture inasmuch as it affects Special Character. While this last issue was an academic issue (versus Special Character) it was, nevertheless also a tension within the school itself.

TENSIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL ITSELF

This last major section is concerned with three major issues that caused tension in the school itself – the worship times in the school assemblies, student issues and staff issues. A fourth sub-section is briefly concerned with three minor miscellaneous issues: the family, the Board of Trustees and culture per se.

School Worship and Assemblies

The issue of worship – whether there is any need for it, and what style it should be characterised by, were spoken of in emotive terms in three of the six schools in this study. The issue of worship was covered in detail in the Literature Chapter 3 and in Chapter 6 on Values: here it is covered in respect of tensions. Some of the tensions arising within the school concern the emphases given to worship vis-à-vis to academic work. “I long first and foremost to produce disciples for Jesus rather than people who took academic accolades and there have been fairly lively discussions as to which is the most important” (P24). Although for him both were important, he had his own preference. Then there were those who were “not comfortable with that style of worship, but basically, this is our Special Character and this is our style” (P67). In all but one of these six schools, the assembly worship times would be considered as ‘contemporary’ in that their Christian songs are modern (few or no hymns are ever sung) and accompanied by guitars, drums, keyboard and a singing lead group. This approach did not please everyone. Participant 41 was not impressed: “The worship leader is often greeted with stony looks … worship leaders can easily become student pleasers. There is the
danger to become flippant in worship”, which P29 suggests, reflects a tension between a focus on
the experiential side of worship that gives pleasure to the individual and a focus on God Himself that
gives pleasure to Him. One pentecostal church took a more generous approach, recognising that the
large staff represented a broad spectrum of worship styles and many of the enrolees were also
coming from a wider spectrum of evangelical belief (P52). At the conservative end of the spectrum,
P62, who was quoted earlier concerning the cringe factor, said:

I cringe sometimes when I see what happens here. I don’t think it is our place to have worship
as such, in terms of assemblies [which] are now worship experiences; I think that’s wrong …
I think that is crossing some of the denominational boundaries that we agreed that we won’t
go into … it makes me cringe. It is Arminian, it is worldly, it is loud, you can’t hear the
words, you can’t sing; it is performance, it is not worship. I like it with reverence and awe.

The above sentiments were reflected in comments from another school (P3) where worship times
were deemed to be:

Incredibly loud sometimes … extremely pumped up, but it doesn’t wash sometimes … [It is]
more about the people up front singing and playing the instruments than the audience who are
supposed to be participating in the worship – except when it suits them.

However, she approved of their choice of songs which are “a bit sort of funky and up to date … that
they can relate to” (P3). Just as the worship-styles of one particular group may dominate to the
chagrin of the others, this can also be the case in theological perspectives which come through in the
worship. The tension here was not so much a theological one as one concerning emphasis. In this
regard P64 likened the denominational mix to the various narrower streams leading into the larger
rivers – they all need to be going in the same direction, if we are to “enjoy the journey”. Ending up
with “one particular group’s interpretation of the Bible … becomes indoctrination”. He felt that
having a mix will bring some minor tension as they interact – provided he was satisfied that “this is
not some kind of fundamentalist jihad” (P64). In most of these schools, the worship was led by
senior students. It is the student issue we turn to next.

Worship times, (by way of summarising), designed to be times of joy and so defining of Special
Character (as they are) can also be a source of dissention when those in authority at the school have
an appreciation of worship at variance with the appreciation owned by the student body and the
churches from which they come. Most schools are understanding and accommodating; it is not just a
theological stance: it is partly generational. Young people like it loud and concert-style. Older folk
are more conservative and prefer expressions of dignity and awe.

**Student Issues**

Tensions of students or involving students are diverse. In the body of the script of this section certain
terms or phrases are a key to the issues raised: the students being biblically illiterate; the programmes
required need to be appealing to the students; avoiding mere head knowledge of the faith; believing students must be inoculated against error; the rigidity of placing Christian values onto students; the over-bearing approach of staff caused by constantly driving *Special Character*; the later integration of students into mainstream culture; the affect of non-preference students; the socialising of students with peers from other schools; the concerns over student pregnancies; and the turning away from the Christian faith, seen in some students. The spiritual impact, of the school is not just felt in its worship times. When asked about the gap between what is espoused in *Special Character* and what comes through, P10 said “It is the thing that tests my heart and mind on a constant basis”. None of the other five principals made such a comment. And although there were “less stand-downs, less suspensions”, yet he was still happy to admit he had some misgivings, especially given the extent to which young people today are biblically illiterate – “very limited knowledge of the Scriptures” (P10). He equated poor discipline and biblical illiteracy with evidence that *Special Character* was lacking in effectiveness.

“The hardest challenge we have”, said P48, “is that the Scripture programme should be exciting, equipping, inspirational and historical in its approach. It is living – it is a challenge” (P48). It seemed this school was not having too much success with the formal teaching of Biblical Studies. Not unlike another school where the student (P27) appreciated the spiritual input of his school but it had left him unchanged. “I haven’t had huge spiritual encounters but … there’s got to be something else … I’m not one of those holy, holy sort of people. I just believe there’s a God”.

There was another contrary view expressed in another school, when P42 suggested that “the purpose of the school is not indoctrination (just to have people with a lot of head knowledge). We’ve also got to be careful that we don’t inoculate kids (that’s just filling them up with religious stuff)”. I was not sure from his statement, the extent to which he believes *Special Character* should be applied throughout the school. It seemed he felt that without sensitivity in the way Christian sentiments were expressed, tensions arose from an imposed belief-system. Any negative student attitude does not need to be widespread for it to have a big effect if you have one very vocal student that thinks negatively towards the *Special Character*. Two student voices were insightful and gave a perspective often not seen by adult participants. One, (P13) made reference to those who are forced to be there. Also, P46 said, “I noticed … that a lot of people bring kids to Christian schools because they think [Christian schools] can fix them” – a kind of inoculation against worldly influences. This, P46 suggested, does work in individual cases, though this is not always appreciated by staff when there is a large number of such enrolments.
Student P13 indicated that rigidity in the faith can lead young people to believe that Christianity is a kill-joy way of life.

I think for example, the end of year, this year, *Special Character* means that they didn’t want us to do certain things that was traditional for Year 13 as we left school, and I think some of them weren’t fair, some of them were somewhat controlling. I think if you are going from a Christian perspective, I think it would have been neat to see, instead of saying “No” they could have said “look we are going along beside you and walk with you”. I think that sort of thing would be where [they could consider] a young person’s view of Christian character instead of an older person kind of imposing the Christian character.

This was a huge tension for the senior students as they perceived a lack of trust in the staff and an unwillingness to communicate at the students’ level. The perception was that of a ‘them and us’ situation, rather than ‘we’, which included staff and students. It militated against a student-acceptance of the *Special Character*.

The other major hassle that student P13 had was with the uniform. She expressed concern with the imbalance “because for me, that is focusing on the outward appearance rather than how you change inside”. I asked whether the uniform issue ranked high as a hassle factor among the student and she said:

Yes. I think that is one of the areas they fight most. … Checking your make-up, checking your clothes, checking everything, right. I think that may have been partly cultural, but also partly intimidating. And then it changed to where my Dean did a brilliant job in that she commended us on what we did right, in assembly, and then said “there are some concerns I’m having” and then explained them in a very loving manner. So I think it changed from a very harsh way of dealing with things to trying to do it in love.

What comes through in this is possibly that teacher attitudes are at issue rather than the rules themselves. If that was rectified the students would possibly be more accepting of uniform regulation.

The credible evidence of *Special Character* resides in the student if teacher P4’s assessment is correct. But students are exposed to societal behaviours that seem, to them, to be the norm. This may create a tension for the student. It is a:

- tension that we are separate from the world; we have a sub-culture, I guess, within mainstream society; our views are radically different from mainstream society and that is an issue of integration when they leave. For example, binge drinking is acceptable in mainstream society, whereas in Christian culture it is not. Sex before marriage is perfectly acceptable in mainstream society, but in the Christian world it is not. So yes, there are tensions in the society that we live in. (P4)

Evangelicals generally hold to ethical standards such as no sex before marriage. Sexual purity is espoused as being of high value. Something doesn’t seem to be working here, the way it was
destined to work regarding Special Character. Only two schools highlighted this issue, of the four schools that had a substantial senior school.

One concern picked up in a fourth school that concerned P34 was the disproportionate number of pregnancies among the girls soon after they left school as mentioned by a student earlier. “The school is turning out solo mums”, she said. Other concerns were language usage and bullying. On hearing foul language on TV, another son commented, “I hear language worse than that at school all the time”. “Look Mum”, the daughter said, “The language is terrible”. Bullying was also an issue this parent/Board member had to contend with, to the degree her daughter was taken out of the school and put in a state school. Another disappointment for this Board member was the “sloppy uniforms”. She questioned the influence on the students – “It is just not as positive all the way through as I would like to believe it should be … and this still pertains”. It made this mother question seriously the effectiveness of Special Character.

Should there be too many non-preference students in a Special Character school, the effect can work the other way as one school found prior to integrating. Accepting preference versus non-preference can be a tension. “People put their kids in hoping that it is going to fix them, when they’ve actually got a huge level of dysfunction in themselves” (P58). However, it was not the non-Christian students in the school that was a problem for student P40, but the socialising with Christian kids from the local state high school whom they met up with at church youth group – “we got a lot of flack … and it is hard for the school sometimes … they give our students a hard time”. Yet there was no sense of resentment in the way this was conveyed. Another student, P13, found the so-called Christian students in her own school were the ones who hassled her. They came with comments such as “oh, you’re a goodie goodie” or “I’m already a Christian, don’t tell me that”. For the researcher there seemed to be the danger of creating an artificial environment where the students align themselves with the theology rather than with a vibrant Christian life.

Failure of some students to ‘buy-in’ to the Special Character nature of the school concerns student P13:

I could probably safely split my [class] year into halves, where one half is very pro the Special Character; they’re very inspired by it, they’re full on for what the Special Character is. They struggle with bits of the school because we’re ready to leave high school. But the Special Character itself as a Christian school, they are very pro. The other half I would in many terms, say they are pushed the other way, due to the Special Character, in some shape or form. In fact that some of them are put off by it, they say “we shouldn’t have this being pushed down our throats, we shouldn’t have this sort of thing”.
Then why are these antagonists in the school? Does *Special Character* also generate a turning away from the Christian faith? They are there because, as P13 went on to say, “they were forced to come here. So those who weren’t forced to come here, I think are more receptive to it. But those who are forced to come here, they are a lot more anti what is done. [And that’s a] very strong voice”. It is not only non-preference students who have a problem with *Special Character*. Students from Christian homes who are forced to attend these schools against their will may well find they do not fit, as P13 suggests. For them, there are big tensions which are projected onto others in that environment.

By way of summary, until a longitudinal study is undertaken, the gap between theory espoused and the reality (Argyris & Schon, 1974) will only be known anecdotally. There are successes and failures in every branch of education and *Special Character* evangelical schools are no exception. Girls fall pregnant; some students are or become atheistic and negative. Students must deal with unbending staff, and at times a sense of being indoctrinated. The school is not there to ‘fix’ all young people but rather to reinforce the values espoused by evangelical parents. Teacher attitudes are crucial factors in getting students on side, and need to explain sensitively the rationale behind rules. For many students, there is a steep growth curve in strength of character if they are to survive spiritually, if *Special Character* is to be held to, on the weekend, in other environments and when they leave school.

**Staff Issues**

Two issues concerning *staff* that give rise to tensions or anomalies are issues that, sadly, are negative in themselves – lack of understanding concerning *Special Character*, and incompetence and competency issues. Nor are indiscretions unheard of in evangelical school staff as mentioned in an earlier chapter. These all impact on the enactment of *Special Character*, albeit in isolated cases.

There appeared to be some staff whose responses regarding some aspects of *Special Character* seemed superficial. One in particular was generally clear thinking concerning most aspects of *Special Character* and could articulate her thoughts uniquely, creatively and succinctly. But on other aspects, P32’s perceptions conflicted with the reality, particularly around administrative/financial aspects of school management and the teaching of evolution. The teaching of evolution is not against *Special Character* *per se* as P32 suggested, but how it is taught is reflective of the *Special Character*. In both matters (financial viability and evolution) the views expressed could well have been inadequate communication. Her views were anomalous to the general understanding.
Participant 10 alluded to the competency procedures he had to work through. The state does not have a monopoly on incompetent teachers. Christian teachers are expected to be competent, yet some who choose that profession are not suited to it and should be doing other things. It creates a tension for the Christian principal. Schools have competency procedures all schools have to follow. Where staff feel they have been unfairly treated, they can take legal action in the form of a grievance case. Reference was made to such by P49 where this had taken place. This is not necessarily connected with Special Character, especially in the case of competency which can arise in any school staff. However, incompetency challenges the effective enactment of Special Character.

In summary, there needs to be clarity of understandings, possibly by way of professional development in Special Character to deepen those understandings, especially where they apply to controversial aspects of the curriculum. Staff would then be better informed as to what to look for in Special Character and how to assess its efficacy. Staff must be consistent, competent, and comprehensive in the enactment of Special Character if the tensions arising from these issues are to be avoided.

**Miscellaneous Problems**

In this final section of issues within the school, matters concerning insularity and the resultant lack of unity were mentioned. The essentials of coherency between home, school and church have earlier been referred to, not to mention coherency within boards. Former home-schooling parents’ expectations created tensions. The culture wars also created tensions. There are less than a hundred evangelical integrated Christian schools in New Zealand, and so there is an insularity among the students, being so disbursed in the community (P10). Christian schools that don’t get along with other Christian schools, experience another form of insularity (P41).

Parents of Special Character schools who have previously home-schooled often have high Special Character expectations and tensions arise when those expectations are not met (P58). Societal tensions can lead schools to focus on the negatives of society rather than focus on the great good in society, resulting in an introspective, inward-looking subculture: a problem in itself (P4). Such ghetto attitudes arise from the culture wars that Colson and Pearcey (1999) talk about. According to Sproul (1986), the battle between the Christian and the humanist is “being fought and will continue to be fought in the area of education” (p. 75). Hence Christian schools. The culture war is “at its most fundamental level, a clash of belief systems” (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p. 12). Participant 34 also made particular mention of the resultant tensions. The incursion of some aspects of current culture in Christian schools threatened the preservation of Special Character.
In summary, the question of the school’s relative insularity, whether by its location or self-imposed, was considered. While there is often a coherence between home and school values in *Special Character* evangelical schools, such is not always the case; there is a wide variety of understandings and varyings in family values. The former home-schoolers particularly can often expect higher standards for the school than the school does for itself. Sometimes the conflict is within the family itself where parents are at variance with each other over their perceptions of Christian schools.

The final issue dealt with was that of the culture. For some, Christian schooling appeared to be a cultural escape. It is also possible, it seemed, that some staff drifted into *Special Character* schools, unable to survive the more hurly-burly of the state system, even though they would constitute a small minority. The tension is worldviews-in-conflict and is evidenced in the particularities of the state’s social policy that runs counter to conservative Christian thinking.

*Special Character* schools suffer from both anomalies (irregularities) and tensions, many of which are unique to these schools. While I have highlighted numerous tensions in the foregoing paragraphs, many of these tensions could be classified as being anomalous in that they are isolated tensions. A ‘bird’s eye view’ of the summary can be seen in Figure 8.2 which follows:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANOMALIES</th>
<th>AN ALTERNATIVE SUMMARY</th>
<th>TENSIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naivities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine lack of understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td>Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethos Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Theological</td>
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<td>Most Tensions themselves</td>
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Figure 8.2: Summary of Tensions and Anomalies
Historical tensions concern the very secularisation of education in New Zealand (P62, P36). The setting up of a private Christian school later to be integrated as a Special Character school is stressful (P34), especially when there are no financial backers (P5, P65) and finding suitable property is difficult (P5). Local council requirements and that of the Resource Management Act is burdensome (P20, P8), while the teachers who set out to establish such a school do so at great financial sacrifice (P14, P9). The process of integrating, five of the six schools found difficult: it was deemed excessively costly (P20) and for some it was a theological dilemma to integrate (P2, P42). In the process, mistakes were made over how much land a church would integrate – leaving the church unable to expand (P52). There were other historical tensions like a mini-student revival that upset some staff (P1). More than one school had staff that let them down through moral indiscretions (Ps 63, 25, 52, 22).

Political tensions were both internal and external. Of the internal tensions, the most pronounced concerned the role of the proprietor. Does an evangelical Christian school function best as church-based or as an independent institution? (P12). Who holds the vision of such a school – the proprietor? The founder? The principal? (Ps 26, 57, 56, 10). In the church-based schools there was proprietor dominance and a question over its disproportionate influence (Ps 1, 52, 64). The school comes under the biblical emphases of the church (P52) and the church can exert considerable control (P52). However, the school can also take the church too much for granted (P52, P28). Whether the church was denominational, non-denominational or undenominational had been debated (P7). On the Board of Trustees there were isolated power struggles and power-blocks evident (Ps 8, 1, 22).

Of the external political tensions, the most pronounced concerned roll capping (Ps 26, 67, 52, 10). These schools can have waiting lists long enough to fill two medium-sized schools. Hence their frustration. If a school wants to cut loose from the church’s proprietorship, the school must renegotiate all over again with government (P52). Government are also responsible for teachers’ salaries and in the negotiation round treated those working in Area schools (which most of these schools are) with conditions less favourable to the rest. Do these teachers strike or not strike? – a biblical dilemma for them (P29). The role of the Education Review Office brought its associated tensions, some of which were distinct to these schools (Ps 9, 29, 22, 34).

The administrative tensions involved finance and staff. The level of debt was a concern (P49, P34) as there was a level of distrust in future governments that might make de-integrating necessary to preserve their Special Character (P9). Concern was expressed over inexperienced finance managers (Ps 8, 15, 42, 54, 52) and over the school being financed at the expense of a church (P52). In church-
school relationships the principal could be seen as ‘the meat in the sandwich’ (P12). A principal does not always get the staff (s)he thinks (s)he is getting (P3, P63). The use of relief teachers was of major concern when such staff do not meet the *Special Character* requirements (P67, P17, P58). Staff also saw the mighty load of bureaucratic compliance issues an inhibiting factor to focusing on *Special Character* (P42, P26).

On matters of ethos, P2 was concerned that in the interests of non-denominationalism, they could not be seen to be sacrificing their roots. Participant 48 highlighted the twin thrusts of discipleship and evangelism having to be held in tension. Students that carried the *Special Character* ethos in their person were often goaded by uncommitted fellow-students (P43) while those students with Christian friends from other schools did not always give them an easy time (P40). The most pronounced tension over school *Special Character* ethos concerned the worship-style in school assemblies (Ps 62, 7, 41, 29, 24, 67, 52, 3).

Pedagogical issues ranged from principles, to practice to programme. What was the ultimate purpose of education? (P10). It was certainly not to inoculate students against a wayward way of life (P46, P13, P42). What was to be prioritised – *Special Character* or academics? (Ps 54, 33, 58, 8, 24). Was the teaching to be Christ-centred, teacher-centred, child-centred or Bible-centred? (Ps 20, 15, 10, 56). When it came to practice, what does it mean to teach Christianly? (P41, P10). Much richer professional development is needed if *Special Character* is to be retained (two schools providing this). The non-preference students (P43) and the iconoclastic students from Christian homes (Ps 58, 22, 10) were also a concern. In the school’s programme, sex education and moral issues were to the fore in the thinking of some (P64, P22, P63) while atheistic Darwinism was a focus for others (P33, P14, P34). Concepts of spirituality were expressed in terms of evangelical Christianity (P12 and documents).

On cultural issues, strong resistance surfaced concerning humanism (P4, P58, P34). Biculturalism embedded in *Special Character* was referenced by Ps 16, 30, 63, 3, 26, 9, as a source of tension. Family life of students and its quality, highlighted by P66 and P10, did not always match up with *Special Character* claims. As much as schools differed over theological issues, they still got on well together. The fundamental nature of eternal truth raised tension for some (P2, P25) while the central issue was at heart, the dichotomy between Arminianism and Calvinism (P49), played out in *Special Character* schools as a tension between the experiential and propositional truth emphases (P10, P49). Militant pentecostalism was an issue where it surfaced (Ps 22, 26, 9, 57). Few made mention of hermeneutics but P64 challenged the traditional evangelical mode of biblical interpretation.
As mentioned above, many of the ‘tensions’ could be classified as anomalies in that few of the 62 participants of this study made mention of them. But anomalies there were which I have classified as being either naïveté, genuine lack of understanding, incongruities and inconsistencies. A student, considering a teacher in an evangelical Special Character school need not be a Christian, could well be considered naïve (P16); likewise, parents who considered the principal need not be a Christian (P47). Special Character, equated with special education, evinced a naïve understanding of what Special Character is (P53). To dismiss all evolution-teaching out of hand indicates a naïve approach to the considerable scholarship surrounding that area of learning (P32). Thinking that no gap exists between espoused theory concerning Special Character and theory-in-use, is naïve (P66). Suggesting that the government cannot close down a Special Character school is naïve (P32).

Of those areas where there was a genuine lack of understanding I have signalled the effort staff will go to try and make the curriculum Christianised (P53). The suggestion that an evangelical Special Character school could be a subset of a secular state school (P8) likewise indicates a lack of understanding where each of them are heading. Biblical illiteracy (leading to a lack of biblical understandings) was highlighted by Ps 10, 48 and 27. Wanting Boards of Trustees to reshape Special Character until we all agree (P17) is a lack of understanding as to who determines Special Character.

Some statements or understandings given by some participants were incongruous, out of keeping with the mainstream of thought given by the rest. In two cases there was a lack of shared understandings of the common terminology used giving rise to the possibility of ‘talking past each other’ (P34, P58). There were some superficial understandings by some trustees of Boards (P1, P42) and by some proprietors (P42, P52). There were some who questioned whether Special Character could be identified at all in a Special Character school (Ps 23, 56, 66). Expecting to see it in the paperwork (P8) was incongruous. There was a lack of clarity in one school over the new birth (P2, P25), a key plank in evangelical thinking. One (P66) questioned the efficacy of prayer in certain situations, while four (Ps 15, 16, 47, 34) indicated an emphasis on a utilitarian education as being the best thing a Special Character school can do for its students. Participant 66 considered that Special Character cannot be lost while P56 considered evangelical schooling was not a para-church activity; it is part of the church’s ministry. Not all participants held that all staff positions need to be tagged positions, but again, they were the exceptions. The most incongruous aspect of the data, was that, to this researcher, the students seemed to be more Special Character aware than all other participants.

The inconsistencies that emerged in the perception of this researcher were various. The call for coherence between home, church and school did not always happen when school authorities were
very conservative and the student body came predominantly from charismatic churches (P62, P13). The schools claimed their teaching positions were all tagged yet not all felt that all positions needed to be filled by Christian believers (P67, P33). In some staff there was an ambivalence towards *Special Character* and some made reference to incompetence (P10, P49, P56). For hard-to-fill positions there was recourse to the correspondence school where students come under the direct influence of teachers not necessarily of the *Special Character* type (P25). Several made reference to the fact there is not always coherence between home and school values in individual cases (Ps 56, 46, 55, 1, 13). There were situations where it was suggested *Special Character* would not necessarily be seen (P49, P53). The saddest inconsistencies, all historical now, were those involving moral indiscretions of staff to which Ps 34, 42, 4, 30, 63, 28, 52, 22 made reference.

As mentioned above, perhaps the greatest anomaly of all was the greater understanding and awareness that the students themselves had of *Special Character* in action. Of the tensions, three were major and across all the schools: roll-capping, proprietor issues and the use of relief teachers. The rest were either very local, issues of debate, or issues where the exceptions highlighted the rules. Yet it must also be recognised that while an issue may be raised by very few it may give an insight or a hint of a much larger territory of concern.

**DISCUSSION**

For a study in evangelical *Special Character* schools to be useful, a discussion on the tensions found in them is necessary. The findings on tensions have been classified under four main headings and these form a useful outline for this discussion. They emanate from theological concerns, administrative concerns, academic concerns and from operations within the schools themselves.

Under the heading of theological concerns I have included the anomaly of variation in perceptions among participants as to what constitutes the ‘new birth’. Bebbington’s (1989) definition gives prominence to conversionism, a stance held by NZACS constitution (2012). A high view of scripture is evangelicalism’s distinguishing mark (Packer, 1958) and conversionism is enshrined in that view of scripture according to Bebbington. As noted in the discussion of Chapter 5, many participants indicated an emphasis on discipling in these Christian schools rather than on evangelising. This was also a reflection of the way the schools are constituted (90% ‘preference’). However, there are still those who hold to the primacy of the evangelistic task (Harris, 1999). This is partially offset by the mission trips in which some of these schools get involved, but does not mean that the school is mission-centred or student-centred.
Much of the literature has identified Christ-centredness as a major feature of these schools (Fowler, 1980a; Octigan, 1980; Walsh, 1997; Edlin, 2004; Wolterstorff, 1997). This was strongly supported in the participant voice, although some felt the orientation was more teacher-centred. Whatever the orientation, parents were concerned that family values and spiritual sentiments were in harmony (Pazmino, 2008). This was not always easily achieved, however, as students were representative of the evangelical spectrum – from the Reformed movement, who tend to be cessessionists to the charismatic/Pentecostals. Although Grigg (2005) perceived from his own research a thaw in the conservative camp to a more moderate stance on the charismatic issue, the tension is keenly felt in these schools, among staff in particular. While some schools choose to leave all controversial issues to one side, others seek to find a way through, paralleling Wimber’s 3rd wave (Wagner, 1988) that sought to find a middle road between traditional evangelicalism and pentecostalism.

Just as coherence of values were noted as being desired in the discussion for Chapter 6, parents were also concerned that the message of home, church and school were consistent, given the role of schooling as an arena in which the battle is fought between humanism and Christianity (Sproul, 1986); or, as Colson and Pearcey (1999) see it, as a site in which a clash of belief systems is played out in a culture war. As noted in the interviews, school personnel were aware of the disparaging jibes levelled at evangelical Christian schools and so were anxious to reject any labelling of them as being too insular or of having a ghetto attitude that, as noted earlier, Hathaway (1989) once suggested. However, despite a history of intra-evangelical tensions and their variable impacts on evangelical schooling and some home schooling options (Hunter, 1993; Badley, 2002; Baldwin, 1993, Erickson, 1997; Wheaton, 2012), this study suggests that many of those tensions have been subordinated to a more overarching purpose – one which, as noted in the discussion to Chapter 5, is not simply expressed through the practice of inserting aspects of Christian belief into their programmes to give them a veneer of being Christianised, as Gilling (1993) suggested they did, or through dogmatic indoctrination that, according to Thiesson (1992) is a charge often inappropriately levelled at them.

The stronger theological tension that continues is what is basically an Arminian-Calvinist divide between the conservative, Reformed believers and the more exuberant charismatic believers (Palmer, 1980; J.R. Williams, 2001). Although the New Zealand Evangelical Christian School literature tends to come from the Reformed sector (Greene, 1998, Pazmino, 2008, Scotchmer, 1986), as the research has demonstrated, these are secondary issues of the faith. There still persists a unity of purpose and mutual care and support among the schools, with the tension being manifested mostly in the worship style as mentioned later in this discussion.
Administrative tensions occur both in the establishment of Christian schools, in their integration into the state system, and in their administrative functioning. The historical section of this study has demonstrated that the very concept of integrating Christian schools by legislation created a wave of protest and opposition from the primary and secondary teacher unions (Bassett, 1976; PPTA, 2009). The research has identified charges that Christian schools were elitist and not in need of funding (Cross, 2008), responses to which cited evidence of the sacrifices that had been necessary to establish them. Contradictions relating to understandings about egalitarianism as they have impacted Special Character Christian schools (Fowler, 1980a; Mechielsen, 1980) have also been investigated and a number of criticisms that were levelled against them identified. The CDSE’s critique related to the desecularisation of education (Cross, 2008), the SPPE’s concern was to protect public education (Lee, 1993), and Minto’s (2009) objection lay in the possibility of indoctrination. The historical argument made by Catholics was that they were paying twice for their education (Moran, 1883), that education was being de-Christianised (Moran, 1894) and that society was being paganised (Wright, 1887). The study has indicated that these are the very tensions currently being raised and addressed by today’s Christian schools.

This chapter has demonstrated that the very process of ‘integrating’ was fraught with bureaucratic hurdles and costs, which have been interpreted by supporters of the schools as the state playing ‘God’ (La Haye & Noebel, 2000). This, in turn, could make it difficult to think biblically around education (Frogley, 2010). The study examined how deeply embedded state control is expressed in a number of ways today to create tensions for families seeking Special Character education and for the schools in their ability to extend their outreach and to prioritise their Special Character-based purpose. Participants from all of the schools in the study expressed concern about the state’s roll-capping of Christian schools. This they felt, was a political tension in that it ran counter to the purpose of both the Integration Act and the more recent Tomorrow’s Schools policy – to give parents choice, to allow the Christian population an education in a school of their home and church’s Special Character – whilst working in the interests of the local state schools by protecting them from falling rolls. State control was also expressed through the business model of management for schools (Treasury, 1987; Dale, 2008) and the creation of an educational market in which education becomes a private rather than public good (Crawshaw, 2011). According to some participants in the research, this seems to violate the biblical mandate to operate as a ministry – as faith-based schools under the overarching metanarrative of scripture (Wolters, 2005).

One interesting finding relating to administrative issues was a somewhat ambivalent response to the ERO, which differed somewhat from many of the commentaries from the wider education sector. Christian schools accept the principle that they need to be subject to accountability measures to the
same level as state schools (Bassett, 1976; Cross, 2008), despite the fact that the process is no less irksome for them than it is for state schools (Smith, 2002). The ERO reports of the schools were in the main favourable, suggesting high standards of performance. Positive performance outcomes have been observed for church schools elsewhere (Carey, Hope & Williams, 2001; Bayley, 2003; Renicks, 2003). The research indicated that acknowledgement of quality outcomes is perceived by school personnel to be an important factor in gaining public acceptance for these schools. In addition, because of the terms of the legislation, ERO inspection provided a basis for legitimation of their Special Character. So, although the literature suggests a greater underlying tension in the work of the ERO as being that between democracy and the demands of the economy (for example Smith, 2002), Christian schools have been shown in this thesis to work within these parameters without malice.

Governance issues within the school communities also created tensions, especially in relation to the proprietor’s role. As has been noted and demonstrated, proprietor involvement in the schools of the study extended from dominance at one extreme (‘the proprietor runs this school’) to very little involvement by those ‘who did not know what they were supposed to be doing’. In schools where the rights of the proprietor dominated, tensions developed if financial constraints were imposed. This led to a deeper underlying tension: should Christian schools be functioning under a church-led proprietorship or under an independent proprietorship? On this issue participant opinions were divided, were sometimes strongly held, and sometimes expressed theologically-based differences. The Reformed influence and that of parent-controlled schools-concept as espoused by Edlin (2004), and in line with Kuyperianism’s ‘sphere sovereignty’, for example, would not see the churches as having a mandate to control schools. However, within the literature, especially that which had taken account of educational contexts that have seen a church to secular shift, some writers have argued that schools wanting to retain a spiritual impact must identify themselves, to the public and the stakeholders, as being connected with a church body that emphasises their uniqueness (Appleyard, 1996). For Kenney (1998), this is important if religion is not to be marginalised or treated as either wholly irrational or non-rational. As has been noted in Chapter 7, these issues have much bearing on the preservation of Special Character, but also highlight the debate/tension about proprietorship, an emotive topic keenly felt in these schools.

The thesis also brought to notice the administrative frustration that arises for a principal particularly, in having to satisfy both a Board of Trustees and a proprietor. The principal can become the ‘meat in the sandwich’ as one principal put it. Church-based proprietors have denominational expectations, yet as Wagner (1999) points out, denominational boundaries have become blurred – and principals live with that reality in the parent-clientele, and so tend to take a non-denominational stance. Tensions can also arise over who holds the vision for the school – the proprietor, the founder, the
Board or the principal? Findings from the study suggest that, should the proprietor make that claim, a measure of coercion can be exercised, which Dickens (2006) sees as heaviness of control under the guise of biblical authority. Church leaders’ perceptions of and attitudes towards Christian schools vary, however. Some see the schools as being in competition with the church, others see Christian schooling as an essential adjunct to the church’s ministry (Sproul, 1986). Some see the schools as unprofessional. Astley & Day (1992) point out that the church has often ignored Christian education, a situation which might well have been fuelled by schools who give it an excuse for ignoring them. The participants in this study were strongly sensitive to this perception.

There was also some administrative tension in student management over what were regarded by some students as imposed values, though staff conceded that values are always taught, because you teach who you are (van Brummelen, 2002). It is part of the hidden curriculum where values are caught (Pazmino, 2008). De Pree (1989) stresses how one’s binding values of the organisation need to be taught. Snook’s (1972) suggestion that it is difficult to provide justification for values is not echoed in this study. The participants in this study have no such difficulty, their values being biblically-based. They would agree with Wolterstorff’s (1999) belief “that life requires the formation of beliefs where knowledge is not available” (p. 508).

Tensions concerned with academic issues were mostly academic within themselves, being philosophical issues over which there was a recognised deviation from secular thinking, but not contentious within the school. The secular-sacred divide, for example, is not an issue for writers who see all education as being religious (Belcher, 2004; Edlin, 2004; Zylstra, 2004). As Sweetman (2002) suggests, ‘secular education’ is a contradiction of terms. The schools in this study lay strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God in all of life whether these schools be Reformed-based or charismatic-based. The issue of the science curriculum was another in which very little heat was generated, as much as they had their own response to the state’s requirement to teach evolution theory – they simply teach it as theory rather than fact. Sarfati’s (2008) view of a young earth is held by some, others confessed to being old earth creationists. They are concepts held in tension but there was no evidence of controversy. Because of their Special Character designation, they are not impacted by The Human Rights Commission’s (2009) prevention of state schools teaching creationism as a breach of secularism. Poole (2012) in writing of science and religion in schools gives both arguments as do the schools in this study.

There were two major issues of tension within the schools themselves as outlined in this study. The first of these concerned the worship times in school assemblies. The problem is not exclusive to schools, hence the ‘Worship Wars’ referred to in the literature (Hansen, 2009). The literature
suggests that there is general agreement over the primacy and popularity of worship (Peterson, 2004), but tensions about how we worship, since it is how we worship that shapes our beliefs (Fournier, 2005). Although not an issue confined to New Zealand schools (Cooling, 2012), as noted in the discussion to Chapter 6, the contemporaneity in evangelical worship as it is encountered in these schools is the key point of contention, having been critiqued by the conservative evangelicals (Gordon, 2010) but also defended by others (Warren, 1995; Wagner, 1988). Dahl (1972), a generation ago, commented on a tendency to flippancy in modernising worship, a caution raised by participants in this study. Also of particular note in this study, the tension was always with adults – never the students, and seldom the parents.

The second internal issue of tension identified from the findings of the study concerned matters relating to academic staff. Staff were considered the front-line of Special Character impact in evangelical schools (English, 1998) making it incumbent to be Christ-like in everything, since ‘we teach who we are’ (Palmer, 1997; Giles, 2011a). Various participants argued that staff members are the guardians of Special Character. So for some, schools should be teacher-centred, as was once thought in Catholic circles (Nash, 1982). In accordance with ideas presented by Moses (2002), there were other viewpoints expressed that suggested a student-centred or Christ-centred interpretation. This reflects the complexity of perspective discussed by Piper (2010) in his rejection of the either/or thinking in Christian circles over many issues, some of which arise in the course of this research, such as head and heart, reason and faith, facts and beliefs, teacher-centred and student-centred, a business and a ministry, denominational and multi-perspective, theology (propositional truth) and doxology (experiential/worship), thinking and feeling (commitment and passion).

Tensions relating to staffing extended to the use of relief staff who replaced regular staff for whatever reason. There were strong expressions of concern both by school administrators and students who rejected the exposure to non-Christian teaching in a Christian school because, as discussed earlier in the thesis, they were seen as a potential threat to the maintenance of Special Character. There was also doubt expressed by other participants who were unsure of their position. The necessity to “teach Christianly” (Greene, 1998; Smith, 2006) was a problem to some as to what this really meant. The expression was used by some participants and with clarity of understanding, but disliked by others as having a religious tone to it. For these participants, there was enough stress in the compliance issues without adding a religious one, as though teaching Christianly was a benchmark concerning their ability to uphold Special Character. Coleman (1993) had observed the pressure New Zealand teachers in Special Character schools have to endure with compliance issues, along with teachers in state schools. But compliance issues do detract from their Special Character emphasis.
The tensions identified in this chapter existed in the operation of the schools. There were no tensions relating to the basis on which these schools are constituted – that the Christian Bible is a reliable guide for all matters of truth, relationships, values, and as a source of guidance. Hence, as the participants indicated on many occasions, a recourse to scripture is their first port of call in mediating tensions, be they concerning sexuality, authority, integrity, work-ethic or establishing a unity within them. When the scriptures are thus applied in a prayer-filled environment of deep concern for the welfare and benefit of others, a richness of brotherhood/sisterhood dominates. Remove that premise (the authority of the scriptures) and there is no evangelical Special Character; the tensions would be no different to non-Christian schools, and Special Character schools would have lost their reason to exist.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has presented an historically informed discussion of Special Character schooling in New Zealand with reference to the evangelical integrated schools. This supports a systematic analysis of the principles which underpin the operation of the schools and an exploration of the expression and practice of their Special Character. It provides a basis for understanding key factors that enable the schools to remain a viable ideologically specific option within a state supported structure, but which paradoxically render vulnerable their continued support. It also fulfils a practice-related objective. As Mutch (2005) notes, research is done to improve the quality of teaching. This research, in prompting conscious interrogation of the ways in which personnel central to the schools integrate Special Character, both philosophically and biblically, into their operational and classroom practice, provides a basis for on-going professional development within the sector.

Analysis of the tensions, that shape the operation of Special Character provides potential for a greater understanding of the various viewpoints of those involved such that even more harmonious working together might be secured and so minimise these tensions. Exposing the factors concerning the preservation of Special Character and how it is lost, will encourage emergence of a more measured approach to the vigilance required, identifying particularly, the responsibilities of those with varying roles – proprietors, board and principal in monitoring; teachers, parents and students for integrating Special Character values into the life-style of the home and the pedagogy of the classroom. Identification of the biblical values which Special Character schools claim to imbibe and model the weighting that scripture gives to them, in combination with the particular emphases on prayer and the relationship with God according to the biblical expectation which they profess to espouse, should be a constant challenge to all involved in these schools if Special Character is to be effective. By bringing all of these dimensions of the study together the thesis provides a comprehensive historically and theoretically informed study that moves beyond what have been largely anecdotal understandings of the Special Character of evangelical schools in New Zealand. By drawing heavily on literature from insiders who have a clear understanding and insight into the functioning of these schools from within, the thesis has been able to interrogate the often dismissive, cynical or less immediately informed interpretations that have been articulated from an outsider’s viewpoint. As Finn (2005) noted, reworking an old project from a new perspective is a legitimate research task.

In this chapter the question of this thesis will be addressed. Given that the ultimate goal of all description is evaluation (Postman, cited by Gordon, 2010), I shall make some evaluative comment on the material of this thesis describing as it does the Special Character of NZPIES as perceived by the participants of the study. Reference will thus be made to the strengths and challenges of the
Special Character evangelical schools, with recommendations for further study, as well as to the limitations of the research. Comment will be made on the contribution this thesis makes to our understanding of this subculture/subset of New Zealand schools. The findings are focused on four issues: Special Character itself, the values espoused arising from that Special Character, the Preservation of the Special Character, and the Tensions and Anomalies that surfaced in the contexts of the Special Character schools. These findings are strongly supported by the data and reflect the sentiments of the participants – not those of the author.

The chief characteristic of the data was a strange mixture of its complexity and its simplicity. Because of its complexity, to define it is almost to lose it. From the participant voice, it appears to be different things to different people – often expressed by how it is seen in its influence, in its value system, in its biblical substantiating. However it is described, is no guarantee that it is there, other than as a dead letter understanding. That is the enigmatic aspect of it. When it is there, however it is described, it brings a dimension of spiritual understanding, a spiritual atmosphere, and a transformational influence attributable by the participants only to the working of God’s Spirit amongst them. In one sense it is an incarnational thing. That is why people make it or break it.

The simplicity was that the participants were, so to speak, in so many ways, all on the same page. The unity of belief-system was clearly spelt out in terms of their acceptance of the Christian scriptures as of “absolute supremacy … the only rule of faith and practice, the only test of truth, the only judge of controversy” (Ryle, 1954, p. 10). This was never in question. However wide the spectrum might be of evangelical church practice, there was clear evidence of a bondedness in relationship. Each of the chapters displayed the complexity of understandings – widely differing perceptions but with common threads throughout. Whatever the differences concerning worship, for example, or whatever the relationship problems there might have been – with proprietors, there was, nonetheless, a strong unity of purpose and belief-system in these schools.

Special Character education, as provided by New Zealand protestant integrated evangelical schools, is an education with a difference: that is, different from the state system (Ch.1). Where others are trained to question and thus to doubt (under the guise of ‘critical thinking’) these schools have a focus on faith (Ch.6), what can be accepted unquestioningly – without forfeiting the need for critical thinking. This is because NZPIES have a different epistemology– it is a belief in divine revelation as a valid form of knowledge. They have a different ontology – a belief in the sovereignty of God– that God is, and is in control of all things. Their Special Character is based on a different story – the

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69 Critical thinking in its broadest sense has been defined as “purposeful reflective judgement concerning what to believe”. … It is “disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded and informed by evidence” (Dictionary.com).
metanarrative (Ch.5) of the Christian Bible. This has led them to a different worldview – a biblical worldview on which they base their values – a different set of values: biblical values. They enjoy a different history (Ch.2), a reformational history, in many cases a Calvinist history. They provide for a different curriculum – one that recognises the work of creation and the authority of God’s Word without losing sight of their obligation to meet the requirements of the state curriculum. They attract different personnel – those who can model for the students a committed Christian lifestyle based on the Christian scriptures, that leads students to a personal relationship with God. They teach with a different pedagogy – aiming as a priority, at the transformation of the student in terms of character, through that God-relationship formed by prayer and God’s Word, without losing sight of encouraging academic progress. Hence there is so often a different teacher-student relationship because of that ‘spiritual’ involvement while maintaining an appropriate emotional distance from the student. That spiritual involvement is very much through the medium of prayer, their having a different resource base – a primary dependency on God, without undervaluing their gratitude to the resourcing provided by the Ministry of Education. They emphasise a different ultimate purpose in their work – to bring glory to God. As such they have a different focus – being Christ-centred rather than child-centred or teacher-centred. Their work is carried out under a different style of leadership – all of the principals in this study were deeply committed evangelical Christian believers passionately committed to serving Jesus, the Christ to whom they felt primarily accountable without losing sight of their accountability to the state.

Before turning to the specific questions of the thesis it is well to highlight very explicitly that according to the evidence gained from this study, Special Character depends to a greater or lesser extent on the wide variety of people, practices, processes and perceptions. Just as the colours of a diamond vary according to the angle from which it is viewed, so also Special Character in any one location can be subject to a variety of interpretations. And just as the diamond is still a diamond, so the essential essence of Special Character remains unchanged whatever the vantage point from which it is viewed.

**How is the Special Character of New Zealand Protestant integrated evangelical schools (NZPIES) interpreted and reflected in practice?** In order to address this question, associated subquestions (see page 17) were considered.

In answering the major question, as having a biblical worldview, Special Character schools have a distinct ontology: there is a supreme creator, God, Who is sovereign over all of life such that man is totally dependent on Him (expressed in prayer-life); there is a distinct authority under God – of parents/family; there is a distinct cosmology, as being creationist; there is a distinct anthropology –
human beings made in God’s image (Ch.3), to reflect God’s image and only to function fully as man when indwelt by God; there is a distinct epistemology, in that there are two equally valid forms of knowledge – scientific knowledge (through observation, experimentation and logic) and revelation knowledge as expressed in the Christian scriptures and mediated through the work of the Holy Spirit; there is a distinct pneumatology (the spirit realm) acknowledging the work of the Holy Spirit, the presence and power of fallen spirits under Satan against whom Christian believers in Special Character schools also do battle. These are all ‘faith’ positions: Special Character schools believe every religion (or anti-religion) is a faith position, each having to substantiate their claims on factual evidence.

Special Character for NZPIES can be considered enigmatic and indefinable but not unobservable or unassessible, as Chapter 1 describes. It is the ethos born out of a relationship: with God and hence with each other. Some would call it the God-factor. Protestant evangelical schooling is a culture of its own characterised by a seemingly fundamentalist doctrine (biblical inerrancy that implies non-negotiable fundamental truths); an exclusiveness of doctrine (“there is no other [God]”); conservative or Reformational in theory but generally neo-pentecostal in practice; having its own jargon such as ‘born again’ and ‘redemption’; being strong in academic disciplines; having a strong emphasis on faith and grace; making judgment on character rather than content; and where the teacher is central to the mediating of Special Character. The teacher is everything in the establishing, modelling and carrying of Special Character. As such, this is where Special Character is most vulnerable.

Special Character is not so much in the content of the learning as in the context of the learning: people, family, school philosophy and the modus operandi of the school. Rather, it is primarily embedded in relationships. Relationship is the basic structure in which Special Character operates – student to staff, Boards, proprietors and management, parents and school and all these in their relationship to the triune God. Figure 9.1 illustrates where those relationships occur, alongside other connections between school entities, I have included below:
The subquestions for this thesis will be answered in turn.

**Subquestion 1**

**How is Special Character defined legislatively?**

As education “within the framework of a particular or general religious or philosophical belief” *(Statutes of New Zealand, 1975, No. 129, p. 3, S.2.1).*

**Subquestion 2**

**How do individual NZPIES interpret their Special Character statement?**

There were six different kinds of schools in the six chosen: a conventional learning-focused school, a performing arts-focused school, a Reformed theology-focused school, a pentecostal-focused school, a relational-focused school and a worldview-focused school. Their Special Character was probably best seen (not in the same order as above): one in their theology, another in their relationships, one in their charismata, one in their worship, one in their values and one in their community service. The dominant value in each school also seemed to vary – in one it was faith, in another hope, in another love, in another truth, in another integrity, in the other service. Tensions (Ch.8) varied in each school with the dominant tension seeming to be moral disappointments in one, worship-style in another, biculturalism in another, burnout in one, and control in one. The dominant means by which Special
Character was being preserved was through a series of lectures in one, the role of the pastor in another, through poverty in another at the time of this research which engendered a God-dependency; through tragedy in another which, again, engendered a ‘leaning in’ on God; through the proprietors in another, and through a strongly established professional development programme (in Special Character). There was a wide diversity of appreciations as to what constitutes adequate Special Character professional development (Ch.7). Some schools relied on an annual conference, others have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in Special Character professional development. Only one participant described their Special Character professional development as adequate. The differences range from no professional development in Special Character to having ‘the best in the world’. Organisationally, they range from weak to strong; the culture ranges from monocultural to bicultural to multicultural. Schools range from poorly equipped (poorly financed) to well financed (and thus well equipped).

While much of subquestion 2 was answered in the three previous pages, in all their interpreting of their Special Character there were some notable omissions from their comments in the light of the literature that circulates in these schools, and in the light of the dominant themes of scripture, the scriptures on which they claim to base their biblical worldview. Concerning the Godhead: but for one school, there was little mention of the Holy Spirit who is, currently, the Godhead’s representative on earth.70 There was little reference to the supernatural – that it is God who changes people’s hearts, who heals, who holds all things together. With God as Creator, there was no mention of Intelligent Design theory. There were few theological terms used which might indicate a paucity of understandings in those areas – that God is the sustainer of life; He is the divine Teacher. It is possible these were assumed, the researcher being a known ‘insider’. There was little mention of our accountability to God primarily, regardless of our accountability to man.

It is quite possible that much of what was left unsaid, was so, by the very focus of the questions asked of the participants. Concerning biblical themes, there was little reference to Bible Study per se. A common quotation of the famous 19th century evangelist, D.L. Moody, was that he never saw a useful Christian who was not a student of the scriptures (Sweeting, 1985). Assuming that Christian teachers are in Special Character schools to be ‘useful Christians’, it is logical to assume, on Moody’s premise, that they are also students of the scriptures. Nor was there mention of an eschatological vision and thus the eternal perspective on life and living. There was little reference to suffering, a major theme of the scriptures that indicates that Christian living and service is not a ‘bed of roses’. Nor was there mention of the long-term missionary programme that, so often, involves costly sacrifice. While there was frequent mention of a biblical worldview (Ch.6), few defined it with

70 John 14:26; 16:13
its application to teaching, for curriculum, for living by. The authority of scripture seemed to be assumed but not its sufficiency. The participants seemed to echo a New Testament faith with little reference to Old Testament themes, creation (apart from Genesis 1-3) and odd verses that reflected a devotional use of scripture.

The evangelical school literature makes much mention of dualism (Ch.3), but the participants made little mention of it per se. Their emphasis was on the sovereignty of God which runs counter to dualism. There is an increasing emphasis today on the need to learn from ‘failure’ (as in John Maxwell’s *Failing Forward* (2007)). No reference was made to such a concept.

Concerning current New Zealand culture’s emphases, no participant raised issues around honouring the Treaty of Waitangi. Indeed there was no discussion of a political nature outside the state’s policies that govern New Zealand education. Participants did not seem to be thinking about post-modernist issues that affect evangelical Special Character schooling outside of the matter of relativism (Ch.3) and truth (Ch.6) issues.Whilst using the term humanism/humanistic, these terms were not defined or elaborated on in participant comments. Although the West is increasingly being influenced by an Islamic presence, there was no mention of this. Ethical issues form part of the senior science curriculum: euthanasia, infanticide, eugenics and genetic engineering for examples; no participant opened up any one of these for discussion.

Concerning personalities, little mention was made of the character of the founders of these schools, with one exception, even though a school tends to go in the direction set at the outset. De Bono is a dominant name in current educational thinking. One participant made a fleeting comment on his work. There was no reference to great evangelical leaders of a past era who have influenced educational thinking among these schools, and only brief references to current Christian educational leaders such as Richard Edlin (Ch.6).

An analysis of two participants’ omissions are of interest, one a proprietor, the other a student. This proprietor made little reference to teaching staff, to the use of prayer or the Bible, or to a relationship with Jesus, Whom he did not mention. Nor did he refer to any of the tensions that were encountered in the school over staffing or use of facilities. He made no claim as to how the classroom operates, as he does not visit the school when it is in progress. There was no evidence he was familiar with the curriculum. In another school, the student, a senior in the school – Head Boy, showed little indication of associating Special Character with thinking biblically and critically. There was no indication of experiencing God for himself, no understanding of biblical authority or becoming Christo-centric in his living. There was no apprehension expressed of the majesty or holiness of God or of the creative
and redemptive work of Christ in his theological thinking. While neither of these were typical, they nonetheless indicate the range of *Special Character* understandings that exist within these schools.

**Subquestion 3**

**How does *Special Character* influence curriculum?**

In their academic progress there does not seem to be an appreciable advantage academically for students to attend New Zealand *Special Character* evangelical schools, except to say that their academic results appear to be above the national average (School Documents). It is not clear the extent to which this is influenced by the decile-rating of the schools. The average decile rating of the six schools in this study was 7.5. There did seem to be a difference of emphasis within the schools on academia as discussed earlier. Where *Special Character* is concerned, it is what the teacher is that counts. *Special Character* curriculum is affected: (a) by a *Special Character* approach in the Interact (Ch.6) and ACE (Ch.5) programmes up to Year 10, and (b) in particular the Science and Health curricula as outlined in Chapter 8, and (c) by student-teacher relationships, particularly in later teenage years. The Interact curriculum is an integrated approach to learning, each term focusing on a different aspect of God’s character. This is the focus in all subjects except mathematics. Some high school teachers had difficulty in their specialist subjects creating a *Special Character* edge to their discipline (Ch.5). Nor did they want to provide a contrived emphasis. In ethical matters, such as in the biological sciences, students were encouraged to explore and debate the issues. One mathematics high school teacher was spoken of highly by students for her *Special Character* contribution in the mathematics work presented. ‘Set works’ in English are chosen with the *Special Character* in mind, with sensitivity to what students will be exposed to and need to discuss. A strong stance on creation is taken consistently across all schools. There was a clear rejection of Darwinism by all, concerning man’s evolving from other than man (Ch.8). Spirituality was interpreted in terms of a biblical spirituality. Sex education was a contentious issue especially when it overlaps with education on morality.

**Subquestion 4**

**How do these individual schools demonstrate their *Special Character* in the life and ethos of their school?**

The most perceptive comments in this regard were possibly made by the students as reflected in the student comments in Chapters 5 and 8 which were from their perspective. Their participation in worship, in the school’s prayer life and in their interactions with their fellow-students concerning their relationship with God demonstrated *Special Character* in the school. Only a longitudinal study of students in their post-school years will provide an accurate assessment of the long-term
effectiveness of *Special Character* on students. Students in these evangelical Christian schools appear to be better behaved and easier to manage compared with their counterparts in the state system. Comments from the participant teachers who have taught in both secular state schools and the NZPIES in this study, bear that out. The staff in these schools enjoy a freedom to talk about faith issues, to pray with students, to acknowledge God and reference the Bible, a freedom both the parents and students are grateful for; it enables a definiteness of philosophy that is clear to all who work within these schools. Chapter 6 on Values elaborated on the lifestyle and ethos of these schools, much of which demonstrates their *Special Character*.

**Subquestion 5**

**What are the values espoused by *Special Character***?

A detailed account of the values professed in these schools was given in Chapter 6, several of which are mentioned in subquestions 2 and 4 above.

There was a strong commitment to academic learning and in three of the six schools, there were doctorates or doctoral candidates associated with school staff: they had a high view of academia. In one of those schools (of less than 500 students) over a decade, there were three staff who were working on or who had achieved doctorates and another seven who were working on or had achieved Masters degrees. But primacy was still given to the spiritual values (Ch.6) of those schools. Fitzgerald (1982) expressed it well when he said:

> New Zealand society needs to be reminded that without reference to the transcendent, to God, it has no future worthy of the name. … The church cannot offer society a practical solution to its problems, but only an experience of God … as the promoter and guarantor of the humanness of humanity. The church cannot provide answers to society’s questions, but it can offer the way to the answers. It offers society not so much a content but a method, not a destination but a journey. (pp. 114-115)

Applying the same concepts to Christian education, Norseworthy (2009, March) said: “If our goal as Christian parents is to lead our children to know about God, to know his commands, and then to know Him personally, then their educational provider is of huge importance” (p. 15). The same theme was reiterated by Giles (2011a) who said: “Teachers are always comporting *who* and *how* they are to students. *Who we are* is integral to *how we are* as teachers” (p. 70). The same concept had been emphasised by Parker Palmer (1998) who advocated the notion that we teach out of *who* we are. On that basis the choice of staff is of major importance so that the values of the schools’ *Special Character* are portrayed through the values of the teacher. The significance of relationships comes through especially strongly as outlined under Subquestion 2. And so, the ‘who we are’ becomes so much more important in these schools, in the homes of the students and in their churches because of the values imparted through personality. In a word, they are the biblical values of the Christian Bible.
The ideal of these schools is that there is a congruence of messages between home, church and school values. Hence there is an acknowledgement of a partnership with parents.

Subquestion 6
Are the NZPIES homogeneous in character? If not, how do they differ from each other in their Special Character?

There are two distinct types of evangelical schools: church-based and those independent of a church (Ch.4). Each holds their stance strongly and each is strong in their opposition to the other type of structure (Ch.3). There are two distinct ethoses: a Calvinist/Reformed approach and an Arminian/charismatic approach. These groups are supportive of each other but strongly opposed to the other’s system. There is an expectation in all Special Character schools of coherence of outlook between home, school and church, with ultimate authority for children’s education lying with the parents (not the state, nor the school, nor the church). The schools work hard in educating the parents and acknowledging the parents to this end. There is a common instilling in students a sense of destiny and purpose for living. The resemblances are seen in similar statements of faith; in the literature relied on; in their music style for assemblies; in their Christian-staff only policies; in a readiness to acknowledge a biblical worldview. The schools are homogeneous in themselves and shun elitism. Run by humans, they are presented as flawed like the rest. They are sometimes viewed as elitist having fewer behavioural problems, but their flaws include occasional cases of bullying, swearing, rudeness by parents, bad manners, laziness, drunkenness by students, theft, vandalism and moral lapses by staff. They are not common, but they are there. A strong sense of purity is taught throughout without becoming pious or prudish. There is a noticeable concurrence over the basic issues of biblical/evangelical authority, of biblical inerrancy, of the place of prayer and of contemporary worship. The worship is generally led by students with even the worship at their annual conferences being frequently led by students brought in for this purpose. The documents accessed in the schools are consistently aligned with each other, with the participant voice and with the literature.

While staff in these schools endeavour not to become ‘emotionally involved’ with students, there is a sense that, in all of these schools, an emotional attachment is made – a bonding at a spiritual level because of the prayer-factor. ‘People who pray together, stay together’ may sound trite, but there is also truth in it. Staff and students do pray together. Prayer together was a factor in the disciplining process. Giles (2011b) writing on relationships, cites Hargreaves (2000) when he said that all teaching is inextricably emotional. Giles went on to say that: “Relational experiences accumulate within each person’s historicity and, in so doing, influence each person’s becoming and how they view the world” (p. 89). The old adage, attributed to a variety of authors (John Maxwell, Theodore
Roosevelt, for example) that: “They do not care how much you know until they know how much you care” is significant here. The intimacy of praying together is an expression of that caring at a deeper spiritual level – common in all of these schools.

**Subquestion 7**

**How can Special Character be preserved?**

In Chapter 4 (Methodology) I discussed my reasons for choosing Case Study methodology. In my third ‘reason’ regarding the lessons to be learned from case studies, I raised the following rhetorical questions: How can evangelical schools avoid repeating the history of losing a faith basis? What are the factors that mitigate against the preservation of Special Character? Are there ‘correctives’ needed to be put in place for charting a future pathway? Can pitfalls be avoided in the future, the pitfalls schools may have already fallen into? What factors ensure a clear pathway ahead that ensures the preservation of Special Character? While much of this has been answered in my Chapter 7 ‘Preserving Special Character’, it is generally recognised that Special Character will only have depth and be preserved long term if it is supported by very intentional Special Character in-depth professional development. Special Character is easily lost.

There are numerous key people involved in the preserving of Special Character as set out in Chapter 7 and in most cases those key people tended to take ownership of the responsibility to preserve Special Character. There was a consensus about the role of people as the greatest threat to the maintenance of Special Character. “People make it, so … people unmake it” (P32). Special Character schools can give assent to all the claims of the biblical worldview but fail to live up to it in practice. It is Christian in rule but not in relationship and is indeed, no better than any other religious school that pays lip-service only to the faith it professes to hold. While Special Character issues can arise in teacher appraisals, it is not in their performance agreements in all of these schools. A principal does not necessarily know for sure that class prayers are said, led or facilitated by the teacher. It is taken on implied trust (P29). Special Character must be fought for, if it is to survive. Glick (2009, August) in her acceptance speech for the prestigious ‘Guardian of Zion’ award, spoke of the way Israelis have fought for their Jerusalem. “It is because people do not fight for strategically significant hilltops. They [Israelis] fight for ideas like freedom. They fight for symbols, for abstractions like flags. They fight for their beliefs. They fight for their way of life” (p. 9). Special Character is an ideal that must be fought for in order to preserve it.
Subquestion 8

What are the tensions/anomalies encountered in the perceptions and outworking of Special Character?

The greatest tensions come in the breakdown of relationships, especially between proprietors and school managers (Ch.8). The tensions as analysed (in Chapter 8) are a litany of exceptions rather than standard practices. For example, I cited a school where the church locked the school out of the auditorium for abuse of church equipment. But 99% of the time, they got along well. Isolated tensions do not define the operation. The schools are greatly inhibited by roll-capping which stems from political restraints and bureaucratic controls. This tension IS a common one. The constraints/tensions imposed externally through the state’s role in governance are not the only administrative issues. There are equally difficult issues to be resolved between agencies internal to the institution because of the complexities of ownership/funding/management/ control and other issues. The tensions imposed/created by local authorities add another level to administrative issues.

Some New Zealand Christian school principals have considerable misgivings about the integration arrangements in that the state, through its auditing process and wide publication of its audits (via internet), exercises considerable control/coercion to a compliance regime thereby imposing its own philosophy of teaching and, to some extent, its own worldview. This would apply particularly in the area of health education where sexuality and morality intersect. In this respect, the modern ‘Christian’ school departs from Kuyper’s philosophy of sphere sovereignty: “in the realm of education, the school is sovereign” (Swanson, 2001, p. 3), with the concomitant repudiation of the absolute power of the state. On balance, there is still considerable freedom in New Zealand under the Integration Act to operate within the biblical worldview in a Christian school, whatever compromises there may need to be to the concept of school sovereignty.

One further tension concerns the size of donations being sought in some Special Character schools, according to the office of the auditor-general of New Zealand. There was “confusion about whether the contribution is voluntary or compulsory or a lack of clarity about whether the donation is for the (public sector) Board or the (private sector) proprietor” (NZ Government Auditor General, 2009). Within each school, however, there are certain concepts ‘held in tension’ as there are no right/wrong answers to them, yet so often in various situations choices must be made. These choices range from whether a school is ‘reformed’ or ‘charismatic’, exclusive (all tagged positions) or non-exclusive, church based or independent, exclusive or pluralistic, with an emphasis on evangelism or on discipleship, on the historic faith or contemporary faith, on academics or on character transformation, on utilitarian education or classical education; walk versus talk, process versus product, felt versus...
telt, christocentric versus paedocentric, theocentric versus christocentric, teacher-centred versus student-centred.

**Strengths and Challenges**

One of the benefits of the research was to expose the rationale of *Special Character* schools to those within it, to give a greater understanding of why they do what they do, where they have come from (what are their roots) and where they are going. It also provided an opportunity for many of the participants to confront a question they had not previously thought about or had taken for granted. As such the values of the participants were identified; the aspects of preservation of *Special Character* were explored; and the tensions and anomalies within them exposed for what they were.

Throughout this thesis addressing the *Special Character* of state integrated evangelical schools, many strengths of these schools became apparent. Perhaps the greatest strength these *Special Character* schools have is the congruence that generally exists between home, school and church, in the values they hold and the messages they give out. I sensed a real unity amongst them and a joy in their togetherness at their annual conferences. There is also an unusual unity of purpose across all these schools – to glorify God; to establish students in a relationship to God and to establish the school as a godly place. These schools enjoy a very clearly-defined, consistent philosophical position with a simple basis – the authority of scripture – affecting pedagogy and determining policy and value-systems. These schools have an increasing involvement in local and overseas missions. There is also great strength in particular individuals as there is in most schools, but in these schools, their strengths are noted for their *Special Character* sympathies. One particular student stands out: she made the clearest statement of all on the inerrancy and divine authorship of scripture and of its authority in our daily lives (Ch.5). She came across as the most vibrant believer in her faith of the 62 Christian believers interviewed. She seemed to have the clearest perception articulated on servant leadership. It appears she seemed to hear God for herself. She did not try to spiritualise and came across as transparently honest.

Just as the NZPIES in this study appeared to have common strengths, some challenges also became apparent. Under the Subquestion 2 above, numerous points were made concerning issues of biblical importance to a biblical worldview which bypassed various participants for whatever reason. Accordingly there appears to be some danger of mouthing Christian biblical clichés with little understanding of their intended impact. Only a survey of biblical understandings could verify the extent of this supposed weakness. Christian school philosophy also seemed to suffer from a paucity of deeper understanding. Again, only a more detailed survey of worldview understandings and of the associated theological understandings could verify the extent of this supposed weakness. It is
conceded that lack of evidence is not necessarily evidence to the contrary. In each of the six schools there was at least one participant who, confessedly, was not confident in their understanding of *Special Character* – approximately 10% overall. There appeared to be a lack of resolve in one or two schools over the employment of staff with respect to *Special Character*. Vulnerability is strongest at this point; principals can ‘do their best’ and still get it wrong, as was acknowledged in more than one case. But these were exceptions.

**Limitations of the Research**

Much cannot and will not, out of loyalty, be said by the participants in a study such as this. It is often the ‘off the record’ discourse that counts. But of that which I have gleaned from the interviews, there will always be the added limitation of personal interpretation. “We don’t see things as they are; we see them as we are”, said the French Cuban diarist Anais Nin (1903-1977) (n.d.). The various aspects of bias were covered in Chapter 4 – Methodology. It became clear during the data analysis that although participant and interviewer were using the same terminology, they were not necessarily speaking the same language. “If we want to speak to a man, we must learn his language first”, said Schaeffer (1968, p. 119). I thought, as an insider, I knew the language of evangelicals. In an earlier chapter, I highlight instances where our understandings differed. Although care was taken, it is possible that in some instances the participant and interviewer were talking past each other. The interviews were an hour long. They needed to be much longer for total clarity. However, any more would contribute to a greater excess of data and weariness on the part of the participant. Although an objective assessment was the goal, the judgments are nonetheless subjective – the participants’ and mine. The schools’ marketing and documentation are done sincerely and produced professionally, but do not necessarily reflect the reality.

Another limitation arose from the wide range of articulation of the understandings of *Special Character* as evidenced and highlighted in Chapter 5. Is *Special Character* all of those things or some in particular? The very enigmatic nature of *Special Character* as referenced in Chapter 1 remains. If it is “spiritually discerned”, to use a biblical phrase,71 a ‘god thing’ as mentioned in Chapter 5, then difficulties remain in ascribing relational qualities to it. There was no access to the *Special Character* audits (see Appendix 4), though they were requested. These may well have been more enlightening. The revelations the data contained may have been seen in a different light were the data to be cut in a different way. What if a random selection of participants had been made? A data set, considerably different, may well have emerged. In that sense, the data is incomplete. Yet the data that was obtained was too extensive to be reduced sufficiently to cover all details within the limits permitted. It is possible the data raises more questions than it answers. For example, has the

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71 1 Corinthians 2:14
investment in *Special Character* training paid off in terms of clearer understandings and enhanced culture? How can anyone looking on come to terms with the complexities of *Special Character* on a brief visit? And while the participant voice and the literature held common currency in terms of perceptions, the schools’ documents added very little to the understandings in the discussion. Furthermore, documents carry a marketing aspect to them and do not always reflect the contemporary reality. To add a subjective judgment, I ranked the contribution to this study’s understanding of *Special Character* that each participant made (on a 1-10 scale: 10 being the greatest contribution), and averaged for each kind of participant, in Figure 9.2 below. The three highest rankings were:

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<th>Av.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
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<td>8.3</td>
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<td>Founders</td>
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<td>7.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Female Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.2</td>
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Figure 9.2: Contribution to the Understanding of *Special Character*

There were many more areas that could have been explored, and some I did at considerable depth, but had to abandon them. It became clear that I needed to establish priorities and make choices about content. There are several more chapters that could have been written (staffing; philosophy; apologetics; curriculum, including evolution; indices of both authors and biblical references). There was much more that could have been covered but there are limits to what can be explored. Much more could have been said about the personnel themselves. The areas of pedagogy and curriculum could well be explored further. The philosophical underpinnings have only been touched upon. None of these were the focus of the research. *Special Character* was, and many of the Values were also part of the explanation to some participants of what *Special Character* was or was reflected in. The exposure and capture of Tensions were clearly the basic benefits of the findings and hence the inclusion of them within the focus. These were the issues that most influenced or were influenced by *Special Character*.

**Recommendations for Schools**

My interpretation of the data generated during this study leads me to the following recommendations regarding the provision of PIES in New Zealand. In the interest of satisfying public demand for evangelical *Special Character* education and of removing an irksome restriction on schools which are geared to satisfy that demand, that Government look much more favourably on removing the roll-capping mechanism currently in place. Roll-capping runs counter to ‘tomorrow’s schools’ ideals, and more so to market forces being permitted to operate.
In the interests of preserving *Special Character*, schools be encouraged to invest more in *Special Character* professional development by way of, for example: setting up *Special Character* libraries which books are regularly promoted; having regular workshops introduced by rotating members of staff or visiting teachers; by developing series of Bible lectures (Old Testament and New Testament) to develop biblical literacy among staff; by providing biblical worldview lectures or videos to strengthen staff understandings.

In the interests of monitoring the preservation of *Special Character*, schools be encouraged to carry out peer-reviewed *Special Character* audits on a regular basis.

In the interests of these schools enjoying yet greater credibility with the public and with the wider school community, that *Special Character* schools be encouraged to place greater emphasis on achieving higher academic results for their students.

**For Further Study**

The foregoing study on the perceptions of *Special Character* as evidenced and articulated in the New Zealand evangelical Christian school movement, has raised a variety of questions for which only further studies can provide answers. Suggestions for further studies are:

1. A longitudinal study of what happens to students who have been through these schools needs to be undertaken in the interests of assessing the value of current approaches in Christian education.

2. A comparative study of the *Special Character* of non-Christian, non-evangelical integrated schools could provide valuable insights were some of the same issues to be raised as were raised in this study. It could well be argued that most schools (including non-integrated) have their own *Special Character* albeit not necessarily a religious one. In which case a comparative study of another kind could also be helpful.

3. Proprietors featured much in this study and more so in the area of tensions. A further study of the role and functioning of proprietors that looks into such questions as how proprietor funds are used; what advantages do proprietors gain from providing school facilities; at what cost to the school is their usage of facilities; to what extent are proprietor funds and contracts enmeshed in the schools’ funds and contracts (phone systems, photocopier contracts, computer management, financial management); to what extent are proprietors financially
vulnerable were their school to be de-integrated; to what extent are Boards of Trustees involved in the further development of facilities (the parents ultimately pay off these mortgages – not the proprietors, though they be the entrepreneur); how must proprietors be identified and how must they function – are their meetings minuted, are the schools beholden to one-man proprietors? Answers to such questions may facilitate Special Character schools’ administration to function more cordially. Some of these issues have already been raised by the office of the auditor-general (NZ Government Auditor General, 2009).

4. It has been pointed out that there are many evangelical protestant teachers in the secular state system. The spiritual impact of their contribution in high schools particularly, and of those engaged in the Bible-in-Schools programmes in the primary schools is another study worthy of consideration. Another parallel movement is “the extraordinary growth in the home-schooling phenomenon [which] calls for some analysis” (Lynch, 2000, p. 101). A large number of these are from evangelical Christian homes with various websites, using the ACE programme – 1000 students in New Zealand on this programme alone (HENZ, 2011).

5. Much has been made by the participants concerning a biblical worldview. A further study on the shape of that worldview and how it clashes with post-modernist thinking could be revealing as to whether a Christian’s worldview shapes our interpretation of scripture or whether the scriptures shape our worldview as is claimed.

6. Little has been said in this study on curriculum and pedagogy per se of the evangelical Special Character schools. An analysis of the various curricula as used in these schools is an area worthy of further study along with the pedagogical emphases embraced or shunned by these schools. This could include a critique of some of the classical names in past education reforms, names such as Dewey, Rousseau and the impact of thinkers like Nietzsche alongside a discussion of the evangelical Christian school response to them.

7. Studies have been done on the Classical Christian School Movement such as (Laidlaw College’s) Dianne Scouller’s Ph.D in 2011 which investigated curriculum models. In the light of Martin Luther’s insistence that Christian schooling should be very biblically based and replete with the study of the classical and biblical languages, some study as to the more radical aspects of historical comment on Christian schooling along with the study of the radical lifestyle of the New Testament church would be in order, as to the biblical purpose for education in terms of evangelism and missionary enterprise and the Bible’s metanarrative of an Israeli context. How do Christian schools respond to these calls?
8. This study has relied heavily on interviews, some school documents and the evangelical literature concerning Christian education to provide the data as analysed. Much rich data could yet be drawn on by way of observations inside and outside of classrooms and focus groups both of which could throw up data quite at variance with that which emerged from this study. Furthermore, a more random choice of participants could well indicate that school personnel were not as *Special Character* literate as this study might suggest.

9. As mentioned earlier, some of the richest data in this study emerged from the interviews with some senior students. An indepth study of student voice in these schools could be a very enlightening study in itself.

In summary, further studies could well be carried out with a longitudinal study, a comparative study in the non-evangelical schools, a study concerning the role, function and accountability of proprietors, the evangelical influence in secular schools, a study on the role of a biblical worldview, curriculum and pedagogy, classical education and the call for a more radical approach, further studies with different methods, and student voice.

**Concluding Statement**

The rationale for this study was that no such study had taken place in New Zealand as it had elsewhere. This study has addressed that gap in the literature. Because these schools boldly claim to have a biblical foundation, and are biblically directed, this study has become a biblically-rich study, adding to the literature in a way that appears not to have been done before. It is a study that my peers are anxious to read, indicating they are unaware of any such study that might throw light on the overall picture of schooling under the umbrella of protestant evangelical *Special Character*. It is new evidence on an old issue – old in that Christian schooling predates secular schooling in many western and non-western communities. In an era when Christian schooling is increasingly attractive as western society becomes increasingly secularised, studies such as this will, correspondingly, be increasingly relevant. The research did not set out to give a clarified understanding as to what constituted the *Special Character* of these schools. It did set out to give a description of *Special Character* as the participants perceived *Special Character*. This it has done, by the means of a multiple case-study analysis which has proved effective in terms of the complexities of this study. At the heart of *Special Character* in NZPIES is special relationships with God and fellow-believers, based on a biblical worldview, held passionately, sometimes lived falteringly, so often achieved sacrificially, setting out to produce their best academically, and doing so unitedly. This research is testimony to those claims.
APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

DRAFT QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPAL

After re-stating the purpose and potential benefits of the research:

1. What do you understand the Special Character of your school to be? How do you describe it? Identify it?

2. What are those understandings based on? Where did they originate? Why that particular special character?

3. How important is the special character to you as a Principal? Would the school function any differently without it?

4. How does the special character of your school differ from the special character of any other Christian school? Why should it differ? Why should you be different?

5. How did you arrive at this special character? Do you still subscribe to it? Should you (all) subscribe to it?

6. Why should your special character justify your school being separate from the state school system or from other integrated Christian schools?

7. What are the distinguishing marks in the day-to-day school life/Board work of that ‘special character’ operating in the school?

8. How is the school’s special character related to your understanding of biblical revelation and biblical knowledge? What is your view of the “Inspiration of Scripture”?

9. How is the school’s special character related to your understanding of worship, and the experiential side of Christian living? What ‘colour’ / ‘flavour’ is the school’s praise and worship? Its ethos?

10. What bearing does the school’s special character have on curriculum? Where does your curriculum come from? How does the special character influence it?

11. What bearing does the school’s special character have on the school’s independence of state involvement in your location, amalgamation, destiny or emphases?

12. What is your understanding of spirituality, especially in the light of Ministry of Education curriculum references to ‘hauora’ and sexuality?

13. How is ‘evolution’ handled in your school in the light of your special character? And bioethics in science and technology?

14. How would you anticipate crisis events to be handled in your school in the light of your special character?

15. What is the role of the Principal in preserving special character? What emphasis do they give it? To what extent does it shape their thinking on Governance issues like finances, curriculum and policies?
16. How does the school address its staffing problems like ‘hard-to-find-teachers’ in the light of its special character?

17. To what extent does special character influence timetabling and subject choices?

18. What influence does the school’s special character have on the enrolling of students and the management (behaviorally) of enrolled students?

19. What impact does the school’s special character have on the relationship between Board and Proprietors, Board and Principal, Principal and Proprietors?

20. In what areas of impact does your school, as a special character school, have on the local community? And to what extent does the local community influence the special character?

21. In what ways does the ethnic mix in your school influence the special character or give evidence of it?

22. How wide is the gap between or how closely aligned is the perceived special character ideals as articulated, and the reality of it in practice as evident?

23. How free are teachers to articulate their own understanding of special character?

24. What are the issues and tensions in our society that engender an embracing of special character education? That establishes a counter-culture?

25. When did you first anticipate getting involved with a Christian School? What were the circumstances?

26. What motivated you to become involved enough to invest the time, energy and finances that you did?

27. What did you understand the Special Character of the school to be at that time? How did you describe it? How was it identified?

28. What impact was the Special Character designed to give in the life and curriculum of the school?
Table Ap.1: Questions asked of each group as they related to the principals’ list of questions

The numbers in the left-hand column correspond to the 28 questions in the list of questions for principals. The 22 questions in the list for founders and proprietors are placed next to questions in the principals’ list that they correspond to. All groups were asked question 24 of the principals’ list. It was question 15 on the students’ list, question 13 on the parents’ list of questions.
APPENDIX 3 – EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORMS

PRINCIPAL’S PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: The Special Character of New Zealand Protestant Integrated Evangelical Schools

To: ________________ Principal

Dear ________________

I write as an EdD student from University of Auckland. It is fifty two years since I entered Auckland Teachers College where I trained. In the meantime I have spent ten years in African education in a missionary capacity and have since spent many years teaching at Auckland Grammar School. I also spent ten years as Board Chairman of what is now Elim Christian College.

My research arises out of my interest in Christian Education and so I am seeking your assistance. The question my research seeks to answer is:

How is the special character of New Zealand Protestant Integrated Evangelical Schools interpreted and reflected in practice?

I have been concerned for some time at what little research has been done in the field of Christian education in New Zealand, research that could well help the Christian Schools in New Zealand - by way of having a clearer picture of its current standing and ethos. In this way, I trust that the unique findings in your school will be of inspiration and help and that I shall be able to make recommendations to the Board, Principal and Proprietors alike regarding the development of their special character emphases.

I write to request your consent (and through you, your Board’s consent) for me to carry out a case study research in your school. I would like to do a document analysis, and request that I be able to look at your school Charter, your strategic plan, any curriculum documents that relate to ‘special character’ and any promotional literature you may have. I request your permission to approach two members of your teaching staff and two senior students over the age of 16, preferably your Head boy and Head girl if these are identified. I wish to ask that you nominate/recommend to me the two members of staff, the two parents and the two student participants who would be best able to articulate the special character of your school. If at all possible, it would be preferable if those chosen have had four years association with the school, that they are fluent in English, and can articulate their thoughts well on special character.

You are invited to participate in this research because you meet the criteria for the study: Yours is a state-integrated evangelical Christian school, and you are a Principal of such a school. Participation in this study is voluntary, which means you or your staff do not have to take part in the study unless you/they wish to do so.
The study will involve eleven semi-structured interviews (questions enclosed) with: The Chairman of Proprietors and the Founder of the school, the Principal, two members of the Board of Trustees (the Chairperson and one other), two staff members, two senior students and two parents. The interviews at your school will take place at a time mutually agreed upon with the participants, and at a time that you, as Principal have agreed upon. The estimated time of the interviews is one hour per person.

You are at liberty to withdraw from participation at any time up to my time of analysis. You are at liberty to withdraw your school from participation at any time up to my time of analysis. If the information you provide is reported or published, this will be done in a way that does not identify you or your school as its source.

Each interview will be taken down by my stenographer/transcriber, Mrs Lesley Brooks, who has signed a confidentiality agreement. When transcripts are written up, I propose to check with the respective participants in interviews, that their sentiments were accurately reported. Each participant in your school will be assured that the confidentiality of participants will be protected, and that in terms of University ethics, it will be inappropriate for the Principal to have access to information that compromises another’s confidentiality. Formal consent will also be sought from each of the participants prior to carrying out the research.

In the unlikely event that an issue is identified which could be detrimental to the well-being of any participant, referral will be made to the qualified counseling staff employed by the school, or the church of their choice. A copy of a summary report on your school will be given to you as Principal of the school.

Storage of Data
All transcripts will be stored in a secure place and viewed by the researcher, his confidential secretary and supervisors only. Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Auckland for a period of six years (separated from the consent forms) in order to produce peer reviewed publications and/or develop other articles. After six years all paper material will be shredded.

Data provided by you or by participants in your school can be withdrawn at your (or their) request and without giving a reason up to the time of my analysis of the data.

If you agree to take part in this research and that your school can take part, please fill in and return the consent form to me in the stamped, addressed envelope or email me at grahamdsmith@xtra.co.nz

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please call me on (09) 5337419 or email me at grahamdsmith@xtra.co.nz or email or contact my supervisors at the address below:

Dr Mavis Haigh
Associate Professor
Head of Postgraduate Programmes
Faculty of Education
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street
Auckland, 1035.
Office: N358, Epsom Campus
Telephone: (09) 623 8899 ext. 48964
Email: m.haigh@auckland.ac.nz
Dr Maxine Stephenson  
Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Education  
Epsom Campus  
University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street  
Auckland, 1035.  
Email: ms.stephenson@auckland.ac.nz

The Head of the School of Teacher Education Practice  
Dr Lexie Grudnoff  
Faculty of Education  
Epsom Campus  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street  
Auckland, 1035.  
Phone: (09) 623 8899 ext. 48890

For Ethical concerns contact:  
The Chair  
The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland  
Telephone: (09) 3737599 ext. 83711

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON

…………………………………….. for ………………. years on ……………………………

Reference Number: 2008/243

Sincerely

Graham Smith.
PRINCIPAL’S CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS.

Title: The Special Character of New Zealand Protestant Integrated Evangelical Schools.

Researcher: Graham D Smith, Candidate for Doctor of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland.

Supervisors: Dr Mavis Haigh, Dr Maxine Stephenson

- I agree, after consulting with the Board of Trustees, to take part in this research.
- I understand I have been chosen for this research because of the strategic position I hold in a special character school.
- I agree that, after consulting with the Board of Trustees, my school can participate in this research.
- I agree that in consultation with me, you may approach the staff to participate in this research.
- I agree to your access to the school’s Charter, Strategic Plan and any promotional material we may have.
- I understand that interviews will be taken down by a stenographer/transcriber and that she has signed a confidentiality agreement.
- I have read and understood the participant information sheet. I have been given an explanation of this research and have had an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary for all participants, who will only take part in this study if they wish to do so. I give an assurance that the decision of staff, parents and students to participate or not to participate will not affect their relationship with the school.
- I understand that the study will involve eleven semi-structured interviews, and that I have seen the leading questions to be asked.
- I understand that the eleven semi-structured interviews involve the Chairman of Proprietors, the Founder of the School, the Board Chairman, the Principal, one other Board of Trustees member, two members of the teaching staff, two parents and two senior students. I
understand the study will also involve a document analysis of the school’s Charter, Strategic Plan, Integration Agreement and promotional material.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time up to the time of the data being analysed, without giving a reason, irrespective of whether or not payment is involved and that I may withdraw my school’s participation at any time up to the time of analysis, without giving a reason.

- I understand that my comments when transcribed will be available for me to peruse, edit and ensure they correctly convey my sentiments, and that I may withdraw given data at any time up to the time the data is to be analysed.

- I understand that if the information provided is reported or published, this will be done in a way that does not identify the school or individual participants as its source.

- I understand that in the unlikely event that an issue is identified by any participant which could be detrimental to their well-being, referral will be made to the school’s qualified counselling staff, or the local church of the participants’ choice.

- I understand that formal consent will be sought from each participant in the school prior to carrying out the research and that the choice of staff members, students and parents to be approached will be done in consultation with the Principal.

- I understand that all transcripts will be stored in a secure place and viewed only by the researcher, his confidential secretary and his supervisors.

- I understand that the data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Auckland for a period of six years (separated from the consent forms) in order to produce peer reviewed publications and/or develop other articles. I understand that after six years, all paper material will be shredded.

- I understand that a copy of a summary report on my school will be given to me, as Principal.

Signed: ……………………………………………

Name: ……………………………………………
(Please print clearly)

Date: ……………………………………………

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON

………………………………….. for ……………….years on …………………………...

Reference Number: 2008/243
APPENDIX 4 – SPECIAL CHARACTER AUDITS

The Guide for one model of an audit produced within the NZACS used in these evangelical schools (Christian/evangelical) is eight A4 pages long. Page 1 explains terms used, the aims (3) of a review with a suggested procedure (14 bullet points) for going about the audit. Page 2 is a paragraph on suggested reviewers, another on deciding a focus and a series of questions (16 bullet points) relating to the proprietors’ property. Page 3 (12 bullet points) is on questions for the Board of Trustees covering their understanding, referencing, agenderising, policy of Special Character, its monitoring, promotion, resourcing, communicating, and being consistent with it. Page 4 is a series of questions (7) on staffing procedures – policy, appointments, job descriptions, briefings, advertising, application packs and appraisals. Page 4 has a similar set of questions (9) focusing on the principal – his/her commitment to, articulating of, maintaining and preserving and promoting of Special Character. His/her modelling of such values as honesty, integrity, civility, reliability, compassion, respect, consideration for others. His/her leadership, direction and encouragement in Special Character matters, and provision for professional development therein. A further series of questions (8) relate to the teachers: their understanding of Special Character, mission statement taught; classroom environment; led by senior staff re application; featured in Performance Management Systems; involvement in prayer and worship; their church involvement; development. Page 5 has a set of 16 questions relating to the students, six of which relate to policy, procedures and compliance. Another seven relate to student-attitudes, worship involvement and work habits while three more relate to extramural activities and discipline. Page 6 covers the topics of Curriculum (10 questions), Administration (3) and Parents (8). The curriculum section looks at curriculum documents, schemes, year plans, the content, the reinterpreting of their discipline in the light of a biblical worldview, professional development on curriculum, references to prayer and scripture, the individual student-needs, homework arrangement, the section on Administrative staff is brief and mainly concerns their treatment of the public and how they are treated. The section on Parents focuses on parental involvement in Special Character issues, policies and communication.
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Longer quotes from 7, 30, 33, 31, 38. Multiple refs of 40, 13, 46, 36, 32, 114 included.
A Typical Analysis Sheet prior to entering on file contents.

**Special Character Values — Proportional Truth (2:14-16)**

Sp. Ch. itself: 81 03/05/33 11/05/66 12/10/50 22/12/16 28/128
81/05/00 81/25/06 81/05/00

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**Matrix relating to the Table and Truth**

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**Notes:**

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- B: Collected from various sources.
- P: Collected from various sources.
- T: Collected from various sources.

- A: Collected from various sources.

- D: Collected from various sources.

**Source:**

- A: Source not available.

**Additional Notes:**

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- The values for the Collected Value have been entered as ranges.
REFERENCES


Jenkins, J. (1998). Shaping the Christian (Mind! Our modernist presuppositions may be showing!). In D. Blomberg & I. Lambert (Eds.), Reminding: Renewing the mind in learning (pp. 22-40). Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity.


Octigan, D. (1980). She’ll be right, Mate. In J. Mechielsen (Ed.), *No icing on the cake: Christian foundations for education* (pp.73-78). Melbourne, Vic.: Brookes-Hall.


