“Let's Talk about Something Else”

Religion and Governmentality in New Zealand’s

State Primary Schools

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Figure 1: Bible in Schools Cartoon from 1912
Abstract
In 2012, the Churches Education Commission in New Zealand stated that around 40% of state
primary schools provided voluntary religious instruction. A search for the word “religion” in
the New Zealand Curriculum, at that time, yielded a zero result. The curriculum recognised
New Zealand’s bicultural heritage and affirmed cultural diversity as a key principle. Yet
religious diversity was not a curriculum focus.

The New Zealand Education Act of 1877 established that the primary school curriculum would
be “entirely of a secular character”. But the Education Act of 1964 stated that, at any time
during the school day, the school could “close” for religious instruction led by church
volunteers. This was, and remains, known as Bible-in-Schools (BiS). In consequence of this,
and subsequent legislation, confessional approaches to religious education appear to have
been preserved in New Zealand primary schools. My research indicates that the effective
separation of religion from the mainstream primary school curriculum, through the construct
of school closure, has precluded both educational scrutiny of BiS programmes and the
theorisation of religion as an appropriate object of study. This thesis examines policy and
practice in seven case study primary schools, and draws on interview data with key
stakeholders at the Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Educational Institute, the
Churches Education Commission and the Human Rights Commission. It examines the archive
of primary sources and traces the “history of the present”, identifying constraints on the
development of religion as a curriculum area.

Adopting a Foucaultian approach to discourse analysis, genealogy, and governmentality, a
critical realist theoretical perspective and theory of conceptual knowledge of religion and an
egalitarian liberal approach to social policy, I demonstrate how dominant societal and
educational discourses operate to disqualify religion as a curriculum area and concurrently to
position confessional approaches to culture and religion as educationally progressive. I
problematisate Bible-in-Schools, showing how current practices may leave children exposed to
teaching which does not respect the right of children and parents to freedom of religions and
beliefs and is inimical to the protection of diversity. I also suggest that, far from being neutral
in matters of religion, secular state schools may be engaged in the promotion of a very specific
liberal religious worldview, which is incompatible with many other religious perspectives. I
advocate the inclusion of critical education in religions and worldviews within the New
Zealand primary and secondary school curriculum.
Acknowledgements

This doctoral research would not have been possible without the principals, teachers, parents, BiS volunteers and other interviewees who have participated in this research. Their willingness to be interviewed on such a contentious theme is greatly appreciated. If my analysis is critical of the perspectives, policies and practices observed, this is not in any way intended to be disrespectful of the participants themselves. All demonstrated a clear commitment to acting in the perceived best interests of children. I am most grateful for all participants’ involvement.

I am greatly indebted to my supervisors, Will Sweetman, Lynne Baab, from the Department of Theology and Religion and Ruth Gasson from the College of Education. They never questioned the potential of the project nor my ability to complete it, and I am most grateful for their constructive criticism, support and encouragement. In this regard I would also like to thank: Vivienne Anderson from the Higher Education Development Centre, who provided guidance with discourse analysis; Hugh Morrison from the College of Education, who provided an initial reading list; and Jean Fessey and Jane Anderson who provided assistance with transcription of interview data. My husband, Andrew, urged me to pursue this doctoral study and his support has enabled me to dedicate myself to the work involved. Andrew’s commitment to my completion of the thesis, and forbearance as each deadline sailed past, has surely secured his place among the saints.

Writing this thesis has been a formative experience. I am privileged to have had the opportunity both to spend time New Zealand and to pursue my research interest in this way. However, I am aware that this has not always been easy for family members: my grown-up children, Kathryn and Russell, and my Mum and Dad. Again, your forbearance is noted with love and gratitude. I therefore dedicate this thesis to my family: my parents, whose strong sense of social justice has been an inspiration; my siblings, Andrew and Jean, whose friendship and support I cherish; Andrew, my companion and soulmate; my children, who will always be my proudest achievement; and our grandchildren, Ella and Toby, who bring joy to all our lives.
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List of Abbreviations

BiS  Bible in Schools: Christian religious instruction (RI) provided by volunteers in New Zealand primary schools
CDD  Curriculum Development Division: body responsible for developing NZ curriculum in close consultation with teachers, through the 1970s and ‘80s, until the 1989 Education Act
CEC  Churches Education Commission: interdenominational group, based in Auckland, providing and co-ordinating volunteers and materials for BiS in NZ
CRE  Christian Religious Education: religious instruction programme published by Access ministries, in Australia, and widely used by CEC in BiS classes
DRS  Director of Religious Studies: teacher with overall responsibility for religious instruction and religious observances in NZ Catholic primary schools
ERO  Education Review Office: Government department reporting on quality of education in all New Zealand's (private and state) schools
HPE  Health and Physical Education: the concept of Hauora (wellbeing), including wairua (spiritual wellbeing), was included within this curriculum area in 1999
HRC  Human Rights Commission: set up in 1977 to protect the rights of all people in New Zealand. Operates under the Human Rights Act 1993
NCEA  National Certificate of Educational Achievement: the national qualification for secondary school students in New Zealand
NZARH  New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists: organisation formed in 1927 to promote rationalism and secular humanism, based in Auckland
NZCCE  NZ Council of Christian Education: group which preceded the CEC as provider of voluntary religious instruction in primary schools (1949-1973)
NZEI  New Zealand Educational Institute: teachers’ union, formed in 1883, with a focus on teachers’ pay, working conditions and improving quality of education
OECD  Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development: intergovernmental organisation, founded in 1961, to advance economic growth and world trade
OFSTED  Office for Standards in Education, Children’s services and Skills. UK Government department reporting on quality of education in state schools and overseeing private school inspection processes
PAG  Policy Advisory Group: Group of 13 advisors, set up in 1990 within the office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, to ensure policies in all departments reflect NZ Government priorities
RE  Religious Education: term used in the UK to denote broad-based education about religion and beliefs, at all levels of schooling.
RI  Religious instruction: term denoting instruction into a faith, sometimes requiring confessions of belief and religious observances such as prayer and songs of worship
SEN  Secular Education Network: Group formed by the NZARH, in 2012, as part of a campaign against BiS and RI in state schools.
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: created in 1945 to build networks among nations promoting peace through common interests.
List of Research Participants

Key Stakeholders
Joris de Bres: Race Relations Commissioner, Human Rights Commission
Sonia Glogowski: Ministry of Education spokesperson
Peter Harrison: NZ Association of Rationalists and Humanists
Neil Laurenson: Catholic Schools Office
Ian Leckie: President NZ Educational Institute
Professor Paul Morris: Victoria University of Wellington/UNESCO chair
David Mulholland: National Advisor Churches Education Commission

Case Study Participants¹

Pukeko School in Dunedin
Linda: Principal
Sarah: BiS co-ordinator
Rosalind: Teacher
Janet: Parent
Mark: Parent

Kereru School in Southland
Penny: Principal
Wayne: BiS co-ordinator
Kathryn: BiS teacher
Annette: Teacher
Chris: Parent
Mike: Parent
Sam: Parent

Takahe School in Southland
Frank: Principal
Grace: Deputy Principal
Jane: Parent and Teacher Aide
Wendy: Teacher/ formerly on board of trustees
Carol: Parent

St Joseph's School in Southland
Bob: Principal
Dee: Director of religious studies
Freda: Teacher
Louise: Teacher
Tammy: Parent and board of trustees
Karen: Parent

¹ Names of case study participants have been changed to preserve anonymity. It has not been possible to directly quote all research participants in this thesis. However, all the data collected have contributed to the research conclusions.
Korimako School in Auckland
Beverly: Principal
Martha: BIS co-ordinator
Anisha: Teacher and Parent
Angela: Parent

Kakapo School in Auckland
Barbara: Principal
Fiona: Teacher
Sue: Parent and board of trustees
Valerie: Parent

St. Margaret’s School in Auckland
June: Principal
Carol: Director of religious studies
Bina: Teacher
Zoe: Parent

Additional Informants
Maria: Principal of Kakariki School in Auckland
Karima: Muslim parent in Dunedin
Chapter One: “Let’s Talk about Something Else”

Ours is a political tradition which, through bitter experience, has learnt not to make a window into men’s souls. We hold at once a fear and a respect for the essence of each other’s beliefs. Our traditions have evolved to contain the power of those beliefs. “I won’t tell you that you are wrong; just don’t bring it up. Let’s talk about something else”, we say.

Hon. Bill English M.P. 1

Introduction

The characterisation of religion as a subject to be avoided, by the current Deputy Prime Minister, anticipates the findings of the current project on religion in New Zealand’s primary schools.2 Early debates about religion in school were defined by a determination to avert any attempt at religious establishment, the injustices of which many had sought to avoid through emigration.3 The Observer cartoon from October 1912 reflects these concerns.4 In the face of rival sectarian opinions, the Minister for Education is advised by the Chief Justice, “Heaton, my boy, don’t touch it! Don’t play with edged tools! Let sleeping dogs lie!” My research indicates that this “hands-off” policy has continued to inform decision-making processes regarding religion in school.5 This is evidenced in practices which promote subject-avoidance regarding religions and beliefs and a laissez-faire approach to voluntary Christian religious instruction. This thesis seeks to both describe and explain policy and practice regarding education in religions and beliefs in New Zealand primary schools, through a survey of archival material and case study research undertaken between October 2011 and July 2012. In a direct challenge to current policy, I advocate ministerial and educational engagement with matters of religion and belief in state schools.6

2 At the time he was Opposition Education spokesman. English invokes the words of Queen Elizabeth I and Protestant/Catholic divisions, but it is likely that he is also alluding to sectarian divisions closer to home.
5 e.g. see pages 82, 87, 90, 96, 100, 105, 117.
As I show below, discussion of this topic in New Zealand is often impeded by a confusion and conflation of terminology. In this thesis I shall use the term religious instruction to refer to inculcation of children into religious belief, including religious observances such as prayers and worship songs. Religious instruction requires children to make confessions of faith and is therefore “confessional”. The term religious education (RE) is used, in the United Kingdom context, to refer to education about a variety of religions without expectation of religious commitment. In the New Zealand context the expression more often equates to religious instruction, which has traditionally been provided by church volunteers during the school day. Known as Bible-in-Schools (BiS), the nature and purpose of this teaching is contested. However I show in this thesis that, in spite of assertions to the contrary, the teaching and resources observed were confessional in nature. In order to minimise confusion of terminology I use the term “education about religions and beliefs” to refer to a broader, non-confessional treatment of religion in school. However, this thesis problematises all these terms in its consideration of different approaches.

My own approach to this subject is informed by my previous experience as a primary school teacher, with a subject specialism in religious education, in the United Kingdom. However, the thesis does not attempt to draw a direct comparison between educational practices in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. To do so would have not have enabled me to do justice, within the constraints of the thesis, to the range of issues raised by my research data in the New Zealand context. It may also have been construed as an attempt to set one “favoured” policy against an “unfavourable” policy, or even as an inappropriate attempt at recolonisation by an “outsider”. Instead I have attempted to set the issue of religion in schools in New Zealand within the context of broader, international educational debates regarding such problems as: religion in religiously diverse educational settings; children’s right to freedom of religion and belief; the purpose of education and curriculum content; and the role of government in education policy. I show how, in the light of these wider discussions, policies and practices in both the New Zealand and United Kingdom contexts raise legitimate concerns. New Zealand, however, forms the focus of this study because practices accommodated within its education system appear to run counter to international developments in RE and to the advice disseminated by European institutions on matters of religion in school.\(^7\)

\(^7\) See below, page 146.
In any academic thesis compromises must be made. My stated focus on curriculum, and broader educational themes, means that it has not been possible to give a thorough historical account of Bible-in-Schools, or to provide as much contextualisation of debates and discussions as I would have wished, including those around bicultural issues. However, in this thesis contextual matters are introduced insofar as they pertain to contemporary policy and practice regarding religion in school. In this chapter, I set out a thesis rationale which addresses relevant aspects of the New Zealand context. These aspects provide essential background to the ensuing discussion and establish both motivation and justification for the current research. I follow this with an overview of the thesis chapters.

**Thesis Rationale**

**Context of Contemporary Debate**

As a former primary school teacher from the United Kingdom I was intrigued to discover that religion was considered a matter not for professional educators, but for church volunteers in New Zealand primary schools. Investigating this issue, I encountered multiple forms of reasoning which disqualified religion as a legitimate curriculum area. This was in complete contrast to the way in which religious education had been theorised within the educational setting in which I had received my training. These different forms of reasoning have become a focus of my thesis as I attempt to explain competing conceptions of religion in school and the constraints which appear to be in operation in the New Zealand education context. This has necessitated a degree of self-examination during which my own professional suppositions have been subjected to scrutiny and amended.

In March 2012, a year into my research, the New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists (NZARH) began a Facebook campaign called Keep Religion out of Schools and created a subgroup called the Secular Education Network (SEN) to support parents. Their campaign has generated much polarised debate in the media, providing a rich source of supplementary data for this thesis. Stories detailing coercive and discriminatory practices, evangelising and apparent infringement of the right to freedom of religions and beliefs, were frequently found on the Facebook pages and websites associated with the campaign.

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8 See below, Table 14, page 144.
9 The NZARH were founded in 1927 to promote secular rationalism, campaigning against the Bible in Schools League and against prohibition movements.
established the contestability of current practices by those affected by them. Yet comments from the Ministry of Education and the teachers’ union, the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), in media interviews, served to close down debate and to render the complaints of parents invalid:¹¹

Ian Leckie, president of the teachers’ union the NZEI said there was no need to review the rules of religious instruction in public schools as the system was working. “I don’t think anybody intends this as a [religious] conversion; it’s more meeting a social need that is being asked for by the community” [. . .]. An Education Ministry spokesman said there were no plans to amend the legislation.¹²

The current project intends to make a constructive contribution to this public debate. It does so by examining the views of parents, teachers, principals, BiS volunteers, and other key stakeholders, thus illuminating the different ways in which the programme was perceived in school contexts at the time of the research. It establishes an educational rationale for religion in education, beyond the invocation of an undefined “social need”. This forms the first part of my research rationale.

Context of Law and Education

In Appendix 1, I provide a timeline of the key events in law and education policy relating to religion in New Zealand’s primary schools. At the time of my research, 85% of young people in New Zealand attended an unaffiliated (secular) state-funded primary school.¹³ The Education Act of 1877 had established at Clause 84 (2) that teaching in state-funded primary schools would be “entirely of a secular character”.¹⁴ But the 1964 Education Act had brought a widespread system of voluntary religious instruction into education legislation: the “Nelson System”. Having been popularised in the Nelson region from the end of the 19th century, the Nelson system involved church volunteers going into primary schools to teach


¹² Marika Hill, “Christians Target Schools in ‘Mission’”, Sunday Star Times, June 24 2012, accessed 25 June 2012, http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/7159949/Christians-target-schools-in-mission. In this thesis I use square brackets and ellipses to indicate that some text or speech is missing from quotations, i.e., [. . .]. A word in square brackets, e.g. [and], indicates that the word is added and not in the original text. See below, page 59, for interview transcription conventions.

¹³ See below, Table 6, page 49.

unddenominational religious instruction classes during the school day. Although the curriculum was still to be secular, Section 78 of the 1964 Act established that, at any time of day determined by the Head Teacher and School Committee:

> any class or classes at the school, or the school as a whole may be closed [. . .] for a period not exceeding thirty minutes for any class in any week for the purposes of religious instruction given by voluntary instructors [. . .] and of religious observances.

Section 79 established that attendance must be optional and that a parent might ask for their child to be withdrawn by making their wishes known in writing to the Head Teacher. The legislation placed the responsibility for deciding whether a school was to have religious instruction with the School Committee. The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975 amended the 1964 Act to include Section 78A, giving the Minister of Education discretion to authorise additional religious instruction in a given school “up to such an amount and subject to such conditions as he thinks fit”. An additional amendment to Section 78 of the 1964 Act, made in 1983, gives provision for up to an hour a week of religious instruction but not exceeding 20 hours a year. In 2012, the Churches Education Commission (CEC), the main provider of religious instruction in state schools, stated that 712—or over 40%—of New Zealand’s secular state primary schools were running BiS programmes.

The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975 entitled formerly private, church schools to integration into the state system and to state funding. Integrated schools were not constrained to a secular curriculum and could maintain the “special character” of their

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15 See below, page 79.
17 Ibid., Section 78. The wording is changed to read “principals” and “school boards”, in place of “Head Teacher” and “School Committee” respectively, from 1989.
18 Ibid., Section 79.
19 But see below, page 93.
20 *The Education Act 1964*, Section 78A.
22 CEC, “Strategic Plan 2013-2015” (Auckland: Churches Education Commission, 2012). The CEC use the term CRE (Christian Religious Education) as a descriptor for their classes, but I found that schools preferred the term Bible-in-Schools. I use the abbreviation BiS in this thesis. The CEC replaced the NZ Council for Christian Education in 1973 as provider of chaplains and religious instruction classes.
religious or ideological affiliation. Parents must consent to their children participating “in the general school programme that gives the school its special character”. However, an opt-out clause was included:

[The] school shall be responsive to the sensitivities of pupils and parents of different religious or philosophical affiliations, and shall not require any such pupil to participate in religious observances and religious instruction concerned with particular observances if the parents of that pupil state at any time that they do not wish that pupil so to participate.

11.5% of New Zealand children attended an integrated school at the time of my research.

These statutes and amendments comprise the explicit legislation governing religious instruction in New Zealand primary schools. However, later changes to school administration appear to have made implicit changes to the ability of secular state schools to promote a religious worldview, including religious instruction and observances. The Education Act of 1989 made provision for Kura Kaupapa Māori schools, designed to provide Māori language immersion and culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. These included promotion of cultural and spiritual beliefs and karakia or prayer. Just over 2% of the total school population received a Māori-medium education. The same legislation permitted the establishment of schools with designated character, which may be religious. Significantly for this project, the 1989 legislation also appears to allow secular state schools to adopt a special religious character if stated in the school’s charter.

The 1999 curriculum for Health and Physical Education included a Māori model of health. The inclusion of a spiritual dimension—taha wairua—has been used to justify a number of religious practices in the classroom. In 2013 charter schools, known as partnership schools,
entered the legislation with the passing of the Education Amendment Act. These are state-funded but do not have to follow the national curriculum. Secular requirements appear to be lifted for sponsors with religious affiliations. In 2015 there were nine partnership schools, serving around 800 pupils or 0.1% of the school population. Around 0.7% of children were home-schooled, many for religious reasons. Just under 5% of young people attended a private school, 64% of which had a religious affiliation.

There was no de jure prohibition on teaching about religions and beliefs in New Zealand schools. A Royal Commission on Education—The Currie Review—in 1962 affirmed that “a natural, unembarrassed reference to religion and religious history [should] be possible for teachers by including mention of religion in appropriate parts of syllabuses”. However, as I discuss below, a degree of social consensus that the legal construct of school closure effected a de facto prohibition on the discussion of religion in school was in evidence.

Although Catholic schools taught a “world religions” unit in Year 12, few secular schools covered this material. For example, only 1% of 4490 secondary school students who took National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) level two Religious Studies unit 90823 in 2011—the only unit to have a comparative element—were enrolled in secular schools. This is in contrast to the situation in England and Wales where the Religious Studies General

33 Ibid., Section 158 B (3) (f).
38 See below, page 229.
39 Information obtained by email request from Psychometrics Reporting and Statistics, New Zealand Qualifications Authority. NCEA is the national qualification for secondary school students in New Zealand.
Certificate of Education (GCSE) is widely accessed across the range of school provision. While there was evident state support for the provision of religious instruction to children in secular, integrated, private and home educational settings, there was little outward evidence of support for education in religions and beliefs. But there was no research available to verify this supposition, as I show below.

From the introduction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, New Zealand—along with other Western democratic nation states—has enacted a series of legislative measures which seek to ensure the equal rights of its citizens, most notably the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993. There are a number of significant human rights instruments pertaining to religion in school, for example, Article 14 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989:

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

At Article 29 paragraph 1.4 of the UNCRC, States Parties agree that a child’s education should include “the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, and friendship among all peoples, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin”.

The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, Section 13 states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief, including the right to adopt and to hold opinions without interference.” And Section 19 (1): “Everyone has the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of discrimination in the Human Rights Act 1993.” But Section

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42 Ibid. Article 29.
Four of the Bill of Rights Act makes it clear that human rights legislation does not override existing statute.\textsuperscript{44}

From my “outsider’s” perspective there was a clear disjunction between human rights legislation safeguarding freedom of religions and beliefs, the absence of education in religions and beliefs and the accommodation of Christian religious instruction in secular state schools. This thesis, therefore, considers the relationship between the human rights of children and parents, between Christians and those of other worldviews, and the consequences of these competing rights for policy on religion in education. This forms the second part of my research rationale.

\textit{Cultural and Religious Context}

Māori make up around 14\% of the population of New Zealand.\textsuperscript{45} New Zealand was colonised by the British following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, by representatives of the Crown and Māori leaders, in 1840.\textsuperscript{46} Early years of settlement were characterised by abuses of the Treaty by the colonisers regarding land, fishing and forestry rights culminating in land wars through the 1860s. In 1877 the Treaty was declared a “nullity” by the Chief Justice, on the grounds that it could not be recognised in court, having never been part of the legislation.\textsuperscript{47} By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, due to both rapid immigration and deleterious government policy, the Māori population had diminished from 13\% of the population in 1874 to 5\% in 1901.\textsuperscript{48} The colony, meanwhile, expanded into land which had often been unscrupulously confiscated or unfairly purchased.\textsuperscript{49} The early 20\textsuperscript{th} century saw native land boards authorised to advance money to enable some Māori to purchase and develop farm land. Native schools, originally established to “civilise” Māori and teach them English, now sought to make Māori children “good farmers and good farmers’ wives”.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The \textit{New Zealand Bill of Rights Act}, Section 4 (a) (b). See Table 11, page 128 and Table 14, page 144, for examples of law theses which mount a challenge to this status quo.
\item This followed a period of contact with the British through sealers, whalers, traders and missionaries from Cook’s first landing in 1769. See Claudia Orange, \textit{The Story of a Treaty} (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1989).
\item Cited by Orange, \textit{Story of a Treaty}: 59.
\item Derived from census statistics. Ibid., 57.
\item Ibid., 44-56.
\item Ibid., 74.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
for Māori, between 1955-69. The urbanisation of Māori communities during the 1960s and economic downturn of the 1970s, during which Māori were increasingly marginalised, led to a radicalisation of the youth and a period of activism over land rights. Dame Whina Cooper’s 1975 hikoi—a march of 5,000 people delivering a petition signed by 60,000—exemplifies the mood of the time. The wider community became increasingly aware of the ongoing effects of colonisation on Māori and The Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal was established, in 1975, in order for Māori to bring land claims. Public policy specialist David Bromell has described how ongoing appeals for justice from Māori obtained a new poignancy in the early 1980s when liberal New Zealanders were embroiled in international racial politics:

Following the South African Springbok rugby tour of 1981, Māori activists challenged White liberals (myself included) to demonstrate the same commitment to racial justice in New Zealand as we had demonstrated to the dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

The 1980s saw a Māori renaissance or resurgence in New Zealand, with the introduction of an unofficial policy of state biculturalism which sought to restore respect for Māori as tangata whenua: the people of the land. It aimed to create a power-sharing partnership between Māori and the Crown, and address problems of representation at an institutional level. Although biculturalism was never enshrined in law, a wholesale reform of social policy and state sector ensued. State departments were given Māori names, te reo Māori was made an official language, Treaty principles would inform public policy, and many Māori traditions such as powhiri (welcomes), poroporoaki (farewells), and karakia (prayers) began to be performed at public functions. Māori vocabulary and concepts have become commonplace in official documents, policy, and in everyday language. Biculturalism is embedded within the New Zealand Curriculum so that “Māori and Pākehā [New Zealanders of European ethnicity]

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51 Although this seems to have been resisted by many Māori communities. See Roger Openshaw, Greg Lee, Howard Lee, “The Politics of Māori Education”, in Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Education History (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993), 75-78.
52 Orange, Story of a Treaty: 76-78.
recognise each other as full Treaty partners . . . [and] have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of te reo Māori me āna tikanga [Māori language and culture].

As a consequence of this colonisation, New Zealand is a country with manifest British and Christian cultural origins. This is reflected in the predominance of Christianity in religious adherence, the adoption of the Christian calendar and festivals, the National Anthem, predominance of Christian places of worship, and the Christian foundation of many schools and institutions. It is also reflected in prevalent Western canons of literature, art, and music which often draw heavily on themes from the Christian narrative. Christianity is undisputedly a dominant cultural referent in New Zealand alongside, and often combined with, Māori culture.

Cultural homogeneity had been a feature of New Zealand society cultivated by White New Zealand policies beginning in the 19th Century. While Chinese immigration flourished during the gold rush period in the 1860s, the New Zealand government was generally reluctant to allow non-British immigrants to settle in the colony. The 1920 Immigration Amendment Bill continued to discourage immigration of non-Britons and between 1945 and 1971 of 90,082 new migrants, 76,673 were from Great Britain and Ireland.

The Immigration Act of 1987 represented a sea-change in policy, bringing increased immigration from Pacific Islanders and the Asian countries in particular. Such changes have radically altered the cultural landscape in many parts of New Zealand. The 2013 census indicated that over a million New Zealanders, a quarter of the population, were born overseas. Table 1 shows changes in residents’ places of birth, with the figures for China multiplying by 20, India by ten and Fiji by eight times between 1981 and 2013. This immigration is unevenly distributed with 39% of the population of Auckland region born overseas, compared to 10% in the Southland region. In Auckland region, where one-third

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59 The Asiatic Restriction Bill of 1879 and Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881 being examples of such a policy.
62 Ibid. Table 1 is licensed by Statistics New Zealand for re-use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.
(33.4%) of New Zealand’s entire population reside, 22% of the population identify as having Asian ethnicity, and 14% identify as Pacific Islanders.63

Table 1: New Zealanders’ Overseas Birthplaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>215,589</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>202,401</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>178,203</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>173,181</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>144,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Republic of China (1)</td>
<td>89,121</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>78,117</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88,349</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,269</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>67,176</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43,344</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20,892</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6,018</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia (2)</td>
<td>62,712</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>62,742</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56,259</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43,809</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>54,276</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41,676</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26,061</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,996</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>52,755</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37,746</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25,725</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6,372</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>50,661</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50,649</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47,118</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24,141</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>37,295</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15,285</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10,134</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>26,601</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28,806</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17,531</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>25,593</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29,016</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28,680</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39,138</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46,401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The 1981 Figure Includes Taiwan
2. Includes Australian External Territories

These changes to immigration policy, along with increased secularisation, have radically altered the religious demography of New Zealand.64 While Christianity is still the dominant religious affiliation, Anglicans are no longer the largest denomination.65 Catholics now make up the largest Christian group, of whom over 12% identify as Asian and over 10% with Pacific Island ethnicity. But it is the rapid growth of religions other than Christianity which is of particular relevance to this thesis rationale. As Figure 2 indicates, the number of people who were affiliated to the Sikh religion doubled between 2006 and 2013. In the same period, those affiliating to Hinduism grew by almost 40% and those identifying as Muslims increased by 29%. In the period between 1991 to 2013, Buddhist affiliation multiplied by four-and-a-half times. In all these cases the relative youth (and therefore reproductive capacity) of the immigrant population may be seen to have contributed to this growth.66

63 Ibid. The Asian ethnicity includes the categories Filipino, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Burmese, Indonesian, Laotian, Malay, Thai, Chinese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Japanese, Korean, Afghani, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Pakistani, Tibetan and Eurasian.
65 See below, note 14, page 70.
66 Figure 2 data derived from SNZ, “Quickstats”. 
It may be argued that this new religious diversity represents a small percentage of overall religious affiliation, is not evenly spread across New Zealand, and that some rural areas remain relatively unaffected. But of relevance to this rationale is the fact that 65% of New Zealand’s population live in the cities. These are the areas which attract most new immigrants and which are therefore most religiously diverse. The cities are, in fact, where the majority of New Zealand’s children live. At the same time, New Zealand is becoming increasingly secular. A relatively high percentage of the population, 39%, state that they have no religious affiliation. For the first time since the founding of the colony, the census indicates that less than half of the population identify as Christians, as Figure 3 illustrates.

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**Figure 2: Growth of Different Religious Affiliations**

It may be argued that this new religious diversity represents a small percentage of overall religious affiliation, is not evenly spread across New Zealand, and that some rural areas remain relatively unaffected. But of relevance to this rationale is the fact that 65% of New Zealand’s population live in the cities. These are the areas which attract most new immigrants and which are therefore most religiously diverse. The cities are, in fact, where the majority of New Zealand’s children live. At the same time, New Zealand is becoming increasingly secular. A relatively high percentage of the population, 39%, state that they have no religious affiliation. For the first time since the founding of the colony, the census indicates that less than half of the population identify as Christians, as Figure 3 illustrates.

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*For example over 90% of all New Zealand’s Muslims and Hindus, and over 80% of all Buddhists and Sikhs, live in the 13 cities. Equally 64% of all those affiliating to “no religion” are city dwellers. 63% of children (five to 14 years) live in a city. 34% of children live in Auckland where more than one in ten people adhere to a religion other than Christianity. Data derived from: SNZ, “2013 Census Tables About a Place”, Statistics New Zealand, accessed 26 February 2016, http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/data-tables/table about-a-place.aspx.

Figure 3 data derived from: SNZ, “Quickstats”. SNZ calculates Christianity at 48.9% and No Religion at 41.9% based only on the total number who answered the religion question. My percentages include the entire population.*
These four areas—Māori culture, Christian heritage, the newly visible religious diversity and increasing secularity— are the key characteristics of the New Zealand cultural and religious context. While Māori culture was promoted and Christian religious instruction was accommodated within the education system, other religions and worldviews were not explicitly represented in curricula. An absence of education policy or curriculum guidelines concerning religious diversity indicated that the integration of religious communities into New Zealand schools, and perhaps wider society, was an under-theorised area. The gap between immigration policy and education policy seemed evident from my “outsider” perspective. Therefore an important focus of this thesis, comprising the third part of my research rationale, has been to examine the educational treatment of matters of culture, heritage, belief and unbelief in New Zealand’s primary schools. While I recognise that these matters are of great sensitivity, it has been important to apply the same critical lens to all four areas because each may be shown to impact on the treatment of religious belief within the curriculum.

According to the Churches Education Commission policy, “the Christian faith, the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus” were the “most appropriate” aspects of religious education to the children of New Zealand. This contestable claim seemed an extraordinary basis for curriculum policy in a country whose children were increasingly religiously diverse and growing up alongside others of varied religious and secular backgrounds. I discuss below the implied suggestion that BiS meets a “social need” by serving school communities with high levels of Christian belief.

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**Figure 3: Religious Affiliation Overview 2013**

No religion: 39%
Christianity: 45%
Other religion: 6%
Unstated: 10%

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Table 2: Regional Religious Affiliation and BiS Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage of population affiliated to religion other than Christianity</th>
<th>Percentage affiliated to Christian religions (inc. Māori Christian)</th>
<th>Percentage affiliated to “no religion”</th>
<th>Percentage of schools in region with CEC-led BiS class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>49.89</td>
<td>29.90</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>51.33</td>
<td>33.94</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>50.68</td>
<td>33.82</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury and West Coast</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>54.40</td>
<td>34.31</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOP (Tauranga)</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>53.40</td>
<td>32.10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson and Tasman</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>45.36</td>
<td>40.86</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>51.08</td>
<td>36.43</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manawatu</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>54.89</td>
<td>31.73</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke’s Bay</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>57.43</td>
<td>29.30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northland</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>51.83</td>
<td>30.58</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisborne</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>67.13</td>
<td>26.79</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranaki</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>53.48</td>
<td>31.93</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlborough</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>54.26</td>
<td>32.42</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southland</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>58.14</td>
<td>31.25</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ian Leckie’s assertion that BiS meets a “social need” in schools and communities is contestable through a comparison of the census statistics for regional religious affiliation with the regional figures for school participation in BiS. The premise of Leckie’s statement is that participation in BiS is predicated on the religious affiliation of parents. Table 2 shows a comparison of the regional religious affiliation, based on 2006 census data, and the CEC’s 2010 data for regional BiS coverage.\(^71\) It will be noted that the most religiously diverse region, Auckland, had the

lowest percentage of BiS classes and the least religiously diverse region, Southland, the highest percentage of BiS. This supports a hypothesis that the programme is perceived to be more appropriate in less religiously diverse regions and that the “social need” for BiS diminishes with increased religious diversity. However, the picture is more complicated and it is difficult to demonstrate a direct correlation between religious affiliation and participation in BiS. For example, Waikato has one of the higher percentages of religious diversity and a very high coverage of BiS. Nelson and Tasman have by far the highest affiliation to “no religion” but not the lowest percentage of BiS. Gisborne has the highest Christian affiliation, but not the highest BiS participation.

The CEC did not release figures for national coverage after the SEN began their media campaign. However, figures obtained in 2016, shown in Table 3 below, reveal surprising changes in the percentages of schools with BiS programmes since the campaign began. It will be noted that nationally there was an 11% drop in school participation in BiS over a six-year period. In some areas, such as Marlborough and Northland, the CEC appears to have lost over half of its participating schools. Yet in Auckland, the base of the SEN and focus of much of the campaign on the ground, there has been an enormous rise in participation. Wellington also bucks the national trend, with a small increase in participation. If school participation was solely predicated on social need one might expect to find census data reflecting a dramatic decrease in Christian affiliation in Marlborough and Northland, a large increase in Auckland and a modest increase in Wellington. However, in Marlborough there is a relatively small decrease of 7% (the national average decrease), from 54% to 47%, in Christian affiliation between 2006-2013. Similarly, in Northland there is a decrease from around 52% to 45% affiliation to Christian belief, in line with the national average. Christian affiliation in the Auckland region has not increased but decreased, from around 50% to 44%. And in Wellington a decrease in Christian affiliation, in line with the national average, is also recorded from 51% to 44%.

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73 Statistics derived from SNS, “Quickstats”.

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It is possible that the sometimes vitriolic nature of the SEN campaign against the CEC and BiS has prompted parents, principals and boards in Auckland to defend what has been seen as a “public good” and to ensure its survival by requesting the programme in their school.74 Increased publicity for the CEC may also have been an unintended consequence of the SEN campaign. An additional reason for the rapid increase may be an increase in immigration into the Auckland region from ethnic groups with high Christian affiliation after 2013. This cannot be statistically evidenced until the after census of 2018.

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74 See below, pages 200, 210, 215.
In terms of my thesis rationale, the apparent conflicts between the regional religious affiliation data and CEC data led me to further question the legitimacy of BiS as a programme premised on social need. The data suggest that parental Christian affiliation may be just one of many factors which impact on the way BiS is maintained and reproduced in New Zealand’s primary schools. The need to explore the imperatives and constraints which maintain the status quo of BiS forms the fourth part of my research rationale. The data on religious affiliation in Table 2 supplied me with two distinct research contexts i.e., Auckland and Southland: the most and least religiously diverse regions of New Zealand.75

**Research Literature Context**

Views expressed about religion in schools, in newspaper reports, letters pages, on-line parent forums and blogs were strongly held and defended. But closer examination of these perspectives revealed that assumptions about current practices differed markedly. It seemed to me that discussions about religion in school were frequently at cross purposes. BiS was supported on often widely differing and contradictory grounds. The terms religious education, religious studies, religious instruction and Christian education were used interchangeably in social contexts and this was reflected in newspaper reports of the SEN campaign.76 Social research academics Philip Gendall and Benjamin Healey conducted the most recent research on attitudes towards religion in schools as part of The International Social Survey Programme based at Massey University, in 2008, as shown in Table 4.77

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75 I discuss my research rationale and sampling procedures further in Chapter Three.
77 Table 4 is used with permission: Gendall P. and Healey B.(2009). Religion in New Zealand. International Social Survey Programme, Department of Communication, Journalism and Marketing, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. Data derived from a statistically representative survey sample of 2040 people.
Table 4: ISSP 2008 Data on Religious Education in Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What sort of religious education would you prefer in...?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Primary Schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religious education in state schools</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing religion (Christianity and other faiths) within the school curriculum</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary instruction by ministers and trained Christian lay people</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian education within the school curriculum</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/can’t choose</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Secondary Schools</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No religious education in state schools</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious studies (all faiths) as a curriculum subject</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious education (Christian) as a curriculum subject</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/can’t choose</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was clear to me that, in the New Zealand context, definitions of the kind used in Table 4 could not be assumed to have fixed and stable meanings. Conceivably, while one person might support “Christian education” in the school curriculum if the teaching was non-confessional, another might support it because they wanted their children to have Christian formation classes at school. “Introducing religion” might be defined as a non-confessional approach to religions and beliefs but, in this New Zealand context, the separation of religion from the secular curriculum meant that a confessional stance, led by volunteers, was often presumed. This would change the meaning and participant response completely. Without further definitions of the descriptors in the table, the data above may not be reliable and the conclusions drawn by the authors seemed questionable:

[M]ost respondents (60%) would prefer children to have some religious education in state primary schools, and half would support some religious education in state secondary schools. Among those who support some form of curriculum-based religious education in schools, strongest support is for teaching about all faiths, not just Christianity [. . .]. Thus, while there is relatively little support for purely Christian education in state schools, there is quite widespread support for children to be taught about religion in our schools.79

An alternative reading of these data is that there was more support for Christian teaching—combining the figures for voluntary instruction and Christian teaching within the curriculum (31%)—than teaching about a variety of religions in school. And this figure is equal to those who would rather religion was not dealt with at all at primary school. In other words while just less than a third (29%) considered it was important for children to learn about a variety of religions in school, almost two thirds did not. This is a rather different conclusion to that

78 See below, page 228.
79 Gendall and Healey, Religion in New Zealand: 2.
drawn by the authors above.\textsuperscript{80} Equally, at secondary level, only just over one-third of participants supported the introduction of religious studies. It is certainly an overstatement to suggest that there was “widespread support” for children to be taught about religions at either phase of education based on the ISSP data. The Church Life Survey of 1997 had used similar terminology to survey this question among church congregations and thus presented the same interpretative difficulties.\textsuperscript{81}

My initial literature search indicated that, while attitudes were certainly being surveyed, the data raised as many questions as they provided answers to New Zealanders’ perspectives on religion in school. An absence of any consensus around terminology made the assertion that BiS met a “social need” problematic. What was needed was a research approach which would examine the reasons people gave for supporting or dismissing different policies, in order to more fully understand and explain current practice. As I explain in Chapter Three below, this precluded a large scale quantitative study and necessitated a more in-depth comparative approach.\textsuperscript{82} A thorough analysis of perspectives on religion in school would identify the educational and social issues at stake and provide a vocabulary for future discussion. This forms the fifth aspect of my research rationale.

A further problem, in relation to examining attitudes about religion in school, was the absence of information about current practices. Teaching materials for BiS were not publicly available: to order them one had to be a registered volunteer attached to a school. While anecdotes about BiS were plentiful, there was little research evidence about the programme. However, the Biblos research project, funded by The Bible Society, took place in 2006.\textsuperscript{83} 42% of children

\textsuperscript{80} Gendall and Healey’s conclusions are repeated by both Lorna May Travis and Paul Morris. Lorna May Travis, “Spiritual Well-Being in Aotearoa/New Zealand Primary Schools of Designated Character” (Masters diss., The University of Auckland, 2011), 32; Paul Morris, “Secularity and Spirituality in New Zealand Schools”, \textit{Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review} 4, no. 1 (2013): 23.


\textsuperscript{82} See below, page 40.

\textsuperscript{83} Hannah Baker et al., “Biblos in New Zealand” (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2006). The sample of 419 respondents, in state schools across New Zealand, included children in Years 6 (60%), 9 (28.2%) and 12 (11.7%). All had attended BiS classes.
in the study could not identify one story or passage from the Bible. 57% of the Year 12 children could not describe any aspects of modern life that had been influenced by the Bible. Other concerns were that children did not recognise the vocabulary differentiating the religious traditions, did not understand the word “worship” and found 39 different ways to spell the name of Jesus. The research raised questions about the efficacy of the CEC’s programme and about the religious literacy of both primary and secondary school pupils in New Zealand. Religious literacy may be variously defined, but in this thesis I follow a definition supplied by Andrew Wright, a critical realist and academic in the field of religious education in the United Kingdom: “the ability to take part in an informed, critical, sensitive and ideologically aware conversation about the nature of ultimate reality and of their relationships to this reality”.

There appeared to be no education theses or empirical research on teaching about religions and beliefs in New Zealand’ schools, aside from a College of Education thesis written in 1977. The subject of religion in the curriculum appeared to have been overlooked as a research focus. The research on the teaching of spirituality in the curriculum in primary schools had given little consideration to how this might involve teaching about religions and beliefs. There was no obtainable information about what children were being taught about religions and beliefs either in BiS lessons, social studies or in spiritual education. An important aspect of my research project—comprising the sixth element of my research rationale—would be to undertake fieldwork within the school environment, in order to investigate contemporary perspectives, policy and practices regarding religion in primary schools.

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84 Ibid., 31.
85 Ibid., 33.
86 Ibid., 30, 59, 60.
Summary of Research

I devised an initial research question which would allow me to examine these broad issues:

1. Is New Zealand’s cultural and religious diversity influencing the practice of, and attitudes toward, teaching about religion and spirituality in state and integrated primary schools?

The qualitative approach necessitated an in-depth comparative study in place of a wide-based study of school practices in areas of high diversity. I recruited a pilot study school in Dunedin, three case study schools in Auckland and three in Southland. I interviewed parents, teachers, principals and BiS volunteers, observed BiS lessons, examined school policy documents and photographed relevant classroom displays. I examined curriculum materials for BiS and Catholic religious education provided by case study schools. In addition, I arranged to interview key stakeholders and other participants with relevant perspectives.

Answering the Research Question and Reframing the Research Focus

To answer my initial research question, case study and interview data indicated that the curriculum and pedagogy of neither BiS, nor religious instruction in Catholic integrated schools, was amended for religiously diverse contexts. Christian confessional instruction was deemed appropriate for all children present in both Auckland and Southland, regardless of religious affiliation, because their parents had not withdrawn them from BiS, or had enrolled them in a Catholic school. Additionally, education about religions and beliefs was disqualified as an appropriate area of study in both regions. In this regard, the research question is answered in the negative. However, research participants in both areas cited increased diversity as an additional reason not to treat matters of religion and belief as matters of substantive inquiry, but to promote tolerance as a more appropriate focus. Curriculum imperatives around the management of increased diversity appeared to limit opportunities for young people to acquire knowledge and discernment in matters of religion. An affirmative answer may therefore be given to the research question. More detailed research summaries are provided in Appendices Three and Four.

As I describe in Chapter Three below, this ambivalent answer to my initial question prompted two further research questions to which the thesis is addressed:

2. What are the key discursive and institutional constraints which maintain current arrangements for voluntary religious instruction and restrict curriculum development in the area of religion and beliefs?
3. Is there an alternative to current practices consistent with New Zealand’s status as a secular, bicultural and religiously plural liberal democracy?

In answer to these questions, the thesis identifies nine primary and six secondary discourses and evidences the ways in which they have impacted, and continue to influence, the subject of religion in New Zealand’s primary schools. In response to the discursive and material constraints identified, and in conversation with the secondary literature, the thesis offers critical liberal criteria for education about religion and beliefs in plural democracies, and proposes critical education in religions and worldviews for the New Zealand educational context. While the fieldwork is focussed on primary school practice, the examination of policy and curriculum documents relating to both stages of education suggests that the same discursive constraints operate at secondary school level. For this reason I do not confine my conclusions and recommendations to the primary school stage.

**Analysis of Research Data and Source Material**

The assessment of policy, practices and perceptions became the starting point for an iterative analysis across interview data, primary source material and secondary literature. Adopting a critical realist approach to Foucaultian discourse analysis, I have identified a range of discursive, material, institutional and embodied constraints which appear to frame discussion on religion in schools in the New Zealand context. In a Foucaultian genealogical survey of primary sources, I show how these contingent and historically situated discourses have operated to construct the secular curriculum as “nothing to do with religion” (and therefore educationally progressive) and confessional religious instruction outside the curriculum as “culturally responsive” (and therefore educationally progressive). I show how a specific form of secular (neo)-liberal governmentality appeared to limit treatment of religion in the curriculum to that which was uncontroversial and, concurrently, to promote BiS as universally appropriate liberal values teaching.

**Theorising Education in Religions and Beliefs for the New Zealand Context**

My literature search indicated that practices, policies and legislation regarding religion in school had not been the subject of theorisation by New Zealand’s educationalists. My research suggests that this has left children exposed to the contingent and conflicting discursive imperatives of BiS volunteers, boards of trustees, principals, teachers and

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92 See below, Chapter Four, Chapter Six, Chapter Seven and Appendix 4.
93 See below, Chapter Five, pages 120 and 123.
94 See below, Chapter Five, pages 178; Chapter Eight, pages 270-275.
governmental interests. These actors always operated in the perceived best interests of the child and this research does not seek to lay blame or criticism at the door of hardworking education professionals or volunteers. The critique is of the dominant discourses informing policy, practice and legislation and constraining the involvement of either the Ministry or educationalists in the development of guidelines for the treatment of religion in primary schools. In order to address these issues I have drawn on Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality, William Galston’s liberal diversity theory, Michael Young’s social theory of “powerful knowledge” and Andrew Wright’s conception of critical religious education. Armed with this theoretical toolkit I develop a critical realist and egalitarian liberal critique of the dominant discursive imperatives operating to constrain development of a curriculum in religions and beliefs. Concurrently, I make a case for critical education in religions and worldviews in New Zealand schools.

**Distinctive Contribution**

This research makes four distinct contributions to research policy and practice in the New Zealand educational context. Firstly, it examines current practices and policies regarding treatment of religion in New Zealand primary schools. It therefore provides a new window into religious instruction in BiS classes, Catholic religious education and the treatment of religion within the broader primary school curriculum. Observations made during case study fieldwork and interviews with key stakeholders raise significant questions about current arrangements and make an important contribution to future policy formation in this contested educational field. Secondly, the research seeks to explain how the current situation regarding religion in primary school has arisen and is discursively maintained. The insights challenge the apparent immutability of current practices, opening up a wider range of policy choices for curriculum planners. Thirdly, the research makes a contribution to a theory of education in religions and beliefs within the New Zealand context. I develop a rationale for a critical education in religions and worldviews which applies across all levels of schooling. Finally, the research makes clear recommendations regarding current practices, policies and legislation which could contribute to any future review of either voluntary religious instruction or the content of the New Zealand Curriculum.

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95 I follow a definition of “critique” supplied by sociolinguistic specialist Norman Fairclough: “Critique brings a normative element into analysis. [...] Critique assesses what exists, what might exist and what should exist on the basis of a coherent set of values.” Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 7. This definition permits analysis which goes beyond neutral description of social practices, holding them up to scrutiny (implying judgement and possible criticism) and seeking to remedy or mitigate perceived social wrongs.
Thesis Structure

The structure is designed to lead the reader through the process of research, data collection, analysis and theorising in which I have been engaged. However this process has not been linear, but iterative. So while my data report chapters are situated at the end of the thesis it will be evident that the data, and my quest for an explanation for the initial findings, inform the choice of methodology, analysis and theory which appear to precede them.

In Chapter One, I have introduced the focus and rationale for the current research. I have provided contextual information, a summary of the research process and an indication of the contribution the research makes to the field. In Chapter Two, focussed on methodology, I describe the epistemological standpoint of social constructionism, the theoretical perspective of critical realism and the methodology of Foucaultian discourse analysis adopted in the thesis. Chapter Three describes the research methods by which I recruited my case study schools and conducted interviews. In Chapter Four I provide a summary of primary and secondary discourses which appear to influence the treatment of religion in New Zealand schools. I then offer a genealogical survey of key primary source material pertaining to legislation and education policy regarding religion, values, spirituality and cultural diversity.

Chapter Five—a review and critique of the literature—introduces the theorists whose work informs my analysis of current policy and practice. I provide a tabular summary of New Zealand and international literature which exemplifies the discourses previously discussed. I demonstrate how my applied theory destabilises and problematises dominant discursive imperatives constraining the development of religion in schools. Chapters Six and Seven constitute my data report. In Chapter Six, I describe the religious instruction practices observed in case study schools, and explain how these practices were discursively maintained and reproduced. In Chapter Seven, I examine the ways in which education in religions and beliefs was disqualified in the case study schools and by key stakeholders. I also describe the way that discursive imperatives around the management of diversity appeared to promote a particular form of secular (neo)-liberal religious worldview in this context. I critique these practices from the critical realist, egalitarian liberal and Foucaultian perspectives previously outlined. In Chapter Eight, I present my conclusions and recommendations. The appendices provide further details of the historical and international context, research methods and research summaries.
Chapter Two: Methodology

Introduction

In our educational institution, what (and whose) view of the world are we giving to students? Who is benefitting? Who is harmed? What knowledge about the world is absent, subjugated, disqualified? Why? [. . .] What else could we do here? Is our ability to imagine what else we might do itself insinuated in hidden regimes beyond our good intentions in raising such alternatives?

Michel Foucault

In Chapter One, I stated that New Zealand primary school children do not routinely learn about religions and beliefs but that, in 2012, 41% of state schools provided Christian instruction. This is a situation which would be almost inconceivable within the state education system which has evolved in England and Wales. The question arises: how does one account for such widely differing policies and practices in the field of religious education? How can Christian religious instruction in state schools be perceived as a “social need” in one Western democratic society and an “inappropriate exercise of power” in another?  

How can one explain that, in New Zealand, education in religions and beliefs is conceived as unnecessary whereas, in England and Wales, it is considered an educational “entitlement”? Such questions necessitate a methodological approach which takes account of the way educational practices are either legitimised or discredited: an approach which permits analysis of rationalisation processes and institutional imperatives.

French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1926-1984) examined the ways in which knowledge and power are combined within discourse to create “regimes of truth”. He described how some forms of knowledge obtain validity and are normalised, while others are disqualified. In this chapter I outline the social constructionist epistemology, critical realist

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theoretical perspective and methodology of Foucaultian discourse analysis upon which this thesis is based.  

**Discourse Theory**

Foucault employs the term discourse in his two works of “archaeology”: *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.  

Foucault explains that, in all forms of social interaction, a system of unwritten but definable rules delineates that which may or may not be said, or thought, at any given time. These rules may be evidenced within the justifications and rationalisations given for social policy and practice, for “‘practices’ don’t exist without a certain regime of rationality”. Foucault identifies two ways in which a regime of rationality may be analysed: “On the one hand, that of codification/prescription (how it forms an ensemble of rules, procedures, means to an end etc.), and on the other, that of true or false formulation (how it determines a domain of objects about which it is possible to articulate true or false propositions).”  

On this basis it is possible to observe discourses at work in the New Zealand educational context by identifying the ways in which “objects” such as religious education or the secular curriculum are defined and the kind of statements of fact, or judgements of value, which are produced in relation to them. Equally the concomitant rules, policies and practices which are advocated, justified and rationalised in relation to these objects, may be observed and analysed.

Discourses, Foucault asserts, are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”. Dominant discourses shape our understanding of the world and frame the ways in which society operates. Thus they define what is conceivable and inconceivable within specific social contexts. I show in this thesis how dominant discourses set the terms of debates about religion in education in New Zealand and constrain pedagogical possibilities in this area.

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5. I adopt Michael Crotty’s distinction between the use of the terms methodology and methods, in which methods pertain to techniques used to gather and analyse data, and methodology pertains to the strategy or design lying behind the choice of the methods; Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1998), 3. Scholars use the spelling Foucaultian or Foucauldian. With Lynn Fendler I adopt this usage because it is closer to the original spelling of the name. Lynn Fendler, *Michel Foucault* (London: Continuum, 2010), 3.


8. Ibid.

American sociolinguistic academic, James Gee, identifies two kinds of discourse through which individuals operate in society.  

He describes a primary discourse defined as the “taken for granted understandings of who we [‘people like us’] are, as well as what sort of things we [. . .] do, value, and believe”. He then suggests that within the wider context of local and national institutions, we encounter a wide range of secondary discourses which we may either acquire and utilise or resist. These may cause us to adopt values which are in conflict with other discourses to which we subscribe.  

I adopt Gee’s modification of Foucault’s conception of discourse in this thesis because my analysis indicates that interviewees frequently draw upon secondary educational discourses in support of a position on religion in schools which is premised upon a primary discourse. They also express contradictory views as they shift between discursive frameworks.

Knowledge/Power

In his “genealogical” works Foucault demonstrates how knowledge and power are bound up in discourse. Some versions of truth or reality are valued and become normative, and others are subjugated. But power is emphatically not held only by one group in society. It is at work at every level, contesting, resisting, asserting and constraining what constitutes knowledge at a given time: “[P]ower-knowledge, the processes and struggles [. . .] of which it is made up, [. . .] determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.”

The “possible domains of knowledge” are those which are validated and have currency within a given time, place and discourse. These are the normative truths about which one may think and speak. Foucault shows how institutions and social practices reflect these “normalised” versions of reality. Policies, practices and forms of knowledge obtain a commonsense quality when they conform to the prevailing regime of truth. Foucault sought to problematise notions of normality, attempting through genealogical analysis to show that normative truths only become so as a matter of contingency. Other versions of reality, truth and knowledge have always been possible through alternative discourses which contest and resist dominant discursive formulations. His interest was in the “subjugated knowledges” which are “disqualified” by prevailing discourses and in the unintended outcomes that might result from

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11 Gee notes that this is not an unproblematic distinction because the boundaries between discourses are contested and fluid: ibid., 159, 165-6.
14 Foucault, “Politics”, 63.
the privileging of discourses in institutions. These conceptions of discourse, power and knowledge are fundamental to Foucaultian social constructionist critique and are central to my research methodology.

**Governmentality**

Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” emphasises the “disciplinary techniques” which individuals, institutions and nation states employ in order to reproduce social behaviour, practice and policy. The persuasive power of discourse is employed at every level of social interaction to either constrain or afford possibilities for action. Foucault describes the contradictions of the liberal nation state which, at one level, promotes freedom to live without interference from the state, but at another must monitor, regulate and amend the behaviour of citizens in order to reproduce behaviours conducive to the furtherance of the interests of the nation state. These forms of governmentality may be tyrannical and oppressive but, alternatively, may have positive outcomes and effects. The mark of an illiberal governmentality is its resistance to self-critique and modification:

The important question here [. . .] is [. . .] whether the system of constraints in which a society functions leaves individuals the liberty to transform the system [. . .]. [A] system of constraint becomes truly intolerable when the individuals who are affected by it don’t have the means of modifying it.

For Foucault, liberalism is:

a tool for criticising the reality: (1) of a previous governmentality that one tries to shed; (2) of a current governmentality that one attempts to reform and rationalise by stripping it down; (3) of a governmentality that one opposes and whose abuses one tries to limit.

However, he recognises that liberalism may be perceived both “as a regulative scheme of governmental practice and as the theme of sometimes radical opposition”. Foucault provides conceptual and methodological tools which I employ in my critique of the social construction of religion in New Zealand’s primary schools. While Foucault’s work has been

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16 Foucault, “Governmentality”.
20 Ibid.
foundational for post-modern and post-structuralist thought, scholars debate the implications of social constructionism for social research.²¹

Realism and Relativism

Foucault’s social constructionism problematises notions of truth and reality: “Truth is a thing of this world [. . .]. Each society has its own regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true.”²²

Foucault here appears to exemplify an extreme relativist or perspectivist position.²³ Reality, or truth, is entirely constructed and has no existence beyond meanings inscribed within discourse. Some post-modernists have argued that social constructionism must, on moral grounds, entail denial of material reality and the espousal of ontological relativism.²⁴ Others have insisted that the question of material reality is bracketed out by social constructionism, having little relevance for social research.²⁵ Foucault refutes claims that he denies the reality of phenomena.²⁶ On the contrary, his approach provides an account of the way in which social reality, institutions and social practices are brought into being and experienced within discourse.²⁷ The claim is not that this reality is an illusion, but that it is contingent. It could be experienced in a different way under different circumstances, which would be equally real. It is the belief that meanings of events and actions are transparent and self-evident; that human beings can be grouped and defined according to essential and natural characteristics and behaviours; and that institutions are simply organised in common-sense, politically neutral ways which is problematised by Foucaultian social constructionism.²⁸

²² Foucault, “Power/Knowledge”, 131.
²⁵ Vivien Burr, Social Constructionism, 2nd ed. (Hove: Routledge, 2003), 90.
²⁸ Ibid., 269.
The matter of realism and relativism is tackled head-on by British philosopher Roy Bhaskar’s critical realist form of social constructionism, which differentiates ontological realism from epistemological relativism. Bhaskar makes a clear distinction between the world as it exists (truth/reality)—the intransitive dimension—and the world as we perceive and experience it—the transitive dimension. Our sense perceptions do not convey ontological reality to us in its perfect form, but our perceptions are related to and reference this intransitive dimension. Therefore we are not imagining the world around us, but we perceive it in a way which may differ in some respects from reality and in a way that may differ to the perceptions of others. This approach recognises that the physical and social structures around us “always already” exist in a material sense. However, the ways in which we understand and ascribe meaning to objects and events, and the ways in which we think about ourselves, are constructed within the constraints of discourse.

Approaches which assume truth and reality to be either fixed and permanent (positivism/empiricism) or entirely a matter of perspective (relativism/subjectivism) have, Bhaskar asserts, fallen prey to the epistemic fallacy: “[T]he view that statements about being can be reduced to or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge.” The epistemological realist denies the transitive dimension, assuming that sense perceptions convey aethic truth. The ontological relativist denies the intransitive dimension assuming that, because sense perceptions are relative, aethia does not exist except through discourse. I show, below, the ways in which the dual epistemology of critical realism permits a more critical analysis of educational policy and practice than an ontologically relativist approach.

Neutrality/Social action
Related to the realism/relativism debate is the dilemma of whether the epistemological relativism intrinsic to social constructionism permits or precludes advocacy in social research.

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31 Burr, Social Constructionism, 95.
33 Bhaskar, A Realist Theory of Science, 36. See also Collier, Critical Realism, 76.
Foucault’s approach appears to have led him, in his academic life, to deny the very possibility of social justice and to eschew any advocacy role for the social researcher.\textsuperscript{35}

What is effectively needed is a ramified, penetrative perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation [. . .]. In other words a topological and geological survey of the battlefield—that is the intellectuals’ role. But as for saying, “Here is what you must do!”, certainly not.\textsuperscript{36}

Foucault is anxious not to set up what he calls a “utopian dissociation” in which a real version of truth is set against the previous false one.\textsuperscript{37} Foucaultian analysis is more concerned to examine the processes which keep such regimes of truth in place and of the production of knowledge within discourses.\textsuperscript{38}

However, Foucaultian and post-structuralist analysis has been accused of undermining the very basis of any political standpoint or identity politics. African American sociologist Patricia Hill-Collins, speaking from a black feminist position, rails against the relativism of post-structuralism and the concomitant crisis of representation which “undercuts African-American women’s political activism” and “eschews social policy recommendations”.\textsuperscript{39} She maintains that post-modern critique can be seen as the “new politics of containment” and a “politics of impotence” which actually works to reproduce power inequalities.\textsuperscript{40} American feminist and post-structuralist researcher Patti Lather seems to exemplify the problem stated by Hill-Collins. While she claims that post-structuralist critique does not have to be disempowering or impotent, in her own work she operates with an awareness that she is “always already wrong” and that her work is “ruined from the start”.\textsuperscript{41} This is a “methodology of getting lost” defined as: “[A] science based less on knowledge than on awareness of epistemic limits where

\textsuperscript{35} However Foucault was politically active on a personal level during the 1960s and ‘70s. Sara Mills, \textit{Michel Foucault} (London: Routledge, 2003), 17-19.


\textsuperscript{37} Foucault, “Power/Knowledge”, 136.

\textsuperscript{38} Gail McNicol Jardine, \textit{Foucault and Education} (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 34.


\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 226-8.
constitutive unknowingness becomes an ethical resource and aporetic suspension becomes an ethical practice of undecidability.”

It is arguable that Lather wears her post-structuralism rather heavily and her methodology of getting lost may simply translate as a thoroughgoing defeatism which must drain the life-blood from any social research project. In Bhaskar’s terms, Lather appears to suffer from the epistemic fallacy in which the transitive and intransitive dimensions are conflated. Her ontological relativism precludes the possibility of substantive critique or policy formulation. She instead engages in what Bhaskar has termed judgemental relativism: the idea that “all beliefs are equally valid in the sense that there are no rational grounds for preferring one to another”. British philosopher, and critical realist, Andrew Collier has described this as a “not drowning but waving” approach in which oppression may be perpetually redescribed in incommensurable terms, and therefore reproduced, by social researchers. Bhaskar instead asserts that “judgemental rationality” is both possible and necessary. Judgements may be made in a rational way by discussing and comparing theories and ideas and adopting those which “explain more” about social phenomena and by amending judgements in the light of new information. Critical realist judgements are predicated on a theory or conclusion being based on the “best available” description of truth/reality in the light of the evidence. Andrew Wright calls this “contingent rationality”: “This is the best sense we can make of reality at present, now let’s see if we can achieve anything better.”

Following this reasoning, critical realist researchers do not allow their social constructionism and epistemological relativism to prevent them from advocating changes in policy and practice. While employing Foucaultian analytical techniques, critical psychologist Ian Parker actively dissociates himself from those “high post-structuralists” or “Nietzschean perspectivists” who “value only the struggle of different versions and forms of resistance in which appeals to rational criteria are seen as mere tactics to get one version into a dominant position”. He suggests that social research must allow the researcher to make judgements and recommendations. Similarly, critical psychologist Carla Willig adopts Foucaultian methods, but argues for politically engaged, rather than neutral social research:

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42 Ibid., 227.
46 Wright, “The Spiritual Education Project”, 173.
My identification of the need to adopt a critical realist type of analysis of the social is not the result of a rejection of ultimate epistemological relativism. Rather it is the result of the recognition that we as human agents find ourselves within a context in which things are always already going on or being done. Within this context it is impossible to abstain from involvement since inaction is always a form of action [. . .]. An attempt to disengage necessarily serves to consolidate the status quo. This is why the postmodernist position so easily slides into political conservatism. [. . .] Instead of engaging in futile attempts to disengage, we need to find a way of improving our understanding of the social world and our role within it.  

Thus, when social researchers conclude from the “best available” evidence that existing institutional and social structures “facilitate limiting or oppressive positioning and practices” there is a concomitant responsibility to “call for alternative formulations” or advocate policy change in institutions. Failure to do so amounts to complicity in the continuation of such practices. I share these scholars’ view that, in line with ethical considerations, social research must be permitted to go further than a post-structuralist redescription of the discursive “battlefield” and (in)conclusions based upon “constitutive unknowingness” and “aporetic suspension”. Accordingly, this project is founded on both epistemological relativism and ontological realism. While utilising Foucaultian tools of analysis, it employs judgemental rationality rather than judgemental relativism and advocates policy change rather than disengagement.

Analysis of Discourse and the Extra-discursive

Discourse analysis is a term which covers widely differing methods of data interpretation. Critical psychologist Vivien Burr broadly categorises these within micro or macro approaches. Micro approaches, founded within the field of discursive psychology, are primarily subject-centred and language-focussed. This approach rejects attempts to describe the internal reality of the subject, or the external reality of the social world, beyond the interview data. In the macro social constructionist tradition, the constructive power of language is recognised but the relationship of this to social reality is emphasised, i.e., institutional practices and social structures which embed discourses into social practice. Norman Fairclough considers that this approach holds in tension the agency of the subject.

49 Ibid., 95.
50 Burr, Social Constructionism, 21-2.
within a discursively constrained material reality and provides a firmer basis for social critique.\textsuperscript{53} This broader analytical approach is consistent with a critical realist theoretical perspective and is one which I adopt in this thesis.

I differentiate the discourse analysis, which I shall employ, from the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) espoused by those whose approach requires a formal grammatical analysis.\textsuperscript{54} Although we share a broadly macro social constructionist approach and a critical perspective, the CDA approach may risk a repositioning of my research focus back towards the individuals interviewed and away from education policy which is the object of analysis.\textsuperscript{55} My approach to Foucaultian discourse analysis follows procedural guidelines recommended by Willig.\textsuperscript{56} My analysis attends to: (i) discursive constructions—the way objects such as religious education and the secular curriculum are constructed; (ii) discourses—the way these different constructions seem to fit within the codes of practice of particular regimes of rationality; (iii) action orientation—what is accomplished or reproduced through this interaction; (iv) positionings—the different subject positions which were possible and adopted or resisted; (v) practice—the implications of this positioning for education policy and practice; and (vi) subjectivity—the implications of taking subject positions for the individual on the affective level. Taking the Foucaultian analysis a stage further than Willig, I also consider the way that discursive imperatives combine within forms of governmentality in educational institutions, constraining and affording possibilities for policy and practice.

Complementing this Foucaultian analysis, the adoption of a critical realist approach permits an interrogation of data for “extra-discursive” elements. Critical psychologists John Crombie and David J. Nightingale identify three extra-discursive elements which they consider to be regularly overlooked by relativist and micro social constructionist research: embodiment, materiality and institutional power.\textsuperscript{57} Although each of these concepts may be understood in discursive terms, they are not reducible to discourse. From a critical realist perspective, these

\textsuperscript{55} I also distinguish my approach from that of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School who operate with a Marxist conception of class-based power structures in contrast to the Foucaultian conception described. See Max Horkheimer, \textit{Critical Theory} (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), 244.
aspects may be analysed for the possibilities and constraints which they place on the “social constructions by and through which we live our lives”. The inclusion of the extra-discursive affords further possibility for substantive critique of policy and practice.

Criticism of a critical realist approach to discourse analysis has been levelled by discursive psychologist Susan Speer, who accuses critical realist researchers of applying an “analytic double standard”. She denies the moral legitimacy of ontological realism suggesting that it results in a “cognitivist treatment of language, in which a person’s talk […] is treated as a straightforward representation of what they are thinking and feeling” and “an unproblematic source of evidence for what happened ‘in the world out there’”. This allows researchers to “use their data to support their pre-established notions” about the constraints of extra-discursive factors on interviewees and to “impose [their] critical, political agendas onto [their] data prematurely”. Speer adopts a discursive psychology approach to the data, which constrains her from making judgements or recommendations about policy. It also predisposes her to scepticism about statements made by interviewees. Her approach exemplifies the judgemental relativism described by Bhaskar above. Speer appears to imply that her approach is more ethical, by dint of its being more “technical” than “political”. But, as Willig has pointed out, politically neutral research can only reproduce the status quo. This is a political position in itself. This thesis therefore operates with a critical realist form of discourse analysis which understands language to be used both as a means of expressing reality (as perceived by research participants) and also as a way of accomplishing social objectives. Far from being mutually exclusive the two levels of analysis are complementary.

**Genealogy**

Social psychologist Derek Hook and social scientists Sara Mills and Jean Carabine agree that a Foucaultian approach requires a wider analysis than that of interview data. They advocate a search of the “archive” surrounding the object of study. Hook insists that:

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58 Ibid., 12.
60 Ibid., 132.
61 Ibid.
one needs to reference one’s analytical conclusions to a double epistemology; to corroborate findings to extra-textual dimensions, like those of space [. . .], time (history), architecture or material forms of practice. Analysing text alone should not be seen as an adequate means of “getting to grips” with power.64

With this in mind, my case study approach includes analysis of lesson observations, class displays and teaching resources.65 But, importantly, Chapter Four will encompass a genealogical approach to the historical data surrounding religion in schools in New Zealand. I include data from parliamentary debates, policy documents, newspaper articles and cartoons, submissions on government reports, report documents and statements of educational policy. This broad-based archival approach provides the context within which to ground analysis of interview data produced from fieldwork.

Carabine summarises Foucault’s genealogical approach as follows: the idea of power as operating and circulating at every level of a society; normalisation as one method of deploying power; the notion that power/knowledge/discourse are intricately intermeshed; the need to account for social context and relations so as to situate the power/knowledge realm; the idea that discourses are constitutive; discourses have a normalising role and regulatory outcomes; the idea of discourse as uneven, contradictory and contested; the idea that knowledge, truth and discourse are all socially constructed and historically specific.66 Such concepts underpin the analysis of my archival material.

**Reflexivity**

Critical theorists Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren, in 1994, described the need for critical researchers to “become aware of the ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, intersubjective and normative reference claims”.67 When this trend first arose during the 1990s, critical feminist Daphne Patai, here summarised by feminist post-structuralist researcher Wanda Pillow, was among those to launch a scathing attack on self-indulgent reflexive practices, excoriating “people ‘who stay up nights worrying about representation’ as privileged academics engaged

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64 Hook, *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power*, 128.
65 See below, page 57.
in the erotics of their own language games [. . .] when ‘notwithstanding, babies still have to be cared for, shelter sought, meals prepared and eaten’”. 68

Patai’s critique parallels that of Hill-Collins which identifies the post-structuralist/relativist viewpoint as one which draws attention away from social reality and inexorably towards the researcher and her/his crisis of representation. Aside from the politically neutralising outcomes discussed above, Pillow warns that this self-reflexive process appears to operate in a way that allows researchers, in some sense, to “transcend their subjectivity and own cultural context in a way that releases [them] from the weight of (mis)representations.” 69 In this way the act of “confession” is followed by “absolution” and the researcher is able to proceed as though their work is objective and neutral and that a “God’s-eye view” is indeed available to them. 70 Pillow advocates a “reflexivity of discomfort” in which reflexivity is used, not to salve the researcher’s conscience about the way in which they represent others, to validate their own position nor valorise an argument, but to actively destabilise and problematise the representations that are made and the knowledge that is produced, for the reader. 71

But, in following her advice, the researcher is surely in danger of descending into a Lather-like paralysis in which there is a requirement to prefix one’s thesis with a conscious invalidation of the data and the confession that one’s findings are “always already wrong”. 72 Again, I contend that the critical realist perspective is a helpful moderation to the post-structuralist/relativist position on reflexivity. If we accept an ontological reality it is possible to make some claims about the way we perceive the world, make judgements and offer a critique from an informed perspective. For although, within an epistemological relativism, we acknowledge our perceptions are never entirely complete or accurate, they are based on the “best possible” understanding of reality as perceived by the researcher within the context of the research. Judgements are always open to correction in the light of new information or a new theory which better explains the phenomena. Thus judgmental rationality is combined with “epistemic humility” in the critical realist approach. As critical realist and religious educationalist Trevor Cooling explains: “[M]y personal judgement that an argument is

69 Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis or Cure?”, 186.
71 Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis or Cure?”, 192.
72 See above, page 32.
compelling does not mean that it is necessarily compelling for all reasonable people, [therefore] epistemic humility recognises a need to temper our own convictions with a dose of the hermeneutics of self-suspicion.\textsuperscript{73}

I therefore acknowledge the situated and constructed nature of my research and offer a statement of reflexive positioning:

My perspective is of one who operates within discourses which value both knowledge about religion and a personal religious quest. I accept that my upbringing in the United Kingdom by left-leaning, politically active and middle-class parents predisposes me to valorise human rights issues, liberal social policy and structural/policy solutions to injustice. My twelve years of experience as a primary school teacher in the United Kingdom inform my thinking on the issue of religious education in New Zealand. My experience of the New Zealand education system is limited to that obtained during the period of my doctoral research. I consciously adopt an egalitarian liberal and critical realist position as I analyse the discourses at work in policy documents and interview transcripts.

I advocate a position on religion in school which I believe has been subjugated within the New Zealand education system and I resist the conclusion that my partiality entirely destabilises my data and conclusions. This would serve only to conserve the status quo which I believe should be challenged. I acknowledge that others think differently about this matter and I explore some of those differences within this thesis. I do not offer a transcendental or God’s-eye view, but the perspective of one whose training and predispositions provide both the motivation and personal resources for this important piece of social research.

**Conclusion**

The methodological approach outlined in this chapter will enable me to explore the power/knowledge relationships at play in the reproduction of Christian religious instruction, and the apparent disqualification of education in religions and beliefs, in New Zealand primary schools. It will also enable me to make judgements about such policy and to advocate policy changes from an egalitarian liberal and a critical realist perspective. In the next chapter I describe the rationale for the research question, selection of case study schools and research methods.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

Introduction

A prime concern in undertaking this research was to do so in a way which would allow for multiple meanings and definitions of terminology in current use, regarding religion in school, to be explored. A quantitative approach, utilising a probability sample with a survey or questionnaire, may have provided statistically generalisable data. However, as discussed in Chapter One above, the absence of an agreed vocabulary with which to discuss religion in school, in the New Zealand context, may have seriously compromised the data collected. The use of qualitative research tools has facilitated an in-depth analysis of the ways in which religious education policy within seven participating primary schools is discursively reproduced. This chapter delineates the process and methods by which this qualitative research has been undertaken, making explicit the connections between methods and methodology.

Research Validity

The “scientific holy trinity” of generalisation, validity and reliability are pertinent in both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms.\(^1\) However, as psychologist and qualitative research specialist Steinar Kvale points out, in the qualitative approach: “the emphasis is moved from inspection at the end of [the research process] to quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production”.\(^2\) The New Zealand context raises particular issues regarding perceptions of research validity. With this in mind I begin by considering the approach to researcher objectivity, kaupapa Māori research and generalisation adopted in this thesis.

Objectivity

From the discussion in previous chapters it will be clear that one motivation for undertaking this research has been a desire to highlight issues of social justice and human rights with regard to New Zealand policy on religious education. I have positioned myself from the outset as an egalitarian liberal and critical realist, in order to advocate change in curriculum policy. In so doing, I depart from a perceived institutional consensus both on religion in schools and perhaps on the nature and purpose of educational research. Subjectivity and researcher bias may be perceived to detract from ethical validity, so I need to address the matter of partiality and objectivity.

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\(^2\) Ibid., 309.
American Sociologist Alvin Gouldner argued, in 1968, that “the adoption of an ‘outside’ standpoint, far from leading us to ignore the participants’ standpoint, is probably the only way in which we can recognise and identify the participants’ standpoint”. By adopting an outside position in this thesis alternative viewpoints are not ignored but are seen through the lens of discourse. Following Gouldner again: “[A]ll standpoints are partisan [. . .] but aren’t some forms of partisanship more liberating than others?” This question may be answered with a “No” by post-structuralist researchers, as described above. However, Gouldner aligns with a critical realist approach which insists that rational judgements are possible in research. For Gouldner, the objectivity of a sociologist ought to be considered in the same way as that of a judge:

The function of a judge is not to bring parties together, but is, quite simply to do justice [. . .]. What makes a judgement possessed of justice is not the fact that it distributes costs and benefits equally between the parties but, rather, that the allocation of benefits and costs is made in conformity with some stated normative standard. Justice, in short, is that which is justified in terms of some value [. . .]. In one part, then, the objectivity of the judge requires his explication of the moral value in terms of which his judgement has been rendered.

Gouldner’s concept of “normative objectivity” rests on the ability of the researcher to recognise and state one’s values and to demonstrate that one’s analysis is consistent with these proclaimed values. However, Gouldner insists that objectivity relies on the espousal of values which contribute to “a human unity of mankind” and which do not accommodate or impose suffering. Research which meets these criteria may be seen to be both partisan and objective. I share Gouldner’s view that these qualities are not incompatible.

As an egalitarian liberal I might state that the values of diversity, inclusion, social justice, equity, human rights and the common good, as stated in the New Zealand curriculum, may be held as normative for education policy and as a basis for liberal democracy. But appeals to notions of justice, human rights and moral values as though their meanings were unproblematic, do not resolve the objectivity issue when one is operating within a social

4 Ibid.
5 See above, page 32, also below, page 157.
7 Ibid., 116.
9 MOE, The New Zealand Curriculum, 10.
constructionist epistemology. Each of these curriculum values may be constructed differently, with contradictory curriculum implications, when set within a different discursive framework. Indeed, this thesis problematises the governmental nature of dominant interpretations of values and principles of the curriculum document. To fulfil Gouldner’s criteria, a more nuanced description of normative values will be required. In Chapter Five I explore liberal theorist William Galston’s model of “liberal diversity”, which prioritises the protection of diversity over the promotion of personal autonomy. I show how establishing the protection of diversity as a normative value is consistent with an egalitarian liberal discourse. I therefore judge current practices, both in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom, according to their capacity to protect diversity. A neutral, God’s-eye view is not available to the social researcher, but objective partisanship is attainable, appropriate and makes a necessary contribution to policy formation.

Kaupapa Māori Research

On the issue of validity, objectivity and the insider/outside dichotomy it would be important to recognise the influence of kaupapa Māori research in New Zealand, as described by Maori educationalists such as Russell Bishop, Graham Hingangaroa Smith and Linda Tuhuiwai Smith. In response to the traditional, Western deficit model of research into Māori educational achievement such scholars would argue strongly for research which is “by Māori, for Māori with Māori” or, as Marjie Maaka concedes, with the participation of invited others. These scholars offer a view contrary to Gouldner’s in which the outsider has the clearest line of sight. From within this discourse it is the insider who is best placed to conduct research in a framework where “Māori language, culture, knowledge and values are accepted in their own

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10 For example, human rights have been invoked in order to both critique and support BiS. See below, for example, Tessa Bromwich in Table 11, page 128 and Paul Rishworth in Table 12, page 131.
11 For example, the promotion of neoliberal values: pages 109, 173, 261.
right”. Such insider research is more likely to provide the answer to Māori educational underachievement and therefore in Gouldner’s terms would be “more liberating” for Māori. Objective research, from a kaupapa Māori perspective, will be research which is “active in pursuit of social and institutional change, that makes space for indigenous knowledge, and that has a critical view of power relations and inequality”. This is a form of objective partisanship with the important difference that only insider researchers are considered to be objective and only the insider’s research is valid.

However, sociologist Martin Tolich notes that the exclusion zone for non-Māori researchers has often been interpreted much more widely than the field of Māori-centred research. Writing in 2002, Tolich described the way in which many Pākehā researchers not only felt unable to research issues directly pertaining to Māori but, in their general research into New Zealand society, discreetly avoided dealing with aspects of Māori culture which may be involved in the study, or carefully excluded Māori participants from the population sample. He coined the phrase “Pākehā paralysis” to describe “Pākehā inability to distinguish between their role in Māori-centred research and their role in research in a New Zealand society”. Tolich argues forcefully that Pākehā researchers best fulfil their obligation to the Treaty of Waitangi by including rather than avoiding Māori issues and participants in their research in order that both Treaty partners may benefit from research outcomes.

The ethical approval process for research in New Zealand now includes consultation with tangata whenua in accordance with a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. This process marks the respect of both the university and the researcher for Māori tino rangatiratanga within the terms of the Treaty. It functions as a safeguard to both researcher and tangata whenua that this research is being conducted within an ethical bicultural framework. I therefore follow Tolich and commit to a treatment of these issues consistent with the obligations of the Treaty, on the grounds that the findings should benefit all concerned.

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16 Smith, “On Tricky Ground”, 89.
17 Tolich, “Pākehā ‘Paralysis’”.
18 Ibid. The term Pākehā refers to New Zealanders of European descent.
19 Ibid., 176.
20 Ibid.
21 Tangata whenua are “the people of the land” or indigenous people. The University of Otago consultation process is with the iwi or tribe of Ngai Tahu. “Memorandum of Understanding”, University of Otago, accessed 30 January 2013, http://www.otago.ac.nz/about/otago005277.html.
22 The right of Māori to autonomy and self-determination.
Case study data are specific to the schools in this study, but where common findings occur in widely differing areas of New Zealand, I argue that these findings have applicability across a wider number of cases and have implications for New Zealand education policy in general. The results are not statistically generalisable, but analytic generalisation is appropriate.²³

**Analytic Generalisation**

Analytic generalisation is, in social research specialist Alan Bryman’s words, dependent on the “cogency of theoretical reasoning rather than statistical criteria”.²⁴ It therefore operates on an entirely different form of logic, in some ways akin to experiments in the physical sciences. As qualitative researcher Joseph Maxwell points out: “Physicists don’t draw random samples of atoms [. . .] [They] make no claim to statistical representativeness [. . .] but instead assume that their results contribute to a general theory of the phenomenon.”²⁵ Such generalisation does not pertain to a specific population sample but to theoretical inferences which may have applicability beyond the cases studied. In the same way, although no claim is made to statistical significance, the findings can be considered to be of substantive significance. Applied sociologist and qualitative researcher Michael Patton explains that substantive significance relates to: the coherence and consistency of the findings; the way in which the research contributes to an understanding of the phenomenon; whether the knowledge produced is new or innovative; and whether it makes a useful contribution, for example, to policy formation.²⁶

As discussed in Chapter Two, the broad range of evidence beyond the case study schools, on which my findings and theorisation are based, also widens the applicability and significance of my thesis conclusions.

**Initial Research Question**

The thesis is framed around three research questions. I began with a preliminary research question, upon which the research design was based:

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1. Is New Zealand’s cultural and religious diversity influencing the practice of, and attitudes toward, teaching about religion and spirituality in state and integrated primary schools?

The question allowed me to explore both what participants perceived to be happening in the primary schools in the study, with regard to teaching about religion, and the differing constructions of—and justifications for—different approaches to teaching about religion. This approach is consistent with my critical realist theoretical perspective which allows for the study of both reality as perceived by participants, including the extra-discursive dimension, alongside analysis of subject positioning and discourse within the regimes of rationality evidenced in the data. Underlying the research question stated is an additional theory or “hunch”. The tentative proposition for the research question was that one might expect to find a greater inclusion of teaching about religions and beliefs within the school curriculum in areas of extreme religious diversity. This was not a fully-fledged hypothesis but a suspicion or, as case study research specialist Robert Yin states, a preliminary rationale for the focus of research. It is based on the phenomenon, noted in Chapter Five, that increased immigration and religious pluralism in some other liberal democracies have prompted a move towards including teaching about diversity of religious belief within the curriculum.

I confess that I expected, or even hoped, to find that teachers and principals in these diverse areas would be in agreement with my position that education about religion is an appropriate and important area of learning. In actual fact this was not the case, as I report in Chapter Seven and Appendix 4. But where a failed hypothesis in quantitative research may mean a return to the drawing board and new research design, in qualitative research it is legitimate for new questions and theories to evolve from the data and to change during the research process. This inductive approach to theorising is applied here. The failure of my initial proposition led me to generate new research questions based on this data, and to form additional theories about what may be taking place. In line with my critical realist and Foucaultian perspective I develop theories which pertain to discursive, material, embodied and institutional constraints at work in these settings.

27 Yin, Case Study Research, 28-9.
28 See below, page 142.
29 See below, page 224, and Appendix 4, page 312.
30 Bryman, Social Research Methods, 26.
Research Design and Reformulation

The research was conceived as a multiple case study of six schools in two areas of contrasting cultural and religious diversity. Each of the six schools constituted a separate case, but the data from each have been used comparatively across both schools and regions. A separate pilot study in a Dunedin school provided additional comparative data.31

Yin describes different types of case study, distinguishing between “exploratory”, “explanatory” and “descriptive” designs.32 While I began with the intention of an exploratory study, my pilot study interview data led me to ask, not just “what is happening here?”, but “why and how is this situation occurring?” The case study design began, therefore, with an initial exploration phase in which I attempted to uncover the ways in which case study schools approached teaching about religions and beliefs, and the reasons they gave for doing so. It then progressed into an explanatory phase where through genealogical mapping of the archive, discourse and critical realist analysis of interview data, I began to consider discursive and structural answers to the questions raised through my exploratory work. Two new research questions were formulated to reflect this new focus:

2. What are the key discursive and institutional constraints which maintain current arrangements for voluntary religious instruction and restrict curriculum development in the area of religion and beliefs?

3. Is there an alternative to current practices consistent with New Zealand’s status as a secular, bicultural and religiously plural liberal democracy?

The research addresses the rights and responsibilities of children, parents and the educational establishment concerning education in matters of religion and belief. These issues pertain to matters of justice, equity and inclusion in the current arrangements for teaching about religion and have important implications for future policy. Since my research focus is wider than any one school in the study and pertains to educational policy and practice in New Zealand more generally, it can be conceived as an instrumental rather than an intrinsic case study.33

31 The research was limited to seven schools and additional key stakeholder/informant interviews because I was advised that around 40 interviews were appropriate for analysis within the constraints of a PhD thesis.
32 Yin, Case Study Research, 19-29.
Research Settings and Participants

In contrast to randomised probability sampling undertaken in large scale quantitative surveys, qualitative research typically requires a more targeted or “purposeful” sampling approach. While randomised sampling is oriented to statistical generalisation, purposeful sampling is oriented towards in-depth understanding derived from cases which are “information rich”.\textsuperscript{34} Bryman further defines two levels of sampling, namely sampling of context and sampling of participants.\textsuperscript{35} However, my study required three levels of sampling in each region: the context, the schools within each area and the interviewees in each school. I here provide an overview of the three-level sampling process utilised in this study.

Purposive Context Sampling: Extremes of Diversity

At the context level, following Patton’s descriptors, I applied “extreme case sampling”.\textsuperscript{36} As described above, my research focuses on the influence of cultural and religious diversity on attitudes and practices of teaching about religion. Information-rich cases would be regions exemplifying contrasting religious diversity: the most diverse and least diverse regions in New Zealand. The logic of the extreme case approach, as Patton explains, is that “precisely [. . .] by being unusual they can illuminate both the unusual and the typical”.\textsuperscript{37} One is not, here, concerned with generating a representative sample but with investigating practices and perspectives at the extremes of diversity in order to make comparisons which may be of more general interest. For example, when the same kinds of issues arise in schools at these polar extremes of diversity, one may surmise that these issues might also occur in less extreme cases and could be considerably more widespread.

The area of New Zealand with the largest proportion of people affiliated to religions other than Christianity, at 11.8%, was Auckland City.\textsuperscript{38} Since Auckland City varied greatly in diversity between regions I decided to select suburbs with 10% or higher affiliation to religions other than Christianity for recruitment of schools. This would ensure that the sample was indeed extreme in comparison with the national figure of 5.1% for alternative religious affiliation. In contrast, the area of New Zealand with the lowest proportion of people affiliated to religions other than Christianity was an area of Southland which I shall call Southerton District, at just

\textsuperscript{34} Patton, \textit{Qualitative Research}, 46.
\textsuperscript{36} Patton, \textit{Qualitative Research}, 231-4.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 234.
\textsuperscript{38} SNZ, “Quickstats 2006” The Census of 2011 was postponed after an earthquake in Christchurch on 22 February of that year. This caused widespread damage, injury and loss of life and lead to a displacement of population. The Census was taken in 2013, after I had completed my fieldwork.
under 1%. Table 5 indicates levels of religious affiliation in selected Case Study regions. The names of the selected suburbs have been changed to protect anonymity. It will be noted that the Auckland suburbs selected also had lower than the New Zealand average affiliation to Christianity, in contrast to the areas of Southland which had a higher than average level of Christian affiliation.

Table 5: Religious Affiliation in Case Study Regions: Extreme Case Sampling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Christian*</th>
<th>Buddhist</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>New Age†</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No Religion</th>
<th>Total People</th>
<th>Christian Belief%</th>
<th>Non-Christian Belief%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total NZ</td>
<td>2,092,968</td>
<td>52,362</td>
<td>94,389</td>
<td>36,072</td>
<td>6,855</td>
<td>19,800</td>
<td>24,447</td>
<td>1,297,104</td>
<td>4,027,947</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland City</td>
<td>190,209</td>
<td>11,403</td>
<td>19,419</td>
<td>10,347</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>1,878</td>
<td>2,781</td>
<td>123,366</td>
<td>404,658</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School A Merrydale Suburb</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td>4,239</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B Greenhill Suburb</td>
<td>1,509</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1,269</td>
<td>3,585</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C Sunnybank Suburb</td>
<td>2,550</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2,025</td>
<td>5,640</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Districts Schools A and C</td>
<td>7,701</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3,216</td>
<td>12,111</td>
<td>55,5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invercargill City School B</td>
<td>28,457</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>16,236</td>
<td>50,238</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunedin City Pilot Study</td>
<td>58,326</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>45,108</td>
<td>118,683</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes all denominations and Maori Christian religions †Includes Spirituality

** PURPOSIVE CASE SAMPLING: SCHOOL TYPE **

From the two initial purposive population samples I recruited the schools for the research: the second level of sampling. In addition to the careful choice of location, schools of the following types were targeted for recruitment in each of the two regions:

A. State primary school with Bible-in-Schools programme
B. State primary school without Bible-in-Schools programme
C. State integrated Catholic primary school

These school types were selected because they represented contrasting policy positions on teaching religion in school. They also represent typical school positions in New Zealand. In this sense the selection represents “typical case sampling”. The schools in these regions at the extremes of religious diversity exemplify common policy positions on teaching religion in school, which is the focus of the study. I evidence this statement with reference to the following data.

39 Figures in Table 5 were generated in the Table Builder section of the Statistics New Zealand Website searching under “Religious Affiliation by Age”.
40 Patton, Qualitative Research, 236.
Table 6 indicates New Zealand statistics on primary school affiliation at the time of my research.\textsuperscript{41} It will be noted that Catholic Integrated primary schools, although representing a relatively small overall percentage of New Zealand’s primary schools (9.3%) were by far the most numerous of the integrated schools and had coverage throughout the country.\textsuperscript{42} It will be further noted that of 2035 schools catering for primary school children 1726 (around 85%) were unaffiliated state schools. These schools did not teach religious education as a curriculum area, but may have had a volunteer-led religious instruction programme known as Bible-in-Schools (BiS). While other Bible programmes existed in state schools, the CEC was the main provider.\textsuperscript{43} As stated above, the CEC 2012 strategic plan stated that 712 state primary

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Affiliation & Full Primary (Year 1-8) & Contributing (Year 1-6) & Composite (Year 1-15) & \hline
Not Applicable & 831 & 737 & 98 & 1,726 \\
Anglican & 13 & 5 & 18 & \\
Jewish & 2 & & & 2 \\
Presbyterian & 2 & 5 & 7 & \\
Roman Catholic & 14 & 48 & 190 & \\
Seventh Day Adventist & 10 & 1 & 14 & \\
Reformed Congregation of NZ & 2 & 2 & & \\
Hare Krishna & 1 & & & \\
Rudolf Steiner & 3 & 3 & 8 & \\
Non-Denominational & 14 & 26 & 40 & \\
Muslim & & 1 & 1 & \\
Trust & 4 & 4 & 8 & \\
Māori Trusts & 5 & 2 & 7 & \\
Pentecostal & 1 & 2 & 3 & \\
Methodist & & & 0 & \\
Open Brethren & 1 & & 1 & \\
New Life Church of NZ & 3 & & 3 & \\
Abundant Life Centre & & 1 & 1 & \\
Baptist & 1 & & 1 & \\
Montessori & 1 & 1 & 2 & \\
Total & 1,038 & 788 & 151 & 2,035 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{State Primary School Sector and Affiliation: July 2011}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{43} Other programmes included “Cool Bananas” in schools in Tauranga, Dargaville and Hastings; Values in Action at Red Beach School, Auckland and the Wanganui Bible-in-Schools programme which is run by local churches and separately from the CEC.
schools ran religious instruction programmes. Approximately 40% of unaffiliated state schools therefore ran BiS programmes in New Zealand at the time the fieldwork was undertaken. In this sense the school types A, B and C above exemplified the most common options for New Zealand parents, with regard to religious education, and therefore represented typical case samples. Private schools have been omitted as they are few in number at the primary phase and this study is concerned with the available options for parents within the state primary education system. Schools rarely put information about BiS programmes on their websites. I was fortunate to have the co-operation of local area BiS organisers for information about individual schools in this regard.

An additional layer of extreme sampling was implemented in the Auckland sample. The Ministry of Education (MOE) did not collect data on religious affiliation in schools, but the ethnicity data for each school were accessible on its Education Review Office (ERO) report. Census statistics show that the most religiously diverse ethnic group in New Zealand were the Asian community, 37% of whom were affiliated to religions other than Christianity. I therefore approached schools of Types A, B and C in religiously diverse regions of Auckland with relatively high Asian ethnicity. I purposefully avoided the selection of schools with large Pacific Island populations, whose affiliations were 80% Christian.

The school ethnicities in Southerton did not present the same sampling challenges, and most schools had over 75% Pākehā/NZ European ethnicity. However, on approaching the BiS advisor for the area, I found that it would not be possible to recruit a school of Type B because all the state schools in the district had BiS programmes. I then relied on information from this co-ordinator for information about the nearest schools that did not have BiS. It became apparent that I would need to broaden my context sample to include Invercargill City. Although slightly more religiously diverse than Southerton the affiliation to religions other than Christian, at 1.5%, was still well below the national average of 5.1% (See Table 5). Invercargill City therefore met my original criterion of being at the lower extreme of religious diversity.

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44 CEC, “Strategic Plan 2013-2015”.
46 SNZ, “Quickstats 2006”.
47 Ibid.
48 11% of state primary schools in Auckland were running BiS in 2010, compared with 66% in Southland: CEC, “2009/2010 Annual Review”, 13. See above Table 2, page 15.
Table 7 shows the case study school data on affiliation and ethnicity which informed the sampling process. The names of the schools have been changed, using names of native birds for unaffiliated schools and alternative saints for Catholic schools, in order to preserve anonymity. “Full” primary schools cater for children from Years 1-8 and “contributing” from Years 1-6. The decile system in New Zealand reflects the socio-economic status of parents in the school locality, based on census information. It is intended to ensure that additional funding reaches the schools where it is most needed, and is not a reflection of quality of educational provision. A decile one rating reflects high levels of parents who are unemployed, are on income benefits, are low-skilled and low-paid workers, who have no formal qualifications and children who live in overcrowded homes. Decile ten schools represent the other end of the socio-economic scale.49

Table 7: Case Study School Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auckland</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Roll</th>
<th>Decile</th>
<th>CRE</th>
<th>Ethnicity breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A: Korimoku Primary School</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pākehā 46%, Māori 9%, Indian 19%, Chinese 6%, British 3%, Middle East 3%, Samoan 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B: Kakāpō Primary School</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pākehā 53%, Māori 2%, Chinese 23%, Indian 5%, Korean 3%, Sri Lankan 3%, Japanese 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C: St Margaret’s Primary School</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pākehā 56%, Māori 9%, India 13%, Samoan 7%, Filipino 4%, Chinese 3%, Tongan 3%, Other 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Southland</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Roll</th>
<th>Decile</th>
<th>CRE</th>
<th>Ethnicity breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A: Kererū Primary School</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pākehā 90%, Māori 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B: Takahī Primary School</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pākehā 75%, Māori 22%, Pacific 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C: St Joseph’s Primary School</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pākehā 83%, Māori 10%, Pacific 1%, Asian 3%, Other 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Dunedin                                      | Pilot Study: Pākoko Primary School | Contributing | None | 275  | 9 | Pākehā 83%, Māori 8%, Other 9% |

An original intention to recruit schools with similar decile ratings, and comparable school roll size proved unrealistic within the constraints of school recruitment. Differences in socio-economic status and school size therefore need to be acknowledged.

**Purposive Participant Sampling: Key Roles**

The third level of purposive sampling took place at the level of recruitment of interviewees. A range of views were sought from people in key roles and associated with each school as

indicated in Table 8. Asterisks refer to the people interviewed and lessons observed in each school.

Table 8: Interviewees by Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auckland</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Religion teacher</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Lesson obs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A: Korimako Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CRE Co-ordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B: Kākāpō Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C: St Margaret’s Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Religious Studies</td>
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<tr>
<th>Southland</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A: Kererū Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CRE Co-ordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School B: Takahē Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C: St Joseph’s Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Religious Studies</td>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study: Pūkeko Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CRE Co-ordinator</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The object was to obtain the perspectives of those in key roles who were implementing, or affected by, policies on teaching religion in primary schools. This could be described as a form of “generic purposive sampling” because the interviewees selected occupied positions relevant to my research. Importantly, I do not claim here that these perspectives are representative of the views of all parents, teachers and principals in New Zealand. Nevertheless I maintain that a comparison of perspectives from the polar extremes of New Zealand, in terms of religious diversity, can illuminate practices and policies in less extreme regions.

**Fieldwork Process**

The time-frame for the case study fieldwork was as follows: Ethical approval granted from the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, July 2011; Pilot Study—October 2011; Case

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50 Bryman, Social Research Methods, 422.
Study School recruitment—October 2011 to February 2012; Fieldwork in Auckland—6-15 March 2012; Fieldwork in Southland—30 April to 8 May 2012.

The following stages delineate the fieldwork process:

1. Schools of types A, B and C meeting all the above criteria were contacted with an introductory email and paper letter (Appendix 2A) with Information Sheet, Consent Form and a stamped addressed envelope.
2. No schools in Auckland responded to either the email or paper letters. St Joseph’s school in Southerton was unique in sending the consent form back by return. After a week, all schools were contacted by telephone. At least three calls were made to each school before obtaining a response from the principal. A total of 15 schools were approached in Auckland during the recruitment process. In Southland the success rate was significantly higher. Of four schools contacted, three agreed to participate.
3. Having recruited three schools in Auckland and three in Southland, and received their signed consent forms, an email was sent to each school principal outlining the time-frame for my visit and the number and type of interviewees requested. I attached sample interview schedules (Appendix 2C) for information. Through the principal, I was able to obtain email addresses for the potential interviewees.
4. Potential interviewees were contacted and, in line with ethical considerations, each was sent an information sheet (Appendix 2B), a sample interview schedule (Appendix 2C) and a consent form (Appendix 2D). Only one potential participant, in Southerton, declined to participate after reading this information, citing pressures of work.
5. Interview times and locations were arranged by email.
6. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded on school premises after consent forms were signed by participants.
7. Interviews were transcribed and sent back to each interviewee for approval.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted in a school in Dunedin, to which I was able to obtain access through a contact. Patton is dismissive of such “convenience sampling”, being “neither purposeful nor strategic”. However, this sample was also a generic purposive sample chosen because—in line with the research focus—Pukeko primary school ran a Bible-in-Schools programme and therefore provided additional comparative data in a region with a higher—although still below national average—affiliation to religions other than Christianity (See Table 5).

The principal differences between the pilot study and the case study fieldwork were in the ease of access to the school and the flexibility regarding time available. This also made it possible for me to attend an assembly practice and observe a Circle Time. I had also been able

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51 Patton, Qualitative Research, 242.
to meet with both the principal and the staff prior to my fieldwork visits. The pilot study indicated that the interview schedule questions would yield interesting and relevant data for analysis. Some minor alterations to question order were made following this study, but the substance of the questions was not altered. Although opinion is divided about whether pilot studies should be included in research reports I concur with medical sociologist Edwin van Teijlingen et al. that, since no substantive changes were made to the interview questions or research method, this additional comparative data broadens the evidence base for my conclusions and makes a constructive contribution to the thesis.52

**Limitations of Sampling**

One aspect of the sampling proved to be problematic and could be interpreted as a limitation in the research design. In the recruitment of interviewees I was dependent on school principals to make the initial contact with prospective participants. Communications with school principals emphasised my desire to speak to people with differing viewpoints, but the reality was that the great majority of participants, in both areas, were those supporting the status quo.53 Principals, perhaps understandably, seem to have simply accepted the first offers of participation. It is possible that they also approached people known to have a Christian faith given the high number of interviewees who positioned themselves in this way.54 Even in type B schools, with no BiS programme, almost all interviewees spoke in favour of BiS and against teaching about religion in schools. Indeed in Korimako Primary school, in Auckland, where almost one-third of the school were Muslim and opted out of BiS, it proved impossible to recruit an interviewee to give their perspective. The principal informed me that the Muslim parents she approached all told her they did not want to appear critical of current arrangements or to cause offence within the school community.

In contrast to quantitative research, where lack of representation within a sample may invalidate the data, in qualitative research an awareness of failure can itself become data and an appropriate area of enquiry.55 For example, what discourses are in operation constraining involvement in this research project? How does the subjugation of voices from the community

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53 For many parents, BiS is seen as uncontroversial values teaching. This thesis problematises that positioning. See below, page 201.
54 The question was not asked in the interview but many interviewees volunteered this information. Of 21 participants in the unaffiliated state schools (excluding CRE teachers), twelve positioned themselves as Christians.
55 For example, Karen Nairn, "A Counter-Narrative of a Failed Interview", *Qualitative Research* 5, no. 2 (2005): 221-244.
work to reproduce the status quo? How is this group exercising agency and resisting the prevailing discourse? How are others prevented from exercising agency? This does not mean that the responsibility to represent minority groups is evaded, but that the constraints under which this case study fieldwork is undertaken are noted and incorporated into the analysis.

Additionally, it will be noted from Table 8 that the BiS lesson observation at this school was cancelled at short notice. The BiS coordinator did not think there was a mandate for me to observe and record the lesson, as only “about seven” consent forms had been returned from the four classes of children to whom they had been issued. I later heard from the principal that in fact 75 were returned, belatedly. Although frustrating, this cancellation may be considered data, especially when considered alongside the stated concern of all the BiS volunteers to avoid doing anything which might upset parents or put the programme in jeopardy. In such ways perceived weaknesses or failures can produce further lines of questioning which strengthen the research rather than detract from it.

**Interviews and Data Collection**

Interviewing was once thought to be an unproblematic and straightforward method for gathering information: that “interviewers collect verbal responses like botanists collect plants in nature”. However post-modern critique, such as that of education research specialist James Scheurich, has raised awareness of the power differentials at play in the interviewer-participant relationship, the co-constructed nature of the knowledge created in an interview context and the fluidity in interpretation of meaning both of interview questions and responses. For Scheurich, any attempt to capture or categorise the interview interaction is futile for “there is no stable reality or meaning that can be represented”. However, I have argued that from a critical realist stance it is possible to move beyond the state of aporetic suspension, which must accompany such a view, and treat the interview data both as a representation of reality from the perspective of the interviewee and of the regimes of rationality within which reasoning around religious education policy is constructed. That is not to say that this is the only way to analyse the data or that another form of analysis, asking different questions of the data, might not yield results which illuminate different features.

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58 Scheurich, “Postmodernist Critique”, 249.
59 See above, page 36.
60 Kvale, “Ten Standard Objections”, 158.
A structured interview, with standardised questions and a neutral and impersonal stance on the part of the interviewer, has traditionally been thought to be a scientific and reliable approach. However, my aim was to elicit rich data from my interviewees, to “capture complexities of individual perceptions”, in Patton’s words. This being the case, a semi-structured approach was adopted with open-ended questioning and the flexibility to pursue rich lines of questioning as they arose without being constrained by the format of the interview schedule.

Interviews largely took place on school premises and were limited to an hour. The aim of the interview was not consensus, but to cover a discursive terrain. I tried to balance good-humoured conversation with a gentle testing and challenging of positions and assumptions. This was not an attempt to persuade interviewees of my position but to record their responses to alternative viewpoints. Psychologist Lene Tanggaard takes this approach further using the battlefield metaphor of “discourses crossing swords”. Rather than “harmonious dialogue” the interview is conceived as “a context for negotiations of meaning and even a clash of conflicting views”. While I would not wish to overplay the combative theme as my approach to interviewing was not adversarial, Tanggaard is right to say that the rich data generated in the interviews—the point at which the knowledge is produced—is the point at which participants are confronted with a viewpoint which is radically different from their own, i.e., where opposing discourses meet. At this instant interviewees may begin to give reasons, justifications and evidences for their views, displaying the discursive imperatives and constraints under which they operate.

Whatever the interplay of dominance and resistance in the actual interview, at the interpretation stage, as Kvale notes, the interviewer generally retains “the exclusive privilege to interpret and report what the interviewee really meant and to frame what an interviewee

62 Patton, Qualitative Research, 348.
64 One parent in Southland preferred to be interviewed over the telephone. Pilot study interviewees were interviewed either at school, in their homes or—in one case—at my home.
66 Ibid., 163.
67 Ibid., 164.
says in his or her own theoretical schemes. Others argue that interviewees should have the opportunity to enter negotiations over the interpretation which the researcher has applied to their words. However, I maintain that the social researcher does have a mandate to apply his or her own reasoning to the theorising of the data. The purpose of my research is not simply to be a mouthpiece to participants in the study, but to examine the ways that discourses operate to construct and reproduce policy on religion in schools. Following Gouldner’s normative objectivity, discussed above, the goal is not to give equal weight to all viewpoints but to measure the viewpoints against stated values. This critique is depersonalised by retaining a focus on discourse and not on individual participants in my analysis.

Data Collection Methods

Consistent with case study research, multiple data collection methods were employed in the school contexts. Additional to the interviews (recorded and transcribed), documents such as school charters and policy statements were collected, photographs taken of class displays, a small amount of children’s work was obtained, observations were made of library resources and data collected from school websites. I observed three lessons, two of which were BiS classes. Audio recordings were made with the consent of parents. Information letters were sent home (Appendix 2E) with a consent form to return. This opt-in approach was felt to be more ethical than a letter informing parents that the lesson observation was taking place and asking them to withdraw their children if they had objections.

For Yin the most important advantage of the use of multiple sources is that, in this process of “triangulation”, findings may be corroborated through “converging lines of enquiry”. However, Stake adopts a social constructionist perspective on triangulation, assuming that multiple meanings and interpretations of events are inevitable. For Stake: “Triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying the different ways the case is being seen [. . .]. Triangulation helps to identify different realities.” In line with a critical realist approach, triangulation of my research data points not towards a single common understanding of

70 Bryman, Social Research Methods, 578.
71 Yin, Case Study Research, 101; Patton, Qualitative Research, 449.
72 The “opt-out” method of consent is the approach most often used by schools and I critique this in Chapter Six, page 215.
73 Yin, Case Study Research, 115.
74 Stake, “Qualitative Case Studies”, 454. See also Patton, Qualitative Research, 248.
religion in schools, but affirms and corroborates common discursive constructions and positionings. It also signals institutional and material constraints on education policy and practice.

In addition to the interviews undertaken within the case study schools the following key stakeholders and additional informants were identified and interviewed during 2012.

**Informants**
- Principal of school running BiS and Islam programme, Auckland (March 2012)
- Muslim parent in Dunedin (August 2012)

These further informants were identified as having perspectives that had not been represented in the case study samples. The principal was interviewed over the telephone and the Muslim mother came to my university office. Ethical and consent procedures including anonymity were applied as for case study participants.

**Key Stakeholders**
- Peter Harrison—NZ Association of Rationalists and Humanists—Keep Religion out of Schools Campaign (March 2012)
- Neil Laurenson—Catholic Schools Office, Auckland (March 2012)
- David Mulholland—National Advisor, Churches Education Commission (March 2012)
- Joris de Bres—Race Relations Commissioner, Human Rights Commission (July 2012)
- Sonia Glogowski—Ministry of Education spokesperson (July 2012)
- Ian Leckie—President, NZ Educational Institute (July 2012)
- Professor Paul Morris—Victoria University of Wellington/UNESCO chair (July 2012)\(^75\)

Participants speaking as a representative of an organisation were given a choice of remaining anonymous or giving permission for their attributed comments to be used. All gave consent to be named.

**Additional Data**
An unexpected bonus for the accumulation of data in the study has been the campaign to “Keep Religion out of School” by the SEN. A good deal of coverage for the subject has been generated in newspaper articles, letters pages and local and national radio programmes.

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Material from online parents’ forums, online newspaper comments sections and Facebook group discussions have provided much data for analysis. The constraints of the thesis have meant that I have been unable to include much of the material which I have collected in support of my research findings, although links to relevant web pages have been provided.

Data Analysis

Transcribing

The interviews were transcribed using HyperTRANSCRIBE software (Version 1.5). A near-verbatim record was produced using the following conventions:

[1] = Pause indicating number of seconds

(L) = Laughs

Italics = word emphasised

. . . = hesitation

“” = someone else’s speech is reported

I undertook most of the transcribing myself but transcripts that were produced by others were checked rigorously against the audio files.\(^76\) I have endeavoured to minimise the risk of error in transcription by checking all transcripts thoroughly against the sound files and by using transcription conventions to regulate the interpretive process of transcription as far as is practicable.\(^77\) All transcripts were sent to interviewees and small amendments, such as misspellings or other minor errors in transcription, were made where requested.

Coding Process

In qualitative research coding, analysis and theory-building are part of an iterative process in which, in contrast to quantitative research, codes are not fixed from the outset but evolve through the data analysis.\(^78\) In Foucaultian analysis, as described above, there is an attention to history and context.\(^79\) This means that the researcher approaches interview data with prior knowledge of discursive constructions pertaining to the object of study. Coding is therefore

\(^76\) The most spectacular transcription error was as follows: Audio file: “and that’s a valid answer”. Transcription: “and that’s a ballet dancer”.


\(^78\) Bryman, Social Research Methods, 299, 568.

\(^79\) Willig, Introducing Qualitative Research.
both inductive—being derived from the text under analysis—and deductive—being informed by analysis of historical data and theory.80

The approach to discourse analysis adopted in this thesis is described in Chapter Two. The analysis, and therefore the coding, pertains to the identification of discursive constructions, discourses, action orientation, positioning, practice and subjectivity. With a critical realist perspective the data are also analysed for extra-discursive elements such as embodiment, materiality and institutional power.81 I approach the coding of interview data, school documentation and online material with knowledge of the way in which the formation of policy on the teaching of religion has evolved in New Zealand, and with knowledge of the way in which others have categorised positions regarding church-state relations. This inductive and deductive approach is described in Chapter Four.82 The corroboration of discursive constructions through historical, legal and institution-specific data lends validity to the findings and provides a broad basis for analytic generalisation.83

I began the coding process using HyperRESEARCH (version 3.0). I found this software to be excellent for storing and coding files such as recorded lesson observations, photographs, and television and radio broadcasts. However, for the interview transcripts, I decided to use Microsoft Word’s in-built reviewing features to mark and comment on relevant sections of text. These sections were then easily retrieved for use in the case study reports and subsequent data chapters.

**Reporting**

The volume of material generated through the fieldwork and other sources was considerable. I wrote a report pertaining to each of the seven case study schools. The data was organised into three sections mirroring the interview schedule used: Bible-in-schools, spiritual education and religions in the curriculum. In line with a critical realist methodology these observations were presented both in realist and constructionist terms. The policy, practices and resources described by interviewees and/or observed at the school were first delineated. Non-discursive elements were outlined, followed by an analysis of prevailing discourses in evidence at the school and the counter-discourses which resisted them. A summary of the case study reports is provided in Appendix 4.

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80 Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 453.
81 See above, page 34.
82 See below, page 63.
Yin explains that individual case reports may form an “evidentiary base” for cross-case analysis without being included in the final report.\textsuperscript{84} While acknowledging Stake’s view that a comparative report limits the production of knowledge from individual cases, the instrumental rather than intrinsic nature of the research predisposes me to a comparative study.\textsuperscript{85} I present this comparative analysis in Chapters Six and Seven. My report reflects the iterative process of analysis and theory building which characterise this thesis.

Conclusion
In this chapter I have outlined the research design and methods used in this qualitative research project. I have shown how my critical realist theoretical perspective informs my approach to objectivity and data analysis and described the use of generalisation adopted. In the next chapter I outline the discursive terrain, as derived from the analysis of data, primary source material and secondary literature. Adopting a Foucaultian genealogical approach to primary sources I show how constraints on religion in primary schools are discursively reproduced and maintained in the New Zealand context.

\textsuperscript{84} Yin, \textit{Case Study Research}, 173.
\textsuperscript{85} Stake, “Qualitative Case Studies”, 457.
Chapter Four: Discursive Terrain and Genealogical Survey

Introduction

All discourses are the products of history [. . .]. It is sometimes helpful to say that it is not individuals who speak and act, but rather that historically and socially defined discourses speak to each other through individuals. The individual instantiates, gives voice and body to a discourse, every time he or she acts or speaks, and thus carries it, and ultimately changes it through time.

*James Gee*¹

Gee’s characterisation of discourses in conversation through time is a helpful way to approach the terrain of literature and discourse regarding religion in schools. While individual commentators and research participants are central to this thesis as an evidence base, it is the historically situated and socially defined discourses which they utilise—with their attendant constraints and affordances for policy on religion in schools—which form the basis of my analysis. The task of this chapter will be to answer research question two:

What are the key discursive and institutional constraints which maintain current arrangements for voluntary religious instruction and restrict curriculum development in the area of religion and beliefs?

I outline the range of discourses which appear to have informed educational policy on religion in school in New Zealand and evidence these discourses in primary source material. Through genealogical analysis I show how discursive constraints and governmental techniques reproduce confessional religious instruction and disqualify education in religions and beliefs.

Charting the Terrain

In seeking to identify the key discourses which speak to each other through my interview data, primary source material and secondary literature pertaining to religion in New Zealand’s primary schools, I employ both deductive and inductive analysis of material. In his discussion of attitudes towards public expressions of Māori spirituality, legal historian Rex Ahdar identifies a number of category types.² He provides a typology which differentiates between the attitudes of conservative and liberal theists and contrasts these with the views of secular rationalists, egalitarian liberals and affirmative action liberals. Ahdar tends towards extreme characterisation, rather than broad representation, in order to maximise the contrast between types, however he does recognise that his typology is not exhaustive of the positions

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¹ Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies*, 159.
His depictions are also viewed through the lens of a conservative Christian discourse. Ahdar’s was the only model of such attitudinal categorisation within the available literature. Recognising a degree of congruity between the perspectives of my research participants towards religion in school and Ahdar’s attitudinal analysis, I have adopted some of Ahdar’s terminology. My own depictions of the discourses in operation are founded in an egalitarian liberal worldview and are open to correction from other perspectives.

The discourses adapted from Ahdar’s work appear to operate largely, but not entirely, as primary discourses within both data and literature. My analysis may be described as deductive in nature to the extent that I have utilised Ahdar’s analytical framework of primary discourses. However, I also inductively identified a range of additional primary and secondary educational discourses which impact on religion in schools. This was an iterative process in which analysis of interview data, primary sources and secondary literature revealed a range of discourses which could then be used to conduct further research and analysis. A discourse analysis approach was taken to all the data, as described in Chapter Two. The data evidenced multiple ways of reasoning about religion in school which revealed quite distinct and competing constructions of, for example, religion, secularity, spirituality, diversity and the purpose of education. By grouping these ways of reasoning together across the data — at first noting references from primary and secondary sources and fieldwork material in groups on large A3 sheets — I identified, over a period of around two years, nine primary and six secondary operative discourses. Establishing descriptors for the discourses was not a straightforward matter and the limitations of the nomenclature chosen should be acknowledged. Ahdar’s categorisation was utilised where it reflected the ways of reasoning evidenced within the data. However, as I show below, the prefix “authoritarian” or “liberal” was sometimes added in order to further differentiate, and more accurately reflect, the discourses in evidence.

I have adopted, adapted and extended Ahdar’s categories for my discursive framework as follows. I adopted Ahdar’s “conservative theist” and “liberal theist” categories, renaming them the “conservative Christian” and the “liberal Christian” discourse to reflect the research context. My data necessitated differentiation between an “authoritarian secular rationalist” and a “liberal secular rationalist” discourse which have different approaches to religion in

3 Ibid.
4 Following James Gee’s definitions, noted on page 28.
5 See above, page 35.
schools. I also distinguish between Ahdar’s “egalitarian liberal” discourse, in which religions are treated equally, and the “authoritarian liberal” discourse which seeks to liberalise conservative beliefs. I rename Ahdar’s “affirmative action” discourse the “social action liberal” discourse to encompass its redistributive and recognitional imperatives, in line with hard and soft forms of biculturalism identified in the literature and evidenced in my research.7 Ahdar mentions a sixth category which he does not name but describes as those sympathetic to New Age spiritualities, including indigenous spiritualities.8 I have included this within the “spiritual secularist” discourse. To these primary discourses I add the “evangelising Christian” discourse, evident from interview data and primary and secondary sources. My data and literature analysis revealed an additional range of discursive imperatives, impacting on the subject of religion in schools, to those identified by Ahdar on the subject of Māori spirituality. These are embedded in secondary discourses, operating at the institutional level in New Zealand primary schools: the neoliberal, legal, human rights, diversity, post-colonial and knowledge age discourses. The discourse names were sometimes derived directly from the research literature, for example neoliberal, knowledge age, social action liberal, post-colonial and diversity, as evidenced in the discussion in Chapter Five. In other cases I have employed new terms which were effective descriptors for example, evangelising and spiritual secularist discourse. I acknowledge that this plethora of discourses sometimes makes the thesis rather unwieldy. However, I would argue that it has been important to do justice to the data by identifying and naming the range of discourses observed.

The advantage of following Ahdar’s typology of attitudes to Māori spirituality was that it provided a base from which to develop a more nuanced consideration of the operative discourses regarding religion in school. However, I acknowledge the problems inherent in this approach. Terms like conservative Christian, liberal Christian and secular rationalist are more commonly used — as does Ahdar — to describe fixed worldviews or groups of people. However, in this thesis I am using them as descriptors for specific sets of arguments, involving discursive constraints and imperatives, regarding policy on religion in school. Individuals in my thesis are not defined by the discourses upon which they draw. The perspectives identified do not represent a permanent account of the position of scholars or other individuals with regard to teaching religion. Rather they provide evidence of historically and socially situated occasions when individuals have found it expedient to draw on such a discourse to make their

case. They may do so differently on another occasion. However, primary discourses do often inform social and religious perspectives at an unconscious level and, when they achieve dominance and become embedded in institutions, they may indeed take on a more permanent nature and operate to constrain social policy and practice, as I show below.

A further problem in the (partial) adoption of a pre-existing analytical framework is that it may open the author to the charge of manipulating the data to fit Ahdar’s categories. However, this chapter makes clear the ways in which Ahdar’s types have been amended and extended in order to reflect the data collected, and the thesis evidences a much broader range of discourses than Ahdar’s framework supplies.

It may also be argued that the discursive approach to analysis of the topic of religion in school makes the thesis rather broad in scope, tending towards sometimes superficial, rather than in-depth historical treatment. Whilst acknowledging these limitations, I maintain that the discourse analysis approach has enabled me to focus on contemporary policy and practice, identifying the various ways in which “progressive”, newly dominant educational discourses serve to maintain historical practices. Constraints on education about religions and beliefs are also exposed in a way which would not have been achieved by a traditional historical treatment of the subject. In relation to the matter of historical/contemporary analysis it should be noted that, in this thesis, the term conservative Christian is intended to describe a set of ideas about the way in which children should be educated in matters of religion. These ideas are based on the belief that New Zealand is a Christian country and that children should be inducted into this religion as part of their moral, social and educational development. These ideas were normative within the Christian social consensus which existed in New Zealand from the beginning of the European settlement until at least the late 1960s. It is clear that, within this consensus, a wide variety of Christian affiliations and beliefs existed, as exemplified by the cartoon from 1912, in Figure 1. This Christian social consensus was not characterised by high levels of church attendance among the general population but rather a kind of folk piety within which, as religious historian Geoffrey Troughton points out, the religious formation of children was the perceived priority. The language of “liberal” and

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9 Church attendance appears to have at its height in 1896, when just under 30% of the population regularly attended. See Geoffrey Troughton, “Religion, Churches and Childhood in New Zealand, c.1900-1940”, *New Zealand Journal of History*. 40, no. 1 (2006): 40, 52. Also Peter Lineham and Alan K. Davidson, *Transplanted Christianity: Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History*, 3rd ed. (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1995), 181-83, 246-48. James Belich notes a general moral “tightening” in this period, over and above the focus on childhood religion described by Troughton. This was exemplified by Sunday closure of shops and bars, censorship, restrictions on immigration, concerns about sexual immorality, and the rise of the temperance and prohibition movements. James Belich,
“conservative” Christianity is more usually applied from the period after the Second World War in New Zealand,\(^\text{10}\) and the imperative to inculcate children into Christian beliefs would not have been perceived as religiously conservative in the 19th and early 20th century. However, in the contemporary New Zealand social context it is appropriate to describe such views as characteristic of a conservative Christian discourse. Without wishing to use the term anachronistically, I do apply it across the historical and contemporary data to show how this set of ideas about children and religion—so dominant in the 19th and early 20th century—has maintained currency despite the erosion of the Christian social consensus in New Zealand. Therefore, when I use the phrase “dominant conservative Christian discourse”, I do not seek to categorise the historical or contemporary religious landscape of New Zealand as conservative Christian but to describe the prevailing attitudes to religion and education exemplified across the data.

The constraints of this thesis do not permit a full discussion of the discourses identified. I have therefore summarised the characteristics of each primary discourse in Table 9, drawing attention to the way in which “religion”, “teaching about religion” and the “secular curriculum” are discursively constructed and the ensuing discursive imperatives for treatment of religion in school. In Table 10, I identify the ways in which the discursive imperatives of these secondary, educational discourses constrain, or afford opportunities for, both BiS and education in religions and beliefs.\(^\text{11}\) These implications are discussed more fully in a genealogical survey of primary literature below, in the review of literature in Chapter Five and within the data analysis in Chapters Six and Seven.

The discursive terrain outlined is by no means exhaustive and represents only those discourses which can most readily be seen to have impacted on policy decisions or to have been utilised in debates regarding religion in primary schools. I follow these tables with a Foucaultian genealogical survey in which discursive constraints and imperatives are identified and evidenced within some key primary educational sources. This genealogy is not offered as a “God’s-eye” view, but as a reading of historical documents and events through an egalitarian liberal, critical realist and Foucaultian lens.

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\(^{10}\) Although Stuart Lange evidences the divide in theological outlook from the 1930s following trends in the growth of evangelicalism in America and Britain. Stuart Lange, \textit{A Rising Tide: The Growth of Evangelicalism and Evangelical Identity among Presbyterians, Anglicans and University Students in New Zealand}, 1930-1965. (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2008), 78-82.

\(^{11}\) These tables are adapted from Bradstock, “Religion in New Zealand’s State Primary Schools”, 358-61.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of currency in NZ from:</th>
<th>Conservative Christian</th>
<th>Evangelising Christian</th>
<th>Liberal Christian</th>
<th>Authoritarian Secular Rationalist</th>
<th>Liberal Secular Rationalist</th>
<th>Eqalistarian Liberal</th>
<th>Authoritarian Liberal</th>
<th>Social Action Liberal</th>
<th>Spiritual Secularist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discursive imperatives with respect to religion in school</td>
<td>Christianity is de facto the state religion, Children should be enculturated into its values and traditions (with opt-out provision).</td>
<td>As Conservative Christian, but with perceived need for all children to be in a relationship with God/Christ.</td>
<td>Christians share matters of &quot;ultimate concern&quot; with other religions. Children should learn about common ground.</td>
<td>New Zealand is secular and progressive. State should suppress influence of church. No religious indoctrination. Anti-religious.</td>
<td>New Zealand is secular and progressive. State should treat religions equally, No religious indoctrination. Neutral.</td>
<td>From 1990s, all religious groups should command equal respect in education policy.</td>
<td>The liberal nation state promotes social cohesion, tolerance of difference and agnosticism. It does not tolerate illiberal religious views in schools.</td>
<td>New Zealand is bicultural therefore tikanga Māori should be recognised in the curriculum. Cultural dissonance should be avoided.</td>
<td>Humans are innately spiritual. This should be recognised in education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Normative construction of &quot;secular curriculum&quot;</td>
<td>Should include religious instruction (RI) but accepted meaning “not religious.” Schools “close” for RI.</td>
<td>As Conservative Christian but &quot;secular&quot; also perceived as anti-Christian.</td>
<td>Should include Christianity and comparative religion but accepted meaning &quot;not religious.&quot;</td>
<td>Education is &quot;nothing to do with religion.&quot; Children should be taught to be autonomous, rational and not religious.</td>
<td>Education should be &quot;nothing to do with religion&quot; at primary level. School &quot;closer&quot; for RI.</td>
<td>Could include education about religions at all ages (RE) (No institutional currency).</td>
<td>Should endorse liberal, tolerant conceptions of religion, and correct false conservative or intolerant beliefs.</td>
<td>May include Māori creation myths, instruction in and observance of protocol and tikanga.</td>
<td>Should include non-religious approach to spiritual education and authentic Māori spirituality.</td>
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<td>Normative construction of &quot;teaching about religion&quot;</td>
<td>R/Bible in Schools (BIS) which uses Bible stories to teach about Christian moral, heritage and traditions inside curriculum.</td>
<td>R/Bible in Schools which teaches correct beliefs about Jesus, Creation and the Bible (outside curriculum).</td>
<td>R/BIS which teaches tolerance, inclusion and respects other faiths. (This promoted comparative RE in curriculum).</td>
<td>R/BIS and RE are both perceived as indoctrination with false ideas. School &quot;closure&quot; protects secular curriculum.</td>
<td>BIS is indoctrination. Information about religions in secondary level Social Science is permitted.</td>
<td>Either all religious groups lead own RI or include in curriculum as RE (No instit. currency for either of these).</td>
<td>Part of general values/social science teaching. No specific teaching of beliefs or truth claims.</td>
<td>Attention to spiritual wellbeing within curriculum as above. May include Māori forms of Christianity.</td>
<td>Focuses on personal development, relationships, and values. Includes insights from tikanga Māori.</td>
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<td>Normative construction of &quot;education about religions and beliefs&quot;</td>
<td>Constructed as confusing and unnecessary. Disqualified from BIS and NZ curriculum.</td>
<td>Constructed as dangerous. Disqualified from BIS and school curriculum.</td>
<td>Constructed as important as a tool for social cohesion and inclusion.</td>
<td>Presented as essential in secondary level to promote tolerance and scepticism.</td>
<td>Constructed as important for promoting equal treatment of religions (No instr. currency).</td>
<td>Constructed as important for promotion of liberal values (and interests of nation state).</td>
<td>Focus is on bicultural not multicultural or religious matters. Omitted.</td>
<td>Focus is on spirituality and not religion. Omitted.</td>
<td>Focus is on spirituality and not religion. Omitted.</td>
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<td>Table 10: Secondary Discourses</td>
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<td>Evidence of currency in New Zealand from:</td>
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<td>Neoliberal</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Post-colonial</td>
<td>Knowledge Age</td>
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<td>Discursive imperative:</td>
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<td>The market economy is an appropriate model for education: schools are self-managing and run by boards of trustees. Children should be &quot;entrepreneurial&quot;. Knowledge should be productive.</td>
<td>The law dictates education policy. There is no alternative but to observe the law.</td>
<td>The NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990 and The Human Rights Act 1993 affirm the right to freedom of religion and belief and freedom from discrimination on grounds of belief.</td>
<td>New Zealand is no longer mono or bi-cultural, but multicultural. Cultural diversity and inclusion must be reflected in the curriculum.</td>
<td>Colonisation has privileged Western forms of knowledge and subjugated indigenous forms. The curriculum should give recognition to other worldviews and contextual knowledge.</td>
<td>Education is about equipping people to do things with knowledge not storing up knowledge. Children need to develop key competencies not learn redundant facts.</td>
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<td>Potential discursive/material constraint or accommodation for Bible in Schools</td>
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<td>Boards have responsibility for parental consultation, checking BIS materials and volunteers, providing info to parents and ensuring informed consent. Ministry is not accountable for checking these processes. Laissez-faire approach of this discourse facilitates reproduction of status quo.</td>
<td>Religious instruction is legal in primary school lesson time, under the Act of 1964, by dint of school closure. Legal statute may be perceived as institutional endorsement of BIS. Attendance is further normalised through opt-out (rather than opt-in) clause. Material accommodation legitimises status quo.</td>
<td>Human Rights legislation may support claims of discrimination and coercion regarding attendance or opting-out of BIS. But the Act of 1964 appears to override Human Rights legislation, making the HRC reluctant to uphold complaints. Material constraint reproduces status quo.</td>
<td>Some schools no longer run BIS because of religious diversity. Discursive constraint. BIS resources represent children of different ethnicities. But as the programme is outside the curriculum it is not expected to reflect diverse religious views. Material constraint on content reproduces status quo.</td>
<td>BIS presents a Western view of religion and a colonial representation of Māori. But it is outside curriculum so the programme does not need to reflect other worldviews. Material constraint on content reproduces status quo.</td>
<td>Resources provided by the CEC alert volunteers to the links to curriculum key competencies in BIS resources. But being outside the curriculum, its confessional form of knowledge transference is beyond the critique of this discourse. Material constraint on content reproduces status quo.</td>
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<td>Potential discursive/material constraint or accommodation for teaching about religions and beliefs</td>
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<td>Focus on &quot;parental choice&quot; regarding religion in school (BIS and church schools) may constrain public discussion to confessional approaches. Right of all schools to identify their &quot;special character&quot; appears to allow for promotion of community beliefs.</td>
<td>The law does not forbid teaching about religious beliefs but the legal separation of religion and the curriculum discursively constrains curriculum development.</td>
<td>The NZ Human Rights Commission supports education in religions and beliefs in all schools, alongside education in Human rights. But HR discourse has been co-opted to support all positions on religion in school.</td>
<td>Focus on culture rather than religion in NZ curriculum. Conflict aversion and promotion of tolerance appear to constrain teaching about religion. Can be disqualifed.</td>
<td>Institutional emphasis on recognition of Māori culture in NZ. In international literature this discourse positions &quot;religion&quot; as a Western liberal theological construct with no basin in reality. Disqualified.</td>
<td>Disciplinary knowledge is old-fashioned. Children need knowledge they can use, i.e., skills and competencies such as tolerance. Religious knowledge is no use. Disqualified.</td>
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Genealogy: A History of the Present

In the opening chapter of *Discipline and Punish* Foucault posed himself the question, why write a history of the prison? The answer he gave explains Foucault’s focus of interest in employing a genealogical method: “Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present.”

In this section I aim to follow a genealogical approach to the primary New Zealand literature from the 1877 parliamentary debates onwards, focussing on the ways in which the objects of religion and religious education are constructed within prevailing discourses at specific moments in time. The purpose is not to examine the history of religion in schools for its intrinsic interest, as definitive histories have been written. Neither is it my intention to justify current voluntary arrangements based on longevity or legal legitimacy (a conservative Christian position) nor to reproduce a celebratory (authoritarian secular rationalist) reading of the Education Act of 1877. In Foucault’s terms either approach would be to write “a history of the past in terms of the present,” inscribing both the 1964 and 1877 legislation with an unwarranted 21st-century significance. The purpose of this genealogy is to show how historically and socially contingent discourses, in New Zealand society and in education, have influenced and constrained the development of the curriculum regarding religion in schools. I demonstrate some of the factors which led to the passing of the secular clause, the legalising of the Nelson System and their ongoing consequences for the treatment of religion in education. I consider the ways in which dominant discourses reproduce the status quo and disqualify education in religions and beliefs from the curriculum. Following a Foucaultian methodology I also ask: what is being accomplished, at the institutional level, by the continued reproduction of BiS and disqualification of education in religions and beliefs from the curriculum? I suggest that the institutional accommodation of BiS, and concurrent resistance to alternative constructions of religious education, are constituents of a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality in New Zealand schools, which serve narrow economic interests of the nation state. I parenthesise the prefix “neo” because, as will become evident, this

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governmentality draws on elements of all the liberal discourses described in Table 9, in addition to the neoliberal discourse.

**1877 Parliamentary Debates**

The parliamentary debates of 1877 were set in a religiously homogeneous but denominationally diverse social context. New Zealand Census returns indicated a 95% affiliation to the Christian faith in 1878. Seeking to avoid the perceived injustices of the dual system of church and state schools established from 1870 in the United Kingdom, and looking towards Australian examples of “free, compulsory and secular” state education, a primary concern was to unite the colony with the provision of a national education system, paid for by taxes, compulsory and agreeable to all. The issues of religious instruction, the provision of daily readings of the Bible and the reciting of the Lord’s Prayer proved to be bones of contention, particularly dividing Protestants and Catholics. A balance needed to be found between providing for the moral and religious formation of children and allowing for the freedom of conscience of teachers and parents who did not subscribe to Protestant beliefs.

Charles C. Bowen, Minister for Education and architect of the Act, took a position reflecting the Christian social consensus of the time. Accepting the need to “exclude religious teaching from our schools” as a matter of fairness, he attempted to mitigate this with the insertion of Clause 85, Subsection 3 in the draft legislation, proposing religious exercises at the start of each day, which he here justified to the house:

> While it is the duty of the state to take care that all children within its borders are educated, and take charge of the secular education of the people, it is bound so to use its power that it may in no way tend to blunt or deaden that intuitive reverence for a higher power, that indestructible hope of immortality, which distinguishes us from the beasts that perish [. . .]. I feel certain that it is the desire of nineteen-twentieths of the people of this country that the Bible should not be absolutely excluded from public

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14 New Zealand Government, “Census New Zealand” (Wellington: Government Printer, 1878). The 1878 census suggests that the largest groups at 42% were Anglican, Presbyterian at 23%, Catholic at 14%, Methodist at 9%, Baptists at 2%, Congregationalists at 1%, and Lutherans at 1%.


16 Victoria (1872), Queensland and South Australia (1875) had taken a secular route. But Cathy Byrne shows how these states subsequently redescribed their “secular” systems to include religious instruction. Cathy Byrne, Religion in Secular Education: What, in heaven’s name, are we teaching our children? (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 187-220. See also Marion Maddox, Taking God to School: The end of Australia’s egalitarian education? (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014).

schools [. . . ]. It is proposed in the Bill that school shall be opened every morning, at an affixed hour, by the reading of the Bible and the Lord’s Prayer; but it is not made necessary that any child should attend at that time if his parents should object. I can scarcely conceive that, if men were to consider carefully what the effect of such a rule would be, anyone could object to it on the ground that it would be an interference with the consciences of the people; and I will but ask honourable gentlemen what a very serious matter it would be to deprive our children—the children of this rising community—of the knowledge of that book which has been an education to countless generations of English children, and the language of which, unconsciously to ourselves, illustrates our conversation form day to day.\textsuperscript{18}

Within the Christian social census described, it was axiomatic that the children of the colony should learn to be reverential towards God and receive knowledge of the Bible and the Lord’s Prayer as part of their education. It was almost inconceivable that others should object. These views exemplify the conservative Christian discourse on religion in school described in Table 9.

While Bowen lost the vote on Subsection 3,\textsuperscript{19} the objections raised during the debates were based not upon antireligious or secularising sentiments but on an acute awareness of the strength of religious convictions within the community and the “heartburning and ill feeling amongst the population” that may result.\textsuperscript{20} Thus it was argued that if Subsection 3 were introduced, Catholic teachers would not be able to teach in state schools either as a matter of conscience or because school committees would not appoint them;\textsuperscript{21} Protestant teachers would object to reading the Bible without being able to give further teaching;\textsuperscript{22} reading aloud in a “parrot like way” each day would breed irreverence towards the Bible;\textsuperscript{23} Catholic and Jewish children would be left outside in the cold and rain while this teaching took place;\textsuperscript{24} Protestants should object (on behalf of Catholics and Jews) to any infringement of freedom of thought;\textsuperscript{25} Catholic schools would rightly refuse to assimilate into the (Protestant) state system;\textsuperscript{26} Catholic parents would be expected to contribute to a state system at which their children could not attend;\textsuperscript{27} since the state would be funding Protestant religious observances, Catholic schools would be justified in claiming funding from general taxation—a “ruinous

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{18} I\textit{bid}.
\bibitem{19} I\textit{bid.}, 25: 515.
\bibitem{20} Mr Lusk: ibid., 185. Mr Tole: ibid., 219.
\bibitem{21} Mr Wakefield: ibid., 184. Mr Lusk: ibid., 185.
\bibitem{22} Dr Wallis: ibid., 194-95.
\bibitem{23} Mr Pyke: ibid., 205.
\bibitem{24} Mr Wakefield: ibid., 182,84.
\bibitem{25} Mr Pyke: ibid., 204.
\bibitem{26} Mr De Lautour: ibid., 200.
\bibitem{27} Mr Wakefield: ibid., 183-84. Mr Tole: ibid., 216.
\end{thebibliography}
expense”; children should, in any case, receive religious teaching at home and in Sunday Schools.

Perhaps summing up the feeling of the house, Independent MP Cecil De Lautour stated:

I do not think there is any objection to religion in the school, but the objection is to creeds in the school. There is no man yet bold enough to stand up in this house and disavow any sympathy with religion; there is no man who would say that children are not to be trained up in religion; but we do hold that religion can be taught by the church—can be taught at the hearth, and it is not necessary that it should be introduced into the daily school.

It is clear from the parliamentary debates that it was strength of Christian consensus in New Zealand which led to the compromise of the secular clause, rather than authoritarian secular rationalist discursive imperatives. The intention was that children should receive their secular education in the schools and their denominational religious education through their families and churches. The Act would certainly have foundered without the deletion of subsection three, and the passing of the secular clause at subsection two, of Clause 85.

One voice stood apart, in expressing a more separationist perspective. Robert Stout, New Zealand Premier and first President of the New Zealand Freethought Association stated:

I say, as the state is bound only to look after secular education, it should be confined to its own sphere [. . .]. The state should only look after that education which concerns it as a whole; and it cannot be said that it has got anything to do with religion at all.

In his Presidential address to the Otago Educational Institute in 1879, Stout repeated this view: “It is said we are a Christian nation and the Bible is recognised by the state. I deny both propositions. As a nation we have nothing to do with religion.”

This is an authoritarian secular rationalist position on religion in school, as defined in Table 9; a minority view in the 19th century and not one that appeared to be shared by those who

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28 Mr De Lautour: ibid., 200.
29 Mr De Lautour: ibid., 197.
30 Ibid.
32 Breward, Godless Schools?, 17.
voted for the secular clause at subsection two, or the deletion of subsection three. However, as I show below, it appears that with the separation of religion from the secular curriculum in 1877, two discursive constructions obtained a degree of permanence and self-evidence within the education system with far-reaching consequences for the subject discipline of religious education: the conservative Christian construction of “religion” as (Protestant) Christianity and the authoritarian secular rationalist construction of “secular” as “nothing to do with religion”. I suggest that these constructions are not permanent and self-evident but contingent on a 19th-century historical, social and legislative context.

Reception of the 1877 Secular Clause

Bishop Hadfield told the Wellington Anglican Synod after the passing of the Act: “Unless I have greatly mistaken the character of the settlers in New Zealand, there will not be found a majority who will long be content that their children should be doomed to instruction in Godless schools.”

Presbyterian minister Rutherford Waddell vociferously warned that:

[I]f we take away from the roots of a child’s character the great verities of religion which are summed up in the Bible, and which are its natural foods, and substitute the bald aridities of secularism, you will look in vain for those fruits of the spirit that have raised men above the level of emigrating rats and free-loving baboons.

For Waddell it was self-evident that a system of secular schooling was placing the morals of the nation’s children in jeopardy. These conservative Christian discursive imperatives on religion in school, prevalent within the Christian social consensus described above, appear to have galvanised enthusiastic but ultimately unsuccessful campaigns by Anglicans and Catholics to secure state funding for denominational schools, and by Wesleyans and Presbyterians to revoke the secular clause to allow religious exercises in schools. The Bible-in-Schools League, established in 1903, made a daily religious instruction class, as part of the curriculum, their goal. A total of 42 Private Members Bills requesting revocation were placed before parliament between 1877 and 1935. It is my view that the tug-of-war over the curriculum

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35 Stout’s views on religion in school were authoritarian secular rationalist, but on a personal level his views were more anti-dogmatic than anti-religious and more agnostic than atheist. He later became involved in Unitarianism: David Hamer. “Stout, Robert, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography”. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, accessed 28 September 2016, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2s48/stout-robert.
37 Cited in ibid., 116.
38 Ibid., 37-50.
39 Ibid., 86.
which took place in this period led to an entrenchment of positions, setting up a binary of Christian Religious Instruction versus Secular State Education which established the terms of subsequent debate on religion in school. Teachers, represented by the NZEI, opposed any impingement on secular education. The possible imposition of religious tests upon teachers was to be vehemently resisted.\(^4^0\) The education profession held up the secular clause as the defender of its professional integrity and the authoritarian secular rationalist definition of “secular”—“nothing to do with religion”—became normalised.

In Figure 4, a cartoon published in The Observer in 1912 bears the caption “Your conscience or your living—A Bible-in-Schools Hold-up".\(^4^1\) The authoritarian secular rationalist discourse is evident in the construction of the secular school teacher as protector of a form of education which promotes rational thought and autonomy. The minister of religion, representing the Bible-in-Schools League, is constructed as imposing at gun-point a form of religious indoctrination involving blind faith and heteronomy. The conceptualisation of education as intrinsically separate from religion and indeed, in opposition to its aims, was one which obtained currency among academics, politicians and journalists in the latter half of the 20th century in New Zealand.\(^4^2\) But it did so within the discursive constructions of “religion in school” and “secular education” established within this fractious historical context.

\(^{4^0}\) Ibid., 28.


\(^{4^2}\) See below, page 83.
Figure 4: "Your Conscience or Your Living" Cartoon, 1912

YOUR CONSCIENCE OR YOUR LIVING—A BIBLE IN SCHOOLS HOLD UP,

State School Teacher: Dear these principles of free and secular education, and teach from your exclusive text-book of Bible readings? I couldn’t conscientiously do it.

Bible-in-Schools League (if he gave that gun): It’s either you drop your conscience or living—one or the other. Hoo-hoo, look sharp!
Education historian Colin McGeorge has shown that, notwithstanding the passing of the 1877 Act, “the schools continued to operate [. . .] in a professedly Christian, predominantly Protestant milieu, which saw nothing odd or illegal in a certain amount of traffic between secular schooling and revealed religion”. 43 McGeorge describes: the large numbers of clerics on education boards and school committees; the employment of (Protestant) clerics as teachers and head teachers; the common practice of school teachers running Sunday school classes; the expectation that clergy would provide prayers and benedictions on formal occasions in schools; the large number of references to God and religion in school text books; and the posting of the ten commandments on classroom walls. 44 This analysis exemplifies the Christian social consensus in New Zealand society and the education system at this time, and provides evidence of what I have described as dominant conservative Christian discursive imperatives informing treatment of religion in school.

However, the desire for children to receive religious formation was evidently not always matched by a commitment from churches and parents to undertake this teaching themselves, and the call was repeatedly made by the Bible-in-Schools League, as discussed above, for the repeal of the secular clause. In 1934, the NZEI attempted to redraw the lines between the secular curriculum and religious instruction in schools:

The teaching profession is rightly concerned to see that functions are not foisted upon it which are beyond the true scope of the school and which transcend its proper influence and authority over the individual conscience. The indifference of parents and the failure of the churches to accept their obligations and to find the means and energy necessary to their performance are the cause of this self-defeating willingness to devolve the teaching of things sacred upon our secular schools. 45

The prevalence of the conservative Christian discursive imperative concerning the religious formation of children, and the authoritarian secular rationalist construction of the secular curriculum, go some way to explaining the widespread appeal of the Nelson System which gradually became normalised in New Zealand primary schools. This system gave the appearance of protecting both the secular clause—and thus the integrity of the teaching profession—along with the rights of church volunteers to give religious instruction.

44 Ibid., 159-67.
45 Cited in Breward, Godless Schools?, 85.
The secular clause of the 1877 Education Act Clause 84 (2) had stated: “The school shall be kept open five days in each week for at least four hours, two of which in the forenoon and two in the afternoon shall be consecutive, and the teaching shall be entirely of a secular character.”\textsuperscript{46} And at subsection (3): “The school buildings may be used on days and at hours other than those used for public school purposes upon such terms as the Committee may from time to time prescribe.” The Nelson System evolved from a strict interpretation of the secular clause commonly attributed to J. H. McKenzie, a Presbyterian minister in Nelson, in 1897.\textsuperscript{47} The argument was put that since schools must legally be open for two hours in the morning for secular instruction, but were in fact open for three hours each morning, an “official” start to the day could be delayed while religious instruction—Bible-in-Schools—took place. This could be provided by a teacher, clergyman or church volunteer, without contravention of the Act.\textsuperscript{48} McGeorge notes that this legal loophole was discovered a good deal earlier, citing Bishop Harper of Christchurch in 1878.\textsuperscript{49} E. O. Blamires, organising secretary of the Bible-in-Schools League from 1927-1945, insisted that it was, in fact, always the intention of Bowen, the Minister for Education, to make this allowance for religious instruction, calling it the Bowen (Nelson) System.\textsuperscript{50} A legal discourse was here co-opted in support of the dominant conservative Christian discursive imperative within which the nation’s children should be provided with religious instruction. After the election of a Labour government which sided with the NZEI, in 1935, the League abandoned its attempts to revoke the secular clause and concentrated its efforts on encouraging the churches to maximise opportunities available to them through the Nelson System.

A system of daily worship, as well as religious instruction, seems to have been widely implemented through the Nelson System. In 1938, in opposition to these practices, Labour Minister of Education Peter Fraser insisted that the common practice of daily devotional observances before secular instruction, while within the letter of the law, contravened the spirit of the law. A Bill before the Parliamentary Education Committee to this effect appears to have been met with a deluge of submissions from around the country and was withdrawn. This episode was described with relish by Blamires who says,”[Fraser] could see how the

\textsuperscript{46} The Education Act 1877.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Rev. E. O. Blamires, A Christian Core for New Zealand Education (Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1960), 49, 54.
whole country was aroused and wisely he decided to abide by the status quo”, his proposals being “out of step with the community as a whole”. The Very Rev Dr J. D. Salmond commented on the legality of Bible teaching in school: “I think it is a case of what the community is willing to sanction outgrowing a legal framework.” A community-wide Christian social consensus, in which a conservative Christian discourse on religion in school was embedded, was again in evidence in education.

While evangelising imperatives certainly informed this thinking, Troughton’s research also highlights the early justification for religious instruction on grounds of training in morality. Children would be taught about the life and teaching of Jesus as an aid to their moral development. In this sense an instrumental or governmental role is discernible, which appears to take precedence over religious or educational imperatives. For example, Troughton’s analysis of teaching materials used in Sunday Schools, Church schools and Bible-in-Schools lessons between 1900 and 1940 demonstrates that a certain amount of license was taken with the Biblical accounts of Jesus’ childhood in the service of the promotion of “civilisation and social order”. Jesus was presented as obedient to his parents, helpful around the home, industrious in the workshop, kind to animals, a lover of the countryside, always said “No” to what was wrong, and was diligent over his homework. These stories have little or no Biblical foundation, but gave clear moral directives. As Troughton explains: “In a context where religion, morality and national prosperity were frequently linked, children’s religious identity was a matter of national significance.” Troughton’s research shows how religious formation explicitly fostered diligence and industry as a means of ensuring both societal wellbeing and economic prosperity for the colony. Troughton gives more emphasis to the former intention. But the resources he cites evidence an imperative to improve productivity alongside the inculcation of religious belief. In Foucaultian terms, religious instruction appeared to have been, at least partly, co-opted as a disciplinary technique in the economic interests of the nation state. The governmental role of religious instruction at this time converged with, but was distinct from, the prevailing social consensus that New Zealand should be a Christian country, and evangelising imperatives regarding children’s salvation. It is

51 Ibid., 12-13. See also Breward, Godless Schools?, 88.
55 Ibid., 48-49. See also Troughton, “Psychological Childhood”, 37-39.
likely that this emphasis on moral teaching (in line with the social aims of the school), rather than contentious religious doctrine, contributed to the willingness of secular schools to accommodate such teaching.\textsuperscript{57} The promotion of children’s compliance to normative morals and values in the national economic interest is an ongoing theme in the treatment of religion in New Zealand’s schools. It is a constituent of the secular (neo)-liberal governmentality identified in this research.

\textit{The Currie Report and 1964 Education Act}

In 1960, the Currie Commission was tasked with reviewing the whole New Zealand education system, in particular teacher training, Maori education, secondary education and administration. The matter of religion in schools also came within its remit. After two years, and receiving “very many and very lengthy submissions”, it concluded that “it seems incontrovertible that a majority of New Zealand parents would wish their children to have some form of introduction to religion”.\textsuperscript{58} The report stated that 80\% of primary schools were already operating a system of Bible-in-Schools at this time.\textsuperscript{59} The Nelson System appeared to have been widely adopted as a solution to the disputes over religion and education which had characterised the period between 1877 and 1935. Census returns for 1960 indicated an 89\% affiliation to Christianity.\textsuperscript{60}

Considering the matter of the secular clause, the Currie Commission noted that the ongoing practice of volunteers leading religious instruction at different times of day, in different classes, certainly contravened the requirement of the 1877 Act that secular instruction should be given for two \textit{consecutive} hours before or after lunch.\textsuperscript{61} Recognising the prevailing Christian social consensus (and concurrent conservative Christian discourse on religion in school), the Currie Commission recommended not the cessation of the illegal practice, but the amendment of the law to make current practices legal. While admitting that “the retention of secularity in primary schools can be reconciled only with some difficulty with the legislation of facilities for voluntary instructors”, the Commission maintained that such a difficulty could be overcome through what is, in effect, an ontological transformation of part of the regular school day. They recommended that, at any approved time, a given class full of children may

\textsuperscript{57} Troughton, “Psychological Childhood”, 39.
\textsuperscript{58} Report of the Royal Commission on Education in New Zealand, 676, 682.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 680.
\textsuperscript{61} Report of the Royal Commission on Education in New Zealand, 680.
be deemed to be “closed” in order for religious instruction to take place.\textsuperscript{62} “The essential point in the view of the Commission is that the two elements—secular instruction and religious instruction—should remain separate and the school as a secular institution be officially and unequivocally out of session when pupils are receiving religious instruction.”\textsuperscript{63}

In line with the submission from the NZEI, the Commission recommended that the secular clause be retained. When the Religious Instruction and Observances Act was subsequently discussed in parliament the legalising of the Nelson System appears to have had cross-party support with no members opposing the amendments to the 1877 Act. However, a strong conservative Christian discourse on religion in schools was in evidence which over-ruled the Commission’s perhaps more liberal secular rationalist suggestions that parents should opt in, rather than out, and that school teachers should not teach religious instruction.\textsuperscript{64} The Minister of Education, Hon W. B. Tennent, explained that the Department considered opting in to be “cumbersome and administratively difficult”,\textsuperscript{65} and that to prevent “devout Christian men and women” currently employed as classroom teachers from speaking to the children about the Christian faith would be to “violate freedom of conscience” and “fundamentally wrong”.\textsuperscript{66} While the latter point was disputed,\textsuperscript{67} both the Bill, and the conservative Christian discursive imperatives exemplified by Tennent were widely affirmed:

I believe that religion has a very important place in the development of any young person. I am satisfied that no young person is able to reach full development of character without it. I am certain that this Bill will meet with the wishes of the great majority of parents.\textsuperscript{68}

Tennent and other Members were at pains to set the tone of this debate against the sectarianism and secularism which they perceived to have characterised the debates of 1877. They emphasised the spirit of ecumenism which now existed and the unity of purpose found amongst the Protestant churches, as evidenced by the common syllabus provided by the New Zealand Council for Christian Education (NZCCE).\textsuperscript{69} All agreed that the legislation was neither

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 688.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 693. It also advised against state funding for Church schools. Ibid., 716.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} \textit{New Zealand Parliamentary Debates}, vol. 333 (Wellington: Government Printer, 1962), 3388.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 3389.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} Mr Edwards ibid., 3395. See also \textit{The Education Act 1964}, Section 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{68} \textit{New Zealand Parliamentary Debates}, 333: 3389.
\end{itemize}
contentious nor problematic, but merely a formality which would “regularise,” “legalise” and render “unassailable” a practice which was “well established,” “customary,” “almost universally applied” and indeed “essential” to children’s education. Even the opposition of the NZEI was restricted to the issue of class teachers delivering religious instruction, in case of discrimination. This was dismissed as old-fashioned thinking on the part of the NZEI, by National MP Thomas Templeton Murray: “We are not living in 1890, we are living in 1962, and we are broader minded men and women.”

From a more critical perspective it may be asked why—if these parliamentarians were so confident of the unanimity of the churches, and nation at large, on the importance of religion in school—they did not have the courage of their convictions and revoke the secular clause. This would surely have been a more honest reflection of the intentions of the 1962 Religious Instruction and Observances Act, and subsequent 1964 Education Act. It would have brought the teaching of religion within the remit of educationalists and, in due course, exposed curricula to normative educational requirements. However, these “broad-minded men” were operating under the constraints of a conservative Christian discourse, with a single-minded perception of the formational role of religion in education which had broad social consensus. They were also constrained by an authoritarian secular rationalist construction of secular education within the education establishment, and a fear of undermining the Christian social consensus in New Zealand with a more far-reaching debate on the secular clause. They had good reason to be afraid. In spite of the Parliamentarians’ assurances of unanimity, the Currie Commission had recognised that it was protestations from school boards about the legality of the Nelson System—and threats of legal action to the NZCCE—which made the new legislation necessary. This makes the statements of the Parliamentarians appear somewhat disingenuous. They were, in fact, well aware of opposition among some educationalists and parents to Bible-in-Schools. From a Foucaultian perspective, the passing of this legislation may be seen as a governmental technique designed to subjugate the secular rationalist discursive imperatives behind this opposition and consolidate the conservative Christian status quo: the perception of New Zealand as a Christian country and the need to inculcate in children Christian beliefs.

71 Ibid., 3391.
73 The Education Act 1964, Section 78.
74 Report of the Royal Commission on Education in New Zealand, 681.
The legal construct of school closure appears to have been designed more to protect the rights of teachers and volunteers to give confessional religious instruction in primary school than to preserve the secular character of the education system. It is a construct which was entirely contingent upon the historical context of the first half of the 20th century: a context characterised by a Christian social consensus within which conservative Christian discursive imperatives on religion in school were dominant. But I believe its establishment within law has imbued the Nelson System and BIS with the status of a permanent solution to religion in education and appears to have rendered it unassailable to the influence of alternative educational and egalitarian liberal discursive imperatives which obtained currency from this period, in other jurisdictions.  

The Currie Commission had been clear to differentiate between religious instruction and teaching about religion within the curriculum. While discursively constrained from establishing “anything so extensive as a new core or School Certificate subject such as religious knowledge” it nonetheless recommended “that the term secular be not interpreted to exclude reference to religion and religious history in the primary and secondary syllabuses of social studies […], and that the limitations of treatment involved be carefully explained.” However, this differentiation of terminology did not enter the legislation and it appears that the “limitations of treatment” were subsequently emphasised over the possibilities afforded by the curriculum. Instead, with the incorporation of the Religious Instruction and Observances Act into the Education Act of 1964, the conservative Christian understanding of religious instruction—Christian formation—was enshrined in statute. At the same time an authoritarian secular rationalist conception of the secular curriculum—having “nothing to do with religion”—appeared to be embedded in New Zealand Law. The effective legal separation of religion and education, and the consequent ceding of responsibility for religious teaching to the churches, has, I argue, had a stultifying effect on the development of education about religions and beliefs at both primary and secondary school level in New Zealand. The currency of this authoritarian secular rationalist construction of secular may have been furthered by academics whose vision of New Zealand as progressive and enlightened was coterminous with its rejection of an established church and its protection of the secular education system.

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75 See below, page 142. 
76 Report of the Royal Commission on Education in New Zealand, 697. 
77 The 1961 Syllabus had defined Social Studies as “a study of people: what they are like— their beliefs, their aspirations, their pleasures, the problems they have to face; of how and where they live, the work they do, and the ways in which they organise themselves.” Cited in A. Gilchrist, “Religious Instruction and Observances in State Primary Schools” (Wellington: Department of Education, 1987), 3. Obtained under the Official Information Act 1982.
Historian John Stenhouse has demonstrated how prominent and influential New Zealand academics—such as theologian Lloyd Geering, and historian Keith Sinclair—systematically redescribed the history of New Zealand in “secular nationalist” terms from the 1960s onwards. In these accounts New Zealand was cast as “the world’s most advanced, enlightened, and secular liberal democracy” having wrestled education out of the hands of the churches from the earliest times. Stenhouse describes this project as a “narrative contract” with the nation state. He suggests that the appeal of Sinclair and Geering’s “celebratory histories” to secular politicians may have lain in their power to “eliminate rival sources of intellectual and moral authority” to that of the nation state. As Stenhouse points out, the influence of such scholars reached far beyond their numerous publications. Many future opinion-formers, such as cabinet ministers and journalists, would pass through their hands as university students. Stenhouse shows how, by such means, scholars appear to have framed an identity for New Zealanders which obtained dominance in the academy, in the media and the government. Within this “secular salvation story”, the positioning of New Zealand as educationally progressive appeared to become contingent upon the preservation of the secular clause of 1877 and the continued dissociation of education from religion. Stenhouse’s analysis of the “secular New Zealand thesis” presents, I believe, an explanatory backdrop to past and ongoing resistance within the education academy to education in religions and beliefs. It appears to have evolved as a kind of foundation myth for the New Zealand state. As historian Jane Simpson notes, the association of secularism with national identity has preserved the secular clause as “a semi-sacred object in a sacred symbol system” with “the timeless quality once given to ‘Holy Writ’”. Competing discursive constructions and imperatives fail to persuade—or even to be granted serious consideration—because they appear to represent a threat to the narrative of “progressive” New Zealand. The idea of the secular narrative in which religion is constructed as a private matter, separate from public life,

79 Ibid., 5.
80 Ibid., 6, 14. He notes that both have been rewarded with civic honours and become “pillars of the academic and political establishment.” Ibid., 5-6.
81 Stenhouse, “Secular New Zealand?”, 84.
82 Ibid.
which does not impinge on a New Zealander’s autonomy or their loyalty to the nation state, is intrinsic to the secular (neo)-liberal governmentality identified in my research.

**Liberal Christian Education**

In 1973 the NZCCE was replaced by the CEC, the leadership of which argued from a liberal Christian perspective that, with increased pluralism, a role should be found for religious teaching in primary schools. The Department of Education, under the influence of the CEC, appeared willing to reconsider the importance of the religious dimension in moral and spiritual education in primary and secondary schools. A liberal Christian discourse appears to have obtained some currency at this time allowing both the CEC and the Department of Education to conceptualise a construction of religion which was supportive of, rather than in opposition to, educational endeavour. However the distinction between teaching about religion and adopting religion as part of personal development was not clearly articulated, as I show below.

Director of Education William Renwick, writing in 1975, could see no objection to the inclusion of teaching about religion “as a cultural product, as a personal ideal and as one source of morality.” He saw religion as a personal resource with which children should be equipped as part of their education and stated: “If the intention is that religion serve the enlargement of understanding, the question is no longer whether, but how.” The same year, with little fanfare, the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act made it possible for private church schools to be integrated into the state-funded system. Soon afterwards the teacher training colleges began to make available classes in (Christian) religion for those intending to teach in integrated church schools. As part of the 1975 legislation, an amendment was made to the Act of 1964. Section 78A made it possible for the Minister to grant secular state schools the right to teach more than the half an hour a week of religious instruction provided in the original Act. The intentions of this clause have been disputed, but historian Rory Sweetman indicates that one of the orchestrators of the legislation was a devout Presbyterian who felt that, within an integrated system, state schools should be entitled to increased religious instruction. Whatever its motivation, Section 78A and the Integration Act of 1975 appear to evidence a blurring of the boundary between religion and state education in a perhaps less dogmatic and.

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86 Ibid.
more liberal climate. The CEC went to considerable lengths to redescribe religion in school as religious education, and to reconstruct “secular” to include openness to a variety of worldviews—in line with a liberal Christian discourse—at this time. They devised resources exploring religious and ethical issues for use in secondary school social studies classes. It is clear that some in the teaching profession were doubtful about the legality of these resources. McGeorge, for example, was scathing about such “illegal” attempts to infiltrate the secular curriculum, claiming that the “distinction between teaching religion and teaching about religion was first fumbled and then dropped” (emphasis in original).

In line with a growing liberal Christian discourse, the Department of Education set up two Hogben House conferences in 1974 and 1975 and two further conferences at Lopdell House in 1976 and 1977 for educationalists, including the CEC, to discuss issues of morality, spirituality and religion in both primary and secondary education. A committee was then detailed to review these matters in a report chaired by J.G. Johnson, named Growing, Sharing, Learning: The Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education. The Johnson Report reflected, to a large degree, a liberal Christian discourse, co-opting the language of “ultimate concerns” and “the spiritual dimension” alongside concerns for “tolerance and understanding of other people” and respect for difference in a “pluralistic and multicultural society”. It suggested that schools could assist children in “seeking meaning and purpose in life” and that “students could discuss the tenets of various religions on a comparative basis”. But an undergirding expectation of religious belief was evident.

The authors of the report failed to clearly differentiate religious formation from education about religions, and propagated a form of religious universalism regarding religious belief. This failure left the report open to attack from both secularists, such as the newly-formed Committee for the Defence of Secular Education, and from conservative Christians in the

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88 See also Jack Mulheron, State Aid, Integration and New Zealand’s Public Schools (Wellington: Paerangi Books, 1987), 15; McGeorge and Snook, Church, State and New Zealand Education, 28.
90 Such as Religion as Social Control developed in conjunction with Waikato Social Studies Association: Turley and Reid Martin, Religion in Education, 32.
93 Ibid., 35, 36.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
churches.\textsuperscript{96} Within an authoritarian secular rationalist discourse the motivation behind the proposed reconstruction of the term “religion” was viewed with great suspicion. McGeorge represented this perspective: “[T]here are arguments which depend on first defining religion as widely as possible—e.g. as ‘ultimate concern’. Having stretched the term out of all recognition one can then let it snap back in practice to mean ‘religion’ in the ordinary sense of the term, or even just Christianity.”\textsuperscript{97}

From the conservative Christian perspective the introduction of a universal “spiritual dimension,” and the lack of specifically Christian teaching, was anathema. Rev. C. W. Haskell, in his self-published critique of the Johnson Report, could not conceive of a form of religious teaching which watered down Biblical truths and omitted the most important details: “One of the most extraordinary facts about the report is its suppression of any mention of Jesus, the greatest benefactor of mankind! [. . .] It is surely unthinkable that He can be left out of account when pondering educational matters.”\textsuperscript{98} Haskell rejected out of hand the universalising tendencies of the report: “The report suggests that the world's religions have common areas. But it is clearly impossible for a religion which believes in a Supreme Being to have any basic thing in common with one that does not.”\textsuperscript{99} In discursive terms, the liberal Christian attempt to position religion within the curriculum, and to obtain educational currency for broader definitions of religion and secular, was thwarted by influential conservative Christian and authoritarian secular rationalist discursive imperatives both in education and in wider society.\textsuperscript{100}

This appears to be the closest that New Zealand’s Department of Education has come to including teaching about religions within the curriculum at either primary or secondary school level. The failure of the enterprise has its roots in contingent constructions of religion and secular embedded in the 1964 Education Act. This legislation meant that attempts to broaden the debate about religion and to bring the subject within the curriculum were inevitably led by the CEC, rather than by the teaching profession. For teachers, as Brian Turley and Margaret Reid Martin—both former General Secretaries of the CEC—pointed out, religion was “one of those controversial areas which are sensitive to deal with in school and therefore safest

\textsuperscript{96} This problem was compounded by conservative Christian opposition to sex education in primary schools which was another of the report’s recommendations.

\textsuperscript{97} McGeorge, “Religion in State Schools”, 37.

\textsuperscript{98} C. W. Haskell, \textit{A Critique of the Johnson Report on Health and Social Education} (Waikanae: C. W. Haskell, 1979), 12.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} See Turley and Reid Martin, \textit{Religion in Education}, 32-33; McGeorge, “Religion in State Schools”, 32.
avoided”. The resulting attempt to inculcate the nation’s children with a liberal Christian worldview by the Johnson Committee appears to have polarised, rather than united, the community. The consequences were threefold: debates about religion in schools were subsequently avoided for fear of stirring up additional controversy; a further entrenchment took place of the widespread authoritarian secular rationalist construction of secular education as “nothing to do with religion” and dominant conservative Christian construction of religious teaching as “confessional religious instruction”, i.e., a reproduction of the status quo; the CEC retreated to its role as provider in Bible-in-Schools, and a more conservative form of religious instruction was promoted in the nation’s schools, as the disillusioned liberal vanguard within the organisation withdrew.

**Normative Confessional Christian Instruction**

Also indicative of the tussle which was already taking place between liberal and conservative Christians within the CEC, in the mid-1970s, were the changes to the CEC’s policy statement. A discursive shift from liberal to conservative and evangelising Christian discourses was notable. The 1975 draft policy states:

> The Commission sees a specific contribution from churches to lie in the field of Religious Education. By Religious Education the Commission means learning to understand and appreciate the beliefs by which people live. It is appropriate in New Zealand to give particular emphasis to the Christian faith because it has been a pervasive emphasis through our cultural heritage and history. The Commission recognises that the primary responsibility for such Religious Education in these terms can be distinguished from the church’s evangelistic and nurturing activities.

This may be seen as a liberal Christian attempt to reconstruct the work of the CEC into provision of a non-confessional form of liberal religious education in state schools. Amid the conservative Christian backlash within the CEC, the Presbyterian Church almost withdrew from the Commission. The new policy, produced in 1976 after consultation with the churches, is still in use and does not appear to have been much revised since its publication.

> The commission holds that religion holds a central place in human experience and that an adequate educational system must include

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102 E.g. see below, pages 88, 100, 106, 117, 240.
103 Margaret Reid Martin, who had been General Secretary of the NZCCE from 1966 and held the same position at the CEC from 1973, left the post in 1978 after the Johnson Report was shelved.
106 CEC, “C.R.E.”. The first sentence is now omitted.
Religious Education. By Religious Education the Commission means learning to understand and appreciate the beliefs by which people live as an aid to the development of the pupils’ own beliefs and values. While acknowledging that there are other views of life that would have a place in religious programmes we believe that it is appropriate in New Zealand to give particular emphasis to the Christian faith, the Bible, and the life and teachings of Jesus, because of their pervasive influence through our cultural heritage and history, and their continuing power and relevance.¹⁰⁷

While the first half of the statement may reflect universalising liberal Christian sentiments and recognition of differing worldviews, a discursive shift takes place during the remainder of the policy. With its emphasis on the children’s personal beliefs, and the inclusion of the power and relevance of the Bible, Christian faith and Jesus’ life and teaching, over and above learning about cultural heritage, this version of the policy drew on conservative and evangelising Christian discourses in a way that the 1975 document did not.¹⁰⁸ Intrinsic to this discursive shift within the CEC was the change to Religion in Life, an Australian programme produced by Access Ministries (formerly the Council for Christian Education in Schools) in Victoria, as its new Agreed Syllabus from 1978.¹⁰⁹ Public debate about including religion within the curriculum appears to have been disqualified either by the conservative Christian discourse or by the authoritarian secular rationalist discourse, or both, from this point on.

An example of this may be seen within Parliamentary debates in 1983, when the CEC requested more flexibility in teaching hours. Clause 11A of the Draft Education Amendment Bill provided for an extension from half an hour to one hour a week, not to exceed the 20 hours a year stipulated by the Education Act 1964. In a move perhaps calculated to minimise discussion on the subject, Clause 11A was tabled as a supplementary order paper after the select committee had finished its hearings and there had been no opportunity for submissions in person.¹¹⁰ Certainly Mr Terris, member for Western Hutt, who wished to use the opportunity to revisit the recommendations of the Johnson Report and discuss the shortcomings of the Nelson System, suggested this had been a deliberate strategy to push the clause through without debate:

Has the Minister a fear? Must healthy debate on religious education somehow be contained and kept to a minimum at all costs? Is the Minister

¹⁰⁹ See below, page 113. The reasons for this shift appear to be undocumented but would make an interesting subject for further study.
afraid that the question of religious education, values education and education in human relationships might be thrown open? Recent events would give credence to the view that the Minister does not want an informed debate on the content of religious education in our schools. That is an absurd situation.\textsuperscript{111}

It seems very likely that the divisive nature of previous debates, couched in the terms set by conservative Christian and authoritarian secular rationalist discourses and the ambivalent language of the liberal Christian discourse, did result in the somewhat evasive introduction of Clause 11A. But a conservative Christian discursive imperative to support the CEC was also in evidence.

In opposition to clause 11A, Mr Marshall cited a submission from the NZEI which was concerned to avoid the “possibility of extensive inroads into the school day for religious instruction that was at the heart of the secular debates in the latter part of the last century”.\textsuperscript{112} When considered alongside the extra provision for religious instruction made in Section 78A, as part of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act, the Labour Opposition agreed with the NZEI that clause 11A was a step too far. Either 78A should be repealed or this Clause should be rejected.\textsuperscript{113} However, for the Minister of Education, Hon M. L. Wellington, the matter was self-evident and objection inconceivable:

The Government’s view is that the maximum period of instruction is reasonable on educational grounds. I cannot understand how it could be otherwise [. . .]. The Government has made that change because the Churches Education Commission which has the responsibility for this matter in the broadest sense, reported that it had some practical problems [. . .]. The Government has had no difficulty in trying to help out the Churches Education Commission. I am surprised that the Opposition has difficulty in doing so.\textsuperscript{114}

These comments are indicative of conservative Christian imperatives which sought to preserve the status quo of Bible-in-Schools by both suppressing parliamentary discussion on the matter and by disqualifying the concerns of the Opposition and educationalists represented by the NZEI. The result, with the passing of the Educational Amendment Act, was the reproduction of conservative Christian policy and practice in New Zealand primary schools. The Ministerial endorsement of religious instruction as “educational” served to further position Bible-in-Schools as normative within the education system.

\textsuperscript{111} Education Amendment Act 1983, 3601.
\textsuperscript{112} New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 454: 3380.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
The Curriculum Review and Biculturalism

A Curriculum Review in 1986, instigated by Marshall as the new Labour Minister of Education, and written by the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) within the Department of Education (in consultation with a wide range of teacher representatives), provides further evidence of disqualification of religion from the primary and secondary school curriculum. The question was posed, “What should young people learn and experience in schools?” The committee, in its draft report of a seven-month long consultation process, made the following comment:

The question of religious teaching was not mentioned often. A small but often vigorously expressed response called for the whole school curriculum to be based exclusively on the Bible or Christian teachings. Others suggested that a more comparative approach to religion ought to be part of the school curriculum.\(^{115}\)

In another section entitled “What do you expect of our schools?” the committee rejected both these approaches, saying: “Although it has noted the request that schools consider the promotion of religious and Christian studies, the Committee believes that State schools should remain secular.”\(^{116}\) The report thus conflated the two forms of religious teaching and operating within an authoritarian secular rationalist construction of secular—“nothing to do with religion”—excluded them from the secular curriculum. A following section on “How should schools reflect the many cultures in New Zealand?” made no recommendations on teaching about religious diversity.\(^{117}\)

Interestingly the full report, published the following year, changed to a position of support for both the secular curriculum and religious instruction in schools, in line with the Education Act of 1964. It also acknowledged that “teaching about the religious attitudes, values, and beliefs that people hold is already part of the curriculum of some schools”, perhaps in recognition of the materials produced by the CEC during Margaret Reid Martin’s tenure.\(^{118}\) The review gave no further advice on religion in schools, effectively reproducing the status quo.

The Curriculum Review document from 1986 reflected the changes in social attitudes towards Māori culture and the discursive shift towards biculturalism in public policy, described

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\(^{116}\) Ibid., 25.


The imperative to include Māori language and culture within the curriculum was evident:

The Committee believes that, by emphasising bicultural skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, as a major move towards multiculturalism, the new design will assist Māori students and those of minority ethnic groups as well as extending the cultural repertoire of others.  

A social action liberal discourse promoted firstly biculturalism and secondly multiculturalism within the curriculum, in order to address ongoing disadvantages for Māori as a consequence of colonisation. The aim was to reduce cultural dissonance: a mismatch between the culture of the Māori child and that of the curriculum. The document had an extensive section on Māori, Pākehā and the Curriculum reflecting the perceived urgency to revise educational practices at his time, and a further section asking “How should schools reflect the many cultures in New Zealand?”, gave approximately 16 out of 18 pages to consideration of Māori culture in education. This emphasis was justified pragmatically:

Children will learn more about themselves if they know a lot about at least one other culture. Self-esteem is developed and maintained when children see that their culture is recognised and valued in schools [. . .]. Multiculturalism will be best achieved through biculturalism. Ease and familiarity with one other culture is a very good bridge to achieving ease later in many cultures. [. . .] Within a New Zealand setting the culture which offers maximum contact, maximum human and material resources, maximum experience of a living culture, and uniqueness within a world setting is Māori.

In the context of social change occurring in New Zealand at this time—the revival of the Treaty as founding document and the growing recognition of the historical and ongoing abuses suffered by Māori — and prior to the changes in immigration legislation in 1987, it is understandable that Māori and Pākehā, as Treaty partners, were presented as normative New Zealand cultures in the Curriculum Review draft. The document evidences the way in which the dominant social action liberal discourse prioritised Māori culture, in terms of curriculum coverage, training and resources, over other cultures and religious beliefs.

Bicultural education policies obtained cross-party consensus and maintain discursive currency in a social context which, as I have shown, is now much more culturally and religiously

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119 See above, page 10.  
121 Ibid., 93-102, 37-54.  
122 Ibid., 53-54.
diverse.\textsuperscript{123} With an emphasis on social justice for Māori, curriculum policy promoting recognition of the Māori knowledge bank and learning styles and cultural relevance of curriculum content was, and remains, positioned as educationally progressive.\textsuperscript{124} I argue below that to challenge social action liberal prioritisation of curriculum content in New Zealand is considered neither politically correct nor expedient, which effectively renders it immune from critique.\textsuperscript{125} This discourse forms part of the secular (neo)-liberal governmentality that I identify in my research in New Zealand schools.

In the Catholic schools, biculturalism was absorbed into the religious education curriculum. Workbooks were redesigned to incorporate Māori language and concepts.\textsuperscript{126} However, the teaching was still primarily that of the Catholic Church and tikanga Māori was interpreted and redescribed through this lens. This process, called “inculturation”, was made explicit in the RE Curriculum Statement of Catholic Schools:

\begin{quote}
The religious education Curriculum endeavours to include the Māori perspective so that Māori will seek after a greater knowledge and understanding of their Catholic faith so that they can live and express it in a Māori way within the church [...]. Inculturation “means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through the integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures”. Inculturation must be guided by two principles: “compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church”.
\end{quote}

This approach to teaching Māori culture may be described, in Foucaultian terms, as a conservative Christian governmental technique in which cultural practices and beliefs were amended and brought into line with Catholic teachings.\textsuperscript{128} However, as the teaching appeared to be culturally responsive, in line with bicultural education policy, it was positioned as progressive in Catholic educational terms.

\textsuperscript{123} See above, page 11.
\textsuperscript{125} See below, pages 167, 256, 257, 258, 259.
\textsuperscript{126} See below, Figure 7, page 184.
\textsuperscript{128} I do not mean to imply that Catholic Māori beliefs are inauthentic, but that the Māori beliefs taught to children at school are explicitly and only those consistent with the Catholic faith. As such they may differ from other Māori \textit{tikanga} are therefore contestable.
Department of Education Guidelines

The Department of Education distributed circular 1987/6 to all school principals in February 1987, perhaps as a result of the Curriculum Review consultation.\(^{129}\) This seems to have been based on circular E.13/1/52, written to clarify the Department’s position after the Johnson Report, in 1979.\(^{130}\)

The circular emphasised that religious instruction was the “responsibility of the school committee, after consultation with the principal and after acquainting itself with the view of parents of the community”.\(^{131}\) It reminded schools that “[i]t is not the legal responsibility of the principal to plan, control, direct, or initiate any religious instruction programme”\(^{132}\) and that the school was “in law closed” for religious instruction.\(^ {133}\) It reminded school committees to “ensure that the instruction and observances continue to be in accordance with what has been approved and the instructors do not attempt to usurp the rights of parents and guardians in regard to the religious affiliation of their children”.\(^{134}\) It also reminded principals to “ensure that parents and guardians of children at their school know that religious instruction or observances are taking place in the school and of their right to withdraw their children”.\(^{135}\) To a large degree the circular reproduced the binary opposition of secular education versus religious instruction consistent with the conservative Christian and authoritarian secular rationalist discourses. However, there was recognition of the ambivalent status of education about religions and beliefs within the curriculum: “The question that is often asked is whether, as part of the school’s official programme during the times when it is ‘open’, any instruction may be included that deals with religion or religious beliefs. This question has never been tested in the courts.”\(^ {136}\)

The inclusion of this paragraph is indicative of a widespread concern regarding the legal status of this material within the curriculum, consistent with an authoritarian secular rationalist construction of secular education. The following section reflected a more liberal secular rationalist discourse, citing (and attaching) the relevant sections of the 1962 Currie Report which clarified the matter, as described above. This may indicate that the Department of

\(^{129}\) Gilchrist, “Religious Instruction and Observances in State Primary Schools”.

\(^{130}\) See McGeorge, “Religion in State Schools”, 40.

\(^{131}\) Gilchrist, “Religious Instruction and Observances in State Primary Schools”, 1.

\(^{132}\) Ibid.

\(^{133}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{134}\) Ibid.

\(^{135}\) Ibid.

\(^{136}\) Ibid.
Education perceived that a more authoritarian secular rationalist construction of the secular curriculum, in which teaching about religion was disqualified, had currency in schools.

A further section of this circular explicitly endorsed teaching about religions and beliefs within the curriculum, but urged caution:

> It is important that children have the opportunity to know and understand other people’s beliefs. But because in schools there are likely to be enrolled pupils whose parents differ widely in their religious and ethical allegiances, great care must be taken to understand and respect differences. In understanding the reasons for different approaches being used by different societies, it is important that children are neither influenced to accept those religious beliefs nor encouraged to regard them as unacceptable.137

In the context of the previous debates on religion in schools, the anxiety about influencing children in religious matters, and competing curriculum imperatives, it is perhaps unsurprising that neither training for teachers nor resources to facilitate this teaching materialised.138 New Zealand educationalists were faced with additional discursive imperatives during the 1980s which appear to have militated against the development of education in religions and beliefs within the curriculum at both primary and secondary level.

**Neoliberal Education Reforms**

After the general election of 1987 a discursive shift took place away from communitarian constructions of education and curriculum policy in line with a neoliberal discourse. This discourse was informing economic and education policy in the United Kingdom and the United States and obtained dominance in New Zealand under a Labour government.

Changes took place in line with a review of education administration led by businessman Brian Picot in 1988.139 The subsequent policy document, *Tomorrow’s Schools*, set out to instigate “the most thoroughgoing changes to the administration of education in our history”.140 This Treasury-led initiative effectively reconstructed education from the communitarian model, espoused by the CDD and educationalists, into a market model espoused by business leaders. The CDD was disbanded along with the Department of Education. This excerpt from a Treasury

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137 Ibid., 3.
138 Paul Morris stated in interview that the University of Victoria in Wellington allowed students to select courses in religious studies as part of their qualification. However, it has never been a statutory part of teacher education.
briefing document from 1987 exemplifies the discursive shift taking place: “[In the technical sense used by economists, education is not in fact a ‘public good’. […] Education shares the main characteristics of other commodities traded in the marketplace.]” 141

Neoliberal discursive imperatives such as an emphasis on personal choice, autonomy and entrepreneurialism as the goals of educational endeavour; work-based skills and competencies as a basis of curriculum; and economic accountability in school management radically altered priorities for schools. The changes were positioned as emancipatory and progressive in their ability to provide more choice in education for parents and more flexibility for schools. These changes in education had important consequences for religion in New Zealand’s education system.

*Tomorrow’s Schools* established that schools were to be self-managed by boards of trustees who would form partnerships between the institution and community. Each board would be responsible for preparing a school charter which outlined the objectives of the institution and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to be taught, in line with the wishes of the community and the teaching staff. 142 Key to this was the ability for schools to develop their own local character: a point which was emphasised by Minister of Education, Phil Goff, in the House when debating the educational reforms:

> Schools will become more innovative and more imaginative. They will be able to determine, within national guidelines and standards, their own local character. This is the first time in the history of New Zealand’s state education system that schools will be able to develop local character and focus on the priorities of their communities. 143

This development was set in the neoliberal discursive context of increased parental involvement and choice as consumers, as described by the Picot report: “Consumers need to be able to directly influence their learning institution by having a say in the running of it or by being able to turn to existing alternatives. Only if people are free to choose can a true cooperative partnership develop between the community and learning institutions.” 144

These reforms did not lead to innovation in education about religions and beliefs in schools, but to a re-entrenchment of the status quo. Religious instruction could now be constructed as

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a matter of parental choice and of reflecting the special character of a school as defined by boards of trustees. With the right of a school to its own special character apparently established in law with the Education Act of 1989, confessional and “local” forms of religious knowledge were again privileged in education over knowledge of religions and beliefs. These were further established as beyond critique from educationalists by dint of being both the legitimate choice of parents, culturally responsive and separate from the official curriculum. The construction of religion as being primarily concerned with the promotion of compliance to normative values, as a route to educational and economic success rather than a matter of intrinsic importance, inhere within the neoliberal discourse and is implicitly promoted within the reforms. The Act of 1989 left intact the secular clause and legal construction of school closure established within the Act of 1964. This may, as Paul Morris believes, have been largely a result of conflict avoidance. The education reforms of 1989, through their continued accommodation and effective endorsement of BiS, thus reproduced a conservative Christian construction of religious instruction disqualifying egalitarian liberal constructions of education in religions and beliefs.

Neoliberal educational reforms with an emphasis on accountability, target setting and testing have had widespread implications for teacher workload globally. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) data indicate that some nation states have taken measures to mitigate this by providing teacher release time. The OECD data show that, in 2013, primary school teachers in New Zealand had the fourth highest level of contact time with children amongst OECD countries, behind Chile (1129), the Netherlands (930) and France (924). At 922 hours of classroom time a year, New Zealand primary school teachers had 200 more hours in front of children than those in England and 150 more than the OECD average. Since 2005, primary school teachers in England have been entitled to 10% of their weekly classroom time as Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time (2.5 hours or a half-day a week for full time teachers). In New Zealand the release time entitlement is ten hours per term. School terms may vary from nine to eleven weeks in length. It will be noted that

145 For example see below, pages 134 and 221.
146 The Education Act 1989, Section 61 (3) (b) (iii).
147 In interview, Paul Morris described how BiS became a “button issue” which “mobilised church forces” in 1962, 1989 and 2006.
150 NZEI, Primary Teachers’ (Including Deputy and Assistant Principals and other Unit Holders) Collective Agreement: 7 June 2013–21 December 2015 (Wellington: New Zealand Educational Institute, 2013), 27.
teachers in England receive more than twice as much non-contact/release time as New Zealand teachers. The half-an-hour a week release time provided by Bible-in-Schools volunteers was understandably valued by teachers and schools. The unofficial provision of additional release time through accommodation of BiS may be seen as an institutional incentive to maintain the programme in primary schools.

The unintended outcome of neoliberal educational reforms for religious education policy during the 1990s, in terms of self-managing schools, teacher workload and curriculum prioritisation, appears to have been the protection of the current system of religious instruction from critique or revision. In Foucaultian terms, BiS appears to have been co-opted into a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality within the education system. The state continued to accommodate BiS as a means of promoting parental choice and community values, providing free teacher release time while instilling compliance to social norms in children, in the interests of increased productivity. This may help to explain the continued resistance to revision of BiS or religion within the curriculum, against international trends.

**Social Studies Curriculum**

Educationalists tasked with drafting the new Social Studies Curriculum (for primary and secondary schools) in 1994 commented on the tension between the need for the new curriculum to be based on a child-focused liberal approach and the imperatives of the neoliberal reforms exemplified by the Minister’s Policy Advisory Group (PAG):

> The writing team reluctantly accepted PAG instruction that ideas and concepts such as *spirituality and well-being* be removed from resources and economic activities achievement objectives. Inside the process, the writing team argued against promoting an economic literacy that would emphasise economic goals to the detriment of the promotion of national harmony.

Two contradictory liberal imperatives appeared to be informing the curriculum development process. I discuss these imperatives in relation to curriculum policy in Chapter Five.

The Social Studies Curriculum, released in 1997, included several references to religious beliefs, but in this respect it reflected the social action liberal discursive imperative to

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151 See below, page 215 and Appendix 5, page 317.
153 See below, page 124.
promote biculturalism. Thus a section entitled “Summary of Essential Learning about New Zealand Society” included: “Māori culture and heritage and the influence of this heritage on New Zealand’s social, cultural, political, and religious beliefs and systems; European cultures and heritages and the influence of these heritages on New Zealand’s social, cultural, political, and religious beliefs and systems”.  

Other cultures were mentioned but not in terms of religious beliefs. This may indicate an institutional constraint in operation restricting education in religions and beliefs to the two dominant cultures with institutional endorsement.

**Values in Education**

In 1996 an international UNESCO report, chaired by Jacques Delors, warned that school curricula needed to place more emphasis on equipping young people to live together harmoniously. It re-emphasised a “utopian” role for education, aside from utilitarian and economic imperatives, seeing it as “perhaps primarily—an exceptional means of bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations”. Values were positioned as central to this process. It was against this background that Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, at the 1998 UNESCO Values in Education Summit in Wellington, made controversial remarks concerning values education. Shipley advocated that state education should now reflect the spiritual, cultural and religious perspectives of parents and school boards, baldly stating that secular schooling was “an idea whose time has gone”. Her assertion was that education should respond to increased diversity of religions and values by allowing school curricula to reflect that diversity in line with parental choice: a market model of values teaching. Her assumption that all religious values should receive state support resides in a diversity discourse and perhaps a liberal Christian universalism. But Shipley’s apparent egalitarian openness to different religious perspectives overlooked the institutional advantage of the Churches Education Commission, already operating BiS in around 60% of

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155 Other references are non-specific such as “religious factors”, “religious institutions” and “religious observances.” Ibid., 31, 32, 37. No further guidelines were issued for teaching about different religions and beliefs at this time.  
157 Ibid., 11-12.  
schools at that time, and the constraints operating on minority religious groups in a Christian majority context.\textsuperscript{159}

The renewed focus on values education at the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, now redescribed by Delors as “learning to live together”, appeared to have given BiS renewed validity at a time when confessional religious instruction might be thought to be increasingly inappropriate. As noted above, during debates in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century there was a strong convergence between the interests of the nation state and those of the promoters of religious instruction. The governmentality of the nation state was consonant with the promotion of Christian religious instruction in a religiously homogeneous context. I want to suggest that here, at the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, there was an identifiable divergence between the secular (neo)-liberal governmentality of the nation state—within which the intended reproduction of a compliant, liberal, tolerant and therefore productive workforce was achieved through the accommodation of BiS within the education system—and the conservative/evangelising Christian governmentality operating within the Churches Education Commission.\textsuperscript{160}

In endorsing community-based, confessional religion and values teaching, Shipley appeared to attribute moral, social and educational legitimacy to BiS, a programme which, as I show in Chapter Six, appears to be exempt from educational scrutiny. Values took on greater educational importance after the Values in Education summit. The CEC began to publicly redescribe its programme as values teaching, and the construction of BiS as uncontroversial, generic values teaching has obtained considerable institutional currency.\textsuperscript{161}

\textbf{Spiritual Wellbeing in the Curriculum}

In 1999, in line with international trends in spiritual education,\textsuperscript{162} and a social action liberal discursive imperative to promote recognition of Māori culture, the New Zealand Health and Physical Education curriculum (again, for primary and secondary schools) included the teaching of spiritual wellbeing for the first time. In this document the Māori concept of \textit{Hauora} or wellbeing was presented through a model devised by Māori health specialist Mason Durie.\textsuperscript{163} In this \textit{Te Whare Tapa Wha} model \textit{taha wairua}, spiritual wellbeing, was presented


\textsuperscript{160} See below, page 185.

\textsuperscript{161} See below, page 201.

\textsuperscript{162} See below, Table 18, page 169.

metaphorically as one of four walls of a house, the others being physical, mental and emotional (combined) and social wellbeing. All four dimensions are required for “strength and symmetry”. The implication was that a child who was not spiritually well could not be wholly well, and therefore that a curriculum that did not attend to a child’s spiritual wellbeing was incomplete. The document defined spiritual wellbeing as: “The values and beliefs that determine the way people live, the search for meaning and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness (For some individuals and communities, spiritual well-being is linked to a particular religion; for others, it is not).”

The bracketing out of a specifically religious understanding of spirituality, in this way, is consistent with a spiritual secularist discourse. Religion was not a necessary element of spirituality, but an optional extra. Spirituality however, in its secularised form, was fundamental to personal wellbeing. There is evidence from the minutes of the PAG working on the document that this minimal treatment of religion in the curriculum statement was strategic. The meeting notes, summarising the discussion, indicate that religion, and the hornets’ nest that it represented, was to be avoided: “Not interested in religions. Can be interpreted at cultural levels. Need to be aware of ability of religious groups to promote their own values. Implementation of the last curriculum—bus loads of parents in to hijack consultation.”

Within these notes, community-based religious values were legitimised within education through the exercise of parental involvement and choice: a neoliberal discursive imperative. The conservative Christian construction of religion as religious instruction was evident, but resisted, as an element of the curriculum. Religious relativism, whereby all religious values are uncritically validated, was assumed. Culture was constructed as less controversial than religion, as a curriculum focus. This may signal a discursive imperative to favour unifying cultural experiences, such as celebrations or tikanga Māori, rather than potentially divisive religious beliefs. Religious relativism and conflict avoidance are indicative of a diversity discourse which was obtaining currency at this time. The opportunity to use spiritual

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165 Ibid.
166 Richard Egan shows how this definition evolved (after receiving submissions) from that in the draft document, which made no reference to religion at all. Richard Egan, “Spirituality/Taha Wairua in New Zealand State Schools” (Masters diss., Massey University, 2000), 59.
education to provide young people with conceptual knowledge of religions and beliefs appears to have been discursively disqualified.

A broadly conservative Christian critique of spiritual education in schools was provided in the form of the Education Forum’s submission on the draft Health and Physical Education document in 1998:

[Spirituality] has to do essentially, rather than merely incidentally, with the world having been created by God [. . .]. Whatever forms the expression of human spirituality may take [. . .] it is unacceptably reductionist to use this term in complete disregard of this basic religious understanding of life’s dependence upon and essential relatedness to, the Creator.168

The spiritual secularist assumption of the universality of a Māori model of spiritual wellbeing provided within the Health and Physical Education document was rejected, not only by conservative Christian critics, but by Māori commentators drawing on redistributional rather than recognitional imperatives.169 However, the positioning of taha wairua within the curriculum further institutionalised biculturalism in education policy.

No further guidelines were issued about the teaching of spiritual wellbeing. I show in Chapters Six and Seven how the absence of guidelines or training for teachers facilitated a wide range of contradictory approaches informed by the contingent discursive imperatives of teachers and principals, none of which involve education about religions and beliefs.

**Diversity and Inclusion**

The turn of the millennium saw the publication of the ERO report, *Multi-cultural Schools in New Zealand*. The document, which covers both primary and secondary schools, is of interest to this genealogy because in 32 pages neither the word “religion” nor “belief” was mentioned. The authors explicitly defined themselves against critical or redistributional forms of multicultural education implying a neutral approach: “The central focus of this study [. . .] is not how schools might deliberately shape the values and attitudes of their students, but the practical issues that arise as schools respond to a population that is becoming increasingly multi-cultural.”170 But a normative uncritical form of cultural relativism was evident throughout the report in line with a diversity discourse and an inclusion agenda: “[A]ll students of all cultures—even in a school with a totally Pākehā population—should be imbued

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169 See below, Table 17, page 165.
with a respect for other cultures.” Examples of good practice in multicultural schools included celebration, respect and tolerance of cultural difference. Furthermore, in line with a social action liberal discourse, schools were advised to devise a culturally relevant curriculum in order to reduce cultural dissonance which creates a barrier to learning:

When teaching techniques and curriculum content are more attuned to the frames of reference of children of other cultures, the attitude to learning of these children can become more positive and their time in class can be more productive and efficient. Acknowledging the validity of other cultural perspectives can enhance the education of all students, even that of the dominant group.

With an emphasis on social justice for children of different cultures, this approach to curriculum development was positioned as educationally progressive. The consequences of these discursive imperatives for religious education were threefold: firstly, religious diversity was rendered invisible, being subsumed under the category of culture; secondly, since the social action liberal discourse proposed teaching from the perspective of, rather than about, different cultures and recognising the validity of cultural knowledge-bases, an uncritical respect for cultural traditions was promoted and critical studies were disqualified; thirdly, a consequence of aligning the curriculum with the cultural backgrounds of the children was that teachers in more culturally homogeneous regions may have legitimately excluded information about other cultures/religions from their planning, on the grounds that it was irrelevant. In this way, the diversity and social action liberal discourses reproduce a status quo of confessional religious/cultural instruction and disqualification of education about religions and beliefs. Such techniques are again constitutive of a secular (neo-)liberal governmentality, and are not a neutral educational approach.

The events of 11 September 2001, in New York, and 7 July 2005, in London, brought religion firmly onto the education agenda of European and other Western nation states. An egalitarian liberal construct of teaching about religions and beliefs in the curriculum, already prevalent in England and Wales, obtained considerable international currency. But a new propensity to conflate religious fundamentalism with terrorism, fostered by the British Home Office, led to the co-option of religious education into a new state project involving the

171 Ibid., 11.
172 Ibid., 20-30.
173 Ibid., 17.
174 See below, page 235.
175 See below, page 146.
promotion of tolerance and social cohesion (diversity discourse) and including a liberalising agenda (authoritarian liberal discourse).\textsuperscript{177}

These discourses became evident in New Zealand Government initiatives, in response to international events and growing cultural and religious diversity. For example, a programme of Connecting Diverse Communities was begun, notably with economic goals, in March 2007: “Government activity to address social cohesion issues can improve social wellbeing and increase economic growth and, at the same time, reduce the risk of future division and social unrest.”\textsuperscript{178}

A New Zealand Alliance of Civilisations (NZAC) report, produced in 2007, expressed the same sentiments:

> For New Zealand to remain a cohesive society, it must continue to build mutual trust and respect amongst its citizens, work to avoid the emergence of inter-communal tensions or intolerance, and guard against the emergence of extremism within any community. Without actions by government, civil society and local communities to address differences that may exist, or to overcome prejudice or alienation, there is a risk that diversity may become a source of intolerance, fear, uncertainty and even violence, rather than something to celebrate and nurture.\textsuperscript{179}

Accordingly, one of its objectives was to “build respect and understanding among cultures and empower voices of moderation and reconciliation which can help calm cultural and religious tensions between nations and peoples”.\textsuperscript{180} The liberalising imperatives of the diversity and authoritarian liberal discourses, through which diversity is managed as a precondition to economic growth, are intrinsic to the secular (neo)-liberal governmentality that my research identifies.

The NZAC report also stated its intention to “[s]trengthen the focus of education at school levels on faiths, religions and cultures”.\textsuperscript{181} My research indicates that prevailing societal and educational discourses appear to have largely precluded educationalists from developing this

\textsuperscript{177} See below, Table 14, page 144.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 11.
aspect of the curriculum and equally from holding the CEC to account.\textsuperscript{182} Meanwhile, the Churches Education Commission has co-opted the educational imperatives of diversity and inclusion in support of Christian religious instruction, by incorporating illustrations of children of different ethnicities and with disabilities into their course booklets.\textsuperscript{183}

\textit{Egalitarian Liberal Resistance}

Working with Joris de Bres at the Human Rights Commission (HRC), Paul Morris, a professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, attempted to effect a discursive shift in religious education in schools. Preliminary efforts were directed at the instigation of a review of religion in schools informed by Human Rights legislation. Human Rights lawyers drafted a report during 2006 and a senior manager at the Ministry, Martin Connelly, reported to the Education and Science Select Committee in August. The report drew on legal and human rights discourses to advocate a “rights-consistent” approach to religion in schools.\textsuperscript{184}

Consonant with an egalitarian liberal approach the report legitimised teaching about religions and beliefs within the curriculum: “[T]his circular is not concerned with teaching about religion—that is, the neutral presentation of information about the current and historical place of religion in our society. Teaching about religion is allowed for under both the social studies and health and physical education curricula”.\textsuperscript{185}

A footnote, explaining where in the curriculum religious material may be covered, signalled an attempt to destabilise a prevalent authoritarian secular rationalist construction of the secular curriculum. The report recommended that, in order to comply with Human Rights legislation granting all students freedom of religions and beliefs, primary schools must be neutral in matters of religion.\textsuperscript{186} In summary the report recommended: 1) that only voluntary instructors, not school staff, should lead instruction or observance; 2) that whole-of-school religious instruction or observances were discontinued; 3) that all religious instruction and observances took place in a separate class outside of normal school hours, i.e., lunchtime, before school, after school; and 4) that parents should state in writing their consent for religious instruction or observance prior to their child’s attendance: an opt-in rather than opt-
out policy. Such measures, the report argued, would reduce the risk of coercion and exclusion inherent in the present system. The report went on to problematise the use of *karakia* and religious aspects of *tikanga* Māori, recommending that boards operate a similar process of informed consent in such matters.

The report thus presented a challenge to two dominant discourses operating within the education system: the conservative Christian discourse within which Bible-in-Schools inheres, and the social action liberal discourse within which Māori culture and spirituality is endorsed. Vociferous opposition was mounted from the New Zealand Principals’ Federation on the grounds that the recommendations were unworkable. But a closer examination of the complaint reveals that president Pat Newman considered that it was the Human Rights recommendations and the secular clause which were unworkable. “[T]he law is an ass around this [. . .].The ministry should have moved to resolve contradictions in the law” rather than seek to amend school practices. The thrust of Pat Newman’s complaint, reflecting both the conservative Christian rationale of teaching Christian cultural heritage and the social action discourse privileging Māori culture, is to resist any change and maintain the current system. Similarly, a response from Anglican Archbishops Turei and Moxon, heavily invested in a conservative Christian regime of rationality, resisted any change in delivery of religious instruction or observances. It appears that the weight of the opposition to the Ministry’s plans, particularly the mobilisation of conservative Christian groups and subsequent loss of backbench support, resulted in a Government backdown early in September. In interview, Morris stated his belief that the controversy caused by this report contributed to the

187 Ibid., 9-10.
188 Ibid., 11.
unwillingness of the Ministry to sanction the inclusion of religion in the revised New Zealand Curriculum, under review at this time.  

In conjunction with the HRC, Morris published a Statement on Religious Diversity, in 2007, partly with the intention of influencing the curriculum review. In a section on education the egalitarian liberal discursive imperative to include religions and beliefs within the curriculum was evident, along with an attempt to reconstruct the prevalent authoritarian secular rationalist construction of the secular curriculum:

Schools should teach an understanding of different religious and spiritual traditions in a manner that reflects the diversity of their national and local community. Education in schools about religious diversity is essential if we are to understand New Zealanders, our Asia-Pacific region and the wider world in which we live [...]. Such an approach is radically different from a programme of religious instruction as part of an individual’s formation within a particular faith [...]. New Zealand legislation (Education Act 1877) has been understood by some to prohibit the teaching of religions in primary schools, but it does not, of course, relate to the teaching about religions and religious diversity at all.

The Statement on Religious Diversity drew criticism, during the consultation stage and at its launch, from conservative and evangelical Christians who believed it emphasised New Zealand’s religious diversity over its Christian and Māori heritage. They rejected its assertion that: “New Zealand has no official or established religion”. Destiny Church leader, Brian Tamaki, organised a march of 800 opponents of the statement at its launch in Waitangi. Religion was once again the cause of public controversy, perhaps contributing to the unwillingness of the Ministry to address the issue, and effectively reproducing the status quo of religion in education.

A Diversity Forum organised by the HRC and Morris in 2007 attended by Karen Sewell, Secretary for Education, provided another opportunity to attempt change the discursive climate. But Sewell simply insisted that it was intended that religion was implicitly included in the new curriculum under “cultural diversity”. No ministerial guidelines were issued to primary or secondary schools, to inform them of this intention. An imperative to avoid conflict

192 Interview with Paul Morris, 20 July 2012.
195 Interview with Paul Morris, 20 July 2012.
and emphasise less contentious cultural celebrations over incommensurable religious differences, within a diversity discourse, was evident in Sewell’s approach.

Subsequent publications and media broadcasts from Morris and the HRC continued to position education about religion as legitimate and to reconstruct religious education within an egalitarian liberal discourse, differentiating it from religious instruction. The most significant of these was “Religion in New Zealand Schools: Questions and Concerns.” This document was intended to clarify misconceptions about religion in schools. It established clear definitions of religious observance, religious instruction, and religious education.

Employing an egalitarian liberal discourse, the document legitimised teaching about religion as part of the curriculum defining itself against religious instruction, which “carries an implicit or explicit endorsement of a particular faith”.

Religious education, also commonly called religious studies, refers to teaching about religion(s) as part of a broader context. An example is the role religion has played in politics, culture, art, history or literature. Religious education does not require students to engage with the religions being studied at a personal level or make choices about accepting those beliefs. Religious education can take place as part of the school curriculum.

It also adopted a human rights discourse to show how rights may be infringed by inconsiderate adoption of religious observances and instruction in secular schools. However, the document could not avoid confirming the legal status of religious instruction and observances as established in the Education Act of 1964. The report appears to have been distributed to schools only by email and its launch received little publicity. Although the report dealt with important matters of Human Rights and was produced in consultation with the Ministry, no mechanism was introduced to ensure that the HRC guidelines were being met in practice. For example, ERO reports were not required to assess schools’ religious instruction procedures against the guidelines.

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199 Ibid., 4.
200 Ibid.
201 Ibid., 7-14.
202 Ibid., 4,6.
203 In interview Paul Morris stated that there had been Ministry involvement. Ministry representative Sonia Glogowski stated that she had no knowledge of this. Interviews with Paul Morris and with Sonia Glogowski, 20 July 2012.
From 2012, the document was frequently cited by the SEN in support of their Keep Religion Out of Schools campaign, on Facebook and in newspaper articles. But, because the document also confirmed the legality of religious instruction within the secular education system, it appeared to provide HRC endorsement of BiS. “Religion in New Zealand Schools” has subsequently been used by both the CEC and the Ministry to further legitimise Bible-in-Schools. It appears that, against the authors’ intentions, the document has served to reproduce the status quo.

**Knowledge and the Curriculum**

But, within the sphere of education, an even greater challenge to the introduction of religious education as a subject discipline has been taking place since the turn of the millennium: an educational discourse within which subject knowledge itself was destabilised and competencies, skills, dispositions and personal experiences were constituted as appropriate curriculum content. A 1996 OECD report, entitled *The Knowledge-Based Economy*, had global influence and informed the report of the Information Technology Advisory Group, *The Knowledge Economy*, to the New Zealand Government in 1999. Asserting that “the foundation stones of the knowledge economy are human ingenuity and skill and a commitment to innovation through research and development”, the report claimed that “know how” and “know-who” were more important than “know-what”, and that knowledge obtained by experience was of equivalent value to that gained by formal education. Within this discourse, obtaining knowledge for its own sake was constructed as “industrial age”, “old fashioned” or “20th century” thinking, as opposed to “knowledge age” thinking which emphasised real contexts, problem solving, purposeful learning, and collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches. A later document, produced by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, summarised this regime of rationality in an education context:

Knowledge is seen as something that does things, as being more energy-like than matter-like, more like a verb than a noun. Knowledge in the Knowledge Age involves creating and using new knowledge to solve problems and find solutions to challenges as they arise on a “just in time” basis [. . .]. Reproducing existing knowledge can no longer be education’s core goal because (a) it is no longer possible to determine exactly which knowledge people will need to store up in order to use it in their lives after

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school, and (b) the “storing up for future use” model of knowledge is no longer useful or sufficient for thinking about how knowledge is developed and used in the 21st century.\textsuperscript{207}

There was now an imperative “to orient schooling around exploring the connections—or spaces—between people, things and ideas and what can happen there (rather than focusing on the people, things or ideas themselves)”\textsuperscript{208}

The knowledge age discourse was in evidence in my interview data, disqualifying education in religions and beliefs as irrelevant and positioning BIS as promoting relevant cultural knowledge and important values and dispositions.\textsuperscript{209} It appeared to be another constituent of the secular (neo)-liberal governmentality operating in New Zealand schools.

**New Zealand Curriculum 2007**

The New Zealand Curriculum 2007 covered the vision, principles, values, key competencies and content across eight learning areas for primary and secondary schools.\textsuperscript{210} It did not contain the word “religion”. Spiritual wellbeing was no longer in the learning objectives, being found only in the glossary on the back cover of the document. The term *Hauora* remained in the Health and Physical Education (HPE) guidelines but the only elaboration of *taha wairua* offered was in the glossary.\textsuperscript{211}

Beliefs featured in the HPE curriculum at Level Three, in primary school, under “Personal Identity” where children were required to “describe how their own feelings, beliefs, and actions, and those of other people, contribute to their personal sense of self worth”.\textsuperscript{212} Similarly, at Level Six in the secondary HPE curriculum under “Relationships”, students were to “demonstrate an understanding of how individuals and groups affect relationships by influencing people’s behaviour, beliefs, decisions and sense of self-worth”.\textsuperscript{213} At Level Seven students should: “analyse the beliefs, attitudes, and practices that reinforce stereotypes and role expectations, identifying ways in which these shape people’s choices at individual, group,


\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 26. Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{209} See page 234, below.

\textsuperscript{210} The learning areas are: English; The Arts; Health and Physical Education; Learning Languages; Mathematics and Statistics; Science; Social Sciences; and Technology. MOE, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, 3.

\textsuperscript{211} MOE, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, 22.

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid. Page unnumbered.

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid. Page unnumbered.
and societal levels”. In none of these instances were beliefs the object of the teaching. The learning was focussed on the affective dimension of feelings and relationships and the way they contribute or diminish self-worth and choices. This learning was arguably driven by the discursive imperatives of: the neoliberal discourse, in which self-actualisation and autonomy are educational imperatives; the spiritual secularist discourse, which privileges personal experience and relationships over institutional religion; and a diversity discourse, in which all beliefs are uncritically valued. These achievement objectives did not preclude, but neither did they encourage, discussion of religious beliefs as part of the HPE curriculum.

There was discussion of cultural beliefs, in relation to conflict, in Social Science objectives at Level Seven, and ideological beliefs that shape society at Level Eight. An authoritarian liberal imperative to amend illiberal beliefs may have been implied. Again, discussion of religious beliefs was neither precluded, nor encouraged.

The curriculum document was infused with the diversity discourse. Diversity was listed as both a key Value and a Principle of the curriculum. Additionally, one of the Key Competencies was “Relating to others”, defined as being “about interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts”. In line with this discourse the document made numerous references to cultural practices, arts, languages and communities. The discursive imperative was towards recognition, tolerance and acceptance of difference. There was also evidence of an authoritarian liberal discourse which seeks to correct ideas which are intolerant or illiberal. For example, at Level Eight of the HPE objectives, under “Identity, Sensitivity and Respect” students were to “critically analyse attitudes, values, and behaviours that contribute to conflict and identify and describe ways of creating more harmonious relationships”. In an education context which did not prioritise understanding religious truth claims and imperatives, such critical analysis could only take place from the dominant perspective, as no other analytical tools had been provided. It is therefore attitudes, values and behaviours which conflict with secular (neo)-liberal imperatives which were to be corrected. The analysis was not critical (in Foucaultian terms) because its own premise was neither made visible, placed under critique, nor held to account. In such ways the curriculum document reproduced a secular (neo)-liberal worldview.

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214 Ibid. Page unnumbered.
215 Ibid., Achievement Objectives (pages unnumbered).
216 Ibid., 9, 10.
217 Ibid., 12.
218 In order of number of references: “cultural” 81; “Culture” 43; “Māori” 37; “bicultural” 4; “multicultural” 2; Pasifica 2; Asian 1.
An emphasis on biculturalism was reflected in one of the current New Zealand Curriculum Vision statements: “Our vision is for young people who will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring.”

A social action liberal discourse foregrounded the bicultural relationship. Other cultures were valued for the way they contributed to this arrangement. While the curriculum valued diversity, was non-discriminatory and inclusive, it primarily “acknowledge[d] the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand”. The dominant social action liberal discursive imperative to promote Māori culture was evident throughout the document and may inform schools’ interpretation of the word “culture” as it appears in the different subject objectives.

The knowledge age discourse was also evident in the structure, design and content of the curriculum. Although retaining subject areas and learning objectives, “wherever possible schools should aim to design their curriculum so that learning crosses apparent boundaries”. “Key competencies” were introduced which permeated the curriculum and were the “key to learning in every area”. They enabled young people to be problem solvers who “actively seek, use, and create knowledge”, who were “enterprising, resourceful, reliable and resilient”, and who could “come up with new approaches, ideas and ways of thinking”.

A special emphasis was placed on being actively involved in communities. This was not the geographic community in which the children lived, but included “family, whanau and school, and those based, for example, on a common interest or culture”. Curriculum content should primarily be chosen to suit students’ needs and interests. In this context the curriculum “has meaning for students, connects with their wider lives and engages the support of their families, whanau and communities”. This is in line with a diversity discourse which recognises the value of all cultures, a social action liberal discourse which validates cultural knowledge bases, and a knowledge age discourse within which cultural and social knowledge is considered to be as legitimate a basis for the curriculum as conceptual knowledge.

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220 Ibid., 8.
221 Ibid., 9. See also note 218, page 110, above.
222 See below, page 253.
224 Ibid., 12.
225 Ibid., 13. Whanau is the Māori language word for extended family.
226 Ibid., 38.
227 Ibid., 9.
The curriculum was process-, rather than content-driven. Problem solving and innovation were emphasised over knowledge acquisition. Combining knowledge age and neoliberal imperatives, the curriculum espoused a vision of young people who were “creative, energetic and enterprising [. . .] who will seize opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies [. . .] who will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners”.

Values were to be “encouraged, modelled, and explored”. The exploration took place in the context of an accepted values framework. The confessional nature of values teaching was reinforced by the expectation that “the specific ways in which these values find expression in an individual school will be guided by dialogue between the school and its community”, reflecting neoliberal discursive imperatives. This may have removed the critical element of values teaching and encouraged either a confessional secular (neo)-liberal or a confessional religious approach.

Curriculum values were described as having “widespread support because it is by holding these values and acting on them that we are able to live together and thrive”. In this way they were presented as neutral, self-evident and unproblematic. The values were excellence; innovation, inquiry and curiosity; diversity; equity; community and participation; ecological sustainability; integrity; and respect for selves, other and human rights.

The values aimed to be inclusive but in the absence of any exploration of incommensurable religious values—including widely differing conceptions of human rights—represented in the community, it is arguable that they presented a secular (neo)-liberal agenda to which young people were expected to conform.

Potentially, the New Zealand Curriculum provided numerous opportunities to explore religious beliefs and practices. However these opportunities were neither made explicit within the curriculum nor in any guidelines provided by the Ministry. On the contrary, multiple discursive, institutional and material constraints positioned religion as an inappropriate area for examination or critique, apparently disqualifying the subject from the classroom at both primary and secondary school level.

228 Ibid., 8.
229 Ibid., 10.
230 MOE, The New Zealand Curriculum, 10.
231 See below, pages 185, 194, and 261.
232 MOE, The New Zealand Curriculum, 10.
233 Ibid.
234 See below, page 243.
235 See below, page 224.
Secular Education versus Confessional Christian Instruction

Concurrently, an evangelising Christian discourse has been evident within the Churches Education Commission which remains unchallenged by educationalists, the Ministry or the NZEI. In September 2011 David Mulholland, then National Director of CEC, stated in an interview for Baptist magazine:

Churches by and large have not woken up to the fact that this is a mission field on our doorstep [. . .]. The children are right there and we don’t have to supply buildings, seating, lighting or heating. It’s an opportunity we should grab hold of [. . .]. We often hear in church about the 10-40 window for evangelising people in the world. For me it’s a 9 to 3 window.236

Similarly Evonne Paddison, CEO of Access Ministries, Australia—provider of the CRE resources used in most Bible-in-Schools programmes in New Zealand at the time of my research—exemplified this discourse when speaking to the Anglican Evangelical Fellowship in 2008:

We have a God-given open door to children and young people with the Gospel. Our federal and state governments allow us to take the Christian faith into our schools. We need to go and make disciples [...]. We have the responsibility to fulfil the great commission of making disciples. We need to see our scripture teachers and our chaplains especially as facilitators of this. We need to be missional.237

In Australia, scholar of politics and religion Marion Maddox examined some of these CRE resources, known as “Religion in Life” in that context:

The tone of ACCESS materials is unequivocally evangelical, not only in that it relentlessly pushes the participating students towards cultivating an individual faith but, perhaps more importantly, in that a person participating in the ACCESS program would come away with the idea that Christians believe that being (or becoming) a Christian is the only acceptable life choice. [. . .] Despite occasional warnings in the teachers’ books to have regard to Christian diversity, “Religion in Life” continuously presents a single, evangelical, literalist version of Christianity. My conclusion is that “Religion in Life” would, intentionally or not, have the effect of conveying to non-evangelical Christian students that their version

of Christianity was inadequate and that they should abandon it and adopt the “Religion in Life” version.  

In a review of the same resources, in Australia, educationalist David Zyngier evidences the very limited value of the teaching activities in educational terms. I argue that the redescription, by the educational establishment, of BiS in New Zealand as “good values teaching” and concurrent denial of its responsibility to monitor the content of the programme “outside” the curriculum, has facilitated the operation of a conservative and evangelising governmentality, by the CEC, within New Zealand primary schools. The CEC has taken advantage of the interest in values in education and included specific New Zealand Curriculum values within its programme, thus positioning BiS as educationally sound.

In Australia a parent group, Fairness in Religions in School, mobilised in 2011 in opposition to evangelistic religious teaching in public schools. In New Zealand, the SEN’s campaign began in 2012. The SEN promote a largely liberal secular rationalist perspective on religion in schools, which opposes religious instruction but concedes religious education may be appropriate at high school level. But group members have a range of personal views and some have expressed more authoritarian secular rationalist ideas on teaching about religion. A prominent member stated: “teaching [. . .] religions would take us even further away from being secular schools. [. . .] Science, history and other evidence-based studies would be swamped by a sea of politically correct fairy tales [. . .]. Do we want to go there?” Authoritarian secular rationalist constructions of “teaching religion” and “secular” led him to disqualify education in religions and beliefs at all levels.

The SEN has launched a forthright campaign against Bible-in-Schools, leafleting schools, sending out press releases with information about cases of parents whose concerns about coercion and discrimination have not been taken seriously. Through their social networks they have shared templates of letters for boards of trustees, and leaflets for parents, outlining problems with religious instruction. This had led to a succession of headlines in newspapers

240 See below, page 201.
241 See also Morris, “Secularity and Spirituality”, 19.
243 SEN, “Secular Education Network (N.Z.)”. The SEN adopt the HRC’s usage of these terms.
244 SEN, “SEN Facebook”. 114
around the country and a number of schools have stopped the programme.\(^{245}\) These headlines reinforce the binary opposition of progressive secular education versus regressive religion in schools.

But supporters of religious instruction have also co-opted current educational discourses in support of their conservative Christian position. In opposition to the SEN campaign, the Anglican Archbishops Moxon and Turei released a letter restating their position:

> If a school’s board of trustees, which is the parents’ elected representative body, wants to offer this spirituality and values approach to the Bible outside of the school day, it has always seemed to us to be desirable to do so—and a perfectly reasonable provision in a democracy and in terms of Tomorrows’ Schools. [...] This is a long-standing agreement which honors the freedom of choice we enjoy in this country, as well as the right of parents to influence their children’s spiritual and moral development. We honor the work of the hundreds of volunteers who continue, in a loving, sensitive and non-manipulative way, to offer access, when asked, to this heritage in our schools.\(^{246}\)

The Archbishops co-opted a neoliberal discourse of parental choice, a legal discourse in which school-time lessons were “outside of the school day”, a spiritual secularist vocabulary of spirituality and values, a human rights discourse of parent rights, and the legitimacy accrued from longevity of institutional accommodation, to position BiS as a “perfectly reasonable provision”. The Archbishops’ arguments inhered only within a conservative Christian discourse within which the complaints of parents about opting out, coercion and discrimination could be positioned as unreasonable.

CEC CEO Simon Greening\(^{247}\) also co-opted a range of discursive strategies in support of a conservative Christian confessional religious instruction: an educational egalitarian liberal discourse to assert that children need to understand about different beliefs and that the CEC teaches children about Christianity; a human rights discourse to emphasise opting out arrangements and the rights of other religions to arrange religious instruction; a spiritual secularist discourse to state that the programme teaches good Kiwi values; and the


\(^{247}\) Greening was replaced, in 2015, by Dominic Hoef.
institutional power of the state to assert that voluntary instruction is legal and that volunteers teach from a syllabus approved by boards of trustees.248

The CEC has recently stated, in response to the SEN’s criticism of its teaching materials, that these are being updated and improved with the introduction of a new programme called *Life Animated*. The spiritual secularist discourse was again co-opted in support of confessional Christian religious instruction: “This New Zealand-made resource is a topical, Bible-based series created for Kiwi kids and covering topics like being a good friend, caring for the environment, resilience, showing love, leadership, and caring for our global neighbours.”249

![Figure 5: “Suffer the Children” Cartoon, 2012](image)

Representing the current debate about religion in schools, a cartoon from the *New Zealand Herald*—published 100 years later than that in Figure 4—constructed a religion teacher as an evil figure consciously undermining the child’s autonomy and rationality and threatening dire consequences for children who opted out.250 A clear authoritarian secular rationalist discursive positioning is evident. In spite of the wide range of discursive strategies employed by

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participants, the public conversation about religion in schools appears to be being debated in almost exactly the same binary terms as it was in 1912. This conversation has been institutionally and discursively arrested by the legal construct of school closure enshrined in the Education Act of 1964 and the disciplinary techniques of an institutional secular (neo)-liberal governmentality.

The Ministry and the NZEI have taken a hands-off approach to the debate, reproducing both the status quo of conservative Christian religious instruction in schools and authoritarian secular rationalist non-intervention by educationalists.\textsuperscript{251} Minister of Education Hekia Parata has employed a neoliberal discourse to position the problem as one of parental choice: “Parents have choice. If they don’t want to have their children going to a school that offers [Bible-in-Schools], then choose another school.”\textsuperscript{252} This neoliberal discourse places responsibility for avoidance of coercion and discrimination in state schools with parents, rather than boards of trustees or the Ministry. This may be interpreted as a conflict-avoiding strategy which averted the need for revision of practices around religion in school. This approach served to reproduce a conservative Christian status quo of confessional religious instruction in state schools and failed to take into account the material constraints on parental choice.\textsuperscript{253}

Religious studies academics, who have attempted to broaden this debate, have been accused by members of the SEN of either missing the point or deliberately conflating religious instruction and religious education in order to promote religion in schools.\textsuperscript{254} An article citing one of my conference papers in the \textit{New Zealand Herald}\textsuperscript{255} and a piece describing my research in the \textit{Otago Bulletin}\textsuperscript{256} have been met with strong criticism on the SEN Facebook pages, including a letter to my head of department in which “intellectual dishonesty” was the least

\textsuperscript{251} See above, page 4.
offensive charge. In such ways, the authoritarian secular rationalist discourse continues to reproduce the disqualification of education in religions and beliefs from the primary school curriculum and to narrow the educational debate.

**Conclusion**

This genealogy has identified and exemplified, in answer to research question two, the operative discursive and material constraints on religion in New Zealand schools. It has demonstrated the ways in which formational and confessional approaches to religion and culture have been able to predominate in the New Zealand education system. They have done so, not through any inalienable right or self-evident legitimacy but through contingent institutional and discursive constraints and imperatives. Dominant conservative Christian and authoritarian secular rationalist constructions of religion and secular education disqualify education in religions and beliefs from the curriculum. As I have shown, these discursive constructions are institutionalised in legislation, in accommodation by schools, in curriculum documents and guidelines. I have shown how the legalisation of school closure in the 1960s continues to inform and constrain debate about religion in school, and effectively to preclude intervention from educationalists, in a way which was not intended by the Currie Commission. In addition, social action liberal, neoliberal, diversity and knowledge age discourses have served to position uncritical confessional approaches to teaching about religion and culture as educationally progressive, effectively reproducing the status quo of Bible-in-Schools and exposing children to conservative and evangelising imperatives. The concurrent positioning of religion within the curriculum as educationally regressive has limited opportunities for young people in New Zealand to obtain knowledge and discernment in matters of religion. The archive suggested that the formational or governmental role of education in general, and religious education in particular, appeared to be prioritised over a truth-seeking educational role. These factors appear to have precluded educationalists from theorising the subject of religion in the curriculum at either primary or secondary school level.

I have suggested that the above discourses have combined into a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality comprising: a secular construction of religion as peripheral, private and unimportant; a liberal construction of belief as universal, relative, uncontroversial and socially liberal; and a neoliberal construction of religion as a lifestyle choice which enhances productivity. This treatment of religion is neither neutral nor inclusive. In the following chapter, I provide a critical realist and egalitarian liberal critique of the secondary literature which supports this status quo.
Chapter Five: Review and Critique of Literature and Discourse

Introduction

[W]e need to look at practice rather than theory [. . .]. New Zealand will need a home-grown approach [. . .]. The answers will not come out of books.

Peter Donovan¹

In this chapter, I lay the groundwork which will enable me to answer research question three: Is there an alternative to current practices consistent with New Zealand’s status as a secular, bicultural and religiously plural liberal democracy? However, in contradistinction to religious researcher Peter Donovan’s advice regarding religious education policy formulation, this chapter attends to both books and theory to broaden the debate about religion in schools. Practices, as Foucault pointed out, are always invested in regimes of rationality. ² Theorising exposes these regimes and facilitates informed debate. In this spirit, I begin with an overview of critical realist scholars and the liberal theorist whose work informs my analysis. I then exemplify the discursive constraints and imperatives operating on religion in New Zealand schools with reference to relevant New Zealand and international literature. I demonstrate how the New Zealand literature reflects the positioned interests of the authors and often overlooks wider social considerations. The constraints of the thesis necessitate a tabular summary of these discursive positions, but following each table I present a Foucaultian, egalitarian liberal and critical realist critique of the positions described, drawing on additional critical literature largely from the New Zealand context. I develop specific criteria through which an alternative form of education about religion and beliefs may be proffered.

In Chapter Two, I explained that a critical realist methodology—in contrast to a post-structuralist or post-modern approach—must go further than description of a discursive terrain and power differentials.³ Critical realism places truth, judgement and corrigibility at the heart of any educational or scholarly endeavour and eschews non-realist or relativist conclusions. There is, therefore, an imperative to move beyond description and redescription towards advocacy of just and equitable policy formulations and best practice in pedagogical approach. This chapter considers some ways to make reasoned judgements about normative “best” practice in religious education policy through a combination of critical realist and liberal theory.

¹ Donovan, “Civic Responsibilities”, 89.
² See above, page 27.
³ See above, page 31.
Critical Realism and Education

Critical realism, as described in Chapter Two, makes an important distinction between alethic truth—the intransitive dimension—and truth as we perceive and experience it—the transitive dimension.⁴ The critical realist educational imperative is, therefore, to work towards the discovery and knowledge of the intransitive dimension by means of enquiry, dialogue, comparison with experience, and judgement: a process I have referred to as “judgemental rationality”.⁵ This is advocated on the grounds that human life is ultimately diminished if not lived in a way that is consistent with the best possible understanding of truth/reality.⁶

This exercise of judgemental rationality is fundamental to the production of academic knowledge where “informed communities of practitioners”, “knowing subjects”, or experts within different disciplines debate and analyse the legitimacy of claims to conceptual truth.⁷ The knowledge produced will always be contingent on the information available at the time and in the specific context, and the possibility always exists that new information and new perspectives might produce a different or amended judgement. It therefore remains in the transitive dimension. While provisional and fallible, such conceptual knowledge may be seen as the “best available”, or a “contingent rationality”. For the critical realist, this is the grounds of all educational endeavour. Education theorist Leesa Wheelahan explains:

[T]he pursuit of truth should be a normative goal of curriculum, recognising the corrigibility of our knowledge and the need to revise it in light of evidence [. . .] [T]he academic disciplines provide access to the natural and social worlds even if this access is imperfect.⁸

For the critical realist, I contend, grounds for advocacy of curriculum policy on religion in schools may be predicated on the exercise of judgemental rationality which takes account of the plurality of lived experience and the “best that is known” in terms of conceptual knowledge within the academic discipline of religious studies. An attitude of openness to debate, and corrigibility in the light of better explanation, should be normative in any educational establishment or curriculum policy, whatever its stated religious, cultural or

⁴ See above, page 30.
⁵ A term coined by Roy Bhaskar and adopted within the critical realist literature: Margaret S. Archer, Andrew Collier, and Douglas V. Porpora, Transcendence: Critical Realism and God (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 2.
⁶ Wright, “Critical Realism as a Tool”, 345.
ideological commitment. Such an attitude has been described by Cooling as one of “epistemic humility”.

Allied to the critical realist position, a body of social realist literature, drawing on the work of Emile Durkheim and Basil Bernstein in the sociology of education and best exemplified by Michael Young, argues for a strong view of conceptual knowledge in the curriculum. Conceptual or disciplinary knowledge is constructed as “powerful knowledge” which is necessary for the development of critical reasoning, the ability to think beyond one’s immediate experience and “imagine possible futures” and in order to participate in democracy. Such knowledge is taught primarily in subject disciplines which have been developed and critiqued within the academy. Conceptual knowledge permits incremental access to the way knowledge is created and recognised within each discipline. It is so powerful because it allows for the production of new knowledge. As Wheelahan points out:

We need practice in “thinking other people’s thoughts” as a condition for thinking for ourselves [. . .]. Induction into the disciplines is necessary if students are to recognise different voices and to begin to articulate their own. This is not an argument for induction into the disciplines as timeless truths. The focus is on introducing students to the debates and controversies within disciplines and for creating the conditions for active agency so students can participate in these debates and controversies. Conceptual knowledge provides access to new ways of thinking and therefore knowledge production: ways to better describe and explain truth/reality. Conceptual knowledge, it is argued, should be an entitlement for all children. Young sums up the purpose of formal education for the social/critical realist as:

To enable students to acquire knowledge that (i) is not accessible to most people in their daily lives, and (ii) [to enable] those who acquire it to move

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12 Wheelahan, Why Knowledge Matters: 78. Wheelahan cites Collier, critical Realism, 71.
beyond their experience and gain some understanding of the social and natural worlds of which they are a part.\textsuperscript{14}

Such knowledge should be accessible to all learners regardless of social class. For Young, the defining role of education is the provision of this epistemic access.\textsuperscript{15} But conceptual knowledge is frequently constructed, through prevailing educational discourses, as a politically conservative device to reproduce existing power differentials. Young recognises his own role in the destabilisation of conceptual knowledge, which he previously characterised as “knowledge of the powerful”, representing and privileging the interests of the few.\textsuperscript{16} He now makes a helpful distinction between the conservative defence of the “role of schools as institutions with responsibility for knowledge transmission” (powerful knowledge) against over-socialised and politicised education models, and the conservative defence of professional or majoritarian interests and privileges (knowledge of the powerful) in educational institutions.\textsuperscript{17}

These authors inform my critical realist approach to “best practice” in the selection of curriculum content and to the study of religion in the curriculum. I therefore ask of the curriculum content proposed within the discourses below, with Young: “Is this curriculum a means by which pupils can acquire powerful knowledge?”\textsuperscript{18} And further: Is this curriculum designed to develop judgemental rationality, and is it characterised by epistemic humility?

As I have shown above, religion has traditionally been perceived, in the New Zealand educational context, to be primarily concerned with formation either of Christian faith or of moral character or both. Conceptual knowledge of religions has effectively been disqualified. Moreover Western liberal education—at least as far back as the 17\textsuperscript{th}-century writings of John Locke—has been widely perceived to be concerned not just with conceptual learning, but with character formation: instilling self-discipline, social skills and moral sensibilities into the young.\textsuperscript{19} Recognition of the dual nature of both education and of religion in education necessitates a theorisation of educational governmentality: on what basis may a liberal state, in a plural context, become involved or intervene in religious and moral formation? My

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Young, \textit{Bringing Knowledge Back In}, 164.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Young, “Alternative Educational Futures for a Knowledge Society”, \textit{European Educational Research Journal} 9, no. 1 (2010): 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Young, ed. \textit{Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education} (London: Collier Macmillan, 1971).
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Young, “From Constructivism to Realism”, 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} John Locke, \textit{Some Thoughts Concerning Education} (London: A & J Churchill, 1693).
\end{itemize}
critique of current educational practice is informed by the Foucaultian concept of
governmentality and the liberal theory of William Galston.

**Governmentality and Egalitarian Liberalism**

In Chapter Two, I introduced Foucault’s concept of governmentality.\(^{20}\) Foucault was interested
in the disciplinary techniques—persuasive and coercive strategies—employed by the nation
state in the governance of individuals and the production of self-disciplining, compliant
subjects, within institutions.\(^{21}\) As previously stated, Foucault noted that liberalism could be
perceived both as an oppressive governmental technique and a critical tool: a method of
resistance to governmental techniques. Liberal critique, he states, is characterised by the
following questions:

> Why, in fact, must one govern? [. . .]. To what extent can [government] be
done without, and in which cases is it needless or harmful for it to
intervene [. . .] and what ends should it pursue with regard to society in
order to justify its existence?\(^{22}\)

The conception of liberalism as critical conscience to governmental activity seems to challenge
earlier depictions of Foucault as a non-realist or relativist.\(^{23}\) For criticism implies judgement
against a normative standard or truth of some kind, or at least a normative conception of
harm. This is consistent with Bhaskar’s advocacy of judgemental realism, rather than
judgemental relativism, and Gouldner’s promulgation of normative objectivity rather than
non-partisan neutrality.\(^{24}\) Foucault certainly did not advocate moral relativism or neutrality in
the education of the young, stating: “If I had a kid, I assure you he would not write on the
walls—or if he did, it would be against my will. The very idea!”\(^{25}\)

For Foucault, the potential for oppression or tyranny in governmental intervention was found
not in the constraints themselves, which might actually be desirable, but in the inability of
those under constraint, within a given system, to object, resist and potentially change the
constraint.\(^{26}\) In other words, a liberal system of governmentality should allow for critique,
debate and improvement by those affected by it. In this regard a critical realist approach to
education, which includes the development of judgmental rationality and is characterised by

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\(^{20}\) See above, page 29.
\(^{22}\) Foucault, “The Birth of Biopolitics”, 74-75.
\(^{23}\) See above, page 30.
\(^{24}\) See above, page 41.
\(^{26}\) See above, page 29.
epistemic humility and corrigibility, is compatible with a Foucaultian liberal critique of educational governmental techniques. Foucault supplies a second question with which to interrogate the discursive positions below: does this curriculum allow for objection, resistance and change?

The question of a normative standard against which governmental intervention should be judged is raised, but not answered by Foucault. What ends may be legitimately pursued through governmental means? In educational terms, which are the legitimate governmental aims of education policy and which aims are oppressive and tyrannical? How does one make that judgement? Galston addresses the question of legitimate state intervention in “Two Concepts of Liberalism”. He differentiates between a liberal autonomy model, based on the Enlightenment project, and a liberal diversity model, rooted in the Reformation project. The former, he notes, tends towards oppressive and coercive governmental techniques which seek to eliminate religiously conservative and illiberal ideas and which set up social and religious liberalism, rationalism and personal autonomy as the universal bases of the liberal state. This form of intervention is, in Galston’s view, illegitimate if the state is genuinely to accept diversity.

The protection of diversity is, Galston suggests, necessary for a number of reasons the most compelling of which, in my view, is that diversity of beliefs and values is an empirical fact of Western liberal nation states and to seek to change this would require an unacceptable level of state coercion and civil strife. This being the case, and regardless of wider instrumental arguments for the protection of diversity, it would seem desirable to promote “public institutions that conduce to the expression, rather than the coercive suppression or covert homogenisation” of these necessarily diverse values and standpoints.

The liberal autonomy model purports to valorise diversity but tends “toward intervention, homogenisation, and the denial of genuine difference”. The liberal diversity model, in contrast, seeks to hold different religious and cultural conceptions of the good in tension,

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29 Ibid., 527. Galston cites Kant as an exponent of this view.
30 Such as the protection of visible alternative versions of the good life, or for the proliferation of sects as a safeguard against sectarian tyranny: ibid. Galston here references John Mills, Isaiah Berlin and James Madison.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 533.
providing the conditions for mutual flourishing. Galston affirms liberal diversity over liberal autonomy but rejects the suggestion that a liberal state must remain neutral, such that it must not pursue its own goals, and that the protection of religious pluralism necessitates moral or judgemental relativism:

Rather, [a liberal state] is properly characterised as a community organised in pursuit of a distinctive ensemble of public purposes. It is these purposes that undergird its unity, structure its institutions, guide its policies, and define its public virtues. In the constitutional context, it is these purposes that shape an appropriate understanding of compelling state interests that warrant public interference with group practices.

He provides three examples of reasonable state intervention in line with the central purposes of a liberal state in which diverse groups might thrive:

[P]rotection of human life—would allow the liberal state to intervene against religious worship that involves human sacrifice [.. .]; protection and promotion of normal development of basic capacities—would allow the state to intervene against communities that bind infants' skulls or malnourish them in ways that impede physical growth and maturation; [.. .] development of “social rationality” (the kind of understanding needed to participate in the society, economy, and polity)—would allow the state to intervene against forms of education that are systematically disenabling when judged against this norm.

These normative criteria apply to all forms of education such that contravention by religious or cultural groups would allow, and even necessitate, state intervention. For “[t]he liberal state has a legitimate and compelling interest in ensuring that the convictions, competencies, and virtues required for liberal citizenship [thus defined] are widely shared”. In my view these criteria provide a normative conception of harm, against which the state has a responsibility to protect its citizens. They provide a measure against which governmental interventions may be judged. I therefore adopt them in my critique of education policy in New Zealand below.

Galston is very clear that the promotion of personal autonomy, which is contrary to some religious worldviews, “is not among the shared liberal purposes” of the liberal state. Rather it is only “one possible mode of existence in liberal societies [. . .] [whose] devotees [. . .] must recognise the need for respectful coexistence with individuals and groups that do not give

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35 Ibid., 525.
36 Ibid., 529.
autonomy pride of place”. 37 For “liberalism is about the protection of diversity, not the valorisation of choice”. 38 Galston notes that the liberal autonomy model appears able to tolerate only forms of alterity which are amenable to reason and to democratic governance. It exerts a liberalising pressure on illiberal and socially conservative groups. 39 This is the oppressive and coercive form of governmentality described above by Foucault, within which there is little room for resistance. It is also exemplified by the authoritarian liberal discourse described in Chapter Four and below in this chapter. In this regard Galston differs from liberal theorists John Rawls and Will Kymlicka, who both affirm that the liberalising imperative is intrinsic to democratic liberalism. 40 In contrast, Galston’s liberal diversity model “evinces a strong system of tolerance” which allows groups to remain “illiberal in their internal structure and practices as long as freedom of entrance and exit is zealously safeguarded by the state”. 41 In other words, the state guards against coercion and indoctrination into communities of belief and ensures, through educational means, that individuals are equipped to leave a community of belief if they undergo a change of mind. This is consistent with Foucault’s critical conception of liberalism which facilitates possible resistance and change to forms of governmentality.

Galston insists that, beyond the protection and enforcement of the central purposes of the liberal state as described above, the state must neither promote cultural or religious views nor promote scepticism about beliefs. Neither religious nor non-religious views may be deemed “presumptively invalid” by state institutions. 42 Tolerance is therefore characterised by non-coercion in matters of religion and belief:

This does not mean wishy-washiness or the propensity to doubt one’s own position [. . .]. It does not require an easy relativism about the good. [. . .] Tolerance means, rather, the principled refusal to use coercive state instruments to impose one’s own views on others, the commitment to competition through recruitment and persuasion alone. 43

But this does not mean that discussion of religious and cultural differences should be avoided in state schools. With regard to religious education, Galston positions this understanding of tolerance as central to the formulation of policy:

37 Ibid., 525.
38 Ibid., 523.
39 Ibid., 519, 523-24.
42 Ibid., 517.
43 Ibid., 528.
It is hard to believe that tolerance, so understood, can be cultivated without at least minimal awareness of the existence and nature of [ways of life different to one’s own]. So the state may establish educational guidelines pursuant to this compelling interest. What it may not do is prescribe curricula or pedagogic practices that require or strongly invite students to become skeptical or critical of their own ways of life.\footnote{Ibid., 529.}

Galston’s liberal diversity model is egalitarian in nature, eschewing the privileging of one form of belief over another and opposing all forms of informal and formal cultural or religious establishment within state institutions.\footnote{Ibid., 528.} It is consistent with the egalitarian liberal discourse described in Table 9, above, and Table 14, below. Galston’s theorising of these two forms of liberalism provide a helpful corollary to Foucaultian liberal critique of educational governmental techniques adopted in this thesis and the critical realist education literature discussed above. His criteria for legitimate state intervention, and his construction of tolerance as non-coercion, are adopted as standards of normative objectivity in the following critique of New Zealand education policy and practice. In this regard, Galston supplies us with three further questions with which to interrogate the discursive positions below: does this curriculum use coercive state instruments to impose views on young people? Does this curriculum genuinely protect diversity (including illiberal worldviews)? Does this curriculum promote social rationality consistent with the requirements of (egalitarian) liberal citizenship?

From this critical realist, Foucaultian and egalitarian liberal (hereafter, critical liberal) vantage point, a critique of the disqualification of education in religions and beliefs in the New Zealand context may be mounted. I give an overview of the New Zealand and international literature in tabular form and then apply my critique to the discursive positions described.\footnote{I omit the human rights and legal discourses as they are generally co-opted in support of other positions in the literature. The employment of more than one discourse occasionally results in duplication of literature cited. I include some primary sources in the international literature.}

\textbf{Discursive Terrain and Critical Realist Critique}

\textit{Authoritarian and Liberal Secular Rationalist Discourses}

I begin with a critique of the authoritarian secular rationalist discursive constraint on teaching about religions and beliefs. As I showed in Chapter Four, a construction of “secular” as “nothing to do with religion” has clearly informed New Zealand education policy. This construction had considerable currency at the time of my interviews.\footnote{See below, page 229.} This, I have suggested, may be as a result not of a simple misunderstanding of the meaning the word, but may be
related, more profoundly, to matters of New Zealand identity and subjectivity.\textsuperscript{48} It is exemplified in the secondary literature as follows.

Table 11: Secular Rationalist Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authoritarian Secular Rationalist</th>
<th>New Zealand Literature</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colin McGeorge: opposes BiS, spiritual education and liberal RE on the grounds that it is indoctrinatory.\textsuperscript{49}</td>
<td>C.D. Hardie: religion is anti-educational (US).\textsuperscript{52}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Mulheron: opposes BiS and state integration of church schools; considers religion to be “worthless”.\textsuperscript{50}</td>
<td>Christopher Hitchens: religion amounts to child abuse.\textsuperscript{53}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Rata: religion is antidemocratic.\textsuperscript{51}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal Secular Rationalist</th>
<th>Dennis Rose: teaching about religion encourages scepticism.\textsuperscript{54}</th>
<th>Paul Hirst: RE should promote rational autonomy.\textsuperscript{57}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyle Church: BiS is indoctrinatory, RE is not a problem.\textsuperscript{55}</td>
<td>Michael Hand: RE should encourage children to question their faith.\textsuperscript{58}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa Bromwich: BiS amounts to religious coercion and discrimination and breaches Human Rights. Learning about religion may be permissible.\textsuperscript{56}</td>
<td>Richard Dawkins: children should be religiously literate to understand that the Bible is “not a moral book”.\textsuperscript{59}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the heart of the authoritarian secular rationalist dissociation of education and religion is an ontology of religion as unreal and irrational, anti-educational and politically regressive. Addressing the Fabian Society, critical realist and sociologist of education Elizabeth Rata appears to exemplify this authoritarian perspective, constructing religious belief as beyond

\textsuperscript{48} See above, page 83. 
\textsuperscript{49} McGeorge and Snook, \textit{Church, State and New Zealand Education}, 37-40. The abbreviation RE is used in tables in this chapter to represent religious education: learning about religions and beliefs. 
\textsuperscript{50} Mulheron, \textit{State Aid and Integration}. Cited by Peter Donovan et al., eds., \textit{Beliefs and Practices in New Zealand: A Directory} 2nd ed. (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1985), 183. 
\textsuperscript{54} Dennis Rose, “Encouraging Conflict”, \textit{Education} 24, no. 10 (1975): 9. 
\textsuperscript{55} Kyle Church, “Religious Instruction in Schools”, \textit{The Open Society} 84, no. 1 (2011), 2-5. 
\textsuperscript{56} Tessa Bromwich, “Should God be Expelled from our Schools? A Human Rights Analysis of Religion’s Place in New Zealand Education” (LLB Honours diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2006). 
\textsuperscript{57} Paul H. Hirst, “Christian Education: A contradiction in terms?”, \textit{Learning for Living} 11, no. 4 (1972), 6-11. 
critique. In this respect she mirrors the views of Hardie and Hitchens expressed above.\textsuperscript{60} She reasons: “[Beliefs] by their very nature are not subject to the rules of logic.” Being “immune to criticism and rejection” they are “fundamentally antidemocratic”. Rata disqualifies religious knowledge on the grounds that it is authorised internally by priests and clerics whereas conceptual knowledge is authorised by procedures which, although internal to each discipline, allow for external scrutiny and criticism.\textsuperscript{61} Rata, along with McGeorge and Mulheron in Table 11, appears to be operating with Galson’s “autonomy” model of liberalism, in which heteronomy is presumptively invalid.

The construction of religion as irrational and invalid is not shared by all critical realists. Sociologist and critical realist Margaret Archer asserts that there are rational reasons both to believe and to disbelieve. Belief is founded on experience of the transcendent; disbelief is founded on the absence of religious experience. “If it is rational for the atheist to disbelieve in transcendent reality, then, similarly, it is equally rational for the religious person to believe in transcendent reality.”\textsuperscript{62} For some critical realists, then: “Ontological realism about God in the intransitive dimension is consistent with epistemic or experiential relativism in the transitive dimension.” God may be considered an ontological reality, an alethic truth, while acknowledging that the way believers describe and experience that reality are contingent, variable, and open to correction, being in the transitive dimension.\textsuperscript{63} Wright insists that religion itself is a truth-seeking enterprise. Its role, he says, is “to enable religious adherents to engage with ultimate reality and to enable them to live flourishing lives in harmony with others in the light of that reality”\textsuperscript{64}.

On this basis it may be argued from a critical liberal perspective that education about religions and beliefs within a state school, whose institutional purpose I have constructed as the pursuit of truth, is not inimical to educational endeavour. In fact an examination of religious truth claims, and the consequences on the ways in which people live their lives, might be positioned as foundational for an education premised on the pursuit of truth. Thus religion should not be bracketed out of secular education but should be a legitimate focus of investigation.

\textsuperscript{60} See above, Table 11, page 128.
\textsuperscript{62} Archer, Collier, and Porpora, Transcendence : Critical Realism and God, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{64} Wright, “Critical Realism as a Tool”, 336.
It is the presumptive invalidity of religious belief—the presumed incontestability of disbelief—inherent in the authoritarian secular rationalist position which fails the test set by Galston above for an egalitarian liberal curriculum. A curriculum in which religion is disqualified does not protect diversity by recognising difference and ensuring that young people form a broad understanding of different worldviews; it does not promote the social rationality required for life in a plural and liberal society. On critical realist grounds, the disqualification of religion denies young people access to powerful knowledge about religion, without which the development of judgemental rationality, or discernment in matters of religion and belief, will be impaired. Religion constitutes a null curriculum. To use educationalist Elliot Eisner’s definition, the null curriculum represents “the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use, the concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire”.

On Foucaultian grounds the disqualification of religion from the school curriculum, and consequent potential for inculcation of a negative view of religious belief, appears oppressive and totalitarian, and places rational autonomy and atheism beyond critique. This may even be perceived as an intolerant strategy of state coercion within Galston’s liberal theory above.

Just such a charge has been made against the New Zealand Curriculum by liberal Christian religious educationalist Terence Copley. He coined the phrase “secular indoctrination” to describe the promotion of a secular/atheist world view in New Zealand schools. Alarmed by the results of his “Biblos” research, he protested that New Zealand children have “no ability to critique this view or to see how it has been so successfully implanted”. Describing this as “a sinister capture of integrity” he says the result is a “closed mind, which sincerely believes its own programming”. Copley’s concern for the child’s impaired critical capacity is in line with a critical realist emphasis on epistemic humility and developing judgemental rationality in education, a Foucaultian concern to allow for critique and objection, and an egalitarian liberal concern to avoid coercion and to educate children about alternative worldviews in order to facilitate diversity. However, this thesis argues that it was not atheism but a secular (neo)-liberal worldview into which youngsters were being programmed at the time of my research.

It will be evident from the preceding discussion that the liberal secular rationalist position, held by Dennis Rose, Michael Hand and Richard Dawkins as shown above, which may permit education in religions and beliefs in order to destabilise existing faith or to prove its disvalue,

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does not withstand critical liberal critique. For the state to employ such an approach would be profoundly coercive and intolerant, in Galston’s terms. In Foucaultian terms, this is an illegitimate form of governmentality because the presumptive invalidity of religious belief is non-negotiable and the basis of individual autonomy as a normative standard is not held up to critique. In critical realist language, the liberal secular rationalist approach to religious education lacks epistemic humility, substituting judgmental rationality with an unreflective cynicism or atheism. Neither the authoritarian secular rationalist nor the liberal secular rationalist position on education in religions and beliefs withstand the scrutiny of Galston, Foucault or critical realist critique as described.

I now address the Conservative Christian and Evangelising discourses and the literature supporting confessional religious instruction in state and integrated church schools.

Conservative and Evangelising Christian Discourses

Table 12: Conservative and Evangelising Christian Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Zealand Literature</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conservative Christian Discourse</strong></td>
<td>Mary Petersen: in favour of schools adopting a religious character and of BiS. Patrick Lynch: believes secular education, which excludes belief, is no longer tenable. Kevin Kannan: supports BiS in state schools to promote spiritual intelligence. Paul Rishworth: supports BiS in state schools as a human right.</td>
<td>Penny Thompson: supports confessional approach to RE teaching in the UK. Ian MacMullen: teaching other religions is useless and may be harmful to the child (US).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67 See above, Table 11, page 128.
68 Petersen, “The School in Partnership”: 1055-1065.
70 Kevin Vijay Christopher Kannan, “Spiritual Intelligence and Imagination in New Zealand Students” (PhD diss., University of Auckland, 2010), 201.
76 George Barna, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003).
In the New Zealand secondary literature the conservative Christian discourse is often exemplified by those working within an integrated church school framework, such as Patrick Lynch and Kevin Kannan, and those associated with the Churches Education Commission promoting Bible-in-Schools (since the 1980s), such as Mary Petersen. In the articles above, these writers conflate Christian religious instruction with religious education and regard as self-evident the importance of instruction in Christian beliefs and values for children in New Zealand state schools. They regard the provision of religious instruction as a reflection of the wishes of the community and presume that freedom of parental choice, in both attendance at BiS and integrated schools, is sufficient to safeguard the rights of children and consonant with liberal democracy. They support the status quo of Bible-in-Schools and integrated church schools. I address the inadequacy of the current opt-out provision, both for BiS and Integrated schools below in Chapter Six. Here I apply my critical liberal critique to the literature supporting confessional religious instruction as it takes place in New Zealand integrated and secular primary schools.

It has been stated, following Archer, that there is no objection in principle, to the critical realist and egalitarian liberal, in living one’s life according to the lights of religious belief. For many this will include the desire to bring one’s children up within a faith. In New Zealand this may involve home schooling, attendance at a church school (either private or integrated) or attending Bible-in-Schools in a secular state school. The right to educate one’s children according to religious belief is enshrined in Human Rights legislation. Significantly, the rights of the child to form his/her own views on matters of religion are also protected.

The writers draw on this discourse to promote the view that freedom of choice relates to that of parents and not of children. It is assumed that parents make an unfettered and informed choice regarding their children’s religious education. There is, however, no consideration of the need to inform young people about alternative worldviews in this conservative Christian literature. Former General Secretary of the Churches Education Commission Petersen, for example, refers to BiS as a “partnership between the schools and the local community”. While she discusses the changing nature of New Zealand society, she does not go on to

77 See below, page 215.
79 See above, page 8.
81 Petersen, “The School in Partnership”, 1057.
consider how religious education might need to change if it was to genuinely reflect the belief traditions of the community. Executive director of the New Zealand Catholic Education Office Lynch extols the virtues of parental choice and the new acceptance of diversity—but his construction of diversity includes only Christian denominations and it is Christian religious formation, in line with parents’ wishes, rather than education in religions and beliefs, which exercises him.

Petersen describes the way in which the “Tomorrow’s Schools” developments in school management have facilitated partnership between schools and communities, encouraging “religious education” provided by the CEC in state schools. She explains that the CEC’s programme is “acknowledged and endorsed by the Ministry of Education and the School Trustees Association” and is “recognised in law and education policy”. In so doing she constructs Bible-in-Schools as a public good and reproduces a presumption of validity regarding Christian belief. By attributing legal and educational endorsement to BiS she imbues the CEC’s programme with institutional power. Her positioning of BiS as Christian religious education, “from a perspective which demonstrates sensitivity and awareness of other religious beliefs and practices”, differs from the analysis of Maddox. In Chapter Four, I suggested that one way of accounting for the continued accommodation of BiS within the New Zealand education system is the systematic redescription of the programme as the promotion of uncontroversial liberal values. Petersen’s chapter exemplifies this redescription and thus evidences one way in which the ability of parents to give informed consent or to exercise their right to opt out may be discursively constrained. My research indicates that matters of freedom of choice, informed consent and opting out regarding Bible-in-Schools are much more problematic than is suggested by the conservative Christian literature. Indeed, Ahdar has cautioned that “social and peer pressure to effect religious conformity is real and it is deleterious in the New Zealand school context.”

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82 Ibid., 1062.
84 DOE, Tomorrow’s Schools: The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand; Petersen, “The School in Partnership”, 1064.
86 See above, page 113. See also below, page 185.
Both Petersen and Lynch fully endorse the neoliberal agenda of parental choice, the self-management of schools and the concurrent move to enable secular state schools to adopt a special religious character, also exemplified by Jenny Shipley in Chapter Four. In these circumstances it seems to be the case that the legislation of 1964 and 1877 has been rendered irrelevant. Neither the secular curriculum nor the rights of dissenting parents are protected within this model. The problems which the secular clause was specifically designed to address are overlooked in the neoliberal belief that the market provides just social outcomes. Within this model the right of the dissenting parent is exercised by simply choosing a different school. Invoking the “right to choose” operates as a trump card and appears to render BiS unassailable.

The argument for parental choice, while purportedly egalitarian, overlooks the institutional advantage of the CEC as provider of BiS. It also places unwarranted reliance on the neoliberal principal of unfettered parental choice in matters of state schooling. There is an unstated assumption that parents are free to choose the school best suited to their ideological outlook. But such a view does not take account of the material constraints under which many parents operate, which effectively limit this choice to that of the local state school. My research also signals constraints on the information secular schools provide to parents about religion programmes. As a result, state schools cannot depend upon consensus regarding religious and spiritual values or traditions. They must therefore, if they are to meet Galston’s liberal criteria of non-coercion and protection of diversity, avoid institutional endorsement of religious belief. Petersen, Lynch and Shipley appear to be operating with Galston’s autonomy-based approach to liberalism, in support of a conservative Christian status quo. In Galston’s terms, the adoption of a Christian faith as part of a state school’s special character constitutes coercion by means of unofficial religious establishment. It is illiberal and intolerant of diversity.

Others problematise the conservative Christian assumption that children should be inculcated into the faith of their parents in faith schools. Cooling, who advocates a critical realist (and

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89 Lynch notes that this has been tested in one Auckland school teaching Christian values. An ERO review upheld the right of the school to do so in the terms of its charter: Lynch, “Religious Education”, 96. See also above, page 86 and below, page 211.
90 See above, page 117.
91 In 2013, 66% of New Zealand children attended their nearest school and this was even more likely to be the case for families attending low decile schools. Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne, “Primary and Intermediate Schools in 2013: Main Findings from the NZCER National Survey” (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2014), 129-30.
92 See below, page 207.
93 Galston, “Two Concepts”, 528, 530.
liberal Christian) form of religious education in the United Kingdom is unequivocal that church schools, and those teaching religious instruction classes in schools, need to exercise “courageous restraint” in their dealings with children:

Courageous restraint means that people are willing to stand back from what is naturally their first priority in order to respect the integrity of other people. It means being willing to let fairness temper one’s advocacy of truth as you understand it. [. . .] For the teacher in the classroom it means welcoming the expression of points of view by pupils and in the syllabus that you think are flawed [. . .]. For curriculum developers it will mean not looking simply to champion your own particular view, but being willing to introduce a diversity of views into a syllabus.  

This will involve exposing children to alternative worldviews by making sure that school enrolment processes are inclusive so that multiple religious voices are heard within the school. It will involve offering education in religions and beliefs alongside any formational religious teaching. This is consistent with the critical realist requirement of epistemic humility, described by Cooling above.

Thus a critical realist form of religious instruction, in any context, would be open to both intra-religious and inter-religious debate and contradiction. Religious beliefs would not be taught to children as if belonging to the intransitive dimension. To do so would be to present children with a set of beliefs about the order of reality which are immune from judgemental rationality. Such a practice would be detrimental to the shared goal of religion and education: to encourage individuals to engage with and pursue truth/reality and to live life according to those lights. From a critical realist perspective it is intellectually dishonest to teach children of any age that one set of knowledge is incontestable, when this knowledge is manifestly contested by others. Such an insult to young people’s rational capacity may reasonably preclude their later engagement with knowledge of or about religion. This means that children in both primary and secondary school should be offered education about a variety of religious and non-religious perspectives as part of their education, even in integrated church schools.

This view corresponds to that of Galston, who, as indicated above, asserts that the liberal state has a responsibility to safeguard the right of youngsters to exit an illiberal religious group

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95 See above, page 38.
97 But see below, page 177.
through their education. While the state may not undermine illiberal or conservative religious teachings it may insist that educational institutions provide the conditions required in order for the right to leave such a group to be meaningful:

A meaningful right would seem to include at least the following elements: knowledge conditions—the awareness of alternatives to the life one is in fact living; capacity conditions—the ability to assess these alternatives if it comes to seem desirable to do so; psychological conditions—in particular, freedom from [. . .] brainwashing [. . .] and more broadly, forms of coercion other than the purely physical [. . .]; and finally, fitness conditions—the ability of exit-desiring individuals to participate effectively in at least some ways of life other than the ones they wish to leave.98

Galston’s concerns correspond to the critical realist attention to knowledge of religions and beliefs, judgemental rationality and discernment—the ability to weigh things up, defend one’s position and sometimes change one’s mind in the light of best evidence—courageous restraint in pedagogical approach and respect for the integrity of the child as a seeker of truth. They also correspond with the Foucaultian conception of critical liberalism in which forms of governmentality must allow for critique, resistance and the possibility of change.

It has been argued, both by research participants, and within the literature exemplified in Table 12, that it is confusing and harmful for primary school children to learn about more than one religion. From within the evangelising discourse, exemplified by Christian educator Michael Drake above, it is argued that children should not be exposed to religious falsehoods. But scholars within the conservative Christian discourse sometimes draw on educational discourses to disqualify education in religions and beliefs. Political scientist Ian MacMullen, for example, based this argument for Christian religious instruction on an uncritical acceptance of a Piagetian model of cognitive development. This model, espoused by religious educationalist Ronald Goldman in the 1960s and influential in the development of Agreed Syllabuses in the United Kingdom, limits pre-adolescent children to concrete rather than formal or abstract operations.99 Within such an educational model, primary school teaching which requires children to see things from alternative religious viewpoints is constructed as damaging and pointless.100 MacMullen’s view does not take into account critiques of developmental theory, such as that of developmental psychologist Margaret Donaldson, which showed how even very young children could demonstrate understanding of different perspectives, so long as the

100 MacMullen, Faith in Schools?, 190-93.
examples they were given made “human sense”.\footnote{101} Julia Ipgrave’s more recent research in religious education sees primary school children demonstrating this understanding by dialoguing with children from different religious backgrounds about matters of religion and belief, via email.\footnote{102} Such evidence suggests that MacMullen’s imperative to nurture primary school children within only one tradition may be founded in his primary conservative Christian discourse, rather than empirical research as he asserts.

It is argued in the primary and secondary literature, and within the interview data, that children in New Zealand need Bible-in-Schools in order to understand their Christian heritage. This argument seeks to conflate conceptual knowledge of religion with the promotion of a majority religious worldview. It cannot be sustained on critical liberal grounds. Conceptual knowledge of Bible stories and Christian traditions is required to unlock the meaning inherent in much Western literature, music and art, and should therefore be an entitlement for all young people. The assertion that BiS provides young people with this powerful knowledge was evidenced neither by the Biblos project, the Biblical Literacy Survey nor within my research data.\footnote{103}

It will be evident from this critique that a critical liberal approach cannot endorse evangelising and proselytising in state schools. Such practices fail to recognise the distinction between transitive and intransitive knowledge, to observe Cooling’s courageous restraint in teaching about religion, or to respect the developing judgemental rationality of the child. While a critical liberal approach may endorse religious instruction and observances in church schools, this should not amount to induction into a closed worldview. Equally objectionable would be the uncritical induction of children into a liberal religious or relativist world view. Both approaches would be inimical to the purpose of education conceived as the pursuit of truth informed by judgemental rationality and characterised by corrigibility. Such coercive practices are detrimental to the promotion of diversity and social rationality and against the compelling interests of the nation state. Both are illiberal in the terms described by Galston and Foucault, above.

\footnote{103} See above, page 20 and below, page 185. NZBS, \textit{Pass it On}: 7-8. Survey data indicated percentages of children who had not heard Bible stories, e.g. of: Jesus’ birth—36%; Jesus’ death—49%; The Good Samaritan—76%; Moses parting the Red Sea—66%.
But “liberal religious education”, exemplified by practices in state schools in the United Kingdom, also stands accused of coercion and illiberality. Analysis of liberal RE reveals the influence of liberal Christian, egalitarian liberal, authoritarian liberal and diversity discourses. I treat the liberal Christian discourse first because it may be seen to form the basis of the academic discipline of Religious Studies and the subsequent development of RE in the United Kingdom.

**Liberal Christian Discourse**

Table 13: Liberal Christian Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Zealand Literature</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ian Breward: disdainful of BiS. Teaching itself is an opportunity for Christian witness and service.</td>
<td>Liberal theologians such as Rudolph Otto, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Paul Tillich articulate the concept of faith as a universal dimension of human life and “ultimate questions” as a focus all faiths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Reid Martin: BiS has had its day. Christian teaching should be in the curriculum but include other faiths.</td>
<td>Ninian Smart: postulates universal dimensions of religion and promotes non-confessional teaching about religious beliefs (UK and US).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enid Bennett: curriculum should include consideration of “ultimate questions” including other faiths.</td>
<td>The Chichester Project: teaching the importance of Christianity without promoting belief (UK).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Donovan: against multifaith RE but believes BiS includes other faiths. Proposes expansion of chaplaincy to include other faiths.</td>
<td>Terence Copley and the Biblos Report: New Zealand’s curriculum amounts to secular indoctrination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Wanden and Lyn Smith: propose interreligious education in state schools but children should learn about “their own” faith, i.e., Christianity as a priority.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna May Travis: includes “presence of God” in analysis of spiritual education and positions Māori spirituality as universal.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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104 See below, page 147.
105 Breward, _Godless Schools?_, 125.
107 Bennett, “Teaching of Religion”, 60.
108 Donovan, “Civic Responsibilities”, 89.
The New Zealand literature, during the late 1960s and 1970s, reflects the influence of a liberal Protestant Christian theology popularised by Paul Tillich. The liberal Christian discourse is characterised by “inclusivity” and a conception of the human being as innately religious, the religious dimension of life being universal. In this spirit of inclusivity, scholars of religion such as Ninian Smart, in the United Kingdom, sought to theorise religious belief and believers from traditions other than Christianity, without intending to make value judgements about them. He did this by describing diverse religions in terms of their commonalities rather than their differences. Smart’s Six Dimensions of Faith—doctrinal, mythical, ethical, ritual, experiential and institutional—provided a procedural framework for the analysis of religion, distinct from the traditional study of theology, which was adopted in new religious studies departments and was enormously influential in the development of religious education curricula in the United Kingdom.

Those exemplifying liberal Christian approaches to religious education often privilege Christianity in the curriculum but avoid confessional approaches and seek to be inclusive of other religions. However, they presuppose a religious sensibility in children which should be developed through religious education. Donovan represents a liberal Christian worldview which is inclusive of other faiths but does not extend this to comparative religion within the curriculum, which he considers a “supermarket”, “mix and match” or “relativistic” approach. Donovan rejects any necessity for children to acquire conceptual knowledge of religion, presuming that faith communities best provide for children’s religious instruction and affirming the CEC’s prioritising of the Christian faith. His further assumption, and assertion, is that the Churches Education Commission’s programme not only pursues Christian goals but also has a responsibility “for advancing the interests of other faiths represented in our schools”. Its materials and training programmes “clearly acknowledge religious diversity as an important fact of life for today’s children”. The CEC may be seen by some boards of trustees as

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115 This was also in evidence in the language of “ultimate concerns” used in the Johnson Report of 1977. See above, page 87. Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, 1-5.
116 Ninian Smart, Secular Education and the Logic of Religion (London: Faber, 1968); Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, 12. Smart’s intentions were egalitarian, but see below, on page 147, for a critique of this view.
118 For example: Brown, “The Chichester Project: Teaching Christianity”, 62.
119 Donovan, “Civic Responsibilities”, 88-89. In this regard some of his views are more conservative than liberal Christian.
“a helpful advocate for a pluralistic, multifaith education”. Donovan appears to position BiS as educational, liberal, inclusive and balanced in approach. His redescription of BiS and endorsement of its role in education may serve to reproduce the status quo of confessional religious instruction in New Zealand primary schools and to legitimise BiS as an educational governmental technique within a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality.

Donovan raises some of the problems around religious diversity and religion in schools but the solution, he states, “will not come out of books”. His “home-grown” solution—to increase the CEC chaplaincy provision to include other faiths—is flawed on several levels. Firstly, the approach fails to differentiate between everyday or experiential knowledge and conceptual knowledge: it does not respect the primary purpose of school which is to provide children with learning that they will not receive elsewhere. Donovan’s suggestion limits children to the knowledge and truth of the family or community context and does not expand their horizons beyond the familiar and local. Secondly, the approach reproduces a confessional approach to religious education, which does not respect the need for courageous restraint or epistemic humility, and does not address issues of accountability associated with the volunteer-led approach. Thirdly, the approach reproduces a separation of curriculum and religion, maintaining the institutional privileging of Christianity, through the CEC, and preventing an adequate social theory of religious knowledge from being developed by educationalists. Fourthly, the approach fails to meet Galston’s precondition for the protection of diversity and the ability of a person to exit a religion: that children should learn about a variety of worldviews as part of their education.

For Reid Martin, Bennett and Wanden and Smith, listed in Table 13, it was axiomatic that children should receive education about other religious beliefs in addition to Christianity, within the school curriculum, and that this inclusive approach was in line with progressive educational trends. But the chief objection to their approach, from a critical liberal perspective, is the presumptive validity of liberal Christianity and of religion in general. The view that religion is a universal phenomenon, that human beings are innately religious or spiritual, and that all religions are inherently benign is promulgated within this approach as though alethic truth. The liberal Christian approach to religious education does not respect the distinction between transitive and intransitive knowledge, and does not treat its own

120 Ibid., 88.
121 Ibid., 89.
122 See below, page 213.
123 Turley and Reid Martin, Religion in Education, 36; Bennett, “Teaching of Religion”, 33.
religious assumptions with epistemic humility. Unless young people are given the opportunity to debate differences of belief and practice, to problematise stable and fixed conceptions of religion, and to exercise judgmental rationality and discernment regarding religious truth claims, there is a likelihood that a liberal Christian approach to religious education could promulgate not powerful knowledge but the “knowledge of the powerful”, in Young’s terms: a Western Christian interpretation of religion which legitimises the normative status of Protestant Christianity and essentialises diverse traditions in order to homogenise and contain them within a Protestant religious framework. The use of state instruments such as school curricula to promote a liberal Christian worldview may be perceived to be intolerant of conservative religious views and of non-religious perspectives. It is therefore detrimental to diversity in Galton’s terms. To represent all religions as conveyors of ultimate truth and reality, and to construct diverse traditions as ultimately the same, may be seen as a totalising form of governmentality in Foucaultian terms.

Egalitarian Liberal, Diversity and Authoritarian Liberal Discourses

Smart’s work greatly influenced the development of religious education as a curriculum area in the United Kingdom. He set up a research and development project with Schools’ Council funding through which he was able to promote a phenomenological and non-confessional approach to education in religions and beliefs. He was a founder of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education, which brought primary, secondary and tertiary level educators together to develop resources and pedagogies for teaching about religion. With other influential scholars of religion, such as Michael Grimmitt and John Hull, Smart may be seen to have effected a discursive shift in religious education from the normative conservative confessional Christian curricula and pedagogy, established in the 1944 Education Act, to a more liberal curriculum and pedagogy at all levels of state education. Adopting a methodology of procedural neutrality, a range of religions were to be introduced to children at all levels of education. This was a religion curriculum designed to meet the challenges of

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124 I discuss this post-colonial perspective further below, on page 156.
127 Michael Grimmitt, What Can I Do in RE?, (Great Wakering, Essex: Mahew- McCrimmon, 1973)
129 Schools Council Working Paper 36, 88-91. The “neutrality” of this curriculum is contested by those drawing on conservative Christian and post-colonial discourses, as I show in this chapter. For a critique of the neutrality of methodological atheism in religious studies see Michael Cantrell, “Must a Scholar of
an increasingly secular and religiously plural society. The changes brought a concurrent shift in focus on educational outcomes reflecting these different discursive imperatives. At a time when traditional approaches to teaching religion were under critique by educationalists in the United Kingdom the phenomenological approach was able to obtain rapid currency. The changes were achieved largely through permeation of the new recommendations into teacher training institutions and local education authority agreed syllabi.

From 1944, each local education authority in England and Wales had been required to provide an agreed syllabus for religious instruction. The first to adopt a multi-faith approach, under the influence of Birmingham University religious educationalist John Hull and liberal theologian John Hick, was the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus of 1975. This was followed in swift succession by multi-faith syllabuses in other education authorities. Christian formation was no longer seen as an appropriate aim for religious education in state schools. The 1988 Education Reform Act formalised the practice of teaching about other religions, alongside Christianity, in England and Wales.

These changes were mirrored in international curricula, in line with changing patterns of immigration and increased religious diversity. Religious educationalist Denise Cush has noted that the countries which have been first to adopt this broader-based religious education are those with a liberal Protestant ethos and where religious instruction was formerly part of the

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130 Smart, *Secular Education*, 90-91.


school curriculum, such as those of Northern Europe. This trend is seen in England and Wales, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands. Canada and South Africa have also adopted a non-confessional, multi-religious approach to RE.

But liberal religious education has continued to be perceived to fulfil a role in social formation. There is evidence that it has become co-opted as a governmental technique in the promotion of democratic citizenship, social cohesion and tolerance, i.e., the management of diversity. Such is the charge of the critics I consider below.

I outline some of the key literature exemplifying the egalitarian liberal approach to religious education in Table 14, below and, in recognition of the discursive imperatives with which liberal religious education may be imbued, I include the diversity discourse and the authoritarian liberal discourse in this section.

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137 Catherine Byrne, “Secular Religions and Ethics Education: International (Best) Practices”, Paper Presented at the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Consultation, Sydney, 16 November 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egalitarian Liberal</th>
<th>New Zealand Literature</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Cox: BiS breaches human rights but religion should be taught as a social fact in curriculum.</td>
<td>Westhill Project: combining knowledge of traditional belief systems with individual experiences/beliefs (UK).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Morris: religions and beliefs should be part of curriculum.</td>
<td>Michael Grimmitt: “Learning about” and “learning from” religions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Sym: multi-faith education would mitigate religious ignorance in New Zealand.</td>
<td>Andrew Wright: critical realist approach to religious education (UK).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jocelyn Armstrong: has produced the first resource for state schools to assist in teaching about religious diversity.</td>
<td>Tim Jensen: religion as a secular curriculum subject (Denmark).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Pratt: religious education should teach understanding and discernment of religions and beliefs.</td>
<td>Jean-Paul Willaime: religion should be taught as a social fact (France).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

138 Jordan Cox, “Religion in New Zealand’s State Primary Schools” (Law Honours diss., University of Auckland, 2008).
142 Jocelyn Armstrong, Discovering Diversity: How the Diverse Values and Beliefs of World Religions are Shaping our Identity (North Shore: Pearson, 2009).
147 Wright, “Critical Realism as a Tool”: 333-347.
150 AAR and Diane L. Moore, “Guidelines for Teaching about Religion”
151 Byrne, Religion in Secular Education, 267.
I discussed in Chapter Four the inability of the egalitarian liberal discourse to obtain currency within the education establishment in New Zealand. Those academics in the New Zealand context who have supported the introduction of religions and beliefs within either the primary or secondary school curriculum are in a small minority. The normative status of BiS “outside” the curriculum and exclusion of religious education “within” the curriculum have effectively precluded educational theorisation of the subject. It appears to have been deemed presumptively invalid by the education establishment.

160 Peter Vardy, Good and Bad Religion (London: SCM, 2010), 64.
In line with Galston’s conception of liberal diversity and the development of social rationality regarding matters of religion and belief, the egalitarian liberal discourse considers the rights of children to freedom of religions and beliefs as equivalent to those of their parents. It also considers education in religions and beliefs as a precondition to that right. This is not only a matter of equity but of the compelling interest of the nation state to protect diversity.\(^\text{164}\)

This egalitarian liberal discursive imperative has led the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, in the United Kingdom, to describe religious education as an “entitlement” for all children:

> The national framework endorses an entitlement to learning in religious education for all pupils, irrespective of social background, culture, race, religion, gender, differences in ability and disabilities. This entitlement contributes to their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. These are necessary for pupils’ self-fulfilment and development as active and responsible citizens.\(^\text{165}\)

In this context, the subject of religious education has generated a vast amount of literature of which I can only provide exemplars in Table 14. As a curriculum area religious education, conceived as education in religions and beliefs, has been gaining international acceptance, particularly since the events of September 11, 2001. In France, philosopher Regis Debray conducted a review of religion in education in 2002 and reported that France should move from a “laïcité of ignorance (in which religion does not concern us) towards a laïcité of understanding (where understanding becomes our duty)”.\(^\text{166}\) Sociologist Jean-Paul Willaime affirms that “religious facts” are now included in teacher training and taught in French schools.\(^\text{167}\) Similarly, in the United States, most school district curricula now include education in religions and beliefs.\(^\text{168}\) The American Academy of Religion has developed guidelines to

\(^{168}\) Jeff Passe and Lara Wilcox, “Teaching Religion in America’s Public Schools: A Necessary Disruption”, *The Social Studies* 100, no. 3 (2009): 102. However, Passe and Wilcox acknowledge discursive constraints still operating on the teaching of this curriculum content.
address religious illiteracy, “using a non-devotional, academic perspective, called religious studies”.

In Australia a similar approach to New Zealand’s voluntary system of religious instruction, within a nominally secular education system, is in place. However, at the state and federal level, this system has been increasingly brought into question. Commentators such as Marion Maddox, Cathy Byrne, Anna Halafoff, Gary Bouma, and Pat Loria have challenged the social legitimacy of existing practices and advocated education in religions and beliefs within the curriculum as more appropriate within a plural context.

Influential to some of these developments were the Toledo Guiding Principles, advocated by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), published in 2007. The Principles were developed by 18 countries across Europe, including France and with the addition of the United States. They are guidelines through which nations may be encouraged to develop teaching programmes concerning religion at all levels of schooling. They propose a balanced, inclusive, rights-based, consultative and professional approach. The Council of Europe also issued extensive recommendations to member states, in 2008, advocating an approach to teaching about religious and non-religious convictions in the context of intercultural education. But of relevance to any proposal to introduce education about religions and beliefs within the New Zealand Curriculum is the critique of current international practices evidenced within the literature. From within a post-colonialist discourse a Foucaultian and post-structuralist critique has been mounted against liberal religious education itself.

It is the intolerance of intolerance which sociologist of religion Russell McCutcheon characterises as the contradiction inherent in liberal religious education. Liberals, he says, dogmatically exclude those whose religious beliefs are not tolerant and construct such

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169 AAR and Moore, “Guidelines for Teaching About Religion”, i, 4-6.
170 See above, page 114.
172 OSCE, “Toledo Guiding Principles”.
173 Ibid., 16-17.
intolerant religious beliefs as inauthentic. Their “tolerant” approach means that when individuals or groups express socially conservative viewpoints or act in extreme ways in the name of religion, liberals must redraw the boundaries of religion to exclude the offensive behaviour. Since the behaviour is no longer authentically religious, it does not need to be tolerated. The redrawing of religious boundaries in this way has the effect of establishing liberal, tolerant forms of religion as authentic and normative:

Those not in favour of these [liberal, tolerant] rules and the social world they make possible are understandably, yet in suitably illiberal fashion, branded as exclusivists [. . .] radicals, militants, extremists [. . .]. Such name calling strikes me as eliminating from serious consideration the very group whom liberals claim to include in their pluralist umbrella [. . .]. Tolerance is therefore part of a normative discourse of dominance and is the trace of an ongoing sociopolitical contestation. Religious studies and religious education, McCutcheon asserts, are directly implicated in this liberalising governmentality. By accepting “comparison and contrast” of different religions as the task of the religious educator, “we are called upon simply to manage and minimalise this difference for the benefit of the abstract notion of the nation state; our role as teachers is to nurture mutual understanding and religious dialogue across what might otherwise be our students’ exclusivistic boundaries” (emphasis in original).

Religious studies then becomes a “socially redemptive, existentially salvific exercise”, by which religious educators are co-opted into the governmental reproduction of compliant and depoliticised subjects, whose first loyalty is to the state and not to religious authority, thus promoting the interests of Western capitalism. Similarly, critical religion scholar Timothy Fitzgerald disqualifies religious education as a liberal governmental technique. In describing teaching resources produced for use in secondary schools in the United Kingdom, Fitzgerald decries the “essentialisation of religion” which is “detached from historical contextualisation, from the power of the state, or from any other kind of discursive domain” and “used to persuade young people and their teachers to believe in some modern, ahistorical, theological invention”.

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176 Ibid., 162-63.
177 Ibid., 159-60.
178 Ibid., 158-59.
McCutcheon and Fitzgerald may be seen to disqualify religious education on three Foucaultian grounds: i) it is nothing more than a governmental technique; ii) it is illiberal and intolerant; and iii) the “knowledge” taught effectively essentialises, homogenises, depoliticises and decontextualises diverse beliefs and practices, i.e., the religious knowledge taught is not real or true, but invested in the governmental interests of the nation state.

I believe the critical liberal rationale for education in religions and beliefs may be sustained in the face of this post-colonial assault. I address the first and second of these points here and deal with the third in the following section. The first point is addressed by Foucault’s recognition that governmental techniques are not always oppressive and totalitarian but may be beneficial and protect the citizenry from harm. I established above, with Galston, some compelling state interests which might constitute such legitimate governmentality, of which the provision of education in religions and beliefs is one. Against the post-colonial critique, the egalitarian liberal rationale for education in religions and beliefs rejects discursive imperatives which either disqualify religion from the curriculum or sanction the use of state instruments to promote particular conceptions of religion, such as those described by McCutcheon and Fitzgerald. While knowledge of religions is presumptively valid, within this discourse there is no presumption of validity or invalidity regarding any particular religious or non-religious worldview, beyond the criteria of compelling state interests stated.

This is in contrast to both the diversity discourse and the authoritarian liberal discourse. The discursive imperatives associated with these discourses may be perceived to be more in line with Galston’s conception of liberal autonomy. Within this model the overriding concern is the protection of individual choice, rather than diversity. As stated above, this focus has the effect of disqualifying conservative or illiberal worldviews because they appear to restrict the choices that individuals may make. When these discourses influence religious education classes in the United Kingdom, or lessons on cultural diversity in the New Zealand context, there is evidence of a concurrent redescription of diverse religious traditions into a relativised liberal universalism and a personalisation and privatisation of religious belief in line with a secular (neo)-liberal worldview. In the Foucaultian terms described, the lack of transparency around, and normative nature of this strategy means that those affected by it have no

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180 See above, page 125.
181 See below, page 243.
182 See discussion of the views of: Wright, page 150; Barnes, page 153; Gearon, page 153; Lundie and Conroy, page 154, below.
opportunity to object or change it. It is therefore, just as McCutcheon and Fitzgerald suggest, an illegitimate governmental technique.

McCutcheon and Fitzgerald conflate liberal Christian, egalitarian liberal, diversity and authoritarian liberal approaches to religious education and disqualify liberal religious education on this basis. From a critical liberal perspective, it is not religious education per se, but religious education which has been co-opted by the authoritarian liberal and diversity discourses, and informed by an autonomy model of liberalism, which is disqualified. This distinction is important in answering the second objection to liberal religious education: it is inherently contradictory, being intolerant of intolerance and therefore illiberal. McCutcheon’s critique of liberal tolerance actually aligns with that of Galston and others within the field of religious education. The difference is that Galston differentiates two different forms of tolerance: the first, oppressively governmental, being concerned with the formation of liberal, tolerant subjectivities; the second, legitimately governmental, being non-coercive and protective of diverse subjectivities. The first, within Galston’s liberal autonomy model, is characterised—just as McCutcheon suggests—by a contradictory tolerance of “difference” but concurrent intolerance of illiberal or conservative forms of belief. The second, within Galston’s liberal diversity model, is characterised by protection and promotion of diversity to the greatest degree possible within the aims and purposes of the liberal state. From this perspective, as discussed above, there is no moral relativism or neutrality implied and no contradiction in the liberal state intervening to protect individuals from harm (as defined above) either within, from or against religious groups.\(^{183}\) This is not illiberal but entirely consistent with the state’s central purpose of protecting diversity. Far from being a coercive strategy to redefine religion or remould religious subjectivities, it is an acknowledgement that one’s right to freedom of religions and beliefs is meaningless if a citizen of an alternative religious or non-religious persuasion is entitled to commit coercion, physical harm or murder in the name of her/his own beliefs. The right for the state to intervene under such circumstances is an “institutional precondition” of the protection of diversity.\(^{184}\)

Consistent with Galston’s assessment of the liberal autonomy model, and of McCutcheon and Fitzgerald’s assessment of liberal religious education, is the work of Andrew Wright. In a critique of liberal religious education in the United Kingdom, Wright characterises liberal religious education as promoting the values of freedom and tolerance as ends in themselves. Personal freedom of choice, he says, is constructed as the ultimate human good and “any

\(^{183}\) See above, page 125.
\(^{184}\) Galston, “Two Concepts”, 525.
choice will do” for liberal educators, for whom truth is inconsequential. He asserts that
teachers tend to play down specific truth claims and differences in an attempt to reproduce “a
naive economy of sameness” or an “ultimately fraudulent economy of mutual identity”.185
Debate and analysis of truth claims are discouraged in favour of a normative tolerance of
difference and religious relativism. The liberal Christian assumption that children are innately
religious is perpetuated in the universal religiosity assumed within liberal religious
education.186 Wright asserts that teaching children that religious truth is relative, ultimately
uniform, or otherwise unimportant is a form of indoctrination which is disrespectful to and
exclusionary of religious believers:187

The imposition of the truths of (say) Islam or Christianity in such a context
is no more acceptable than the imposition of a Liberal world-view that—by
virtue of its abdication of any responsibility to examine different religious
and secular truth claims—advocates the implicit relativism of fundamental
beliefs by treating them as little more than private, optional, and hence
ultimately unimportant, life-style choices.188

Wright, like Galston, recognises two forms of liberalism. The first represents a “closed
ontology” or “closed world-view that seeks [. . .] to attract converts into its fold”.189 In line
with Galston’s liberal autonomy model and the post-structuralist critique of McCutcheon and
Fitzgerald, this liberal approach operates to establish a normative liberal subjectivity which is
exclusive of conservative or illiberal worldviews. The second, Wright’s preferred form of
liberalism, is one which operates instead as an “interim ethic” or “open heuristic tool for
exploring cultural diversity”.190 This liberal approach resists the liberalising imperatives of the
former, acknowledging that truth claims are incommensurable, and insisting on open lines of
communication and debate between diverse groups.191 Being more procedural than
ontological, it is the latter form of liberalism which is consistent with a critical liberal approach
to religious education, validating Young’s powerful, conceptual knowledge and discernment of
religion and exemplifying Cooling’s epistemic humility and courageous restraint. It is the
former, and not the latter, approach to liberal religious education against which I believe
McCutcheon and Fitzgerald are pitted.

185 Wright, “Critical Realism as a Tool”, 334.
186 Wright, “Spiritual Education Project”, 177-78.
187 Wright, “Critical Realism as a Tool”, 334-35.
188 Ibid., 335. Elsewhere he describes this as “liberal fundamentalism”: Wright, Spirituality and
189 Wright, Spirituality and Education, 98-100.
190 Wright, “Critical Realism as a Tool”, 335.
191 Wright, Spirituality and Education, 99.
Robert Jackson has raised questions about the target of Wright’s critique, wondering who his “unnamed generalised liberal” might be. He does not recognise Wright’s account of liberal religious education—the promotion of liberal relativism—in his own publications or in those of others in the field. This is, perhaps, to misunderstand the nature of Wright’s criticism which targets the unacknowledged governmental nature of the delivery of religious education—the discursive constraints and imperatives of the classroom—rather than programmes of study or specific academic approaches. In the United Kingdom, some of these forms of governmentality in religious education are more explicit than others. An egregious liberalising social agenda is evident, for example, in the co-option of secondary school RE teachers into the government’s Prevent Strategy, to counter terrorism and violent extremism, through the RE-silience project.

The Prevent Duty, to ensure young people are not drawn into extremism, is now incumbent upon all schools and staff in the United Kingdom. Extremism is defined as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”. Some primary schools with majority Muslim populations are being asked to pilot questionnaires designed to identify candidates with extreme views. The questions indicate that young people are being assessed on their beliefs and social attitudes and on questions of identity, in ways which intentionally stigmatised both religious and socially conservative views and validate a normative liberal relativist worldview. Commentators, such as religious studies scholar Douglas Pratt, have highlighted the potentially radicalising effects of conflating socially and religiously conservative or fundamentalist views (an exclusive religious identity) with extremism and anti-Britishness (religious exclusivism). And as Grimmit points out, young people who perceive disrespect for their community’s conservative religious beliefs reflected in the values of secular liberalism promoted at their school may be as likely to re-affirm a conservative religious standpoint, or even to succumb to radicalising influences, as to conform

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192 Jackson, Rethinking RE and Plurality, 84.
193 REC, “RESilience”.
196 Diane Taylor, “Fury After Primary Pupils are Asked to Complete Radicalisation-Seeking Surveys”, The Guardian, 28 May 2015, accessed 4 June 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/28/fury-after-primary-pupils-are-asked-to-complete-radicalisation-seeking-surveys. Young people were asked whether God has a purpose for their life, whether their religion was the only correct one and about their attitudes to women in the workplace.
to a tolerant and liberal worldview. It is perhaps of interest that the former head teacher of Mohammed Emwazi or “Jihadi John”, the British Muslim who performed atrocities in the name of IS in Syria, stated that her majority Muslim school promoted “intolerance of intolerance”.

Pratt notes that this radicalisation appears to be working in two directions. Policies which stigmatise Muslims operate to engender fear and hostility towards Muslims—Islamophobia—amongst the wider community, resulting in an increase in violent attacks and “reactionary extremism”. In a process termed “reactive co-radicalisation”, Pratt notes that both groups begin to act in ways which are contrary to their habitual values resulting in a normalisation of intolerance on both sides. In reaction to just such a perception of growing intolerance there is further evidence that imperatives of the diversity and authoritarian liberal discourses are gaining currency in religious education, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Religious studies scholars Liam Gearon and Philip Barnes have both noted ways in which RE curriculum and pedagogy in the United Kingdom promote a liberal Protestant view of the essential unity of religions in the service of social policy. Research commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families examined materials used to teach about world religions in schools in England, with a particular focus on the promotion of community cohesion, which was made a requirement of the curriculum. The findings signalled problems of misrepresentation of religious groups, misinformation and superficiality of coverage, Christian bias, avoidance of controversial issues between religions and prioritisation of moral development and values rather than learning about religions. These factors may be the result of poor teacher subject knowledge and lack of consultation with subject specialists in preparation of teaching resources, as Jackson et al. suggest. However, they may also be influenced by the liberalising discursive imperatives of the diversity and authoritarian liberal discourses described above. In such ways the imperatives to promote social cohesion,

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200 Pratt, “Islamophobia as Reactive Co-Radicalization”, 216.
tolerance and relativism impact on the content and pedagogy of RE such that the subject itself may be co-opted as a governmental technique in the interests of the nation state.

History of religions scholar Tim Jensen, in Denmark, has also noted this trend pointing out that the Toledo Principles lean towards the selection of curriculum content that reinforces tolerance, respect and caring for others and, far from being neutral and objective, actively promote a positive attitude towards liberal forms of religious belief and arguably rule out alternative views. The International Religion in Education: Contribution to Dialogue (REDCo) research project report, in 2009, drew attention to the fact that schools in the study frequently prioritised the development of abstract or passive tolerance in their work, and focussed on homogeneity rather than accentuating religious differences. In order to promote practical or active tolerance, which might be borne out not just in young peoples’ stated attitudes but in their friendship choices, it was recommended that schools value and engage with differences in religious and non-religious worldviews. Does RE Work?, a three year investigation into outcomes of RE in the United Kingdom, concluded in 2011 that while RE could be very effective in promoting intercultural understanding, this was often prevented by an over-riding relativism in RE teaching. Researchers David Lundie and James Conroy identified a widespread “predetermined aim of nurturing uncritical tolerance” in RE lessons. They have termed this process “intoleration” and contrast this governmental approach with that of “entoleration”, a “transformative encounter with others’ beliefs”. Entoleration is a process by which young people are encouraged to enter into the lived experience of religious adherents in order to develop “sympathetic discernment of the merit” in their beliefs and practices, and which facilitates intercultural encounter. In contrast, intoleration, they argue, precludes any such encounter and may actually foster intolerant attitudes. By focussing on uncritical acceptance of the strange and different “other”, without equipping young people with the tools to understand their thinking and evaluate truth claims, reductive and stereotypical views may be reproduced rather than challenged:

[W]hat emerges is a curatorial mindset that creates a kind of “cabinet of curiosities for ordinary people”. These “cabinets of curiosities” are not infrequently to be seen in the material conditions of the classroom […]

206 Ibid., 275-76.
There is something of a consequent failure to ignore the “rough edges” of religion and a consequent elision of difficult questions.  

I would argue that intolerance—the development of uncritical and passive tolerance—is a product of the diversity discourse and consistent with Galston’s liberal autonomy model. In contradistinction to this, entoleration—the development of knowledge and discernment in matters of religion and belief, leading to active tolerance promoting diversity and no-coercion—is consistent with Galston’s liberal diversity model and inheres within the egalitarian liberal discourse. I apply these concepts to the way matters of religion and culture are treated in the New Zealand curriculum and in my case study schools, in Chapter Seven.

The literature exemplifying the diversity and authoritarian liberal discourse in the New Zealand context is scant, partly due to the curriculum area’s disqualified status and partly because, as I have intimated above, governmental techniques are sometimes employed at the level of practice more than the level of theory. However, the New Zealand results from the International Civic and Citizenship Survey signal that diversity and authoritarian liberal discursive imperatives may be informing teaching on diversity and forming secular liberal subjectivities. The survey report demonstrates that while students with higher civic knowledge scores displayed more tolerant (liberal) attitudes to (other people’s) religion they were less likely to see the relevance of religion on a personal, ethical or societal level. This may support my research finding, in Chapter Seven, that tolerance and respect for a liberalised secular (personal and private but irrelevant) construction of religion are reproduced through New Zealand pedagogical practices.

As described above, in a further critique, McCutcheon and Fitzgerald use post-structuralist analysis to argue that the very subject matter of religious education is an illegitimate Western construction. In the next section I address this post-colonial critique. However, I treat the New Zealand post-colonial literature in a subsequent section where I consider Māori culture in the curriculum.

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208 See below, page 246.

Post-colonial Discourse

Table 15: Post-colonial Discourse: International Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Literature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edward Said: the West defines itself against the oriental (primitive, bizarre) “other” to justify its colonial project.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayatri Spivak: Colonisation has privileged Western forms of knowledge, science and rationality and disqualified indigenous knowledge.211</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jonathan Z. Smith: world religions are a construct of the Western academy, bearing no relation to reality.212</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talal Asad: religion, as primarily concerned with belief, is a Protestant Christian construct.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Fitzgerald: teaching religion legitimises Western constructs of “religious” (as private and personal) and “secular” (as rational, political and economic) reproducing the ideology of Western capitalism.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell McCutcheon: religious educators are “caretakers”. They reproduce a compliant, uncritical and tolerant citizenry in service of the capitalist interests of the nation state.215 Religion is a “thoroughly human activity”.216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his 1975 article “Map is not Territory” historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith describes “World Religions” as a “dubious category”:

A world religion is a religion like ours; but it is, above all, a tradition which has achieved sufficient power and numbers to enter our history, either to form it, interact with it, or to thwart it. All other religions are invisible [. . .] they may as well not exist.217

Here Smith points out the power relations at work in the use of the term, which serves to define the beliefs and practices of others through a colonial lens. The history of religious studies is constructed as not only colonial but as profoundly theological in origin and bearing no resemblance to the object of study. Smith is unequivocal on this point: “Religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study. It is created for the scholar’s analytical purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalisation. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy.”218

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218 Smith, *Imagining Religion*, xi.
Fitzgerald makes the point that even the distinction between “religious” and “secular” is a modern Western construct and makes little sense in analysing pre-modern cultures. In teaching religion in this way, he claims, educators are further legitimising the colonial view that “secular” ideals such as rationality or self-interest and the non-religious state are the “natural” state of affairs. Treating religion as a universal, autonomous and self-evident dimension of life, as *sui generis*, separate from politics and economics, relegates religion to the personal and private sphere and elevates the secular aspect of life, namely government and the state, to a higher status category. It derives this status by dint of being non-religious, neutral and value-free:  

> Only by inventing an illusory and separated arena of “religion” and “religions”, so assiduously pump-primed by the modern religion industry, could the rhetorical construction of politics and economics have been made to seem like inescapable commonplaces, as if they are inscribed into the nature of things.  

Fitzgerald posits that in presenting religion as a personal and private matter, separate from the important business of politics and state, schools and academies are colluding with a Western colonialist and capitalist agenda.

For McCutcheon the scholar of religion should be critic, not caretaker. The role should be one which challenges the constructed nature of religion and the function that such constructions accomplish in society, including the way that scholars of religion have constructed the discipline. He dismisses the descriptive and comparative approach to the study of religion as an act of mere translation, appreciation and nostalgia. He advocates “redescription” and theorising of power dynamics as a more appropriate critical approach. He suggests that religious studies academics should not get involved in debates about what kinds of religious education are appropriate in schools, regarding this as rhetorical match-playing. In such ways, as stated in point iii) above, it is asserted that religion is entirely a social construction and therefore of no intrinsic value or interest beyond the discursive imperatives and governmental practices which reproduce it.

220 Fitzgerald, *Discourse*, ix.
From a critical realist perspective it may be argued that the post-colonialist critique appears to have fallen prey to the epistemic fallacy, as defined by Bhaskar: it does not distinguish between the transitive and intransitive dimensions and operates with an ontological relativism.\(^{224}\) It assumes that, because perceptions and descriptions of religion differ according to context and are socially and discursively constructed, religion itself does not exist. In Young’s language, all conceptual knowledge of religion is discredited as “just another set of social practices”,\(^{225}\) as “knowledge of the powerful”, implicated in the preservation of privilege.\(^{226}\) The critical realist accepts the socially constructed nature of religion, but maintains that, while these constructions exist in the transitive dimension, they are based upon and are constructed in reference to alethic reality—that of the intransitive dimension.\(^{227}\) Conceptual knowledge cannot be abandoned, because it is essential in order to generate new knowledge and improved understanding of religions and beliefs.\(^{228}\) Within the international field of religious studies Kevin Schilbrack presents a critical realist defence of the concept of religion against the post-colonialist critique using slightly different language.\(^{229}\) Schilbrack agrees that religion is a social construction but insists it is nonetheless a reality. He explains this by distinguishing between “socially independent facts” that would exist whether or not human beings ever lived and “socially dependent facts” whose existence depends upon human behavior, for example by tradition, covenant or agreement.\(^{230}\) “The point is that socially dependent facts are nonetheless facts. They are ‘out there’ in the world [...]. With social realities, if people find the term useful and live in its terms, this agreement is all that is needed for the alleged thing to exist.”\(^{231}\)

Schilbrack’s critical realist analysis recognises the validity of the post-colonial critique: that the concept of religion has been ideologically driven and is based on European perceptions and self-interests. But he equally insists that those perceptions were nonetheless based on observations of social practices and thus the concept of religion is not devoid of content.\(^{232}\) Schilbrack acknowledges the historical misuse of the term—but points out that this need not

\(^{224}\) See above, page 31.
\(^{225}\) Young, *Bringing Knowledge Back In*, 89.
\(^{226}\) Young, “From Constructivism to Realism”, 14.
\(^{228}\) Wheelahan, *Why Knowledge Matters*, 2; Rata, “Politics of Knowledge”, 114.
\(^{230}\) Ibid., 1118.
\(^{231}\) Ibid., 1118-9, 1134.
\(^{232}\) Ibid., 1132.
determine its future use. The problems with the term “religion” should not be overlooked but dealt with as part of the study of the subject. As a critical realist it is important to Schilbrack that scholars of religion concern themselves precisely with “the ontological question about what kind of thing religion ‘is’”. This task becomes impossible without some form of nomenclature. Since all labels and terms come with the baggage of history and ideology, Schilbrack argues for the retention of the word “religion”, “though now conscious of the shadow it casts”.

In a critique of McCutcheon’s position it is his extreme anti-realism and normative atheism which philosopher of religion Michael Slater finds most problematic. Slater points out that while protesting that scholars should not be interested in what religion “really is”, McCutcheon makes clear metaphysical claims about religion, describing it as “a thoroughly human activity, with no mysterious distillate left over”. Slater wonders why scholarship which assumes the falsity and disvalue of religious beliefs and practices should be more objective than scholarship which is concerned with matters of truth and value in religion. Slater makes the point that McCutcheon’s personal views on religion are driving his views on the study of religion. McCutcheon is therefore hoist with his own petard, since this is precisely his critique of the “caretaking” approach to scholarship. Post-structuralist analysis does not incontestably render religious belief presumptively invalid, as perhaps McCutcheon and Fitzgerald imply. John Milbank demonstrates that the same tools can equally be employed, from a conservative Christian perspective, to position religion as “fundamental”, beyond description and providing “the only alternative to a nihilistic outlook”.

Critical liberal analysis must concur that the body of knowledge accumulated within the field of religious studies will need to be reassessed in the light of post-colonial critique. Education in religions and beliefs will need to include the development of critical awareness of the ways in which worldviews are constructed and promoted. An awareness of the partiality and

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233 Ibid., 1131.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid., 1133.
236 Ibid., 1135. See also Paul Hedges for a “semi-realist” defence of “religion”: Paul Hedges, “Can We Still Teach ‘Religions’?: Towards an Understanding of Religion as Culture and Orientation in Contemporary Pedagogy and Metatheory”, in International Handbook of Inter-Religious Education, ed. Kath Engebretson et al. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 291-311.
238 Slater, “Can One Be a Critical Caretaker?”, 341.
239 Ibid., 340.
240 John Milbank, Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 140, 417, 434
contingent status of current knowledge becomes part of the curriculum. Both dystopian and utopian constructions of religion must be presented.\textsuperscript{241} Education about religions and beliefs then ceases to reproduce knowledge of the powerful and becomes an empowering opportunity for young people to begin to understand the lenses through which they and others see the world.

Wright has responded pro-actively to the post-colonial/post-structuralist challenge. His critical realist approach specifically identifies and teaches the characteristics inherent in the worldviews of secular atheism, universal religiosity and post-modern relativism, alongside those of more traditional religious beliefs. This enables young people to analyse topics from a range of religious and secular perspectives and to exercise discernment regarding the implicit messages of the wider curriculum.\textsuperscript{242} Following Wright, religious educationalist Susan Hookway describes the way in which this “critical religious education” offers a hermeneutic of resistance to prevailing governmental approaches to teaching religion, spirituality and liberal values, but equally offers a hermeneutic of transformation enabling young people to use discernment to envisage alternative ways of living life with integrity in a diverse community.\textsuperscript{243} This critical liberal approach offers a more emancipatory role for education in religions and beliefs than does the post-colonial disqualification and destabilisation of religion.

From a critical liberal perspective, while it is illiberal to enculturate young people into acceptance of religion, atheism, scepticism, universalism or relativism, it is imperative to promote religious discussion and to inform young people about religions and beliefs as a precondition to the protection of diversity. In disqualifying education in religions and beliefs, the post-colonial/post-structuralist critique restricts young people’s epistemic access to conceptual knowledge, understanding and discernment in matters of religion. As Wheelahan points out: “Induction into the disciplinary structures of knowledge is important even if we wish to overturn elements of those structures, because understanding those structures is a necessary condition for revolutionising them.”\textsuperscript{244}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{242} Andrew Wright, \textit{Discerning the Spirit. Teaching Spirituality in the Religious Education Classroom} (Abingdon: Culham College Institute, 1999), 29-30. \\
\textsuperscript{244} Wheelahan, \textit{Why Knowledge Matters}, 78.
\end{flushright}
But the transmission of disciplinary knowledge is directly challenged by the knowledge age discourse, which appears to accept the post-structuralist/post-colonial analysis of religion as unstable, corrupted by vested interests and unnecessary for children.

**Knowledge Age Discourse**

Table 16: Knowledge Age Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Zealand literature</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane Gilbert: knowledge is something we do, not something we have. Storing up knowledge is old fashioned.</td>
<td>Carl Bereiter: learning should be problem, not fact-centred (Canada). 246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bernie Trilling and Paul Hood: we need a paradigm shift from industrial age to knowledge age learning in schools. “Just-in-time” teaching not storing up knowledge (US). 247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The knowledge age discourse effectively redefines the purpose and function of education from knowledge transmission to “building the capacity for knowledge production” (emphasis in original). 248 As explained in Chapter Four, the focus within this discourse is no longer on reproducing or storing knowledge which is positioned as regressive and old fashioned. In line with rapid changes in technology and work patterns, it is posited that new ways of thinking need to be developed in schools. The curriculum focus is on problem-solving and innovation, learning information “just-in-time” to put it to use, and on developing skills and competencies. The emphasis is no longer on people, things or ideas, but the connections between them. 249 It valorises procedural and experiential forms of knowledge over that of conceptual: “know-how” rather than “know-what”. 250

The critical realist and social realist literature specifically addresses the problems inherent for learners and for the status and future of conceptual knowledge of the widespread currency of this discourse in Western education systems. Education scholar Kathryn Ecclestone notes the contempt with which conceptual knowledge, and the truth-seeking subject, appear to be held in the education academy:

> At worst, humanist subjectivity and knowledge are seen, especially in academic discourse, as oppressive, offensive, ridiculous and reactionary

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245 Gilbert, *Catching the Knowledge Wave?*


248 Gilbert, *Catching the Knowledge Wave?*, 77.


250 See above, page 108.
and as a sign, whether implicit or overt, of class, gendered and cultural elitism. In philosophical and political thought, the idea of a universal rational, externally-seeking human subject is now widely held in contempt as an oppressive Western, white, male social construct, an anachronistic myth.  

In New Zealand, education scholars Bronwyn Wood and Mark Sheehan have raised concerns about the “unchallenged orthodoxy” of the knowledge age discourse in New Zealand’s education system. They describe a blurred curriculum-pedagogy distinction which potentially leads to a “very superficial and over-socialised encounter with knowledge in secondary schools”. Critical and social realist authors argue that the knowledge age discourse fails to distinguish between school knowledge (conceptual/disciplinary knowledge), experiential or everyday knowledge (including cultural and religious values and dispositions) and procedural knowledge (skills and competencies). As Young explains, since both experiential and procedural knowledge are tied to specific social or practical contexts and everyday concerns, they do not have the same “explanatory power or capacity for generalisation” attributed to conceptual knowledge. The knowledge age discourse falls into the error of treating conceptual knowledge as “just another set of social practices”. Rata, Young and Wheelahan agree that while conceptual knowledge is emancipatory, enabling young people, to some degree, to transcend their social and cultural contexts, experiential and procedural knowledge may be socially restrictive and disempowering when substituted as a basis for curriculum content. Student-led or inquiry approaches based on pupils’ interests and experiences may be motivational, but they fail to adequately differentiate the curriculum content from the means of delivery, and place too great an emphasis on students’ everyday or prior knowledge. This can disadvantage those at the lower end of the socio-economic scale whose personal experiences and prior knowledge is often more restricted. Likewise, topic-led curricula may not differentiate adequately between subject disciplines, and often fail to respect the incremental nature of conceptual learning: knowledge introduced may omit important stages of learning, rendering the knowledge inaccessible—particularly to those with less resourceful

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253 Young, Bringing Knowledge Back In, 89.

254 Ibid.

or supportive family backgrounds. Equally, curricula which replace conceptual knowledge with skills and competencies based on the criteria of employers and the workplace are critiqued by Young. These approaches to curricula, far from being progressive and empowering can actually deny access to conceptual knowledge to young people. As Wood and Sheehan suggest:

Approaches that favour “doing” rather than “knowing” may actually serve to increase educational inequalities between those schools which retain “powerful knowledge” and those which rarely include such knowledge in their curriculum options. This potentially [. . .] reinforces inequality by fostering powerful knowledge among the elite schools and shutting out students from non-elite schools who do not generally have access to this knowledge.

The absence of a strong social theory of conceptual knowledge in the education academy, Young states, has opened the curriculum up to political and instrumental imperatives. In Foucaultian terms, an illiberal form of governmentality which reproduces a skilled and competent—but uncritical and compliant—workforce, in the service of the economic interests of the nation state, may be the result. In Galston’s terms, the imperatives of the knowledge age discourse are consistent with the autonomy model of liberalism because of the coercive governmental techniques they facilitate. The utilitarian nature of such a curriculum effectively subverts the goal of education as the pursuit of truth. Far from learning conceptual knowledge from experts, children are constructed as knowledge producers and their teachers as facilitators.

In the United Kingdom religious education scholars Clive and Jane Erricker exemplify just such an approach to religious education. Asserting that “all knowledge is relative” and that “the idea of subject matter is wrong in itself” they advocate a constructivist narrative pedagogy, emphasising the children’s own experiences. Teachers are asked to:

yield their position of power and authority within the classroom. We are suggesting that children can be allowed to know as much or even more than the teacher, can publicly claim the position of the repository of that

256 Young, Bringing Knowledge Back In, 89.
knowledge and have it acknowledged by the former holder of that exalted rank—the teacher. In such ways the transmission of conceptual knowledge is discursively positioned as educationally regressive. This discourse uncritically validates cultural and experiential knowledge and the autonomy of the child as knowledge producer. The child’s cultural and religious perspectives are not an appropriate subject of investigation or analysis, but are simply (but relatively) correct. In Young’s terms the legitimately conservative nature of education in the transmission of conceptual knowledge has been conflated with the illegitimate preservation of power and privilege. The democratisation of knowledge itself is positioned as progressive and emancipatory. Against such an approach, Wright insists:

[K]nowledge [. . .] needs to be actively pursued [. . .]. Knowledge is not something we are free to create for ourselves; rather we discover and generate knowledge through our interaction with that reality which, on the one hand we are intimately related to, and yet on the other always appears to be one step beyond our present horizon of understanding.

Wright’s critical realist approach begins with the horizon of the child but then assists young people in identifying the ways in which their ideas have been influenced by religious narratives or other worldviews. By learning to identify the sources of their ideas about religions and beliefs young people develop the discernment required to develop informed opinions on religious matters, rather than being constrained by childhood conceptions. Such an approach is more consistent with Galston’s liberal diversity model which valorises the development of social rationality and education about diversity. It is consistent with Foucault’s conception of liberalism as critic, enabling young people to understand the influences which inform their own thinking, and that of their peers, and enabling them to make future judgements about such governmental strategies.

In a former colony such as New Zealand, with a de facto policy of state biculturalism, the differentiated nature of knowledge takes on even greater significance in curriculum policy. In the next section I formulate a critical liberal response to the uncritical promotion of Māori spirituality in New Zealand schools.

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261 Ibid., 202.
262 Young, “From Constructivism to Realism”, 17.
264 Wright, Discerning the Spirit, 41-47.
Table 17: Post-colonial (New Zealand) and Social Action Liberal Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-colonial</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Bishop: indigenous people are subject to deficit theorising in Western education systems.</td>
<td>See above, Table 15, page 156.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Hingangaroa Smith: teaching Māori culture re-colonises Māori and “indigenises” Pākehā children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Salter/Brendan Hokowhitu: the co-option of Hauora into the NZ Curriculum marginalises indigenous knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison Jones: including Māori culture in the Curriculum merely assuages the colonisers’ guilt and does not address inequality.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Action Liberal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Bishop: education should be culturally appropriate to Māori and address power differentials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Hingangaroa Smith: Education should promote self-determination for Māori.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranganui Walker: policies of multiculturalism relegate Māori to one minority among many.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will Kymlicka: affirmative action is legitimate as a precondition to effective participation of national minorities in public life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Banks: liberal multicultural education does not challenge stereotypes or colonial perspectives (US).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen May and Christine Sleeter: multicultural education should address social and political constraints on minorities (UK).</td>
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269 This secondary literature reflects a redistributive form of biculturalism.
270 Bishop and Glynn, *Culture Counts*.
Academics who draw on the post-colonial and social action liberal discourses are concerned to address the ongoing impact of colonisation on the indigenous Māori community in New Zealand and the social disadvantage of minority groups in other plural democracies. In New Zealand, these authors often advocate affirmative action education policies designed to promote redistribution of power and resources to Māori communities including establishing schools with an entirely Māori ethos and pedagogy. Consistent with a de facto policy of state biculturalism, public education policy reflects an imperative to make Māori culture visible by including elements of mythology, language and protocol within the curriculum. This dominant institutional discursive imperative has driven prioritisation of training and resources for cultural inclusion, and “culturally responsive” curricula and pedagogy in the New Zealand educational context.

Hingangaroa Smith, Bishop and sociologist of education Alison Jones are critical of efforts to include Māori culture in the state school curriculum, identifying a form of re-colonisation of Māori knowledge by the state. Simply accommodating the teaching of an approved form of Māori culture in state schools, they argue, does not challenge existing power differentials and the interest-laden nature of the Western curriculum is not addressed. For Māori academics George Salter and Brendan Hokowhitu, the inclusion of hauora within the curriculum, in 1999, was a case in point. They suggest that the hauora model supplied by Mason Durie as part of Te Whare Tapa Pha, for the Health and Physical Education Curriculum, presents a sanitised and Westernised version of wellbeing far removed from any Māori understanding of the term, which is deeply bound up in mythological and theological tradition. Indigenous studies scholar Chris Andersen and Hokowhitu have elsewhere described the way that Pākehā public policy authenticates one version of “traditional” Māori culture—as pre-modern, tribal and static rather than evolving and dynamic. From a critical liberal perspective, this construction of Māori culture and spirituality fits within a secular (neo)-liberal worldview in which religions and beliefs are personal, private, innocuous and therefore politically safe. Māori subjectivity is constructed as innately and authentically spiritual, consistent with colonial conceptions of the

276 See above, page 10.
277 See below, page 253.
278 See notes to Table 17, page 165 above.
279 See above, page 99.
“noble savage”. Thus it is possible that, while ostensibly promoting progressive bicultural policies, the state engages in an illiberal form of governmentality which seeks to manage and “liberalise” subjectivities in line with its own interests.

Commentators such as Rata and critical education scholar Roger Openshaw, politics academic Bryce Edwards and educationalist John Moore and social anthropologist Erich Kolig have suggested that biculturalism itself has become an oppressively illiberal form of governmentality: a worldview which is positioned as progressive and socially just and therefore immune from critique. To seek to analyse or criticise bicultural policy is to be accused of racism. Others, such as Bromell and education researcher Paul Callister, reflect on the problem of basing public policy on ethno-cultural criteria when such identities are not singular but plural. Māori are not a homogeneous group but have mixed ethnicity and hold a wide number of religious affiliations.

Rata is concerned that the localisation of knowledge, and concurrent re-ethnicising of a section of the community, disadvantages the children of this cultural group. She operates with a critical realist understanding that one role of education is to enable an individual to stand apart from everyday conceptions of life in order to develop a capacity for abstract thought, or judgemental rationality. If school knowledge only reinforces one’s local and cultural knowledge this separation does not occur. She asserts: “Children who do not acquire the cognitive processes and dispositions of abstraction and objectification, that ability to

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282 Ibid.
283 See below, page 253.
286 Rata, “Politics of Knowledge”, 118.
separate from the subjective world of their own experience, are restricted from moving into
the world of critical reasoning and, hence, from the world of educational achievement.”

Rata’s critique is directed at both kaupapa Māori schools and wider initiatives to promote
culturally responsive pedagogy and recognition of the Māori knowledge-base in education.
But her perceptions are relevant to spiritual and religious education in particular. For if only
one form of spiritual education—an authorised version of Māori culture—is given explicit
recognition within the school curriculum, is considered presumptively valid and is therefore
exempt from critique it is legitimate to ask how young people are to develop powerful
knowledge and a capacity for judgemental rationality or discernment in matters of religion
and spirituality. An egalitarian liberal approach to Māori spirituality must be to learn about the
diversity of Māori traditions as part of a wide ranging study of religions and beliefs, not to
endorse or embody those traditions within the curriculum. In line with a Foucaultian critique
there must be an opportunity to discuss, resist and object to constructions of Māori culture
(and other worldviews) as part of one’s education. This is particularly important for Māori
youngsters themselves, given the critique that a Māori worldview is neither uniform nor static.
From a critical realist perspective, to teach such contestable knowledge as either transitive
knowledge (the best we can know about Māori spirituality) or intransitive knowledge
(ultimate reality) would seem to be disingenuous no matter how honourable the state’s
intentions in promoting recognition of Māori culture. It is another example of the
governmental role of education taking priority over its primary role: the quest for truth.

A secular form of spirituality is explicitly promoted within the research literature and the
interview data. It is common for Māori spirituality to be co-opted within a Spiritual Secularist
discourse as universally appropriate for all children in New Zealand.

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287 Ibid., 119.
289 An example of the re-ethnicising of children and substituting cultural knowledge for conceptual
knowledge is provided in MOE guidelines on Treaty of Waitangi for schools. A case study reports how,
with the support of a Māori spiritual guardian, the children are encouraged to explore their identity
through rock drawings, and the sharing and retelling of Māori myths, in place of the original “Victorian
### Spiritual Secularist Discourse

#### Table 18: Spiritual Secularist Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Zealand Literature</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Egan: spiritual education should not provide answers but ask meaningful questions.</td>
<td>David Hay and Rebecca Nye: spiritual awareness is universal and “massively present in the lives of children”. It is founded on “relational consciousness” (UK).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison Sewell: spirituality is a sense of identity, authenticity and connection with others.</td>
<td>Clive Erricker et al: advocate educating the “whole child” and attending to their spiritual needs (UK).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Fraser: spirituality is connectedness with nature, each other and meaningful activities and events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Kennedy: seeks to broaden religious understanding of spirituality into a “spirituality of ordinary life in the classroom”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Bone: explores an “everyday spirituality” in Early Years settings. Positions Māori as spiritual guardians of NZ.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spiritual secularist discourse is less interested in established belief and dogmatic religious adherence than in personal spiritual experience and development. In educational terms, the importance of the development of the “whole child” and attending to a child’s “spiritual needs” is stressed. There is some overlap here with the liberal Christian discourse and an assertion of a universal spiritual dimension. However, this discourse draws on post-modern ideas which not only detach spirituality from religion but allow for development of an individualised spirituality which may draw on many aspects of religious or indigenous traditions or on notions of relational connectedness, personhood, wellbeing, experiences of

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awe and wonder and personal involvement in a search for meaning. 

Within this discourse, religion is positioned as dogmatic and constraining in contrast to a more liberalising, authentic and self-actualising spirituality.

In New Zealand a notable characteristic of the spiritual secularist discourse is the valorisation of indigenous spirituality over mainstream religion. For theologian Lorna May Travis, Māori spirituality is “universal”. And for early childhood educationalist Jane Bone, Māori are the “spiritual guardians” of New Zealand. Religion is omitted from education scholar Alison Sewell’s definition of spirituality in the curriculum but Māori terminology is appropriated, secularised and included:

Spirituality is used here to mean a deep sense of identity and authenticity [. . .] from which individuals connect with others, both unselfconsciously and selflessly. Spirituality, or wairuatanga, as it is referred to by indigenous New Zealanders, becomes a connecting force to create a sense of wholeness or oneness.

In such ways the discourse disqualifies education about religions and beliefs and places the relational, emotional and psychological child at the centre of spiritual education. The inclusion of spiritual wellbeing in the Health and Physical Education Curriculum, in 1999, was not widely perceived to legitimise the introduction of education in either spiritual or religious matters to children. Having interviewed health lecturers at the six colleges of education in New Zealand, spirituality researcher Richard Egan concluded: “Generally, most College of Education staff involved in Health Education and the relevant Ministry of Education staff do not think that the literal teaching about or the explicit facilitating of students’ spiritual well-being is justified by the new Health and Physical Education Curriculum.”

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298 Crawford and Rossiter show how trends towards secularisation and privatisation of religion, alongside the emphasis on here-and-now experience and post-modern questioning of universal truths contribute to this discourse. Ibid., 180-93.


300 Travis, “Spiritual Well-being”, 132.

301 See note 294 on page 169, above.


This is consistent with my research findings as I discuss below. The emphasis is, once again, on governmental strategy within the curriculum—regulation of the internal development or subjectivity of young people—rather than development of conceptual knowledge and judgemental rationality in religious matters. There is an emphasis on individual meaning-making (constructivism) over an educational quest for truth. In Young’s terms this is to substitute everyday or social knowledge for school knowledge—an abdication of the responsibility of education itself.

Ecclestone has noted that the emphasis on internal and emotional wellbeing of young people and the positioning of these as potential barriers to learning, in Western curricula, serves to divert attention away from economic, structural and institutional constraints which might also impede progress. She draws a direct link between emotionally-based pedagogy and curricula and self-seeking imperatives of neoliberal educational agenda. She also makes a connection with the constructivist imperatives of the knowledge age and post-colonial discourses discussed above. These discursive imperatives destabilise “external” conceptual knowledge as untrustworthy, substituting a more “authentic”, “internal” emotional and experiential content in its place.

For the critical realist the separation of the emotional and rational is inimical to the process of knowledge construction, which is dependent upon an active relationship between the individual and the knowledge pursued. The knowledge product is not that of unalloyed fact but one which contributes to, and is constitutive of, the child’s self-development. This is known as Bildung: a German term used to describe the process by which intellectual endeavour informs one’s judgement and therefore improves one’s character. Intrinsic to this is the ability to separate oneself and self-interest from the object of knowledge. This process, described by Rata, is constitutive of education itself. Consonant with the development of epistemic humility and judgemental rationality, Bildung is equated with “critical wisdom” by Wright. These terms may be used to denote the way in which “our

305 See below, page 260.
307 Ecclestone, “Promoting Emotionally Vulnerable Subjects”, 70.
308 Ibid., 63.
310 See above, page 167.
311 Wright, Spirituality and Education, 109-11.
striving after realistic knowledge runs hand in hand with our striving for self-formation”.\textsuperscript{312}

From a critical realist perspective, a spiritual self-formation which positions the self as both object and subject would appear to militate against the very development it purports to promote.

A further ground of concern, for Wright, to the secular and personal approach is that this approach is devoid of transcendental, communal or historical associations.\textsuperscript{313} It eschews all links with traditional conceptions of spirituality, which most usually take the search for truth beyond the self and towards the transcendental.\textsuperscript{314} The approach does not take into account the prevalent understandings of spirituality in the locality or their historical and cultural roots.\textsuperscript{315} It assumes the child is a blank slate with no prior experience or preconceptions of spiritual truth. As Wright says: “It seems difficult to deny that our spiritual lives are, for good or ill, shaped by our history, and that this ought to be reflected in any effective form of spiritual education.”\textsuperscript{316}

Being devoid of conceptual content, the spiritual secularist approach cannot develop a vocabulary of religions and beliefs or equip young people to exercise judgemental rationality with regard to either their own or others’ conceptions of spirituality. By avoiding all controversy and encouraging young people uncritically to rely on their emotions and cultural knowledge, an opportunity is missed to contribute to spiritual and religious identity formation. The spiritual secularist approach to spiritual education confirms the normative status of religion/spirituality as uncontentious, personalised, private and a lifestyle choice with no intrinsic importance. Religion is a non-essential or optional element of spiritual wellbeing. The critical liberal does not deny the need for values/social/emotional/spiritual education. But to treat these issues in isolation from the religious and non-religious traditions within which they inhere is neither religiously neutral nor uncontentious, but reproductive of a secular (neo)-liberal worldview.

In Foucault’s terms this form of spiritual education is illiberal and oppressive because there is no opportunity within the curriculum to critique the worldview promoted and no consideration of alternative perspectives. In Galston’s terms, a spiritual secularist form of

\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 110.
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{314} Egan’s work goes furthest in the attempt to bridge personal and “religious” perspectives, in the New Zealand spiritual secularist literature: Egan, “Spirituality/Taha Wairua”, 93, 99-100.
\textsuperscript{315} In the New Zealand context, a form of Māori spirituality appeared to be valorised to the exclusion of other traditions. See below, page 253.
\textsuperscript{316} Wright, \textit{Spirituality and Education}, 75.
spiritual education fails to satisfy the compelling interest of the liberal state to educate its citizens in matters of religion and belief. The spiritual secularist approach to spiritual education instead positions self-actualisation—a sense of identity, agency, autonomy and personal fulfilment—at the centre of the project of personal development, consistent with a neoliberal discourse.

The Neoliberal Discourse

Table 19: The Neoliberal Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Zealand Literature</th>
<th>International Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roger Douglas: education is improved by privatisation, competition, increased choice and meeting the demands of the labour market.</td>
<td>Economic theories such as those of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman adopted in the UK by Margaret Thatcher and in the US by Ronald Reagan. Education positioned as a commodity in the marketplace. Increased parental choice and competition will improve educational outcomes. Education should reflect needs of workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand Business Round table: advocates school choice. Students should leave bad schools and go to better ones.</td>
<td>DFES on the expansion of faith schools: “The evidence shows that schools with a distinct identity perform best” (UK).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Petersen: constructs BiS as a model of parental partnership compatible with “Tomorrow’s Schools” reforms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Lynch: religious schools are not divisive but offer choice. Parents know best. No single form of education can be seen as superior to others.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The neoliberal educational reform agenda valorises choice and competition as a means to improve education outcomes. In Chapter Four I discussed the impact of these reforms on the education system in the 1990s. The more recent introduction of National Standards is in line with this discourse, with a drive towards accountability and quantifiable outcomes. The concurrent introduction of partnership schools is framed as maximising parental choice and flexibility in school management.

As indicated in Chapter Four, the neoliberal discourse promotes an uncritical approach to confessional religious or cultural curriculum and pedagogy. This is on the utilitarian grounds that schools which unite around a special character, identity or religious commitment appear to perform better than those without a clear ethos. The right for parents to choose a school

324 See above, page 94.
whose ethos they share is a fundamental neoliberal premise, as former Minister of Finance Roger Douglas explains:

Choice is the basis of flexibility, innovation and variety; and the most important autonomy of all is parent/student autonomy. Choice links consumer and provider directly, with consequential incentives on schools [. . .]. Choice gives low-income families and the middle-class the same options. [. . .] Parents could “shop around” for the best school for their children. 325

These policies are positioned as socially progressive and emancipatory as choice is available to all, not just those able to afford a private education. I discussed, in Chapter Four, the way that such policies have contributed to the reproduction of a normative conception of religious education as religious instruction in church schools, and as Bible-in-Schools in secular schools. These teaching approaches are neither progressive nor emancipatory in critical liberal terms, promulgating compliance—in the name of productivity—over truth-seeking, judgemental rationality and critique. 326 Shopping around for religious values implies a laissez-faire approach to religion in New Zealand schools. For the critical liberal, the liberal state cannot be neutral and “hands-free” but has a compelling interest in the formation of its citizens. A state which does not ensure that young people develop social rationality and the ability to participate in democratic citizenship is abdicating its responsibilities. Children who attend schools with religious or cultural affiliations (or special religious character) should also be offered a broad education in alternative worldviews.

Education academic John Codd contrasts the difference in emphasis between economic and socially-oriented education systems in the New Zealand context. While the former prepares young people for the labour market, the latter “seeks to promote the concepts, capabilities and knowledge required for testing truth claims and justifying beliefs”. 327 This mirrors Young’s critical realist analysis, that the school curriculum should provide epistemic access to “powerful knowledge” rather than the procedural information and skills characteristic of the neoliberal and knowledge age curriculum. It is in line with the critical realist assertion that education is primarily a quest for truth and meaning and not compliance with dispositions and skills needed to maximise productivity.

325 Douglas, Unfinished Business, 93.
326 See above, page 96 and page 134. See also below, page 221.
Philosopher of education James D. Marshall adopts a Foucaultian critique of the neoliberal influence on the New Zealand education system:

Business values, masquerading as facts, penetrate the rational planning and delivery of education as determiners of standards, pedagogy and curricula. Bureaucratic rationality is then a totalising form of rationality that [has an] over-riding and over-arching end concerned with the development of autonomous choosers [. . .]. It is this totalising view of culture which is being promoted in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{328}

For Marshall, freedom of choice is a fiction which serves economic interests to the detriment of social and communal goals.\textsuperscript{329} He disputes the assumption, within the neoliberal project, that it is part of human nature to “both make and want to make consumer-style choices [and] that such choices are the student’s (or chooser’s) own and that they have not been manipulated or imposed in some way upon the chooser”.\textsuperscript{330} He suggests: “The enlightenment ideal of personal autonomy as a fundamental notion of human being has become the dehumanised notion of the autonomous chooser imprisoned in the choices offered by the enterprise society.”\textsuperscript{331}

This autonomous chooser evolves without commitments or social obligations, primarily concerned with his/her own well-being, self-interest and self-actualisation:

If there is no need to consider the other, to converse and to consult, to enter into dialogue, then the independent autonomous chooser is further cut off from a shared community form of life and more liable to be “picked off” by the information systems, consumer products and media, through which individual choices increasingly come to be exercised.\textsuperscript{332}

The critical liberal might concur that a form of spiritual education with an unreflective focus on the actualisation of the autonomous self, in isolation from community and tradition, fails to equip young people to exercise judgemental rationality and may result in increased susceptibility to the evangelical approaches of religion and consumerism alike. Aligned to this, critical realists assert that the best approximations to truth/reality are achieved not in isolation but in dialogue with others.

\textsuperscript{331} Marshall, “Mode of Information and Education”, 164.
\textsuperscript{332} Marshall, “The Autonomous Chooser”, 95.
Education academic Ivan Snook has gone so far as to say that any attempt to teach children values in schools may be significantly compromised by the market values undergirding the education system of which the children are a part.\textsuperscript{333} He suggests that any legitimate programme of values must raise awareness of the influences of economic and social policy, school practices, advertising and media and expose young people to a variety of worldviews and traditions in order that they should recognise the complex nature of morality. Anything less is not values teaching but rather an indoctrinatory tool “for producing passive conformists”.\textsuperscript{334} Values teaching must facilitate the transformation of both the school and wider society.\textsuperscript{335} There is a high degree of synchronicity between Snook’s proposals for values teaching in New Zealand and Wright’s proposal for a critical religious education which raises young people’s consciousness of the influences which may inform their beliefs and values.\textsuperscript{336} Both are consonant with a critical liberal approach to education in religions and beliefs.

Wright is right to assert that educators do our youngsters a disservice by allowing them to believe that there is no higher purpose to education or society than the promotion of freedom of choice and that, at the end of the day, one choice is as good as another:

> If we wish our children to live rich and fulfilled lives we must help them to make responsible choices. According to critical realism, such choices are dependent upon a willingness and ability to wrestle with questions about the actual nature of reality. We can, I think, make the point a little stronger: because our children are infinitely valuable, we should teach them to make not just responsible choices but excellent ones. It is at this point that the search for truth and struggle for truthful living coincide: if a choice is to be genuinely excellent, then it ought to be in harmony with the ultimate order-of-things.\textsuperscript{337}

Wright points out that secular approaches to spiritual education and values teaching are purportedly designed to respect freedom of belief in plural contexts. However, by failing to address traditional conceptions of spirituality, to recognise children’s existing religious and non-religious commitments, or to develop in young people an appropriate spiritual or religious vocabulary with which to engage with others in the subject this approach effectively “disenfranchises” pupils. Imposing a relativist ontology in which ultimate truth does not exist and “the only truth is the truth expressed by the individual pupil” excludes young people from the quest for ultimate truth/reality which this thesis positions as the focus of educational

\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., 9-10.
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{336} See above, page 160.
\textsuperscript{337} Wright, “Critical Realism as a Tool”, 345.
endeavour. From a critical liberal perspective, the absence of epistemic humility in the inculcation of secular liberalism and neoliberalism, and the absence of explicit opportunity for either young people or their parents to exercise judgemental rationality over the worldview into which they are being enculturated, confirm this as a confessional form of instruction, constitutive of a form of secular (neo)-liberal governmentality.

A logical conclusion of my critical liberal analysis might be the recommendation of mandatory critical education in religion and worldviews, with no opt-out provision, at all levels of education. The UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt asserts the legitimacy of this approach. However the history of religion in schools, described in Chapter Four, might caution against aiming one solution to the religion problem with permanence through legislation. An attempt to do so in Canada resulted in parents challenging the legitimacy of Quebec’s Ethics and Religious Culture programme in the Supreme Court. In other contexts, religious studies scholar Benjamin Schonthal and others have shown how legislation intending to protect the right to freedom of religions and beliefs can itself be the cause of religious tension leading to the “hardening of boundaries and a sharpening of antagonisms”. Political theorist Alison Braley has argued, in the light of the Quebec experience, that while education in religions and beliefs should be offered to all age groups there is a case for an opt-out provision in the primary phase only. She bases this on the pragmatic premise that it is “less likely to stoke the hostility of parents” who perceive the programme to be contrary to their family’s beliefs. This is perhaps in keeping with Galston’s view that the nation state should allow exemptions and remove “as many contested issues as possible from the sphere of national legislation or regulation” in the protection of diversity.

For more pragmatic than theoretical reasons, then, I am inclined to advocate offering critical education in religions and beliefs at all ages and in all school types, but mandating the programme within the curriculum only at the secondary phase. This is not an entirely

338 Wright, Spirituality and Education, 77.
unproblematic concession, due to the inherent difficulties with opting out of normative programmes. But it may be the most realistic means of implementation.

Conclusion
A search of the primary and secondary literature in Chapters Four and Five indicates that the New Zealand educational context appears to be characterised by a disqualification of education in religions and beliefs and a concurrent facilitation of uncritical confessional approaches to cultural difference, Bible teaching and secular values teaching. I have suggested that this state of affairs is neither axiomatic nor part of the natural order of things but is constituted within the constraints and imperatives of prevailing educational and political discourses.

I have demonstrated that, when viewed from Foucaultian, critical realist and egalitarian liberal perspectives, informed by the analysis of Michael Young, Andrew Wright and William Galston among others, the discursive constraints on teaching about religions and beliefs which I have identified do not withstand critique. In each case, the presumptive invalidity of religious education appears rather to be informed by governmental and disciplinary techniques intended to mould individual subjectivities. Rather than developing knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs, essential for the protection of diversity within the liberal nation state, a combination of discursive imperatives construct such education as regressive and unnecessary while driving policies which are formational, confessional and reproductive of the status quo. These policies do not respect the right of the individual to make informed and educated judgements about matters of belief. They narrow the range of options available to New Zealand’s young people to the worldview presented by the religious proclivities of boards of trustees, an authorised Māori conception of spirituality and/or a secular (neo)-liberal worldview. This is characterised by a privatised, personalised, depoliticised construction of religion: just one lifestyle choice among many, of which one must be uncritically tolerant.

In answer to research question three I suggest, in line with Wright and Snook, that a corrective to this illiberal form of governmentality would be the creation of a space within the New Zealand Curriculum where religions, beliefs and worldviews could be analysed and discussed. This would not essentialise religious and secular traditions but would induct young people into the language, concepts and ongoing debates within the subject discipline of religious studies. It would not presume the validity of a religious perspective, but neither would it preclude such

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344 See below, page 215.
validity. Following Wright, it would need to introduce liberal and secular perspectives such as universal religiosity, post-modern relativism and secular atheism as specific worldviews. And following Snook and Marshall, in the New Zealand context, it would need to include analysis and critique of the neoliberal worldview. While in-depth debate and analysis may be more appropriate to the upper end of primary school and secondary level, the literature shows that there is no legitimate developmental reason for denying children in the lower years of primary school education about different religious worldviews and teaching them to see things from different perspectives, even in schools with a religious character. To do so does not preclude formation within a (liberal or illiberal) religious community but it is in the compelling interest of the nation state. I concede that, at primary school, this programme may need to be optional to facilitate implementation.

I suggest that confessional religious instruction in state schools where plurality of religious perspectives must be assumed is, in Galston’s terms, inimical to the protection of diversity and tolerance which is a central purpose of the liberal state. In Young’s critical realist terms it fails to differentiate between powerful conceptual knowledge and the promotion of a religious worldview. It does not treat religious knowledge with epistemic humility and fails to respect young people’s developing judgements rationality. I evidence this further in the following chapter. I also suggest, with Wright, that the critical realist pursuit of truth does not preclude religious belief. It is therefore consistent with a critical realist approach to endorse religious instruction in integrated religious primary schools. However, in Galston’s terms, the liberal state must ensure that young people of all ages know and understand about alternative worldviews alongside the faith in which they are enculturated. And, in Cooling’s terms, schools must teach children with courageous restraint, acknowledging the transitive nature of religious knowledge.

In the next chapters I present a critical liberal account of the way discursive constraints operated in case study schools, and in interviews with key stakeholders, to disqualify education in religions and beliefs and to legitimise confessional approaches to religion in schools.
Chapter Six: Confessional Religious Instruction

Introduction

I’ve never thought of drawing the distinction between teaching religion and teaching about religion [. . .]. That has never crossed my mind.

Frank: Principal of Takahe School, Southland

As a principal of 18 years’ standing, and a teacher for many more, Frank had never had occasion to differentiate confessional Christian religious instruction from education in religions and beliefs. Nothing in his training or teaching experience had caused him to question the self-evident nature of religious formation as the normative construction of education in religion. This construction was evident in interview data from key stakeholders and participants in case study schools in each region. Many participants appeared to be almost unable to conceive of a form of religious education that was not confessional in nature, so dominant was the perception of “Bible-in-Schools” as the conventional model for teaching religion in primary school. Equally, I was told by the great majority of teachers, parents, principals and several key stakeholders that teaching about religions and beliefs would be indoctrinatory, illegal, unimportant, undesirable, unproductive, and otherwise unnecessary in New Zealand primary schools: education about religions and beliefs appeared to be inconceivable.

Chapters Six and Seven constitute a report of the case study and interview research data.\(^1\) Research question two, regarding constraints on religion in school, was initially answered from a study of the archive of policy documents in Chapter Four, and further exemplified from the research literature in Chapter Five. Chapters Six and Seven provide an opportunity to show how these same discursive and material constraints were operational within contemporary interview data. The purpose of the data report is both to evidence these discursive constraints and to problematise their self-evident and common-sense nature. I seek to show how dominant discourses reproduce normative approaches to religion in school, fix definitions of terms and constrain curriculum content and policy. The constraints of this thesis do not permit the full inclusion of the raw interview data or case study reports. However, I have provided a summary of research findings in Appendix 3 and an overview of perspectives on religious instruction, spiritual education and teaching about religions and beliefs in Appendix 4. Appendices 4A, 4B, and 4C evidence the key constraints which appeared to prevent children in the case study schools from obtaining knowledge about religious diversity. Appendix 4D identifies the perspectives of the key stakeholders interviewed.

\(^1\) See above, page 47, for case study schools and types.
My findings destabilise three apparently commonly-held views: that the system of voluntary religious instruction, with the right to opt out, is equitable and fair and that there is no need for a review of current practice; that New Zealand primary schools already “do enough” about religious diversity; that the current approach to treatment of religious diversity is religiously neutral.

Interview questions addressed three separate areas: religious instruction, spiritual wellbeing and teaching about cultural and religious diversity. In practice, many participants conflated the three. In this chapter and the next, I draw on participants’ responses across the case study data and across the three interview areas. I exemplify the two governmental approaches to teaching religions and beliefs described, namely Christian religious instruction and secular (neo)-liberal instruction. I apply a critical realist methodology to pinpoint aspects of embodiment, materiality and institutional power which functioned to reproduce these forms of confessional instruction and to constrain development of education in religions and beliefs.

Chapter Six has two parts. In Part One, I demonstrate the ways in which confessional approaches to religion and values teaching were taking place in case study schools. In Part Two, I examine the ways in which confessional Christian instruction was reproduced.

**Part One: Following Jesus in State Primary Schools**

Confessional Christian instruction was taking place, to varying degrees, in six of my seven case study schools, although this appeared to be made explicit to parents only at the two Catholic schools visited. A conservative Christian discourse was in evidence in these six schools.

**Catholic Religious Education**

At St Margaret’s and St Joseph’s schools, religious education took the form of a 40-minute class, three times a week. In addition, I was informed by principals and teachers that Catholic religious teaching would infuse the whole curriculum and that each day would be punctuated with religious observances such as prayers and genuflection, both in class and in religious assemblies. Prayer corners were a feature of school classrooms. Children would attend Mass at frequent intervals during the year, to which parents were invited. Parents were also involved in the religious education homework, which formed part of the religious education programme booklet.

Within religious education at St Margaret’s school, there was an intention to “encourage children to be committed to the truth of the Gospel, to sharing it and to living Gospel values”

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2 See Appendix 2C.
made explicit in the Learning Area Statement. And at St Joseph’s the Religion Curriculum Statement expressed a similar intention: “Religion involves learning about the teachings of God and the church, and to adopt those inherent values for day to day living in relationship with others.” A conservative Christian construction of religious education was evident, in which children were to absorb Christian truths and embody them both through religious ritual and through the values by which they lived. The government of belief and behaviour were intentionally combined. The interdependence of Christian beliefs and values was explicit in school charters, policies, displays and interview data as the foyer display from St Joseph’s in Figure 6, which had the heading “God is Love”, exemplifies. The values of this school were derived from the truth of the love of God and the commandment to love others. In both schools it was made explicit in policy and interviews that children were expected to develop a relationship with God through the religious education programme, but that this should be a “free faith response”.

Figure 6: Beliefs and Values Foyer Display at St Joseph’s School

Children in Catholic primary schools followed a religious education programme authorised by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Conference. An examination of a Year Three children’s

3 I am unable to provide citations to school documents without compromising the anonymity of case study schools. All case study school documents cited are held by the author.
activity book used in Catholic primary schools supported the view that, in tone and emphasis, the teaching presumed that children either had or were developing a Catholic faith. The six strands covered were: God, Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit, Church—Community of Disciples, Sacrament and Communion of Saints. The curriculum made explicit reference to church teachings and liturgy and included Bible readings and suggestions for prayer. There were activities designed for homework with family and also independent class work. The books travelled between home and school every day. Activities for children included crosswords, cloze procedure, maze puzzles, drawing, word searches, memorising Bible verses, matching beginning and ending of sentences, scrambled words, secret messages to discover and true/false quizzes—all pertaining to Bible verses or words of Catholic liturgy. The faith imperative was established through statements of Christian belief in page headings such as “God—te Atua—Io Matua Kore—‘The Father Almighty’” and “Jesus Christ—Hehu Karaiti—‘His only Son, our Lord’” and also through the use of the word “we” to signify membership of the faith group, e.g.: “At Eucharist we gather to remember.” The children and their families were expected to embody the “fruits of the Holy Spirit”. Children were required to “respond to the call of Jesus” by indicating that statements such as “I am a disciple of Jesus” and “Jesus is the best way to come to know God” were either true or false. The right answers were self-evidently those which confessed a positive response to the call of Jesus. There was no discussion of alternative religions and beliefs in this programme or recognition of the 5% of children in each school whose families did not belong to the Catholic faith.

4 NCRS, Yellow Book: Children’s Activities, Religious Education Programme for Catholic Primary School in Aotearoa New Zealand (Wellington: National Centre for Religious Studies, 1997).
5 Ibid., 1, 10, 14, 22.
6 Ibid., 32. See Figure 7 below. Copyright 1997 by National Centre for Religious Studies. Published by NCRS, TCI, PO Box 1937, Wellington, New Zealand. (Used with permission.)
This was a confessional, conservative Christian form of religious instruction. It was a highly structured teaching approach which was designed to encourage compliance with the beliefs of the church rather than independent enquiry in matters of religion. This was in contrast to policies on enquiry learning, which applied to other curriculum areas in both Catholic schools visited. However, there was evidence of a liberal theological stance on the Bible and the Creation. While the Bible was constructed as “God’s Word to people” and “Holy”, the booklet also stated: “More than 35 people wrote the Bible.”

Equally, children learned that “God is the source of all Creation” but were also told: “Most cultures have stories about how the world was created and how God is active in it.” The Māori story was here compared with the Genesis account, with the teaching focus being one of environmental concern rather than Biblical literalism. The following activity was “We show respect for all cultures”, reinforcing a liberal theological perspective. While acceptance of the Catholic faith was expected, if not required, a belief in the inerrancy and sufficiency of the Bible was not. This was reinforced by critical discussion of Biblical texts as described, in interview, by the principal at St Margaret’s.

7 Ibid., 6.
8 Ibid., 8.
9 Ibid., 9.
School. She described discussing some of the problems of the Genesis accounts and encouraging children to query a literalist approach:

Could this be a story that, because most people were not educated, that they were trying to get across to people that God made . . . the world, made us? [. . .] Does it matter? Do you have to believe this? Or could it be that?

In this way a critical dimension to the teaching was introduced at St Margaret’s school, but the discussion was restricted to the discursive boundaries of the Catholic faith and therefore remained confessional in content. This liberal approach to Biblical study was in particular contrast to the theological perspective of the BiS materials observed in state schools and the teaching of one BiS volunteer interviewed, as I discuss below.10

These findings were perhaps to be expected in a form of schooling with an explicit intention—as stated by St Margaret’s school policy statement on its Catholic special character—“To provide a faith environment for children to experience Catholic life and to be evangelised and catechised.” Parents of children at Catholic schools could not fail to be aware of the confessional nature of teaching and even those who were not Catholic signed a form to confirm that their child would participate in all activities associated with the special character of the school. A more surprising finding was the extent to which BiS classes in secular state schools, and attended by children of diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds, mirrored the intentions of the confessional Catholic programme.

**Bible-in-Schools**

As stated above, Bible-in-Schools usually took place during the school day, in secular state schools, although the school or classroom in use was deemed to be legally “closed” for the duration of the lesson. The programme was led by volunteers and usually lasted for half an hour a week. Parents could withdraw children from BiS but, as I argue below in this chapter, there were significant constraints on this process and very few children at Pukeko or Kereru School did so. At Korimako School where the Muslim children formed a sizeable group—one third of the school—these children opted out by staying at home for the duration of the class, while the Hindu and Sikh children appeared to attend. In practice, the positioning of the programme during normal school hours and the default policy of attendance meant that children of diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds attended BiS classes. I argue below that their attendance should not reasonably be taken as either adherence to Christian belief

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10 See below, page 192.
or consent to receiving confessional Christian instruction, although this appeared to be the 
basis upon which schools and BiS volunteers operated.

From lesson observations in Pukeko and Kereru schools, interviewing BiS volunteers at 
Pukeko, Kereru and Korimako schools, looking at the materials used and interviewing David 
Mulholland at the CEC, I formed an impression of the nature of the teaching and the discursive 
imperatives operating within the BiS programme. An examination of teaching materials 
routinely in use in New Zealand schools revealed a confessional teaching approach which was 
not designed to take account of other faith perspectives, presumed a Christian faith and 
uncritically promoted a conservative/evangelising Christian theology.

At Pukeko School I was given sample copies of the children’s CRE workbooks Trek 1 and 
Search 1. Trek, Search and Quest resources, published by Access Ministries in Melbourne, 
Australia were the main material approved by the Churches Education Commission for use in 
state school classrooms. An alternative curriculum, Life Choices, was designed and approved 
by CEC for assembly-style delivery with larger school groups. The CRE workbooks were in use 
at Pukeko, Kereru and Korimako Schools and the Life Choices curriculum was used for older 
children at Korimako School.

The activities in the CRE workbooks were less formally religious than those in the Catholic 
workbooks. Where the Catholic workbooks concerned themselves with Catholic liturgy and 
sacrament alongside matters of belief, the CRE workbooks attended to Christian belief and 
behaviour. However, the CRE activities were equally confessional in content: they assumed a 
Christian consensus and adopted the first person plural “we” to indicate membership of the 
same faith. This was evidenced by the following activity used in the lesson observed at Pukeko 
primary school:

> What can help us learn more about God? Circle the correct word in the 
> sentence:
> 
> We can pray/play to God.
> 
> We can read/ride the Bible.
> 
> We can ask/eat other people for help.\(^{11}\)

Such an activity would inhere within conservative and evangelising Christian discourses. 
Within these discourses it is self-evident that children need to learn more about God and that 
praying and reading the Bible are activities they should undertake. Children were required to

\(^{11}\) Access, “Trek 2 (Blue Series)” (Victoria: Access Ministries, 2008), 5.
read and complete confessional statements such as: “Jesus is Amazing! He is the Son of God!”;12 “Jesus is God’s Son. He showed God’s power when He healed the man.”;13 “Jesus turned the water into wine. Only God’s son could do this!”;14 “Don’t worry about anything but pray about everything.”;15 “Make a mini-poster advertising how to behave as Jesus wants us to.”16 Figure 8 exemplifies these teaching activities.17

Figure 8: Example of BiS Resources

Lessons for Easter taught the children about Jesus dying on the cross and gave a conservative/evangelical Christian theological interpretation of this event: “When we upset our friends we need to ‘make it up’ with them. At Easter, Jesus made it up for us with God.”18 Subsequent sessions clearly implied that children should follow Jesus as a result of this event. Activities included a puzzle to help the disciples find their way to Jesus, and writing a prayer to God.19 Older children completed a section on “Choosing to join” where they considered the

12 Access, “Trek 1 (Blue Series)”, 5.
13 Ibid., 9.
14 Ibid., 14-15.
16 Ibid., 25.
17 Access, “Trek 1 (Blue Series)”, 5, 9. Reproduced in accordance with section 42 of the New Zealand Copyright Act 1994, Fair dealing for the purposes of criticism, review, or reporting.
18 Ibid., 10-11; CEC, “Search 1”, 16-17.
qualities of a good leader and completed a crossword puzzle which combined questions about disciples following Jesus with questions about child-oriented clubs and activities.20

Unit 4 Session 1 of the Search 1 resource was entitled “The Bible is Amazing”.21 A conservative Christian interpretation of the conversion of Māori, through the dissemination of the Gospel of Luke in te reo, was here presented. There was an implied assumption that just as some Māori “became followers of Jesus and learned to live God’s way”, so should the children hearing this story. In Trek 1, young children were required to indicate whether the following statements were true or false: “Jesus ran in the Olympics; Jesus turned water into wine; Jesus helped a blind man to see; Jesus went shopping at supermarkets; Jesus told the waves and storm to stop.”22 Here the truth of these miraculous events was presented as self-evident. The true/false dichotomy was no more seriously explored in this activity than in that presented above in Figure 7, from the Catholic religious education booklet.

The Life Choices curriculum resource (Year 3) observed at Korimako primary school, gave suggestions for a class prayer and praise choruses to sing in each lesson.23 Furthermore, it encouraged children to believe that the Bible was the Word of God, contained no inconsistencies, was reliable and should be followed like a manual.24 This construction of Biblical inerrancy inhered within an evangelising Christian discourse and positioned the teaching outside of that of the mainstream Christian denominations in New Zealand, whom CEC claim to represent.25

David Mulholland, at the CEC, referred to resources in use in schools in New Zealand which were much stronger in tone than the Access or Life Choices resources. “Connect” resources, produced in Sydney, Australia, warn children of the “consequences of turning away from God” in introductory lessons.26 At the time of the interview these resources were “approved” by CEC. A survey undertaken by a member of the SEN in 2012 indicated that at least 57 schools

21 Ibid., 28.
22 Access, “Trek 1 (Blue Series)”, 7.
23 In response to the SEN campaign, new editions of the Life Choices curriculum caution volunteers against using prayers and choruses in which children are required to confess belief. However, a complete change of curriculum materials and teaching approach would be required to address the issue of confessionalism currently embedded in these classes.
24 CEC, Life Choices, Year 3 (Wellington: Churches Education Commission, 2009), 24-54.
25 “The Churches Education Commission (CEC) acts on behalf of Christian churches as the agency responsible for CRE in state schools.” CEC, “C.R.E.”.
were using the resources. Under Simon Greening’s leadership of the CEC approval of Connect materials was withdrawn, but Wanganui Council for Christian Education is run separately from the CEC and remains committed to teaching with this material in the Wanganui region.

From a critical liberal perspective, in their promotion of a conservative/evangelical Christian worldview and their neglect of other faith perspectives, the resources approved by CEC materially undermined the protection of diversity in New Zealand schools. By encouraging children to make personal decisions about faith and requiring embodied acts of faith, irrespective of family background, the resources equally undermined the right of children and parents to freedom of religions and beliefs. Presenting one form of religious belief as alethic truth did not respect the developing judgemental rationality of young people present. My assessment of the Access Ministries resources is in accordance with those of Maddox and Zyngier, in the Australian context, in which the authors identified a strongly evangelical message and limited educational value within these materials. A recent report by Paul Morris confirms the assessment that activities and resources involving prayers are “inappropriate and likely objectionable” to parents in state schools.

It will be noted that the Catholic teaching resources presented a more liberal theology of the Bible than did the materials routinely used in secular state schools. While the Catholic booklets went home with children every night the BiS booklets were retained by the volunteer, and were not routinely seen by parents, restricting the information parents had about the programme.

Further evidence of a teaching approach characterised by an assumed and unquestioned religious consensus was supplied by the lesson observations and interviews. At Pukeko School, in Dunedin, BiS co-ordinator Sarah positioned the programme as promoting liberal values of tolerance and inclusion and resisted any construction of BiS as evangelising or coercive, in interview. However, it was self-evident to Sarah that all children should have the opportunity to form a relationship with God and that this was important for their wellbeing:

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29 See above, page 113.
30 Walters, “Paul Morris Gives Review”.
What we are teaching is that, um a recognition that there is more to life than just . . . little human ants scurrying about on the surface of the earth . . . that they can have a relationship with God [. . .]. And that that love from God, and of God, can drive all the other relationships—all the other good and positive relationships—with their friends, with their family, with home and school, with themselves.

The BiS lesson I observed here contained no prayer but did have an evangelising message. Sarah, following the Access resources, told a complicated story from Acts Chapter 10. The stated Curriculum values of “community and participation” and “care and compassion” covered in this lesson were deeply embedded in a more dominant message about listening to, and obeying God. A Biblical text on the children’s workbook stated: “Come near to God and He will come near to you (James 4:8).” The message Sarah wanted the children to take away from her lesson was that both Cornelius and Peter listened to God and obeyed him. She finished the lesson with an appeal for children to apply this teaching to their own lives:

Because they both listened, and they both did what God asked them to do, amazing things happened to both of them that changed their lives. Sometimes we can hear things. You can hear something amazing and if you listen to it and do what you’re asked to do, even though it doesn’t make sense sometimes, your life can be changed too. Amazing things can happen.

Here, Sarah suggested to the children that they listen to God and change their lives. This inhered within the evangelising Christian discourse within which children are intended to make a personal commitment to faith. It was confessional Christian instruction within which believing in, listening to and obeying God were normalised.

At Korimako School in Auckland, Martha, the BiS co-ordinator, was frustrated that so many Muslim children opted out of BiS at this school. She believed that the programme was suitable for children of any faith background:

Does the curriculum become amended at all around children of other faiths?

Well it’s a general . . . no, it doesn’t change for any faith, or for any person. [. . .] Just like churches, they’re all multicultural, there’s no . . . I don’t know of any churches actually that have just got one particular race there, they’re multicultural, so therefore all the material . . . I mean the Bible is multicultural: it’s for everybody!

Within a conservative/evangelising Christian regime of rationality there was no need to adapt this programme to make it appropriate for children of other faiths. It was already appropriate, because the Bible was for everybody. Martha’s comparison of a BiS class with a church
community revealed an underlying assumption that the assembled children either were already, or were potentially, Christian believers. The presumptive validity of Christian belief over families’ existing faith perspectives did not inhere within a liberal Christian or egalitarian liberal discourse. It was inconsistent with the protection of diversity and with the rights of parents and children to freedom of religion and belief.

While all the BiS teachers interviewed were clear that it was not their role to evangelise, all intimated a hope that children would come to belief in God at a later stage and that their role in school was to sow a seed of faith. In interview David Mulholland, then National Advisor for BiS at the Churches Education Commission, stated this explicitly:

> We talk in terms, on the training programme, of: “You're sowing a seed.” Whether it grows and fertilises and develops is not our concern, and it’s not. We can’t . . . do that . . . but we can sow the seed. And unless the seed is there, well there’s never going to . . . nothing is ever going to happen. [. . .] So if we can sow some seeds [. . .] hopefully the children will . . . think about it? Maybe not always then, sometimes later on in life.  

Sowing a seed of Christian faith in a secular school, where children of different faith backgrounds were present, was self-evidently appropriate within a conservative or evangelising Christian discourse.  

At Kereru Primary School, in Southland, I was able to observe a BiS lesson and interview the BiS co-ordinator. The lesson focus, based on a passage from Philippians, was on “working together to solve problems”. While such a topic would inhere within the secular rationalist and egalitarian liberal interpretation of values teaching, this class reinforced the message that working together is what Jesus wants “us” to do. The characters in the story from Philippians are engaged in spreading the news about Jesus, “So it was important that they could work together well, wasn’t it?” Just as was noted at the Catholic schools, the value being taught was unreflectively embedded in Christian belief. The song, “Jesus loves me this I know, because the Bible tells me so”, and the expectation that all children assent to the prayer, below, inhaled within both a conservative Christian and an evangelising Christian discourse:

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31 See above, page 113, for David Mulholland’s published views on schools as mission fields. In interview, David reiterated his assertion that sowing a seed is not the same as evangelism and stated that the article had been intended to recruit more BiS volunteers. David was dismissed by the CEO, Simon Greening, in response to the SEN campaign’s criticism of his views.  
Ok, can we just close our eyes please? [whispered]
Dear Lord, thank you that Paul and Barnabus worked together, and that others were prepared to help them, and work with them. We just pray that you will help us to work together and to do a much better job than we could on our own. And I just thank you for this wonderful group of children. And I just pray that the children and Miss [name] have a great weekend, a safe and happy weekend. In Christ's name. Amen

Children and teacher: Amen

The class teacher sat at the back of the room marking books throughout the lesson but during the song she came to sit at the front of the class with her work, joining in the song and prayer. In this way she, as representative of both the school and education system, may be seen to have imbued the evangelising Christian message at the end of the lesson with institutional power. The expectation of whole class participation in an explicitly Christian prayer, and the participation of the class teacher, evidenced a required and institutionally endorsed embodiment of Christian belief through religious observance in this lesson.

An interview with Wayne, the BiS co-ordinator in Kereru School, confirmed that teaching children to have a relationship with God was imperative to his work:

This is to give the children a basis in spirituality [. . .]. It's not teaching faith so much as a relationship with God [. . .]. Many people say: “I'm going to leave it ‘til the children are older, and adults, and can make their own decisions.” OK—what are they going to make that decision on? Unless they've been exposed to it?

But Wayne was unequivocal that what children needed to be exposed to was a form of Christianity which involved belief in Biblical inerrancy and Creationism:

We've had some really interesting . . . debates, generally, about Creationism [. . .] and how, well . . . . when you consider the number of scientists that say evolution is so flawed . . . that it actually—and it is, too—Evolution is actually a religion [. . .].

So what would you be saying to the children about that?
I say: “Well, look—in the Bible I believe we've got an eye-witness account. And this is what I believe.” And I explain what an eye-witness account is, and start talking about how God created everything. Hmm . . .
And, even though it might sound difficult to believe that this could happen, we have to remember that God is all-powerful.

Wayne also explained his approach to Muslim children in his Bible class:

With the Muslim children, when they stay in class, I do not show disrespect to what they've already been exposed to, but try and get them to understand that Isa is perhaps more than what the Qur’an contains.
Wayne’s assertion that he was not disrespectful to other religions was undermined by his acknowledged attempts to persuade Muslims of the truth of the Bible over the Qur’an. He voiced strong opinions about Islam, stating that the teachings of Islam and Christianity are “totally opposed” to each other. Such comments position Wayne within an evangelising discourse, in which children are strongly encouraged to accept the beliefs being promoted even though they may conflict with the beliefs of their family or the child’s developing judgemental rationality.

Wayne had been teaching religious instruction classes in Kereru School since 1988. While he admitted that some parents have challenged his ideas, the school had never done so. Wayne’s teaching approach arguably breached the CEC’s own Code of Expectations which required volunteers to:

Accept that the purpose of CRE is to educate children about Christian beliefs and values; a CRE teacher must not use their position to engage in evangelism [. . .]. Respect the variety of experiences and beliefs represented among the students in the class (and their parents/caregivers).  

While the CEC, David Mulholland and all the BiS volunteers interviewed fervently denied any evangelising intention in Bible-in-Schools lessons, they appeared to be resisting an evangelical Christian construction of evangelism, in which children might be encouraged to make an on-the-spot confession of faith in order to be “saved”. However, the commonly-stated intention to sow seeds of faith in state schools would inhere within the evangelising Christian discourse as defined in Chapter Four. There was a clear intention and assumption in resources and lesson plans that children would develop a Christian faith, in due course, as a result of this teaching. From a critical liberal perspective, this was evangelism and faith formation and not conceptual knowledge of Christianity.

As has been stated, many of the interviewees were anxious to resist any association of Bible-in-Schools with an evangelising intention but several offered examples of volunteers in other schools where they felt this line had been crossed. For example Janet, a parent at Pukeko School, mentioned that she knew of “a school [in Christchurch] where ‘Hell-fire and damnation’ was being preached. And the parents became very aware of that and got very ‘up in arms’.” Also, at Pukeko School, teacher Rosalind described teaching that her own children had experienced:

We had problems in Nelson, in a school that they went to where one of the teachers was Hell and damnation [. . .]. This particular lady [. . .], she had been doing it for years. The school itself didn’t have the heart to take her out. But she was upsetting a lot of children, and she was talking about the End of the World, and what was going to happen—and they had to make a decision now! [. . .] They were going home with these horror stories. And that lady was doing a few schools.

Beverly, the principal at Korimako School recounted similarly inappropriate teaching in a previous school:

In past years, I have seen things where you have had kids coming out of lessons being completely terrified and out of their minds because the Holy Spirit was coming to get them. The Holy Spirit was going to turn them into boiling water and all this sort of carry on: “You’re going to burn in Hell.” All this sort of thing.

These examples indicate that, whatever the stated intentions of the Churches Education Commission, the system of volunteer teachers operating in New Zealand has left children exposed to teaching which is manifestly inconsistent with the protection of diversity and which fails to respect freedom of religions and beliefs. But an in-house programme at another case study school may indicate that an acceptance of confessional forms of religious instruction is even more widespread.

**Values at Takahe School**

Takahe school was recruited for my research because it was one of the few in Southland that did not have a BiS programme. However in interview, Frank, the principal, and Grace, the deputy principal, were clear that Christian values and beliefs were implicit in the work of Takahe school. The principal stated that he was active in a local evangelical church, as were several families in the school. Although BiS had not taken place at Takahe for years, a fortnightly values class was run by Jack, a teacher aide and former church youth leader, throughout the school. A primary conservative Christian discourse informed the thinking of the senior management of this school, restricting the conceptualisation of both religious education and spiritual education to religious instruction, the aims of which, I was told, were covered by the Values class. But both Grace and Frank were anxious to point out that, as a secular school, they could not teach about religious beliefs. As Grace stated: “We don’t address . . . God issues.”

Both Grace and Frank constructed personal belief and behaviour as more authentic than institutional religion. But for both it was axiomatic that children should learn to embody Christian values either through the modelling of behaviour of Christians on the staff—
described as a “fifth column” by Frank—or through making implicit links to faith through the values programme, as Grace described:

Here’s the other interesting thing too that happens, and it doesn't even need to be talked about. The children themselves will start to, I guess, relate these values to their own lives and their own beliefs and what's happening with them [...] and they connect it with the God aspect, without you having to even say it. And I can honestly say in my class there are children that have just come out with uh, what it means to them, and their relationship with God and what Jack has said—they've connected up all the dots: values—God—them.

Another teacher aide and parent, Jane, described how Jack wove matters of faith into his values class:

And it’s all about respect and responsibility. So . . . and he does all the core values and he brings God into it all the time. . .

Does he?
in a . . . in a very round-about way, but he does. Yes, he . . . he does. And sometimes um, if they can bring God into it—um through a story and stuff—then they do, yeah. So the kids are getting it without getting it, anyway.

Jack declined the opportunity to be interviewed but provided some of his resources for me to look at. Jack drew on materials largely from United Kingdom-based assembly resource websites for images, video clips, stories, activities and worksheets on specific values. The resources were certainly far less confessional in nature than BiS resources observed elsewhere. But there was an implicit, rather than explicit tone of faith, such as in one lesson on health in which examples from Christian cultural heritage such as Michelangelo, the Sistine Chapel and the sculpture of David were used to encourage children to think of themselves as created beings, a work in progress.

More telling was the effusive way Grace described the effect of these classes in terms of the developing religious beliefs of all the children in the school. She explained how Jack’s work, without explicitly promoting Christian belief, was implicitly facilitating such conversations. This, she felt, was a more effective way to deal with religion in school than a BiS programme:

I had a wee girl say to me yesterday, [. . .] “You know what Miss B?” she said, “I prayed to God last night to really help me with my work.” And I said “That is absolutely awesome.” And she said, “Do you know? I know he’ll listen to me.” So I think what happens here is, through this values programme it begins to open up that spiritual aspect of a child [. . .]. So if that spiritual aspect is tied up with Christianity it just starts to unravel it, and unlock it more and more and more [. . .]. Even a child that has not had such experiences with church, with God, it’s incredible how they start to
think about things—and they hear other kids talking about it, and so automatically they’re drawn to ask questions about it [. . .]. So it’s not as if you have to stand up there and hammer God and the Bible—because actually you don’t. I think it happens when you have the right sort of foundation in a school.

Here, Grace appeared to acknowledge a kind of hidden curriculum where children were encouraged to make connections between the Christian faith and the values teaching in class. The values programme was grounded in the implicit and unstated Christian beliefs of the senior management and teaching assistant running the lessons. There was a prevailing conservative/evangelising Christian discourse within this secular state school into which children from non-church families may have been drawn. The school did not mention the values class in policy, in the school charter or on the website. No parental consent was requested for the programme and there was no opt-out procedure. Frank informed me that this was a deliberate measure to avoid unnecessary discussions with ill-informed parents. Grace insisted that there was no need for an opt-out provision: “Everybody, everybody agrees with Christian values, or values. I don’t think there’s any parent that would say, ‘I don’t want my child to be respectful.’” The assumption, by senior leadership, that Christian values (and implicitly, beliefs) were appropriate for all the children positioned policy at Takahe school within a conservative/evangelising Christian discourse.

From a critical realist perspective there were clear material constraints on freedom of religions and beliefs in Takahe School. The lack of transparency over the programme content and implicit evangelising intention meant that parents in this state school were completely uninformed about this aspect of the curriculum. The positioning of the programme as secular values teaching, rather than religious instruction, led the senior management of the school to assert that there was no legal requirement for opt-out provision. This positioning also meant that the primary conservative/evangelising Christian discursive imperatives, evident in the interviews with the principal, deputy principal and teacher aide could exercise influence over the teaching programme in the school and were immune from any form of critique from parents, board members or other staff members. In Galston’s terms, the promotion of Christian belief irrespective of family background constituted coercion: a form of intolerance inimical to the promotion of diversity within the liberal nation state. A concurrent prohibition of teaching about other religious perspectives potentially impeded the development of both social and judgemental rationality in matters of religion at this school. From a Foucaultian perspective, an illiberal form of governmentality was in operation with no opportunity for parents or youngsters to critique or challenge proceedings.
There is no way of knowing, from my research, how widespread such home-grown values programmes are in New Zealand primary schools. What this case study does demonstrate is that the secular clause of 1877 offers little or no protection to children from the contingent discursive imperatives of school principals and boards of trustees when school programmes, embedded in religious belief, are presented to parents as educational values teaching. This is one of the key ways in which confessional religious instruction appears to be reproduced in the New Zealand education system, as I discuss below.

**Part Two: Institutional Reproduction of Religious Instruction**

Confessional Christian instruction was accommodated and reproduced, in the New Zealand educational context, in statute and through longevity of practice. As Sonia Glogowski at the Ministry of Education stated:

> This Act has been in place for quite some time. [...] And we’re not in the . . . well it’s not my particular . . . at the moment to seek a change in the Act [...] I’m not aware of, and I’ve probed quite significantly and I’ve also contacted Legal, and they’ve said, well they haven’t had any strong evidence to say that the Act is not working in its current form.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the legislation and practice were established in a time of much greater religious consensus. Yet it seemed, from my research, that there was no willingness to revisit the issue either by the Ministry, the NZEI or other educationalists interviewed. In this section I explore the ways in which religious instruction was reproduced and maintained.

**Catholic Schools**

The principals in the Catholic schools interviewed saw their role as one not only of religious formation of the children but, to a significant degree, of parents who would be drawn back into church life through their children’s participation in religious activities. The school was positioned at the heart of the Catholic community and instrumental in the reproduction of the institution of the Catholic Church. But, to a large degree, parents were complicit in the governmental techniques employed as part of the children’s education. In each school, 5% of the roll had no Catholic affiliation. This meant that 95% were drawn from families with Catholic connections. In order to further legitimise confessional instruction and religious observances all parents were required to sign a form on enrolment to give permission for their child to participate in such activities, such as this one at St Margaret’s:

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34 The 2012 SEN survey covered only “religious instruction”.
I/we the undersigned, accept as a condition of enrolment that the herein named pupil will participate in the general school programme that gives St Margaret’s Primary School its special character.

Parents who were not prepared to sign the form could not enrol their child at the school. This approach was staunchly defended by Catholic parents, such as Kathryn at St Margaret’s:

> When we do the New Parents’ Morning Tea, I've had people say to me: “How do I get them out of the religious bit of it?” [. . .] And I just say, “Well, I'm sorry, you just should not be here because that is not going to happen!”

Neil Laurenson, Manager of Catholic Education Services, confirmed in interview that this was standard practice in Catholic schools in New Zealand. By enrolling children from Catholic families and enforcing the participation of those whose motivation for enrolment was not Catholic religious belief, these schools reproduced a school environment in which confessional religious instruction alone was considered appropriate even when the school was situated in a very diverse area. Alternative educational or religious discourses could obtain no currency at all in the subject area of religion. Teaching about other faiths was positioned as inappropriate in this environment. Opting out of religious instruction or observances was effectively prohibited. In neither of the schools were parents informed about their right of withdrawal under the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975. There was broad agreement that the child’s right to freedom of religions and beliefs was overruled by the will of their parents that they receive a Catholic education. As the principal at St Margaret’s stated:

> No child can make an adult decision. Our parents would say you bring your children into faith, but when they're an adult they can make their own mind up. But they want them to have that [. . .]. I'm not a big believer in your rights as a child [. . .]. I just think it's too PC for me.

**Secular State Schools**

My research indicates that, in the schools with BiS, a narrative of social consensus either within the whole community or the host Pākehā community was in evidence. I was told by each of the three principals that there was considerable support for the programme in the school. David Mulholland, at the CEC, indicated that this support was widespread. He was...

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35 Attendance at Catholic primary school may be driven by discursive imperatives other than Catholic faith. Interviewees pointed out that the Catholic secondary schools have very high pass rates, good standards of discipline and a more middle-class make-up. Catholic secondary schools are often single sex, which may also attract adherents of other religions. Pupils are more likely to be successful in obtaining a place in a Catholic secondary school if they have first attended a Catholic primary school. Catholic primary and secondary schools in New Zealand are oversubscribed. The social capital accrued by attendance at church schools has been noted in the United Kingdom and United States contexts: Carolyn King, “Faith Schools in Pluralistic Britain: Debate, Discussion, and Considerations”, *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 25, no. 2 (2010): 281-299; Anthony S. Bryk, Peter Blakey Holland, and Valerie E. Lee, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).
explicit that there was more demand for volunteers from schools across the country than could be met. Evidence of a wider perception of social consensus came from interviews with Sonia Glogowski at the Ministry, Ian Leckie at the NZEI and Joris de Bres at the HRC who each recognised the legitimacy of the programme with reference not just to the Act of 1964, but to the programme’s support within a school community. Indeed, the perceived widespread support for the programme was frequently given as a reason not to revise the legislation. In this way the perception of community consensus imbued the programme with a social legitimacy, through which it was further reproduced. Legitimacy for confessional religious instruction in a religiously plural community appeared to be derived from institutionalised policies and practices constituted within a conservative Christian discourse.

Christian Values and Heritage: Conservative Christian Discourse

The conservative Christian discourse was evident in the way in which the programme was described by the principals of the three schools running BiS. There was a strong sense in which Christian values were seen to be universally appropriate for children in these state schools. The self-evident aim of such teaching was the governmental reproduction of Christian morality and civil society. At Kereru School in Southland, the Religious Education Policy explicitly stated that the purpose of BiS was:

To ensure that all children have an opportunity to obtain a guided understanding of Biblical principles, Christian values, standards and beliefs, within a structured environment.

In interview, principal Penny was clear that:

This is around teaching those kids good Christian values which is part of my belief system as well. So I like that [. . .]. I think they have a lovely time, with lovely people teaching them good values [. . .]. I just think the principle of having good Christian values is great to have within a school.

At Korimako Primary in Auckland, while there was no policy document on religious instruction, Beverly, the principal was equally supportive of the Bible programme, again drawing on her own religious background to justify the teaching of Christian values in her school:

The programme is very values-based all those beautiful, beautiful stories that came out of the Bible that I grew up with, because I grew up Anglican and going to Sunday School and learning all these Bible stories.

At Pukeko School in Dunedin, principal Francis invoked the conservative Christian construction of Christian heritage as a rationale for BiS:
We are a Christian-based society. All of our rules and laws within our society are based on Christianity. And the guidelines, I would think, were probably fairly consistent, actually, with what we would expect in the playground or classroom . . . as to what we would be teaching about in [BiS].

Such views were also reflected amongst many of the parents interviewed in these schools. Within this discourse, it was axiomatic that it was good for all children to develop Christian values and learn about the Christian heritage of New Zealand and that this had widespread support. Bible-in-Schools was unreflectively constructed as the only appropriate way to achieve these ends and was uncritically positioned as a “public good”, i.e., as presumptively valid. This view appeared to have considerable currency in New Zealand, evidenced by media coverage of the debates surrounding the SEN campaign, which frequently constructed BiS as self-evidently beneficial to New Zealand children and concurrently positioned dissenting voices as unreasonable, extreme and misguided.36

The difficulty for the critical liberal in accepting the narrative of social consensus is in the discursive disjunction between the “commonsense” conservative Christian promotion of values and heritage (which may indeed have broad appeal) and the evangelising Christian imperatives of seed planting, introducing children to a relationship with God, and expectation of uncritical acceptance of the truth of the Bible, as evidenced in the materials and interviews with CEC volunteers. As I have shown, the material reality of the BiS resources and lessons is that they do not primarily promote values or Christian heritage, but a form of Christian belief which does not have broad currency even within the major Christian denominations. Indeed, my research indicated that the system of volunteers did not safeguard against fundamentalist and Creationist teaching. It would be hard to make a case for widespread support for such religious instruction amongst the general population. For this reason, I have positioned the “perception of social consensus” as a part of, and evidence for, the conservative Christian discourse itself rather than a self-evident material reality.

This being the case, there is a pressing need to account for the apparently widespread endorsement of BiS and its continued accommodation within the education system in New

Zealand. My research indicates that there are discursive, institutional and material constraints on the information that parents receive about the BiS programme which they appear to support. These constraints undermine the conception of social consensus and cast doubt upon the programme’s social legitimacy.

Redescription as New Zealand Curriculum Values Teaching

My research indicates that one way in which confessional religious instruction in secular New Zealand schools was reproduced was through redescription of the programme as teaching which is consistent with secular Curriculum Values, with educational content, and therefore appropriate to children of all backgrounds. This gave the programme increased legitimacy from a parental perspective.

The language of “Christian values-based education for kiwi kids” was used on CEC materials for BiS. Simon Greening repeatedly stated in radio and television interviews, in 2012, that the programme taught Bible-based values which link to the eight core values of the New Zealand Curriculum. Promoting Christian values as Kiwi values, the CEC positioned its programme as mainstream and inclusive. Promotional material for parents emphasised the “educationally sound” curriculum. Christian values teaching would begin with students’ interests and experience [. . .] allowing them to learn by exploration and discovery” and assist in developing “critical skills”.

David Mulholland explained, in interview, that the “Life Choices” curriculum was designed precisely with New Zealand Curriculum values and key competencies in mind, and that the CEC supplemented the Australian-based CRE materials with additional information to match the teaching to New Zealand Curriculum expectations. These are known as MYTR sheets: Making Your Teaching Relevant (to the New Zealand Curriculum). In such ways the CEC may be seen to position its “unashamedly Christian” approach to religious instruction as “acceptable to New Zealand State Schools” and “very appropriate for non-Christian children in the school environment”. By co-opting educational discourses the CEC was able to imbue its programme with social legitimacy. But the construction of confessional religious instruction as general values teaching was also used by the three principals of schools with BiS to redescibe

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38 Such as interviews on Radio Live on 13 July 2012 and Breakfast on TV1, 18 July 2012.
39 CEC, CRE in New Zealand State Schools.
the programme in interview. This was mirrored by Maria, the principal of Kakariki School in Auckland, which ran BiS: 41

And when I am enrolling people I do say that this is Christianity, but it's—I say, “It's very generic and it's good values” and all of those types of things.

Ian Leckie, at the NZEI, also redescribed confessional religious instruction as general values classes, and could see no reason to review the practice:

It would be broadly informative, values-based, and as a result of that uh, you know, my personal experience was even the people who had non-religious beliefs actually were happy for their kids to be included. Because everybody liked what was being talked about and saw that as being general life-type skills and thinking.

A Hindu teacher at Korimako School, Anisha, whose children attended BiS, redescribed this confessional Christian programme as teaching liberal values. She implied that the Muslim children who opted out, at this school, were too conservative in their beliefs; that it was their religion rather than Bible-in-Schools which was dividing the school community:

And it's more values-based than in pushing the whole: “This is the only religion.” . . . Which is why I said to my boys, “No, do it, because it's not saying there's only one religion.” [. . .] [The Muslims] are quite strong about their belief. Whereas I see all the other . . . some . . . I don’t know what their beliefs are but um . . . Indian children are still doing “Bible”.

By constructing the teaching as liberal and inclusive, and encouraging her sons to attend, Anisha positioned herself as liberal-minded and her family as integrated into liberal New Zealand society. If attendance at BiS had become a marker of integration for some immigrant communities, this may have been serving to reproduce confessional religious instruction in religiously plural, secular schools. In this way, attendance at BiS may have operated as a disciplinary technique within a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality.

At Pukeko School, in Dunedin, the policy for Bible-in-Schools reflected a liberal Christian discourse, redescribing confessional religious instruction as spiritual education:

Rationale: This school believes that the spiritual dimension is a worthwhile part of the educative process.
Purposes: To provide an opportunity to cater for the spiritual dimension of children.
To introduce the children to the link between a spiritual heritage and the values society upholds.

41 This was not one of the case study schools. I interviewed the principal of this school as hers was one of perhaps three, in Auckland, holding a separate class for Muslims at Bible-in-School time.
To acknowledge the importance of the spiritual dimension in history and for many people today.

Guidelines: [. . .] 2. The Religious Instruction offered will be Christian education with information on other mainstream religions.

The construction of religious instruction as spiritual education may serve to position this teaching as liberal and perhaps less dogmatic in the eyes of the intended readership. The universalising construct of the spiritual dimension appears inclusive and child-centred, rather than religion-centred and confessional. The redescription of the teaching as introducing heritage, values, and history served to inscribe the teaching with educational legitimacy. The statement indicating that mainstream religions would be taught reflects the inclusive imperatives of the liberal Christian discourse espoused by Sarah, the CRE co-ordinator. These imperatives were not reflected in the programme materials, which dealt exclusively with Christian teaching. This redescription effectively served to mislead parents about the content of the BiS programme.

In the schools with BiS, a confessional Christian approach to teaching religion appeared to be self-evidently appropriate and beneficial to the children, whereas information about other religions and beliefs was disqualified. But in all three cases (Pukeko, Korimako and Kereru) — five including the values class at Takahe School and BiS at Kakariki School, mentioned above—classes were promoted to parents by school staff as education in “good values”, rather than religious formation classes promoting Christian beliefs. In each case, the stated institutional intention of BiS—upon which its presumptive validity was based—was different from the intention of the CEC. The institutional governmentality in operation was one in which young people should absorb messages about compliance to normative standards of behaviour and liberal dispositions towards others: a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality. But by positioning BiS as educational, rather than confessional in approach, educationalists at Pukeko, Kereru, Korimako and Kakariki Schools effectively endorsed and reproduced Christian religious instruction and formation classes and facilitated the CEC’s conservative/evangelising Christian governmentality in these secular state schools. Indeed, some principals, teachers and boards of trustees were clearly in sympathy with the CEC’s intentions. The redescription of BiS, in which schools and educationalists were complicit, may have placed material constraints on the ability of parents to give informed consent to their children’s attendance. I discuss this further below.

Paul Morris, in interview, was in agreement that the materials in use in schools were not accurately described:
Parents don't seem to be aware of what is being taught [. . .]. And the Churches Education Commission is often ambiguous about this [. . .]. I was told it was a programme that was designed for all pupils that is non-confessional, but when you have a look at any of the teaching materials this just isn't true.

Joris de Bres, at the HRC, agreed that the CEC were “pretty disingenuous about what goes on. It’s quite a slick operation.” And Peter Harrison of the SEN raised the same concerns:

They were sold as teaching . . . what I considered “secular” values: you know—love, tolerance, um, understanding, multiculturalism [. . .]. It’s about, you know, teaching kids all these wonderful things . . . that you’d have to be pretty insane to want to disagree with. The problem is, is that they get into the class and the actual syllabus—yes, it kind of touches on those things, but the main focus is teaching about God.

The lack of clarity over the nature of the teaching was of concern to Karima, a Muslim parent interviewed in Dunedin. She denied that all parents would consider Christian values to be appropriate for their children and suggested that the kinds of values promoted in schools should not be specific to any religion:

But then they are values like discipline, manners, which I think are across no matter what religion you are [. . .]. So those values [. . .] are not Christian. Those values should be, like, values for everybody!

Mark, an atheist and opponent of BiS at Pukeko primary school, was clear that confessional Christian religious instruction was not what he expected at his children’s secular state school:

They consider their job to be more one of religious formation and this just seems to me to be quite inappropriate in an education system that by law was meant to be free, compulsory and secular.

From egalitarian liberal and secular rationalist perspectives the concerns of parents who do not wish their children to receive confessional religious instruction in a secular school are legitimate. However, for the principals involved and key stakeholders from the MOE, the NZEI and the HRC, the sufficiency of the current legislation to protect religious rights of parents and children appeared to be self-evident. Their uncritical approach to current policy served to further reproduce confessional religious instruction in New Zealand schools.

Restricted Consultation

A shared assumption of the representatives of the NZEI, the MOE and the HRC interviewed was that secular schools which chose to run Bible-in-Schools programmes did so on the basis of regular consultation with the parents at the school:
[A School] must, under the Act, consult with its community around this. So in fact, the decision for inclusion of religious instruction, actually, is the result of consultation [. . .]. It’s ultimately on behalf of the school community, and the school and board of trustees make a decision. And then it moves on from there to the next review time. So it’s a fairly . . . I think it’s a fairly set process. *Ian Leckie, NZEI*

It’s actually the school board of trustees and principal who are agreeing, or not agreeing—whatever the case may be—to have the group in school [. . .]. They have an obligation to ensure that the community has been consulted and parents have the right to withdraw their child during that time. *Sonia Glogowski, MOE*

The fundamental thing really has to be that the school has to make a democratic, consultants decision about it [. . .]. I think the programme should only run if there’s a consent of the school community, that’s my fundamental premise [. . .]. Um if a majority want something, but a minority don’t, they have a right for their decision to be respected. *Joris de Bres, HRC*

However, there are currently no ministerial guidelines for schools on how frequently such consultation should take place, the form it should take, or the level of support which might constitute a sufficient majority for the programme to run. The CEC has recently suggested a three-year cycle is appropriate. My research indicates some of the material constraints on this consultation process.

In Southland, at Kereru School which ran a BiS programme, Penny, the principal admitted that she did not consult parents very frequently about the continuation of the programme:

> It’s probably a good thing to do annually. And I guess I don’t. Yeah, it’s not something that I have . . . It’s not something that’s there that I should do every year . . . and I would be disappointed if . . . I mean, it just kind of goes on. . . . I don’t really want to ask them because I think it’s a good thing to happen. So if you start asking them, then what do you do? Then you’re left with a dilemma.

Penny, operating within a conservative Christian discourse, considered the programme to be good for the children at her school. While she knew she should consult the parents, it was simpler to avoid any undesirable outcome of consultation and to allow the programme to roll on each year. From a critical realist perspective, the principal may be seen to place a material constraint on the right of parents to be consulted about religious instruction.

Similarly at Korimako School, in Auckland, Bible-in-Schools had been running since the 1950s. The school reportedly had a high proportion of evangelical Christians on the board of trustees.

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but, at the same time, a significant proportion of Muslim children on roll. Approximately one-third of the school stayed at home for the first half-hour on a Friday morning while religious instruction took place. The principal, Beverly, recognised the potential divisiveness of the current provision. She had attempted to instigate a more egalitarian approach to teaching religion—in line with policies of cultural inclusion in the school—by requesting volunteers to teach religious instruction from other religious communities. The conservative Christian board of trustees had emphatically overruled this, employing a conservative Christian form of governmentality, over both the principal and children, to ensure that the Christian faith alone was promoted at Korimako School. Beverly admitted, in interview, that she would rather stop the programme altogether than only have Christian instruction, but as principal she felt she must operate as the “mouthpiece of the board”. She was under a material constraint to maintain the status quo:

To a large extent [. . .] I would, as principal, have said “Enough! I am canning the whole lot!” And I am still very tempted to do that, except that I would probably lose my job!

Beverly avoided answering my question about how often the community were consulted on this issue, insisting that the majority of the parents wanted the programme to run.

Numerous attempts were made to interview members of the Muslim community at Korimako School, but the repeated message (via the principal) was that no one was prepared to go on record—even anonymously—as appearing critical of the current system. This may indicate a material constraint on consultation exercises that might take place at this school. It was clearly difficult for this minority religious group to be seen to criticise a programme with the ostensible endorsement of the board, the principal and the majority Pākehā community.

When I described this situation to Race Relations Commissioner Joris de Bres, he was clear that the rights of this Muslim Community had not been respected by the board of trustees and that this case should have been brought to the Human Rights Commission. It was evident to me, however, that the same material constraint which prevented Muslim parents from participating in my research would have prevented parents from “rocking the boat” for their children and community by formally complaining to the HRC. While the parents could silently exercise their right to withdraw their children from the classes, as an immigrant community reluctant to draw attention to themselves or to appear to be critical of the “host” community, these parents were materially unable to voice a complaint about confessional Christian instruction classes being run during the school day, with no alternative provision for their
children. This school therefore exemplified two further forms of material constraint on parental consultation. Firstly, the conservative Christian perspective of the board of trustees appeared to have constrained the more egalitarian liberal imperative of the principal to respect the needs of the whole school community. Secondly, the imperative within the Muslim community to protect itself from censure by the wider community appeared to have constrained any imperative to protect its own rights as a religious minority. This, potentially loud, dissenting voice may not have been heard in any school consultation process as a result.

At Pukeko School, in Dunedin, the policy document on religious instruction stated that consultation took place every three years. This was confirmed by the principal and BiS co-ordinator. A parent, Mark, was a vocal critic of Bible-in-Schools and raised an issue which he felt the school, at the time, was not addressing:

> I did suggest to Frances [the principal] that it might be good to—if people were going to have a consultation about this, as the school does regularly—to have an evening at which, you know those who teach the course, could actually tell us what they’re doing, because, in fact, we don’t get given any information by the school. I would have had to go and search it out . . . so I’ve just relied on what the girls have told me.43

Mark indicated that a further material constraint on parent consultation procedure may be a lack of information for parents, upon which to base a decision.

The constraints on parental consultation identified at Kereru, Korimako and Pukeko schools served to destabilise the self-evident legitimacy for BiS, and protection of religious rights, secured—in the view of key stakeholders above—by the consultation process. These material constraints on the consultation process served to reproduce confessional religious instruction in these secular state schools in line with either an institutional secular (neo)-liberal governmentality or the conservative/evangelising Christian discursive imperatives of principals and boards of trustees and the CEC, rather than the informed consent of the parents.

Restricted Information

In contrast to the Catholic primary schools visited, none of the four case study schools running BiS/values classes provided any information about the classes on their websites or school charters. Neither was BiS covered in their ERO inspection reports. It would have been quite possible for new parents to begin an enrolment process for their children at these schools without any knowledge of the programme running.

43 The information evening has now become part of the consultation exercise at Pukeko School.
At schools with BiS, principals informed me that the programme was mentioned in the enrolment interview and parents were told that they may opt out. As previously discussed, principals and teachers often gave their own interpretation of the programme to parents, sometimes apparently based more on their own intentions for the programme than on first-hand knowledge of the materials in use in their school. None of the four principals interviewed who ran Bible-in-Schools programmes appeared to know the name of the booklets or resources used in their school.\(^4^4\) It was left to the parents themselves to seek out information about the programme.

One parent, Sam, interviewed at Kereru School could not remember having been given any information, at any stage, about Bible-in-Schools and was surprised to learn that her child had attended:

> How much do parents know about what happens?

Well you don’t. Well, see, the only way I knew he was going to be doing it was because it came home on his school fees [. . .]. I can’t remember seeing anything about it. Or him saying he had to have permission or anything . . . and then it was just like, “Oh . . . it’s started!”\(^4^5\)

A teacher, Annette, who positioned the programme co-ordinated by Wayne, at the same school, as “harmless”, “important” and “really valuable” did not think it was necessary for parents to have specific information on Bible-in-Schools any more than on the rest of the curriculum:

> Do you think [parents] have a good idea of what takes place?

Possibly not the content of the programme. I guess there's an element of trust. So, just as they don't necessarily know every part of the curriculum that we deliver, as teachers of the New Zealand Curriculum, I guess there's a curriculum for Bible-in-Schools and I guess there's an element of trust.

The same imperatives—either secular (neo)-liberal or conservative Christian—which informed the principals’ and boards’ decisions not to consult parents about running the programme, at least at Kereru school, may also have informed a decision not to give parents information about BiS. Parents should suspend their judgemental rationality and put their trust in the

\(^4^4\) In David Hines’ 2012 survey, mentioned above, 41 of the 578 schools who were running religious instruction classes stated that they did not know which programme was used in the school. Additionally, 80 schools had not supplied the name of the resources used although they had religious instruction classes. A further 18 schools apparently did not know which organisation provided the religious instruction in their school. See Hines, ”Wesleyschair.net”.

\(^4^5\) Secular state schools are free but “voluntary donations” are regularly requested to assist with school expenses, including the cost of BiS resources.
school to act in the children’s best interests. But, for Sam, without any information there was nothing upon which to base her trust:

          So, do you know, it’s that whole trust thing with people? You don’t even know who’s teaching your kids this stuff. You have no idea who they are. […] You don’t have any background information on them […] You have no idea.

Perceived Institutional Endorsement

In all three schools running BiS, parents who expressed support for the programme (and sometimes criticised those who opted out) also stated that they had neither been given nor sought out, information on the content of the programme itself. For most this was not a problem because, like Janet at Pukeko School, “I trusted them that it would be appropriate and suitable.” Sometimes this trust was based on a complacency derived from the longevity of BiS. Beverly, the principal at Korimako School, stated her understanding of parents’ attitudes as: “‘Well I went to this school, we have always had RE and you learn about God and Jesus so it won’t be any different.’ That is their feeling and sort of their take on it.” At Kereru School in Southland, teacher Annette agreed that parents gave their consent without much thought:

          I don’t think they really think twice about it. I guess it’s probably been part of their culture when they were at school. And it’s not doing any harm. I think that’s what some of them think: “It’s not harming my kid to have this stuff.”

Sometimes it was based on a not unreasonable assumption that a programme running during school hours, having been operating with the consent of the teaching profession, must have educational value. The materiality of institutional accommodation appeared to reproduce a perception of the programme’s legitimacy. Obfuscation around the construct of school “closure” may have contributed to this.

Educationalists perceived the school to be “closed” during religious instruction, thus protecting the secular clause of the 1877 and 1964 Acts and resisting any suggestion of endorsement or approval by the school. As Ian Leckie put it:

          The state system closes down to allow religious instruction to occur and then reopens at the conclusion of that to carry on again with the school’s curriculum. So it’s seen as outside the school’s curriculum, um in terms of its delivery.

But from a critical realist perspective, it was evidently the discursive construction and not the material reality of closure which was important in the preservation of the secular clause. The closed classroom differed in no respect from any other open classroom in the school. To any
parent or researcher—indeed to the children themselves—the classroom was manifestly open. The school was neither required to document the closure nor keep records of the hours that classrooms had been closed for religious instruction, for inspection. This closure was of a fundamentally different nature to school closures of any other kind, which must be accounted for under Section 65 (2) of the 1989 Education Act. Parents, who had permitted their children to attend the BIS lessons I observed, would have had no way of knowing that the classroom was closed. They were entitled to assume that the teaching taking place had been subject to the usual scrutiny and approval associated with the New Zealand Curriculum. The construct of school closure functioned to protect the secular clause but manifestly failed to prevent children from being exposed to teaching which would have been considered inappropriate in terms of the protection of diversity, of the right to freedom of religions and beliefs and of the integrity of the child as truth-seeker. As I show below, the construct of school closure was used precisely to position responsibility for both the monitoring of BIS resources, and the provision of information to parents, as beyond the remit of secular educationalists. However, it was common for parents to assume, by dint of its institutional accommodation, that the programme carried the endorsement of the Ministry, principal, staff and/or board. This perceived endorsement served to reproduce the prevailing construct of Bible-in-Schools as a public good.

Sue, at Kakapo School in Auckland (speaking about Bible-in-Schools in her children’s previous school), appeared to assume that the programme had been approved for use in a secular school: “I always felt very comfortable with [it] knowing that this material has been passed and has been acceptable.” Others made the assumption that the programme had government approval. Alan, a board member at Korimako School in Auckland, suggested as much in an email to the principal relating to a complaint from a parent:

> The government has also instructed in the curriculum, that it is a requirement for schools to teach principles and values of mercy, trust, respect, patience, tolerance, love and many others, to our children. Correct me if I am wrong, but the CEC curriculum is the government approved mechanism, model and structure, and it is what the Bible so accurately and emphatically describes and shows us how to live these values and virtues if you like a roadmap for living in a society like ours[sic].

Alan’s argument for Christian religious instruction reflected conservative Christian discursive imperatives, but additionally attributed the institutional endorsement of the government and state to the Bible-in-Schools programme.
Simon Greening, at the CEC, also credited the programme with Ministerial approval when he spoke on a Breakfast TV programme in 2012.\footnote{Breakfast, TV1, 18 July 2012. He was later required to retract the statement regarding Ministry approval but insisted he had \textit{believed} this to be the case. If Greening, a trained lawyer, understood this to be true when appointed, this may be evidence of a wider misperception amongst the general population.}

We use a curriculum which has already been approved by the Ministry of Education, it’s been approved by school boards. And this curriculum is linked with the New Zealand Curriculum.

In this way he imbued the BiS programme with the institutional power of the Ministry, the school and the New Zealand Curriculum. Such institutional power served to reproduce a perception of educational validity and legitimacy.

Parents had good reason to believe that their principal and school board had inspected and approved the programme. Statements to this effect appeared in school policies such as the one at Pukeko School, which stated: “The syllabus used will be that approved by the board of trustees.” The policy at Kereru School equally stated: “The curriculum followed will be a recognised religious education publication and shall be approved by the board of trustees for the beginning of each school year.” The CEC website stated: “The principal and board approve the teachers and the teaching material.”\footnote{CEC, “Become a CRE Teacher”, Churches Education Commission website, accessed 30 May 2014, http://www.cec.org.nz/index.php?id=49.} Representatives of the NZEI, the HRC, and the Ministry all stated in interview their belief that programme resources and volunteers were checked and approved by the principal and board of trustees.

Such assurances could account for the very high level of complacency in evidence among parents who allowed their children to attend the classes and who did not feel it necessary to request to see the resources. Parents were justified in believing that the school and/or Ministry was responsible for ensuring that the religious instruction their children received was appropriate to a secular school setting. My research indicates that the trust parents appeared to place in the educational authorities to monitor BiS resources may have been misplaced. There was evidence that the complacency of parents appeared to be mirrored in the approach of the trustees. At Kereru School, for example, Penny described her board’s approach to monitoring resources:
And it's like: who is taking responsibility for that? Because I would have to say to you that our board doesn't take great responsibility around it either. It's something historic that's happened, so: “Yeah, good, fine.”

And David Mulholland at the CEC had reservations about the level of attention that boards of trustees gave to some of the resources in use in schools:

I think, a lot of board of trustees, I'm not so sure they actually sit down and look at it with any degree of carefulness! And they should. And I say they should [. . .]. As a CEC we approve of it as our national offering, but at the end of the day, it's the board of trustees who say: “Yes, these teachers can come and this is the material.”

For some board of trustee members, like Alan at Korimako School, Bible-in-Schools was understood to have ministerial or governmental approval. Under those circumstances, a close inspection of resources would be unnecessary. For others, such as the board at Kereru School, the programme appeared to be waved through each year without close inspection, because it had always run at the school and had general support. In both instances the institutional power of statute, education establishment and longevity of practice, constituted within a conservative Christian discourse, served to imbue Bible-in-Schools with a self-evident legitimacy which was uncritically reproduced by boards of trustees. Concurrently, a dominant authoritarian secular rationalist discourse placed a discursive constraint on teaching professionals in a way which severely limited the accountability of the CEC and its volunteers.

“Don’t Touch It”: Authoritarian Secular Rationalist Discourse

Analysis of interview data of principals and teachers indicated that responsibility for monitoring the BiS material was constrained by an authoritarian secular rationalist construction of “secular” which meant “nothing to do with religion”. This maintained the binary logic of secular education versus religion, discussed above.\(^{48}\) The construct of school closure operated within this discourse to protect the “secular” school staff and curriculum from the taint of religious indoctrination. This construction informed a “hands-off” approach by teachers, principals, the Ministry and the NZEI to both the monitoring of teaching programmes and to the provision of information to parents. The 1912 advice to the education minister portrayed in the cartoon in the frontispiece: “Don’t touch it! Don’t play with edged tools!” appeared to still be applied by educationalists.\(^{49}\) This appeared to shield the CEC and its programme from educational scrutiny.

\(^{48}\) See above, page 74.

\(^{49}\) See above, Figure 1, page ii.
Constraints on Information and Accountability

For example, Ian Leckie at the NZEI was clear that his organisation did not have any responsibility to monitor BiS materials:

*Can I ask you about the level to which your organisation has had the opportunity to look at the resources?*

No. No we haven’t . . . and . . . it’s . . . because it’s not part of the official curriculum because, as I say, schools are closed at that time. You know, NZEI has backed the free public secular education system that’s been in place since the late ’30s.

And Sonia Glogowski was clear that this was not within the remit of the Ministry:

*Has the Ministry actually looked at the resources which are being used?*

No [. . .]. By and large we don't have the time, um, nor do we have the mandate to, I guess look at, and give feedback on materials [. . .]. I mean, schools are closed during that time, so therefore it’s not seen as part of the curriculum.

Representatives of the Ministry, the NZEI and the HRC were clear that it was the responsibility of schools to make sure parents were informed about the nature of the BiS programme. But at Korimako and Kereru Schools both principals and staff positioned this as either unnecessary or inappropriate.

Teacher Annette, at Kereru School, evidenced the way in which the authoritarian secular rationalist construct of school closure could demarcate responsibility for the provision of information to parents:

*I think officially the school is closed during Bible-in-Schools time. So that means that we don’t have any responsibility around that . . . I think. But it’s a fairly open door. Anyone’s welcome into any of our classes at any time.*

Penny, at Kereru School, recognised that parents did not have sufficient information about the BiS programme:

*Parents do sign up for it. But how informed are they? I’d say they definitely are not. We've got a little pamphlet that we put in our information pack and, yeah, I mean I don’t ever get into any debate around that, because I clearly do not think that’s my place to do that. If they asked me, I could tell them that’s my personal opinion. But I don’t see that as part of my job as leader of this school. But no, I think people do it very unknowingly! They wouldn’t have a clue what happens!*

Penny drew a line between her remit, as principal, to provide secular education in the school and the self-evident impropriety of providing information about the religious instruction
classes (which she nonetheless accommodated and endorsed). Her reasoning evidenced an authoritarian secular rationalist discursive construction of secular education. Later in the interview, Penny admitted that parents may not always approve of the lessons taking place in her school:

And then we've got a couple of, you know sort of older ladies who are not so confident and much more structured, and that's just pretty heavy at times and sometimes I see stuff and I think “Oh, far-out! What are those kids learning from that?” It’s just too Godly. And that sounds terrible doesn’t it? [. . .] Well, it's just too far removed from where these kids are. And I'm sure they're following the curriculum, there's nothing about that. But the way it's presented and kids...learning Bible verses...and being rewarded for that sort of thing [. . .]. And I think “Well, hang on!...What is that about?” And “Would these kids’ parents be happy if they knew that’s what their kids were doing?”

These BiS classes and those delivered by Wayne carried, for parents, the institutional power of the school. The school policy on religious instruction stated that the curriculum was “recognised” and “approved by the board of trustees”. The volunteers were “preferably accredited” and participated in “ongoing training and development programmes”. Such assurances lent legitimacy and perceived endorsement to this evangelising Christian teaching and may have materially constrained the right, or perceived need, of parents to withdraw children from the classes.

Operating under discursive constraints, Penny chose not to address her concerns either with the volunteers or with the CEC. She may have been constrained by an authoritarian secular rationalist discourse which would preclude her involvement, as secular principal, in matters of religion. She may also have been reflecting a primary conservative Christian discourse within which Christian values and beliefs were perceived to be good for the children, in spite of the teaching methods employed. Alternatively, an institutional secular (neo)-liberal form of governmentality may have informed a belief that the programme’s social role in reproducing conformity to liberal social norms was more beneficial than harmful. From a critical liberal perspective Penny’s inaction, whatever its cause, may be seen to reproduce the status quo in which parents at her school continued to allow their children to attend inappropriate lessons, the board continued to approve the programme without inspecting it, and no-one was held accountable for the teaching that took place.

When I suggested to Ian Leckie, at the NZEI, that parents may not know enough about the BiS programme, he rejected the idea out of hand: “Well I’d be surprised if they didn't, and if they don’t, they should.” His defensive stance, mirrored by that of Sonia Glogowskki at the Ministry,
may be seen, from a critical realist perspective, to further reproduce a status quo which did not protect the right of parents to give informed consent.\textsuperscript{50}

Institutional Vested Interest

Providing a further example of institutional accommodation leading to a lack of accountability Ian Leckie described how, in his experience, many schools made use of the Bible volunteer to provide release time for classroom teachers:

\begin{quote}
Can I just mention to you though, I think there’s another little driver for schools and religious instruction and closing schools that you haven’t mentioned? And that is that when a school closes and a teacher is released from teaching their class, because somebody else is doing the religious instruction, that provides the teacher with an opportunity to either work on their preparation or work individually with their children [. . .]. So the motives, though, for saying “yes” to the inclusion of religious education in this class or in the whole school, sometimes isn’t driven by religious beliefs. It’s driven by “This is a great opportunity”—however that might be perceived.
\end{quote}

Ian constructed Bible-in-Schools as a “great opportunity” for schools, once again conferring on the programme the status of public good. In providing what he considered to be an educational justification for the continuation of religious instruction, Ian alerted me to the fact that it was often the case that teachers left the room during BiS, and the volunteer may have been unsupervised with the children. He also highlighted schools’ vested interest—in terms of teacher release time—in continuing the programme each year. This may have acted as a further material constraint on consultation with parents and served to further reproduce the status quo of BiS in state schools. From a critical liberal perspective, it may be argued that the President of the NZEI’s legitimate concern with teacher release time might have been better exercised through addressing the material insufficiency of non-contact provision (in comparison with practice in other OECD countries) than through the validation of confessional religious instruction in state schools.\textsuperscript{51} It also demonstrated another way in which BiS has been co-opted into an institutional secular (neo)-liberal governmentality.

Disincentives to Opting Out

The prevailing belief among representatives of the teaching profession, the CEC, the MoE, the NZEI and the HRC, that the opt-out provision allowed for freedom of choice and protected the

\textsuperscript{50} Support for the view that this problem is more widespread than the case study schools is evidenced by recent media reports prompted by the SEN campaign: Jody O’Callaghan, “School Kids Taught ‘God Created Everything’", The Press, 26 February 2015, accessed 26 February 2015, http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/66677419/school-kids-taught-god-created-everything.html

\textsuperscript{51} See Appendix 5, page 317, for OECD averages.
rights of those who did not wish their children to receive religious instruction, is problematised by my research data. The accommodation of one form of religious teaching by the education system, as I have shown, is open to interpretation as institutional endorsement or approval. By running the programme during school hours attendance was certainly normalised so that a child opting out of this class may be the exception.

As parent Mark, at Pukeko School, put it:

> It’s presented as just regularly part of the school programme, therefore you have to make a real effort to opt out. One of my feelings is . . . if you have such a programme—which I’m not in favour of—but if you were to, it ought to be an opt-in, not an opt-out. Because . . . whenever it’s the default position, naturally people are just going to go along with it.

The policy at Kereru School, for example, stated that while parents may withdraw their children:

> Supervision of the above children is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver. The school is happy for children to go to the Library, but will not be directly supervised.

This policy made clear that children were generally expected to attend the BiS class and that no special provisions would be made for those who opted out. There was clear and intentional disadvantage for children who had been withdrawn, through material lack of supervision and educational programme during school time. The guidelines may have acted as a disincentive or material constraint, upon working parents, against withdrawing their children from religious instruction. They represented a coercive strategy to normalise attendance at Bible-in-Schools.

At the same school a parent, Sam, felt that while she disagreed with Bible teaching in schools withdrawing her son would lead to certain victimisation:

> Because as soon as I say, “No. He's not coming.” Um . . . it's yeah . . . All the other kids: “Michael doesn't have to come to lesson on a Friday!”

And then he's going to get hell in class [. . .]. It's easier to just go with it.

Sam was frustrated that dissenting parents felt that they had no choice but to allow their children to attend BiS:

> Anyone that's got something to say about it, it’s like “Oh yeah, we've got to do it. We've got no choice in the matter.” But we do have a choice in the matter [. . .].They shouldn't just be: “Oh yeah we've got to do it.” And if their kid doesn't go to it, they’re going to get picked on and harassed in that class.
In such ways the normalisation of attendance at Bible-in-Schools entailed embodiment of a majority Christian identity. To opt out of this perceived social consensus was to embody an identity other than the norm. This “other” may be atheist or another religious identity. But the “othering” process in a school environment can have material consequences for a child’s wellbeing. Mark, a parent at Pukeko School, described his daughter’s experience of rejecting the embodiment of Christian identity in a BiS class and marking herself as different within the class unit:

Wendy got quite annoyed one day when the teacher was praying with the class, or asking the class to pray with her . . . Um . . . and . . . interestingly she just felt this wasn’t on, and she just wasn’t interested and she didn’t want to have any part of it at this point [. . .]. Wendy did get a bit of flack from a few other kids, you know, she was told she wasn’t going to go to heaven, because she didn’t believe in God and that sort of thing.

Wendy appeared to have been able to brush off these comments from her peers, but this is just one example of material disadvantage or discrimination suffered by children who are withdrawn from BiS and therefore positioned as “different” by their peer group. There are numerous accounts on on-line forums and Keep Religion out of School/Secular Education Network Facebook pages of parents who report victimisation from children and school staff when they attempted to withdraw their children. These include being made to sit at the back of the class, or the “naughty corner”, being given menial tasks such as litter-picking or washing-up, or parents simply having their wishes ignored and their children placed in the class. Some of these parents have obtained media coverage as part of the SEN campaign and a subsequent court case. Parents who have publicly complained have found themselves criticised and marginalised.53 Mike, a Jehovah’s Witness and parent at Kereru School, was certainly alert to this problem:


[53] Editor, “Editorial: Silly Complaint About Religion”, The Press, 24 July 2014, accessed 13 October 2014, http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/opinion/editorials/10303694/Editorial-Silly-complaint-about-religion. The editorial states: “The fact that there is no great agitation to change the system would seem to indicate that most parents find it unobjectionable.” This statement is predicated on the belief that parents know exactly what takes place in BiS classes and that parents feel able to object. As indicated above, these are questionable assumptions.
From a parent’s point of view . . . um . . . It’s not easy, I guess, to stand out as being a little bit different. There’s always a certain amount of trepidation as to whether or not um . . . while your request might be respected . . . whether or not you as a person will be looked at as, you know, “What’s your problem?” . . . sort of thing.

The potential for being labelled a trouble-maker at the start of one’s child’s school career may act as a material constraint on parents’ willingness to either withdraw their child or complain about the programme. Peter Harrison at the NZARH confirmed that this was a real issue for parents who contacted his organisation with their concerns. At Kereru School, dissenting parents may also face the further disadvantage of inquisition from Wayne, the BIS co-ordinator. Wayne appeared to reflect an evangelising Christian discourse, positioning parents who chose to withdraw their children as having unresolved personal issues to do with their lack of faith:

If I was to discuss it with that particular parent, I would ask them as to why they’ve come to that decision. And there may be something in their own background, which—either subconsciously, or consciously—has brought them to that place.

Such inquisition, which Wayne admitted had caused embarrassment to parents, contravened both the Act of 1964 and Human Rights legislation, and could conceivably place an additional material constraint on the willingness of parents to opt out of BiS at Kereru School.\(^\text{54}\)

A further material disadvantage, described by parents in on-line forums, was that of withdrawn children being alienated from the class unit and being excluded from the “benefits” of social approval, rewards of gifts and sweets, and fun of communal singing and other activities. Penny, the principal at Kereru School, recognised how difficult a decision it would be for a parent to withdraw their child:

It’s not easy. It’s not. Yeah. It’s peer group pressure around that. It’s as simple as that I’d say, Helen! [. . .] It’s hard. You’ve got to be quite strong. Because your children are alienated.

A Muslim parent, Karima, interviewed in Dunedin, suggested that while opting out would be difficult, the alienation this might inflict on her child would be good preparation for life as a Muslim in New Zealand:

And if it means feeling isolated and ostracised that's something unfortunately, you know, you live with on a regular basis [. . .]. It would be very difficult for my daughter, but for me it would just be preparing her for things to come.

\(^{54}\) Wayne began our interview with a similar interrogation of my beliefs.
But Karima recognised the dilemma for immigrant families who want their children to be happy in school and in the wider community:

> Because we chose to come into this country. We chose to . . . you know . . . um have this environment for them to grow up, and so I think it's our responsibility to ensure that they're as comfortable as possible in this environment and that they don't feel isolated or secluded from things. It is very, very hard.

This constraint might operate both to dissuade Muslim parents from withdrawing their children from BiS and to prevent them from voicing their concerns about this programme. Either outcome would serve to reproduce a mistaken perception of BiS as having the support of the school community.

When I described to Karima the situation at Korimako School where the Muslim children stayed at home on a Friday morning during Bible-in-Schools, and the unwillingness of the Muslim community to register a complaint about this, Karima identified a further constraint on this community’s freedom to stand up for their rights:

> And I think this is part of the problem, is that being a minority you’re so used to being excluded that you just learn to grow a thick skin and try not to be offended by it. Whereas if it happened to a majority . . .

Karima identified a normalisation process within which the Muslim community in New Zealand had become so accustomed to feeling ostracised that they were now inured to the offence that this should cause, offence which would not be tolerated by the “host” community. While in policy and documentation New Zealand educational institutions subscribed to an egalitarian liberal discourse and positioned themselves within human rights and social action liberal discourses, from this minority perspective the prevailing religious discourse was exclusionary and majoritarian. The apparent institutional endorsement of confessional Christian instruction may have reproduced this perceived exclusion.

At Korimako School, a parent who wished to complain about the exclusion of the Muslim community on Friday mornings, during BiS, concealed her identity in an email, calling herself Jane Doe. The principal allowed me sight of the email exchange and comments from the board of trustees. The following sequence of events ensued: Jane was informed that her forthright comments had been sent to the Ministry; the Ministry responded with a statement affirming the legal position regarding school closure and the secularity of the school; Jane was invited to attend a meeting with the board chair; Jane declined, in order to preserve her anonymity; Jane’s views were disqualified—she was positioned by a board member as “misinformed,
confused or unaware of the nature and content of the curriculum,” which was “government approved”. In consequence, Jane’s anonymous complaint served only to reproduce the status quo of BiS at Korimako School. This incident exemplified the material constraint, for parents, of complaining about a programme with perceived majority and institutional endorsement, when social disadvantage may be the result.

A critical liberal interpretation of the practice of “opting out” of religious instruction points towards potential harm for children, for parents, for the school and for the cohesion of the wider community. This harm was inherent in a system which normalised one form of religious belief in secular state primary schools, conceivably making non-attendance at Bible classes a marker of difference, dissention, atheism, non-integration and/or illiberalism. Constraints on individuals and communities were potentially more powerful than any de jure right to withdraw a child from religious instruction. And when members of the school community felt so compelled to withdraw from a part of the school week that they were willing to face potential opprobrium and social exclusion, New Zealand Curriculum principles of inclusion, and cultural diversity and the Curriculum value of equity were inevitably undermined.

When interviewed, representatives of neither the Ministry, the NZEI nor the HRC appeared to recognise the potential for discrimination or disadvantage in the current opt-out arrangements. They believed in the sufficiency of the legislation and representation of parents by boards of trustees to protect the rights of children and parents. When asked about the potential for discrimination in the opting out process, Sonia Glogowski, the Ministry representative, constructed discrimination as a matter of perception. This was a “not drowning but waving” approach to discrimination, reflecting a post-structuralist epistemology. Sonia’s argument, which also co-opted both the institutional power and longevity of the legislation in support of current practice, effectively reproduced a conservative Christian status quo:

I think that’s an opinion. People... whether it's, you know, perceived discrimination, um I mean everything is about perceptions in those sorts of things. Um, you know, this Act has been in place for quite some time.

Sonia went on to suggest that, given sufficient evidence of the need for a review, the Ministry may revisit the issue:

55 See above, page 33.
Um if there was compelling evidence to show us that it wasn't working the way that it was intended, then it may be cause for consideration. And I think . . . that's what we are open to . . . in the Ministry.

However, an unwillingness to recognise the social disadvantage a complaint, or opt-out, may bring and a “hands-off” policy, both at the Ministry and the HRC, appeared to militate against such an outcome. A default policy of referring all parents’ complaints back to school boards to resolve may have acted as a material constraint on revision of policy on religious instruction on two levels. Firstly, a constraint was placed on the likelihood of a just resolution of the complaint: it was often the actions of the board about which parents were complaining, and a confrontation with the board and principal which the parent was attempting to avoid when they contacted the Ministry or HRC. This action was therefore likely to result in the complaint being dropped and the continuation of the status quo. Secondly, a constraint was placed on the likelihood of the Ministry and HRC themselves giving due attention to the body of compelling evidence that the opt-out procedure in the Act was not working. In such ways, the policy adopted by the Ministry and the HRC served to reproduce confessional religious instruction in New Zealand schools.

Self-managing Schools and Special Character

Both Sonia Glogowski and Ian Leckie defended the non-interventionist approach of the Ministry and NZEI respectively, with reference to the 1989 legislation introducing self-managing schools and the right of each school community to promote its special character, including religion, through its teaching programme.56 For Sonia, religious teaching would be the result of a “collective agreement” of the parents. Ian Leckie stated:

> It's absolutely every school's right to create its own character in whatever ways it may do. And where it includes and reflects their community, and the community belief, it's important that every school develops [a transparent] process.

These key stakeholders appeared to assume that parents at the schools with BIS had chosen to be there because of its special character and were fully aware of the implications of this character on the teaching programme. My research indicates, as I have shown throughout this chapter, that this is an unwarranted assumption. Furthermore, none of the schools offering Bible-in-Schools in the study made reference to the programme in their charters, on account, I believe, of an authoritarian secular rationalist discursive constraint which constructed religion as separate from the secular school curriculum. My research, therefore, does not support the assertion that parents of children at schools running Bible-in-Schools programmes may be

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56 See above, page 94.
assumed to be in a state of “collective agreement” or participating in a shared “community belief”.

The neoliberal imperative of parental choice, implicit in the remarks of these representatives of the Ministry and the NZEI, effectively served to disqualify the right of parents and their children to freedom of religions and beliefs or to a secular education in New Zealand primary schools. The adoption of a special religious character implied that religion was no longer “outside” the curriculum when the school is “closed”, but was intrinsic to the school itself and therefore institutionally endorsed. The prioritisation of choice over diversity regarding religion in school, in a context where the CEC was already the main provider, effectively reproduced the status quo of BiS, but simultaneously reconstituted confessional Christian instruction as culturally responsive and progressive. As I have shown above, this positioning was not based on analysis of the BiS programme but on instrumental and governmental imperatives.

Conclusion

My research indicates that the accommodation of confessional religious instruction in secular state schools had profound implications for the protection of diversity in New Zealand. The normalisation of one form of religious belief in secular state primary schools served to mark as “different” those children whose family beliefs precluded attendance, with potential consequences for social inclusion. Coercive social imperatives and limitations on information and consultation effectively constrained the rights of parents to withdraw their children or to complain about the programme. And when large numbers of a school community did withdraw from this part of the school week, the school’s efforts to promote the Curriculum principles of inclusion and cultural diversity, and the Curriculum value of equity, were significantly undermined.

There appeared to be two forms of governmentality in operation through the implementation of BiS. Two different sets of aims were accomplished through the same set of disciplinary techniques which ensured that, where a school ran the programme, most of the children would attend. These techniques, as described above, included: holding the lessons during school hours; redescribing the programme in secular terms; restricting consultation with parents; restricting the information given to parents; allowing parents to believe that the programme had educational approval; and effecting significant disincentives to opting out and making complaints. On the state level what appears to have been intended, through the governmental reproduction of BiS, was the promotion of “good values”: the constitution of young people as compliant, productive subjects who adhered to a secular liberal worldview, in
which religion was confined to the uncontroversial role of personal wellbeing and value enculturation, and did not impact on the wider economic interests of the nation state. In this way, BiS appeared to have been co-opted into a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality within New Zealand’s education system. However, the authoritarian secular rationalist constraints on accountability, described above, facilitated an additional form of governmentality through the CEC. This organisation was able to employ precisely the same disciplinary techniques, in apparent collusion with the education establishment, with the evident intention of constituting young people as Christian subjects who had a relationship with God, who believed in the Bible and who knew that Jesus was amazing. In the Catholic schools visited, the Catholic Christian governmentality in operation was made explicit to parents and was undertaken with their express permission. In contrast, the disciplinary techniques employed within the secular state schools with BiS were formulated precisely to obfuscate parents’ understanding of the nature of the programme, on the assumption that attendance was in their child’s best interests. For Foucault, such a form of governmentality is illiberal and oppressive since there is no means for either parents or children to critique or resist it. In Galston’s terms, the presumptive validity of BiS as a general school programme endowed Christianity with the status of unofficial establishment in these state schools. For Galston this signals a coercive and intolerant form of governmentality, inimical to the protection of diversity intrinsic to the flourishing of the liberal state. Both forms of governmentality identified sought to position education in religions and beliefs as unimportant and unnecessary, and to position critical approaches to teaching about religion and culture as controversial and regressive. In Chapter Seven I discuss the discursive imperatives which contributed to these findings.

57 See above, pages 29 and 123.
Chapter Seven: Disqualification and Redescription of Religions and Beliefs

Introduction

I won’t tell you that you are wrong. Just don’t bring it up: Let’s talk about something else.

*Hon Bill English MP, 2005*

Bill English’s statement describing New Zealander’s attitudes to religious diversity reflects some of the major constraints identified in my data on teaching about religion in schools. In Appendix 4, I have provided an outline of the key constraints operating on case study schools and key stakeholders. I show, in this chapter, the ways in which my data evidenced both disqualification and redescription of religion in the primary school context. In Part One, I demonstrate the ways in which the “don’t bring it up” approach was discursively maintained to exclude conceptual knowledge of religions and beliefs from all the primary schools visited. In Part Two, I show how the “let’s talk about something else” approach facilitated a redescription of religion in terms amenable to a secular (neo)-liberal form of governmentality.

Part One: “Just Don’t Bring It Up”—Disqualification of Education about Religion

*Conservative Christian Disqualification of “Other” Religions and Beliefs*

The Catholic primary schools in the study did not consider it their responsibility to teach about other faiths. Neither their curriculum documents nor school charters made mention of other religions. Carol, the director of religious studies (DRS) at St Margaret’s School in Auckland, would have been pleased to discuss other religions with years 5 and 6 but, as she stated: “It isn’t set out for us anywhere to talk about that.” Both principals explained that the secondary school curriculum dealt with other religions, and they appeared to rely on conservative Christian discursive imperatives to defend their right to instruct primary children from all backgrounds in the Catholic faith. As Dee, the DRS at St Joseph’s, explained:

> I think that if we try to do that here, during the juniors, that would just be very confusing. Because the mystery of God is sometimes confusing for them at the best of times, let alone try to introduce someone else’s faith values.

The positioning of other religious viewpoints as confusing and harmful to young children was common among interviewees in the Catholic schools but also in state schools, as I discuss below. Such positioning inhered within the conservative Christian discourse.

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1 See above, page 1.

2 See above, Table 9 on page 67 and Table 12 on page 131.
Neil Laurenson, at the Catholic Schools Office, confirmed that a religions unit was commonly taught in Year 12, in Catholic schools. His description of this teaching appeared to reflect liberal Christian discursive imperatives, highlighting similarities and differences between religions in comparison to the Catholic faith. Teaching about religions at primary level was not prohibited, he said, but: “It’s not part of the curriculum [. . .]. I personally think it’s better left until later, unless it happens to come up.” While cultural festivals, such as Diwali, might be recognised at primary level, this would not include teaching about religious beliefs. A policy of “inculturation”—teaching about cultural difference and diversity through the lens of the Catholic faith—was in operation. This was most evident in the treatment of Māori spirituality. While the children’s workbooks contained Māori language headings, use the word whanau for family and displayed a koru motif throughout, this was used entirely in support of a Catholic worldview. Principals and teachers in both schools described teaching about diversity within the Catholic faith, rather than beyond it. As June, principal at St Margaret’s, stated:

The children will do their prayers sometimes in church in their own languages . . . um so, whenever we can, we will include “How is the faith celebrated in other countries?” and then you can also, a little bit, do “Now what would you do?” [. . .]. You can do a lot about tolerance, but you don’t do a great deal about other major faiths, religions or what they do, because of the way that they come to the schools and they sign on the enrolment application, that they agree with their child’s participation in the school’s religious education programme and the religious life of the school.

June’s focus on uninformed tolerance was notable, signalling the liberalising imperatives of the diversity and authoritarian liberal discourses in her Auckland school, but the dominance of the conservative Christian discursive imperative was most evident. While both schools’ charters mentioned promoting and learning about cultural diversity, the dominant conservative Christian discourse—supported by the institutional power of the Bishops’ Religious Education Programme in these schools—ensured that teaching about religion would be of a confessional Christian nature.

Bob, principal at St Joseph’s school, identified the Bishops’ Curriculum as a material constraint on teaching about other faiths:

[The]Bishops of New Zealand direct this school to teach the programme that they have designed and resourced. And that’s what we must do as part of our programme, first and foremost.

Is there any flexibility within that? Can you adapt things?

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3 See above, page 92.
We’ve got to be careful about . . . because when people are employed within a Catholic school, we must be seen to not have interests which are in conflict with the Catholic Church. Otherwise we end up in reasonably serious trouble because you’ve got, I don’t know what to call this . . . um “freethinking” that may work against the teachings of the church.

Teaching about alternative worldviews was here positioned as a potential threat to the work of the school in promoting the Catholic faith. However, children of other faiths were perceived to be “free” to pursue their own beliefs as Carol the DRS at St Margaret’s School described:

We’ve got a little boy that wears the turban. And it’s absolutely . . . We're not saying, “Don't”. You know? We're not saying that he has to not be a Muslim, or not show that he's a Muslim. So, in that sense, there is a freedom there.

And June, the principal, talking about the same child, agreed:

Um, our Hindu family are Punjabis and all their children have come here. And the little boy [. . .] he's got his little wee turban on. So we don't adapt our programme, but we include them in the things, by saying for example, this is why . . . the significance . . . We acknowledge the significance but we do not teach about it.

From a critical liberal perspective, the respect that these educationalists intended to demonstrate for the freedom of religious belief of this child was undermined by the fact that they have not recognised that he was a Sikh. There was, in fact, evidence that enculturation into Catholic beliefs and practices was non-negotiable for children of other faiths. At St Joseph’s school, a “devout” Muslim family enrolled their daughter, who had now been baptised a Catholic, as DRS Dee explained:

Is there any problem around following the [Catholic] education curriculum with that [Muslim] child?

No. We had a discussion with [the father] . . . um . . . before his older child was enrolled and just discussed what his needs were for her and we set out what our expectations were and [. . .] it might have been a bit different if there was a Muslim church that he goes to [. . .]. Because there isn’t a church for him, for his own religion, here and so he just joins ours. It made it a lot easier.

Yes, and he has no objection to her attending mass and everything?

No. No, and she has actually been baptised a Catholic, so she is being brought up with the Catholic upbringing.4

Neil Laurenson insisted that the conversion of non-Catholics was not the intention of Catholic education:

4 The DRS at St Joseph’s appears to be unaware of the nomenclature for a Muslim place of worship.
It's not our aim to proselytise, so it's not our aim to convert children, but it is . . . but they are . . . um, they do follow the same teachings. If children later on decide that they want to convert to, um, Catholicism, well that's their own choice, but it'll never be forced on them.

From a critical liberal perspective, the absence of epistemic humility and the lack of opportunity to develop judgmental rationality within the Catholic religious education curriculum, combined with an unwillingness to allow parents of different faiths to withdraw their children from religious observances, undermined the assertion that freedom of religious belief was protected in Catholic schools. The absence of education in alternative worldviews did not promote judgemental or social rationality, or protect diversity. The disciplinary techniques of omission of curriculum content, inculturation of other cultures with a Catholic worldview, and uncritical enculturation of children into the Catholic faith signalled an illiberal form of governmentality in operation in the schools visited.

A strong conservative Christian discourse was also in operation within some of the state schools. This discourse constructed education in religions and beliefs as confessional and therefore harmful to the promotion of Christian faith and values endorsed by the school. Despite repeated attempts to describe the kind of informative, rather than formational, education about religions and beliefs that I was interested in, most interviewees conflated the two and disqualified them both from the secular curriculum lest impressionable children should be inadvertently influenced.

Marie, a principal at Kakariki School in Auckland, recognised that the children in her school were not learning about other religions, and justified this position with an argument which would inhere within a conservative Christian discourse:

I personally don't, because I am a Christian and I wouldn't want my children being taught other values and . . . of other religions, until they were . . . I'd rather teach them when they were younger—and then, when they're older, they’re hearing the different things, that’s fine.

This view was repeated by Grace, the deputy principal at Takahe school, in Southland: “I wouldn't want my child being taught about Hinduism . . . I wouldn't.” And similarly, teacher Fiona at Kakapo School in Auckland was very clear on this point:

[W]ould I want my children to learn about Buddhism?

Well, would you?
No. Not particularly. As adults, I'd be . . . happy's the wrong word, but . . . if as adults they wanted to learn about that faith, that would be for them to make that decision.

Wayne, the BIS coordinator at Kereru school, explicitly warned against exposure of children to other religions, in line with an evangelising Christian discourse:

When we look at other religions: Islam, Hinduism, Sheikhs [sic] etc. have come in and we find that . . . they're not pro-children, pro-family as . . . in the same way that Jesus is. And I . . . personally, I feel we have to be very careful as to what we expose our children to. It's not that I'm afraid to expose them to it. It's just that I feel there's got to be caution there.

The assumption that, in order to teach about other religions, volunteers from different religious communities would need to be found was evident in all three regions. This was frequently raised as a further objection to education in religions and beliefs, exemplified here by Wendy, a teacher at Takahe school in Southland:

How would they get all the people in to actually teach it? With what they're believing in? Because it's becoming so diversified . . . . How would they? [. . .] How do you monitor what is being taught?

Within the conservative Christian discourse, it was appropriate for voluntary Christian religious instruction to be accommodated into the school day, but not for children to learn about other religious beliefs. Jane, a parent and teacher aide at Takahe School, evidenced a preference for formational, over conceptual, knowledge of religion:

I think—because the interesting thing is that you said about the teachers teaching the . . . all the different cultures—and my first thought was: “Well, that's all just head-knowledge; there's no heart-knowledge in that.”

The additional argument was made, frequently at the Catholic Schools, by David Mulholland at the CEC and by Wayne at Kereru School, that children need to be taught to operate within one faith before they can decide whether to accept or reject it, and should not, therefore, be exposed to other faiths at primary school.

The conservative Christian discourse appeared to resist all efforts to reconstruct religious teaching as non-confessional education about religions, in the interview data. Instead it continually re-endorsed and reproduced confessional religious instruction in primary schools. The disciplinary techniques of omission of religions and beliefs from the curriculum, and redescription of such teaching as harmful and indoctrinatory—as presumptively invalid—are constitutive of a conservative Christian form of governmentality.
Authoritarian Secular Rationalist Disqualification of Education about Religions and Beliefs

Concurrently, a dominant authoritarian secular rationalist construction of the secular curriculum was evident in the secular schools in all three areas, and in key stakeholder interviews at the Ministry and NZEI. Although I was at pains to make clear, in interview, that I wanted to discuss participants’ views on teaching about diverse religions within the curriculum, a frequent response was to conflate this with confessional religious instruction and to state that teaching religion was not allowed in state schools. I was told that it was not the responsibility of schools, that it was not part of the curriculum and that children should be protected from indoctrination. Many interviewees including principals, teachers and parents appeared to be unable to conceive of a classroom teacher planning and teaching lessons about religion. It was evident that the difference between religious instruction and religious education had been made clear neither during initial teacher training nor ongoing professional development for teachers. For most, like Frank with whom this data report began in Chapter Six, the distinction had never crossed their minds.

Religious studies professor Paul Morris believed this phenomenon was widespread and certainly had hindered his attempts, at the time of the last national curriculum review, to persuade those involved that religion should be a part of primary and secondary education:

> The legal adviser within the Ministry, [...] the meeting I had with [name of person] was amazing, in that their interpretation of the Education Act was that no school could teach religion. And this was the top legal adviser for the Ministry of Education.

> When you say no school could teach religion, is that religious instruction?

> It was absolutely adamant: they weren’t aware of the distinction.

Paul Morris also described a “most fruitless” meeting with Education CEO Anne Sewell, in which “she was absolutely adamant that the advice she had received was to leave religion alone”.

> Once again, the 1912 advice to the Ministry: “Don’t touch it!” appeared to be informing Ministerial policy. But this time the advice was being applied not only to BiS, but to a broader treatment of religion in the curriculum: religious instruction and religious education were conflated and jointly disqualified. Sonia Glogowski, at the Ministry of Education, confirmed the reasoning behind the strategic omission of the word “religion” from the 2007 curriculum document:
I think there was potentially [. . .] more risk by putting the word “religion” in the curriculum than using words like values and ethics and um, I don’t think even morals is used in there, for that very reason.

*Right. So it’s a deliberate choice?*

Yes. Just because I think it can actually conjure up quite a narrow interpretation, maybe a narrow Christian interpretation.

Sonia’s understanding appeared to confirm a perceived widespread construction of “religion” as pertaining to Christianity, and therefore “religious education” as pertaining to Christian religious instruction. The legal advisor to the ministry and the CEO herself, as described by Paul Morris, appeared to be operating with a construction of “secular” which meant “nothing to do with religion”. Such constructions, when used to disqualify religion from the curriculum, inhere within an authoritarian secular rationalist discourse. These constructions were prevalent throughout my interview data, as I discuss below. My research indicated that these discursive constraints impacted on policy and practice in New Zealand primary schools, limiting the content of the curriculum with regard to religion.

**Teaching about Religion Is Illegal**

A number of interviewees indicated that they either thought it was illegal to teach lessons on religion in the secular state school curriculum under the Education Act, or were very unsure about the legality of doing so. Examples included the principal at Kereru School in Southland; the principal and deputy principal at Takahe School, Southland; the DRS at St Joseph’s School, Southland; the BiS co-ordinators at both Pukeko School, Dunedin and Korimako School, Auckland; the manager of Catholic Education Services and several other parents and teachers interviewed across the case study schools. As Janet, a parent at Pukeko School in Dunedin, put it:

> You’d have to have a complete change of the curriculum in the state system to allow for that, and I think that the naysayers would probably, um, put the kibosh on it.

Martha, a BiS teacher at Korimako School in Auckland, concurred:

> Well I mean it obviously is . . . the syllabus and the curriculum is directed from . . . our government . . . um. They can’t just suddenly decide it would be a nice idea, you know to be nice and kind and friendly, and start teaching everyone about else’s faith. [. . .] No, that was my understanding, that they weren’t able . . . that they didn’t incorporate that into the, into their classrooms.
The institutional power accrued to the Act of 1964, which legalised religious instruction by volunteers “outside” the curriculum, appeared, to a considerable degree, to operate de facto to position teaching about religion (in any way) as unlawful “within” the curriculum. Thus, an authoritarian secular rationalist construction of secular education was embedded in the legislature and informed educational practice as Sarah, BiS coordinator at Pukeko School, exemplified:

*What’s your understanding about teaching world religions within the curriculum?*

There is no basis for that, within the Education Act, as far as I am aware.

This perceived illegality operated as a material constraint on religious education through a pursuant lack of curriculum guidelines, teacher training, professional development, teaching resources and teacher subject knowledge. This latter constraint was acknowledged by Frances, principal at Pukeko School: “[W]e don’t have that kind of grounding ourselves as educators,” and by Barbara, principal at Kakapo School:

There’s been this er . . . er . . . Islam family. Who’re quite devout, you know, and that’s a lot of learning for us, because it’s the first time we’ve had such a . . . a devout family come in to the school, I mean, you know, [N] goes out on Friday afternoon, for prayer, if he wants to, with Dad. You know, so . . . that’s been a lot of learning for us, because we didn’t know. So there’s a bit of ignorance as well. 5

Both Barbara and Frances made the point that, as far as they were concerned, there was no curriculum requirement to teach about religion and since ERO neither inspected nor reported on this area it was unlikely to be a priority. In her 16-year career as principal, Penny, at Kereru School, had never thought of religion as important enough to include in school topics and enquiries:

I would say generally through my leadership, this school and other schools, it has not . . . the religious aspect has not been well covered. And I guess it is because . . . um a lack of thought around the importance of that.

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5 Sonia Glogowski at the Ministry, and numerous other interviewees, restated the problem of teacher subject knowledge. It was common for educationalists interviewed, even in senior leadership roles, to evidence difficulty in talking about religions and beliefs due to a lack of familiarity with the vocabulary of religion. A low level of religious literacy signalled by confusion of terms (e.g. Muslim/Islam, Hindu/Hindi) and religious practices were in evidence. At Takahe School in Southland, the principal displayed not just a lack of knowledge but a measure of disrespect for religious difference: “So we have one wee lass here now who could be, don’t know whether she’s Muslim or Hindu. I haven’t seen the single smallpock anyway (L).” The authoritarian secular rationalist discursive constraint appeared to preclude the recording of religious affiliation of children’s families on enrolment.
Religious Education as Indoctrination

In every school visited the risk of indoctrination, or unduly influencing the beliefs of children, was given as a reason for extreme caution around the subject of religion in secular state schools. Frances, principal at Pukeko School in Dunedin, was explicit on this point:

The temptation would be to actually um . . . inadvertently I’m sure, but . . . put . . . values and judgements in place, which wouldn’t be intended, I’m sure, but would be there. The hidden curriculum can be powerful.

The fear of inadvertently influencing children was given as a reason for only touching briefly and lightly on matters of religion, and usually only if the children themselves brought the subject up. Rosalind, a teacher at Pukeko School, expressed the fear that unless teachers taught about religion in a very “superficial” way there was a risk of “people trying to convert people in class”. Parent and ex-teacher Valerie, at Kakapo School in Auckland, was one of several who thought this problem was resolved by the volunteer system:

It’s a really fine line. And if you’re getting children questioning you . . . how easy is it to cross that line and not really realise that you have? And that’s where I wonder if it’s asking too much of the classroom teacher.

Chris, a parent at Kereru School in Southland, where the principal and a teacher interviewed also urged caution around teaching about religious matters, clearly conflated religious education with religious instruction, constructing this as a potential source of indoctrination and conflict with parents, such teaching being best left to volunteers:

How about if, in the classroom, they wanted to explain the Christmas story or the Easter story: are the class teachers allowed to do that, do you think? What’s your understanding?

Um—I would say that they’re probably not because that would be . . . um, putting their personal beliefs on the children. But I think if there was a child-led discussion, that they could carry on with that. But I think that’s why the outside organisation comes in because . . . to stop that . . . . I suppose it can get a bit dodgy with teachers . . . um, well their viewpoints . . . not being forced on the children . . . but then they can get in conflict with parents and things of “Why are you saying this to my children?” and yeah.

Teacher Fiona, at Kakapo School in Auckland, felt highly constrained in what she could teach the children about Christian festivals: teaching about religion, here conflated with religious instruction, just wasn’t her responsibility:

I will go as far as saying that Easter is about Jesus, and Jesus dying on the cross, and that's why we have hot cross buns. But I’m just very careful not to go further than that. Because I know that . . . that I don’t have the
mandate to do that. [. . .] So I don’t actually think it's my role. I think it’s part of my life. It's who I am. But I don’t think it's part of my job.

Beverly, principal at Korimako School, informed me that religion was “included in day to day things that come up occasionally”, but resisted the suggestion of providing further information within the curriculum, through an authoritarian secular rationalist discourse which constructed information about religion as religious instruction:

_Do you think children are getting enough information [about religion], would you say?_

I personally believe that I don’t have a right to answer that question because I personally believe that it is up to the family to make that decision [. . .]. I don't feel that I ever have a right to put my thinking onto someone else.

Ian Leckie, at the NZEI, thought schools could deal with religious matters in curriculum time, but again urged caution about overstepping the line and highlighting the “de-emphasis” on religion within the curriculum:

_In the New Zealand context, teachers just have to be careful where it's . . . it's fine as part of our work and our discussions [. . .] but if there's a predominance of religion now being reflected in my classroom, um, you know that I am potentially overstepping what we would say would be not recognising the balance, the place and the emphasis or the de-emphasis really that religion has, as part of New Zealand’s Curriculum. Right? It's not there as an explicit part and it's not there as a focus. So how it is included in the various elements, though, is where schools do tread a fairly careful line and try not to overstep it.

There was a real sense—as a result of the widespread conflation of religious education and religious instruction—of trepidation regarding the handling of religious matters. Education concerning religion was frequently conceived as beyond the remit of the school or Ministry and positioned as the responsibility of parents, volunteers and boards of trustees and the children themselves. As a curriculum area it was presumptively invalid.

The authoritarian secular rationalist discourse resisted all attempts to reconstruct religion in school as education about religions and beliefs. It continually re-positioned the teaching of religion as confessional religious instruction, outside the curriculum. The effect of this, I contend, has been to immunise BiS from educational discursive critique and influence and—ironically—to reproduce confessional religious instruction in New Zealand schools. But what, in Foucaultian terms, is accomplished by this disqualification? Positioning religion as “beyond the curriculum” enabled the state to reconstruct religion firstly as BiS, then to redescribe it as harmless liberal values teaching which was beyond critique. Thus depoliticised, religion posed
no threat to the interests of the nation state and did not interfere with the constitution of young people as neoliberal subjects or autonomous choosers. In this way the reproduction of BIS and concurrent disqualification of education in religions and beliefs may be seen as disciplinary techniques in line with a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality. This form of governmentality drew on additional educational discourses to endorse confessional instruction and disqualify education in religions and beliefs.

Knowledge Age Destabilisation of Religious Knowledge

A newly prevalent knowledge age discourse, influencing curriculum policy and design, was evident in interviews with Sonia Glogowski at the Ministry, with Frank and Grace, the principal and deputy principal at Takahe School, with Bob, principal of St Joseph’s School, Penny the principal at Kereru School and with Barbara, the principal at Kakapo School.

Within this discourse, conceptual knowledge of different religions was constructed as less important than adopting the key competencies and dispositions of the New Zealand curriculum. Barbara at Kakapo School explained:

> I think the New Zealand Curriculum very much . . . holds . . . the knowledge explosion, and the whole . . . aspect of globalisation we all recognise that our kids need to be aware of [. . .]. I think we all struggle with fitting things in and it's about, I mean, of course we know there's so much knowledge out there we can't possibly teach it all, which is why [we have our] dispositions and we talk about our “KS Learner” [Kakapo School Learner] based around our competencies. [. . .] So the key competencies in the Curriculum—we’ve adopted it. All about that “awareness, empowering, connectedness” because that’s where that comes through, and so you’re equipped for learning, and those are the core things.

For Barbara, teaching dispositions and competencies was positioned as a pragmatic solution to the overloaded curriculum. Children needed to be taught the skills to pursue their own enquiries rather than be taught all the conceptual knowledge that was available. For Frank, Grace and Sonia conceptual knowledge itself was destabilised and positioned as unimportant in comparison to skills and competencies. For Frank and Grace, knowledge had to serve a purpose. As Frank stated bluntly: “[T]he point of learning is ‘What difference are you going to make with it?’ It's not enough just to know stuff to know stuff.” And Grace elaborated:

> I guess really this philosophy, ties in with our school-wide philosophy, our enquiry philosophy which is you never do anything for the sake of doing it. It’s always “just-in-time” learning so you don’t teach it for the sake of teaching it. I wouldn’t learn how to scuba-dive, because what's the point? I'm not going to scuba-dive. You know, why would I teach somebody how to scuba-dive? So you take something, and you teach it when the kids are
ready to use it [. . .]. It’s not just taking something and teaching it, and
that’s the end of it . . . There’s no action . . . there has to be that action.

The implication of this discourse was that teaching about religion served no immediate
purpose and was, like teaching about scuba diving, pointless or presumptively invalid. For
Grace, the Takahe School values programme, combined with the school enquiry philosophy,
equipped children with the values, dispositions and skills that they needed in life. These were
clearly prioritised over conceptual knowledge within the curriculum.

The knowledge age discourse sometimes combined with post-colonialist and social action
liberal discursive imperatives within which curriculum content may be defined as useful only if
constructed around the children’s own context and experiences, relevant to and valuing their
cultural knowledge-base. Such discursive imperatives made it possible for two principals, in
religiously homogeneous Southland, to position knowledge of other religions as unimportant.
Frank, at Takahe school, implied such teaching would be more relevant in Auckland than
Southland. Bob, principal at St Joseph’s School, was quite clear that curriculum content should
be appropriate to the context of the school:

This is why New Zealand Curriculum has been given such wide parameters
for the choice of its topics. Because you look at the group that you’re with.
Now teaching about Diwali, here in [Southerton] with these children, could
be interesting . . . but it is not number one on the curriculum.

And Penny, at Kereru School, agreed that the material lack of cultural and religious diversity in
the area made it hard for her to justify as a curriculum topic within educational discursive
constraints, although she thought such teaching would be of value:

But it’s difficult to come across those people, because as you say, there’s
not a lot out in the community [. . .]. It is a challenge. And real contexts as
well. You sort of don’t want to be studying “the different people”. You
need to have a reason to be interacting with those people.

The discursive imperatives identified by Penny—the requirement to study “real contexts”, and
to avoid stereotyping and essentialising “the different people”—inherited within the post-
colonialist discourse. Equally the “need to have a reason” inherited within a knowledge age
discourse within which knowledge cannot be acquired for its own sake, but must serve some
immediate purpose. These imperatives, as Penny conceded, were not easily satisfied in an
area where there was little religious diversity in evidence. They effectively served to reinforce
a status quo where religions and beliefs were disqualified from the curriculum.
In Young’s terms, an inadequate social theory of conceptual knowledge within the curriculum allowed utilitarian governmental goals to dictate curriculum content, denying young people powerful knowledge of religions and beliefs. In Galston’s terms an inadequate conception of liberal education resulted in a failure to recognise the social importance of teaching about alternative worldviews for children’s developing social rationality.

At the Ministry, Sonia Glogowski appeared to invoke post-colonial and knowledge age imperatives, to match learning to the cultural and religious knowledge-base, in a way which reproduced confessional religious instruction in preference to introducing education in religions and beliefs. Conflating religious instruction and religious education, she asserted that teaching about religion was a matter neither for the curriculum, nor the Ministry, but for individual school communities:

So I think rather than mandating um “You must do this or you must do that in the curriculum,” I think what we’re trying to encourage schools to do is to be responsive to the community which um their students come from. And if I think of some of our secondary schools that do have prayer rooms and things like that. [...] And no matter how much you can prescribe or how much you don’t prescribe, curriculum is always interpreted and it’s always interpreted by the person who is in the classroom with the kids, it’s always interpreted by the school as a whole [...]. And um I would imagine for some teachers themselves, they will experience conflicts, um in terms of their own worldviews, whether they’re religious or not religious, there’s the human element there. So I guess in terms of the Ministry we, you know, we try to be as permissive as possible so that, you know, those conversations with communities and teachers and staff can happen at that level. Rather than us coming in and saying, “This is how you do it.”

Sonia insisted that it would be inappropriate for the Ministry to prescribe content concerning religious beliefs, as the curriculum should reflect the wishes and context of the community—by implication—through voluntary religious instruction. This positioning inhered within: a conservative Christian discourse in which children should receive religious instruction consistent with their family backgrounds or the religious majority; an authoritarian secular rationalist discourse which suggests teachers are incapable of being objective in their treatment of other faiths; post-colonial and knowledge-age discourses in which existing contextual and experiential knowledge are substituted for conceptual knowledge; and a neoliberal discourse within which schools reflect community beliefs and are self-managed by boards of trustees with limited Ministry involvement. Sonia strongly resisted my suggestion that children should be entitled to information about religions as part of their education and that this should not be dependent on the proclivities of principals and boards of trustees. She
disqualified this view as a “value judgement”. For this Ministry representative, such a curriculum would be inconceivable.

But from a critical realist perspective, Sonia appeared to position BiS as an appropriately “responsive” approach to education in matters of religion, further imbuing it with institutional power. In so doing she gave educational validation to reproduction of the “community” religious knowledge base, in preference to the opportunity to expand children’s conceptual knowledge development in religions and beliefs. An “over-socialised curriculum”, which failed to provide learning opportunities beyond the social context of the child, appeared to be the result. By positioning confessional approaches as progressive and child-centred, the Ministry gave social and educational legitimacy to a construction of religion which was private, personal, and not a matter for critique or debate consonant with a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality. But in so doing, it also imbued conservative and evangelising Christian religious instruction with equal legitimacy. By such means, confessional instruction appeared to be reproduced in New Zealand schools while children were denied the powerful conceptual knowledge of religion. My research suggests that the unwillingness of the Ministry to engage with matters of religion, and the Ministry’s unwarranted assumption of religious consensus in state schools, had consequences for both the protection of families’ rights to freedom of religions and beliefs, the development of social and judgemental rationality of young people and for the protection of diversity within the nation state.

Sonia sought to further destabilise conceptual knowledge of religion. Her arguments reflected the imperatives of the post-structural, knowledge age and authoritarian liberal discourses. Prioritising the disposition of tolerance over knowledge of religion, the latter being constructed as a matter of personal perspective, she again positioned religious education as an inappropriate subject for study. It is worth quoting her reasoning process at length:

It’s about where do you get that knowledge from? Whose um interpretation of that religion are you using? […] What would [the Ministry] be using as our sources of information? And I think, maybe it is a default position, but I think we’re much more confident in being able to talk about tolerance for different beliefs, rather than making active statements about: “This person believes this, in this way.” Because that is very, very um . . . well you have individual interpretation as well. […] If you’re wanting to engage with another individual who has a different belief system . . . um because of individual differences around practices it’s far better to engage with a person that you’re wanting to find out about and have those skills to do that, rather than having a whole lot of assumptions.

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See above, pages 122 and 162.
about: “Well, you’re Muslim, therefore you do this, this, this and this,” because that carries risks as well, in the same way that cultural stereotyping carries risk. So in some ways our position is more about the skills and dispositions that allow people to better engage with diverse others rather than having prescriptive sets of knowledge that people need to have.

Sonia appeared to assume that in order to prescribe a religious education curriculum the Ministry would need to endorse one particular version of truth in each tradition. It could not do this, she said, because there was no way of knowing which religious perspective was true. Demonstrating a post-structuralist and post-colonial concern to avoid misrepresenting or essentialising religious belief, Sonia appeared to deny the possibility of conceptual knowledge of religion and the academic discipline of religious studies upon which it is based. From a critical realist perspective, Sonia appeared to fall prey to the epistemic fallacy. She conflated epistemic relativism with ontological relativism, finding no grounds to judge between sources of religious knowledge, conflating experiential and conceptual knowledge, and disqualifying them all as equally unreliable. A post-structuralist “ethical practice of undecidability”, applied to education policy, here served to maintain the status quo. In place of conceptual knowledge of religion, the dispositions of unreflective cultural and religious relativism and uninformed tolerance were arguably promoted. The knowledge age discourse therefore legitimised both confessional Christian instruction and a secular (neo)-liberal worldview. When incorporated into “liberal and progressive” educational policy, post-modernist arguments appear to become immune from critique. The diversity discourse adopted similar positioning as it excised Christian cultural references from curriculum and school life and promoted “inclusion” by avoiding the potentially divisive subject of religion.

**Diversity Discourse: Religion as Socially Inappropriate**

Inclusion, integration, tolerance and conflict avoidance are discursive imperatives which inhere within the diversity discourse. While cultural differences may be celebrated, discussion of religions and beliefs—positioned either as a potential source of unresolveable conflict or as an emblem of Christian majoritarianism—is conceived as embarrassing and socially inappropriate.

**Disqualification of Majority Christian Culture**

A number of interviewees including David Mulholland at the CEC, Neil Laurenson at the Catholic Schools office, June the principal at St Margaret’s School, teacher Annette at Kereru School and teacher Rosalind at Pukeko School, observed that it was now perceived to be more

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socially acceptable in New Zealand schools and wider society to discuss and accommodate minority religious festivals than those associated with Christianity. A discursive constraint appeared to be in operation within which, as Rosalind, at Pukeko School pointed out: “We can discuss other people but we can’t discuss Jesus.” For David Mulholland the outworking of this in school policy might even amount to discrimination against Christians:

Well, they’ve put a room aside for the Muslims in a school—but they won’t provide a chapel for the Christians. You know we could say that we’re discriminated against, if you wanted to. I look for an even playing field.

Reflecting a diversity discourse, Barbara, the principal at Kakapo School in Auckland, was clear that, in such a diverse school, promoting the values and culture of one religion over another in a Bible-in-schools class would be inappropriate. The imperative to promote inclusion and affirm an integrationist rather than assimilationist approach to pluralism, consonant with a diversity discourse, appeared to produce a disqualification of majority culture and religion here. This manifested itself not only in the absence of BiS, but through a strategic removal of references to Christian festivals and culture in the life of the school. While Chinese New Year and Diwali were recognised and celebrated, references to Christian festivals appeared to have been expunged from school life. Within this discursive constraint, Christian culture and religion were constructed as majoritarian, exclusive and even offensive in a secular plural context. There was a real sense of grievance, in interviews with parents Valerie and Sue and teacher Fiona, that New Zealand’s Christian heritage was being denied to children at the school. As Fiona described it:

The general feeling at Christmas time is “But what about the other, what about the other cultures?” So we sing Christmas songs, as opposed to Christmas carols, because “What about the other cultures which don’t get a look in?” And I always want to go “Well actually, just a second . . . let’s look at that word . . . Christmas. There actually would be no Christmas without Christ . . .” Actually, “Away in a Manger” wouldn’t be a bad thing. At least.

Barbara, the principal, explained her justification for changing the name of the school Christmas (Summer) Party:

Initially it was about . . . er it was a Christmas end of year party, but I . . . didn’t want to exclude . . . different groups because it wasn’t talked about in terms of a Christmas get-together, so we went with a . . . very . . . non . . . I don’t know what the word is . . . a very neutral title because it was about

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8 See below, page 245.
9 A view partly reflected in data for the coverage of BiS programmes. See above, Table 2 on page 15.
community coming together. Because we felt that, if it had been called a Christmas party, then our Chinese Hindus would’ve not necessarily come.

And Barbara described how it had become “very un-P.C” to teach children about Easter and Christmas, because it might cause offence to those of other religions, or be perceived as majoritarian. The Kakapo School charter was the only one of the secular state schools studied to mention the word “religion”. It did so, in the following context, to affirm religion as an aspect of identity which should be understood and respected:

Cultural Diversity: We are intent on valuing and celebrating each person’s individuality. We aim to promote a strong sense of pride in one’s own cultural identity. We promote an understanding of, and sensitivity towards, the cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs of students. We strive to find ways to value, respect and champion the diverse groups within the school to ensure an inclusive community.

It was not clear from my research at this school how either pride in cultural identity including religious beliefs, or understanding of religious beliefs, could be fostered when references to the Christian religion were disqualified from school life and, as discussed below, conceptual knowledge about religions and beliefs were constructed as unimportant in comparison with the disposition of tolerance.

Conflict Avoidance and Disqualification of Religions and Beliefs
The secular schools in both Auckland and Southland appeared to be interpreting the requirement to teach about cultural diversity from within a diversity discourse within which differences were minimised, diversity was “celebrated” but conflict and controversy were avoided. At Korimako School, where one third of the children were Muslim, the whole school had recently started a topic on “Celebrating Differences”. Each classroom displayed a topic web on differences, which had been generated through class discussion, such as those pictured:
As may be seen, the topic webs made no mention of differences in religion or belief. While culture and cultural celebrations were included, the word “religion” was notably absent. Teacher Anisha explained this phenomenon:
We wrote this whole topic together, but like, we didn't talk about the religious beliefs. It was um, celebrations; it was clothing; it was food; it was living. But . . . I suppose it's a bit of a . . . you know . . . especially in such a multi-cultural school . . . Would you be stepping on someone's toes?

In this instance, the risk of causing offence appeared to operate as a discursive constraint on both teacher and children, excluding the subject of religion from the class topic and refocusing the conversation onto less controversial aspects of difference. Subject avoidance (Don't bring it up) appeared to operate as a disciplinary technique which served to prevent conflict in the classroom.

Anxiety over causing offence was not unique to Auckland schools. Penny at Kereru School, in Southland, insisted that the subject was not deliberately or consciously avoided but, in fact, was rarely mentioned because of “sensitivity” around the issue. Another teacher at Kereru School, Annette, went further when asked about the likelihood of including teaching about religious belief in cultural diversity topics:

No. I think we're nervous. I think we're nervous to offend people. Those conversations uh, we're just nervous, I guess we're politically correct, rightly or wrongly, we're nervous to talk about that stuff [. . .]. I don't think I am [prohibited], but we never do! [. . .] Because . . . for that reason. It's just kind of a taboo thing. It's a bit scary.

In a rush to avoid potential conflict, the diversity discourse appeared to overlook religious difference and redescribe religious diversity as “cultural celebrations”, promoting religious relativism and affirming uncontroversial and universal dimensions of community life. A further intention of this redescription was to promote tolerance—or uncritical acceptance of difference—as a disposition, as Sonia Glogowski affirmed above. This discursive imperative may be seen to have operated as a disciplinary technique within a secular (neo)-liberal form of governmentality.

**Discursive Prioritisation: “There’s not enough time”**

Additional material constraints mentioned included the lack of energy, resources and time for a new curriculum area. This was often attributed to the all-consuming neoliberal curriculum imperatives of National Standards, here expressed by Fiona at Kakapo School:

We feel absolutely crunched. Really crunched. [. . .] I think, “Yet another thing that I'm not going to be able to do well, because I can't give it the time or energy that I should be able to.” . . . And in the meantime National Standards say I must get my “below” readers to this point, by this time. There's the move towards um, you know . . . [payment by results]. So
where will I end up focussing? Reading, writing and arithmetic. [. . .] It’s not what I signed up for.

The lack of curriculum time, associated with government priorities, was raised in each of the case study schools. Sometimes these priorities were perceived to be coming from parents as Barbara, principal at Kakapo School, pointed out:

All I get is: "You're doing too much sport, because what about the reading, writing and maths?" [. . .] Or we did, um, a big Art focus two years ago[on Matariki] and we ended up doing a whole school production at the end of the year, and I got criticised for the fact that we were doing too much Art. [. . .] But they're very... they want their kids in the core subjects.

A dominant social action liberal curriculum imperative to teach Māori culture was also a focus for all the schools, as previously described. These discursive imperatives were driving curriculum priorities and effectively disqualifying education in religions and beliefs. From a critical liberal perspective, it is not self-evident that young people should be denied conceptual knowledge of religion at school. My research demonstrates that current practices are discursively maintained and reproduced, and founded on an inadequate social theory of religious knowledge in the curriculum. While this subject avoidance was frequently positioned as progressive and liberal—preventing the imposition of religious views on children and preserving the neutrality of the curriculum—it effectively reproduced a conservative Christian status quo and inhibited the potentially emancipatory development of knowledge and discernment in matters of religion and belief. Concurrently—and perhaps ironically—a specific set of values and beliefs about religion were uncritically promulgated within the curriculum, as I discuss in Part Two.

**Part Two: “Let’s Talk about Something Else”—Secular (Neo)-Liberal Redescription**

In Part Two, I aim to demonstrate the ways in which prevailing discursive imperatives served to promote a secular (neo)-liberal worldview in the secular state schools visited. Recalling Bill English’s description of New Zealanders’ attitude to religion, “Let’s talk about something else”, I argue here that the “something else” which was introduced, in place of religious education in the curriculum and forming an implicit rather than an explicit curriculum, was a set of normative attitudes comprising: an unreflective cultural and religious relativism and universalism; the disqualification or liberalising of conservative religious views; an uncritical tolerance of and “celebration” of difference; promotion of the construction of religion/spirituality as personal, private and “cultural”; uncritical acceptance of neoliberal curriculum imperatives and values; and an unexamined promotion of Māori cultural beliefs and practices. This secular (neo)-liberal worldview drew variously on secular rationalist, liberal
Christian, authoritarian liberal, social action liberal, spiritual secularist, knowledge age and neoliberal discourses, as I show below. This worldview was never set out in policy for parents to consider, and thus was never subjected to critique or held to account.

**Liberal Redescription of Religious Difference**

Representatives of the Ministry, the NZEI, school principals and some teachers and parents informed me that sufficient opportunities were provided for children to learn about religious differences within the New Zealand Curriculum. Examples given were topics such as Festivals, Celebrations or Great Leaders. School principals in Auckland described special school events where the children’s cultural diversity was celebrated by eating traditional foods and wearing traditional clothes. However, it was evident that while all schools taught cultural aspects of Diwali, Chinese New Year and Matariki, such as dances and lantern-making, religious beliefs and practices were not a focus of these topics. Indeed, I was repeatedly assured that the teachers never went into any “depth” in such lessons. As Rosalind, a teacher at Pukeko School in Dunedin, explained: “[W]e can celebrate their festivals, [. . .] but only in a very superficial way. You certainly wouldn’t get into any strong study.” And Fiona, a teacher at Kakapo School in Auckland, agreed: “They know [Diwali is] an Indian festival, but there is a religious significance behind that festival. But that’s not gone into.”

In the secular schools in all areas, it was clear that the aspects of religious difference which had curriculum validation were those which were uncontroversial, which pointed towards universal human experience (e.g. parties, food and celebrations) rather than incommensurable truth claims, and those which gave opportunities to promote Western liberal values. This was apparent from school library resources, where few books on religions seemed to be available but books on celebrations and festivals were sometimes more prevalent.¹⁰ The emphasis on “celebration”, rather than understanding of religious difference,

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¹⁰ The library at St Margaret’s school contained over 120 books on Christian themes, and over 30 books on Māori/Pacific Island culture and mythology, only three books on festivals of other religions were in evidence. Similarly at St Joseph’s school there was a wide selection of books on Christian themes and Māori culture but only five books pertaining to other religions. Secular school libraries reflected the discursive imperatives of the social action liberal discourse and the diversity discourse. While there were many books evident on Māori myths and customs, and a wide selection on cultural celebrations of different kinds, information books on specific religions and beliefs were far fewer in number. The widest selection was found at Kakapo School, in Auckland, where a regular “Celebrations” topic had encouraged the librarian to purchase around 60 books on diverse cultural and religious celebrations and practices including eight on specific religions. However, the librarian informed me that while the books on festival and celebrations were well-used, the books about specific religions were not. This accords with interview data at the school suggesting that cultural/religious festivals were covered in class, but religious aspects of belief and practice were neglected. In this instance, even though some books were
appeared to operate to reproduce an uncritical religious and cultural relativism in which differences between, and within, traditions were smoothed over. The “surface level” approach elided differences between worldviews in a way which appeared to imply that those differences and truth claims were unimportant and perhaps simply a matter of personal or family preference. Any notion that the actions of religious adherents may be driven by religious imperatives, and informed by profoundly-held convictions about the nature of truth/reality, appeared to be absent from the lessons described.

A thoroughgoing redescripion of diverse religious worldviews into a universalised and personalised form, consistent with secular (neo)-liberalism, was in evidence. The replacement of religion with the apparently less contentious term “culture” in New Zealand Curriculum documents—contested by Paul Morris at the time of the curriculum review—is one example of this redescripion. Interviewees frequently substituted the word “religion” with “culture”, as did Beverly, at Korimako School:

I don’t know how you go about letting other people know about the different cultures without maybe having programmes in schools when children have opportunities to learn about different cultures and teachers prepared to talk about other cultures.

This was the one attempt Beverly made, throughout her interview, to conceptualise teaching about religion within the curriculum, and her avoidance of the term was notable. At Pukeko School, in Dunedin, a topic on great leaders was of interest. Rosalind did describe teaching about some religious differences but her description was filtered through an authoritarian liberal discourse and appeared to be in service of the promotion of liberal universalism:

But we were looking at Gandhi, and [. . .] of course we had to look at the caste system, because he believed everyone had God in them . . . and everyone was identical—and that was his big thing. And it was just such a new thing for the Hindus at the time. And then he tried to bridge that gap with the Muslims and the Hindus. And his mother’s religion was Jainism which was different again—but very much was his belief in non-violence that came through [. . .]. The way to get something done is to be non-violent. And actually we looked at a lot of people, and the only one I was really careful about, and we discussed very briefly, was Jesus. Because I thought “Isn’t it funny that we can discuss other people, but we can’t discuss Jesus?” [. . .]. Anyway, so I mentioned him, as somebody else that talked about non-violence because, of course, he aligned with Gandhi.

available, discursive constraints appeared to militate against their use. At the other extreme, at Takahe school, neither the principal nor I could find a section on religion in the school library at all.
It was not possible to establish the degree to which the children investigated the religions mentioned by Rosalind, since there was no children’s work available. From her description, the teaching goals appeared to be directed towards validating the unifying personal qualities and values of Gandhi and Jesus. The endorsement of a liberal worldview, in which the similarities between religions were emphasised and liberal democratic values of tolerance and non-violence/conflict-avoidance advocated, was evident. Rosalind’s implicit endorsement of Gandhi’s universalism arguably disqualified a conservative Hindu worldview. This is consistent with the authoritarian liberal discourse and Galston’s autonomy model of liberalism. Discursive constraints and imperatives associated with the promotion of inclusion and avoidance of controversy served to actively reproduce a secular (neo)-liberal worldview in which tolerance, rather than understanding of difference, was advocated.

**Intolerance**

The term intoleration as described by Lundie and Conroy from their research in the United Kingdom, discussed above, is equated with a form of enculturation into uncritically tolerant attitudes.\(^{11}\) My research indicates that a similar intoleration process, in operation in the New Zealand context, was a constituent of a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality in the secular state schools visited.

At Korimako School, Topic Web 1, in Figure 9 above, was to form part of a display on celebrating differences. Figure 11, below, indicates that the range of images selected may have accentuated the strange and extraordinary, arguably reproducing orientalist pathologies and cultural stereotypes. There was no evidence, from Topic Web 1, that the worldviews evidenced in the images displayed were going to form part of the classroom discussion on differences.

\(^{11}\) See above, page 154.
Equally Topic Web 2, Figure 10, was going to form part of a larger wall display on the topic of celebrating differences, shown in Figure 12. The teaching aim was displayed in the centre: “WALT [We are learning that]: We are all different but we can still be friends.” This liberal maxim was presented as the goal of the topic. It seemed clear that examination of differences would be secondary to the promotion of the disposition of tolerance and acceptance of difference. In other words, an uninformed and unreflective tolerance of difference was advocated over the development of conceptual knowledge of religions and beliefs.
On another display board at Korimako School, shown in Figure 13, differences were reduced to individual personality rather than the potentially contentious obligations of religion or community:

Figure 12: Celebrating Differences Display 2
The following statement, shown bottom-left on the display board above, reinforced the secular (neo)-liberal worldview that differences are a matter of personal choice, autonomy or individual personality and are therefore not a matter for examination, critique or judgement:
We all have unique personalities. Sometimes we have the same ideas and opinions and sometimes we don’t agree. We are all the same in some ways and different in others.

The same approach was evident at Kakapo School, where teacher Fiona described her class rule or Treaty agreement:

We do the whole Treaty thing at the beginning of the year [. . .]. What my class has said this year is that “We’re all different and it's really important that we accept that we’re all different.”

And principal Barbara, at Kakapo School, positioned tolerance of difference as the priority for her children over religious knowledge which did not need to be “embraced”. The use of this word may indicate that Barbara was conflating religious instruction and religious education in this instance, and resisting the imposition of religious belief on children:

So there’s that thing about respecting—and I think our children do respect the cultural diversity within our things. I don’t know whether they need to necessarily embrace it [. . .]. They just know that: “Yeah that’s fine, you’re blond haired and blue-eyed, and I’m Pacific, I’ve got dark skin.” And, you know, that's what it is.

Grace, the deputy principal at Takahe School in Southland, was unequivocal on the same point:

*How are children to be introduced to the different religious beliefs and practices, that actually inform the lives and motivations and decisions of other people, if it's not dealt with in the classroom?*

I don’t think it's based on religion, though, that’s the thing. It's based on acceptance of others which brings it back to our values programme. So, if you look at diversity again, the foundational . . . I suppose the crux of it is . . . acceptance of others. It's not about, “This is your religion”, or “You eat this” or “You’re that colour.” It's actually acceptance. That's what it's based on . . . and so if you can teach your kids to be accepting of others, you know, all of those other things will happen.

In each case religion-blindness was advocated, within which religious relativism was promoted over differentiation and discernment, and uncritical tolerance was promoted over conceptual understanding. This is precisely the process of intolerance described by Lundie and Conroy, above. These inclusive discursive imperatives inhered within the diversity, authoritarian liberal and knowledge age discourses and were constitutive of the secular liberal (neo)-liberal
governmentality described in this chapter and evidenced in the views of Sonia Glogowski at the Ministry, in Part One, above.  

From a critical liberal perspective, the substitution of conceptual religious knowledge with the procedural disposition of tolerance conflated the school’s educational purpose of knowledge transmission, with its governmental role of values transmission. In contrast, critical liberal theory understands knowledge of religion to be a prerequisite to religious understanding and respect. The promotion of conceptual religious knowledge would induct young people into the vocabulary, conversation and controversies of an academic discipline and develop the judgemental rationality required both for personal identity construction and for discernment regarding truth claims. This would facilitate the process of genuine “entoleration” described by Lundie and Conroy. In Galston’s terms, such education is in the compelling interest of the liberal nation state whose primary goal is the protection of diversity. In Foucaultian terms, it was the inability of either parents or young people to critique the worldview promoted that made this teaching authoritarian rather than liberal, and confessional rather than educational. The promotion of the disposition of liberal tolerance appeared to function to suppress and disqualify both discussion of incommensurable differences of worldview, and conservative religious beliefs following a utilitarian pedagogical agenda, in the service of the institutions of the school and state.

Disqualification of Conservative Religious Views

Constitutive of the secular (neo)-liberal worldview was an authoritarian liberal discursive imperative which actively disqualified more conservative forms of religious belief, substituting them with an approved liberal interpretation of faith. At Korimako School, for example, Anisha described how she felt obliged to correct the conservative Muslim position of a child, in her class of five year olds, with a more relativist liberal discourse:

I find, um, like the Muslim belief. They’re quite strong. So, even when we talk about things in class, it’s like: “No! [Bangs table in imitation of child] This is the way it is!” And it’s really hard explaining that, “No, there are lots of different beliefs, and lots of different religions out there, and everyone is different.”

This child appeared to receive the message that her version of truth was disqualified through not being sufficiently liberal and she was encouraged to accept the legitimacy of all religious perspectives. In an educational context where little information about religion was provided, the uncritical imposition of religious relativism and tolerance onto young children may be

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12 See above, pages 236 and 237.
considered a secular (neo)-liberal disciplinary technique and, as Wright points out, as confessional an approach to religious education as that of Christian religious instruction.\textsuperscript{13}

At Korimako School, the principal worked very hard to provide an inclusive environment often meeting with different ethnic groups, in her own time, to discuss their cultural needs within the school. However, a religion-blind policy which was tolerant of all but, in practice, demanded conformity with the secular (neo)-liberal status quo—in line with authoritarian liberal discursive imperatives—appeared to be in operation. Within the constraints of a conservative Muslim discourse, Muslim girls were unable to wear swimming costumes and swim while boys were in the pool. This effectively resulted in a loss of curriculum entitlement to swimming lessons for these girls. Anisha described this problem:

I’ve got one Muslim girl in my class. And the first swimming day she came in the pool, and the mum turned up. She hasn’t been in the pool since! And I thought “That’s really strange!” and I said, “Why not?” And she just said, “No,” and I asked her older sister, and she said, “Oh. Mum didn’t realise there were going to be boys in the pool too.” And she had so much fun on that first day! Actually it’s happened before. We’ve had Muslim children that said “We don’t have togs”, and we’ve had other parents have said “You can have these!” But no [. . .]. She sits on the side, now. It’s so sad.

It seemed, from the way this situation was described, that neither the school nor the parents were able to communicate effectively with the other about this matter. On one level, the conflict-avoiding diversity discourse appeared to operate to close down the conversation. On another, there was a material lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of school staff about the religious constraints under which the girls operated. But, for Anisha, the matter was self-evidently unresolveable unless the Muslim parents complied with secular (neo)-liberal school expectations and allowed their girls to swim with the boys. No one had suggested having separate swimming lessons for Muslim girls, in spite of the large number potentially affected in the school. An authoritarian liberal discourse, within a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality, appeared to resist any such accommodation or validation of conservative religious beliefs in school policy. Indeed, the principal elsewhere redescribed constraints on Muslim women’s clothing as a matter of unfettered personal choice rather than a religious imperative or decision to live one’s life according to religious truth:

And what is interesting with Muslims, they don’t have to wear the hijab. They choose to wear it. It is not a rule in the Qur’an at all. It is something they just choose to do.

\textsuperscript{13} See above, page 150.
Although she was evidently not talking about swimming in this context, it is possible that this secular (neo)-liberal redescription of a religious imperative as a matter of inconsequential personal choice—the act of an autonomous chooser—may have informed her general approach. For if parents may arbitrarily “just choose” for their girls not to swim, these parents may (perhaps should) just as easily change their mind on the subject. Certainly, through the lens of this authoritarian liberal discourse, the school could not be expected to change its swimming timetable on these grounds.

At Korimako school, while in policy and cultural matters an inclusive egalitarian liberal discourse was in operation, in matters of religion this was undermined by the uncritical promotion of “liberal” forms of religious belief and the concurrent presumptive (and undiscussed) invalidity of alternative (conservative) religious perspectives. The school’s unwillingness to accommodate the needs of the Muslim girls arguably signalled neither respect nor tolerance for their beliefs, or those of their families, but a form of governmentality characterised by an authoritarian imposition of secular (neo)-liberal values. This is an approach consistent with Galston’s conception of liberal autonomy which seeks to undermine the legitimacy of heteronomous worldviews. In contrast, Galston’s liberal diversity model is characterised by “an accommodationist, pro-exemption understanding of free religious exercise”, limited only by compelling state interests. 14 Such a model would have enabled Muslim girls, who were materially disadvantaged at Korimako school, to receive their curriculum entitlement without compromising their beliefs.

**Embodied Māori Beliefs and Practices as a Marker of Liberalism**

The requirement to teach about cultural diversity in the New Zealand Curriculum was frequently interpreted through a dominant social action liberal discourse promoting recognition, and often embodiment of Māori culture. This appeared to reflect a binary, rather than plural approach to cultural issues. For some interviewees, like Frank, principal at Takahe School in Southland, teaching cultural diversity appeared largely to equate to teaching about Māori culture. Māori culture was certainly given priority in terms of resources, staff training, and curriculum time. There was far less evidence of professional development, resources or classroom teaching about other cultures, as would be consonant with a multicultural approach. In the secular state schools, books on Māori and Pacific Island culture far outnumbered books on festivals and religious beliefs and practices. Neil Laurenson at the

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Catholic Education Office was clear that Māori culture, both in secular and Catholic schools should be prioritised:

Well, yes, they should be looking at those cultures, but they also need to address the fact that we live in a bicultural country, and Māori must always come first.

![Māori Culture and Language Display](image)

**Figure 14: Māori Culture and Language Display**

All schools were concerned to observe Curriculum requirements to promote tikanga and te reo. While the Catholic schools did so largely through their religious education programme, in a process of inculturation as mentioned above, the secular state schools ran extra-curricular *kapa haka* groups where children learned *waiata*, *poi* and *haka*.\(^{15}\) Classrooms in all schools had labels and displays in Māori language, such as that in Figure 14, from Korimako School in Auckland.

At Korimako School, the principal gave professional development to other staff on Māori culture and language which was appreciated by teacher, Anisha:

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\(^{15}\) *Waiata* are traditional songs in the Māori language; *poi* are objects with the appearance of balls on lengths of string, which are twirled by women/girls in rhythmic patterns; *haka* are ritualised warrior chants generally performed by men/boys.
And we've got a whole big book where she gives us hand-outs and what the correct way of pronouncing the words is; and then we teach it to the children. And like [. . .] we had no idea, you know like you can't just go out and collect the flax. You have to go at a certain time of the day. You know if I was doing weaving with the children, I would probably just go and snip some [. . .]. So we do the whole: “No, it's tapu to sit on tables. We don’t sit on tables.” We tell the children: “It’s where we put our food and our books and things. We don’t sit there.” I reckon there’s more Māori than spiritual or religious teaching in this school.16

At Pukeko School, in Dunedin, a schools advisor was brought in to give advice on a school concert:

We were doing a karanga to start off our performance,17 um which was really interesting, so we brought in [Name of Māori advisor], and she helped the two little girls that I’d picked, but she said “In Māoridom, two is a bad number” and “Spiritually, two is a bad number, so you should have three.” And then she saw our reserve was a little Pākehā girl and she said “Perfect—It’s very important in Māoridom that we’re not seen as exclusive—you must include her, and you must have three, because three is a strong spiritual [number].” [. . .] And we had to instantly have a change—and it was like the day of the production!

At Kereru School the issue of subject knowledge was being addressed through outside support which Penny, the principal, hoped would be transformational within the school:

What we are trying to do is embed Māori beliefs into curriculum and, when you've got staff that don't know a lot about Māori culture, that's difficult. They don't actually know what it is . . . and there's not a . . . it's not that there's a lack of will—there's a lack of knowledge. And I include myself in that as well. So one of the things we are doing later in the year we've got [Names] and they're doing a Nationhood course, which will talk about the whole origins of the Māori culture you know, right from the very beginning—which I think will give us that foundational belief of . . . why things need to be different.

It may be argued, as in the Curriculum Review draft discussed above, that foregrounding Māori culture in the curriculum in this way, and raising awareness of cultural differences, serves the broader aims of multicultural education.18 But this intention was not clear from case study data, where bicultural imperatives were explicitly emphasised. What was notable, from a critical liberal perspective, was that the interventions made to support teaching Māori culture all conflated teaching about culture with teaching children to observe Māori protocol, i.e., enculturation. Teachers and children were expected to amend their behaviour, and sometimes their beliefs, in line with this discursive imperative. Recognition of Māori culture

16 Tapu and noa are concepts, meaning sacred and non-sacred, around which much protocol exists.  
17 A karanga is a call, given by a woman, which forms part of a Māori welcoming ceremony.  
18 See above, page 91.
appeared to frequently involve embodiment of that culture, rather than improved knowledge and understanding or critical appraisal. The teaching approach may be perceived to be confessional in the embedding of a particular worldview into the education system and in the way this teaching was exempt from critique. It signalled a presumptive validity, indicative of institutionally established belief. Parents who expressed opposition to their children receiving this teaching were frequently positioned as either ignorant, intolerant or racist, i.e., illiberal, by educationalists. Acceptance of the teaching appeared to be perceived as a marker of the progressive and liberal attitudes promoted within the curriculum, and resistance from parents positioned as a problem to be managed.

At Kereru School, Penny evidenced the way in which prioritisation of time, energy and resources, to the promotion of a social action liberal educational discourse within both school and parent community, effectively placed a material constraint on the development of education in religions and beliefs:

How well [are the children] equipped for life, living amongst people of different religions?

Well I'd say these children, right at this moment are not [. . .]. And I guess it's first things first, the barriers and the hurdles around dealing with our Māori community, you know, where that is . . . 20% of our school family, and there's that sort of resistance. Well it's underlying resistance. It needs to be managed and I'm very conscious around it. People's tolerance levels, around anything different than what they know and do, is very low.

Penny recognised that children in her school were not learning about other religions and beliefs, but she was aware of the potential for parental resistance to anything other than BiS. A prevalent confessional construction of religious teaching made teaching about other religions highly controversial and unlikely to be tolerated. Parents may have feared that their children would be converted to another faith. Penny foresaw the difficulties she might face in introducing teaching about religions and beliefs. Her more urgent priority, however, was to manage the resistance she already faced from parents regarding the teaching of Māori language, protocol and beliefs to their children. A normative confessional approach to education in beliefs, in which beliefs needed to be unreflectively “embedded” in the curriculum, combined with the discursive imperatives of a redistributational social action liberal educational discourse within which “things need to be different”, was met with parental resistance which needed to be “managed” at Kereru School. This management process signals

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19 Social action liberal discursive imperatives would assert the importance of both learning about and observing Māori protocol.
20 See above, page 227.
that promotion of Māori culture formed part of a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality in which beliefs and values of children and parents were amended and corrected in New Zealand schools.

This governmentality extended, at Takahe School in Southland, to the requirement to participate in karakia. For Grace, the deputy principal, an important role of the school was to develop taha wairua—the spiritual dimension of education—as promoted through the Te Whare Tapa Wha model of wellbeing in the Health and Physical Education Curriculum. This spiritual dimension was reflected through the values programme at the school, the kapa haka classes and as part of a daily routine of beginning the day with karakia:

We also look at it in our classroom, the spiritual again, because I think it’s really important. So we start off every morning with a karakia or prayer in Māori. And again I just think it’s really addressing the spiritual side of things, for our Māori children, but also for other children, too.

Māori spirituality was here perceived as having universal applicability. Within this discourse Māori prayers became non-negotiable in the state school classroom. An authoritarian liberal disciplinary technique was evidenced when I asked about the response of parents to this practice:

I did actually have some Brethren parents complain about starting with karakia, and having karakia, and they came to me and they complained about it. And I said to them, “OK,” I said “That’s fine,” I said, “Who do you pray to?” and they said, “Our God.” “Oh,” I said, “That’s really interesting because that’s exactly what we’re doing.” I said, “We’re praying to the same God.” I said, “So what are your issues in us praying to the same God as you have?” [. . .]. And I said, “So what would you have me do with your child? Would you have me sit your child outside the classroom while we do that? That’s your choice.” And often, they’ll go away and think about it, come back and say, “No, no, no. It’s fine for my child to be a part of it.”

Grace’s approach to teaching spiritual education manifestly breached the right of parents and children to freedom of religions and beliefs. Parents appeared to be coerced into giving permission with the threat of their child’s social exclusion. Children were either required to embody a Māori spiritual worldview—or at least a universalist liberal theological worldview—through participation in prayer to a universal God, or risk embodiment of a dissenting identity which marked them as “different” from the rest of the class. Again, a conservative religious worldview was disqualified and supplanted by a more liberal and relativist ideology. The unqualified and uncritical endorsement of both tikanga Māori and taha wairua within the

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21 Karakia are prayers or blessings in the Māori language.
New Zealand Curriculum enabled Grace to invoke the institutional power of the Ministry to justify this practice:

> And I mean it is, it’s all there in our Curriculum. So the *karakia* is part of the Māori culture and so, it just goes with it, it’s a package deal, and I’m not going to cut out the *karakia*. And so I would need to explain this to parents, and really and truly, if they had issues with it, I’d then direct them to Frank, who would then probably direct them to the Minister, and the Minister would have to explain it. Because this is a New Zealand-wide Curriculum. We can’t change it. It’s what’s been implemented in New Zealand Schools.22

However, numerous other interviewees, even in the same school, attested that there was no requirement to perform *karakia* as part of the delivery of *tikanga* Māori or of teaching about spiritual wellbeing within the curriculum. A “hands-off” policy on the part of the Ministry permitted contradictory policies on *karakia* to operate in state schools in a way which must have caused confusion to parents. For parents of children in Grace’s class, a form of coercion by unofficial establishment was in operation. As Galston points out, such establishment is illiberal, intolerant and inimical to the protection of diversity. Binary approaches to culture, values and spiritual wellbeing in this classroom precluded the development of a broader form of spiritual education which respected the integrity of all the children.

Certainly, for Muslim parents, there could be no assumption that *karakia* or Māori spirituality were appropriate in a state school. But as a minority group in a bicultural context there were discursive and material constraints which may prevent a parent from complaining or withdrawing a child, as Karima explained:

> That’s a very difficult thing for me. Because I feel like now, I’m treading on eggshells, you know: taboo. I don’t want to disrespect New Zealand, but . . . I’m thinking, “That’s not what we do.” [. . .]. You feel like you will be ostracised if you say anything. But it is treading on eggshells. It’s very difficult [. . .]. Like sometimes, especially when my children were in pre-school and the *karakia* was part of the pedagogy and you know like at meal times they used to sit there and do it. And my children would be involved, you know. I found that very, very hard [. . .]. At the time I didn’t raise the issue, only because my children were the minority amongst about 20 other kids, and I thought they’re too . . . they just have no comprehension [. . .]. Because two-year-olds obviously are very . . . they can’t comprehend why I’m left out. So I just let it slide, you know?

22 *Karakia* are not mentioned in the New Zealand Curriculum. However, this curriculum update does encourage schools to use *karakia* as part of *tikanga* and in keeping with the Treaty partnership: MOE, “Treaty of Waitangi Principle”, 1. Sonia Glogowski stated that the Ministry was divided over the use of *karakia*. The HRC recommends parents should be given the chance to opt out of such observances, but none of the schools in my study were aware of these guidelines: HRC and Morris, “Religion in New Zealand Schools”, 9.
As a citizen of New Zealand, Karima had a right to freedom of religions and beliefs, the right to bring up her children according to her beliefs and the right not to be coerced into religious observances. However when religious observance was implemented as a part of pedagogy, with apparent state and institutional endorsement, it became very difficult to assert these rights without embarrassment or possible social disadvantage for herself or her children. In this instance normalised religious observances, employed as liberalising disciplinary techniques, resulted in a clear infringement of religious rights.

But as Galston points out, the formal or informal establishment of cultural beliefs may be equally constraining for the privileged culture, setting up an expectation of “authentic” beliefs and practices and co-opting that culture for governmental interests. When a pupil did not conform to expected behaviour during the class karakia at Takahe school, Grace, the teacher, constructed the incident as a contravention of authentic Māori identity, rather than of social norms or class rules:

Last week, in my classroom this Māori boy was being very disrespectful during our karakia and I went up to him and said to him “I am really upset by this. This is your culture and you are being really disrespectful, Why?” So it’s quite good, because they can relate to that because it is part of their culture and who they are.

In critical liberal terms the re-ethnicising of the Māori pupils through the assumption of a normative cultural spiritual identity is an oppressive form of governmentality, detrimental to the development of judgemental rationality.23

The two interviewees most vehemently opposed to confessional religious instruction, namely Peter Harrison at the NZARH and parent Mark at Pukeko School, both self-identified as atheists and secularists. While both reflected the imperatives of a social action liberal discourse in support of institutional recognition of Māori culture, neither approved of the institutional use of karakia. However, both identified a discursive constraint which prevented them from publicly criticising such practice. Mark stated:

In particular contexts, there are reasons why I wouldn’t kick up a fuss. But that doesn’t mean I approve in principle, it’s just . . . you know. . . you pick your fights.

And Peter said:

It would be one of a number of areas here where . . . um . . . it would be politically difficult to take on and not necessarily well-advised (L).

23 See above, page 167.
A dominant social action liberal discourse, operating at an institutional level in New Zealand, appeared to constrain secular rationalist, human rights and conservative religious objections to required participation in Māori (and often Māori Christian) religious beliefs, protocols and observances. Thus immunised from critique, such practices appeared to be reproduced in policy and practice. As an institutionalised marker of liberalism in New Zealand society, the embodiment of Māori culture and beliefs appeared to be another constituent of a secular (neo)-liberal governmentality in operation in case study schools.

**Promotion of Secular Spirituality**

As previously discussed, it was common for interviewees to conflate the teaching of spiritual wellbeing with Catholic RE and BiS, or to align it with curriculum imperatives giving recognition to tikanga Māori and wairua, including karakia. However, the teaching of spiritual wellbeing was also frequently described in purely secular terms, addressing personal development, values and dispositions, in line with spiritual secularist and neoliberal discourses. In fact, none of the interviewees constructed spiritual education in a way which might include learning about religions and beliefs. Some principals, like Penny at Kereru School and Beverly at Korimako, indicated that that the word spiritual was not used at all in their schools. Anisha, a teacher at Korimako school, expressed shock and surprise that spiritual education was meant to be in the curriculum. It had never been mentioned to her before.

A teacher at Kereru School in Southland, Annette, associated spiritual wellbeing with a sense of self-esteem, connectedness and relationships with others, in line with a spiritual secularist discourse:

> Spiritual wellbeing for our kids and for us staff: We . . . we work really hard to create a strong sense of community for our kids, as strong sense of identity . . . they own our school. They own being here: this is their place and connectedness is really important. Um, we work hard as teachers to build strong relationships with our kids. We go further . . . and spiritual wellbeing for me looks like a balanced um relationship with a kid. It looks like a child who has hope for the future, who is proud of themselves, they have self-esteem [. . . ] and because they've got that self-esteem and that sense of self they can accept that others are different.

Equally, at Kakapo School in Auckland, the principal Barbara constructed spirituality in spiritual secularist terms. While she struggled to articulate her understanding of the word, she was clear that it was a meaningful expression without a specific religious content:

> So defining “spirituality” is . . . yeah, I don't know how to define it—it's just that genuine respect and understanding about yourself and the place that
you have, so that you can . . . actually genuinely respect . . . others, as well, and so it’s . . . just a way you are.

Here the relational, emotional and psychological child was placed at the centre of spiritual education in place of conceptual religious knowledge. The positioning of the dispositions of tolerance and acceptance of difference as inherent to spiritual wellbeing were notable in these descriptions. Kakapo School had included “nurturing the human spirit” in its charter, intrinsic to which was the promotion of secular values derived from a consultation exercise with parents. Barbara believed that these values were promoted in the school without the need for a Christian programme or any teaching about religious beliefs.

From an egalitarian liberal perspective, such as that espoused by Galston, the failure to educate children in matters of religion and belief is inimical to the promotion of genuine tolerance and the protection of diversity, consistent with the governmental principles of the liberal nation state. From a critical realist perspective, this secular and purportedly neutral approach to spiritual education as personal development, devoid of reference to religious traditions and communities of belief and practice, and without an operational theory of conceptual knowledge in spiritual and religious matters, was open to the influence of dominant secular (neo)-liberal imperatives. Thus a particular form of subjectivity may have been moulded with normative secular (neo)-liberal dispositions regarding, for example: religion as an optional extra, rather than intrinsic to spirituality; religion as uncontroversial and personalised or reduced to cultural celebrations; and uncritical tolerance and religious relativity as non-negotiable. From a Foucaultian perspective, the psychologising of spiritual education was constitutive of a governmental rather than critical approach. The focus on self-esteem, identity, autonomy and personal fulfilment—the self-actualisation at the root of the spiritual secularist approach—was highly amenable to, and embedded in, the neoliberal discourse.

**Promotion of Neoliberal Values**

At Kakapo School the values selected by parents appeared to have been largely informed by this discourse. The values of resilience, perseverance, humility, pride, integrity, ambition, bravery, innovation, service, caring, self-belief and compassion were to be promoted throughout the curriculum. As Barbara stated:

[I]t's a part of what we do all the time, so it's not seen as anything specific, it's just how we talk, and what we expect from our children . . . the whole time that they're at school. So it's just a natural part of our . . . our programme, really.
While humility, service, caring and compassion arguably have a basis in New Zealand’s Christian heritage, the values of resilience, perseverance, ambition, bravery, pride, innovation and self-belief may have owed more to a neoliberal educational discourse within which young people were expected to emerge as successful entrepreneurial subjects and agents within the market economy. These latter values were presented as religiously neutral within a spiritual secularist construct of spiritual wellbeing, described as “nurturing the human spirit”, in the Kakapo School charter. But the spiritual resources to be developed were embedded in, and constitutive of, a worldview arguably contrary to religious perspectives with a more transcendent focus. Like the Catholic values and beliefs promoted in the integrated schools visited, the explicit beliefs promoted in BiS and the implicit Christian beliefs encouraged through Takahe School’s values classes, this worldview was exempt from critique and presented as normative and presumptively valid: as “a natural part of the programme”. In a context where broader conceptions of spirituality were disqualified, such teaching was at risk of confining the educational quest for spiritual truth to, what Marshall calls, “the dehumanised notion of the autonomous chooser imprisoned in the choices offered by the enterprise society”.  

Conclusion

In answer to research question two, the data report further evidences the operation of discourses identified in Chapter Four and exemplifies the consequences of these for New Zealand as a plural liberal democracy, for religion in the curriculum and for young people themselves. My data indicate that significant discursive, institutional and material constraints appeared to be in operation to construct education in religions and beliefs as illegal, unimportant, undesirable, unproductive, and unnecessary in the case study schools. Concurrently, confessional instruction of different kinds was accommodated into the education system in ways which were not always made explicit to parents in the study. The replication of these findings in very different educational contexts, and in the comments of representatives of the Ministry and NZEI, lead me to conclude that they may have a wider applicability to the New Zealand education system in general. My findings clearly indicate that the distinction between educating children about beliefs and practices, and enculturating them into forms of belief, has not been sufficiently well made within New Zealand primary schools. The blurring of this boundary has been shown to serve functions within both the conservative Christian and secular (neo)-liberal governmentalities operating within the education system.

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The irony of these findings is that policies and practices, purportedly designed to protect children from indoctrination into religious belief, appeared to be themselves co-opted as illiberal governmental techniques promoting uncritical acceptance of very specific worldviews. The “Don’t touch it!” approach, which positioned religion outside the curriculum, seems to have induced a laissez-faire attitude to the voluntary system of religious instruction by New Zealand’s education establishment. This, in turn, has expedited the enculturation of children into a Christian worldview in an uncritical and unreflective manner, exposing some to indoctrinatory practices. Concurrently, the “Don’t bring it up” and “Let’s talk about something else” approaches were intended to engender tolerance and social cohesion, democratise knowledge, be responsive to community beliefs and promote self-actualisation. However, my research indicates that these approaches reproduced illiberal confessional approaches to religion and culture and effectively served to impose a secular liberal and relativist worldview onto New Zealand children, which was neither acknowledged nor held to account. These practices were embedded in an understanding of liberal policy based on the valorisation of choice rather than the protection of diversity: autonomy liberalism rather than diversity liberalism.  

In consequence, none of these policies or practices equipped young people with the knowledge to debate or analyse beliefs and worldviews, or to exercise discernment over truth claims. They did not develop in young people the social rationality, or entoleration, required for active participation in the democratic liberal nation state. In fact, matters of truth and truthful living appeared to be bracketed out of the education process. An opportunity to contribute to genuine character formation—Bildung—through the development of knowledge, understanding and discernment in matters of religion appeared to have been missed.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis I draw together the findings of my genealogical research, literature survey and data report to make key recommendations for changes in the treatment of religion in New Zealand Primary schools.

\[25\] See above, page 124.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

Question 1: Is New Zealand’s cultural and religious diversity influencing the practice of, and attitudes toward, teaching about religion and spirituality in state and integrated primary schools? Question 2: What are the key discursive and institutional constraints which maintain current arrangements for voluntary religious instruction and restrict curriculum development in the area of religion and beliefs? Question 3: Is there an alternative to current practices consistent with New Zealand’s status as a secular, bicultural and religiously plural liberal democracy?

The preliminary research question with which I commenced this research yielded answers, but raised many further lines of enquiry. Case study and interview data indicated that, on the one hand, the curriculum and pedagogy of BiS and of religious instruction in integrated schools was not amended for different contexts. In both Auckland and Southland the state schools with BiS and Catholic integrated schools adopted confessional approaches which presumed children present were developing a Christian faith. Additionally, education about religions and beliefs was disqualified as a curriculum subject in both areas. In this regard, the first research question is answered in the negative. On the other hand, research participants in both areas cited increased diversity as an additional reason not to teach about religions and beliefs at school. In other words, curriculum imperatives around the management of diversity appeared to further render the controversial subject of religion non grata: for some, religion was simply taboo. The first question may therefore be answered in the affirmative. The major task of this thesis has been to answer questions two and three: to analyse the ways in which this situation has arisen and was being reproduced, and to theorise the subject of religion in schools for the New Zealand context. Research question three required a formulation of alternative policy solutions, which I further address in this chapter.

Thesis Summary

An iterative Foucaultian approach to the interview data, primary sources and secondary literature revealed a range of discourses which appeared to operate to constrain curriculum development in the field of religions and beliefs, and to maintain the status quo of Bible-in-Schools. I have demonstrated how an interpretation of secular as “nothing to do with religion” obtained currency and became embedded in the national identity, constraining the development of religion as a curriculum subject area, ceding responsibility for religious education to the churches and limiting opportunities for young people in New Zealand to obtain knowledge and discernment in matters of religion. I have shown how current dominant educational discourses, evident in curriculum and policy documents, have served to position
uncritical confessional approaches to teaching about religion, values and culture as educationally progressive, effectively reproducing the status quo of Bible-in-Schools and to disqualify education in religions and beliefs. I have evidenced the ways in which governmental techniques operated through the co-option of discourses which promoted compliance, personal autonomy and personalised constructions of religion in the service of economic state interests.

Through an egalitarian liberal and critical realist analysis of the discursively-based objections to education in religions and beliefs, I have shown how these objections are often based upon constructions of religion, knowledge, education and liberalism which are not stable and self-evident but are contingent upon historical, political and cultural discursive contexts. I have demonstrated that these dominant constructions are contestable and that alternative constructions of religion in education are not only possible, but, from my objectively partisan standpoint, educationally imperative.

My data report provided case study evidence of the discursive constraints and governmental strategies identified in my genealogy and review of literature. An under-theorised conception of knowledge in general, and religious knowledge in particular, within the New Zealand curriculum allowed dominant discourses, evident in case study schools and in interviews with key stakeholders, to promote confessional and community-based forms of religious, spiritual and cultural education and disqualify conceptual knowledge of religions and beliefs in state schools. But the legally embedded construct of school closure, and apparent institutional endorsement of BiS, appeared to operate as material constraints on information for parents, informed consent and accountability regarding the resources used and teaching methods of volunteers. The construct of school closure protected the secular clause, but did not protect young children from teaching which was coercive, intolerant, inimical to the protection of diversity and detrimental to the development of judgemental rationality. Concurrently, a secular (neo)-liberal form of governmentality appeared to be in operation in state schools promoting a construction of religious belief which was socially liberal, autonomous, personal, private, universalised, relative, uncontroversial and a matter of lifestyle choice. The ubiquitous redescription of Bible-in-Schools as universally appropriate values teaching appeared to form part of this governmentality. However, concurrent discursive constraints on accountability operated to facilitate a conservative and evangelising Christian form of governmentality through the accommodation of BiS in New Zealand state schools. Interview data evidenced a
widespread uncertainty about the use of religious vocabulary, indicating low levels of religious literacy among both educationalists and parents interviewed.

An autonomy-based conception of the liberal nation state, in which freedom of choice (for parents) was prioritised, permitted Catholic integrated primary schools to enculturate children into one faith without introducing them to other perspectives. However, there was evidence that parents (including non-Catholics) were not informed of their right to withdraw their children from religious observances. An apparent absence of epistemic humility and courageous restraint made this a potentially coercive and illiberal form of religious education. However, in the explicit nature of its provision of information for parents about religious education in terms of policy documents, school charters, parental access to teaching resources, and in some of the teaching content in evidence, the Catholic schools’ approach was more liberal and transparent than those of schools running BiS and one running an in-house values programme.

In summary, and in explicit answer to research question two, a “secular nationalist” national identity, an autonomy-centred rather than diversity-centred model of the liberal state, combined with an absence of an operational social theory of religious knowledge in the curriculum, appeared to facilitate the discursive reproduction of the status quo: volunteer-led Bible-in-Schools, compulsory religious instruction in Catholic schools, and the presumptive invalidity of education about religions and beliefs within the primary school curriculum.

To address research question three, I have suggested that an alternative form of education in religion and beliefs for the New Zealand context could be framed with the following critical liberal emphases: epistemic access to conceptual knowledge of religion; the development of judgemental rationality; a pedagogical approach characterised by epistemic humility; a curriculum which allows for objection and resistance; a non-coercive approach; the genuine protection of diversity; and the development of social rationality consistent with the requirements of liberal citizenship. I explain below how a critical education in religion and worldviews might meet these critical liberal criteria and better equip young people for participation in a secular, bicultural and religiously plural liberal democracy.

**Limitations**

It will be noted that the fieldwork undertaken is necessarily limited in scope and to specific contexts in New Zealand. However, I have argued that corroboration of the discourses
identified in case study interview data with those in primary and secondary sources, and with those in interview data with key stakeholders, gives the research findings wider applicability.

As noted in Chapter Three, there were difficulties in recruitment of schools and of interview participants and in the cancellation of a lesson observation, attesting to the controversial nature of the subject for school communities. Assumptions about the nature of my research may have affected the recruitment of interviewees by principals.

**Playing With Edged Tools: Recommendations**

In Figure 1, the advice of the Chief Justice to the Minister for Education in 1912 regarding religion in schools was, “Don’t touch it! Don’t play with edged tools! Let sleeping dogs lie!” This policy, which appears to have been the default Ministerial strategy whenever the subject has subsequently been raised, can no longer be justified in the plural context in which New Zealand’s children are currently being educated. Solutions to the religion problem, reflecting the religious homogeneity of the 19th century to the mid-20th century, are now due for revision. The sharp tools must be handled and the dogs awakened. Fear of criticism from those with vested interests is not a legitimate rationale for education policy.

**Bible-in-Schools**

In line with my egalitarian liberal analysis I have suggested that the unofficially established nature of the Christian faith, through voluntary Bible-in-Schools classes in New Zealand primary schools was coercive, intolerant, and detrimental to the protection of diversity. In line with my critical realist analysis, I have indicated that the teaching did not respect the developing judgemental rationality of children, treating one religious worldview as alethic truth. On these grounds and concomitant with the additional problems of accountability, informed consent and opting out associated with the construct of school closure, Bible-in-Schools may be considered, in Foucaultian terms, an illegitimate governmental technology in secular state primary schools. I believe that the relevant sections of the Act of 1964 should therefore be repealed and voluntary religious instruction in school hours and on school property should cease.¹

However, the current legality of confessional religious instruction is not in question and, until such time as the legislation of 1964 may be revisited, my research findings indicate that the

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following urgent changes should be made to current practices. Of primary importance would be the provision of guidelines from the Ministry to boards of trustees, including reminders of legal requirements and recommendations for good practice in line with parents’ and children’s right to the freedom of religions and beliefs. I recommend that:

1. The programme is moved to after school hours to limit the potential for perceived institutional endorsement or coercion.

2. Where programmes continue during the school day, parents should opt in, rather than out, to reduce potential for perceived institutional endorsement and coercion.

3. Boards of trustees are reminded that the Ministry does not endorse, approve, evaluate or monitor religious instruction programmes: this is the legal responsibility of boards of trustees.

4. Schools are reminded that it is their responsibility to state explicitly in school charters, on websites, in newsletters and in school policy that religious instruction takes place and that attendance is optional.

5. Parents are surveyed every two years.

6. Schools are reminded that it is their responsibility to provide accurate information to parents, prior to any survey and prior to their child’s enrolment, about the programme, its intended contribution to the school, and the volunteers including:
   a. Access to course materials
   b. Information about the religious organisations to which the volunteers are affiliated
   c. Information about the CEC or programme provider
   d. School policy document on religious instruction

7. Boards of trustees are reminded that it is their responsibility to monitor resources, and volunteers on an annual basis.

8. Schools are given criteria by which to assess materials, provided by CEC/other providers, used at any time on school premises including that:
   a. The material does not require children to make confessions of faith
   b. The material does not require religious observances such as prayer or songs of worship (Songs of worship make confessions of belief such as “Jesus loves me” and value judgements about religion, such as “The best book to read is the Bible”)
c. The material does not presuppose religious membership by the use of “we” and “us”

d. The material does not require children to make judgements about truth and falsehood where the “true” answer is a contestable statement of faith.

e. The material and teaching do not apply the contestable beliefs of the programme providers universally, e.g. “we are all sinners”, “Jesus wants us to . . .”, “God made the world in six days”.

f. The material teaches about the religion, recognising that beliefs and practices differ within a faith.

g. The material teaches about the importance of belief to a believer, but does not imply that children should adopt religious belief.

9. Schools are reminded that it is their responsibility to provide adequate supervision and educational activities to children who have been withdrawn from religious instruction. Every effort should be made to ensure that they do not incur any form of social disadvantage.

10. Primary school teachers should be provided with non-contact time in line with the OECD average. This would limit the apparent tendency of schools to unreflectively endorse BiS, on the contingent grounds of the provision of vital release time.

Integrated Church Schools

Integrated church primary schools, along with schools with Designated (religious) Character, Kura Kaupapa and Partnership Schools with a religious foundation are necessary for the protection of diversity in the liberal nation state. Religious and cultural communities are entitled to bring up their children within their tradition, to live according to the lights of their faith and culture. The social legitimacy of such schools is contingent upon the provision of explicit information for parents about the religious or cultural basis of the educational approach. But children attending these schools also have rights to freedom of religions and beliefs and are capable of more than passive induction into one tradition. Children of different religious backgrounds attend Catholic and other Christian or religious schools and their integrity and rights should be respected. It is also in the interest of the liberal nation state that every child should develop both social and judgemental rationality by learning about alternative worldviews. The following recommendations would apply to these schools:

\[2\] See Appendix 5.
1. Integrated primary schools must allow children, whose parents request it, to opt out of religious observances in line with Section 32(2) of the 1975 Conditional Integration Act.

2. An opt-out provision should also be in place for children attending partnership or other special character schools where religious instruction and observances take place.

3. Religious instruction should be taught with epistemic humility and courageous restraint: acknowledging the transitive nature of religious knowledge and recognising that religious propositions are contestable.

4. Schools with a religious character or foundation should offer children the opportunity to learn about a range of alternative worldviews in a way which respects the diversity of religious belief represented in New Zealand.

*Education in Spirituality, Religions and Beliefs*

Current curriculum guidelines for educating children about spirituality, religions and beliefs in New Zealand primary and secondary schools are inadequate. Practices observed in case study primary schools were detrimental to the protection of diversity and the promotion of tolerance, defined as non-coercion. Additionally they prioritised community-based confessional approaches over the development of conceptual knowledge and discernment in matters of religion and belief. Within the curriculum, the avoidance of controversial religious matters, the promulgation of relativism and the promotion of a universal secular (neo)-liberal version of spirituality and religious belief were in evidence. Teachers appeared to lack the knowledge and confidence to assist young people to debate and discuss religious matters and sometimes believed they were legally precluded from doing so. The following recommendations would address the findings of my research:

1. The Ministry of Education takes responsibility for education about religions and beliefs as a curriculum matter at all levels of education.

2. Knowledge, understanding and discernment in matters of religion is considered essential to a young person’s education by the Ministry.

3. A stronger social theory of conceptual knowledge is reintroduced to future curriculum development as a precondition to the introduction of conceptual knowledge of religions and beliefs.

4. A form of critical education in religions and worldviews is developed which, incrementally through the school system:
a. Introduces young people to the vocabulary, concepts and debates of the
discipline of religious studies (religious literacy)
b. Explores diversity within and between religious and non-religious traditions
c. Explores the diversity of Māori cultural and spiritual practices, and debates
pertaining to colonisation
d. Informs young people about the elements of the Biblical narrative upon which
the Christian calendar is based
e. Allows for the validity of religious truth and truthful living
f. Includes consideration of the characteristics of, and values inherent in, secular
atheism, universal religiosity, post-modern relativism and neoliberalism as
specific worldviews
g. Enables youngsters to discuss and debate substantive matters of religious
difference
h. Encourages young people to reflect appropriately on their own
beliefs/spirituality and worldviews and the range of influences which inform
them
i. Assists young people with identity formation and discernment in matters of
religion and belief

5. Training, resources and curriculum guidelines are devised and provided.
6. Parents should be able to withdraw their children at the primary school stage only.

Future Research

To test the replication of findings in New Zealand secondary schools:

1. Case study research based in areas of contrasting religious diversity and including
state secondary schools with and without religious affiliation

To assist the future development of critical education in religions and worldviews:

2. School-based action research could involve a pilot scheme trialling resources designed
to develop knowledge of religious and non-religious worldviews specific to the New
Zealand context

3. Activities to assist young people in primary and secondary schools to apply these
different critical lenses to specific situations could be developed and trialled in the
pilot scheme.
4. These resources could be adapted and trialled in other contexts such as Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

During the research process a number of issues pertaining to evangelisation of children in New Zealand’s schools came to my notice. Applying the same critical realist, egalitarian and Foucaultian critique to the following areas may be pertinent to the protection of diversity and the right to freedom of religions and beliefs:

5. Replication of the current research with a particular focus on parents’ and schools’ perceptions of BiS in the Wanganui region, which uses Connect resources no longer approved by the CEC because it is evangelical.

6. Research on the use of curricula founded in a narrow religious worldview such as the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum which, reportedly, has over 35 years been “successfully used by 1000s of students in NZ”, either through home-schooling or through private Christian schools.  

7. The CEC’s provision of school chaplains for secular primary and secondary schools in New Zealand. In 2012 there were 186 chaplains in New Zealand’s schools.

8. The expansion of American-style after school clubs, such as the Good News Club, using school resources and facilities to evangelise children. In 2012 there were eleven such clubs running in New Zealand schools “reaching 202 children of whom 24 were counselled for salvation”.

Critical Education in Religions and Worldviews: an Emancipatory Programme

More generally, a need for a critical liberal analysis of schools’ provision of epistemic access—conceptual and disciplinary knowledge—in comparison with provision of a more localised, culturalised, personalised and utilitarian curriculum, is compelling. This brings me back to research question three, which I now address more fully: Is there an alternative to current

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practices consistent with New Zealand’s status as a secular, bicultural and religiously plural liberal democracy?

It is my view that critical education in religions and worldviews might provide, not just a viable alternative to current practices, but an emancipatory programme within the New Zealand curriculum. What is proposed is that a space is created to promote not just an awareness of religious and non-religious worldviews but a consciousness of the prevailing influences on the education process in which young people are participating. This consciousness-raising process must do more than simply offer a deconstructive tool within which all conceptions of truth or meaning are subsumed into a post-modern relativism or a simple scepticism. Conceived within the critical liberal framework that has been described, critical education in religions and worldviews must offer the tools of judgemental rationality and discernment: it must equip young people to make informed judgements in matters of religion and belief. This emancipatory strategy releases them from the constraints of a curriculum informed by neoliberalism, within which the freedom to choose becomes sacrosanct, and by ontological relativism, in which “any choice will do”.

Wright asserts that in order to live well, in harmony with others, young people at secondary school will benefit from the acquisition of spiritual and religious literacy marked by “the ability to take part in an informed, critical, sensitive and ideologically aware conversation about the nature of ultimate reality and of their relationships to this reality”. Wright, “Spiritual Education Project”, 180. Within this critical realist framework the acquisition of religious literacy involves: learning to describe and articulate one’s own beliefs and values; to recognise how these beliefs and values have been formed in relationship with family, tradition and other influences; to learn about other religious and secular perspectives, developing a conceptual vocabulary appropriate to the discipline of religious studies; to dialogue with others across boundaries of difference, developing critical thinking methods; learning to argue from different perspectives; and to rearticulate one’s beliefs and values in the light of these discussions. Wright, “Spiritual Education Project”, 180. This teaching approach would equip young people with the knowledge and discernment to make informed decisions about matters of religion and belief.

If children are to develop religious literacy at secondary school, they need to have opportunities to learn about religions and worldviews at primary school. They need to do so in a way which enables them to understand religions as distinct but diverse traditions with very

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7 Wright, “Spiritual Education Project”, 180.
8 Ibid.
different truth claims. They also need to do so in a context of epistemic humility and with the development of judgemental rationality as a normative objective. Younger primary school children will benefit from an early introduction to the vocabulary and concepts of religious belief, which will assist them in identity formation and enable them to begin to understand the practices of those living and learning either alongside them, or in other parts of New Zealand. This would include a range of Māori beliefs and practices. Even in the younger years of primary school a critical liberal approach can be developed by encouraging children to consider familiar situations and problems from the different perspectives to which they have been introduced. Helping children to understand the implications of religious belief (or unbelief) in daily life, for many New Zealanders, will form a basis for the further acquisition of knowledge, understanding and discernment during their school life. Critical education in religions and worldviews at all levels of schooling will therefore promote genuine and active tolerance—entoleration—which is required for the mutual flourishing of religious diversity: the central purpose of the liberal nation state.

Conclusion
Previous generations have sought binary explanations of the problems of religion and culture in New Zealand, for example: the secular state versus Christian church; Māori versus Pākehā. The Immigration Act of 1987 has transformed the cultural and religious make up of New Zealand such that policy and practice now need to reflect these changes. Young New Zealanders will need to develop more nuanced conceptualisations of culture, spirituality and religion and to be able to draw on a much broader vocabulary to express these new ideas. They need practice, not just in celebrating diversity but in discussing matters in ways which recognise, and hold in tension, the conflicting truth claims and worldviews now co-existing in New Zealand society. In a context where many young people align themselves with not one but multiple cultural and religious perspectives, the acquisition of religious literacy could greatly assist in the process of identity formation. The provision of space within the curriculum to explore difficult and controversial matters of culture and religion could promote debate and disagreement in a safe environment. It is by learning to wrestle with different ideas, to strongly disagree but to understand the other’s point of view and her/his right to hold it, that understanding and respect for difference is engendered. It would give young people an insight into the religious and non-religious worldviews which inform the lives of the communities in which they live. The ability to identify and locate the values and imperatives to which they are exposed within particular worldviews, whether secular, cultural or religious, would equip them with the resilience, confidence and discernment required for democratic participation.
As future global citizens they will need to understand, not overlook, the religious imperatives which drive human behaviour at the local and international level.

In contrast to the governmental strategies of confessional Christian instruction and secular (neo)-liberalism apparently facilitated by the New Zealand education system, critical education in religions and worldviews would respect the right of families to maintain conservative beliefs and give young people opportunities to examine and defend their beliefs in this space created within the curriculum. It would provide a means by which conservative beliefs and practices and more liberal conceptions of belief could enter into dialogue in order to promote a genuine and active tolerance of difference. Critical realism values the quest for alethic truth. The openness to the possibility of the truth of religion is therefore maintained in critical education in religion and worldviews. To enable young people to recognise, state, affirm and reflect upon their assumptions and convictions, and the influences that have formed them, is to encourage them in the pursuit of truth and truthfulness rather than in acceptance and compliance. This I have positioned as the goal of religion and the ultimate aim of education itself. In their entry in the *Sage Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, James Conroy and Robert Davis concur:

> Critical realist methods propose religious education as part of a shared intellectual framework for debate and interaction in a plural society, endorsing the mainstream liberal view that learners from diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds ought to be encouraged to pursue rival versions of the good life in conditions of mutual toleration. Authentic toleration then demands, however, that religious education fully acknowledges the divergence of belief and conviction, enabling learners to describe, celebrate, rationalise, and defend beliefs, even up to the point of irreconcilability on the basis that it is a morally vital, and educationally defining, end in itself to search for and live by the truth derived from an apprehension of the ultimate order of reality.⁹

In consideration of the problems with existing practices in religious education in New Zealand, and in the light of Foucaultian, critical realist and liberal theory, I contend that critical education in religion and worldviews therefore represents the “best available” approach to religious education at both primary and secondary school level.

These recommendations will be unpopular with most stakeholders of Christian religion and secular education in the New Zealand context. Firstly, the territory gained in the hard-won battles over religion in schools of the past will not be readily relinquished. But this research is

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not alone in calling into question the social legitimacy of Bible-in-Schools in the increasingly secular and religiously plural social context of New Zealand. The Ministry may come under increasing pressure to address the issue, as publicity around the SEN court case raises public awareness of the issues at stake. Secondly, my recommendations to introduce a new subject area require a commitment of time, resources and energy which remain “inconceivable” within the constraints and imperatives of dominant educational discourse. To this it may be argued that time, resources and energy are already expended in unreflectively governmental ways on forms of religious, spiritual and values instruction teaching and topics on cultural celebrations in New Zealand schools. Some of this expenditure may be harmful to the protection of diversity, illiberal in outcome, damaging to identity and character formation and detrimental to democratic participation.

From a critical liberal perspective, what is required is a discursive shift: a retreat from conservative Christian and authoritarian secular rationalist constructions of religion and secularity, and secondary discourses which collectively disqualify religion from the curriculum, and the adoption of an egalitarian liberal and critical realist construction of religious education. This would allow a subject which has been considered presumptively invalid to be reconstructed as an essential precondition both to the protection of diversity in the liberal nation state and to the child’s right to freedom of religions and beliefs. Critical education in religions and worldviews thus becomes imperative to identity formation, to the development of knowledge and discernment essential for democratic participation, and the locus of educational endeavour: an emancipatory quest for ultimate truth and truthful living. For such a matter of national significance—from this objectively partisan perspective—time, resources and energy might be legitimately prioritised.

The New Zealand Education Act of 1989 casts the academy as the “critic and conscience of society” asserting “the freedom of academic staff and students, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions”. It is in this spirit that I offer this controversial, unpopular, but potentially emancipatory doctoral thesis.

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10 The Education Act 1989, Section 161, 2a and Section 62, 4a (v).
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Appendix 1: Timeline of Religion in New Zealand Schools

First Mission School founded in 1816
- Language of schools was Māori
- Māori taught to read and write
- Curriculum based on Bible and Christian doctrine

Colonisation from 1840
- Provinces created in 1852 and schools, for settlers' children, provided by churches, individuals and communities
- Land wars from 1845-1872
- Native schools founded to “civilise” and “assimilate” Māori and teach them English and manual skills

The Education Act 1877
- National state-funded primary education system established. End of provincial system of schools
- Established that “the teaching shall be entirely of a secular character” (Section 84 (2))
- Continuation of native schools

Nelson System of religious instruction (RI) circa 1897
- Rev. J. H. McKenzie popularised inter-denominational Bible teaching through a loophole in the Act
- Only two of the three hours in a school morning required to be secular. Volunteers teach RI when school is “closed”.

Formation of Bible In Schools League 1903
- Campaigned for repeal of secular clause and half an hour of Bible teaching delivered by class teacher
- 42 Private Members’ Bills between 1877 and 1935 brought by campaigners

Formation of National Schools Defence League 1913
- Defended separation of church and state
- Opposed religious test for teachers and proposals for teachers to teach Bible lessons

Formation of New Zealand Council for Christian Education (NZCCE) 1949
- Replaced Bible in Schools League
- Adopted Nelson System
- Published Agreed Syllabus from 1955
- Produced guidance for volunteers and a code of practice

The Currie Review 1960-62
- Recommended legalising the Nelson System
- Suggested an “opt-in” rather than an “opt-out” procedure
- Opposed integration of church schools
- Clarified that class teaching could include reference to religion

The Education Act 1964
- Incorporated Religious Instruction and Observances Act 1942
- Retained secular clause (Section 77)
- Legalised Nelson System of voluntary religious instruction (Section 78)
- Established opt-out entitlement (Section 79)

Native schools transfer to local Board control 1955-1969
- Assimilation intended to give equality of status, opportunity and educational standards to Māori

Formation of Churches Education Commission (CEC) 1973
- Repealed RICC
- Continued to fund and resource Nelson system
- Developed units for secondary school social studies

The Lawrence Report 1974
- Recommended “Māoritanga should form an important part of the curriculum in all schools”
- Recommended moral education should be a part of the curriculum
Appendix 2: Sample Fieldwork Documents

Appendix 2A: Introductory Letter to Schools

Dear [Name of Principal],

I am a PhD student at Otago University, formerly a primary school teacher in the UK, who is undertaking some research into cultural diversity and religion in primary schools.

I am interested in the attitudes of principals, teachers, parents towards teaching about religion in schools, and in the ways in which schools are including teaching about the world religions within the curriculum, for example in their social studies work.

I have ethical approval to conduct research in two areas of contrasting cultural and religious diversity next year, and have recently piloted this research in a primary school in Dunedin.

I am approaching [Name of School] because of its situation in an area with a high level of religious diversity. I would be interested in your perspective on the CRE programme provided by the Churches Education Commission and your school’s approach to matching the broader curriculum to the cultural and religious backgrounds of your pupils.

I have tried to minimise the inconvenience for schools, seeking to interview the principal, one member of staff, two parents and (where applicable) a CRE volunteer in each school. The anonymity of the school and all participants would be preserved.

I am not seeking to interview children, but may request to observe a lesson, if relevant to my research.

The interviews would take place within the first two weeks of March next year, at the convenience of the school.

The research aims to inform educational debate on teaching about religion in schools. This is an area which although well-developed as a research field internationally, is under-represented in the New Zealand context.

I will be giving you a call in the next few days to discuss the possibility of your school participating in this research.

I am enclosing an Information Sheet which provides further details of the research. In addition a Consent form, with SAE is enclosed, should you be interested in participating in this study.

With best wishes,

Helen Bradstock
PhD Candidate
University of Otago
Appendix 2B: Information for Participants

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS
Interviewees

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies at the University of Otago.

What is the Aim of the Project?
The aim of this project is to examine the ways in which religious and cultural diversity are influencing education about religion and spirituality in primary schools. Additionally it seeks to explore the impact of religious and cultural diversity on attitudes of principals, teachers and parents towards teaching about religion and spirituality within the school curriculum.

What Type of Participants are being sought?
I am looking for primary school principals, teachers, parents and CRE volunteers who would be willing to reflect on current school practice in this area, in state and integrated primary schools.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?
Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. You will be asked for your thoughts about the teaching of cultural diversity, religion and spiritual well-being in your school, including any religious observance such as prayer / karakia, and your personal views on the ways in which schools should approach these matters. The interview may take up to an hour of your time, but you may voluntarily extend or curtail this.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?
You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?
The principal data collected in this study will be your perceptions and opinions as presented in the interview. Interviews will be audio-taped and transcripts will be returned to you for approval. The data will be used in a PhD thesis which intends to explore the historical and contemporary debates about the place of religion in the primary school curriculum.
The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity and the anonymity of the school. You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University’s research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

**What if Participants have any Questions?**
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Helen Bradstock  
Department of Theology and Religion  
Telephone Number: 03 479 8901

or  

Dr Will Sweetman  
Department of Theology and Religion  
Telephone Number: 03 479 8793

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

**Please Note:**
This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
Appendix 2C: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule for Principals and Teachers

Research Question: Is New Zealand’s cultural diversity influencing the practice of, and attitudes towards teaching about religion and spirituality in state and integrated Primary schools?

Introductory: How long have you worked at this school? (Teachers) Do you have responsibility for any curriculum area?

Sub-question 1: In what ways do you think your school acknowledges religious and cultural diversity within the curriculum or school ethos?

- Are religious festivals discussed/celebrated?
- In what ways does the social studies curriculum cover religious topics?
- What resources are available to support this?
- In what ways are children encouraged to talk about their differences and similarities?
- In what ways does the school encourage an awareness of different faith traditions?
- In what ways do the school library/reading books/English curriculum reflect different cultural contexts?
- What is your understanding of New Zealand law regarding the teaching of religion in primary schools?
- Do you think children should be taught about the world religions and Christianity within the curriculum?
- If so, what would your school need to achieve this?
- If not, why not?

Sub-question 2: How do you think the school seeks to address education in spiritual well-being?

- What does your school understand by the term spiritual well-being?
- Is there a member of staff/community with responsibility for this area?
- Does the school think this is an important curriculum area? How does it demonstrate this?
- In what ways do children in this school learn about spiritual well-being?
- Do children have lessons in Maori custom which might include aspects of spirituality? Is this a separate lesson or is it woven into the curriculum, or both?
- Do children from different faith traditions need to learn about spiritual well-being in different ways? Why/Why not?
- How important do you think it is for children to learn about spiritual well-being? What makes you think this?

Sub-question 3: What approach does your school take to CRE?

- Has your school ever had a CRE class? If so, why has it stopped?
- Do people in your school feel strongly about this subject? What makes you think this?
- In what ways does your school seek to teach about values?
- What in your view is the best way to teach about values?
- Do you think it is important to teach about different cultural and religious values? Why do you think this?
- Do the children take part in prayers or karakia during the school day?
- Does the school have an assembly? If so,
  - How often?
  - Would it have a religious component?
  - Do children from different religious backgrounds take part?
- What are your views on religious instruction in primary schools?
- How important do you think it is for children to understand about the religious aspect of life? What makes you think this?
  If it is important, who should be responsible for teaching about it?
  If it is not important, how should these matters be dealt with?

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix 2D: Participant Consent Form

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about.
All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further
information at any stage.

I know that: -
1. my participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. the data (audio-tapes) will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which
   the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it
   will be destroyed;
4. the results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library
   but every attempt will be made to preserve anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.


................................................................. ........................................
(Signature of participant) (Date)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any
concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human
Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and
investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 2E: Information for Parents

Religious Education in Primary Schools

Information for Parents

Introduction
My name is Helen Bradstock and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Otago. I have been in New Zealand for nearly three years, having been a primary school teacher for 12 years in the UK. I am interested in what parents and other educators think about Religious Education in New Zealand primary schools.

In New Zealand, Religious Education is not a curriculum subject but Christian Religious Education (CRE) may be taught by volunteers with the permission of Boards of Trustees. In many Australian states, representatives of other faiths, such as Islam and Buddhism, may also go into school to talk to children from their faith communities. In state schools in the UK Religious Education is a secular curriculum subject. The class teacher teaches about the world religions as well as Christianity.

Research Aim
The New Zealand Curriculum 2007 recognises and values biculturalism and multiculturalism. Primary schools are expected to teach about cultural diversity and also to attend to children’s spiritual development. My research aims to explore whether New Zealand’s increased religious and cultural diversity is impacting on parents’ and educators’ attitudes towards teaching about religion and spirituality within the school curriculum.

What is involved?
Next year I will be interviewing principals, teachers, parents and CRE volunteers in selected schools in the North and South Island. With the permission of your principal I am piloting this research at [Name of School] during the week beginning [date]. I have already arranged to interview some parents and staff during that week. Each school participating in the project will receive a book voucher to the value of $40 as a token of my appreciation.

I am looking for examples of the way in which education in religious and spiritual matters takes place in primary schools. Your principal has given me permission to request your consent to observe and make a sound recording of a CRE lesson and an additional relevant lesson. She has also given me permission to ask your consent to make a copy of your child’s work and photograph wall displays that are relevant to the research. In addition I have permission to obtain school ethnicity data and information from curriculum planning documents.

Parental Permission
I am requesting your permission to observe and record a regular lesson in which your child is taking part. The focus of the observation would be the subject matter. I would not be interacting with the children as part of the research. No reference will be made to individual children in the written report. Interactions between the teacher and the children may be reported if relevant to my field of enquiry.
In addition I am requesting permission to make a copy of a piece of your child's work, if it relates to my research area. This may include taking photographs of classroom displays. No photographs will be taken of children. Your child's permission would also be obtained before copying any of his/her work.

Anonymity
The anonymity of the school, interviewees and children will be maintained. Only myself and my supervisors will have access to the raw data, and the names of the school and all participants will be changed in the thesis and any published work.

How will information be used?
The data will be used in a PhD thesis which will explore the historical and contemporary debates about the place of religion in the primary school curriculum. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library, but every attempt will be made to preserve anonymity. A summary report of the findings will be provided for the school.

Sound recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project. Other data may be securely stored for up to five years after the completion of the project and then destroyed according to the University's research policy.

Can I change my mind?
You may withdraw from the project and have your child's work removed at any time before the completion of the project, without any disadvantage.

What if I have a question?
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Helen Bradstock
Department of Theology and Religion
Telephone Number: 03 479 8901

or

Dr Will Sweetman
Department of Theology and Religion
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This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

I would be most grateful if you would sign the consent form and return it to the class teacher by [Date]

Please keep this INFORMATION SHEET for your reference.

Thank you for your interest in this research which will assist educational debate about religion in schools in New Zealand.

Helen Bradstock
Appendix 3: Summary of Research Findings

1. Religious instruction and values teaching
   1.1. Catholic schools were explicit about promotion of Catholic Christian values
   1.2. Children of other religions at Catholic schools were obliged to attend Catholic religious instruction and observances
   1.3. Some secular schools actively promoted and endorsed Christian values and beliefs
   1.4. Christian values were redescribed for parents in secular schools as “secular”, “liberal”, “spiritual”, “general”, “good” and “Kiwi” values
   1.5. These secular schools were not explicit about BiS/values programmes on websites or charters
   1.6. Most research participants supported Christian values teaching
   1.7. Some participants rejected Christian values as universally appropriate

2. Religious instruction and faith formation
   2.1. The Catholic schools were explicit in their promotion of the Catholic faith. Parents were involved in pupil’s learning in RE and regularly saw children’s workbooks
   2.2. Catholic RE programme was confessional and largely conservative but promoted a liberal theology concerning the Bible
   2.3. One secular school in Southland promoted Christian belief through an in-house values programme but did not inform parents
   2.4. Schools with BiS were engaged in “sowing a seed of faith” including encouraging the children to have a “relationship with God”
   2.5. There was evidence of fundamentalist teaching of creationism in one school and further reported evangelical teaching in schools outside the study
   2.6. BiS resources seen, and lessons observed, were confessionally Christian in content: they encouraged children to adopt beliefs and required children to participate in religious observances
   2.7. Some BiS resources promoted Biblical inerrancy and were more conservative in this regard than the Catholic resources seen

2.8. Other faiths were not taken into account in either BiS or Catholic materials
2.9. Parents did not routinely see the BiS workbooks

3. Opting out of religious instruction and observances
   3.1. The Catholic schools did not make parents of children of different religious faiths aware of their right to opt out of religious observances (1975 Act, Section 32 (2))
   3.2. No concern about opt-out provision for BiS from Ministry, CEC, NZEI or HRC. All believed parents were sufficiently consulted and informed about programme
   3.3. Identified significant constraints on consultation with parents. Boards of trustees/principals appeared to have most influence on running of programme
   3.4. Constraints on ability of minority group to complain about majority religious instruction:
3.4.1. Unwillingness to stir up trouble or attract hostility
3.4.2. Fear of disadvantage for child/community
3.4.3. Perceived as illiberal (not Kiwi) to opt-out/complain

3.5. Constraints on informed consent.
Lack of information for parents regarding:
3.5.1. The existence of the programme in the school
3.5.2. Which organisation ran the programme
3.5.3. The programme materials
3.5.4. The volunteers

3.6. Constraints on accountability due to school being “closed” for BIS:
3.6.1. CEC approved and endorsed its own materials
3.6.2. Ministry, ERO, NZEI, HRC did not examine resources
3.6.3. Evidence that boards and principals assumed materials were pre-approved and did not examine materials thoroughly

3.7. Unwarranted complacency of parents in evidence

3.8. Constraints on opting-out and complaining due to fear of disadvantage for child:
3.8.1. Evidence of coercion to attend BIS
3.9. Discrimination and disadvantage against those opting-out was not recognised by Ministry representative
3.10. Right of state schools to a “special character” (1989 Act) appears discursively to override previous legislation on RI (1877, 1964)

4. Education in spiritual wellbeing
4.1. Catholic schools did not differentiate spiritual and religious instruction/wellbeing
4.2. Some secular state schools did not differentiate spiritual and religious instruction/wellbeing
4.3. Some BIS teachers equated spiritual wellbeing with a relationship with God
4.4. Māori spirituality sometimes constructed as universally appropriate, including compulsory karakia

4.5. Conflation of learning about Māori culture and observing Māori protocol identified
4.6. Constraints for parents on complaining about imposition of Māori spiritual practices identified:
4.6.1. Perceived as illiberal (not Kiwi)
4.6.2. Perceived as narrow-minded/bigoted/racist
4.6.3. Fear of social disadvantage for child

4.7. Secular form of spiritual wellbeing includes sense of identity, self respect, relationships with others and values

4.8. Lack of guidelines allowed for contradictory interpretations and some practices which undermine curriculum values

4.9. None of the schools included teaching about religious diversity as part of spiritual education

5. Education about religion and beliefs: Disqualification
5.1. Common construction of education as “nothing to do with religion” and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.2. Conflation of RI and RE led to a perception that education in religion was:</th>
<th>5.4. Religion is personal, a matter of individual perspective, so:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1. Illegal</td>
<td>5.4.1. There was no way for schools to know what to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2. Potentially indoctrinatory</td>
<td>5.4.2. It was a matter for school communities not the Ministry</td>
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<td>5.2.3. Beyond school’s responsibility</td>
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<td>5.2.4. Appropriate for church schools and that</td>
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<td>5.2.5. Class teachers mustn’t teach the subject</td>
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<td>5.2.6. Volunteers from different faiths would need to be found</td>
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<td>5.2.7. It would be harmful or confusing to children to learn about faiths other than Christianity</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.3. Education in religion in beliefs was perceived to be unimportant relative to:</th>
<th>6. Curriculum coverage of religion within social science/cultural diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1. Teaching of Māori culture</td>
<td>6.1. Unwarranted complacency about curriculum coverage by Ministry and HRC reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2. National standards</td>
<td>6.2. Teachers and principals believed there was no requirement to teach about religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3. Southland (religiously homogeneous) context</td>
<td>6.3. Catholic primary school taught about diversity of practice within Catholic faith only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.4. More immediately useful and practical skills and competencies</td>
<td>6.4. Cultural festivals and great leaders topics did not focus on religious beliefs but on uncontroversial “universal” aspects</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3.5. Disposition of tolerance</td>
<td>6.5. Biculturalism was prioritised over wider cultural/religious diversity</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.6. Tolerance of difference was prioritised over knowledge of religious difference</th>
<th>6.7. Religious differences were “too sensitive” to discuss</th>
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<tr>
<td>6.8. Evidence that conservative religious perspectives were contradicted and amended, not tolerated</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.9. Promotion of diversity sometimes involved suppression of majority Christian culture</td>
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<th>7. Additional constraints on teaching about religion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1. No explicit requirement to teach about religion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.2. No curriculum guidelines</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.3. Low levels of religious literacy among some teachers and principals</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.4. Absence of data: teachers and principals did not know the religions of children in their class or school</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.5. Few library and teaching resources on religions and beliefs. Library resources focussed largely on Māori culture and cultural/religious festivals</td>
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## Appendix 4: Summary of Case Study and Key Stakeholder Data

### Appendix 4A: Case Study Schools in Southland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Bible in schools/Religious Instruction/Values</th>
<th>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in BiS/RI/Values</th>
<th>Education in spiritual wellbeing</th>
<th>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in spiritual education</th>
<th>Teaching about religions and beliefs in the curriculum</th>
<th>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in curriculum</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Southland</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>St Joseph’s</td>
<td>NZ Bishops’ RE programme is followed. Includes Catholic formation, participation in Mass and liturgies and prayer. Strong emphasis on values and behaviour: WWJD?</td>
<td>School must follow Catholic Religious Education Programme which does not include other religions at primary level.</td>
<td>Spiritual wellbeing and education are equated with Catholic religious belief and understanding. Promoted through the curriculum, daily prayers and in “Mind, Body, Spirit” awards.</td>
<td>Spirituality constructed within conservative Christian discourse as Catholic religion.</td>
<td>Positioned as secondary school level topic. Cultural diversity, including Māori culture, is taught as diversity within Catholic faith.</td>
<td>Principal: Not part of curriculum. Might conflict with Catholic teaching. Principal and parent: Not important in Southland context. DRS: Too confusing. Two parents: Parents might complain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takahe</td>
<td>School has not run BiS for ten years, but runs an in-house values class led by Christian teaching assistant. Promotes Christian values with some Christian references but not described as religious teaching. No opt-out.</td>
<td>Classes designed to promote values not conceptual knowledge of religion. Indication of conservative/evangelising discourse which privileges Christian beliefs.</td>
<td>Principal constructs spirituality in Christian terms. Christian staff in school model Christian living. Describes people praying for school and over child with behavioural problems. DP: Spirituality includes Māori culture and karakia.</td>
<td>Construction of spirituality within Christian and social action liberal discourses precludes teaching about other religions.</td>
<td>Māori culture is prioritised. Conflation of RI and RE. Not part of curriculum. Can discuss things brought up by children but not plan to teach about religion.</td>
<td>Principal: Never before thought of difference between learning religions and learning about religion. Not important in Southland. DP: Religious knowledge is not useful. No right to teach religion. We teach values, skills and competences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Bible in schools/Religious Instruction/Values</td>
<td>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in BiS/RI/Values</td>
<td>Education in spiritual wellbeing</td>
<td>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in spiritual education</td>
<td>Teaching about religions and beliefs in the curriculum</td>
<td>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in curriculum</td>
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<td>Auckland</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Margaret’s</td>
<td>NZ Bishops’ RE programme followed. Aims to help children to develop a personal relationship with God within the Catholic faith. Evidence of liberal Christian theology. RE involved in re-evangelising parents.</td>
<td>No separate class taught. No separate class taught. No separate class taught. No separate class taught. No separate class taught.</td>
<td>School must follow Programme which does not include other religions at primary level.</td>
<td>School must follow Programme which does not include other religions at primary level.</td>
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<td>School must follow Programme which does not include other religions at primary level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korimako</td>
<td>Board and Principal support BiS but nearly 1/3 school opt out by staying at home until 9.30 a.m. on Fridays, because they are Muslim. Children of other religious backgrounds attend. Programme described as good values teaching and Bible stories.</td>
<td>Spirituality closely related to Catholic faith and rituals of prayer. Also concerned with values and beliefs, social justice and pastoral care. Spiritual wellbeing includes knowledge that the child is made in the image of God.</td>
<td>Spirituality closely related to Catholic faith and rituals of prayer. Also concerned with values and beliefs, social justice and pastoral care. Spiritual wellbeing includes knowledge that the child is made in the image of God.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakapo</td>
<td>Principal considers BiS inappropriate in such a diverse area. Too many would opt out. Parents would not support use of time. Values are embedded in general teaching and not taught separately.</td>
<td>Spiritual wellbeing constructed largely within spiritual secularist discourse promoting values and personal development.</td>
<td>School charter includes references to spiritual wellbeing, Hauora and nurturing the human spirit. Principal defines it as “respect and understanding” for self and others. Parent thinks charter might open way to BiS.</td>
<td>School charter includes references to spiritual wellbeing, Hauora and nurturing the human spirit. Principal defines it as “respect and understanding” for self and others. Parent thinks charter might open way to BiS.</td>
<td>Spiritual wellbeing constructed largely within spiritual secularist discourse promoting values and personal development.</td>
<td>Spiritual wellbeing constructed largely within spiritual secularist discourse promoting values and personal development.</td>
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### Appendix 4C: Pilot Study School in Dunedin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot Study: Pukeko School Dunedin</th>
<th><strong>Bible in schools/Religious Instruction/Values</strong></th>
<th>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in BIS/RI/Values</th>
<th><strong>Education in spiritual wellbeing</strong></th>
<th>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in spiritual education</th>
<th><strong>Teaching about religions and beliefs in the curriculum</strong></th>
<th>Constraints on including elements of religious diversity in curriculum</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Bis is generally supported: good (liberal) values and Christian heritage. Policy states programme covers Christianity and other “mainstream” religions (It does not). Some parents disapprove of BIS.</td>
<td>Bis teacher would like to include comparative religion but it’s not in Access materials. She stated that those who fund BIS would not approve.</td>
<td>Bis is positioned as catering for the “spiritual dimension of children” in policy doc. BIS teacher: Involves a relationship with God. Principal: Involves sense of identity, place and purpose. Includes Māori culture.</td>
<td>Spirituality is defined within discourses promoting Christian or Māori cultures. A further discourse promoting general values does not include input on values of other religions.</td>
<td>Cultural aspects of some festivals are covered, but not religious beliefs. Great Leaders topic includes Gandhi. Occasional use of child’s parent to talk about a festival/practice.</td>
<td>Principal and parent: no curriculum requirement; lack of teacher subject knowledge and resources. Principal and teacher: Concern about indoctrinating children. CRE teacher and parent: Illegal in curriculum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix 4D: Summary of Key Stakeholder/Informant Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stakeholder</th>
<th>Catholic Religious Education</th>
<th>Bible in Schools in state schools</th>
<th>Spiritual wellbeing</th>
<th>Teaching about religions and beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neil Laurenson: Manager of Catholic Education Services</td>
<td>Catholic schools teach whole curriculum from Catholic point of view, not just RE. Can teach the real meaning of Christian festivals. Grief and dying covered well. Importance of social justice, stewardship, pastoral care. Religion not forced on children but all must attend RE and religious observances.</td>
<td>Programme depends on calibre of volunteer. Biggest problem is that teaching can’t be integrated through school day like at Catholic school. Children need to understand Christian heritage of NZ.</td>
<td>In Catholic school would come under “pastoral care” of whole community. Involves Catholic perspective on health but also prayers for community. Secular schools deal with safety of students as part of spiritual wellbeing.</td>
<td>Might come up in a social studies topic but not in any depth. Festivals such as Diwali might be celebrated. More usual to celebrate cultural diversity within Catholic faith, such as saying prayers at Mass in the different languages and costumes of children. Better left until secondary level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key stakeholder</td>
<td>Bible in Schools</td>
<td>Opting out of BiS</td>
<td>Monitoring BiS</td>
<td>Spiritual wellbeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonia Glogowski: Ministry of Education representative</td>
<td>Act of 1964 means schools may choose to have RI but school is officially closed. Ministry does not have a position on BiS. A matter for parents and Boards.</td>
<td>Parents have right to withdraw child. Act has been in place for a long time and seems to be working. “Opting in” would require a change to the Act. Positions Ministry as open to persuasion on reviewing policy.</td>
<td>Ministry has neither time nor mandate to look at resources used. Ministry can’t say “this is right and this is wrong” in matters of religious belief. Teaching religion is a community decision. Boards approve resources. Complaints referred back to Board.</td>
<td>Uncertain of definition. A way of including Māori culture in schools. Alerts teachers to think broadly about children’s wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joris de Bres: Race Relations Commissioner, Human Rights Commission</td>
<td>A bit odd that a school can close. An anachronism. Believes school “completely changes its hours” to run BiS, (It does not). Problems caused by evangelical teaching. But school Boards can resolve any problems. It would be a lot easier if it wasn’t there!</td>
<td>Parents must be consulted and informed about programme be able to opt out without suffering discrimination. “Opting in” is a waste of time if parents have already been consulted and majority are in favour..</td>
<td>Boards are responsible for making sure teaching does not require children to pray or take part in religious activity. When shown CRE resources stated that he would not recommend them for use.</td>
<td>Uncertain of how schools might teach spiritual wellbeing. But it must have regard for diversity and not impose a worldview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Morris: Professor of Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington</td>
<td>Problematic due to legal anomalies, default programme in schools, untrained volunteers and evangelical approaches. Lack of attention to human rights. Not good materials and not well taught. Probably hasn’t done much harm.</td>
<td>Instigated a Human Rights/Ministerial report on issue of opting in/out. But recommendations (change to opt-in) were rejected by churches. Became a “button issue” which closed debate down.</td>
<td>Knows Ministry don’t approve materials and CEC approves its own. Believes CEC are “ambiguous” over description of materials and deliberately misrepresent Ministerial approval. Parents misinformed.</td>
<td>Spiritual development is essential component—a dimension of human life. In curriculum as a way to acknowledge tikanga Māori. About a moral sense, relationships that are beyond the familial or the local.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key stakeholder</td>
<td>Bible in Schools</td>
<td>Opting out of BiS</td>
<td>Monitoring BiS</td>
<td>Spiritual wellbeing</td>
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<td><strong>David Mulholland: Churches Education Commission</strong></td>
<td>Children need to be informed about Christianity in order to make a choice later on. CEC’s role is to sow a seed. Presenting secular school values but from a Biblical perspective. Matched to key competencies of NZ curriculum. Teaching Christian heritage. Parents sign up for Christian education classes. Demand outstrips volunteers available.</td>
<td>States he hasn’t given the opt-in/opt-out problem a lot of thought. Law states parents can opt out, but some have opt-in. CEC doesn’t insist on opt-out, but it could.</td>
<td>Complaints are acted on by team leaders. Needs to be dialogue between principal and team leader. Resources approved by CEC but should be checked by Boards of trustees. Recognises that this sometimes doesn’t happen and that evangelical material is in use. Believes parents have enough information.</td>
<td>BiS helps to teach spiritual dimension of life. Missing in secular curriculum without BiS. School chaplains may pray with pupils. Prayer in CRE lessons should be optional.</td>
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<td><strong>Ian Leckie: President of NZ Educational Institute</strong></td>
<td>NZEI does not have position on BiS. BiS is outside school time. Personal view is that programme is good values and “general life-type skills and thinking”. Schools are responsible if teaching inappropriate. It is good because it gives teachers relief time.</td>
<td>Parents have enough information. Not a problem for children of other faiths to attend. Opting out can be a problem if too many do it. Might cause school to stop programme.</td>
<td>Boards frequently consult parents and regularly review BiS. Schools are responsible for reviewing resources. Believes ERO check consultation process and that it is included in school charters. NZEI don’t look at resources because it’s outside the curriculum.</td>
<td>Assumes schools interpret though values education. Promoting teaching about ways pupils “think, act and do”. Recognising right to hold different beliefs. Schools probably avoid religion as way to teach it. It is not part of teacher training.</td>
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<td><strong>Peter Harrison: NZ Association of Rationalists and Humanists (Keep Religion out of School campaign)</strong></td>
<td>School effectively endorses Christian belief. Promoted as secular values but is religious indoctrination. Children can’t differentiate between RI volunteer and real teacher. Disingenuous. Christian values are intolerant and in opposition to secular values. Does real harm to families.</td>
<td>Doesn’t work. School closed but children obliged to be there. Opting out is segregation, punishment and ostracism. Easier for parents to let children attend. Parents don’t want to complain in case of further ostracism.</td>
<td>Parents should be given accurate information by schools.</td>
<td>Didn’t know spirituality in curriculum. Thinks there’s a danger of depreciation of Māori culture by including in curriculum.</td>
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Appendix 5: OECD Comparison of Teaching Hours per Year 2013

The graph shows contractual teaching time, including the OECD average of 772 hours at primary school level.¹